

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY  
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

A MULTIPHASE ITERATIVE MIXED-METHOD STUDY OF LAY-EQUIPPING  
COMPETENCIES OF MIDWESTERN ADVENTIST PASTORS

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Gary S. Collins

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Multiphase iterative mixed-method study is to determine if the lay equipping competency courses of a School of Divinity's MDiv program influences the church discipleship programs of graduate lead pastors to develop partnership with their parishioners in ministry and commitment for their church's mission. Burggraff (2015) attests that most evangelical churches in North America are in decline (p. 22). He and many other scholars believe that this general membership decline is due to a lack of emphasis on discipleship, by clergy (Burggraff, 2015). At this stage in the research, lay equipping competencies (LEC) will be generally defined as skills obtained by pastors that can help their parishioners grow in Christ, learn, and develop their spiritual gifts, and provide cooperative opportunities to use their gifts in the gospel ministry. The theory guiding this study is that pastors with more robust LECs are more effective at equipping their members for the gospel ministry (Hwang 2008, p. 177). Further, this study deems that the commitment levels of church parishioners and their partnership with their pastors are directly related to the implementation of LECs by their pastors.

*Keywords:* Seminary, lay equipping competencies, priesthood, partnership, commitment

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### **Dedication**

To my best friend, lover and prayer partner in life, my wife, Loretta, who supported me when I presented the idea of pursuing my doctorate and encouraged me, especially through the rough times. She always believed that I would complete the program even when I wavered.

To my loving and loyal daughters Shanta' and Jordan, who always believed that their dad would complete this milestone and never wavered. To my godly dad and mom who prayed for me and encouraged me along the way. To my wonderful sister, Arlette, who prayed and supported me every step of the way.

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### **Table of Abbreviations**

Lay Equipping Competencies (LEC)

Leader-Member Exchange -7 (LMX-7)

Master of Divinity (MDiv)

Masters in Pastoral Ministries (MAPMin)

Mid-American Union Conference (MAUC)

New Testament (NT)

Old Testament (OT)

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ-9)

Qualitative (QUAL)

Quantitative (QUAN)

Seventh-day Adventist (SDA)

## CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

### Introduction

Statistically speaking, evangelical churches are experiencing a steep decline in membership. Burggraff (2015) states, "According to Dickerson's surveys, the evangelical church is losing members at the rate of 2.6 million per decade" (p. 22). This statistic should be alarming to the evangelical church for, in real numbers, this means that the Evangelical Church has lost 10 percent of its members over the last ten years. Burggraff (2015) believes that the loss in church membership within Evangelical churches are directly related to a lack of emphasis on discipleship.

The lack of a discipleship emphasis amongst Evangelical churches is contrary to Jesus Christ's directive to his disciples. The researcher used the Holy Bible (King James Version, 1769/2017) to provide a biblical context for advancing his biblical assessment of this study's subjects. In Matthew 28:19, 20, he says,

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (King James Bible, 1769/2017).

In verse 19, to teach all nations means to "rightly, *make disciples of*" (Vincent, 1887, p. 149).

They were commissioned to make disciples or followers of Jesus Christ. Dockery (1992) puts it this way. "Believers' task in life, in essence, is to duplicate themselves in others, leading men and women in every part of the world to faith, baptism, and obedience to all of Christ's commands" (p. 567). The Disciples were to, first, duplicate, of all nations, followers of Jesus like themselves and then teach them all what Christ requires of a disciple. Burggraff (2015) states, "In biblical times, a disciple was one who followed a recognized teacher. Jesus commanded his disciples to be engaged in the process of 'discipling' disciples" (p. 398). Within the DNA of a disciple is the

ability to make disciples. Disciple-makers not only duplicate, within others, their biblical and theological beliefs and habits but also cultivates, within them, their God-given gifts for ministry. This cultivation equips new disciples to fulfill their God-given purpose.

Every believer is called to ministry. Hwang (2008) quotes Paul Stevens, who says, "All Christians are given gifts for ministry. There is only one order: laos (Xaoq), the people of God. All are ministers. All are priests. All are called" (p. 66). Elkington (2013) agrees with Hwang on this point. He believes that it is essential for churches to adopt a missional ontology. He asserts that the church is "the complex body of Christ [which is] comprised of a community of believers who work together around a common commitment to the lordship of Christ and their willingness to follow him in discipleship" (p. 8). By the church's very nature, "every person who is a part of a local church has a role" (p. 8)

From scripture, it can be assumed that the Christian church cannot fully live up to its creed until every member is actively involved in ministry. This creed includes every member's spiritual maturity and accomplishing the gospel commission (Ephesians 4:11, 12 & Colossians 1:18). Thus, through educating, equipping and executing one's calling, each member is transformed into the likeness of Christ (Burggraff, 2015, p. 404). Christlikeness is spiritual maturity and is Christ's ultimate objective for every believer (Ephesians 4:12). Thus, as co-workers with Christ, every minister must hold their parishioners' spiritual maturation as their utmost objective.

The researcher believed that parishioners need to have the essential traits of steadfastness and cooperation to receive spiritual instruction and gift development from their pastors to effectively perform their role in the gospel commission and aid in their spiritual maturation. Pastors cannot assume that their parishioners are committed to the church and its mission or are

willing to partner with them and their churches to execute coordinated plans to expand God's Kingdom. Commitment and partnership must be intentionally fostered. Steers (1977) states that organizational commitment is "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (p. 46). According to Porter et al., organizational commitment is embodied by at least three factors: "(1) [a] strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization" (p. 46). The researcher believed that these are three baseline characteristics necessary to foster spiritual progress and gift development.

Akin to commitment is partnership. Hwang (2008) states that partnership is "a reciprocal relationship between [a] leader and member in terms of trust, respect, and sense of obligation to each other" (p. 10). Northouse (2016) believes that leaders "should develop high-quality exchanges with all" of those he leads in an attempt to "make every follower feel as if he or she is a part of the in-group" (p. 142). Graen and Uhl-Bien (1991) assert that partnership between leaders and followers develops sequentially over time in three phases: (1) the stranger phase, (2) the acquaintance phase and (3) the mature partnership phase (p. 33). Pastors are called to equip members for partnership in the gospel ministry. Like commitment, developing partnerships with every parishioner is not something that comes naturally. Partnership is an intentional pursuit by the trained pastor. The skill of fostering partners must be taught to future pastors. Gaining lay equipping competencies (LECs) like commitment and partnership should not be left to chance. Seminaries are best positioned to provide future pastors with lay equipping competencies while they are still moldable.

Hwang (2008) attests that when members go through a "lay-equipping process," their commitment to the church and the gospel increases and a partnership with the church and their pastor is forged (p. 70). He states, "Equipping church pastors are confident that laypeople need to be equipped because they are changed through the equipping process" (p. 70). Spiritual maturation takes place as believers fulfill their spiritual calling according to their giftedness.

### **Background to the Problem**

The primary educating and equipping agent of the church is the pastor. Hwang (2008) addressed this factor by stating, "The equipping pastor is an essential component of the equipping church. (p. 177). In Ephesians 4:12, Paul states that pastors play a pertinent role in equipping the saints "for the work of the ministry" (King James Bible, 1769/2017). Hwang believes that pastors are to be equippers rather than enablers. He believes that anemic equipping processes are problematic for the church in North America. Sadly, many pastors enable their members to be onlookers (p. 71). One could safely say that the ultimate responsibility of educating and equipping the laity rests on pastors. Geiger and Peck (2016) state, "God has given pastors to His Church, and their overarching job is 'to equip the saints [God's people] for the work of the ministry'" (p. 37).

Paul understood that pastors, along with apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers, were strategically given to the church "for the perfecting of the saints" to perform ministry work (Ephesians 4:12). The word *perfecting* "implies correcting in all that is deficient, instructing and completing in number and all parts" (Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown, 1997, p. 350). Perfecting denotes both character development and equipping for the "work of the ministry. Thus, Paul is declaring a directive for leaders. They are to educate and train their members primarily.



Further, in the apostolic church of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, the "*kleros*," which means "clergy" in the Greek New Testament, was a part of the *Laos* or "people of God" (Stevens, 1999, Kindle, Loc 44). The *kleros*, "which means the 'appointed or endowed ones'" is used in scripture to represent "the whole people" (Stevens, 1999, Kindle, Loc 50). A hierarchical system was non-existent. Hwang (2008) states that spiritual leaders served as equippers (p. 1). Everyone who joined Christ became ministers in their own right. "The word layperson (*laikoi*) was first used by Clement of Rome at the end of the first century" to elevate the theologically indoctrinated clergy to protect the young Christian church (Stevens, 1999, Kindle, Loc 46). At the time, the meaning of *kleros* changed in the Christian church to mean the pastorate in contrast to the ordinary congregation as the church grew. Thus, two categories emerged as the church organized and the pastorate became a "duly ordained clergy as a closed 'status' over against the 'laos' the people, i.e., the ordinary people" (Kraemar, 1958, p. 50).

### **Statement of the Problem**

When it comes to discipling, pastors are best positioned to develop lay equipping programs within their parishes. Christian higher education institutions like divinity schools and seminaries are best positioned to provide pastors with the LECs necessary to equip Christian believers. Some might argue that pastors with poor LECs could simply use one of the many discipleship programs or curriculums on the market in their parishes. According to Barna's study in 2015, most pastors do not take advantage of those resources. Barna states that only "*1 percent* [of pastors] say 'today's churches are doing well at discipling new and young believers'" (pp. 9, 10). Barna further states, "Fifty-nine percent of church leaders believe it is 'very valuable' for Christians to be involved in a systematic curriculum or program of discipleship" (p. 12). But this enthusiasm for discipleship programming does not translate into the use of these resources

though they feel that there are "more than enough – discipleship materials currently available" (p. 12). Most of the pastors surveyed by Barna believed that their parishioners should have access to a systematic discipleship program yet did not use these resources even though they felt that their churches had anemic discipleship programs. Maybe the pastors that participated in Barna's survey perceived that the available discipleship resources did not effectively address discipleship. This perception might be a reason for some, but Barna (2015) also asserts that 85% of pastors feel that "busyness is a major obstacle to discipleship" (p. 10). This researcher believes that pastors are too busy fulfilling other important ministry tasks, which precludes them from developing and implementing effective discipleship programs.

Some might believe that divinity schools and seminaries are not responsible for providing pastors with LECs. Pastors can learn these skills through on-the-job training while pastoring their parishes. Dearborn (1995) disagrees with this opinion. He asserts, "To state the problem in extreme terms, I am concluding that there is no other professional organization in the world which allows its primary professional training institutions to produce graduates who are generally as functionally incompetent as the Church permits her seminaries" (p. 7) Dearborn proceeds to compare the seminary to medical school. He asks, "Can you imagine a medical school retaining its certification if its graduates' first exposure to surgery was as surgeons" (p. 7)? He believes that when pastors enter the field of pastoral ministry, they should be prepared to develop disciples and equip them to do the same. The responsibility is essential.

Besides, change is difficult for pastors. Roger Bernard, the president of an umbrella church organization, was asked if he believed that pastors used information disseminated to pastors in various symposiums and pastor's meetings in their churches? Bernard responded with an emphatic "No" (R. Bernard, personal communication. November 16, 2020). Roger Bernard

gave two reasons for the lackluster response of most pastors. He stated that either most pastors feel "overwhelmed by the information that they get" or that they are "accustomed to doing things the way that they have normally done them" (R. Bernard, personal communication. November 16, 2020). In other words, pastors get used to performing ministry a certain way and have great difficulty diverting from that way. As Zig Ziglar (2010) says in his presentation *Meet You at The Top*, "They squatted to rise and just got cooked in the squat." Pastors eventually get set in their ways.

Based on the Barna statistics and the experiences of leaders like Roger Bernard, this researcher believes that colleges and seminaries are best positioned to provide LECs to future pastors because these students are in a learning mode and are still moldable.

Powers (1996) believes that the development of commitment and partnership are essential to Christian education. He says that the purpose of Christian education is "to develop within persons an understanding of, commitment to, and ability to practice Christian teachings" (p. 6). He goes on to say, "Christian education [is] the ongoing effort of believers to understand, practice, and propagate God's revelation" (p. 6). Both partnership (connection) and commitment are found in Power's Christian educational purposes. By interviewing senior pastors who have completed a Master of Divinity, the researcher has measured the effectiveness of their seminary educations in imparting them with lay equipping competencies (LECs). By engaging the participant pastor's members in a questionnaire, the researcher has assessed the effectiveness of the senior pastor's LECs to foster the partnership and commitment of their parishioners.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Multiphase iterative mixed-method study was to determine if graduate lead pastors received adequate lay equipping competencies from their alma mater's

Master of Divinity (MDiv) programs to help them develop partnerships and foster commitment in ministry amongst their parishioners.

The researcher believed that partnership and commitment are essential characteristics possessed by the members of an equipping church. An equipping church refers to a church having a dominant directive to equip every member for ministry. Hwang (2008) asserts, "In this church, the pastor plays an important role as an equipper and there is an equipping process through which lay people are trained to become effective lay leaders" (p. 12). Partnership is "a reciprocal relationship between [a] leader and member in terms of trust, respect, and sense of obligation to each other" (p. 10). Commitment is "The relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Steers, 1977, p. 46). In this study, the organization was the church and lay equipping competencies (LECs) serve as a specific guide to the core knowledge, attitudes, and skills essential to pastors' ability to foster partnerships with their parishioners and commitment within their parishioners to the church and its gospel commission. To equip is to provide individual members with the competencies given by God and hewed by the church "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12)." In this study, equipping, in a broad sense, will be used synonymously with discipling (Seventh-day Adventist Handbook, p. 224).

### **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

Six research questions were identified for this study from the problem statement mentioned above.

**RQ1.** What do the participant pastors personally and biblically believe their prime responsibility is within their parish?

In RQ1, the researcher discovered the participant pastor's interpretations of Matthew 28:19, 20 and Ephesians 4:11 to determine what if any directives they found for pastors.

**RQ2.** How well do the participant pastors believe their completed Master of Divinity program prepared them to broadly equip their parishioners for the gospel ministry?

In RQ2, the researcher learned from the pastors in this study how effective they believed their alma maters were in equipping them with LECs.

**RQ3.** According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, commitment to the church and its mission?

In RQ3, the researcher measured through semi-structured interviews, how effective the participant pastor's alma maters were in providing them with skills to develop their parishioner's commitment to the church and its mission.

**RQ4.** According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, partnerships with them in ministry?

In RQ4, the researcher measured through semi-structured interviews, how effective the participant pastor's alma maters were in providing them with skills to develop their parishioner's partnership with them, as pastor, in ministry.

**RQ5.** According to the participant pastor's parishioners, how effective was their church's overall discipleship/equipping program?

In RQ5, the researcher engaged the participant pastors' parishioners in a questionnaire, thus enabling him to determine how effective the parishioners believed their pastors LECs were in helping them to discover their spiritual gifts and to use them in individual and corporate ministries.

**RQ6.** According to the participant pastor's parishioners, how effective was their church's equipping program in fostering their commitment to the church and its mission and partnership with the pastor to accomplish the gospel commission?

In RQ6, the researcher was able to measure the perceived commitment and partnership of the lay participants, from their point of view, after engaging them in a questionnaire and analyzing their responses.

**H<sub>05</sub> and H<sub>06</sub>:** The participant pastor's interview answers will not correlate with their parishioner's questionnaire answers on the impact of the church's equipping program on the parishioner's commitments and partnerships in accomplishing the church's mission.

The researcher believed that the participant pastors would have more confidence in their abilities to equip their parishioners than their parishioners would.

### **Assumptions and Delimitations**

In this study, the researcher determined if the courses participant pastors completed in seminary provided them with skills that influenced their church's discipleship programs to develop partnership with their parishioners in ministry and commitment for their church's mission. Below the researcher will convey the assumptions and delimitations of this study.

#### **Research Assumptions**

This study assumed that pastors are not born with LECs but must be taught. Considering this study's non-doctrinal influence, the researcher assumed that discipleship was of utmost importance to the life and growth of the collective church and every church member's maturation.

#### **Delimitations of the Research Design**

1. This research was delimited to pastors who graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited institution. This study did not include pastors who have completed another type of master's degree other than a Master of Divinity in a seminary.
2. The research was delimited to senior pastors who have served in their role for at least three years in their parish. This researcher did not include associate pastors or youth pastors.

3. This research was delimited to attendees of the participant churches who systematically attend church services in person. This research did not include those on the participant churches' church roles but did not attend church services either in person or online.

### Definition of Terms

1. *Seminary/Seminaries* is a graduate residential training that requires three or more years of schooling to receive a Master of Divinity [M. Div.] (Porter, 2016, p. 320). In this study, seminary refers to seminaries that align with the evangelical church and addresses specifically a Master of Divinity program.
2. *Equip* is a term used to describe the competencies given to individual members of the body of Christ, provided by God and hewed by his church "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12)." In this study, equipping, in a broad sense, is used synonymously with discipling (Seventh-day Adventist Handbook, p. 224).
3. *Lay Minister (laity)* "refers to a person who is not ordained but voluntarily participates in ministry with a clear identity as a minister called from God and worked together with his/her pastors for the kingdom of God" (Hwang, 2008, p. 12). The Koine Greek word "*laos*" means laity. In this context, the lay minister is not a lesser minister than the ordained minister. He or she performs a different function.
4. *Clergy*: A paid church staff member who pastors or shepherds the church. The word "*kleros*" means "clergy" in the Greek New Testament (Stevens, 1999, Kindle Loc 51).
5. *Equipping Church* refers to a church possessing a dominant directive to equip every member for ministry. Hwang (2008) asserts, "In this church, the pastor plays an important role as an equipper and there is an equipping process through which lay people are trained to become effective lay leaders" (p. 12).
6. *Church Growth* is "both qualitative and quantitative growth" (Hwang, 2008, p. 12). In this study, church growth or growing churches is the increase in church membership, spiritual growth and growth in ministry experienced by individual members of the church and the collective body of believers within the church context (Hwang, 2008, p. 13) (Stevens, 1999, Kindle Loc 51).
7. *Lay Equipping Competencies (LEC)* refers to the skills and bearing necessary to make disciples. LEC is a term coined by the researcher. It is similar in definition to other areas of expertise that require unique competencies such as the "core competencies for clergy and pastoral ministers in addressing alcohol and drug dependence," for example (SAMHSA, 2004, p. 3). The SAMHSA's competencies "are presented as a specific guide to the core knowledge, attitudes, and skills essential to the ability of clergy and pastoral ministers to meet the needs of persons

with alcohol or drug dependence and their family members" (SAMHSA, 2004, p. 3). Similarly, in this study, LECs serve as a specific guide to the core knowledge, attitudes, and skills essential to pastors' ability to foster partnerships with their parishioners and commitment within their parishioners to the church and its gospel commission.

8. *Leadership Member Exchange Theory-7 (LMX-7)* is a questionnaire developed by Scandura and Graen (1984) to measure the partnership that exists between the leader and the followers (p. 430). This study utilizes [ a Multiphase iterative mixed-method approach. Creswell (2018) states that mixed-method research is "an approach to inquiry involving collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical and theoretical frameworks" (p. 4). The mixed-method design idea affords greater insight by combining qualitative and quantitative research methods.
9. *Organizational Commitment Questionnaire-9 (OCQ-9)* is an instrument that measures the commitment a person has to a particular organization (Porter, 1979, p. 224). In this study, questions from the OCQ-9 are incorporated with items from the LMX-7 to create a questionnaire that measures parishioners' commitment levels to their prospective church and its mission (Appendix I and J).

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study was wrapped up in the gospel commission (Matthew 28:19, 20). God admonishes his disciples to make disciples of the blood-bought human race. Also, God's people's maturation is directly connected with their ability to make disciples of other people (Ephesians 4:13). In Ephesians 4, Paul states that God gave gifts to humanity for their restoration. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Ephesians 4:11, 12) Unlike apostles, prophets and evangelists, pastors and teachers are inaugurated by God, in the church system, to equip, envision and mobilize for the edification or maturity of every member and the church collectively. Pastors have the most significant access to their parishioners and are best positioned, in the church system, to equip, envision and mobilize their church in the gospel commission. As Hwang (2008) states, "The equipping pastor is an essential component of the



equipping church” (p. 177). Thus, it is of the utmost importance for pastors to possess LECs to fulfill their prime objective properly.

Hwang (2008) asserts, "Further study on the pastor's leadership that implements shared ministry could be beneficial for future research" (p. 200). As has been ascertained, pastors are not born with LECs, nor should the receiving of LECs be left to chance considering the great importance of this pastoral responsibility. Christian colleges and seminaries are best positioned to provide the necessary LECs to future pastors. The researcher has seen very little on how well higher education institutions foster LECs in future pastors and what effects those skills have on their parishes. This study aims to determine that.

### **Summary of the Design**

The evangelical church is experiencing membership declines in its ranks. Many scholars believe that this decline is mostly contributed to the church's lack of discipleship. Scripture admonishes and many Christian scholars agree that the pastor's role is to equip their members to work in the gospel ministry. Statistics portray a clergy that does not possess the competencies to equip their parishioners. This researcher searches for the culprit.

An obvious culprit is those that educate future pastors for their future ministries. Thus, this researcher performed a Multiphase iterative mixed-method study to determine if pastors, who graduated with a Master of Divinity possessed effective lay equipping competencies necessary to aid them in successfully implementing lay equipping programs within their parishes.

This study was divided into two phases. The first phase of this study included interpretive, phenomenological, semi-structured interviews with the ten participant lead pastors to hear how they perceive the LECs they received from their alma maters, to become acquainted

with the lay equipping programs they lead in their parishes and to see what impact, they believe, their equipping programs have had on their parishioner's commitment and partnership.

The second and final phase of the research was a quantitative survey and qualitative questions given to the ten participant lead pastors' parishioners. The survey was a variation of the leader-member exchange-7 (LMX-7) survey and the organizational commitment questionnaire-9 (OCQ-9) to measure the partnership in ministry and the participating attendees' commitment levels. Also, a few qualitative questions were given to get their direct opinions of the lay equipping programs offered in their churches and the lay equipping competencies their pastor possesses. The data collected from these phases were compared and contrasted to determine if there was a correlation between the LEC courses taught in seminary and the performance of pastors who completed these courses.

The next chapter will explore the theological and theoretical foundations for equipping the laity and the pastor's role in the process. The next chapter provided a theoretical underpinning for why seminaries are responsible for providing future pastors with LEC. A more in-depth survey of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ-9) and Leader-Member Exchange-7 (LMX-7) theory will be performed.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter explored the prevailing literature on the subject to establish a robust foundation for the research. The theological foundation is shown. Scripture states that every Christian church member should be equipped for ministry (Ephesians 4:11, 12). Their coordinated service will facilitate their spiritual maturation. The pastor's proper place and role are explored, and the seminary function is surveyed in the theoretical framework. The responsibility of the pastor, as the primary equipper, has been examined from scripture and biblical scholars. In this chapter, other related literature has been investigated to survey the pastor's role as the church's visionary and mobilizer, explored the necessity for pastors to receive adequate LECs, and provided proper footing for the rationale that seminaries are responsible for equipping pastors with LECs. Both quantitative and qualitative schemas have been introduced. In quantitative research, the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire-9 (OCQ-9) and the Leader-Member Exchange-7 (LMX-7) have been explained and the spectrum of teaching methods has been investigated. The chapter ended by expounding on the study's rationale, the literature gap, and the study's profile.

### **Theological Foundation**

When considering the best approach to finding answers to equipping pastors, scripture communicates God's furnishing model and mobilizes God's people for ministry. In the Old Testament, this process is called the priesthood of all believers. This concept is first expressed in the Bible book of Exodus after the Children of Israel were unshackled from 430 years of slavery and formed into God's chosen nation.

In the New Testament, it is called the "*laos*" or "The people of God" (Stevens, 1999, Kindle Loc 51). This term is given to the entirety of God's church after the life, death and

resurrection of Jesus Christ (Stevens, 2017, Kindle Loc 48-49). This term also incorporates the priesthood of all believer's motif.

The best way to equip God's priesthood or "*laos*" is found in the Bible. Discipleship is at the apex of this model (Matthew 28:19, 20). In the next two sections, the priesthood and the "*laos*" will be examined. The discipleship design of Jesus' teaching method will also be explored.

### **The Old Testament Foundation – The Priesthood**

God's invitation to the priesthood was spoken directly by God to Moses and was given to every man, woman and child in Israel. "Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel" (Exodus 19:5, 6 English Standard Version). God desired Israel, a nation that had suffered slavery for over 430 years, to experience godly royalty and the holy priesthood. God said, "You shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." God spoke this in the future tense as a conditional promise to the children of Israel.

In addition to Israel's priesthood calling, God invited them to royalty. Royalty" is denoted in the word "kingship" (Davies, 2004, p. 93). Regarding the priesthood, "Israel is to be, as well as to have, a priesthood" (p. 93). The idea of a royal priesthood is expressed in the phrase "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6 English Standard Version). Davies (2004) expounds on this idea by stating, "Taken together the phrase [kingdom of priests] is a powerful image of the grant of position or standing concerning God which is being offered to Israel" (p. 93).

God intended that every Israelite know God intimately as only a priest can. In scripture, priests had the honor of continual access to God's presence (Anizor & Voss, 2016, p. 32). Presence theology reveals God's intentional and progressive self-revelation to Israel. Hagan

(1996) expounds on this theory by stating, "The revelation of God's presence develops from hiddenness to a permanent site of presence, the tabernacle" (p. 228). Then Hagan (1996) declares,

As the book [Exodus] unfolds, God's presence takes tangible directions with specific instructions to Moses in Egypt and the mountain. Israel witnesses God's presence in the storm at Mount Sinai. As the people draw nearer to the Deity who has been working on their behalf, they fear for themselves and ask Moses to continue to intercede for them (20:18–21). It is as though they need distance from God; presence draws near, but the people cannot take it.

God attempted to communicate directly with Israel but was met with such resistance that scripture records, "Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die'" (Exodus 20:18, 19 English Standard Version). Israel's fear of God fostered their decision to forfeit one of the priesthood's benefits, speaking to God directly, as to a friend. Jamieson, Fausset & Brown (1997) assert, "They were eye and ear witnesses of the awful emblems of the Deity's descent. But they perceived not the Deity Himself" (p. 62). Scripture records that Aaron was the priest of Israel at that time. The priesthood was eventually delegated to the Levites. The Levitical order did not negate Israel's calling as a "kingdom of priests."

In addition to accessibility to God, Israel, as a royal priesthood, was to intercede for the world's nations. As an entire nation, the Israelites were God's priests to the world" (Kingdom of Priests, 2012, para. 39). Isaiah 61:5, 6 expounds on this thought by asserting,

Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks; foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers; but you shall be called the priests of the Lord; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory, you shall boast.

According to Isaiah, Israel was to receive the necessities of life from the nations of the world just as the Levitical priesthood received their sustenance from the other eleven tribes (see Numbers 18:20, 24 and 26). In return, as God's royal priesthood, Israel was to intercede between God and the nations and teach the nations about God. Israel was to represent God to the pagan nations that existed around them and stand in the stead of unbelieving nations. Thus, Israel, as a royal priesthood, possessed vertical and horizontal relational responsibilities. As a royal priesthood, they were to "stress election and the call to holiness and obedience," which was a measure of their vertical connection to God. Horizontally, they were ambassadors of God and examples of holiness to the nations around them (Anizor & Voss, 2016, p. 37). Exodus 19:5, 6 is a part of the covenant between God and Israel. As long as they obeyed God's voice, they would occupy the priest's exclusive place in the world (Anizor & Voss, 2016, p. 31).

It appears that God set up the Levitical priesthood in lieu of Israel's fulfillment of their royal priesthood status. Thus, the Levitical priesthood's elevation would appear less prevalent as the Israelite nation more closely fulfilled their roles as priests (Himmelfarb, 2006, p. 2). Sadly, Israel's history is frocked with their failures as intercessors. Instead of representing Yahweh to the secular nations around them, they often imitated those nations by worshipping their false gods and adopting their pagan customs.

### **The New Testament Foundation – Royal Priesthood and Laos**

The establishment of the New Testament church was also the reestablishment of the concept of the royal priesthood of the "*laos*." This idea is expressed most beautifully in 1 Peter 2:9.

### ***Royal Priesthood***

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9 KJV). Peter connects Israel and Christians as special people worldwide by calling them an "elect race." Achtemeier (1996) points out that Peter promotes the "elect race" theme throughout 1 Peter to encourage Christians that are marginalized and persecuted (pp. 163-167). The declaration of God's elect as a "royal priesthood" reflects God's statement at Sinai in Exodus 19:6 and is pronounced to all Christians everywhere.

There is at least one distinct difference. In Exodus 19:6, God gives Israel a conditional promise of their future standing based on their obedience to God. On the other hand, Peter declares, to the elect, their status as a royal priesthood as present tense (Seland, 1995, p. 133). But Peter creates some stark similarities with Exodus 19:6. Just as in the Old Testament, the New Testament priesthood of all believers designates at least two privileges (Anizor and Voss, 2016, p. 47).

First, the royal priesthood of the New Testament denotes the privilege of direct access to God. Christians do not need to go through an Earthly intercessor, but through Christ can communicate directly to God the Father. Anizor and Voss (2016) expressed it most beautifully. They write, "God's election in Christ and the sanctifying work of the Spirit, together participate in the benefit of direct access to God" (p. 47).

The second privilege of the New Testament royal priesthood is that every Christian represents God's Kingdom. Forbes (2014) declares, "As a royal priesthood, believers are representing the King, and this priesthood was to be understood as ambassadorial, of mediating God's presence to the world" (Kindle Loc 3862). The Christian calling to the priesthood was a

summons to exhibit, by word and example, the "excellencies" of God to a pagan world to invite them to the royal priesthood (See Matthew 28:19, 20). In 1 Peter 2:9, this is signified that believers are rescued "from spiritual bondage. They have been moved out of darkness into his marvelous light through the saving acts of God in Jesus. Consequently, as the redeemed new covenant people, Peter exhorts his readers to proclaim the excellencies of God" (Seland, 1995, p. 142).

## **Laos**

The "*laos*," or the people of God, in the New Testament, "is a term of great honour denoting the enormous privilege and mission of the whole people of God" (Stevens, 2017, Kindle Loc 48-49). Interestingly, the Greek word "*kleros*," which is the root word for the English "clergy," when used in the early church, was a part of the "*laos*" (Stevens, 1999, Kindle Loc 51). This understanding of *laos*, or people of God, infers that the clergy is not a separate or elevated sect in the Christian movement that is revered above all others but is instead a person who has been gifted by God to perform a specific function or task for the edification of God's church.

The meaning and relationship of the *laos* and the *kleros* changed in the First Century. Kraemar (1959) states, "The main reason, apart from the profane use of the word in ancient society, is the emergence of an organized, duly ordained clergy as a closed 'status' over against the 'laos,' the people, i.e., the ordinary congregation" (p. 50). Though the church's organization was necessary to protect it from early heresies like Gnosticism, the idea of the biblical *laos* was lost.

The biblical "*laos*" worked together in ministry. Everyone had their part. The purpose of the ministry of the "*laos*" was to fulfill the gospel commission and, through its fellowship and mission, develop every member into mature reflections of Christ (Eims, 1978, p. 61). This



purpose is expressed in the Pauline Epistle of Ephesians.

In Ephesians 4, Paul describes the church as a body (see verses 12, 13). Through this illustration, Paul propagates that every person that is a part of the "laos" has a responsibility in the body of Christ, just as every part of the body has a function. Through the proper service of every part of the church, every member matures, the church collectively grows spiritually and the body effectively fulfills its mission to the world. God's ultimate objective is that together, the church will achieve the measure of Christ and become "a perfect man" (Ephesians 4:13).

In Ephesians 4, Paul states that God gave gifts to humanity for their restoration. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11, 12 King James Version).

In the New Testament church, apostles were eye-witnesses of Jesus. Their ministry was necessary to relay, under the unction of the Spirit, the testimony of Jesus. The Prophets received vital instruction from Heaven to guide the church. The majority of those prophets are found in scripture though Joel testifies that "your sons and daughters will prophecy" in the last days (Joel 2:28). Evangelists are the front-line soldiers that proclaim the gospel to unbelievers. Teachers teach the word of God to the church. Pastors are the overseers of the church. Elwell (1997) writes, "The purpose of endowing the church with these gifts of grace is to equip the individual members for service" (p. 1080). The equipping and mobilizing of every member in ministry attributes to God's objective, every believer's spiritual maturity. Because of their calling, pastors and teachers primarily perform the equipping and maturation of the church. Ferreira and Chipenyu (2021) put it this way.

The gifts are given as the vehicles that lead to church growth. This makes church growth almost obvious because God provided the means to accomplish church growth. Thus,

failure to realise church growth rests with the church leadership, whom God tasked with the mandate to spearhead church growth (Eph 4:11). The church's decline is therefore a direct result of leadership failure to embrace the growth guidance provided by God. Pastors are on the front lines because they have direct access to Christ's church (p. 4).

Thus, pastors are the prime equippers. But pastors do not inherently possess equipping skills. They must be developed. Biblically speaking, how are leaders, like pastors, made?

### **The Discipleship Method of Equipping**

Jesus' ministry on Earth was three and a half years. Scripture records that Jesus healed the sick, brought sight to the blind, cured deafness, cast out demons and even raised the dead (See Matthew 12:15; Matthew 9:27-31; Mark 7:31; Mark 16:9; John 11:38-44). But behind Christ's benevolent acts of kindness is a masterplan. Jesus was a teacher.

His principal pupils were twelve men known in scripture as Jesus' disciples (Matthew 4:18-22). Christ's goal was to create a team of men to establish his kingdom on Earth, his church. Kopiczko (2017) expounds on Jesus' investment in his disciples by stating, "The first thing he did was he gathered disciples around him to proliferate his presence and extend its range. In other words, he took care of preparing leaders of the emerging Church" (p. 66). When Jesus healed and taught the masses, he mirrored to his 12 disciples what he expected of them. Then he sent them out to imitate him (See Luke 10:1-12).

At the end of Jesus' ministry on Earth, before ascending to Heaven, he gave an overview of his plan to reach the entire world. Jesus told his disciples, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28: 19, 20, King James Version). In verse 19, "to teach all nations" means to "rightly, *make disciples of*" (Vincent, 1887, p. 149). They were commissioned to make disciples or followers of Jesus Christ. Dockery (1992) puts it this way. "Believers' task in life, in essence, is to duplicate themselves in

others, leading men and women in every part of the world to faith, baptism, and obedience to all of Christ's commands" (p. 567). The Disciples were to, first, duplicate, of all nations, followers of Jesus like themselves and then teach them all what Christ requires of a disciple. Their responsibility was to lift up Jesus through their words and example. Allen (1962) puts it this way.

“If we set Christ first, faith in Christ first, the Name of Christ first, we set men on a sure road to something that is infinitely good, but that progress is in Christ, not in our intellectual, moral, and social doctrines, and we cannot set them on that path except by bringing them to Christ. We must put Christ first.

Burggraff (2015) states, "In biblical times, a disciple was one who followed a recognized teacher. Jesus commanded his disciples to be engaged in the process of 'discipling' disciples" (p. 398). Within the DNA of a disciple is the ability to make disciples. Disciple makers not only duplicate, within others, their biblical and theological beliefs and habits but also cultivate, within them, their God-given gifts for ministry. This cultivation equips new disciples to fulfill their God-given purpose.

Jesus prescribed discipleship as his principal means of winning the world (Matthew 28:19, 20). Warren (1995) states, "Discipleship is the process of helping people become more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Because disciples make disciples, pastors must first be disciples to effectively equip their parishioners (Morris, 2017, p.7). The biblical discipleship model of Matthew 28:19, 20 is an effective way to equipping pastors to equip their parishioners. Pastors, as members of the "*laos*," are called to make disciples like themselves.

In summary, both the Old and New Testaments convey the royal priesthood motif of all believers. God's original plan included all of God's people as a part of his priesthood. In both the Old and the New Testament, they enjoyed intimate communion with God and to be ambassadors of his kingdom.

In the Old Testament, Israel failed to realize the fullness of the royal priesthood. In the New Testament church, the "*laos*" or "people of God" experienced the royal priesthood's manifestation, even through great persecution. The "*kleros*" or "clergy" were a part of the "people of God." Though their responsibilities were, by nature, more demanding, they were held to a higher standard and were not elevated above the rest of the church.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists are responsible for winning the hearts of non-believers to Christ. Pastors and teachers are called to equip members for ministry. Pastors are on the front lines of this effort, for they must not only fit their members for ministry but provide opportunities for them to minister. Professional teachers, specifically in ministry, must train future pastors for this work. Throughout the Christian church history, higher education institutions have shaped future pastors who have shaped the church. For example, the tenets of the Protestant Reformation was birthed in seminary. Marsden (1994) states, "The Evangelical reformers formed their new doctrines in the give and take of academic debate, and the classroom lecture was the first medium they used to spread their message" (p. 13). The Reformation's biblical authority and backbone were grounded in "a well-educated clergy" (Marsden, 1994, p. 37).

In North America, Harvard College was established 1636 to train future pastors for ministry (Marsden, 1994, p. 41). In 1808, the first American seminary, Andover Theological Seminary, a Congregationalist institution, was launched. According to Greig (1999), Andover Theological Seminary "established a pattern of theological education that would influence all seminaries to this day" (p. 2). Understanding that theological education was heavily influenced by North America's first seminary, in what ways has Andover Theological Seminary shaped seminaries? Shelley (1993) asserts, "The three-year curriculum [of Andover Theological

Seminary] focused on three areas of study: Bible, church history, and theology" (p. 43). These three areas are staples in seminaries today and are propagated in Christian churches by graduate pastors. But discipleship is not explicitly on this list (though some might argue that it could come under the heading "Bible"). However, scripture declares discipleship to be the primary responsibility of pastors. The early seminary's goal was to create in every future pastor the "image of the pastor-theologian" rather than the equipper, visionary and coordinator (Shelley, 1993, p. 42). Greig (1999) believed that the emphasis on theology has crippled "the seminaries' ability to train seminarians to be effective pastors and church leaders" (p. 2). The apparent lack of LECs amongst most pastors is evidence. Seminaries might not be providing future pastors with adequate lay equipping skills. Indirectly, one can deduce from Greig's statement the pronounced influence seminaries have on future pastors' emphasis.

Christ's method of making disciples is the most effective way of equipping pastors to equip their members. The theological foundation is now set. The next section established the theoretical framework for pastors' proper training to fit their future parishioners.

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to Ephesians 4:11, pastors, who are also teachers, are tasked with equipping and mobilizing believers for ministry. By providing organized and coordinated opportunities for their parishioners to use their gifts, they, in effect, help their parishioners to spiritually mature.

### **Discipleship in the Seminary**

The idea of discipleship in Matthew 28:19, 20 is demonstrated in the disciple-making process, when disciples make disciples. Discipleship is also passed on from the teacher to the student. If one were to remain faithful to the biblical account of discipleship, then the classroom should emulate the construct of Jesus' disciples and the instructor should pattern Jesus. House

(2015) explores this concept in the writings of the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Bonhoeffer believed that the church could only experience renewal if there were a "new sort of minister for a new type of church" (para. 7). House goes on to assert, "It depended on a group of pastors formed by Christ reforming the church according to the demands of Christian discipleship within the visible body in a hostile environment" (para. 7). House also asserts, "It was necessary to train pastors as Jesus trained the apostles" (para. 9). Jesus' discipleship model was Bonhoeffer's blueprint for teaching future pastors in seminary. House explores one of the foundational qualities of Bonhoeffer's teaching philosophy: brotherhood. House quotes a letter from two of Bonhoeffer's Confessing Church colleagues. They wrote:

Brotherhood is the essential living beginning of 'church.' Thus, we have attempted a church administration through a "council of brethren," in conscious contrast to all church 'government' that conform to the world. (What does it matter if, after centuries of the secularization of the church, this attempt has not yet penetrated and seized the entire 'church'?) Thus, the knowledge is growing in us that things can only go forward in the individual congregations if there is at least a beginning of brotherhood around the minister. . . . Thus, in clergy circles, it has long been felt that a renewal of the ministry can only succeed when the secularized forms of separation from one another in the official church are overcome by a brotherly with-one-another (para. 8).

Bonhoeffer and his colleague's idea of brotherhood are akin to the term partnership. According to the letter above, brotherhood or partnership cannot be fostered in the church until it is modeled amongst the clergy. Bonhoeffer intentionally worked to develop closeness amongst his students, the future leaders of the church. Pastoral care provides an avenue for pastors and other church representatives to intentionally bring healing to the hearts of parishioners, develop closeness between the pastor and the parishioners and to reunite them to the body of Christ, the church (Jaeckle and Clebsch, 1967). Campbell, (1987), defines pastoral care as that which "addresses the welfare of the individual and of the society at large." Pastoral care is an

intentional and relevant act of compassion primarily by the pastor, but also carried on by representatives of the church body.

Jibiliza (2021) agrees that pastors can foster partnership through pastoral care. He asserts,

The pastor, priest or minister plays a very decisive role in feeding the church not only spiritually as its shepherd, but also by providing the essential leadership and direction necessary for the church to achieve its chief mission and directive. Pastoral care and counseling represent a means by which the shepherd and leader of the church fulfills his spiritual and social responsibility to the church. Pastoral care and counseling are the needed ingredients in the life of the church. When these are absent, no real tie between the church leadership and parishioners can exist.

The pastor and the church have historically served as a place of care, needs were served and burdens lifted (Allen, Davey & Davey, 2010, pp. 117-134; Lourens, 2012, p. 161-173)

Bonhoeffer wrote a book called *Nachfolge*, a German word that means *Following* (House, 2015, para. 4). The English version of the book is entitled *The Cost of Discipleship*. House (2015) believes that the German name reflects Bonhoeffer's seminary philosophy more closely (para. 4). Bonhoeffer explained what he meant by "following" in "thirteen tightly connected chapters divided into two parts:" "discipleship" and the "visible church" (para. 10). Amongst the thirteen chapters, Bonhoeffer talked about "costly grace, costly commitment, costly service and visible community" (para. 10). From his extensive exegesis on the life of Jesus, Bonhoeffer believed that these subjects reflected Jesus' blueprint of teaching (para. 10).

The researcher also believed that the overarching theory of teaching future pastors is found in the biblical model of disciple-making taught by Jesus. Discipleship should be taught scholastically and modeled to future pastors in ways that truly prepare them for their future parishes.

Christian institutions of higher learning appear to follow more closely the model of scholarship and less closely discipleship (Shelley, 1993, p. 42). But under present educational

philosophy, are future pastors receiving the qualifications to equip their members or are they even aware of their equipping responsibilities? The next sections will investigate the equipping issue within the clergy, review statistics from Barna, and address the possible role that seminaries play in providing future pastors with LECs.

### **The Primary Equipper**

Kidder (2009) expounds on the role of the pastor by stating that they should "have a strong relationship with God," "preach the gospel," "meet the needs of the people," "make disciples," and live a "life of service and sacrifice" (pp. 20, 21). The goal of preaching, meeting people's needs, living a life of service and sacrifice, and exemplifying a Christ-like example, is to make Disciples of Christ.

Geiger and Peck (2016) reflect the Ephesians model more closely by writing, "God has given pastors to His Church, and their overarching job is "to equip the saints [God's people] for the work of the ministry" (p. 37). Vanden Langenberg (2016) writes, in his church curriculum, that one of the clergy's primary roles is to "disciple and counsel leaders and church members to help them grow in their ability to follow Christ and to disciple other believers" (p. 205).

As clear as the pastor's role is defined in scripture and other scholarly texts, ministry in real life is not as clear-cut. There are ambiguities in the pastor's role. These ambiguities have caused pastors to respond in different ways.

Ingram (1981) states that one result of ambiguous pastoral roles is pastoral dominance. Ingram focuses on the ambiguity of the pastoral mission by centering on clergy socialization who possess authoritarian self-images. He connects the resulted self-image to the vagueness that exists within their roles. He asserts, "Two forces lead to the location of this dominance in the pastoral role. One is structural, in the form of role demands; the other is developmental, learned



during the socialization process of the future minister" (Ingram, 1981, p. 120). According to Ingram, one of the reasons for pastors' dominant attitude is the parishioner expectations and the ambiguity in responsibilities that could lead to congregations that are "unwilling to follow pastoral initiative" (Ingram, 1981, p. 119). In many parishes, pastors are the go-to person for almost everything. This places a great deal of pressure on the pastor (Ingram, 1981, p. 119; Posey, 1997, p. 470).

The cyclical effects of pastoral ambiguity and member apathy lead pastors to hypocrisy, abdication and manipulation (Ingram, 1981, pp. 123-125).

Ambiguity in pastoral responsibilities has also led to ministry burnout and the abandonment of the profession altogether. Elkington (2013) states that three pastors, every day, in North America, leave pastoral ministry to follow a different career path (p. 1). He believes that adversity plays a role in the departure of pastors from pastoral ministry.

Elkington (2013) quotes Jackson & Daly in defining adversity as:

"The cluster of negative, stressful, traumatic, or difficult situations or hardships stemming from working conditions, the work environment and the daily challenges encountered in an occupational setting." It is often associated with "excessive workloads, lack of autonomy, bullying and violence, and organizational issues such as restructuring."

Based on this definition, Elkington surveyed 51 pastors on the subject and asked for further comments on the adversity they faced. One pastor stated in his remarks:

Our culture accepts metrics of success in church ministry and the cult of personality and the pastor, over against the biblical understanding of the church, not the pastor, as the locus for the dwelling of the Spirit, sets up pastors and prepares us to fall. We need a far more collegial church ministry model, both pastorally and within our local churches (p. 7).

This pastor felt that the church, as a whole, had taken a wrong and unbiblical turn by not only elevating the clergy above the rest of the membership but taking away the responsibility of ministry from the laity and instead placing those responsibilities on pastors; a burden that is an

impossible one to bare. This comment is more than an opinion. It is historically accurate. The clergy's responsibility as equippers was lost near the end of the First Century when the pastor was elevated above the church members to protect Christianity from heresy and persecution (Hwang, 2008, p. 1). Martin Luther rediscovered the laity's call to ministry in the Reformation, but the idea of the clergy as an educator never really gained momentum (Hwang, 2008, p. 23, 24).

In 1910, Covert addressed similar issues with the clergy and laity. Covert (1910) states, "The ordained and officially appointed church leader in the person of preachers, teachers or evangelists are in no wise able to meet the growing religious demands of the day adequately" (p. 429). He attributes this inability to fulfill the pastor's ever-growing duties to the lack of work done by the members in the pews (Covert, 1910, p. 428). He asserts that the only way the laity will take on greater responsibilities is to be trained. Years of study in the seminary, for the congregation, are not practical. He believes that pastors are the primary educators and equippers within the church (Covert, 1910, p. 429). Pastors are the prime educators to equip their members for ministry. In churches documented as vibrant churches, Siew (2013) states, "Faith development correlated strongly with active participation in quality Christian education programs. Indeed, Christian education was more important than any other factor in promoting faith development and active church participation among members" (p. 49). The overarching pastoral role, according to the ecclesiology of the early church was and is to empower every member to use their giftedness in the service of God (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2022, p. 4; Lemke, 2017, pp. 270-284; Urban, 2013, p. 16-19). The gospel commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20 requires pastors to train and provide ministries opportunities for more than specific or seasonal outreach activities. Pastors are called to help their parishioners develop their spiritual gifts for

their lifelong calling, which in turn leads to the church's numeric and spiritual growth, which positively effects the overall health of individual parishioners and the corporate body (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021, p. 42). Hosseini, Meyer & Cremus (2022) and Reyes-Ortiz, Berges, Raji, Koenig, Kuo and Markides (2008) believe that religious involvement also significantly contributes to mental health in the church. It counters negativity and could counter cognitive deterioration in the elderly (pp. 208-225). For pastors to proficiently lead in educating and equipping, they must be trained to do so. Seminaries must bear some, if not most, of the responsibility for outfitting the equipper (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2022, p. 42).

### **Related Literature**

Beyond equipping the laity, pastors are also to create a shared vision and mobilize their parishioners in an organized effort to fulfill the gospel commission. The next section addressed this subject.

### **Visioning and Mobilizing**

Pastors are called to educate, equip and mobilize their parishioners in coordinated ways to fulfill the gospel commission. The researcher believes that working together requires partnership and commitment. The pastor and his members must have a shared vision. In Kuperus and Patterson's (2016) study on the pastor's role in mobilizing people in South Africa and Zambia, they believe that vision plays a vital role in citizenship involvement. They state, "Our in-depth analysis reveals how organizational autonomy, which we define as an organization's independence from external partners and its leader's independence in decision making, facilitates citizen mobilization. This autonomy intertwines with visionary pastoral leadership to promote citizenship involvement" (p. 320). In the church, visionary pastors mobilize their members in ministry as well.

The pastor facilitates the church's vision. Nichols (2007) believes that the church leader must be the prime catalyst for creating its vision. "Chief visionary" does not mean that the pastor must birth the idea, but "the pastor is responsible [for seeking], discern[ing], and articulat[ing] the vision" (Nichols, 2007, p. 27). The spiritual leader guides his followers collectively to discovering and implementing the vision for their organization.

As a visionary, the pastor controls the narrative in his church. His words affect the vision of the church on many levels. In Simpson's article "Complexity and change management: analyzing church leaders' narratives," he analyzed narratives through group conversation.

By examining several case studies that practiced a specific manner of conversation, he was able to determine whether there was a "change or continuity in the organizing narratives" (Simpson, 2012, p. 283). He concluded that through "complex responsive processes theory," the change in everyday life is "change management" (Simpson, 2012, p. 283). Or put, the pastor's words, in conversation, directly influenced change. The influence of the pastor through visioning and articulating is the catalyst of discipleship.

The pastor must not only cast the vision and control the narrative, but he must formulate a team. Jesus is the pastor or shepherd of all and pastors are his under-shepherds. Christ is their example in all things, so just as Jesus set up a team of disciples who were given the task of making disciples, pastors must set up their teams of disciples (or followers of Christ) to implement the curriculum for their churches. Kopiczko (2017) unpacks this idea by stating that the way Jesus overcame his self-imposed limitations of time and space was by "gathering disciples around him to proliferate his presence and extend his range" (p. 66).

Malphurs fleshes this concept out, in today's church, by expounding on the need of the pastor to train his leadership team or church board to promote and implement the church's vision.

The formation of such a committee should not be arbitrary. He believes that the pastor should be purposeful in the board's composition, choosing the chairman and defining her responsibilities and the board's characteristics, including harmonious doctrinal beliefs and spiritual maturity.

Malphurs also believes that church boards should take what he calls the policy approach to governance, which consists of the board making decisions based on biblically based policies centered on the church's vision (Maphur, 2005, p. 59). Burggraff adds to the subject by inserting another layer to the leadership team. He believes that in larger churches, there should be a "senior pastor, education pastor and executive pastor," which should work together in the formation and evaluation of the curriculum (Burgraff, 2015, p. 411).

The pastor is the primary equipper, visionary and mobilizer in his or her parish. Since this fact, theologically and theoretically, holds, is equipping or discipleship a priority amongst pastors? If not, why? If so, are they making positive strides as equippers in their parishes? These and other questions are addressed in the next section.

### **Equipping the Equipper**

As the primary equippers of their churches, pastors are responsible for setting up systems that will educate their parishioners to perform the exercises necessary for spiritual growth. Pastors are also to provide mechanisms that will help their members discover their purpose in life. Lastly, pastors provide ways that their members can use their gifts to make other disciples ultimately (See Figure 1, *The Discipleship Spiral*).

The process of equipping is cyclical. This cyclical course of action is a powerful course rooted in the great commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20. Since the equipping process is God's plan to spread the gospel and spiritually mature his followers, do pastors, as a whole, prioritize equipping in the schema of their ministry?

### *The Priority of Equipping*

In 2015, Barna, in partnership with the Navigators and Navpress, did a study on the state of discipleship in the Christian church. 2,003 self-identifying Christians were surveyed to determine how they felt about discipling (Barna, 2015, p. 7). Those surveyed also included pastors. It should be noted that the participants possessed different definitions for discipleship (p. 28). Although there are differences in interpretation, life transformation, or spiritual maturity was a part of all descriptions (p. 28).

Barna asked pastors if they felt that today's churches are doing well at discipleship. Only

### **Figure 1**

#### *The Discipleship Spiral*



one percent said that churches were discipling very well (p. 9). Measuring their parish, eight percent of pastors said they were doing very well. Fifty-six percent said that they were doing somewhat well (p. 10). These statistics reflect a clergy that has difficulty developing and managing discipleship in their churches.

Another telling statistic amongst the pastors that participated in the study is that only "26 percent say discipleship is their number one priority" (p. 11). Interestingly amongst seven parishes and 30 churches with effective discipleship programs, 75 percent said, "Senior leadership vision or endorsement is critical to their efforts, along with a clearly articulated

approach to discipleship" (p. 11). The data shows that churches with pastors who promote discipleship and develop well-defined plans are most successful. On the other hand, churches that do not prioritize discipleship do not have discipleship programs in their churches or do not execute discipleship plans.

Barna (2015) also asked pastors what they would do to improve their church's discipleship programs? Twenty-seven percent said they would develop a specific and clear plan for discipleship (p. 12). Thus, seventy-four percent have not given thought to how they would improve their discipleship programs or are mindful of their discipleship deficiencies but do not even possess ideas on mitigating their discipleship shortfalls.

In review, eight percent of pastors said they were doing very well at discipleship, and only 27 percent said they needed to develop a more specific and clear discipleship plan. The Barna (2015) survey reveals that discipleship amongst the surveyed pastors was not a priority. Further, these pastors seem hazy about their plan to improve their church's discipleship programs.

Barna (2015) also found that "fifty-nine percent of church leaders believe it is 'precious' for Christians to be involved in a systematic curriculum or program of discipleship" (p. 12). On the other hand, two out of three deem that "there are enough—or more than enough—discipleship materials currently available" (p. 12). In other words, the majority of the surveyed pastors felt that it was of utmost importance for their churches to have systematic curriculums or set discipleship programs. Still, they did not believe that the available programs were relevant to the needs of their churches.

Again, the pastor is the church's primary equipper, yet according to the Barna (2015) data, pastors are either unaware of their calling or confused about accomplishing it. Who's the

culprit behind these pastoral-equipping ambiguities? This researcher believes that seminaries principally dictate the way of pastors and their churches. The next section will expound on this notion.

### **The Way of the Seminary**

Apostle Luke carefully uses his words to express the weighty responsibility imbued upon those chosen to lead God's flock. He quotes Paul by writing, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28, English Standard Version).

Paul counsels the church elders in Ephesus to take special care of their spiritual welfare and the church. Paul's counsel echoes through the annul of time to religious leaders across the span of the church's history. In practical terms, this counsel implicitly asserts that pastors' beliefs and teachings become doctrine and affect the church's mission. Thus, church leaders must make sure that scripture squarely supports their beliefs and teachings.

Sadly, the Christian church's history is dotted with leaders that have led God's blood-bought flock down unbiblical paths. One example of this is the practice of indulgences in Germany in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Indulgences were the granting of pardon to those who not only confessed their sins but also made monetary payments to the church to avert "temporal punishment" for those sins (Mandalaki, 2016, p. 208). "Such contributions relieved sinners from years, even centuries, of pain in purgatory, the realm where one went after death before entering the kingdom of heaven" (Johnson, 2010, p. 610). The biblical validity for this doctrine is unsubstantiated. Be it as it may, its leaders have abused this process to fill their pockets and the church's coffers or get free services for various building projects sponsored by the church. The Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, composed what is known as 95 Thesis and nailed them to the



Wittenberg Castle church door (Johnson, 2010, p. 610) in protest of abusive indulgences given by Popes Leo X and Julius II to those that helped construct St. Peter's of Rome (Mandalaki, 2016, pp. 209, 210). The doctrine of indulgences, abuses, and other questionable doctrines that promulgated church-sponsored injustices divided the church through the Reformation Movement and ignited Protestantism.

The beliefs and teachings of Spiritual leaders influence the doctrines and mission of the church. But a closer look reveals another possible player. Christian educators form the theology that spiritual leaders believe and teach their congregants. These teachings become the foundation of church doctrine and affect the mission of the church.

Many of the early fathers of the Christian movement were heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. For example, Clement of Alexandria was heavily influenced by Platonic philosophy. Some scholars also classify Clement as a Christian and a gnostic (Litwa, 2017, p. 126).

Gnosticism, in general, is a thought or practice of the early Christian era "distinguished by the conviction that matter is evil and that emancipation comes through gnosis (esoteric knowledge of spiritual truth)" (i.e., Merriam Webster). Clement's adoption of this Platonic thought categorized the human body as evil and the human Spirit as trapped and needing to be set free. Thus, Christians must strive to free their spirits from their flesh.

To Clement, Christian martyrs are individuals who are "superior to passions and pleasures" and are real "gnostics" (Litwa, 2017, 133). "The Christian gnostic who masters the passions while in the body is (in Clement's bold phrase) 'a god walking about in the flesh'" (Litwa, 2017, 133). He believed that Christian martyrs were examples to be admired and emulated.

Clement's view of the flesh and the martyrs were not only his beliefs but were a

part of his teachings at the School of Alexandria (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 113).

Interestingly, similar views are found in the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine of the veneration of saints (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2019, p. 300). Some scholars pinpoint the origins of the veneration of saints to the second-century persecution of Christians. Clement of Alexandria was born in A.D. 150, while Christians were still being martyred for their faith. Clément's teachings, which were influenced by Greek and Roman philosophy, promulgated at the School of Alexandria could have influenced the church's doctrine on this subject. His influence is still felt today (Calvin, 1854, p. 16).

The teachings of professors like Justin Martyre and Origen influenced the Christian church's belief on the Trinity (Gaston, T, 2009, p. 575; Ramilli, 2007, p. 331). Basil the Great's teachings on the necessity of art might have influenced the creation of the beautiful murals in basilicas across Europe (Barsela, 2014, p. 58).

The Catholic church understood that the influence of seminaries was so pronounced on the doctrine and function of the church that in 1563, "the Council of Trent issued a decree requiring all diocese in Catholic territories to build seminaries for the training of parish priests" (Commerford, 2005, p. xv). Seminaries were built to re-educate secular priests who were clerically ignorant and incompetent (Commerford, 2005, p. xv). Seminaries have historically influenced the church through the clergy.

A grant was given to fund a project called "The Christians' Calling in the World" to perform a study that ran from 2009 to 2014 amongst five seminaries of varied Christian denominations. The study addressed the gap between future pastors, who know the importance of parishioner vocational ministry and their members who saw no value in it (Lose, D. et al., 2015, p. 388). The study included Princeton Theological Seminary, Catholic Theological Union,

Luther Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary and Duke Divinity School. Lose (2015), along with his colleagues from the institutions mentioned in the study, believed that though their seminaries were good at teaching the importance of lay vocational ministry, they had "done a relatively poor job of equipping them [pastors, former seminarians] to help their people recognize and claim their vocational identity in their lives in God's world" (p. 388).

Two keys stand out in their study. First, educators and seminarians must see church members in a different light. Lose (2015) puts it this way.

Congregations must move from being like concert halls where Christians come to inspire their faith to become more like community music schools where Christians receive instruction, guidance, and encouragement as they seek to "play the faith" for themselves (p. 388).

This concept coincides with the priesthood of all believer's motif of scripture.

The second key is that future pastors must be fashioned *formatively* rather than *performatively* (Lose, et al., 2015, p. 388). Their seminarians must be taught to teach or equip their parishioners in ministry.

These five seminaries understood the profound influence they possessed on future pastors and, ultimately, the church's direction at large. These five seminaries performed experiments to determine what methods might adequately equip future pastors. VanDenburg (1992) takes this line of thinking even further. He asserts, "The 'professional' minister's ministry is to prepare the 'amateur' ministers for their ministry" (p. 79). Thus, pastors should function as an extension of the seminary, providing their parishioners the theological, spiritual and practical ministry training needed for their parishioners to make disciples effectively.

When it comes to LECs, what measurement does an institution of higher education quantify the quality of its LEC curriculum? The researcher proposes that future pastors should be given the skills to foster commitment and partnership amongst their future parishioners

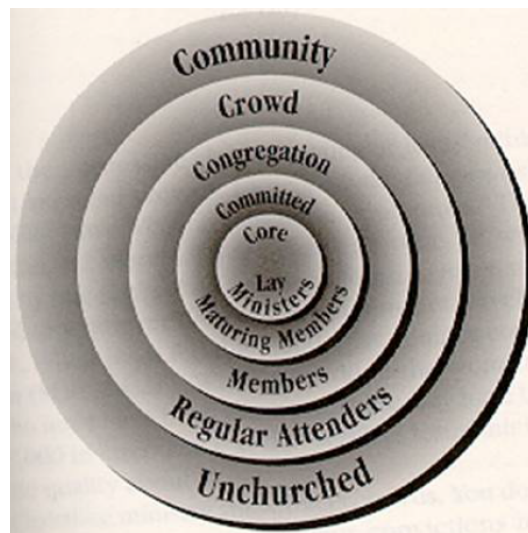
beyond theological education and practical spiritual formation. The next two sections addressed these two essential qualities.

### **Organizational Commitment**

The commitment of employees or volunteers to an organization and its goals are paramount to its success. Retaining committed employees is a "top priority" in many companies (Neininger et al., 2010, p. 567). Mowday, Steers & Porter (1979) assert that many definitions for commitment in organizations fall under two categories: "commitment related behavior" and "attitudinal commitment" (p. 225). Commitment related behavior is, for example, conduct that surpasses normal expectations (p. 225). Attitudinal commitment is when someone's identity is connected to the organization (p. 225). Personnel with a robust level of attitudinal commitment willfully continue with the establishment (p. 1184).

### **Figure 2**

*Circles of Commitment (Warren, 1995, p. 130)*



Meyer and Allen (1997) believe that there exists a level beyond behavioral and attitudinal commitment. As a psychological state, commitment "has at least three separable components

reflecting (a) a desire (affective commitment) [an emotional attachment], (b) a need (continuance commitment) [fear of loss if separated from the organization], and (c) an obligation (normative commitment) [morally right to stay] to maintain employment in an organization (p. 61). The Christian church's perspective on commitment should be different. Ghorpade, Lackritz, and Moore (2012) state that churches measure commitment in a variety of ways, "including attendance, participation, frequency of scripture reading, subscription to a set of beliefs, and feelings about the pastor (p. 285).

The commitment measurements suggested above might seem superficial to some. Rick Warren, the senior pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, developed a progressive commitment scale [see figure 2] for his church called the "commitment level model" (Fanning, 2001, p. 1). Warren's (1995) goal is "to move people from the outer circle (low commitment/maturity) to the inner circle (high commitment/maturity). At Saddleback, we call this "moving people from the community into the core" (p. 130). The scale is composed of five rings. The outermost ring is a first-time visit to the church (Fanning, 2001, p. 1).

Haskell, Burgoyne and Flatt (2016) believe that humans have two competing needs, "inclusiveness" and "uniqueness" (pp. 409-436). Humans want to belong and be valued for their unique qualities. The researcher believed that this sounded a lot like Rick Warren's core in his wing of "Community" (p. 130). Regarding the other four inner rings, Fanning (2001) states that the visitor "should lead to a personal commitment to Christ and His church [Crowd], to a commitment to follow Christ in discipleship, [Congregation], followed by a commitment to a specific ministry [Committed] and ultimately a commitment to one's mission for life [Core]" (p. 1). This sequential scale of commitment is the fundamental component of the Saddleback Church. Commitment is of utmost importance to the maturation of Christian disciples. According

to Warren's circle of commitment, one's level of commitment coincides with one's level of activity of ministry. Warren's goal is to move Saddleback Church attendees from spectatorship to wholistic involvement in the gospel commission's collaborative work. Fanning (2001) believes that as one's commitment to God and his cause increases, her maturity increases simultaneously (p. 5, 6).

Mowday, Steers and Porter developed a commitment testing survey that is agreeable to empirical testing and validation called the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire [OCQ] (Fields, 2002, p. 4). Fields (2002) asserts that the OCQ uses "15 items to describe *global* organizational commitment" (p. 4).

According to Fields, the OCQ's reliability is high. On a scale of 0 to 1, as stated by the Cronbach Alpha, the "Coefficient alpha values [for the OCQ] ranged from .81 to .93" (p. 4). This researcher believes that an altered form of the OCQ could effectively measure the members' commitments in this study's ten target churches. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire correlates "positively with" the "leader-member exchange (LMX).

### **The Leader-Member Partnership**

A disciple is a follower. Pastors are responsible for making followers of Christ. Jesus relieved suffering and brought light to the world. When Jesus' disciples are using their ministry gifts to alleviate pain and defend the oppressed, they were following Jesus. Discipleship also implies following God's under-shepherds, his pastors (Ephesians 4:11-13).

There must exist a dyadic relationship of trust between the pastor and his parishioners. Browner, Schoorman and Tan (2000) believe the "LMX [Leader-Member Exchange] theory is concerned with dyadic relationships, assumes that leaders differentiate among subordinates in the establishment of these relationships, and describes a role-making process that leads to the

development of the relationships" (p. 228). The relationships between pastors and their church members affect their ability to equip them for ministry. In a more general sense, the Leader-Member Exchange Theory seeks to find the relationship between the leader and the follower.

In the book *Leadership Theory and Practice*, Northhouse (2016) expounds on the LMX concept by first describing the predecessor of the LMX, which is the vertical dyad linkage (VDL) theory. He states that two vertical linkages were found within the VDL, the in-group and the out-group. The first are those "based on expanded and negotiated role responsibilities (extra-roles)" (p. 138). These roles were given by the leader and accepted by the subordinate. The excellent work ethic of the aide placed him in the in-group.

On the other hand, the out-group are those hired under contract. This group performs according to agreement and nothing more. Their lackluster performance puts them outside of the in-group circle. The in-group receives "influence, confidence and concern from their leaders. The out-group does not. As the LMX developed out of the VDL, the in-group, out-group terminology dropped (Brower, Schoorman & Tan, 2000, p. 229).

Bien (1995) believes that LMX eventually developed into four stages. The four stages are as follows:

Stage 1 is the discovery of differentiated dyads; Stage 2 is the investigation of characteristics of LMX relationships and their organization's implications (e.g., outcomes of LMX); Stage 3 is the description of dyadic partnership building, and Stage 4 is the aggregation of differentiated dyadic relationships to group and network levels (p. 225).

This study will be grounded in the third stage, "dyadic partnership building" (p. 225). By focusing on dyadic partnerships between clergy and parishioners, this researcher believes that the LMX can provide the data needed to measure the level of these relationships empirically.

Graen, George and Uhl-Bien (1991) also show that the dyadic partnership between leaders and

followers progressively propels followers to leadership (p. 33). In other words, the leader's goal is to make the follower a leader. Graen, George and Uhl-Bien (1991) state, "The development of mature leadership relationships in the Leadership-Making process may also be viewed in terms of a "life cycle" of leadership relationship maturity. Graen, George and Uhl-Bien (1991) bring to light the three phases within the life cycle of development of the leader-follower relationships (See figure 3 shown below).

**Figure 3**

**Life Cycle of Leadership –Making, (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991, p. 33)**

	—————Time —————→		
STAGE:	STRANGER → ACQUAINTANCE → MATURE		
Characteristic:			
A. Relationship-Building Phase	Role-Finding	Role-Making	Role Implementation
B. Type of Reciprocity	Cash and Carry	Mixed	In-Kind
C. Time Span of Reciprocity	Immediate	Some Delay	Indefinite
D. Leader-Member Exchange	Low	Medium	High
E. Incremental Influence	None	Limited	Almost Unlimited
F. Type of Leadership			
1. Transitional	Behavior Management (Bass, 1985) —————→ Reciprocal Favors (Burns, 1978)		
2. Transformational	Self-interest —————→ Team-interest		

In the first stage, leaders and followers "come together as strangers occupying interdependent organizational roles" (p. 33). Graen, George and Uhl-Bien (1991) call this the "stranger stage" (p. 33). Within the stranger stage, interactions are formal and contractual. The second stage is called the "acquaintance stage" (p. 33). In this stage, some of the interactions are less formal. "These exchanges are still limited, however, and constitute a 'testing' stage—with equitable return of favors within a limited time perspective" (p. 33). The final step is the "mature stage" (p. 33). Interactions within the third stage are "highly developed: they are exchanges in kind and may have a long-time span of reciprocation" (p. 33). There is a level of trust, loyalty



and support. "Exchanges are not only behavioral but also emotional" (p. 33).

Pastors might naturally possess the competencies necessary to build strong reciprocal relationships of trust with their parishioners. More than likely, interpersonal skills must be taught and caught by pastors and future pastors to equip their parishioners adequately. The seminary must take up the teaching mantle on content and interpersonal training.

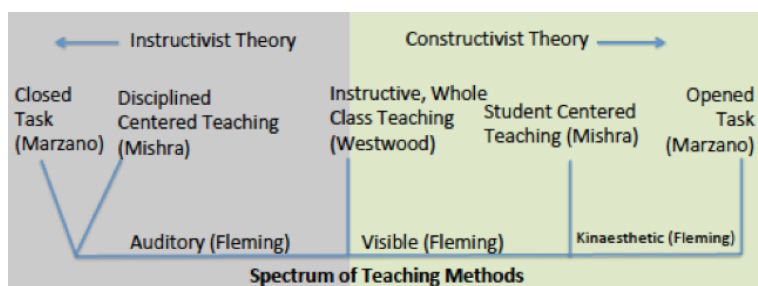
The stage for this study would not be complete without addressing the teaching role of seminaries. Before a pastor can set up an effective educational curriculum or program that will equip his parishioners for ministry, he must first receive the necessary competencies. Seminaries are best situated to perform this task. This study perused possible teaching methods to set the stage for the next phase of this study in the next section.

### The Spectrum of Teaching Methods

The primary responsibility of pastors is to equip their members for ministry. Many pastors are either unaware of this responsibility or unqualified to perform it. The educational institution responsible for outfitting future pastors for ministry is the seminary. Thus, the charge to furnish future pastors with competencies to equip their future parishioners is seminary. So how should seminaries pursue such a feat? The real question is, what teaching method should seminary professors use to train their pastors to produce and maintain an equipping ministry? Scholars have expressed different views about teaching. This section will address some of those views.

**Figure 4.**

#### The Spectrum of Teaching Methods



Over the years, educators have considered what teaching method would be most effective for educating their pupils. The teaching methods range from the highly restrictive teaching style to the freer formed, tailored teaching method. Figure 4 describes the spectrum of some of the teaching styles propagated.

**Instructivist theory.** Westwood (2008) summarizes the extremes of the spectrum of teaching methods by describing two teaching approaches. On one extreme of the spectrum is instructivism or direct teaching, which is expressed by Westwood (2008) as individuals that "believe firmly in the value and efficacy of direct and explicit teaching, particularly for achieving certain goals in education" (p. 2). Instructivism is traditional classroom teaching. The content of the curriculum is based on the goals set for the students. Students must conform to the teacher's content and learning style rather than determine their interests by interacting with the object of learning, as expressed in constructivism.

Marzano's (1992) "closed task" follows the instructivist theory of teaching. Closed tasks entail a specific structure and clear ideas on how the job should be accomplished.

Mishra's (2007) "disciplined-centered style" also adheres to the instructivist theory guidelines. Like "closed task," "disciplined-centered style" is structured and inflexible on time and class content. There are set goals to reach. Assessments are used to measure success.

Less regimented than the disciplined centered style is the instructor-centered style of teaching. The teacher is the complete source of information for the student (Mishra, 2007).

**Constructivist theory.** On the other extreme of the spectrum, Westwood (2008) expounds on the constructivism theory, which is established on the premise that "human learning requires that each individual create his or her understanding of the world from firsthand

experience, action and reflection, not from having predigested information and skills presented by a teacher and a textbook" (p. 2). Constructivism is founded in psychology that believes that different people learn differently.

Marzano's (1992) open-ended task is a constructivist theory. It allows students to ask questions and express fresh ideas. Marzano (1992) suggests that open-ended tasks are for students with higher abilities. One goal of the open-ended study is to help students develop thinking skills.

Mishra (2007) description of the student-centered teaching style is also akin to the constructivist theory because it is a learner-centered teaching style. Rote memorization is not the goal. Instead, student-centered teaching emphasizes cognitive development. Students are encouraged to ask questions and develop their own opinions by obtaining knowledge from interacting with the object of study and problem-solving. Student-centered teaching converges on the requisites of the learner.

Fleming's Visual Auditory Kinaesthetic (VAK) model describes kinaesthetic learners as individuals that prefer to learn by engaging physically with the object that they are learning about or participating directly in "hands-on activities," which allows the learner to obtain knowledge firsthand (Grinder, 1991, p. 30). Kinaesthics is another model patterned after the constructivist theory because it requires the learner to touch the object of learning or participate directly in the activity. Based on the interaction with the experience, the learner acquires knowledge. One advantage of constructivism is that the learner has more opportunities to engage in the learning process. Those who learn kinaesthetically might learn better in an interactive environment.

This theory's weakness is expressed in the cognitive load theory (CLT) that raises doubts on unstructured, unguided learning (p. 8). The adherers to CLT assert that learners involved in constructivism "are often overwhelmed by the amount and diversity of information that needs to be processed and remembered simultaneously" (p. 8).

**Interactive, whole class theory.** Westwood (2008) provides one more approach that lands in the middle of the teaching theory spectrum. It is called Interactive Whole-Class Teaching and is less structured than direct teaching. Like instructivism, it proposes to render a high level of attention from the students by "establishing a high response rate to teacher's questioning and prompting." For example, the teacher may begin by presenting information with a traditional didactic approach followed by a reciprocal dialogue between the students and the teachers, allowing them to express new ideas, ask questions, and give opinions on the subject (p. 8).

In addition to kinaesthetic learning, Fleming's Visual Auditory Kinaesthetic model also addresses audible and visual learners (Grinder 1991, p. 30). Auditory learners absorb information best by listening rather than reading. They would probably learn best within a group discussion. Visual learners absorb information best by reading or viewing diagrams, models, or charts (UKEssays, 2018). Visible, auditory, and kinaesthetic learners are found across the teaching spectrum. However, kinaesthetic learners are more apt to appreciate the constructivist theory of teaching.

So what teaching style is best? The answer should not be subjective to the opinions of teachers or the learning institutions. The objective of teaching should be in view: how students learn best. Thus, successful teachers should not have one strict style because they will have more than one kind of student. The researcher believed that interactive, whole class learning with a

lean towards the practical and interactive could be quite effective in the learning processes of seminarians. Practical, hands-on training that allows future pastors to experience the equipping of parishioners in real time could be beneficial to effective learning (Barnes, 2015, pp. 111-129).

Seminaries must adjust their content to help outfit future pastors to equip their future parishioners. The spectrum of teaching methods demonstrates that the process is just as important as content. Professors have to carefully determine how to most effectively teach future pastors to carry on the most important work on Earth. The future of the church and the blood-bought lives of God's children depend on it.

### **Summary**

The church is a place where believers can mature in Christ. A part of their maturation is working in ministry. Pastors are called to equip their parishioners for ministry. They are also directed to facilitate a clear vision for their churches and to mobilize each member for ministry.

Ephesians 4 states that God's church matures collectively and each member individually as they work together in ministry. Sadly, according to Barna, most pastors are either unaware of their equipping calling or unqualified to perform it. Seminaries are responsible for training pastors. Lose et al. (2015) states that seminaries should train pastors *formatively* rather than *performatively* (p. 388).

Though Lose' et al. (2015) studies touched on the equipping quandary that plagues ministry today, this researcher believed that there is a gap in their research. The next section addressed, in greater detail, the possible gap in the study of this subject.

### **Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature**

Scripture and many scholars agree that the pastor's primary role is not to preach, chair meetings, or visit the sick (even though each of these activities is a part of a pastor's job

description and are essential in their ministries). The principal responsibility of pastors is to equip and mobilize their membership for ministry. Jesus calls this responsibility "making disciples" (Matthew 28:19, 20).

As disciple-makers, "the local church pastor has emerged as the key player in setting the course for the church" (Hull, 2007, p. 64). The 2015 Barna study on discipleship reveals that pastors are either unaware of their disciple-making responsibilities or are unqualified to accomplish them.

### **The Rationale**

The subject of equipping the church is not a new one. There are several studies on the subject. Jernigan's (2015) study entitled *The Development of a Strategy for the Columbus Baptist Association to Equip Pastors to Lead Their Churches in Evangelism* comes close to the subject of equipping pastors to equip their parishioners to fulfill the gospel commission. Jernigan's study "aimed to develop a strategy to equip the pastors of the Columbus Baptist Association to provide evangelistic leadership in their churches" (p.1, 10). Though this study is necessary unless pastors are motivated to change, as the 2015 Barna study on discipling implies, Jernigan's evangelistic strategy could potentially end up as another excellent yet unused program. Baldemor's (1990) research addresses the qualities of ten growing churches in Metro-Manila. Though this study provides excellent information on growing churches' characteristics, it does not provide a bridge for change. This study seeks to get to the heart of the discipleship deficiency within the church. This researcher prays that the information obtained from the collected data will change the trajectory of the Christian church and help educators produce pastors that produce mature disciples.

## The Gap

Though there are many dissertations that either provide instruction for discipleship or unpack the benefits of equipping members for ministry (Taylor, 2014; Sego, 2017; Scott, 2002; Rusk, 1998; Rose, 1996; Rasmussen, 2001; Pichett, 2000; Parker, 2013; Legoh, 1990), this researcher did not find a significant number of dissertations that addressed the ways seminaries equip their pastors to disciple or equip their members for ministry. Varghese (2017) conducted a study on preparing pastors to be disciple-makers: an outcome-based assessment of an Indian Bible College curriculum. Participants were members of pastors who attended and completed courses in the South Asia Leadership Training and Development Center (SALTDC) in Madhya Pradesh, India (p. 10). Like this study, Varghese's research sought to find the "effectiveness of theological programs such as Diploma and Bachelor of Theology offered in SALTDC" [in the preparation of future pastors tasked to "train church members for discipleship" (p. 9). Varghese used a quantitative descriptive approach and answered one question; "To what extent do members of churches pastored by graduates of Pentecostal Bible Schools in India participate in discipleship practices such as Lifestyle, Priorities, Attitudes, Evangelism, and Biblical Beliefs" (p. 9)? He used a survey questionnaire to collect data from the participant parishioners (p. 9). The survey measured the "discipleship maturity" of the participant parishioners as established in his literature review. In summary, those measurements included:

Bible reading, (2) Kindness, (3) Belief and life practice, (4) Gratefulness, (5) Stewardship, (6) Attitude towards health, (7) Modesty, (8) Church attendance, (9) Prayer time, (10) Fruit of the Spirit – patience, kindness, self-control, (11) Attitude towards the government, (12) Witnessing of Jesus Christ, (13) Witnessing love of Jesus, (14) The importance of regular prayer meetings and Christian maturity, (15) Attitude towards smoking, (16) The value of fellowship, (17) Attitude towards alcohol, (20) Dependence on God, (19) Understanding of forgiveness; (20) Understanding of the role of Holy Spirit; (21) Attitude towards the occult, (22) Unity of the body of Christ, (23) Understanding of accountability to God, (24) & (25) The purpose of life, (26) Understanding of salvation, (27) Compassion, (28) Understanding of Bible as the inerrant word of God, and (29)

Understanding of divinity and work of Jesus (p. 57).

The results of Varghese's (2017) study yielded a 96% "positive response to those questions" (p. 66). Varghese attests, "This indicated that the curriculum used in SALTDC to train the graduates to equip the believers to discipleship is fulfilling its purpose" (p. 73).

Though the study's general tenets are similar to the study at hand, there are some differences. Varghese (2017) approached his research with a quantitative survey to answer one RQ and had one source of data: the participant church members (p. 9). On the other hand, the study at hand utilizes a mixed-method approach and has six RQs and two phases. The researcher triangulated the findings from the two steps and literature on the subject to determine the outcome of the study. Two variables were explicitly investigated: the partnership of members with their pastors and members' commitment to their churches and their church's mission.

The answers to Varghese's (2017) RQ was based on the subjective feelings of the participant church members (p. 66). This study addressed the feelings of lead pastors and their parishioners.

Lastly, Varghese's (2017) study defines discipleship in its broadest terms (p. 4). In this study, the researcher assumed that the churches in this study addressed discipleship's theological aspects. Thus, he narrows discipleship to equipping for ministry.

This researcher could not find a dissertation seeking to determine if a correlation existed between LEC courses taught in seminary and the implementation of lay equipping programs in the local church. Vandenburg (1992) comes close in his research by discussing the theology of equipping pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Still, he does not address the role seminaries play in fostering LECs for future pastors. There appears to be a gap in the research in determining the effectiveness of LECs gained from seminaries. This researcher has filled this



gap.

Powers (1996) states that the purpose of Christian education is "to develop within persons an understanding of, commitment to, and ability to practice Christian teachings" (p. 6). He goes on to say, "Christian education [is] the ongoing effort of believers to understand, practice, and propagate God's revelation" (p. 6). Both connection (partnership) and commitment are found in Power's Christian educational purposes. Churches with members that feel connected to the church, the pastor, and the church's mission and are committed to the church's mission are probably churches that have emphasized discipleship. Thus, connection and commitment could serve as measurements for the success of an equipping or discipling church curriculum or program.

This study quantitatively measured the parishioners' commitment levels within the ten target churches by administering a modified Organizational Commitment Questionnaire-9 (OCQ-9). The purpose of measuring commitment was to determine whether churches with defined equipping and placement programs possess a more significant percentage of members with behavioral and attitudinal loyalty than churches that don't (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979, p. 225).

This researcher also completed his quantitative study by measuring the parishioners' connection or partnership within the ten target churches with their prospective pastors. Relationship or partnership is an essential step to helping pastors fulfill their core responsibility. A modified Leader-Member Exchange-7 (LMX-7) survey was administered and analyzed. The data collected from the OCQ-9 and LMX-7 was compared and analyzed.

### **Profile of the Current Study**

Scripture states theologically that every member of the Christian church should be

equipped for ministry. Their coordinated service will facilitate their maturation. Theoretically, as the primary equipper, the pastor's role was expounded on in scripture and by biblical scholars. According to a 2015 Barna study, most pastors feel ineffective and unqualified to equip their members to fulfill the gospel commission.

In this study, the seminary was questioned in the apparent pastoral equipping shortfalls. A spectrum of teaching methods was examined to set the stage for the next phase of this study. Quantitative and qualitative schemas were also introduced. In the qualitative research, the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire and the Leader-Member Exchange were used as measuring tools to determine whether the skills the participant pastors gained contributed to their ability to foster commitment and partnership of their prospective memberships (Appendix I and J). In the next chapter, the research methodology for this study was explored.

### **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This Multiphase iterative, mixed method's study was investigated in greater detail in this chapter. The study was divided into two phases. The first phase consisted of qualitative phenomenological, semi-structured interviews with the participant pastors in this study. The second phase consisted of a mixed-method hybrid survey with open-ended questions, given to the participant pastor's parishioners. This chapter provided the research design synopsis, population, sampling procedures, limitations of generalization, ethical considerations, proposed instrumentation, research procedures, data analysis and statistical procedures.

#### **Research Design Synopsis**

##### **The Problem**

Questions have been raised by scholars regarding the North American evangelical church and its lack of emphasis on systematic discipleship, which has contributed to its decline in membership (Doss, 2016; Kim, 2012). But, research, like the 2015 Barna report on discipleship, shows that most pastors feel that their discipleship programs are inadequate. Discipleship is more than gaining spiritual knowledge and goes beyond the borders of one's personal spiritual development. Pastors are called to be shepherds. That is the pastor's role. But the task of equipping leads members to fulfill their purpose and to mature in Christ. VanDenburgh (1992) states, "If shepherding is the pastoral OFFICE, then equipping is the pastoral PURPOSE" (p. 77). Equipping members to perform in the gospel commission and providing coordinated ways to do so with other believer's aids in their spiritual development and maturity (Wilson, 1976). Through their ministry efforts, parishioners also duplicate themselves by winning more disciples. Pastors are the prime equippers, but pastors are not born with equipping skills. They must be taught. Christian seminaries are best positioned to accomplish this task.

Scripture declares and scholars confirm that pastors' primary responsibility is to equip their parishioners to work in the gospel commission (see Ephesians 4:11, 12; Elwell, 1997 p. 1080; Hwang, 2008). When believers can use their gifts in the gospel commission, they work with God in their maturation (Ephesians 4:13; Barna, 2015, p. 12). Future pastors gain valuable training for their future pastoral ministry from seminaries. Thus, the challenge of Christian seminaries is to provide pastors with the skills they need to fulfill their calling effectively. Seminaries need to disseminate relevant information and make sure that the data is, on the most part, translating into effective fulfillment of the pastor's primary calling, which is to equip his parishioners to fulfill the gospel commission.

By triangulating the precedent literature, the interview answers of the pastors in this study with their parishioners, the researcher believed that he could determine if the lay equipping competencies (LEC) these pastors gained from seminary contributed to the partnership and commitment of their parishioners.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Multiphase iterative mixed-method study is to determine if the LECs of graduate lead pastors gained from their alma mater's Master of Divinity program affected their parishioner's partnership with them in ministry and their commitment to their churches and their church's mission.

The researcher believed that partnership and commitment are essential characteristics possessed by the members of an equipping church. An equipping church refers to a church possessing a dominant directive to equip every member for ministry. Hwang (2008) asserts, "In this church, the pastor plays an important role as an equipper and there is an equipping process through which lay people are trained to become effective lay leaders" (p. 12). Partnership is "a

reciprocal relationship between [a] leader and member in terms of trust, respect, and sense of obligation to each other" (p. 10). Commitment is "The relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Steers, 1977). In this study, the organization is the church and lay equipping competencies (LECs) serve as a specific guide to the core knowledge, attitudes, and skills essential to pastors' ability to foster partnerships with their parishioners and commitment within their parishioners to the church and its gospel commission. To equip is to provide individual members with the competencies given by God and hewed by the church "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12)." In this study, equipping, in a broad sense, will be used synonymously with discipling.

### **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

**RQ1.** What do the participant pastors personally and biblically believe their prime responsibility is within their parish?

**RQ2.** How well do the participant pastors believe their completed Master of Divinity program prepared them to broadly equip their parishioners for the gospel ministry?

**RQ3.** According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, commitment to the church and its mission?

**RQ4.** According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, partnerships with them in ministry?

**RQ5.** According to the participant pastor's parishioners, how effective was their church's overall discipleship/equipping program?

**RQ6.** According to the participant pastor's parishioners, how effective was their church's equipping program in fostering their commitment to the church and its mission and partnership with the pastor to accomplish the gospel commission?

**H<sub>0</sub>5 and H<sub>0</sub>6:** The participant pastor's interview answers will not correlate with their parishioner's questionnaire answers on the impact of the church's equipping program on the parishioner's commitments and partnerships in accomplishing the church's mission.

The researcher believed that the participant pastors would have more confidence in their abilities to equip their parishioners than their parishioners would.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This Multiphase iterative mixed-method design has examined the relationship between the lay equipping competencies pastors, who completed a Master of Divinity, receive from seminary and the implementation of lay training programs in their parishes to determine if the quality of those competencies fosters commitment and partnership amongst their parishioners. Creswell (2018) states that mixed-method research is "an approach to inquiry involving the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical and theoretical frameworks" (p. 4). The idea behind the mixed method design is that greater insight can be obtained by combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Omrod (2015) asserts that the Multiphase iterative design "includes three or more phases, with early ones providing foundational data on which later phases can build" (p. 313). This study only had two phases that began with (phase one) a semi-structured qualitative interview to be conducted with the ten participant lead pastors in this study and (phase two) a quantitative survey and embedded questions with the parishioners of the ten participant churches in this study.

#### ***Phase One***

The researcher conducted interpretive, phenomenological, semi-structured interviews with ten participating lead pastors in phase one. In phenomenological design, the sample should be a small number because it will be an in-depth study. Leedy et al. (2019) state that phenomenological data is primarily collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews of a

purposeful sampling of 5-25 individuals” (p. 236). Ten lead pastors have provided this study with a purposeful sample.

Practically speaking, unstructured or semi-structured interviews are best used in qualitative research because qualitative research is open-ended by nature and depends heavily on the interviewee's subjective view. Structured interviews are not relegated to qualitative studies alone but are also suited for quantitative investigations (p. 314).

Unstructured interviews are usually accompanied by other data gathering tools like observational data. Semi-structured interviews "are often the sole data source for a qualitative research project" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). McDonough (2017) states, "[The] semi-structured interview format [provides] the advantage of focusing directly on a core set of questions, while also allowing for relevant impromptu questions to follow the variety of conceptual paths participants' responses broached" (p. 251). This researcher believed that the interpretive, phenomenological semi-structured interview provided a solid foundation to launch his interview and the flexibility to allow the participant pastors to freely give their true feelings on the study's subject. This interview will seek to answer RQ1 through RQ4.

### ***Phase Two***

In phase two, the researcher used a quantitative survey with qualitative questions for clarity. A three answer, Likert scale was used for the survey and the questionnaire portion contained a combination of various kinds of questions. Quantitative research is a methodology for examining “objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. Data is usually collected on instruments and quantified (Creswell, 2018, p. 4). Surveys involve “acquiring information about one or more groups of people—perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences—by asking them questions and tabulating answers” (Omrod,

2015, p. 141). The researcher believes that a survey provided the data consistency he will need to access a more extensive sampling.

In this phase of the research, the researcher distributed a quantitative survey to the participating pastors' members. This survey collected data on the commitment and partnership levels of the participant parishioners. This survey sought to answer RQ5 and RQ6. The next section explored, in greater detail, the qualitative setting, participants, and role of the researcher in phase one and the quantitative population, sampling procedures, limits and generalization of the second phase.

## **Setting**

### **Phases One and Two**

In phases one and two, the settings are the parishes of the participant pastors. The churches are located within two conferences of the Mid-American Union of Seventh-day Adventist. One conference covers the states of Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and New Mexico and is predominantly African American. The second conference covers Minnesota and is predominantly Caucasian. The churches in this study varied in size. Older members, in the participant churches, far outnumbered young adults and teenagers. Pseudonyms have been used in place of the pastor's names and their churches to preserve their confidentiality.

## **Participants**

### **Phase One**

A sequential sampling procedure determined who the graduate lead pastors that completed LEC classes were. Sequential sampling is used when the "size of the rare population is unknown or difficult to determine the sample of the desired sized needed for estimation of the



rare population characteristic with a specified degree of accuracy" (Arnab, 2017, p. 839).

Bondensson and Thorburn (2008) state, "The units in the population are 'visited' one by one in some order and at each visit, it is decided whether or not the unit should be sampled" (p. 466).

Graduate pastors who completed a Master of Divinity and have been in their parish for at least three years were identified within the two target conferences. After getting permission from the Ministerial Directors of the two conferences, an email was sent to all their pastors introducing the study and inviting them to participate in the interview process (Appendix D). A link was attached to a set of screening and demographic questions on Qualtrics to filter out pastors who did not possess a Master of Divinity, who had not been in their church as lead pastor for three years or more and who were not eighteen years or older (Appendix I). The demographic questions included the size of the church (Appendix I). Through the screening process, the researcher sought to sequentially narrow the participants to a sample of ten lead graduate pastors. The lead pastors chosen to participate in the study were allowed, by Qualtrics, to complete the online consent form if they were able to answer the screening questions correctly (Appendix D). After the researcher received the signed consent forms, he contacted the participant lead pastors to set up the most appropriate time for the interviews. Each interview took an estimated 60-minutes. The interview questions coincided with the survey questions of phase two, pulling its content from the OCQ-9 and the LMX-7 (Appendix J) In addition to participating in an interview, each pastor employed their parishioners to take the questionnaire offered in phase two of this study. The data collected from the semi-structured interviews, in phase one, was coded and analyzed. After the interviews were complete and the data collected from the surveys in phase two, each participant lead pastor received a gratuity of \$50.00 via check by mail.

## Phase Two

The regular, in person parishioners of the participant lead pastor's parish were the population of phase two. Despite the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic the researcher, under the advisement of the pastors that participated in this study, restricted the population to parishioners that attended the church in person. Probability sampling was used in each parish applying a random selection of church attendees so that “each member of the population [had] an equal chance of being chosen” (Omrod, 2015, p. 159). This researcher used an online sample size calculator to determine a more accurate sample size using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. Exact sample sizes for each establishment were added to this section as they were determined. An email was sent out to all prospective attendees explaining the study and inviting them to participate (Appendix E). The researcher also sent a follow up email seven days after the first email, if there was not a response from the prospective participants. Those who agreed to participate in the survey were asked to click on an embedded link, which lead them to a few screening questions and a consent form (Appendix F). After the consent form reviewed, the participants were given access to the survey by Qualtrics (Appendix I).

### Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role or the "human agent should be considered a variable in any research, especially in qualitative research. Leedy and Omrod (2016) state, “Because qualitative data analysis involves so much decision making—so many *judgments*—it can be especially vulnerable to a researcher’s predispositions, expectations, biases, and values” (p. 301). Thus, the researcher acknowledged his biases and factored them into the equation as he analyzes the data collected in each phase of this study.

The researcher admitted that he has felt his inadequacy to properly motivate, equip, and mobilize his parishioners in the gospel commission on more than one occasion. The researcher also understands the idle state that his parishioners appear to exist in when they are not actively working for Christ. Of all that he was taught in seminary, the researcher has wondered if his seminary could have done more to prepare him for his primary directive, which is to equip his parishioners for the gospel commission. The researcher taught and promoted Bible study within his parish. He also worked with his leadership team to foster spiritual development within those that attend his church. Every member of his church was required to go through a spiritual gift assessment. After their gifts were identified, they were assigned to a department. Unfortunately, the leaders of those church departments failed to nurture their new partners. The researcher found himself at a loss on more than one occasion. In phase one of the research, the researcher understood that he was a pastor interviewing other pastors; thus, he did his best not to project his perspective in the dialogue.

In a qualitative study, the researcher was the research gathering instrument. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state, “The inquirer is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants” (p. 183). Next, the researcher identified ten lead graduate pastors to conduct semi-structured interviews with for phase one. A sequential sampling procedure determined who the graduate lead pastors that completed LEC classes were. The researcher coded and analyzed the interviews.

In phase two, the researcher partnered with the pastors in this study to distribute a questionnaire to their parishioners. After the questionnaires were completed, the researcher used Qualtrics to analyze the data.

After 25 years in pastoral ministry, the researcher approached this study with certain biases and assumptions on lack of LECs amongst the Christian pastorate in the United States according to the 2015 Barna Study (p. 12). Be it as it may, this researcher did not allow his biases to taint the actual research. Because phase one was qualitative and utilized the semi-structured interview as a research gathering tool, the researcher used counter mechanisms to counter his biases. He used a preapproved research protocol to help him towards his data collection goals. The next sections explored the quantitative population, sample procedures, and limits of generalization.

### **Quantitative Sampling Procedures**

To determine the sample for phase two, proportional stratified sampling was used within the ten churches of graduate lead pastor participants. Omrod (2015) states, “Proportional stratified sampling is appropriate when various strata are *different* in size” (p. 159). The researcher assumed that each participant parish would possess unique characteristics distinct from the other participating institutions. Probability sampling was used in each parish applying a random selection of church attendees so that “each member of the population had an equal chance of being chosen” (Omrod, 2015, p. 159).

Addressing the sample size, Omrod provides some general guidelines for the researcher to follow. If the parish has an average weekly attendance of 100 people or less, the researcher would survey the entire population (Omrod, 2015, p. 166). If the parish had an average weekly attendance of around 500 people attending “(give or take 100), 50% should be sampled” (Omrod, 2015, p. 166). If the parish has an average weekly attendance of around 1,500 people attending, “20% should be sampled” (Omrod, 2015, p. 166). If a parish has an average weekly attendance

of 5,000 members or more, “the population size is almost irrelevant and a sample size of 400 will be adequate” (Omrod, 2015, p. 166).

This researcher used an online sample size calculator to determine a more accurate sample size using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. Exact sample sizes for each establishment were added to this section as they were determined. The participant churches were given pseudonyms and were categorically arranged by membership. They were as follows: 001, 002, 003, 006, 007, 009, 010, 011, 012, 017, 018, 019 and 021. Membership was divided into five categories: Category 1 – 500-999, Category 2 – 200-249, Category 3 – 150-199, Category 4 – 50-99 and Category 5 – 1-49. Four of the churches did not qualify to participate in this study (009, 010, 011 and 021) because their pastors did not complete a Master of Divinity. The questionnaire was given to the participant churches when the COVID-19 restrictions for in person church attendance had been lifted and attendance was sparse. Of the eight remaining churches that participated in this study, there was a total population of about 180. To determine the confidence level and margin of error, the researcher used the online sample size calculator found in *calculator.net*. Of the total population, 125 of the possible lay participants, took part in the questionnaire, which gave this sample a confidence level above 95% with a 5% margin of error.

In this study, the researcher instructed the participant lead pastors to employ their church members in taking the survey, with an understanding that the number of people that take the survey could not fall below the allotted sample size.

### **Limits of Generalization**

The survey offered in phase two of this study was limited to individuals that attended churches of lead pastors that graduated with a Master of Divinity and had pastored their parish

for three years or more. Though most churches in North America overreport their attendance numbers, according to Brenner and DeLamater (2014), this researcher trusted the participating parishes' attendance reports as written (p. 349). The researcher understood that the number of people that attend a church activity can vary from a one-time visitor to a regularly attending member. The researcher desired to obtain data from the entire spectrum of attendees to determine how and if they were invited to participate in the church's lay equipping development program. The lead pastor did not participate in the questionnaire but was interviewed by the researcher in phase one of this study. Though this study was limited to members of the ten participating churches, the results of this study could translate into other church denominations and Christian traditions. The next section addressed the ethical considerations of the entire study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Upon approval by the Institutional Research Board (IRB) of Liberty University, this researcher conducted qualitative interviews with ten pastors. The privacy and confidentiality of each participant lead pastor was carefully measured. Each pastor received a pseudonym. The pseudonym key is stored on the password protected computer of the researcher and will be deleted after three years of completing this study. The researcher is the only one with access to the protected computer.

The privacy and confidentiality of those taking part in the qualitative and quantitative questionnaire were carefully measured. Church attendees 18-years-old and older and systematically attending one of the churches of the pastors involved in this study were invited to take the survey.

Pseudonyms were used to protect the churches. The confidentiality of survey participants was also protected. Every survey was demarcated by a number and the pseudonym of the

participating church. The pseudonym key was stored in a password protected computer of the researcher and will be deleted after three years of completing this study. The researcher is the only one with access to the protected computer.

This researcher understood and adhered to the following Review Board Handbook (2004) statement:

Primary responsibility for all aspects of the protection of human participants on a given project, including compliance with all Federal and University policies and procedures and that all research associates involved in [the] project also comply with said regulations, policies, and guidelines.

### **Data Collection and Instruments**

The instruments of research in this Multiphase, iterative, mixed-method study included, (phase one) a semi-structured, phenomenological, qualitative interview to be conducted with the ten participant lead pastors in this study and (phase two) a quantitative survey and embedded qualitative questions with the parishioners of the ten participant churches in this study.

### **Collection Methods**

Qualitative document analysis was conducted. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material" (p. 27). Like other qualitative methods, document analysis is a process of "examining and interpreting data to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 2).

### ***Phase One***

In this phase, the researcher conducted interpretive, phenomenological, semi-structured interviews with a set goal of ten participating lead pastors. In phenomenological design, the sample should be a small number because it will be an in-depth study. Leedy et al. (2019) state that phenomenological data is primarily collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews of

a purposeful sampling of 5-25 individuals” (p. 236). Based on Leedy’s statement, ten lead pastors sufficiently fulfilled the sample requirements.

**Instrument and Protocols.** Phenomenology is a method to process and analyze participant observations. Chemero and Kaufer (2015) concisely define phenomenology as “an ontology of human existence” (p. 11). Human existence in phenomenology cannot be viewed in a vacuum. Phenomenology is the study of the meanings that humans place on their experiences.

There are three approaches to phenomenology: descriptive, interpretive and reflective (Davidsen, 2013, p. 109). Descriptive phenomenology “emphasizes the 'pure' [portrayal] of people's experiences” (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015, p. 22). The interpretive phenomenological approach “is used to examine contextual features of experience concerning other influences such as culture, gender, employment or wellbeing of people or groups experiencing the phenomenon” (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015, p. 22-27). The reflective phenomenological approach, known as reflective lifeworld research, helps the researcher to get a greater understanding "of their preconceptions of the studied phenomenon” while exercising the principles of “openness, compliance, promptness and uniqueness” (Lederman et al. 2019, p. 2).

The researcher used an interpretive phenomenological approach to determine the influence (if any) that the participant lead pastor’s theological education had on their ability to equip their members to fulfill the gospel commission (See Matthew 28:19, 20). The questions were semi-structured. According to DiCicco-Bloom (2006), qualitative interviews are unstructured, semi-structured and structured. Practically speaking, unstructured or semi-structured interviews are best used in qualitative research because qualitative research is open-ended by nature and depends heavily on the interviewee’s subjective view. Structured interviews



are not relegated to qualitative studies alone but are also suited for quantitative investigations (p. 314).

Unstructured interviews are usually accompanied by other data gathering tools like observational data. Semi-structured interviews "are often the sole data source for a qualitative research project" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). Phenomenological data is primarily collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Leedy et al., 2019, p. p. 233). The researcher had a set of opened-ended predetermined questions to ask the participant lead pastors and intuitively determined what questions to ask as the interview proceeded based on the participant's pastors' answers.

The structure of the interview questions covered four categories. The first category addressed the participant pastor's feelings on the competencies they received from the educational institution they graduated from. The participant pastors were asked questions about receiving the LEC of partnership building in ministry and developing commitment amongst their parishioners. The second category of questions directly addressed the LEC's the participant pastor possesses. The third category of questions managed the lay equipping programs that the participant pastors have instituted to determine if partnership and commitment were components in their lay training programs. The fourth category of questions referred to how the participant pastors felt their parishioner's responded to the lay equipping programs they instituted. The researcher sought to determine if the participant pastors believed that their parishioners were ministry partners? Did they believe their members felt like ministry partners? Did they think that their members were committed to the church, their pastor and the church's mission? The researcher used the survey data to answer RQ1 through RQ4, which was, "“What do the participant pastors personally and biblically believe their prime responsibility is within their

parish,” “How well do the participant pastors believe their completed Master of Divinity program prepared them to broadly equip their parishioners for the gospel ministry,” “According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, commitment to the church and its mission,” and “According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, partnerships with them in ministry.”

### ***Phase Two***

In this phase, the researcher used a quantitative survey with qualitative questions for clarity. Quantitative research is a methodology for investigating “objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. Data is usually collected on instruments and quantified (Creswell, 2018, p. 4). Surveys involve “acquiring information about one or more groups of people—perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences—by asking them questions and tabulating answers” (Omrod, 2015, p. 141). The researcher believed that a survey provided the data consistency he needed to access a more extensive sampling.

A variation of the Leader-Member Exchange – 7 (LMX-7) and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ-9) was given to the parishioners of the participating pastors to determine the respect, trust, sense of obligation and commitment they felt they had towards their church, the pastor and its mission, which was the gospel commission (Hwang, 2008, p. 18; Porter, 1979, p. 224). The LMX-7 measured the partnership of the participant pastor’s church members. More specifically, the LMX-7 measured the respect, trust and sense of obligation of the participants (Hwang, 2008, p. 18). The LMX-7 has a coefficient internal consistency

reliability of .91 (Cogliser and Schriesheim, 2000, p. 496). The OCQ-9 measured the participant's affective commitment (Mowday et al., 1982). The OCQ-9 has a coefficient internal consistency reliability of .952 (Hwang, 2008, p. 21). Interval questions such as the Likert Scale were used to determine the target church member's commitments and partnerships with the church, pastor, and mission. Hwang (2008) adjusted the LMX-7 and the OCQ-9 for church. This researcher proposed to use a variation of his version. The survey consisted of 20 questions from the LMX-7 and 23 questions from the OCQ-9 (Appendix J). The researcher also added questions to accompany some of the survey questions to clarify the answers given. A combination of “yes or no,” three-question Likert scale, and open-ended questions were used in the survey. The researcher believed that by combining the LMX-7, OCQ-9 and some clarifying qualitative questions, he could systematically determine the effects of the participant pastor’s applied educations on their congregations.

The survey was pilot tested with some of the parishioners in the researcher's church to ensure that the questions were not "ambiguous or misleading or that yield uninterpretable or otherwise useless responses" (Leedy & Omrod, 2016, p. 147).

The researcher sought to use the data from the survey to answer RQ5 and RQ6, which stated, " According to the participant pastor’s parishioners, how effective was their church’s overall discipleship/equipping program?” and “According to the participant pastor’s parishioners, how effective was their church’s equipping program in fostering their commitment to the church and its mission and partnership with the pastor to accomplish the gospel commission?”

**Validity.** The survey was a variation of the combined LMX-7 and the OCQ-9. This research used a varied form of Hwang's (2008) survey, which was offered to Korean churches to

determine the target churches' partnerships and commitments within his study. This researcher wanted to acquire similar information from the ten participant pastors' target churches to compare the commitment and partnership levels of churches whose pastors have varied lay equipping competencies. Validation was obtained through a pilot survey given to ten people in the local church of the researcher. After receiving the completed surveys, the researcher analyzed the data, made necessary adjustments, and finalized the distribution survey.

**Reliability.** The researcher was able to measure the reliability of his study through Qualtrics. Twenty questions from the LMX-7 and twenty-three questions from the OCR-9 were measured to see how closely related they were to other items within their groupings to determine their reliability.

## **Procedures**

In phase one, the researcher conducted interpretive, phenomenological, semi-structured interviews with ten participating lead pastors. Semi-structured interviews "are often the sole data source for a qualitative research project" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315).

McDonough (2017) states, "[The] semi-structured interview format [provides] the advantage of focusing directly on a core set of questions, while also allowing for relevant impromptu questions to follow the variety of conceptual paths participants' responses broached" (p. 251).

This researcher believed that the interpretive, phenomenological semi-structured interview provided a solid foundation for launching his interview and the flexibility to allow the participant pastors to give their perceptions on the study's subject freely. The interviews took place over Zoom. The interviews were recorded on Zoom and stored on the researcher's hard drive and simultaneously dictated by Microsoft Word dictation. The researcher sought to learn how the participant pastors perceived the LEC's they received from their alma maters and how relevant

these competencies were used in their parishes. The researcher also sought information on the lay equipping process implemented within their local parishes and how the participant pastors felt about its effectiveness. The interview process took 21-days. The researcher reached out to the participants for follow-ups to the initial interview for clarification.

In phase two, the researcher distributed a quantitative survey to the parishioners of the participant pastors. Surveys involved “acquiring information about one or more groups of people—perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences—by asking them questions and tabulating answers” (Omrod, 2015, p. 141). The sample size for each church was based on the number of regularly attending members using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. An online sample size calculator was used to ascertain an accurate sample size for each parish. At the beginning of the questionnaire, a few qualitative questions were asked to provide the researcher with direct answers on the feelings of the parishioners as they pondered the LEC programs of their churches. The researcher used a modified version of Hwang's edition of LMX-7/OCQ-9 Survey to establish the partnership in each participant's ministry and commitment levels (Appendix J). The survey was distributed through Qualtrics online and on paper. The participating pastors were responsible for engaging their churches in the survey, collecting paper copies of the survey, scanning and emailing the questionnaires to the researcher. At the end of phase two, each participant lead pastor received a gratuity of \$50.00 for participating in the interview and engaging their parishioners in the survey. This survey process took about 45-days.

### **Data Analysis**

After collecting data from each phase in this study, the researcher analyzed it. He also compared and contrasted the data collected in the different phases with the lead graduate pastors

and their churches or church campuses. This section explained the analysis process in greater detail.

### **Phase One**

In qualitative document analysis, as is the case for all qualitative research, data must be closely examined "to find the meanings that lie within them" (Omrod, 2015, p. 291). The data collected from the semi-structured interviews were systematically analyzed. Like other designs of a qualitative nature, "it is difficult to separate gathering of phenomenological material from analysis of phenomenological material, as the two are so delicately intertwined throughout all phases of the study" (Vagle, 2018, p. 108). The next segment details how this researcher analyzed the interpretive phenomenological semi-structured interviews.

*Data Methods.* Vagle (2018) suggests six steps that provided some guidance in this researcher's analysis.

- 1) "Holistic reading of the entire text"- The researcher recorded the interviews using Zoom and simultaneously transcribed each recording using Microsoft Word's dictation function. After transcription, the researcher read through and listened to the interviews to get "attuned to the whole material-gathering even" (p. 110). At this step, Vagle suggests that the researcher should take notes (p. 110).
- 2) "First line-by-line reading" – Vagle (2018) recommends that the first line-by-line reading be done by taking careful notes and highlighting essential excerpts (p. 110). The researcher put parenthesis around longer texts and place notes beside the text that might ask relevant questions like "how does this statement relate to the training that she received at her alma mater. The researcher also kept a journal called a "bridling

- journal” on his questions and feelings as he carefully rereads the transcript (Vagle, 2018, p. 110).
- 3) “Follow-up questions” – After reading the entire transcript, the researcher read the other transcripts, comparing, and contrasting each as he wrote and restated various statements in his bridling journal (Vagle, 2018, p. 110). From the new notes, the researcher crafted more questions to ask the participant pastors to “clarify intentional meanings that one predicts, at the early stages of analysis, might be important to describe/interpret/represent the phenomenon” (Vagle 2018, p. 110).
  - 4) "Second line-by-line reading" – The purpose for the second reading is to articulate the meanings "based on the markings, margin notes, and follow-up with research participants" (Vagle, 2018, p. 110). The researcher did this stage as a Word Document by copying and pasting the excerpts. The researcher took one document per participant, which "contain[ed] all the potential parts that the researcher thinks might contribute to the phenomenological text" (Vagle, 2018, p. 110).
  - 5) “Third line-by-line reading” – In this step, the researcher went through each document, line-by-line and “articulate [his] analytic thought about each part” (Vagle, 2018, p. 110).
  - 6) “Subsequent readings” – In this step, the researcher read each document, comparing and contrasting. The researcher looked for themes. The researcher created from each theme a preliminary title. Phase one answered questions RQ1 through RQ4.

## Phase Two

The next section detailed the data analysis and statistical procedures done in the quantitative survey study. The subheadings in this section were divided between data analysis and statistical methods.

### *Data Analysis*

After the completed paper and online survey were collected, the data was analyzed by using the “data analysis” and “results” tools within the Qualtrics platform. The researcher interpreted the data produced by Qualtrics. (Refer to Tables 1 and 2.) From these interpretations, the researcher made a subjective assessment of the data.

### *Statistical Procedures*

In the second stage of this study, the researcher sought to obtain descriptive statistics. The researcher needed descriptive measurements because he wanted to measure the partnership and commitment of those that participated in the survey (See Table 1 for an example of the descriptive statistics table used by the researcher). The researcher wanted to see if there was any correlation between the partnership and commitment of the members and the lay equipping programs implemented by their pastors.

**Table 1**

*Example of Descriptive Statistics Table.*

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR QUANTITATIVE DEMOGRAPHICS	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	# of participants

The researcher also asked a few questions to connect the participant's partnership and commitments with their lay training and mobilizing programs of their parishes. The questions



were analyzed considering the related questions they clarified. Phase two answered RQ5 and RQ6.

### **Trustworthiness**

Overall trustworthiness of the study was verified by “triangulation of the data sources [including documentation]” (Bowen, 2009, p. 38). When there was a “convergence of information from different sources, readers of the research report usually have greater confidence in the trustworthiness of the findings” (Bowen, p. 2009, p. 30). Following this, the researcher examined the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the data's subjective analysis.

### ***Credibility***

In phase one, the interview questions' credibility and the analysis of the data collected in the interviews were verified by using Vagle's (2018) method of analysis. The consent form provided the study's objectives (Creswell, 2018, p. 92).

In phase two, the qualitative part of the questionnaire has been analyzed using Vagle's (2018) method of qualitative analysis and the quantitative part was verified and by Qualtrics. Further, Qualtrics provided various tools for the researcher to analyze the data. After the lay participants were identified by the participant pastors, each potential participant received introduction explaining the sponsorship and purpose of the questionnaire in an email or paper letter. Screening questions followed the introduction information (Creswell, 2018). A link was provided at the end of the letter, in an email giving access to the screening questions in Qualtrics. For potential participants who were not comfortable or did not have access to a computer, a paper copy was provided. For potential participants who qualified, the Qualtrics platform gave them access to the questionnaire.

### ***Dependability.***

In phase one, the interview questions were divided into four categories (see Instrument and Protocols). The survey was a variation of the leader-member exchange-7 (LMX-7) survey and the organizational commitment questionnaire-9 (OCQ-9) to measure the partnership in ministry and the participating attendees' commitment levels. These two instruments have been proven for their dependability and have been used in numerous studies. The researcher's version of these two instruments is closest to Hwang's (2008), in his comparative study on churches, pastor lay churches verses lay lead churches. Every step of this phase was explained for replicability (Funder et al., 2014). The questions in phase one also relate to the questions in phase two. In phase two, the quantitative and qualitative questions have been verified by Qualtrics. A pilot test was conducted amongst some of the parishioners of the researcher's parish to determine if the ideas of each question were clearly understood by the participants.

### ***Confirmability***

The processes and procedures of phases one and two have been communicated sequentially. An audit trail has been intentionally established (Carcary, 2009). Although it was not practical to include all the researcher's data on phase one in this document, the researcher has provided an audit trail for anyone that would like to review it upon request.

### ***Transferability***

The document analysis sequence was direct and the data could be used in other contexts. Yet, there were other factors to consider. According to Carcary (2009), "transferability to other settings depends on the congruence between the *"sender context,"* i.e., the context in which the research was conducted, and the *"receiving contexts,"* i.e., the context to which the research findings are to be applied" (p. 15).

This research might benefit a study on the benefits of practicums for future pastors. This research could also contribute to an analysis of the benefits of mentorship for future pastors. This research might also benefit other Christian denominations and traditions outside of churches affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Also, other institutions of higher learning could benefit from the study. From the data obtained, the researcher has determined how many lead pastors in active pastoral ministry in their parish for at least three years, possess LECs and are executing an equipping program in their parishes that are positively affecting the involvement and spiritual growth of their parishioners.

### **Chapter Summary**

This document has compared the church equipping programs of lead graduate pastors who have completed a Master of Divinity and have served their parish for at least three years. The researcher determined if the LECs the participant pastors gained from their alma mater provided them with the training they needed to foster their parishioner's partnership with them in ministry and their commitment to their churches and their church's mission. Through a Multiphase iterative mixed-method study, this researcher has triangulated the two phases of this study to determine if the training the participant pastors received provided them with adequate LECs.

In phase one, the researcher sought to interview ten participating lead pastors to determine if their alma maters' curriculums provided them with adequate skills to equip their parishioners to fulfill the gospel commission. After each pastor completed the interview, the video transcript was coded and evaluated. RQ1 through RQ4 was answered.

In phase two, the researcher offered a survey to the ten participating lead pastors' parishioners to determine each participant's partnership and commitment levels. Also, qualitative

questions robustly connected the survey with the overarching thrust of this document. Phase two answered RQ5 and RQ6.

After the two phases were completed, the two evaluations were triangulated with the prevailing literature on the subject. The conclusions from phases one and two were compared to the hypothesis of the literature reviewed. Also, the assessments of phase two were compared and contrasted with phase one.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

In chapter four, this study first used interpretive, phenomenological, semi-structured interviews. The researcher sought to interview ten pastors. After interviewing the ten prospects, eight of the pastors qualified to participate in this study. The researcher determined to grasp how the participant pastors perceived the LECs they received from their alma maters, to become acquainted with the lay equipping programs they lead in their parishes and to see what impact, they believe, their equipping programs have had on their parishes. This study then distributed a quantitative questionnaire to the parishioners of the participant pastors which was a variation of the leader-member exchange-7 (LMX-7) survey and the organizational commitment questionnaire-9 (OCQ-9) to measure the partnership in ministry and the participating attendees' commitment levels. Additionally, a few qualitative questions were given to get the parishioner's direct opinions on the lay equipping processes in their churches and the lay equipping competencies of their pastors.

In this chapter, after reviewing the purpose statement and the RQs, the researcher presented the hypothesis for RQ5 and RQ6, the compilation protocols and statistical measures used to analyze the research data. Demographics and sample data were discussed for the participants in phase one's qualitative semi-structured interviews and phase two's quantitative questionnaire. Lastly, evaluation of the research designs was submitted.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Multiphase iterative mixed-method study was to determine if graduate lead pastors received adequate lay equipping competencies from their alma mater's

Master of Divinity programs to help them develop partnerships and foster commitment in ministry amongst their parishioners.

### **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ1.** What do the participant pastors personally and biblically believe their prime responsibility is within their parish?

**RQ2.** How well do the participant pastors believe their completed Master of Divinity program prepared them to broadly equip their parishioners for the gospel ministry?

**RQ3.** According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, commitment to the church and its mission?

**RQ4.** According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, partnerships with them in ministry?

**RQ5.** According to the participant pastor's parishioners, how effective was their church's overall discipleship/equipping program?

**RQ6.** According to the participant pastor's parishioners, how effective was their church's equipping program in fostering their commitment to the church and its mission and partnership with the pastor to accomplish the gospel commission?

**H<sub>0</sub>5 and H<sub>0</sub>6:** The participant pastor's interview answers will not correlate with their parishioner's questionnaire answers on the impact of the church's equipping program on the parishioner's commitments and partnerships in accomplishing the church's mission.

### **Compilation Protocol and Measures**

The method of analysis chosen for this research was a Multiphase iterative mixed-method study, which includes two sample groups, qualitative semi-structured interviews, a QUAL and QUAN questionnaire and QUAL and QUAN tools of analysis. And overview of compilation protocol and measures is displayed in Table 2.

Phase one of this study included interpretive, phenomenological, semi-structured interviews with eight participant lead pastors to grasp how they perceived the LECs they

received from their alma maters, to become acquainted with the lay equipping programs they lead in their parishes and to see what impact, they believed, their equipping programs had on their parishes. Phenomenology is a method to process and analyze participant observations. Chemero and Kaufer (2015) concisely define phenomenology as “an ontology of human existence” (p. 11).

**Table 2**

*Protocol and Measures*

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Sampling Design</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Research Type/Instrumentation</b>	<b>Data Analysis Tools</b>	<b>Measures</b>
<b>Phase One</b>	Sequential sampling procedure	8 lead pastors	QUAL/Semi-structured Interviews recorded on Zoom	Vagle’s systematic analysis	QUAL measures (described below)
		8	Interviews using “Word” dictation during interview. Dictation processed by researcher	Holistic Reading	
		8		1 <sup>st</sup> Line by Line Reading	manually coded
		8	QUAL/Phone calls and texts for clarification	Follow-up Questions	results noted
		8		2 <sup>nd</sup> Line by Line reading	manually coded
		8		3 <sup>rd</sup> Line by Line reading	categorized and consolidated
		8		Subsequent Readings	
<b>Phase Two</b>	Probability Sampling	125 Parishioners	QUAN and QUAL Questionnaire	Qualtrics	Percentile Estimation

The researcher used an interpretive phenomenological approach to determine the influence (if any) that the participant lead pastor’s theological education had on their ability to equip their members to fulfill the gospel commission. The questions were semi-structured. According to DiCicco-Bloom (2006), qualitative interviews are unstructured, semi-structured and structured. The researcher chose semi-structured to add structure to his questioning without sacrificing flexibility when needed. The structure of the interview questions covered four

categories. The first category addressed the participant pastor's feelings on the competencies they received from the educational institution they graduated from. The participant pastors were asked questions about receiving the LEC of partnership building in ministry and developing commitment amongst their parishioners. The second category of questions directly addressed the LECs the participant pastor possessed. The third category of questions concentrated on the lay equipping programs that the participant pastors had instituted to determine if partnership and commitment were components in their lay training programs. The fourth category of questions focused on how the participant pastors felt their parishioner's responded to the lay equipping programs they instituted. The researcher sought to use the survey data to answer RQ1 through RQ4.

After interviewing ten pastors, eight of them qualified to participate in phase one of this study. One of the pastors that didn't qualify for this study had only completed his Bachelor of Arts in Religion. The second pastor received a MAPMin (Master's in Pastoral Ministry) rather than an MDiv. The researcher saw value in the data collected from the pastor that completed the MAPMin, and recommended that a similar analysis be performed in a future study.

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews were systematically analyzed. Vagle (2018) suggests six steps that provided guidance in this researcher's analysis.

- 1) "Holistic reading of the entire text"- The researcher recorded the interviews using Zoom and transcribed each recording using Microsoft Word dictation (p. 110).
- 2) "First line-by-line reading" The researcher put parenthesis around longer texts and placed notes beside the text that might ask relevant questions like "how does this statement relate to the training that pastor received from his alma mater." The



researcher also kept a journal called a “bridling journal” on his questions and feelings as he carefully reread the transcript (Vagle, 2018, p. 110).

- 3) “Follow-up questions” – After reading the entire transcript, the researcher read the other transcripts, comparing and contrasting each as he wrote and restated various statements in his bridling journal (Vagle, 2018, p. 110). From the new notes, the researcher crafted more questions to ask the participant pastors to “clarify intentional meanings that one predicts, at the early stages of analysis, might be important to describe/interpret/represent the phenomenon” (Vagle 2018, p. 110).
- 4) "Second line-by-line reading" – The purpose for the second reading is to articulate the meanings "based on the markings, margin notes, and follow-up with research participants" (Vagle, 2018, p. 110). The researcher accomplished this stage as a Word Document by copying and pasting the excerpts. The researcher took one document per participant, which "contain[ed] all the potential parts that the researcher thought might contribute to the phenomenological text" (Vagle, 2018, p. 110).
- 5) “Third line-by-line reading” – In this step, the researcher went through each document, line-by-line and “articulated [his] analytic thought about each part” (Vagle, 2018, p. 110).
- 6) “Subsequent readings” – In this step, the researcher read each document, comparing and contrasting. The researcher looked for themes. The researcher created from each theme a preliminary title.

Phase two of the research was a quantitative survey and qualitative questions given to the eight participant lead pastors' parishioners. The survey was a variation of the leader-member exchange-7 (LMX-7) survey and the organizational commitment questionnaire-9 (OCQ-9) to

measure the partnership in ministry and the participating attendees' commitment levels. Also, a few qualitative questions were given to get the participant pastor's direct opinions of the lay equipping programs offered in their churches and the lay equipping competencies their pastors possessed. The data collected from these two phases were compared and contrasted, in chapter five, to determine if there was a correlation between the LEC courses taught at the participant pastor's alma maters and the performance of pastors who completed these courses. Also, a combination of "yes or no," three Likert scale, and open-ended questions were used in the survey. The researcher believed that by combining the LMX-7, OCQ-9 and some clarifying qualitative questions, he could systematically determine the effects of the pastors' applied educations on their congregation's ability to effectively work in the gospel ministry. The data collected from completed questionnaires were analyzed by using tools from Qualtrics and percentile estimations.

### **Demographic and Sample Data**

The research was conducted between two conferences in the Mid-American Union of Seventh-day Adventists. The conferences were not named in this document to preserve confidentiality. To participate, certain criteria had to be met by the contributors. In phase one (RQ1 – RQ4), the participant pastors were required to have a Master of Divinity degree, be a lead pastor in their parish, minister in their district for at least three years and pastor in one of two participating conferences in the Mid-American Union of Seventh-day Adventists.

In phase one, the researcher conducted interpretive, phenomenological, semi-structured interviews with eight participating lead pastors. In phenomenological design, the sample should be a small number because the purpose of the study was to collect indepth information. Leedy et al. (2019) states that phenomenological data is primarily collected through in-depth, semi-

structured interviews of a purposeful sampling of 5-25 individuals” (p. 236). Eight lead pastors have provided this study with a purposeful sample.

Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant pastor to protect their privacy and confidentiality. The participant pastors’ pseudonyms were PP1, PP2, PP3, PP4, PP5, PP6, PP7 and PP10. Two pastors were not included in this study (PP8 and PP9) because they did not qualify in one or more of the criteria.

Six of the participant pastors were black and two were white. All eight participants were male. Though the researcher made concerted efforts to include females in his study, none of the possible female pastors within the two conferences met the inclusion criteria for this study.

Two pastors ministered in Nebraska, one pastor in Iowa, two pastors in Minnesota, two pastors in Kansas and one pastor in Missouri. The size of the participant pastor’s parishes varied as well. Four pastors had parishes with one church. Two pastors had two churches in their parishes. One pastor had four churches in his parish and one pastor had six churches in his parish. Thus, four of the participant pastors had one church in their parish and four of them pastored multi-church districts.

Regarding education, seven of the participants attended a denominational seminary and one attended a non-denominational seminary. Table 3 displays the demographics of the participants in phase one.

**Table 3**

*Personal Demographics*

<b>Participant Lead Pastors</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Location of Parish</b>	<b>Number of Churches in Parish</b>	<b>Alma Mater (denominational/non-denominational)</b>
<b>PP1</b>	Male	African American	Nebraska	1	Denominational Seminary
<b>PP2</b>	Male	African American	Iowa	2	Denominational Seminary
<b>PP3</b>	Male	Caucasian	Minnesota	6	Denominational Seminary

<b>PP4</b>	Male	African American	Nebraska	1	Non-denominational Seminary
<b>PP5</b>	Male	African American	Missouri	1	Denominational Seminary
<b>PP6</b>	Male	Caucasian	Minnesota	4	Denominational Seminary
<b>PP7</b>	Male	African American	Kansas	1	Denominational Seminary
<b>PP10</b>	Male	African American	Kansas	2	Denominational Seminary

The criteria for participating in phase two (RQ5 and RQ6) of this research project was that the contributors must be 18 years old or older and systematically attend one of the churches lead by one of the participating lead pastors. Of the eighteen churches pastored by the participants, nine of them contributed to the questionnaire. Of the nine, seven of them had five or more contributors. In phase two, the researcher distributed a quantitative survey (or questionnaire) to the parishioners of the participant pastors. Surveys involved “acquiring information about one or more groups of people—perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences—by asking them questions and tabulating answers” (Omrod, 2015, p. 141). The sample size for each church was based on the number of regularly attending members using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. An online sample size calculator was used to ascertain an accurate sample size for each parish. Due to COVID-19, the population was based on actual attendance in the church building and did not include online viewers. The participant pastors admitted that their weekly church attendance was significantly lower when this questionnaire was given to their, in person, attendees. They assumed that most of their members watched their church services on YouTube, Facebook, or a teleconferencing platform like Zoom. For consistency, the researcher only sought those that attended church services in the church building.

The participant churches were given pseudonyms and were categorically arranged by membership. They were as follows: 001, 002, 006, 007, 012, 017, 018, and 019. Membership

was divided into five categories: Category 1 – 500-999, Category 2 – 200-249, Category 3 – 150-199, Category 4 – 50-99 and Category 5 – 1-49. The ages of the participants varied. 63.20% of the participants were 50 years old and older. The majority of those that took part in phase two of this study were members of their local parish. A whopping 90.85% of those that took part in the study were registered on the role of the participant church they attended. Additionally, 30.43% of the participants were male and 69.57% female.

A classification of the ages of the participants in phase two are displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Age classification of phase two participants*

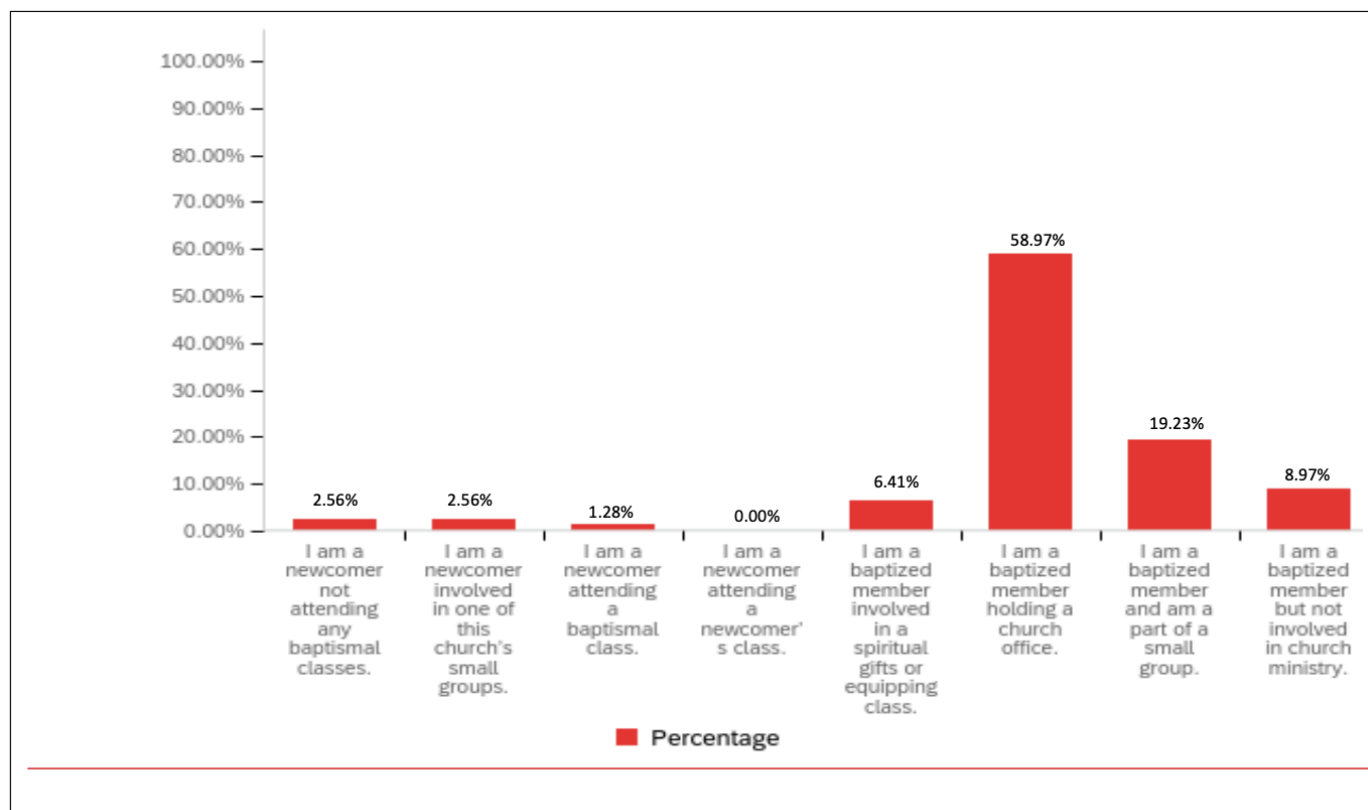
#	AGE	PERCENTAGE	AMOUNT
1	Under 18-years-old	0.00%	0
2	18-32 years-old	11.20%	14
3	31-40 years-old	15.02%	19
4	41-49 years-old	11.20%	14
5	50-64 years-old	33.60%	42
6	65 years old or older	29.60%	37
			125

Regarding length of affiliation, 71.43% of the participants had been members of their local parish for two years or more and regularly attended either in person or online. Another significant statistic in this study is that over half (53.15%) of those that took the questionnaire held a church office. 22.52% belonged to a small group. Thus, over 75% of those that participated in this study were actively involved in ministry. Figure 5 provides a synopsis of the demographics of those that participated in phase two. A summary of data analysis and findings were exhibited according to the research questions. Interviews were conducted and recorded via

Zoom and dictated by the “Dictate” function in Microsoft Word. The researcher verified the dictation by listening to the recording and updating the dictation for accuracy.

**Figure 5**

*Church Standing Statistics*



After the dictation was updated, the researcher followed Vagle’s systemic analysis. The researcher sought to determine 1) the pastor’s ministry values (RQ1), 2) the skills the pastor received from their alma mater to equip their members for ministry (RQ2), 3) the effectiveness of those skills to cultivate commitment within their parishioners (RQ3) and the effectiveness of those skills to forge partnerships with their parishioners (RQ4).

## Data Analysis and Findings

After the researcher conducted his study, he compiled and reviewed the data. The following section is his analysis and findings.

### Findings from RQ1

**RQ1.** What do the participant pastors personally and biblically believe their prime responsibility is within their parish?

From the interviews with the participant pastors, the researcher discovered various themes from their responses. Table 5 provides a synopsis of those themes and their occurrences.

**Table 5**

*Identified Themes (RQ1- Personal)*

Theme	Occurrences
Introducing people to Jesus	3
Pastoral Care	5
Equipping members to work in ministry	3

In the interviews, the researcher first sought to understand what the participant pastors believed their foremost responsibility was from a personal and biblical perspective. Through Vagle’s systematic analysis, three themes emerged.

In RQ1, the theme, “Introducing people to Jesus” arose from the following codes: “Lifting Jesus up” and “to introduce and keep before them Jesus Christ.” A second theme that surfaced from RQ1 was “pastoral care.” Codes that supported this theme were “love them (x2),” “nurture them,” and “care and nurture.” “Equipping members to work in ministry” also developed as a theme for RQ1. Codes that supported this theme were “training members to work not only in church but as missionaries, carrying forward the word,” “equip the members for the Gospel Ministry,” “support members in evangelistic outreaches,” “less dependent on the pastor,” and “more dependent on God given gifts of members.”

Regarding the participant's personal perspectives, two of the participants gave multiple answers. Pastor PP7 said, "I believe my responsibility to be twofold. One to provide pastoral care; spiritual nurture to my parishioners and two, to do evangelism in all its phases." PP7 paused and then stated, "I would include in that, maybe I would say three because my third responsibility would be to equip the laity to do the work." Pastor PP2 also believed that pastors were responsible for training members to work beyond the functions of the internal church which he stated was the mission work outside of the church's walls. Additionally, Pastor PP2 also believed that pastors were to help people have an encounter with Jesus Christ and to care and nurture them in their walk with Christ. He thoughtfully stated, "I really believe that Jesus wanted his disciples to do what he did with them, and that was he wants to basically make other people who have a relationship with Jesus Christ and are truly wanting to follow him."

Including the two pastors that gave multiple answers to the pastor's prime responsibility, five out of eight (62%) said that their supreme directive was pastoral care. Pastor PP4 depicted it best. He passionately said, "Love people. That's number one. Love people. If you can't love people, you're in the wrong business."

Including Pastor PP2, three participants (37.5%) believed that helping the attendees of their church to foster a relationship with Jesus Christ was paramount in their ministry. Additionally, three pastors, including pastors PP2 and PP7 believed that equipping their members for ministry was their most important responsibility.

The researcher also wanted to understand how the participants interpreted two scriptures about disciple-making and equipping to obtain greater insight on their ministry values. Since Seventh-day Adventists believe, with other Protestants, *sola scriptura*, the researcher felt that the



participant's views on the following scriptures would provide direct insight into their biblical stance regarding their responsibility to equip their parishioners (Moss, 2015, p. 66).

### **Matthew 28:19, 20**

The participant pastor's responses presented a couple of themes. Table 6 gives a synopsis of these themes and their occurrences.

**Table 6**

*Identified Themes (RQ1- Biblical – Matthew 28:19, 20)*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
Make true followers of Christ	6
Developing gospel workers	3

In Matthew 28:19, 20, Jesus gave his disciples the great commission. The participant pastors were asked to interpret Jesus' proclamation. Through a systematic analysis, two themes emerged in this section for RQ1. These themes were supported by the following thematic codes. The theme, "Make true followers of Christ" developed from the codes "People who do not just say they believe, but followers that have a relationship with him and spend time daily with him," "Teaching followers a practical knowledge of walking with Jesus," "Teaching people to practice both faith in Jesus and the faith of Jesus," "Lead people to Christ," and "fostering relationships with Jesus by teaching them of his life and ministry." The theme "developing gospel workers" was supported by three codes. They were, "Help them duplicate disciples," "Duplicating Jesus in them as in us," and "Our responsibility becomes that of the members. A snowball effect takes place where each one reaches one. Then they duplicate the process in their own lives."

Two of the interpretations had multiple phases. Pastor PP2 believed that Jesus wanted his disciples to teach about his life and ministry. Additionally, PP2 zealously stated, "that's teaching...the life and the Ministry of Jesus, that all things in the Bible point to Jesus and that

people know not just theoretical knowledge, but on a practical level, what walking with Jesus looks like.” PP2 implied that by observing the life, character and personality of Jesus as portrayed in scripture, believers would be apt to imitate and even change into His image.

Pastor PP4 had varied features to his interpretation. He asserted that Jesus wanted his disciples to “preach, teach and baptize.” Further Jesus directed his followers to teach people to “practice both faith in Jesus and the faith of Jesus.” He explained that faith in Jesus is full confidence in Jesus’ promise and ability to save sinners, while the faith of Jesus is “practicing the same faith that Jesus practiced; his faith, devotion and love for those around.”

Including the interpretations of PP2 and PP4, three out of eight (37.5%) of participants said that Jesus was instructing his disciples to duplicate disciples. PP5 summed it up by saying, “Our responsibility becomes that of the members. A snowball effect takes place where each one reaches one, then they duplicate the process in their own lives.”

Three out of eight (37.5%) stated that Jesus simply meant to lead people to him. Though it could be assumed that Jesus’s directive to duplicate themselves or even himself would also include their outreach efforts, none of the participants explicitly said that Jesus’s admonishment in Matthew 28:19, 20 contained the task of equipping believers for the ministry of the gospel.

### **Ephesians 4:11, 12**

The pastors in this study were asked to give their interpretation of Ephesians 4:11 and 12. A couple of themes arose from their responses. Table 7 provides the identified themes that developed from the Ephesians 4:11,12 responses and their occurrences.

**Table 7**

*Identified Themes (RQ1- Biblical – Ephesians 4:11, 12*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
Everyone has something to do in ministry.	4

Pastor is to equip members for ministry.	5
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In Ephesians 4:11,12, the Apostle Paul writes about gifts, in the form of people, that God has given the church. Amongst those gifted people are pastors and teachers. Pastors and teachers are responsible for the “perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12, King James Version). The participants were asked to interpret Paul’s statement.

The most prevalent answer included the equipping of believers by pastors. 50% of the participants answered from the perspective of the pastor as the equipper of spiritual gifts. A couple of themes surfaced in this section for RQ1. One of those themes was “Everyone has something to do in ministry.” This theme is supported by the following codes: “No one person can do the job,” “Everyone has a part in nurturing and helping members to grow,” and “God has put people in church, who have abilities to work with Pastor,” The second theme is supported by the following codes: “Leadership is to help members to know Jesus, serve Jesus in the community, and nurture them spiritually,” “The pastor is not ‘the all in all’ but he has to teach his members to support each other and to reduplicate the training of helping people find whatever their gifts are and mobilizing them in the work,” “Teach sound doctrine, relational experiences with Christ, live what they are taught. They are called to be ambassadors., which means they must be examples to family, neighbors and community,” and pastors should “bring them (parishioners) to spiritual maturation.”

PP1 said that pastors are not to be “the all in all” but they must teach their members to support each other and to reduplicate the training of helping people find whatever their gifts are and mobilizing them to the work. He feels that pastors have failed in this area. PP10 believed that Paul’s job description for pastors includes “making ambassadors” of their parishioners, for

Christ, which means that pastors must teach their members to be “Christian examples to family, neighbors, and community.” PP2’s interpretation, though similar, was more nuanced. He asserted that leadership is to help members to know Jesus, serve Jesus in the community, and nurture them spiritually. PP7 gave a three-pronged answer. He asserted that pastors were to perfect the saints, which means to bring them to spiritual maturation. PP7 also said that perfecting the saints spoke of their maturation, which included the use of their gifts to help others. The pastor was to help facilitate this process. Then he said that as one pours out their gifts to help others, they are filled, which helps them to mature in Christ. Further, he said that the work of the ministry was the vehicle for the gifted to accomplish God’s work and the edifying of the body of Christ was the use of those gifts to encourage like believers to mature in Christ.

Two of the participant’s (25%) explanations of Paul’s statements infer that Paul was placing the responsibility to equip on everyone and not just on pastors and teachers. PP6 said that no one person can do the job. It takes the whole body. He said that everyone has a part in nurturing and helping members to grow. PP5’s interpretation is like PP6’s. He stated that everybody has “a duty, responsibility, and potential to contribute to the cause of God” and that God has put people in church, who have abilities to work with the Pastor. Then he said that everybody has gifts, and that giftedness is to help the whole body. He does not mention the pastor as the equipper, but as a partner in the work of the ministry.

PP4’s explanation does not mention the pastor as the equipper but emphasizes the responsibilities of each member. He states that all of us has a role to play “in our Levitical role and responsibilities,” which is the natural result of having the Holy Spirit. Thus, Christ’s disciples must collaboratively use their gifts to impact others.

PP3 mentioned the pastor's role as a passive equipper. He said that pastors should "encourage" each member to utilize their gifts to win their "oikos" or household to Christ. Thus, pastors should admonish more than equip.

Though half of the participants believed that Ephesians 4:11, 12 addressed the pastor as an equipper, the other answers varied in meaning and scope.

### Synopsis

The participant pastor's personal and biblical perception of their primary roles as pastors in their parish is evident in the data. See Table 8 for a detailed record of Ephesians 4:11, 12 responses.

**Table 8**

#### *Frequency Report (RQ1)*

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
Pastor equips members for ministry	22.6%
Introducing people to Jesus	29%
Pastoral care	16.1%
Prepare people for Christ's Second Coming	3.2%
Get out of church and meet people	3.2%
Preach, teach and baptize	3.2%
Everyone has something to do in ministry	3.2%
Pastors should encourage members to participate in the ministry	3.2%
Everyone is responsible for the equipping process	6.45%

Twenty-nine percent of the participant pastors believed that their prime responsibility in their parish was to introduce people to Jesus and to help them to foster a vibrant relationship with Him. At a close second, 22.6% of the participants believed that their primary responsibility was to equip their members for ministry. Pastoral care was third at 16.1%. 6.45% believed that equipping was everyone's responsibility.

## Findings from RQ2

**RQ2.** How well do the participant pastors believe their completed Master of Divinity program prepared them to broadly equip their parishioners for the gospel ministry?

**Table 9**

*Competency from alma mater (RQ2)*

Competency from Master of Divinity Program	Occurrences
Yes	1
No	3
Yes and No	2
No, by Design	2

In RQ2, the researcher asked the participant pastors questions that would help him to better understand the training that they received from their alma mater and the results of that training in their parishes. Table 10 provides themes and their occurrences as mentioned above in answer to RQ2.

**Table 10**

*Themes (RQ2)*

Themes	Occurrences
Obtained no LECs from alma mater	5
Received training from sources outside of seminary	3
Specific Event Training	6
Integrated training on as needs basis	6

Several themes arose in this part of the study. Codes from the research guided the themes. One theme was that “pastors obtained no LECs from alma mater.” The codes that contributed to this theme were, “The information learned were tools for God to help him use effectively,” “Not specifically. Nothing in the master’s program was practical,” Pastor “learned how inadequately trained he was to equip his members,” “No real-life situations,” and “Some things you can get in a classroom and some only through experience in the field.”

A second theme that developed in this part of the study was training that was received from sources outside of seminary. Codes that supported this theme were “field school with evangelist Ron Halverson, colporteur internship in Michigan,” training in an “evangelistic meeting with Mark Finley,” “Training from Rick Warren’s workshop,” “Chaplaincy (training) at the prison which taught lived theology,” “working at an orphanage for three months in Mexico,” and a “two-week intensive in Haiti.”

The researcher sought to understand what skills the participant lead pastors gained in the Master of Divinity program they completed. All but one participant, PP4, attended a denominational seminary. In the next line of questioning, the researcher sought to determine, from the participant’s perspectives, if the education they received provided them with the skills they needed to equip their members for the gospel ministry.

Sixty-two and a half percent of the participants stated that their education did not prepare them to equip their members for the gospel ministry. PP7 gave an emphatic, “No.” He said that it wasn’t practical enough but contained too much theory. PP10 said that his alma mater was lacking because it focused on “maximizing baptisms and not on retention.” PP10 also stated that the training was only for pastors with one church and did not consider pastors who lead multi-church districts without the resources to hire professional Bible Workers. PP1 said that his alma mater perpetuated the denomination corporately but did not teach the pastor how to develop individuals.

Twenty-five percent of the participants said both “yes” and “no.” PP2 said that he answered “yes” because he was able to meet people from around the world with different experiences, both conservative and liberals. Over time, the interactions made the student more aware of differences. He also believed that his alma mater equipped him because it provided him

with diverse theological thought and “the professors will challenge your thinking.” But, PP2 said that his alma mater did not prepare him to handle “real life situations.” PP3 said no for the same reason. He stated that there was some knowledge you can only get from “experience in the field.”

Twenty-five percent of the participants believed that it was impossible for their alma mater to equip them to equip their parishioners. PP4 attended a non-denominational seminary and believed that he received an education that helped him to interact with people outside of his denomination and provided him with the skills to defend his faith more effectively, but he was not taught how to run a board meeting or to do many of the everyday functions of a pastor.

PP6, said that he received all that he needed from seminary to equip his members. He sees the information that he received as tools. Table 9 gives a summary of the participant’s answers.

When the researcher asked the participant pastors if they remembered any courses within their Master of Divinity program that may have provided them with the skills to equip their parishioners for the gospel ministry, two of the participants gave multiple answers. PP1 started his answer by saying emphatically, that he was inadequately trained to equip his members for ministry, so he was forced to look for resources on his own. He could not find anything practical enough within his denomination, so he looked in other places and settled on Rick Warrens model for equipping. PP1 explained Rick Warren’s baseball diamond illustration, where first base is helping a new convert know Christ, second base was individual responsibility of study, prayer, finding a study and prayer group and doing things to strengthen the inner person, third base was learning your calling and fourth base was developing a life core missionary attitude. The pitcher’s mound was worship. At the end of his answer, his memory was jarred about a possible



class that might have equipped him. “Pastoral Ministries” taught him the role of the pastor as an administrator and evangelist but did not teach him church life or the lifestyle of the church.

PP6 also gave multiple answers. He started his reply by stating that seminary did not specifically give him skills to equip his members for ministry. He believed that he learned more practical information in undergrad. He did receive some training outside of seminary in a field school with Mark Finely and as a Bible Worker with Ron Halverson. He also received some on the job training as a colporteur, where he learned how to sell Christian books.

Several participant pastors, 37.5% of them, which are all the pastors that said no, recalled some of the possible courses that might have provided them with LECs though they initially said that they received no LECs from their alma maters. The 37.5% of participants visibly struggled with their answers. For example, PP7 first gave a vigorous no to the question, but as his response developed, classes that might have equipped him came to mind. PP7 expounded on his “Evangelism Class” by asserting that he learned how to work with individuals contemplating a decision for Christ. He trained his church’s Bible Workers to do the same.

Thirty-seven and a half percent of the participants stated that they did not learn how to equip their members for ministry in the classroom but at a field school or internship. PP4 remembered the practicums he took for chaplaincy in prisons which taught lived theology. PP4 also talked about how he worked at an orphanage for three months in Mexico and a two-week intensive in Haiti. These practicums helped him to develop equipping programs within his church. Table 11 gives a synopsis of possible LEC courses completed by participants.

The researcher also asked participant pastors what kind of equipping programs they had implemented within their congregations. After analyzing their answers, another theme surfaced. The researcher discovered that participant pastors did not have an ongoing equipping program,

but rather trained their members for specific ministry events. Codes that formed this theme were “getting everyone involved in an evangelistic series of meetings like, ‘Which Way America,’” “one on one training with the church’s Bible Worker,” collaborating “with other organizations throughout the city to man his church’s community service warehouse” and “training the church to get involved in this effort,” and “training members to give Bible studies” by shadowing him in Bible studies.

Another theme that arose was integrated training on an as needs basis. The codes that arose for each pastor that supported this theme dealt with the training volunteer leaders to run church departments.

### ***Synopsis***

The results of this part of the study were telling. PP1 and PP4 stated that they did not receive any LECs from seminary, but they did gain LECs outside of the classroom, either through practicums or through an established church discipleship training program. Both pastors established formal equipping programs in their churches. See Table 11 for competency courses and results.

### ***LECs Received from Alma Mater***

**Table 11**

*Competency courses and results (RQ2)*

	PP1	PP2	PP3	PP4	PP5	PP6	PP7	PP10
<b>Received competency from alma mater</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Yes and No</b>	<b>Yes and No</b>	<b>No by design</b>	<b>No by design</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Equipping Courses and Competencies Gained</b>	Post MDiv. Learning (Rick Warren Discipleship Program)	Course: “Mobilizing the Laity”	Alma mater taught the idea of equipping members, but nothing specific.	Gained equipping skills through practicums offered by Seminary	Course: New Testament Studies; Ministry in African American Context	He couldn’t recall any specific class. He then recalled field school with Ron Halverson	Course: Church Growth; Evangelism; Small Groups; Church Leadership	Course: Homiletics; Pastoral Formations; Liberation Theology

						and Mark Finley	(Not enough courses and more theoretical)	
<b>Church Equipping Program</b>	Formal Equipping Program	Leadership Training	Informal Equipping Program	Formal Equipping Program	Event Specific Training	Event Specific Training	Event Specific Training/ Leadership Training/ Informal Equipping Program	Event Specific Training
<b>Effectiveness of LECs gained from alma mater</b>	None	None	None	None	Yes, in diversity	Yes, grasping Scripture	None	Yes, in diversity

Several of the participants stated that seminary taught theoretically, the necessity of equipping their future members, but lacked practical instruction. Seventy-five percent of the pastors conducted training for specific outreach ministry events but did not have formal, systematic equipping programs for their churches. Sixty-two and a half percent of the participants felt that seminary was not effective in providing them with lay equipping competencies.

In review, the researcher sought to gauge the perceived skill levels that the participants gained from their alma maters. After determining what Master of Divinity program each participant completed, the researcher sought to determine if these pastors felt that they were properly equipped to equip their members for ministry. Thirty-seven and a half percent said that they were not properly equipped. Twenty-five percent said that in some ways they were and in others they were not. Twenty-five percent stated that their alma mater did the best that they could and that it was impossible for them to cover every contingency. When asked what courses might have provided them with skills to equip their members for the gospel ministry, 37.5% of the participant's answers were initially a "no" answer but as they continued to share, their memories were refreshed on the subject and they were able to name some possible classes, though they struggled to do so. When asked again, 62.5% said that they did not receive the LECs from seminary necessary to equip their parishioners.

Of the ten classes mentioned by the contributing pastors, this researcher determined, based on the name of the classes, that two of them (20%) could provide some LEC skills for future pastors. Twenty-five percent stated that though they did not learn how to equip their members in any traditional Master of Divinity class, they received a great amount of experience through practicums in various formats.

Subsequently, the researcher wanted to know if the participant pastors had an equipping program or structure within their parish and how their alma mater influenced that program. Seventy-five percent confessed that they had no formal equipping program in their parish but had integrated different kinds of equipping activities on an as needed basis. For example, PP1 used Rick Warren's discipleship program. PP1 stated that every quarter he took his church members through quarterly assessments to measure their activity in service. He admitted that he had difficulty convincing his members to show personal initiative and accountability in ministry.

PP4 also asserted that he had a formal equipping process, though there were still aspects of it that were still developing. His first step was to establish the church's mission, vision and values. He believes that the acceptance of a common mission, vision and values helps the members identify who they are and how they ought to act. PP4 said that "when people know what their mission is, they know what their marching orders are and they are more apt to march forward." He believed that this was one of the best ways to equip his parishioners. He also said that vision is "letting his parishioners know who they wanted to be." Vision is what they perceive their future can be. This projection of themselves in the future helped them to define who they were. Values are "the way that we live and the ethics that we live by." His church member's values were what allowed them to execute and complete their mission. PP4 said that his church had 7 values. These values are called the "Seven C's." They were 1) Christ 2)

connectivity, 3) collaboration, 4) cultivation, 5) creativity, 6) charity and 7) commission. These were values that his church not only agreed to live by in church life, but in their everyday lives. The vision, mission, and values were PP4's first model and attempt to empower his members for ministry. Another way PP4 empowered his members was through the grow groups. Grow groups were his church's form of small groups. The five themes that the grow groups revolved around were 1) physical health groups, 2) social health groups, 3) social needs, 4) mental-emotional health groups and 5) spiritual health groups. These groups functioned in the fall and spring semesters. PP4 recognized that he did not have a way of helping the members to discover their distinct spiritual giftedness so in 2022, he would implement a spiritual gifts assessment into his equipping structure.

The other participant pastors stated that they did not have formal equipping programs in their churches. PP7 said that though he did not have a formal equipping program, he did have one-on-one Bible worker training, seasonal training with his leaders and he trained on an as needs basis. He stated that his training for groups were "tailored for their needs." He had experienced marginal success (20-30% involvement) with this integrated approach.

The researcher observed that the participants viewed equipping in different ways. Seventy-five percent expressed equipping as preparation that was done before an event, like an evangelistic meeting or revival. For example, PP6 said that he tried to get his churches involved in an evangelistic broadcast called "*Which Way America*," A team member from the broadcast visited one of PP6's churches to train his parishioners to perform one-on-one and corporate evangelism. PP6 stated that 40-50% of his members attended the training in his two larger churches and 15-20% attended in his two smaller churches. But he acknowledged that more people participated in training than in the actual work. Since PP6 pastored four churches, he also

admitted that he had difficulty managing equipping programs in his district, so he relied heavily on his leaders to carry out his plans in his absence.

PP10 said that he did informal equipping with some of his members to facilitate and streamline his online worship service. He's also done training for his community service outreach program. He believed he had 100% participation in his programs.

PP5 stated that he did not have a single equipping program, but he took opportunity, within his denominational ministry structure to train his parishioners. For example, he used his board meetings to develop his leaders. He was going through a book on leadership with his board in board meeting to help develop them into better leaders. PP5 also invited specific members to accompany him at Bible Studies so that they could see his example and imitate him. He provided opportunities for them to teach at the Bible Study. He could not measure the effectiveness of this strategy because he felt it was too early to tell, but he expected to see some fruit in mid 2022.

PP3's philosophy on equipping was different from the other participants. He believed that pastors should help their members support a life of community and service. He did not believe that a pastor should program discipleship because it was a lifestyle. Further, within his six rural churches, he did not believe that his members had time to attend any formal training. His equipping was based on developing strong relationships with his members and looking for opportunities to direct them to implement their outreach in their day-to-day activities. He had no way of measuring the success of his method, though he totted that through his leadership, his churches instituted prayer meetings.

At this point, the researcher wanted to know how the training gained in seminary contributed to the participants ability to effectively equip their parishioners. Fifty percent asserted that the skills that they gained in seminary did not contribute to their equipping strategy.

PP7 added that there was an organization within his denomination called the North American Division Evangelistic Institute (NADEI) that went to churches equipping members to do evangelism in various ways because pastors are too administratively busy to do so. He believed that the pastor's schedule should be considered in the subject of equipping.

The definition of equipping members for the gospel ministry varied from pastor to pastor. Some of the pastors perceived equipping as preparation for an event, like an evangelistic meeting or a community service activity. Others saw equipping as training their parishioners to accomplish church goals. One pastor viewed equipping as a lifestyle formation. Seventy-five percent of the participant pastors admitted to not having a formal equipping program within their churches. Of those who did not have an equipping program, all of them shared some form of training or equipping within their church; many on an as needed basis. Fifty percent stated that the equipping activities in their church were not influenced by the training that they received from the Master of Divinity program they completed. Twenty-five percent stated that their alma mater provided them with nominal skills to equip their members.

### **Findings from RQ3**

**RQ3.** According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, commitment to the church and its mission?

From the interview, several themes surfaced for RQ3. For an abstract of these themes and their occurrences from RQ3, see Table 12.

**Table 12**

*Themes (RQ3)*

Themes	Occurrences
Excited about attendance growth	4
Pessimistic about attendance decline	5

20 – 25% of membership active in ministry	5
10-20% of membership put forth a significant effort for the success of the church.	7

Four themes surfaced from the responses given by the participant pastors to RQ3. They were “Excited about attendance growth,” “Pessimistic about attendance decline,” “20 – 25% of membership active in ministry,” and “10-20% of membership put forth a significant effort for the success of the church.”

The codes that developed the theme, “Excited about attendance growth” were, “Newly baptized members joined and stayed because of the love that they felt,” “Church feels excited” because “evangelism and baptisms make a difference,” “Parishioners are excited; they keep showing up and support what’s going on (the church burned the mortgage, which made the members feel good),” the members feel, “encouraged, optimistic and hopeful, “There’s an excitement about the future,” and the churches are optimistic yet patient.”

The theme, “Pessimistic about attendance decline” was supported by the codes church is “pessimistic because church is getting older and dying off and no young people are coming,” church doesn’t feel good “about developing spiritual gifts or finding a mission in life,” “Some are discouraged because church is small,” “There is very little to be proud of in the area where the church is,” and “Only about six members attending after the pandemic.”

In this investigation, the researcher believed that one’s values forms one’s thoughts and feelings, which ultimately determine one’s behavior. Thus, one’s values, feelings and behaviors reveal to whom or what one is committed. The researcher wanted to understand how the participant pastors perceived their parishioner’s commitment by exploring the perceived values, feelings and behaviors of their parishioners in relation to their church.



### ***Perceived Values***

The participant pastors were asked if they believed their parishioner's values aligned with the values of the church. Fifty percent of the participants said that their parishioner's values aligned with their parish's values. PP10 boasted that his church members were not pew warmers. They were willing to participate in the outreach programs of the church.

Those who said that their parishioner's values did not align with the churches provided different causes. PP6 said that immigrant families, in one of his churches, had different backgrounds, thus they were not as committed to the church as those who were native to the area and were long standing members.

PP7 presented a different dichotomy within his church. Based on the responses that he received from his members after presenting the theme for the year," he surmised that about 50% had values that aligned with his church. He believed that the other half were probably not committed to Christ. PP4 suggested that all his parishioners were not yet "sold out" on the seven values of the church, but he believed that they were in the process of doing so.

### ***Perceived Feelings***

The participants were first asked to share how they perceived their parishioners felt about their parish. Thirty-seven and a half percent said that their church felt good about their church. PP2 and PP5 went as far as to say that the church members were excited about the church. PP2 attributes this excitement to the activity of evangelism and baptism. New people are accepting Jesus and joining the church on a consistent basis. PP5 testified that he saw actual growth in his members. His leaders were showing consistency in their responsibilities and the members supported what was going on. He believed that the members wanted the best for his church. PP6

believes that his parishioners “found fellowship within the walls of his churches.” He believed that this sense of family made a difference.

Additionally, fifty percent of the participants gave mixed reviews about their perceived parishioners feelings regarding their churches. PP10 stated that he felt that one of his churches were pessimistic about its future because the older members were dying off and no young people were attending. This was the sentiment of several pastors.

### **Dying Congregations**

One major condition that arose as a perceived issue in three of the pastor’s parishes was the older demographic of some of their congregations. Churches that had a demographic of senior citizens were less optimistic about their church and its future, in contrast to churches with younger people. PP6, who pastored four churches, stated that the churches that primarily had older people in attendance were “more pessimistic about the church presently and its future because they had experienced a dwindling of their membership due to death.” PP6 wondered how much longer the church would last at the rate people were dying. His younger church had a constant influx of members because the church was near a military base with young families. There was always a sense of excitement there.

PP1 stated that the young people had left the church and that the congregants were getting older. Those who grew up in the church, now have children of their own but fail to attend church with their children. The church is mostly older people, so his congregants felt somewhat pessimistic. PP1 asserted that his members were excited about the worship service but showed resistance towards finding and using their spiritual gifts or finding a mission in life.

### **Other Factors of Pessimism**

PP3, who pastors six churches, stated that some were discouraged because his churches were small. He also said, “There is very little to be proud of” in the area where his churches were because he felt that the potential for growth in the rural areas where his churches resided were small. PP4 stated that because of the pandemic, only four of his members attended church in the church building. Most instead watched the services online. His church was nearly full every Sabbath because non-members from the community have been attending.

### **Optimistic Feelings**

Despite the mixed reviews, 75% felt that their members were optimistic about their church’s future. Statements like “The church is growing, and their best days were before them (PP7)” were said to describe the hopeful feelings of their congregants. Even participants who were cynical about their parishes spoke buoyantly about their parish’s future. For example, PP3 said that his churches were optimistic, yet patient. PP5 stated that his congregants were excited and waiting to see what would happen next. PP10 stated that their community service work in the community caused his congregation to feel hopeful about their future.

### ***Perceived Behavior***

Again, the researcher believed that values, feelings and behaviors shed light on one’s object and level of commitment. He asked the participants to rate the performance of their parishioners in the ministries of the church.

### **20/80 Phenomenon**

PP6 stated that 20% of his members did 80% of the work in his churches. He illustrated some of the work that the 20% did by telling me about an elder in one of his churches that worked long hours as a meat inspector, yet still found time to give Bible Studies on a weekly

basis. PP6 does not attribute this member's behavior to any church sponsored gifts assessment or equipping process but believed that his Elder was self-motivated to work for God after his conversion.

PP7 asserted that 20-25% of his members gave extra effort towards completing the church's mission. He also gave an illustration of some of the work that the 20% did in his church. Since the pandemic, several young men had taken it upon themselves to develop the church's broadcasting capacity. They developed a professional broadcast for church service every Sabbath. His church also had a drive-in service and those young men made sure that the audio and visual ministries were professionally done. PP7 does not trace their efforts to any training that he coordinated at church. They saw a need and because they were skilled in those areas, they passionately stepped up to the task. Sixty-two and a half percent of the participants felt that some of the members consistently performed their responsibilities in ministry well while others did not.

### **Commitment Limits**

Twenty-five percent of the participants asserted or implied that though their members showed commitment to the programs of the church, their commitments were limited. PP1's church took part in a Gallup Poll survey where they scored high on community service. PP1 acknowledged that the church rallied behind events, but when it came to consistent one on one ministry, his members were not responsive. PP1 believed that his members would take part in the big events because it looked good. PP6 stated that because he had so many churches he pastored in his parish, he couldn't give any of them the proper amount of time to equip them all in ministry so, "a few people cared about the majority of the work." PP6 told the story of a lady in

one of his churches who burned herself out trying to carry on the functions of the church because she felt that no one else could do them right.

Five of the pastors that participated in this study said that 20 – 25% of their members were active in ministry and seven of the pastors stated that their membership put forth a significant effort for the success of the church. The researcher saw that these two statements were themes.

### **The COVID Effect**

Regarding performance, many of the pastors stated that the pandemic had an adverse effect on the performance of their members. PP7 said that the members that were self-motivated during the pandemic looked for ways of contributing to the ministries of the church. Those that were not self-motivated were absent from ministry and the pandemic gave them an excuse to do so. PP2 said that he had low levels of participation in one of his churches. He also attributed their absence to COVID-19. Throughout the interviews, COVID was a part of the conversation because it has affected most of the participating churches.

### **Good Performance**

Only 25% of the participants felt that their parishioner's performance was good. Pastor PP3 stated that his members would pay someone else to do the work of ministry but did not feel the burden to do it themselves, therefore he had made it a point to help his members see that "getting out of their comfort zone to do their hands on part in the ministry is their responsibility." Those that were working put forth valiant efforts. Eighty-seven and a half percent of the participants said that between 10 and 20% of the members put forth a more significant effort for the success of the church.

PP2 shared an unusual story regarding one of his churches. He asserts that close to 100% of his members in one of his churches had given extraordinary efforts to fulfill the mission of the church. PP2 affirmed that the church members of this special church were always ready and willing to participate in the work of saving souls. He attributed their spiritual fire to the fact that the entire church became Seventh-day Adventist about 15-20 years earlier and had not adopted some of the lethargic ways of some of the more established churches in the denomination. The church was still passionate about spreading the gospel to the world.

PP10 also maintained that 100% of both of his churches gave a more significant effort than expected for the success of the church's mission. He set up several ministries where the members had participated and enjoyed doing so.

### *Synopsis*

See Table 13 for a synopsis of the participants perception of their parishioner's commitment to their prospective churches.

**Table 13**

#### *Synopsis on Commitment (RQ3)*

Participant Pastor's Perceptions on commitment	PP1	PP2	PP3	PP4	PP5	PP6	PP7	PP10
What members are willing to give more significant effort than normal?	Some of them	Some of them	No	Some of them	Some of them	Some of them	Some of them	Yes
How members feel about church?	Mixed Reviews	Excited	Mixed Reviews	Mixed Reviews	Excited	Excited	Mixed Reviews	Mixed Reviews
What parishioners are willing to do for the success of the church?	Work Hard	Some of them	Pay money, not work	Work Hard	Pay money, not work	Work Hard	Some of them	Work Hard
Values of members v.	Some aligned	They aligned	They align	Some aligned and	They aligned	Some align and some	Some aligned and some don't align	They aligned

values of church	and some don't align			some don't align		don't align		
Parishioners feel about future of church	Pessimistic	Optimistic	Optimistic	Unknown	Optimistic	Pessimistic	Optimistic	Optimistic
Performance of parishioners in ministry	Some perform consistently/ Some do not	Some perform consistently/ Some do not	It's poor	It's poor	Good	Some perform consistently/ Some do not	Some perform consistently/ Some do not	Good

Sixty-two and a half percent of the participants felt that some of the members consistently performed their responsibilities in ministry well while others did not. Several of them spoke of the 20/80 effect where 20% of the members did 80% of the work. Eighty-seven and a half percent of the participants affirmed that 10-20% of their parishioners put forth a more significant effort for the success of the church's mission.

The data also revealed that those pastors that felt that their parishioner's values lined up with their church's values also perceived that their members were optimistic about the future of their church, though this did not always translate into their member's good performance in the church's ministry.

### Findings from RQ4

**RQ4.** According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, partnerships with them in ministry?

Several questions were presented to the participant pastors related to RQ4. Various themes developed from the pastor's responses. Table 14 provides the themes that emerged from RQ4 and the number of occurrences.

**Table 14**

*Themes (RQ4)*

Themes	Occurrences
Set plan to determine spiritual gifts	6
Consensus to solve ministry problems	6

Used resources to help members in trouble	4
Perceived excitement of parishioners about new ideas and plans	5
Pastors perceived members saw them as competent	7
Pastors perceived some members would defend and some not in leu of accusations	3
Pastors perceived members saw them as partners	3
Pastors perceived members did not see them as partners	3

Eight themes emerged from the interviews regarding RQ4. These themes were, “Set plan to determine spiritual gifts,” “Consensus to solve ministry problems,” “Used resources to help members in trouble,” “Perceived excitement of parishioners about new ideas and plans,” “Pastors perceived members saw them as competent,” “Pastors perceived some members would defend and some not in leu of accusations,” “Pastors perceived members saw them as partners,” and “Pastors perceived members did not see them as partners.”

The theme “Set plan to determine spiritual gifts,” were supported by the following codes: “Use of spiritual gifts inventory questionnaire,” “Identifies people’s passion,” “Listens for areas that parishioners want to get involved,” “Uses a gifts placement team,” “Communicates to church what is needed and requested volunteers to help,” “Spiritual gifts teaching and utilizing a spiritual gifts form,” and pastor “seeks out gifts “by visiting, talking to them and social interaction.”

The theme “Consensus to solve ministry problems,” was supported by the codes, “Uses an Elder mentor or mentor that is assigned that they can get advice if they run into a problem,” the pastor “follows Matthew 18 to guide his parishioners through relational troubles,” the pastor “uses a whiteboard and writes the problem and possible solution,” “the pastor “helps facilitate interaction where they come up with their own solution,” the pastor “talks through the talks through the problem (with the leader) to (help them) figure it out,” and the pastor “encourages his members to come to him with a solution, not a problem.”



The theme, “Used resources to help members in trouble,” was developed from the codes, provides “financial assistance for funerals or talks with funeral home to give discount,” has “written letters for people in trouble with the law,” the pastor “provides counseling and if necessary, outsources,” helps parishioners “with Sabbath (work) conflicts,” “helped a person get out of a domestic violence situation,” and “helped spearhead getting financial (help for people) in need.”

The theme “Perceived excitement of parishioners about new ideas and plans,” was supported by the codes, “Initially, they say, ‘Why?’ because they done it another way for so long, but, (the pastor’s) credibility and success” helps promote the idea, “If they understand, they will go along with it,” if an idea is presented, “they are willing to try.”

The theme “Pastors perceived members saw them as competent,” was developed by the codes, “The churches probably see that (the pastor) is doing the best he can,” parishioners are “pretty positive about his leadership when they are able to get it,” “Nine out of ten would say (the pastor) was a competent leader,” the pastor has been in his district for three years but “feels that both churches (see him) as competent” because “he’s taking them somewhere,” “They feel good, but that’s the problem because the members knows (the pastors) they won’t help out,” and “They have learned to trust (the pastor) as a leader.”

The theme, ““Pastors perceived some members would defend and some not in leu of accusations,” was supported by the codes, “Some wouldn’t believe it” but “some look for opportunities to poke holes,” “Majority of members would be supportive, but it depends on the accusation,” and the pastor stated that “70% of members would come to his defense.”

The theme, “Pastors perceived members saw them as partners,” were developed by the codes, he “will not ask people to do what he will not do himself,” “Collaborative,” and “I’m

tough, I do have expectations, but I also have compassion and that is a growth area that's also something not taught in seminary."

The final theme that emerged for RQ4 was "Pastors perceived members did not see them as partners." This theme was developed by the codes, "Church sees (the pastor) as a visitor because (he's) not there all the time," "Some see me as a micromanager," and the pastor is "talented, he's nice, but it's too much of a one-man show."

Hwang (2008) stated that partnership was "a reciprocal relationship between [a] leader and member in terms of trust, respect, and sense of obligation to each other" (p. 10). Pastors are not to lord over their parishioners but to partner with them in the work of the gospel ministry. The researcher aimed to discover the perspectives of the participant pastors regarding their partnership with their parishioners and how they perceived the feelings of their parishioners regarding their partnership with them. Questions were asked to hear specific encounters as the participants interacted with their parishioners.

### ***The Pastor's Perspective***

One way the researcher attempted to understand specific encounters of the participant pastors with their parishioners was to investigate the ways that they sought out the potential gifts of their members in church and how they utilize those gifts in their corporate ministry plans. PP7 gave his members a spiritual gifts inventory, which is a survey that each member took that helps pinpoint what their possible spiritual gifts were. His youth leader also sent the teenagers through a similar survey. Additionally, PP7 aimed, through observation and conversation, to find what his members were passionate about and then to match them with a ministry, within the church, that would help them to fulfill that passion. From data gathered from the spiritual gifts assessments and the personal interactions, the Gifts Placement Team attempted to place the

members in positions that most closely matched their passions and giftedness. PP4 has also sought the gifts of his members through personal conversations and investment in relationships.

PP5 used a spiritual gifts assessment to find the gifts of individual members. He matched their gifts with different ministries within the church. Additionally, he's tasked his leaders to observe individual team members to see who had a passion or great interest in that ministry. Those individuals could potentially become leaders in the future.

PP1 also used a spiritual gifts assessment but has found that not all the recommendations have been compatible with the structure of the Adventist Church or the ministries that he has available. He wanted to see a more practical assessment that gives everyone a way of using their gifts.

PP2 used a spiritual gifts form to determine what ministries peaked his member's interests. He allowed his members to determine what they thought their spiritual gifts were and to volunteer to use them. PP10 does something similar, but he didn't use a form but told his congregants what positions needed filling. He was surprised to see who volunteered for what. Seventy-five percent of the interviewees had a set plan in place to find gifts and to utilize them in an organized ministry plan or structure.

Another way the researcher attempted to understand the partnerships of the participant pastors with their parishioners was to seek out specific times that they helped a church leader who faced a challenge. Seventy-five percent of the participant pastors said that they helped their leaders through consensus in a board meeting or when they presented various leadership problems was through consensus. PP3 also helped his members facilitate interaction on the issues and encouraged them to come up with their own solutions. PP1 called his leaders together, pulled out a whiteboard and asked the challenged leaders to express to the entire group what their

problem was. Then PP1 asked for possible solutions and then wrote those solutions on the whiteboard. Through consensus, he directed his leaders to pick two or three of the best answers and warned them that if one solution didn't work, they should not feel bad about the results, but try another solution.

PP7 used an Elder on his Elders' board to serve as mentors to the leaders. Those mentors helped guide them through ministry problems. PP7 stated that he also gave his own advice where necessary.

PP2 helped his leaders solve ministry problems by walking them through the stages of Matthew 18, which included going to the troubled party first. If the problem was not resolved, they were to take someone with them. If the problem still subsisted, the troubled leader would bring the issue to the board.

The researcher widened his scope of investigation by exploring how the participants used their pastoral authority to help their parishioners that were in trouble. The participants answered differently.

Fifty percent of the participant pastors said that they used their resources to help a member in trouble. For example, PP7, PP2, PP4 and PP1 said that they authorized the church to write a check to help someone needing financial help. PP1 added that individuals who needed financial help were given help based on the stipulation that they would return it over the course of time so that someone else could be helped. If the needy individual failed to do this, they would not get help from the church again.

Additionally, PP1 talked about the confidentiality of individual church members needing help. He gave an example of a young church member who had become pregnant outside of marriage. According to church policy, she was subject to church discipline. She wrote a letter to

PP1 confessing her shortcoming and asked for censorship, which was a lesser form of church discipline in the Adventist church. According to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, church discipline is not punitive but redemptive, so by asking for discipline, she implied that she also sought to be restored in the future. PP1 took it upon himself not to present her case to the church for discipline, but instead discussed the issue with his elder board and assigned her to an elder for Bible studies. She was still living with the future father of her child. When she went through the Bible lessons, she realized that she could not continue to live with her boyfriend, so she put him out and decided to recommit her life to Christ through baptism. PP1 looked forward to restoring her with her new baby, to full fellowship. PP1 said that he made the executive decision to help the young offender by restoring her to God without subjecting her to the embarrassment of public discipline which would have required for the details of her sin to be publicized amongst the church body. PP6 was the only participant that said that he would handle parishioner problems by consensus, through his church board.

### ***Perceived Parishioner Perspectives***

The researcher asked the participant pastors how they perceived their parishioners' responses to specific actions taken by their pastor. In chapter five, the researcher compared these perceptions with the actual answers given by their parishioners in Phase Two of this study.

The researcher asked the participants how they believed their parishioners responded when they (the pastor) presented a new idea or plan for their parishioners to participate in? The majority, sixty-two and a half percent of the participants believed that their members were excited and accepting of new ideas and plans from their pastor. PP5 said, he doesn't get pushback when he presents new ideas. If his members understood what the plan was and why he

had proposed it, they would go along with it. PP5 stated that he had built that kind of trust. He said that his members knew that he loved them, loved the Lord and was consistent.

Some of the participants presented different caveats to their answers. For example, PP10 said that his members would first ask why because “they had become accustomed to doing something another way for so long,” but he witnessed his credibility from past successes win the sceptics over. PP2 asserted that his ideas were well received by his churches, though they responded differently. One church would hear the ideas or plans and would support them with their time, talents and resources. In another one of his churches, the members would give money to the effort but not their time. PP7 said that eight out of ten of his members responded positively when he presented a new idea or plan. He then gave the example of a change that he proposed. He proposed to move Sabbath School from Saturday morning to Friday night because of the pandemic. At that time, the church was not opened, and Sabbath School was exclusively online but participation was very low. Upon first introduction of the idea, most of his board and members were willing to give it a try, but his Sabbath School Superintendent was not. Majority ruled and he had to take the Sabbath School helm to make it happen, but Sabbath School attendance on Friday night skyrocketed.

PP4 gave a mixed review. Though his church went along with him on many of his new ideas, he felt that his young age and perceived naivety kept him from getting full approval and participation.

Along those same lines, the pastor’s competency was brought into question. They were asked if they believed that their parishioners perceived them as competent in leading them to fulfill the church’s mission. A whopping 87.5% of the participants believed that their parishioners saw them as competent in leading them in the church’s mission. PP2 said that he

had pastored his two churches for three years and he believed that his churches saw him as a competent leader because they felt that he was leading them somewhere. PP3 also believed that his members saw him as a competent leader. PP10 averred that his members wished that they had more baptisms, but they understood that numbers do not always equate to a growing church. His nurturing ministries kept his members.

For PP1, competency was not always a positive trait. He stated, “They feel good, but that’s the problem because the members know I’m skilled but won’t help out.” His elders illustrated this by summing that he was “a quarterback with no wide receivers.” They admired “superstar, charismatic pastors but don’t grasp their responsibility to ministry.”

PP5 pronounced that he was younger than the four previous pastors that led his parish so when he first arrived at his church, the members verbally said that he was there for them to train him to pastor. But over the last three years, they have learned to trust him as a leader. PP4 had a similar experience but had not, yet, had the same results. Because he was in his late twenties when he became pastor of the church, the church members saw him as inexperienced and naïve. He believed that though he was a dynamic speaker, it was difficult for his church to see him as competent.

The issue of agism became a theme amongst a couple of the interviewees. Pastors of multi-church districts sometimes had members of influence in the church, whose authority rivaled their own. In one of PP2’s churches, one of his elders wielded a lot of influence. The church would not follow anything PP2 suggested without first getting approval from this elder. Fortunately for PP2, this matriarch followed his lead and partnered with him in ministry.

PP6 did not fare so well. He had an Elder in one of his churches that carried much influence, even more than PP6. If the elder endorsed an idea, the rest of the church would follow

his lead and support it. Unfortunately, many of the plans and ideas promoted by PP6 were not endorsed by this Elder and the church lost enthusiasm for his leadership.

Participant pastors were also asked how they believed their members would respond if a negative accusation was made against their pastor. PP10 said that his members would defend him publicly but would confront him privately to get a firsthand account. PP5 said that if his members heard a negative accusation against him, they would “shut it down for the most part.” He stated that he sometimes said things the wrong way, but he had shown that his intentions were for the betterment of the church. He believed that his relationship with them, through the power of the Holy Spirit, would guide his parishioners to make the right decision if such an accusation were to arise. Only 25% of the participants believed that their parishioners would defend them if a negative accusation were to surface. Thirty-seven and a half percent of the of the participants believed that some would defend them, and some wouldn’t. PP1 believed that some would heavily defend him and wouldn’t believe the accusation. He said, “Some would look for opportunities to poke holes.” PP3 believed that most of his members would be supportive, but he admitted that it would depend on the accusation. PP7 believed that 70% of his members would come to his defense.

PP4 implied that if a negative accusation were to surface, they might believe it because he stated he had a stellar reputation in the community, so the accusation would probably come from within the church and those accusations would probably be about his performance of his single status. PP6 has never had a negative accusation against him in his 38-years of ministry so he really didn’t know how his members might respond.

Lastly, the researcher sought to determine how the participants perceived their parishioners would characterize their working relationship with them in ministry. Thirty-seven



and a half percent of them believed that their members characterized their working relationship as a partnership. PP7 said that he would not ask his people to do what he would not do himself. PP10 used the same sentiments. He used the word “collaboratively” to describe how he perceived how his members saw his working relationship with them. PP5 said, “I’m tough, I do have expectations, but I also have compassion and that is a growth area that’s also something not taught by seminary.”

Twenty-five percent said that their members would characterize their working relationship as personal. Three of the participant pastors had unique characterizations. PP6 believed that his members saw him as a visitor because he had so many churches and was not able to give proper attention to any of them. PP4 stated that his members considered him to be a one-man show. They said that he was nice and talented but not a team player. PP7 believed that some would categorize him as a micromanager. Some would say that he was “supportive, like a cheerleader.” Some would say that he was “collaborative, a team player and a servant leader.”

### ***Synopsis***

Regarding pastoral perceptions of their interaction with their members, 75% of the participant pastors had a set plan in place to find gifts and to utilize them in an organized ministry plan or structure. When their leaders faced a ministry challenge, 75% of the participant pastors said that they had helped their ministry leaders manage leadership problems by consensus. The pastors either convened a small committee or the church board to discuss and solve the problem. Using a wider scope, the pastors were asked how their members perceived their use of authority to help a parishioner who was dealing with a problem. Fifty percent of the participant pastors said that they would take the initiative to use their resources to help a member in trouble. Only one pastor stated that he would collaborate with others to come up with a

solution. The confidentiality of the parishioner in trouble was an issue for at least one of the participants. Regarding the participant pastor's perception of their parishioner's responses to their specific actions in ministry, 62.5% of the participants believed that their parishioners would be excited and would not challenge them if they presented a new idea or plan to their parishioners. Further, Eighty-seven and a half percent of the participant pastors believed that their parishioners saw them as competent in leading the church to fulfill its mission.

On the other hand, only 25% of the interviewees believed that their parishioners would defend them if a negative accusation were to surface against them. Thirty-seven and a half percent asserted that some would defend them, and some would not. Lastly, when asked how they believed their members viewed their working relationship in ministry, 37.5% of the participants believed that their members characterized their working relationship as a partnership. Twenty five percent of the interviewees believed that their parishioners characterized their working relationship in ministry as personal or relational.

See Table 15 for a synopsis of the researcher's findings on the partnership perceptions of the participant pastors.

**Table 15**

*Synopsis on Partnership (RQ4)*

Participant Pastor's Perceptions on partnership	PP1	PP2	PP3	PP4	PP5	PP6	PP7	PP10
How members respond when pastor presents new ideas.	Not much support	Most are excited and supportive	Most are excited and supportive	Not much support	Members excited and supportive	Members excited and supportive	Most are excited and supportive	Members excited and supportive
How do you believe your members perceive your competency	Competent	Competent	Competent	Not Competent	Competent	Competent	Competent	Competent

<b>Sought out and utilized spiritual gifts of parishioners</b>	Used Rick Warrens Spiritual Gifts Program	Taught and asked for volunteers (Spiritual Gifts Form)	Informal Training	No program	Spiritual Gifts Assessment	Events Specific Training. No formal program	Spiritual Gifts Assessment	Asked members for help to fill empty position in church
<b>Helped parishioners with ministry problems</b>	Through Consensus	Through Consensus	Through Consensus	Sought inside and outside help	Trial and Error	Through Consensus	Through Consensus	Through Consensus
<b>Helped parishioners with personal problems</b>	Use resources with stipulations	Use of resources	Give advice as friend	Use of resources	One on one; un-conventional	Through Consensus	Use of resources	Give advice as friend

## Findings from RQ5

**RQ5.** According to the participant pastor's parishioners, how effective was their church's overall discipleship/equipping program?

In the mixed-method portion (phase two) of this study, a questionnaire was developed to gather data from the parishioners of the participant pastors. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In part one, the researcher asks some qualitative questions to get an understanding of the perceptions of the participant lay attendees on the overall discipleship/equipping program of their churches. Demographical information was also obtained in part one. This portion addressed RQ5, which utilized a perceptual measurement, asking questions based on the observations of the parishioner's partnership with their pastor and perception of their commitment to their church. This portion of the study answers RQ6.

The response measurements of the Likert scale used in the quantitative portion of phase 2 were arranged as follows: 1 – disagree (D), 2 – neither or neutral (N), 3 – agree (A). In most cases, higher numbered answers in the questionnaire represent higher levels of partnership and commitment. The alpha reliability for commitment questions (23 items) was .9 (Range of  $r = 1.18$  to  $2.93$ ). The mean of this scale is 2.52 (SD = .612) and the range of the scale is 1 to 3. The

higher alpha reliability score indicates stronger relationships between questions. The coefficient internal consistency reliability of all questions measuring laity's partnership (22 items) was .881 (Range of  $r = 1.44$  to  $2.84$ ). The mean of this scale is 2.54 ( $SD = .603$ ) and the range of the scale is 1 to 3. In this questionnaire, the questions measuring commitment and partnership were highly reliable as they related to every other question within their categories.

### *Analysis*

The questionnaire was distributed using Qualtrics, which provided access to the questionnaire online. The researcher provided paper copies as well and inputted the data from the

**Figure 6**

*General discipleship/equipping program (RQ5)*



completed copies into the online version of the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, the researcher sought to find out how the participating lay attendees perceived their churches discipleship/equipping programs and their pastor's competence to develop and run a discipleship/equipping program. Of the total respondents ( $n=125$ ) 18.42% of the participants said that their church had a spiritual gifts and equipping curriculum to help them discover and use their gifts to spread the gospel. Additionally, 34.21% said that their church did not have either and 22.37% said that their church had a spiritual gifts program. Twenty-five percent said that their church had an equipping curriculum. See Figure 6 for details.

In the qualitative portion of the questionnaire, the lay participants were asked to describe their church's discipleship program. The study revealed that 45.3% of lay participants ( $n=125$ ) (several percentage points higher than 34.21% portrayed in the previous table) said that their church either did not have a discipleship or equipping program, the concept was not applicable to their church or there were serious limitations in their church's program. One example of a limitation was a comment made by an attendee from 012 who said that only individuals belonging to cliques in the church would receive training and opportunities for ministry. Another attendee from 002 said, "Due to members inconsistency, this area was limited because attendance was inconsistent. The researcher assumed that this attendee made this statement considering the effects of the pandemic upon their church's attendance. Additionally, 9.3% of lay participants said that their church's discipleship programs were inactive and 7.8% asserted that they were unaware of a formal discipleship program in their church. This researcher did find in the data statements their church's discipleship programs were informal in nature.

On the other hand, 48.4% of lay participants stated that their churches were "good, in progress, encouraged everyone to do something, provides opportunities to follow Christ, open to

everyone, active and inviting, were abundant in opportunities for service, encouraged members to use gifts, were inviting, awesome and spirit filled.” An attendee from 017 said that their church “does well at giving people the opportunity to grow, develop and serve” both within and outside of its walls, “however no formal system was in place to insure consistency and visibility.”

The members from two church did not participate in this part of the questionnaire, 006 and 018. 006 had one member to complete the questionnaire. The pastor of 018 expressed in his interview that his church did not have a discipleship program. Table 16 gives a synopsis of these findings.

**Table 16**

*Description of Church Discipleship Program (RQ5)*

A description of church's discipleship program:	001	002	006	007	012	017	018	019	
Not applicable	X				xx	xx		xxxx	14%
Many are not involved	X	x							3.1%
Strict		x							1.5%
In progress		x			x	x		x	6.25%
Good		x		x	xxx	xx		xx	14%
Not aware of formal program		x		x	xx	xx			9.3%
Only for those in clique					x				1.5%
Inactive					xxxx	xx			9.3%
Everyone to do something				x		x			3.1%
Effective					xxx				4.7%
Church fosters followers of Christ					x				1.5%
Open to everyone					x				1.5%
Active and inviting					x				1.5%
Many programs					xxxxx	x			9.3%
Invited to work but not mentored					x				1.5%
Connecting members					x				1.5%
Micromanaging					x				1.5%
Members encouraged to use gifts					x				1.5%
Awesome and Spirit filled						x			1.5%
Hit and miss						x			1.5%
Pastor and lay attendees' disciple						x			1.5%
Pastor does more than members						x			1.5%

The data also showed that every answer approving the discipleship or equipping program of the participating churches were made by a baptized member who was either actively working in a church office or belonging to a small group. This is not surprising, in and of itself,

considering that 78.2% of lay participants in this study either held a departmental office in the church or belonged to a small group.

### Findings from RQ6

**RQ6.** According to the participant pastor's parishioners, how effective was their church's equipping program to fostering their commitment to the church and its mission and partnership with the pastor to accomplish the gospel commission?

RQ6 made up Phase Two, or the quantitative part of this study. There were three demographic categories that were investigated. They were age, gender, and churches with perceived spiritual gifts programs verses churches that do not have perceived spiritual gifts programs. The descriptive statistics for these six categories and their sub-classes are displayed in Table 17.

**Table 17**

*Descriptive statistics for age, gender and pastors with perceived LECs*

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR QUANTITATIVE DEMOGRAPHICS	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	# of participants
<b>1. Age</b>	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.59	79
Age 18-32	2.00	2.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	7
Ages 33-40	3.00	3.00	3.35	0.00	0.00	10
Ages 41-49	4.00	4.00	4.00	0.00	0.00	9
Ages 50-64	5.00	5.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	30
65+	6.00	6.00	6.00	0.00	0.00	23
<b>2. Male</b>	2.00	6.00	4.29	1.49	2.21	24
<b>3. Female</b>	2.00	6.00	4.82	1.11	1.24	55
<b>4. Pastors with perceived LECs</b>	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	13
<b>5. Pastor without perceived LECs</b>	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	3

In collecting and processing the data obtained from the questionnaire, the researcher used Qualtrics to determine how the different demographics of this study responded to the questions that addressed commitment and partnership. Eighteen tables were developed that reflected, by percentages, the answers given in the three Likert scale questionnaire. After data from each

demographic was collected, the researcher divided the questions into four categories for commitment and three categories for partnership.

The demographic data was then placed in a comparative table to determine which demographic received a higher percentage in each category presented and ultimately in their commitment to the church and its mission and their partnership with the pastor as they, together accomplished the gospel commission.

### ***Demographics***

Within the seven ranges of this study (18-32-year-olds, 33-40-year-olds, 41-49-year-olds, 50-64-year-olds, 65+-year-olds, male verses female and perceived pastoral LECs verses perceived absence of pastoral LECs). The researcher considered if there were any substantial differences in the commitment and partnership levels comparatively.

### ***Commitment***

The research first addressed commitment. Four categories were investigated to determine which demographic showed the greatest overall commitment. The categories for commitment were parishioner values, parishioner perceived feelings, parishioner perceived behavior and parishioner's responses to lay equipping programs instituted by their pastors. Following is synopsis of this researcher's findings.

#### **Parishioner Values (Age)**

Four questions addressed parishioner values as compared to their church's values.

**Table 18**

*Comparative Table for Parishioner's Values*

<b>Comparative Table for Age Parishioner Values</b>		<b>18-32-year-olds</b>	<b>33-40-year-olds</b>	<b>41-49-year-olds</b>	<b>50-64-year-olds</b>	<b>65+-year-olds</b>
<b>35.</b>	I am very interested in the growth of this church.	100%	80%	100%	92.86%	90.48%
<b>37.</b>	When the church is successful in fulfilling its	100%	90%	100%	92.86%	90.48%

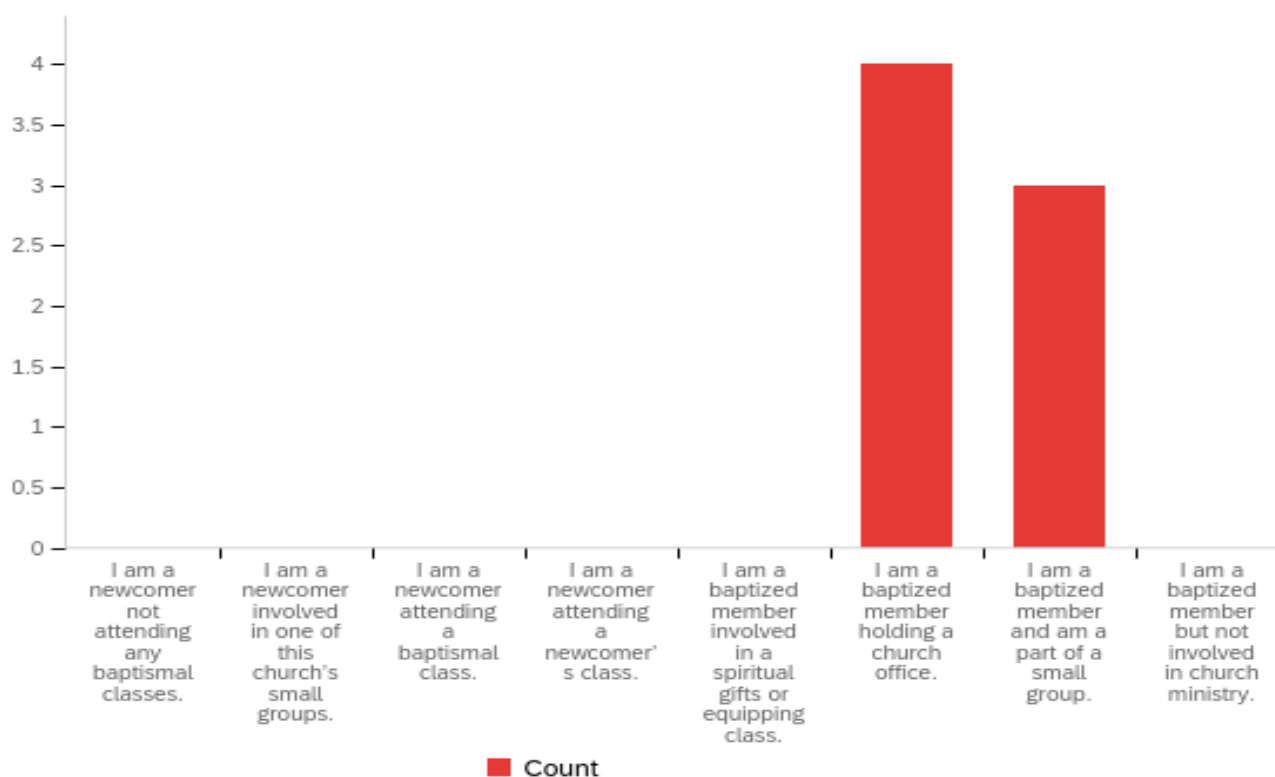


	mission, I rejoice.					
40.	I clearly understand the mission plans and goals of my church.	75%	90%	100%	85.19%	71.43%
42.	It doesn't matter to me whether the church grows or not (positive response for church gives a "disagree" answer).	80%	100%	100%	85.71%	80.95%
<b>Average</b>		88.75%	90%	100%	89.16%	83.34%

The researcher first investigated the age demographics to see the percentage levels of agreeable responses to the statements provided. See Table 18 to view the questions and the percentages of the “agree” responses from each age demographic.

**Figure 7**

*Parish status age 33-40 (RQ6)*



demographics had high percentages, but the 33-40-year-old's values perfectly aligned with their

churches at 100%. The researcher also discovered that 100% of this group was either a baptized member actively working in the church or baptized and a member of a small group.

The remainder of this demographic were baptized but inactive. There were no newcomers amongst this group. Figure 7 shows a pie chart reflecting the church status of this group.

The researcher felt that it was worth noting that the 33-40-year-old demographic makes up only 11.39% of participants.

### **Parishioner Values (Gender)**

This investigation revealed overall that female values in this study aligned more closely to the church than male values.

**Table 19**

*Descriptive Statistics for gender*

1	What is your gender?	1.00	115	100%
2	Male	1.00	35	30.43%
3	Female	2.00	80	69.57%

The researcher discovered that the outlier in this data was that 68.18% of male participants clearly understood the mission, plans and goals of their church in comparison to 86% of female participants. Additionally, 22.73% of males gave neutral responses to this statement.

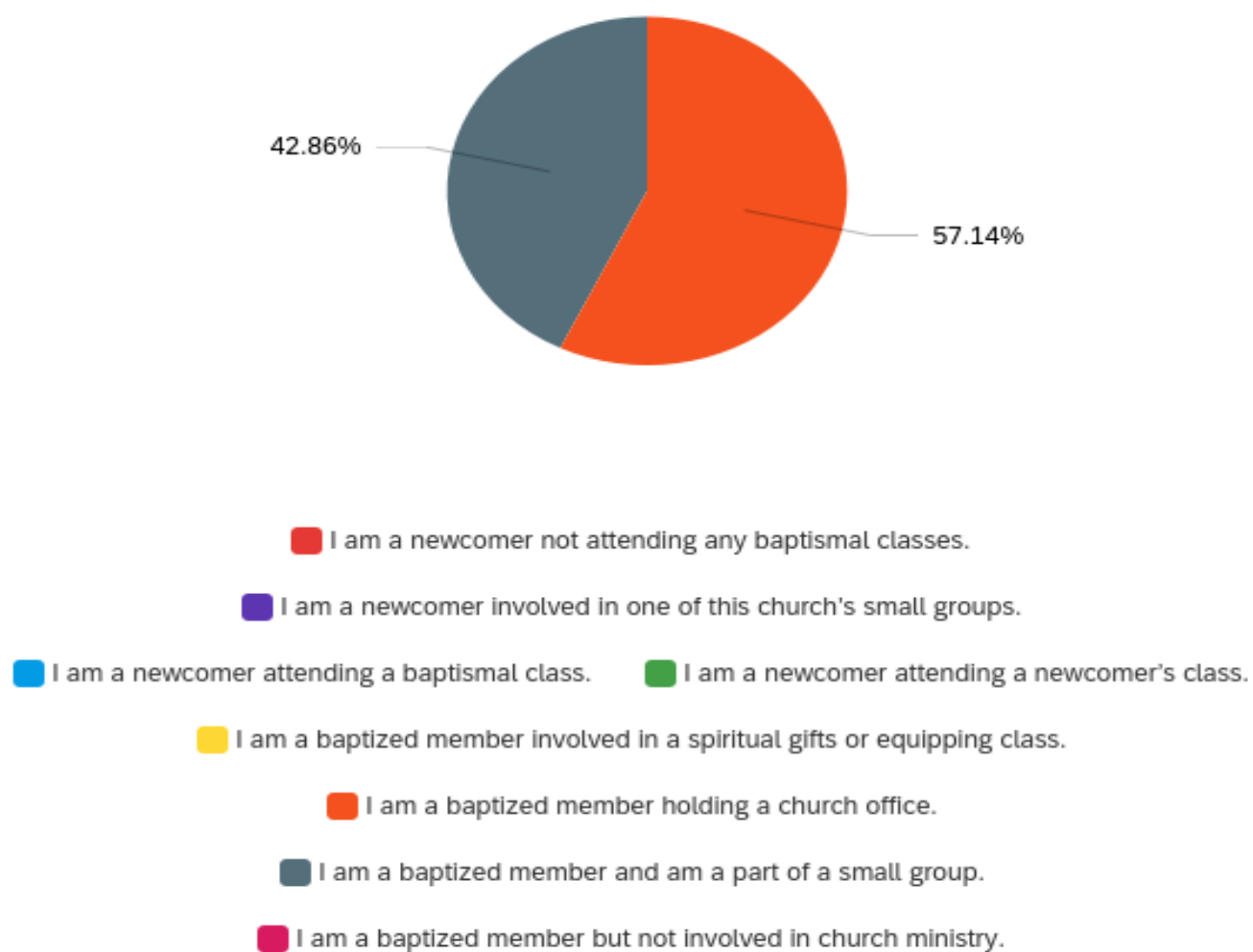
Other facts stood out in the data. There were more than double the female participants in this phase of the study than male. See Table 19 for descriptive statistics of these two demographics.

The ratio of males and females that were baptized and holding a church office or baptized and a part of a small group were closely aligned. A comparison of the church statuses of females and males are found in Figure 8. Though the ratio between males and females in this study are closely aligned, because the data showed that females outnumbered men two to one, more females serve in church offices and are a part of small groups than men.

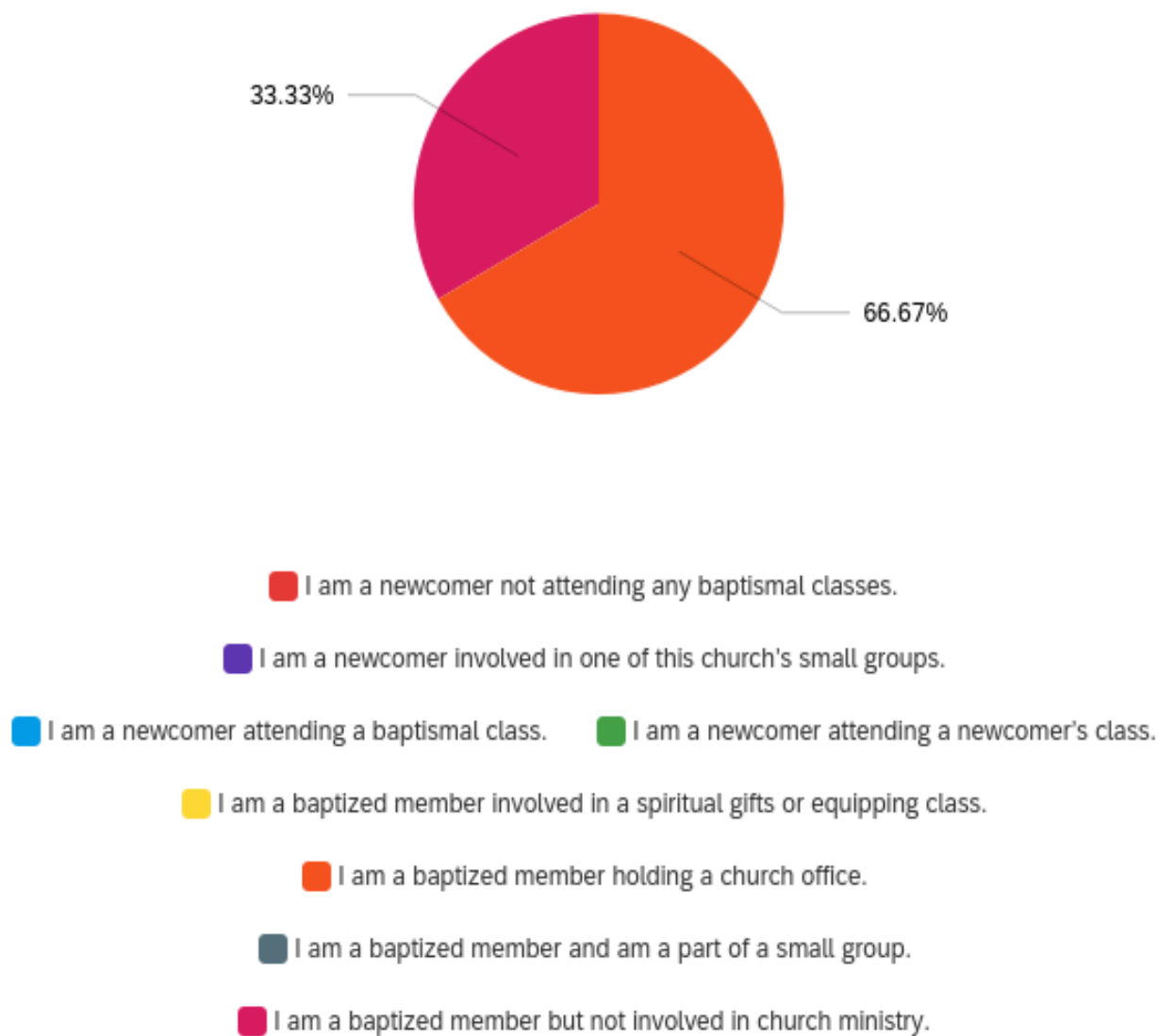
**Figure 8**

*Parish comparative status age 33-40 (RQ6)*

Female parish status



### Male parish status



### Parishioner Values (LECs)

The researcher compared the values of those that perceived that their pastor had LECs verses those that perceived that their pastor did not as their values correlated with the values of their church. Table 20 give a detailed account of this comparison.

**Table 20**

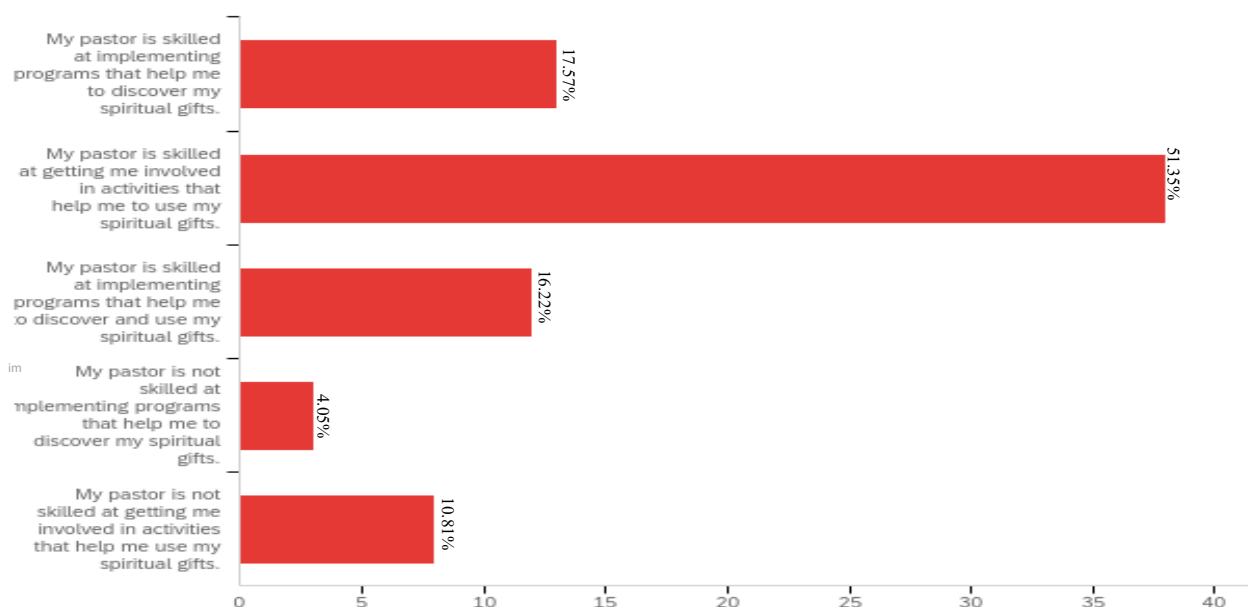
*Values Comparative Table for perceived status of pastor's LECs (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for LEC's Status/ Parishioner Values</b>		<b>Perceived Pastoral LECs</b>	<b>Perceived Lack of Pastoral LECs</b>
<b>35.</b>	I am very interested in the growth of this church.	91.67%	66.67%
<b>37.</b>	When the church is successful in fulfilling its mission, I rejoice.	91.67%	66.67%
<b>40.</b>	I clearly understand the mission plans and goals of my church.	83.33%	33.33%
<b>42.</b>	It doesn't matter to me whether the church grows or not (positive response for church gives a "disagree" answer).	87.67%	66.67%
<b>Average</b>		88.58%	58.34%

Participants that perceived that their pastors possessed LECs also had values that were more aligned with their churches than those that perceived that their pastors did not have LECs. The researcher was also aware that those who perceived that their pastors did not have LECs only made up 3.79% of the participants in this study. Those that perceived that their pastored possessed LECs made up 16.45% of participants in this study. After investigating the purpose for the low responses, the researcher found that 51.35% of participants believed that their pastor was skilled at getting them involved in activities that helped them to use their spiritual gifts. So, the percentages of those that felt that their pastor was skilled at training them in their spiritual giftedness (LECs) was much less than their perception of their pastor's ability to implement programming for the use of their spiritual gifts. Figure 9 shows a bar chart of these findings.

**Figure 9**

*LEC and Implementation Skills of Pastors*



### Parishioner Perceived Feelings (Age)

Next, the researcher investigated the category, parishioner's perceived feelings about their churches. Nine statements from the questionnaire fit into this category. Like parishioner values, the researcher looked for substantial contrasts or variations that stood out in the data. Age demographic was first explored. Table 21 provides a comparative view of the five age demographics and the participants commitment through their feelings.

**Table 21**

*Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Feelings (RQ6)*

Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Feelings		18-32-year-olds	33-40-year-olds	41-49-year-olds	50-64-year-olds	65+-year-olds
22.	I love to tell people I meet about my church.	40%	50%	66.67%	78.57%	61.90%
23.	When the opportunity avails itself, I advise others to visit the church because it is a great place to be.	60%	60%	77.78%	71.43%	66.67%
25.	I am proud to tell others that I am a member of this church.	80%	90%	88.89%	89.29%	80.95%
27.	I made the right decision to choose this church to join over other churches I was considering.	80%	70%	77.78%	85.71%	66.67%
28.	In my opinion, this church is the best church to attend and minister.	60%	60%	55.56%	78.57%	52.38%

30.	I am so grateful for my church.	80%	100%	100%	92.86%	90.48%
36.	I cannot imagine my life without this church.	40%	40%	55.56%	66.67%	52.38%
39.	I do not like to hear criticism about my church.	60%	30%	33.33%	55.56%	47.62%
43	I am incredibly blessed to attend this church.	80%	80%	88.89%	85.19%	71.43%
<b>Average</b>		64.44%	74.44%	71.60%	78.21%	65.61%

When it came to parishioner feelings about their churches, the researcher found that the percentages were lower than those that were within the subcategory parishioner values. 50-64-year-old demographic had the highest average of 78.21%. The researcher also found some ambiguity in some of the responses. For example, for question 22 (*I love to tell people I meet about my church*) and 28 (*In my opinion, this church is the best church to attend and minister*), 40% gave neutral responses in demographics 18-32 and 33-40-years-old.

### Parishioner's Perceived Feelings (Gender)

Gender demographic responses were like age demographic responses. Table 22 gives a summation of the agreeable responses to the questionnaire's statements about perceived feelings.

**Table 22**

*Comparative Table for Gender and Parishioner's Feelings (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Feelings</b>		<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
22.	I love to tell people I meet about my church.	66.67%	63.64%
23.	When the opportunity avails itself, I advise others to visit the church because it is a great place to be.	68.63%	68.18
25.	I am proud to tell others that I am a member of this church.	88.24%	81.82%
27.	I made the right decision to choose this church to join over other churches I was considering.	76.47%	77.27%
28.	In my opinion, this church is the best church to attend and minister.	66.67%	59.09%
30.	I am so grateful for my church.	94.12%	95.45%
36.	I cannot imagine my life without this church.	64%	36.36%
39.	I do not like to hear criticism about my church.	48%	45.45%

43	I am incredibly blessed to attend this church.	82%	77.27%
<b>Average</b>		72.76%	75.44%

Regarding the feelings of the participants about their church, both females and males almost averaged evenly. Males edged out over females by 2.62%. There are a couple of data points the researcher thought was worth mentioning. The first was statements 22, 23 and 36. These questions address the willingness of participants to tell people about their church, invite them to attend their church and the feeling that their church was the best church that they could attend. All three statements received responses in the 50 and 60 percentiles.

The researcher was also interested in another variant. Statement 36, (*I cannot imagine my life without this church.*) received a 36.36% agreement rating. Most males gave a neutral response (45.45%).

### **Parishioner's Perceived Feelings (LECs)**

Like LECs for parishioner values, LECs for parishioner perceived feelings display the greater dichotomy than all other demographics. There is a 31.18% difference in the averages between those who perceive their pastors possess LECs and those that don't. The demographic that perceived their pastors had LEC's averaged 71.92% while the those who perceived a lack of LECs from their pastor averaged 40.74% in their responses to the questions in this category.

Table 23 provides a side-by-side comparison of these findings.

**Table 23**

*Comparative Table for perceived status of pastoral LEC's and Parishioner's Feelings (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for Perceived LECs and Parishioner's Feelings</b>		<b>Perceived Pastoral LECs</b>	<b>Perceived Lack of Pastoral LECs</b>
22.	I love to tell people I meet about my church.	50%	66.67%
23.	When the opportunity avails itself, I advise others to visit	75%	33.33%



	the church because it is a great place to be.		
25.	I am proud to tell others that I am a member of this church.	91.67%	33.33%
27.	I made the right decision to choose this church to join over other churches I was considering.	91.67%	33.33%
28.	In my opinion, this church is the best church to attend and minister.	66.67%	33.33%
30.	I am so grateful for my church.	100%	66.67%
36.	I cannot imagine my life without this church.	41.67%	33.33%
39.	I do not like to hear criticism about my church.	50%	0.00
43	I am incredibly blessed to attend this church.	80.56%	66.67%
<b>Average</b>		71.92%	40.74%

A couple of percentages stood out to the researcher. To the statement, “I love to tell people I meet about my church,” 50% of those that believed their pastor possessed LECs agreed with this statement, while 66.67% of those who did not believe their pastor possessed LECs agreed with the statement, which goes opposite to the trend of responses amongst this grouping of statements.

Two more statements received lower marks from those who perceived their pastors had LECs. A low 50% agreed with the statement, “I do not like to hear criticism about my church,” while an even lower 41.67% agreed with the statement, “I cannot imagine my life without this church.”

### **Parishioner’s Behavior (Age)**

The researcher then sought to gain insight on the behavior or perceived behavior of the contributing demographics within the ministry and mission of their churches. The statements provided in this category from the modified LMX-7 covered some of the areas of church life and was designed to measure the overall performance of the participants.

When it comes to parishioner behavior and age, the 41-49-year-old demographic received

the highest average (88.89%) amongst the behavioral statements for commitment. Table 24 gives an account of the comparisons on behavior within age demographics.

**Table 24**

*Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Behavior (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Behavior</b>		<b>18-32-year-olds</b>	<b>33-40-year-olds</b>	<b>41-49-year-olds</b>	<b>50-64-year-olds</b>	<b>65+-year-olds</b>
<b>29.</b>	Except for unavoidable circumstances (trips outside the city, sickness, etc.), I always attend worship services at this church, either in person or online.	60%	90%	77.78%	78.57%	85.71%
<b>31.</b>	I give as much as I can to make sure that the church successfully performs its mission.	80%	90%	88.89%	64.29%	66.67%
<b>33.</b>	I will not abandon this church, even in difficult times.	100%	80%	88.89%	81.48%	66.67%
<b>38</b>	I am reluctant to support the church financially (The percentages expressed were those who disagree with this statement).	80%	90%	100%	85.71%	80.95%
<b>Average</b>		80%	87.50%	88.89%	83.01%	75%

The researcher felt that there were a couple of facts worth noting. First, 16-32-year-olds had the lowest marks when it came to attendance of services or watching the services online. Sixty percent agreed with the statement, "Except for unavoidable circumstances (trips outside the city, sickness, etc.), I always attend worship services at this church, either in person or online." Additionally, the older demographics (50-64-year-olds and 65+-year-olds) had lower percentages to the statement "I give as much as I can to make sure that the church successfully performs its mission." Additionally, 66.67% of participants in the 65+ group stated that they would not abandon their church in difficult times, which was far lower than the other demographics.

### Parishioner's Behavior (Gender)

Next, the researcher compared the behavior of males and females. As in other comparisons, females and males averaged extremely close (a 1.38% difference) when it comes to behavior. Table 25 provides the details of this comparison.

**Table 25**

*Comparative Table for Gender and Parishioner's Behavior (RQ6)*

Comparative Table for Gender and Parishioner's Behavior		Female	Male
29.	Except for unavoidable circumstances (trips outside the city, sickness, etc.), I always attend worship services at this church, either in person or online.	84.31%	72.73%
31.	I give as much as I can to make sure that the church successfully performs its mission.	70.59%	77.27%
33.	I will not abandon this church, even in difficult times.	78%	81.82%
38	I am reluctant to support the church financially (The percentages expressed were those who disagree with this statement).	84.31%	90.91%
Average		79.30%	80.68%

When it came to attendance, females scored higher with 84.31% to males 72.73%. On the other hand, 77.27% of males believed that the gave as much as they could to make sure that the church successfully performed its mission. Females were slightly lower at 70.59. Overall, males slightly inched past females in this category.

### Parishioner's Behavior (LECs)

The researcher then matched participants that believed their pastor had LECs with those that didn't. The difference between participants that believed their pastors possessed LECs verses those that did not was about 25%. Those that believed in their pastor's LECs scored an

average of 83.33% while those who did not recorded at 58.33% a detailed account of the responses to behavioral statements by this demographic are found in Table 26.

**Table 26**

*Comparative Table for Status of Perceived LECs and Parishioner's Behavior (RQ6)*

Comparative Table for LECs and Parishioner's Behavior		Perceived Pastoral LECs	Perceived Lack of Pastoral LECs
29.	Except for unavoidable circumstances (trips outside the city, sickness, etc.), I always attend worship services at this church, either in person or online.	83.33%	66.67%
31.	I give as much as I can to make sure that the church successfully performs its mission.	75%	66.67%
33.	I will not abandon this church, even in difficult times.	75%	33.33%
38	I am reluctant to support the church financially (The percentages expressed were those who disagree with this statement).	100%	66.67%
Average		83.33%	58.33%

The researcher thought it was worth note that 100% of those who believed that their pastor's possessed LECs did not agree with the statement, "I am reluctant to support the church financially (The percentages expressed were those who disagree with this statement)."

### **Parishioner's Responses to Lay Equipping Programs (Age)**

In this category, the researcher sought to understand how the participants responded to the lay equipping programs their pastors instituted. As in the other categories, the researcher compared the five groupings of age to measure their responses to LECs in Table 27.

**Table 27**

*Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Responses to LECs (RQ6)*

Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Responses	18-32-year-olds	33-40-year-olds	41-49-year-olds	50-64-year-olds	65+-year-olds
---	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	---------------

to LECs						
24.	I will do whatever I can (no matter how difficult) to progress the church's mission.	60%	40%	100%	71.43%	66.67%
26.	This church inspires the best in me by providing tangible ways for me to use my spiritual gifts to fulfill the church's mission.	40%	60%	77.78%	71.43%	57.14%
31.	I give as much as I can to make sure that the church successfully performs its mission.	80%	90%	88.89%	64.29%	66.67%
41.	I do all I can to make sure that this church achieves its mission objectives.	80%	70%	100%	67.86%	57.14%
44.	I know what my spiritual gift(s) are.	60%	70%	77.78%	67.86%	66.67%
45.	I know how my spiritual gift(s) fit into the overall mission of my church.	40%	60%	77.78%	57.14%	61.90%
<b>Average</b>		60%	65%	87.03%	54.76	62.69%

Regarding of the parishioner's feelings towards the LEC training implemented by their pastors, the 41-49-year-old age group averaged head and shoulders above the rest at 87.03%. The researcher attempted to find factors that might contribute to the disparity. Question 7 on his questionnaire gave the participants an opportunity to qualitatively describe their church's discipleship program. The researcher thought that the responses to this qualitative question would shed more light on these demographic's feelings about their church's equipping program. The study also showed that 55.55% stated that their churches had good discipleship programs. One participant stated, "The church does extremely well with giving people the opportunity to grow/develop and serve, both within and outside of its walls, however there is no formal system in place to ensure consistency and visibility." Another participant in the 40-49-year-old demographic said that the church's program was "good but could use work." Another participant said that their church's discipleship program was at that time nonexistent. Others said that their church's program was "active and effective." This group, though small in quantity, viewed their churches with optimistic eyes.

### Parishioner's Responses to Lay Equipping Programs (Gender)

Next, the researcher explored gender considering lay equipping to determine what differences, if any lay between females and males. Males again had a higher percentage of participants who agree with the statements in this category. Table 28 provides a detailed account of the responses in this category.

**Table 28**

*Comparative Table for Gender and Parishioner's Responses to LECs (RQ6)*

Comparative Table for gender and Parishioner's Responses to LECs		Female	Male
24.	I will do whatever I can (no matter how difficult) to progress the church's mission.	64.71%	77.27%
26.	This church inspires the best in me by providing tangible ways for me to use my spiritual gifts to fulfill the church's mission.	64.71%	63.64%
31.	I give as much as I can to make sure that the church successfully performs its mission.	70.59%	77.27%
41.	I do all I can to make sure that this church achieves its mission objectives.	62.75%	86.36%
44.	I know what my spiritual gift(s) are.	66.67%	72.73%
45.	I know how my spiritual gift(s) fit into the overall mission of my church.	60.78%	59.09%
<b>Average</b>		65.04%	72.73%

The greatest difference in responses between females and males is found in the statement, "I do all I can to make sure that this church achieves its mission objectives." 86.36% of males agreed with the statement while a lesser 62.75% of females did and 27.45% of females gave neutral answers while no males disagreed with the statement.

### Parishioner's Responses to Lay Equipping Programs (LECs)

Amongst participants who believed that their church had pastors that possessed LECs and those that did not, the researcher was not surprised to see higher averages amongst former than

the latter. About 67.83% of those that perceived that their pastor possessed LEC agreed with the statements that supported their church's lay equipping programs while 44.44% agreed from amongst those that felt their pastor did not possess LECs. Table 29 gives an account of the responses to the statements in this category.

**Table 29**

*Comparative Table for Status of Perceived LECs and Parishioner's Responses to LECs (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for LECs and Parishioner's Responses to LECs</b>		<b>Perceived Pastoral LECs</b>	<b>Perceived Lack of Pastoral LECs</b>
<b>24.</b>	I will do whatever I can (no matter how difficult) to progress the church's mission.	75%	33.33%
<b>26.</b>	that	58.33%	33.33%
<b>31.</b>	I give as much as I can to make sure that the church successfully performs its mission.	75%	66.67%
<b>41.</b>	I do all I can to make sure that this church achieves its mission objectives.	69.86%	33.33%
<b>44.</b>	I know what my spiritual gift(s) are.	68.49%	66.67%
<b>45.</b>	I know how my spiritual gift(s) fit into the overall mission of my church.	60.27%	33.33%
<b>Average</b>		67.83%	44.44%

The data shows that there is a difference in the amount of effort each group in this category amongst this demographic are willing to give. Seventy-five percent of those that believed their pastor possessed LEC's agreed with the statement, "I will do whatever I can (no matter how difficult) to progress the church's mission," while only 33.33% of those who perceived their pastor did not have LECs did. That is a 41.67% difference in responses.

Statement 41 restates the question with slightly different responses. Additionally, 69.86% of those that believed that their pastor had LECs agreed with the statement while 33.33% of those that didn't believe their pastors had LECs agreed. Though the former group scored typically

higher averages than the latter, the researcher expected to see much higher percentages in the formal because the statements reflected the emphasis of their demographic.

### ***Partnership***

Next, the researcher investigated the perceived partnership of the participant parishioners with their pastors in the fulfillment of the gospel commission. The demographics examined in commitment were also assessed in partnership. Partnership addressed three lines of questioning from a variation of the organizational commitment questionnaire-9 (OCQ-9). Those categories are parishioner's feelings about new ideas, parishioner's feelings about their pastor's equipping competencies (LECs) and parishioner's feelings about their working relationship with their pastor.

#### **Parishioner's Feelings about New Ideas (Age)**

New ideas covered two perspectives. The first dealt with ideas that came from parishioners. The second addressed ideas given by the pastor and his leadership team. Age was the first demographic explored. The averages in the category of new ideas are low, the highest percentages coming from the 41-49-year-old demographic at 66.67% Table 30 gives a detailed account of the responses to this category.

**Table 30**

*Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Feeling about New Ideas (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's and New Ideas</b>		<b>18-32-year-olds</b>	<b>33-40-year-olds</b>	<b>41-49-year-olds</b>	<b>50-64-year-olds</b>	<b>65+-year-olds</b>
<b>31.</b>	I have spoken with the pastor and leaders of this church about the future direction of our church.	40%	40%	55.56%	46.43%	47.62%
<b>33.</b>	My suggestions are taken seriously by my pastor and the leaders of my church.	80%	60%	77.78%	62.96%	52.38%
<b>Average</b>		60%	50%	66.67%	54.70	50%



The percentages of those that state that they have spoken with their pastors and leaders about the future of their church was, overall, much lower than those who were not only able to get an audience with their pastor to share new ideas but felt that their suggestions were taken seriously by their pastor, especially amongst the 18-32-year-old demographic.

### **Parishioner's Feelings about New Ideas (Gender)**

When it came to new ideas, males etched out another lead over females. Table 31 gives a detailed account of this category and gender.

**Table 31**

*Comparative Table for Gender and Parishioner's Feeling about New Ideas (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for Gender and Parishioner's and New Ideas</b>		<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
<b>31.</b>	I have spoken with the pastor and leaders of this church about the future direction of our church.	41.18%	59.09%
<b>33.</b>	My suggestions are taken seriously by my pastor and the leaders of my church.	60%	68.18%
<b>Average</b>		50.59%	63.64%

The average percentage in this category for males was 63,64% while females averaged 50.59%, a 13.05% difference. Males perceived that they were in the room where decisions were made at higher levels than females and that their ideas were taken seriously at higher levels. The researcher believed that it was necessary to remember that females outnumber males two to one yet feel least represented when it came to partnering with their pastors and leadership on the framing of their church's future and mission. Despite the higher percentages found amongst male participants, both males and females scored below the 70 percentiles when it came to their abilities to exchange ideas with leadership.

### Parishioner's Feelings about New Ideas (LECs)

Related to the category of new ideas, next the researcher compared those who believed that their pastors had LEC's verses those who didn't. The average percentage amongst those that believed that their pastors had LECs in the category of ideas was 50% while those who did not perceive their pastors had LECs was 33.33%. Table 32 gives an account of these statistics.

**Table 32**

*Comparative Table for Status of Perceived LECs and Parishioner's Feelings and New Ideas (RQ6)*

Comparative Table for LECs and Parishioner's Feelings and New Ideas		Perceived Pastoral LECs	Perceived Lack of Pastoral LECs
31.	I have spoken with the pastor and leaders of this church about the future direction of our church.	41.67%	33.33%
33.	My suggestions are taken seriously by my pastor and the leaders of my church.	58.33%	0%
Average		50%	33.33%

None of those who felt their pastors possessed LECs felt that their pastors took their suggestions seriously. The researcher thought that it was worth noting that 66.67% of participants amongst that demographic that perceived a lack of LECs in their pastors were neutral. Within this same demographic, 66.67% gave neutral responses and 33.33% disagreed with the statement, "My suggestions are taken seriously by my pastor and the leaders of my church."

In both categories, like the others, the percentages are low, which reflects low collaboration between the members in these two demographics and their pastors.

### Parishioner's Feelings about Pastoral Competencies (Age)

The second category the researcher addressed under partnership was the feeling the lay contributors of the focused demographics about the lay equipping competencies (LEC's) their

pastors possessed. The researcher repeated the demographic cycle performed in the other areas of this research.

The five segments of ages were first contrasted in this category. The 41-49-year-olds had the highest average percentage when it came to favorable responses to the statements of this category. Table 33 provides a detailed account of this category's findings.

**Table 33**

*Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Feeling about their Pastor's LECs (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's and Their Pastor's LECs</b>		<b>18-32-year-olds</b>	<b>33-40-year-olds</b>	<b>41-49-year-olds</b>	<b>50-64-year-olds</b>	<b>65+-year-olds</b>
<b>6.</b>	My pastor is aware of the kind of service I give to fulfill the mission of my church.	60%	80%	88.89%	82.14%	76.19%
<b>8.</b>	My pastor is content with my service in the mission of the church.	60%	20%	44.44%	53.57%	42.86%
<b>9.</b>	My pastor and the church are aware of my spiritual gifts.	80%	50%	77.78%	53.57%	57.14%
<b>18.</b>	I am fully aware of the vision for my church's mission, as expressed by the pastor and the church leaders.	60%	80%	88.89%	89.29%	76.19%
<b>19.</b>	My vision and the vision of my pastor and the church are identical.	60%	60%	77.78%	82.14%	52.38%
<b>20.</b>	I fully support the vision of my pastor and the church.	80%	100%	100%	85.71%	71.43%
<b>Average</b>		66.66%	65%	79.63%	74.40	62.70%

The researcher noticed that statement 8 received low favorable responses from all age demographics. The statement stated, "My pastor is content with my service in the mission of the church." Only the 18-32-year-olds scored 60% or higher. The 33-40-year-olds scored 20%. This statement speaks to the perceptions that the lay contributors have about how their pastors feel about their service to the church.

### Parishioner's Feelings about Pastoral Competencies (Gender)

Gender was the next set of demographics the researcher addressed in the pastoral competency's category. Again, males had a higher percentage of positive responses at 73.49%. Females were close behind at 68.30%. A detailed account of these percentages is found in Table 34.

**Table 34**

*Comparative Table for Gender and Parishioner's Feeling about their Pastor's LECs (RQ6)*

Comparative Table for Gender and Parishioner's and Their Pastor's LECs		Female	Male
6.	My pastor is aware of the kind of service I give to fulfill the mission of my church.	78.43%	81.82%
8.	My pastor is content with my service in the mission of the church.	41.18%	54.55%
9.	My pastor and the church are aware of my spiritual gifts.	49.02%	81.82%
18.	I am fully aware of the vision for my church's mission, as expressed by the pastor and the church leaders.	86.27%	72.73%
19.	My vision and the vision of my pastor and the church are identical.	68.63%	68.18%
20.	I fully support the vision of my pastor and the church.	86.27%	81.82%
<b>Average</b>		68.30%	73.49%

The researcher believed that the greatest contrast in this category was demonstrated in statement 9 which says, "My pastor and the church are aware of my spiritual gifts." Females gave a favorable response rating of 49.02% while men gave a favorable response rating of 81.82%. Additionally, 39.92% of females gave neutral responses to statement 9, which shows some ambiguity. Despite the low perception of their pastor's and church's awareness of the spiritual gifts they have to offer their church, 86.27% said that they were fully aware of the

vision for their church's mission as expressed by their pastor and the church leaders and the same percentage fully supported that vision.

### **Parishioner's Feelings about Pastoral Competencies (LECs)**

The last grouping the research explored were those that felt that their pastor's had LECs verses those that did not. Expectantly, the former group outscored the latter with a favorable ratio of 69.44% to 50%. The details of this category are found in Table 35.

**Table 35**

*Comparative Table for Status of Perceived LECs and Parishioner's Feeling about their Pastor's LECs (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for LECs/Parishioner's and Their Pastor's LECs</b>		<b>Perceived Pastoral LECs</b>	<b>Perceived Lack of Pastoral LECs</b>
<b>6.</b>	My pastor is aware of the kind of service I give to fulfill the mission of my church.	75%	66.67%
<b>8.</b>	My pastor is content with my service in the mission of the church.	25%	33.33%
<b>9.</b>	My pastor and the church are aware of my spiritual gifts.	58.33%	66.67%
<b>18.</b>	I am fully aware of the vision for my church's mission, as expressed by the pastor and the church leaders.	83.33%	66.67%
<b>19.</b>	My vision and the vision of my pastor and the church are identical.	75%	33.33%
<b>20.</b>	I fully support the vision of my pastor and the church.	100%	33.33%
<b>Average</b>		69.44%	50%

The responses of two statements stood out for the researcher. Statement 19, which say, "My vision and the vision of my pastor and the church are identical," received a favorable rating of 75% for those who believed that their pastors had LECs to 33.33% for those who did not. Statement 20 is related. It says, "I fully support the vision of my pastor and the church." One hundred percent of the demographic that felt their pastor had LEC's gave favorable responses

while 33.33% gave favorable responses amongst those that did not believe their pastors had LECs.

Additionally, the researcher felt that though the demographic that believed that their pastors had LECs had higher favorable percentages than those that did not, their marks were low, especially since they demonstratively stated that their pastor possessed LEC skills.

### **Parishioner's Feelings about Relationship with Pastor (Age)**

The final category under partnership that the research explored was the parishioner's working relationship with their pastor. He went through the cycle of demographics addressed in the previous categories. The researcher first contrasted the five age groupings in this study. Table 36 gives a detailed account of his findings.

**Table 36**

*Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Working Relations/Pastor (Age) (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Working Relationship</b>		<b>18-32-year-olds</b>	<b>33-40-year-olds</b>	<b>41-49-year-olds</b>	<b>50-64-year-olds</b>	<b>65+-year-olds</b>
<b>1.</b>	My pastor is familiar with my personal situation.	60%	60%	88.89%	60.71%	57.14%
<b>2.</b>	I know my pastor and the leaders of my church personally.	100%	80%	88.89%	85.71%	71.43%
<b>3.</b>	I do my best to accommodate my pastor and the church when asked to help.	100%	90%	100%	85.71%	80.95%
<b>4.</b>	I trust the decisions that my pastor and the church leaders make.	100%	90%	100%	82.14%	71.43%
<b>5.</b>	I enjoy working with my pastor rather than working by myself.	100%	60%	66.67%	75%	42.86%
<b>10.</b>	My pastor used his authority to help me when I was in trouble.	20%	50%	22.22%	39.29%	23.81%
<b>11.</b>	My pastor and the leaders of the church work together for the Kingdom of God.	100%	90%	100%	92.86%	66.67%
<b>12.</b>	I feel distant from my pastor. (Answered reflected on this statement were marked "disagree.").	100%	70%	88.89%	71.43%	57.14%
<b>15.</b>	My pastor used his resources to help me when I was in trouble.	80%	40%	0.00	46.43%	28.57%

13.	I am a lay leader working with my pastor and the church to build up the Kingdom of God.	60%	40%	66.67%	71.43%	52.38%
14.	I do more than what is asked of me by my pastor and the church.	40%	40%	44.44%	42.86%	52.38%
16.	I know the level of service my pastor and the church expect from me.	40%	70%	66.67%	53.57%	47.62%
17.	With all my heart, I cooperate with my pastor and the church to fulfill the gospel commission.	90%	90%	88.89%	75%	71.43%
<b>Average</b>		76.15%	73.85%	63.25%	67.86%	55.67%

Of the five age demographics contrasted in this portion of the study, the researcher found that 18-32-year-olds etched out the highest percentage of favorable responses at 76.15% followed by the 33-40-year-olds at 73.85%.

The researcher noticed a couple of statements that received low favorable percentages across the board. Statement 10, which said, “My pastor used his authority to help me when I was in trouble,” received favorable marks of 20% from the 18-32-year-olds, 22.22% from the 41-49-year-olds and 23.81% from those 65 and up. The 50-64-year-olds received a 39.29% favorability and the 33-40-year-olds split the difference at 50%.

The second statement that received low favorability marks across two of the five age groupings was in response to statement 15 which states, “My pastor used his resources to help me when I was in trouble.” No one agreed with this statement amongst the 41-49-year-olds, while 28.57% of the 65-year-olds and up agreed with the statement.

### **Parishioner’s Feelings about Relationship with Pastor (Gender)**

Next, the researcher investigated the contrasts between females and males that participated in this study as it relates to the working relationship with their pastors. A detailed account of some of the researcher’s findings in this category are found in Table 37.

**Table 37**

*Comparative Table for Age and Parishioner's Working Relations/Pastor (Gender) (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for Gender and Parishioner's and Their Pastor's LECs</b>		<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
<b>1.</b>	My pastor is familiar with my personal situation.	62.75%	63.64%
<b>2.</b>	I know my pastor and the leaders of my church personally.	78.43%	90.91%
<b>3.</b>	I do my best to accommodate my pastor and the church when asked to help.	88.24%	86.36%
<b>4.</b>	I trust the decisions that my pastor and the church leaders make.	82.35%	86.36%
<b>5.</b>	I enjoy working with my pastor rather than working by myself.	64.71%	63.64%
<b>10.</b>	My pastor used his authority to help me when I was in trouble.	33.33%	31.82%
<b>11.</b>	My pastor and the leaders of the church work together for the Kingdom of God.	86.27%	86.36%
<b>12.</b>	I feel distant from my pastor. (Answered reflected on this statement were marked "disagree.").	68.63%	77.27%
<b>15.</b>	My pastor used his resources to help me when I was in trouble.	33.33%	45.45%
<b>13.</b>	I am a lay leader working with my pastor and the church to build up the Kingdom of God.	58.82%	63.64
<b>14.</b>	I do more than what is asked of me by my pastor and the church.	39.22%	59.09%
<b>16.</b>	I know the level of service my pastor and the church expect from me.	52.94%	59.09%
<b>17.</b>	With all my heart, I cooperate with my pastor and the church to fulfill the gospel commission.	78.43%	81.82%
<b>Average</b>		58.82%	68.88%

Again, males had a greater percentage of favorable answers to women with 68.88% of the male demographic providing auspicious responses to the female 58.82%. Also, 90.91% of males said that they knew their pastors personally while a lesser 78.43% of females said that they did.



Additionally, 59.09% of males said that they did more than what was asked of them by their pastor and their church while only 39.22% attested to this sentiment.

Statement 10 received low percentages from both genders. About 31.82% of males agreed with the statement, “My pastor used his authority to help me when I was in trouble,” while a higher percentage of females, 33.33% agreed with the statement. The data also showed that 47.06% of females and 45.45% of males gave neutral responses to this statement. Both genders gave lack luster favorable marks for their overall working relationships with their pastors.

### **Parishioner’s Feelings about Relationship with Pastor (LECs)**

The last category addressed by the researcher regarding the parishioner’s working relationship with their pastor for the demographic with various perceptions of their pastor’s LECs. The researcher was not surprised to see that contributors that believed their pastor had LECs had more favorable responses (66.03%) than those who did not believe their pastors had lay equipping skills (33.33%). Details of these statistics can be found in Table 38.

**Table 38**

*Comparative Table for Status of Perceived LECs and Parishioner’s Working Relations/Pastor (Gender) (RQ6)*

<b>Comparative Table for LECs/Parishioner’s and Their Pastor’s LECs</b>		<b>Perceived Pastoral LECs</b>	<b>Perceived Lack of Pastoral LECs</b>
<b>1.</b>	My pastor is familiar with my personal situation.	66.67%	0.00%
<b>2.</b>	I know my pastor and the leaders of my church personally.	91.67%	100%
<b>3.</b>	I do my best to accommodate my pastor and the church when asked to help.	100%	100%
<b>4.</b>	I trust the decisions that my pastor and the church leaders make.	100%	33.33%
<b>5.</b>	I enjoy working with my pastor rather than working by myself.	66.67%	0.00%

10.	My pastor used his authority to help me when I was in trouble.	33.33%	33.33%
11.	My pastor and the leaders of the church work together for the Kingdom of God.	91.67%	33.33%
12.	I feel distant from my pastor. (Answers reflected on this statement were marked “disagree.”).	66.67%	0.00%
15.	My pastor used his resources to help me when I was in trouble.	33.33%	0.00%
13.	I am a lay leader working with my pastor and the church to build up the Kingdom of God.	50%	33.33%
14.	I do more than what is asked of me by my pastor and the church.	33.33%	66.67%
16.	I know the level of service my pastor and the church expect from me.	50%	0.00%
17.	With all my heart, I cooperate with my pastor and the church to fulfill the gospel commission.	75%	33.33%
<b>Average</b>		66.03%	33.33%

Several statements received no agreeable responses from those who believed their pastors had no LECs. Three of these statements had 100% neutral responses. These statements were, “My pastor is familiar with my personal situation,” “I enjoy working with my pastor rather than working by myself,” and “I know the level of service my pastor and the church expect from me.” Statement 12, “I feel distant from my pastor. (Answers reflected on this statement were marked “disagree.”),” had 33.33% who agreed with this statement and 66.67% that were neutral.

Additionally, several statements received low agreeability from the demographic that believed their pastor possessed LECs. Statements that dealt with receiving financial or influential help from their pastor received only 33.33% agreement. This group also felt that they failed to do more than what was asked by their pastor or church. Only 33.33% agreed with this idea.

### Summary and Statistical Analysis

Following is a summary of the themes that surfaced after the researcher completed

compiling the data from phase one and two. The researcher then provided a statistical analysis of his findings.

***Summary of RQ1: Prime Responsibility of Participant Pastors***

From phase one's semi-structure interviews regarding what the participant pastors believed their prime responsibility was, three themes emerged:

1. **Pastoral Care:** Spiritual nurture to parishioners. Terms used by the participant pastors to describe this obligation were "love them," "nurture them," "care and nurture," and "love people."
2. **Introducing people to Jesus:** Helping attendees to have an encounter with Jesus Christ and to foster a relationship with him.
3. **Equipping Members to work in ministry:** Training members to work beyond the functions of the internal church; the mission work outside of the church's walls. Teaching his disciples to do what he did for them. He helped those he met to bond with him so that they truly desired to follow him Christ's disciples will help other to love and serve God by serving others.

While the participant lead pastors ( $n=8$ ) ranked pastoral care as their number one responsibility, they considered introducing attendees to Christ and equipping their members for ministry as less important than pastoral care. Both introducing attendees to Christ and equipping their members for ministry were of equal importance. Next, the researcher investigated the participant pastor's views on **Matthew 28:19, 20**, a passage that addresses the Jesus' great commission for all his disciples.

1. **Make true followers of Christ:** Teach about Jesus' life and ministry. Teach that all the Bible points to Jesus and how to practically (not just theoretically) walk with him. Observing the life, character and personality of Jesus as portrayed in scripture and imitating and changing into his image. Developing disciples who know how to disciple.
2. **Prepare people for Christ's Second Coming:** Help develop relationships with Christ and characters fitting for Heaven.

3. **Get out of building and meeting people:** Members must be encouraged to do more than internal programming. Members must be encouraged to minister to those outside of the four walls of the church, in the real world.
4. **Preach, teach and baptize:** Fostering faith in Jesus, which is full confidence in Jesus' promise and ability to save sinners. Teaching the faith of Jesus which is practicing the same faith that Jesus practiced; his faith, devotion and love for those around him.

Most participants believed that Matthew 28: 19, 20 primarily admonished Jesus' disciples to make disciples or followers of himself. These followers were intern, urged to make disciples. The snowball effect happens when each one reaches one. The participants were also asked to interpret the meaning of **Ephesians 4:11, 12**. The following views were given.

1. **Pastors are to equip members for ministry:** Teach their members to support each other and to reduplicate the training of helping people find whatever their gifts are and mobilizing them to the work. Make ambassadors of their parishioners. Teach members to be Christian examples to their families, neighbors, and communities. Teach members to serve the community. Teach members to use their gifts to help others.
2. **Everyone has something to do in ministry:** Everybody has "a duty, responsibility and potential to contribute to the cause of God" and that God has put people in church, who have abilities to work with the Pastor. Everybody has gifts, and that giftedness is to help the whole body.
3. **Pastors should encourage members to participate in the ministry:** Pastor's should "encourage" each member to utilize their gifts to win their "oikos" or household to Christ. Pastors should admonish more than equip.
4. **Everyone is responsible for the equipping process:** Everyone has the responsibility to equip the membership, not just pastors and teachers. Everyone has a part in nurturing and helping members to grow.

Most participants stated that Ephesians 4:11, 12 gave pastors the directive to equip their members for ministry. A quarter of this group ( $n=8$ ) believed that the scripture implied that everyone has something to do in ministry. An eight of  $n=8$  asserted that the scripture admonished pastors to encourage their members to participate in ministry and that every member is responsible for the equipping process.

### ***Summary of RQ2: Impact of participant pastor's seminary education***

Participant pastors were asked if the courses completed in seminary provided them with LEC skills. Three themes emerged from the responses given by the participant pastors.

1. **Obtained no LECs from alma mater:** Not practical enough; contained too much theory. Focused on “maximizing baptism and not retention.” Training did not consider pastors with multi-church districts. Alma mater perpetuated the denomination corporately but did not teach the pastor how to develop individuals. Possible LEC courses received were on the theory church growth, evangelism, small groups, church leadership, homiletic, pastoral formations, and liberation theology. One pastor received his training from a non-seminary training program. Regarding equipping programs, one pastor created a formal one for his church while the other two pastors training programs were connected to specific events sponsored by their churches. Only one of the participant pastors in this category said that they believed that the LEC's they gained from seminary was effective, but only with working with diverse groups.
2. **Specific Event/Seasonal Training:** Coaching for evangelistic training using a planned denominational evangelistic training program.
3. **Integrated training on an as needs basis:** Training for departments at the beginning of each year. Individual one on one training. Bible study training for interested parishioners.

Sixty-two and a half percent of clergy participants ( $n=8$ ) stated that they did not receive LECs from their alma maters, while 37.5% said that seminary was not designed to take provide LECs to their students. Only 12.5% or one pastor asserted that he had received LECs from seminary.

### ***Summary of RQ3: Developing Parishioner Commitment***

Participant pastors were asked how effective they believed the skills they gained from seminary contributed to their ability to foster within their parishioner's commitment to their church. Four themes emerged.

1. **Excited about attendance growth:** Excited about evangelism and baptisms. Excited about new people joining the church on a consistent basis. Excited about growing attendance at church services. Excited about young families attending with children.
2. **Pessimistic about attendance decline:** Dwindling church membership due to deaths. Aging church membership and attendance. Adult children of members no longer

attend church with their families. Church in rural area where the population has dramatically decreased.

3. **Twenty to twenty-five percent active in ministry:** Twenty percent of membership does eighty percent of church ministry work within and outside of the church. Members who consistently performed their responsibilities in ministry well.
4. **Ten to twenty percent of members gave significant effort:** Members who sought for the success of the church. Members who went above and beyond the call of duty as it relates to the church's ministry and mission.

#### ***Summary of RQ4: Developing Parishioner Partnership***

Participant pastors were asked how effective they believed the skills they gained from seminary contributed to their ability to foster within their parishioner's partnership with them in completing the gospel commission. Seven themes emerged.

1. **Set plan to determine spiritual gifts:** Utilizing a spiritual gifts inventory assessment to help pinpoint possible spiritual gifts of parishioners. Personal conversations and investment in relationship to determine spiritual gifts. Succession programs where leaders look for individuals within their department or the church at large who demonstrate the skills and demeanor necessary to hold leadership in their position. Utilizing a ministry placement questionnaire.
2. **Consensus to solve ministry problems:** Facilitate interaction in church board meetings on the issues and encouraged board to collectively come up with the solutions. Whiteboard meeting, listing problems and jointly coming up with solutions, which were also written on the whiteboard. The best solutions are tried. Elders have served as mentors to leaders and have developed communal solutions.
3. **Use resources to help members in trouble:** Authorizing the church to provide financial assistance to those that needed financial help. Handling church problems through the consensus of the church board. Providing protection and a path for members in moral trouble to experience healing and restoration.
4. **Perceived excitement of parishioners about new ideas and plans:** Receiving no pushback from parishioners about new ideas and plans. After clearly understanding the plan and purpose of a new idea of plan, parishioners support them. Acceptance of new ideas and plans based on trust in the pastor's leadership from times past. Acceptance of new ideas and plans based on the relationship of the pastor with the Lord and consistent leadership.
5. **Pastors perceived members saw them as competent:** Perceived competence because leadership was taking the church in the right direction. Perceived competence

because of nurturing ministry of pastor. Pastor is skilled. Parishioners have learned to trust the pastor over time. Competence based on longevity in the ministry.

6. **Defense in the face of a railing accusation:** Parishioners publicly defending pastor but privately getting a firsthand account. Parishioners shutting down negative accusations.
7. **Pastors perceived members saw them as partners:** Leading by example. Perform ministry collaboratively. The working relationship is personal. Supportive like a cheerleader. Team player and servant leader.
8. **Pastors perceived members did not see them as partners:** Saw pastor of multi-church district as a visitor because he was not able to attend church every week. Talented but not a team player. A one-man show. A Micromanager.

#### ***Summary of RQ5: Equipping Limited/Ministry Activity Encouraged***

Most participants stated that their churches did not have a formal equipping program, their church's program had serious limitations, or they were unaware of a formal equipping program. On the other hand, a large percentage of lay participants stated that their churches provided ministry opportunities to the church at large and encouraged everyone to participate in ministry.

#### ***Summary of RQ6: Greatest Levels of Commitment and Partnership***

In the quantitative part of this study, a questionnaire was used to determine the commitment levels of the participant pastor's parishioners and their partnership with their pastors in fulfilling the gospel commission. Age, gender and those that believed their pastor had LECs versus those that did not were the three demographics examined.

Forty-one through forty-nine-year-old showed the greatest commitment ( $n=9$ ). This group made up the second smallest age demographic. Males ( $n=25$ ) showed higher commitment than women ( $n=56$ ) by 2.4 percentage points. Females outnumber males in the study more than two to one. Those that believed their pastors had LECs ( $n=13$ ) had more favorable responses on commitment statements than those who did not believe their pastors has LECs ( $n=3$ ).

Partnership addressed three categories. They were parishioner's feelings about new ideas, parishioner's feelings about their pastor's equipping competencies (LECs) and parishioner's feelings about their working relationship with their pastor. Forty-one through forty-nine-year-olds showed the greatest partnership while males showed greater partnership than females. Lastly, those that perceived that their pastors had LECs showed greater partnership than those who believed that their pastors did not have LECs.

Phase II, which is the quantitative part of this study was focused on the churches of the participating pastors. The study used modified versions of the leader-member exchange-7 (LMX-7) survey and the organizational commitment questionnaire-9 (OCQ-9) to measure the partnership in ministry and the participating attendees' commitment levels.

Four categories were investigated to determine which demographic showed the greatest overall commitment. The categories for commitment were parishioner values, parishioner perceived feelings, parishioner perceived behavior and parishioner's responses to lay equipping programs instituted by their pastors.

The researcher focused on three general demographics to understand the commitment and partnership of the participants. These three demographics were age, gender and those with various perceptions of their pastor's lay equipping skills. Using percentile averages of agreeable responses, the researcher was able to determine which specific demographics were more committed to their churches and their churches mission and which demographics had greater partnership with their pastors as they worked together to accomplish the gospel commission.

Of all ages explored, the 41-49-year-old ( $n=9$ ) demographic showed the greatest commitment amongst all age groups with a favorable calculation of 86.88% though this group made up the second smallest age demographic. Males etched out females in commitment with a



favorable calculation of 78.80% which was only 2.4 percentage points above females. Additionally, females outnumber males in the study more than two to one. Lastly, those that believed their pastors had LECs had more favorable responses on commitment statements than those who did not believe their pastors has LECs. The former has a favorable calculation of 77.92% to 50.46 for the latter. Overall, the 41-49-year-olds had the highest percentage of favorable statements of all categories. The overall favorable average commitment calculation for all demographics was 74.57%

Partnership addressed three categories. They were parishioner's feelings about new ideas, parishioner's feelings about their pastor's equipping competencies (LECs) and parishioner's feelings about their working relationship with their pastor.

The 41-49-year-old demographic had the most agreeable responses amongst all age groups with an overall calculation of 69.85%. Males had more agreeable responses than females overall with a calculation of 68.57% compared to females 59.24%. Contributors that perceived their pastors possessed LECs had more agreeable responses overall than contributors who believed their pastors lacked LECs. The former had an overall calculation of 61.82% compared to the latter 38.89%. Amongst all categories, the 41-49-year-old demographic had the most favorable responses with an overall calculation of 69.85% in partnership. The overall favorable average partnership calculation for all demographics was 61.18%.

### **Evaluation of Research Design**

The researcher used a Multiphase iterative mixed-method study to determine if graduate lead pastors received adequate lay equipping competencies from their alma mater's Master of Divinity programs to help them develop partnerships and foster commitment in ministry amongst their parishioners.

The study was divided into two phases. Phase One utilized interpretive, phenomenological, semi-structured interviews with eight participant lead pastors to grasp how they perceived the LECs they received from their alma maters, to become acquainted with the lay equipping programs they lead in their parishes and to see what impact, they believe, their equipping programs have had on their parishes. In Phase Two, the researcher distributed a mixed-method questionnaire to the parishioners of the participant pastors which was a variation of the leader-member exchange-7 (LMX-7) survey and the organizational commitment questionnaire-9 (OCQ-9) to measure the partnership in ministry and the participating attendees' commitment levels. Additionally, a few qualitative questions were given to get the parishioner's direct opinions of the lay equipping classes offered in their churches and the lay equipping competencies their pastor possessed.

### **Strengths**

The researcher found that the Multiphase iterative research design provided the necessary data needed to complete his study. The semi-structured interviews, in phase one, helped the researcher get an accurate understanding of the participant pastor's perspectives on the questions presented. The mixed-method questionnaire, in phase two, provided the researcher with a reasonable understanding of the parishioner's perspective.

In effectuating the interviews with the eight participant lead pastors in Phase One, the researcher found Zoom to be a great tool for not only interviewing but recording each interview and easily saving them on the researcher's hard drive. He also utilized the "Dictate" function in Microsoft Word during the interview.

In Phase Two, the researcher found Qualtrics to be an excellent tool for electronic distribution of his questionnaire and in analysis of the data. The filters allowed the researcher to

adjust the various parameters of the study to gather data for each demographic.

The researcher quickly found out that he had to pick and choose what data he would use from his quantitative tools because the data was quite voluminous. By following the four categories of commitment and three for partnership employed in the interviews in Phase One, the researcher was able to establish a framework for research in Phase Two that will help him to triangulate the data in chapter five of this study. Additionally, percentile estimation worked well in measuring the percentage of favorable responses for both commitment and partnership.

### **Weaknesses**

Initially, the researcher had three phases to this study. The first phase sought to gather the curriculums of two institutions of higher learning without success. Next, the researcher changed his study to include only one institution of higher learning. One institution failed to respond, and the second institution agreed to allow the research, but researcher couldn't find any graduate Master of Divinity alumni that qualified to participate in this study. The researcher had to adjust his study once more by eliminating phase one. The delays in the study cost the researcher an entire year. If the researcher could do the study again, he would have either simplified the qualifications for phase one or eliminated the phase from the onset.

Additionally, because the questionnaire for the participant pastor's parishioners was mixed-method, the data collected was voluminous. The researcher had to reduce his study by about 100 pages to stay within the dissertation's page requirements. If the researcher could do the study again, he would have made the questionnaire qualitative rather than mixed method.

Along with the recording function on Zoom, the researcher used the Dictate function on Microsoft Word to assist in the dictation process. The Dictate function worked well but it mistranslated words and left some words out. The researcher had to go through every dictation

document, with the recording and edit the dictation. This was time consuming. A dictation company could have also been a viable option.

Vagle's systematic analysis worked well but was also time consuming. Next time, the researcher will use an online program like NVivo, which was designed to organize data for qualitative studies.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

Following a review of the research purpose and RQs, Chapter Five will offer research conclusions, implications, and applications. The researcher will highlight another participant and her church that did not qualify to participate in the study. The researcher felt that her contribution to the study needed mentioning. Researcher limitations will be discussed with potential negative impacts. Finally, the researcher will offer suggestions for further researcher and provide a summary of the study.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this Multiphase iterative mixed-method study was to determine if graduate lead pastors received adequate lay equipping competencies from their alma mater's Master of Divinity programs to help them develop partnerships and foster commitment in ministry amongst their parishioners. The researcher, first, used semi-structured interviews to extrapolate data from the participant pastors to determine the level of competency they possessed to equip their members for ministry by exploring how they perceived their parishioner's commitment to their churches and their partnerships with their pastors and leadership teams. Second, the researcher distributed a mixed-method (QUAL and QUAN) questionnaire to the participant pastor's parishioners to determine what they perceived to be their commitments to the church and partnership with their pastors and church leaders.

### **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ1.** What do the participant pastors personally and biblically believe their prime responsibility is within their parish?

**RQ2.** How well do the participant pastors believe their completed Master of Divinity program prepared them to broadly equip their parishioners for the gospel ministry?

**RQ3.** According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, commitment to the church and its mission?

**RQ4.** According to each participant pastor, how effective was the completed Master of Divinity program in producing the skills they needed to develop, within their parishioners, partnerships with them in ministry?

**RQ5.** According to the participant pastor's parishioners, how effective was their church's overall discipleship/equipping program?

**RQ6.** According to the participant pastor's parishioners, how effective was their church's equipping program to fostering their commitment to the church and its mission and partnership with the pastor to accomplish the gospel commission?

**H<sub>0</sub>5 and H<sub>0</sub>6:** The participant pastor's interview answers will not correlate with their parishioner's questionnaire answers on the impact of the church's equipping program on the parishioner's commitments and partnerships in accomplishing the church's mission.

### **Research Conclusions, Implications, and Application**

This researcher gives the following most significant conclusions from the themes that surfaced in his research as they relate to the Research Questions:

**RQ1 *Participant pastors believed that their prime directive as a minister was pastoral care.***

Sixty-two and a half percent of the participant pastors ( $n=8$ ) believed that their primary responsibility was pastoral care, which focuses on the well-being of individuals and society.

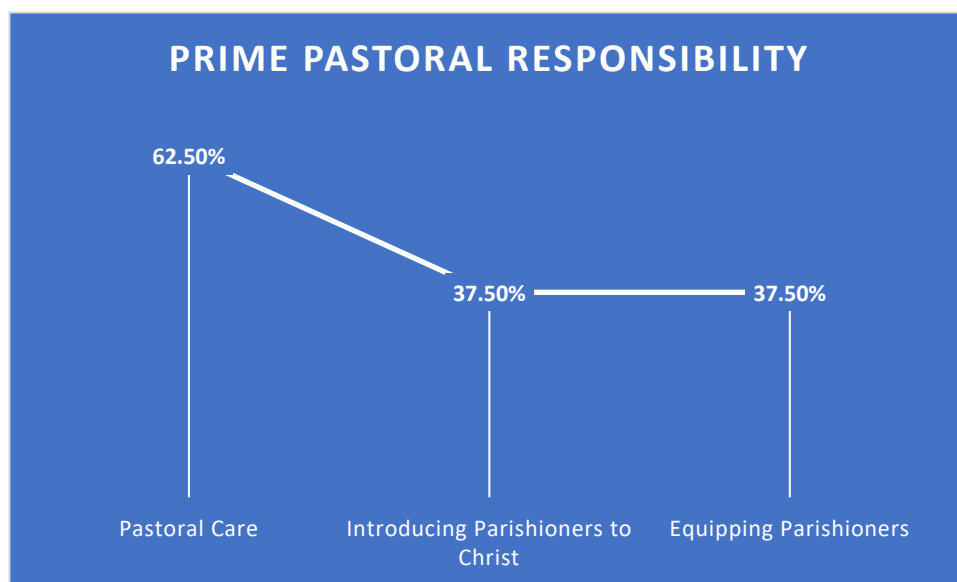
Jibiliza (2021) puts it this way:

The pastor, priest or minister plays a very decisive role in feeding the church not only spiritually as its shepherd, but also by providing the essential leadership and direction necessary for the church to achieve its chief mission and directive. Pastoral care and counseling represent a means by which the shepherd and leader of the church fulfills his spiritual and social responsibility to the church. Pastoral care and counseling are the needed ingredients in the life of the church. When these are absent, no real tie between the church leadership and parishioners can exist (Vol. 102).

This researcher believed that the pastors that considered pastoral care as their paramount responsibility deemed that the effort and support, they offered their parishioners would contribute to their overall wellbeing and spiritual growth.

**Figure 10**

*Perceived Prime Pastoral Responsibilities*



Thirty-seven and a half percent believed that introducing their parishioners to Christ and equipping members to work in ministry were their most important responsibility (See Figure 9). Regarding the “Christ first” motif, their comments reflected a confidence in the power of knowing and serving Him. They would set their parishioners on “a sure road to something that is infinitely good, but that progress is in Christ, not in our intellectual, moral, and social doctrines, and we cannot set them on that path except by bringing them to Christ. We must put Christ first” (Allen, 1962, pp. 117-134).

Regarding the responsibility of equipping, the participant pastors believed that equipping had a place in their ministry, but not a primary place. This lowered view of equipping members is also reflected in another study. The 2015 Barna study that asked pastors what they would do to

improve their church's discipleship programs? Twenty-seven percent (Ten and a half percent lower than the pastors in this study) said that they would develop a specific and clear plan for discipleship, which means that 74% of the pastors in the Barna study had not given any thought to how they would improve their discipleship programs or were mindful of their discipleship deficiencies (p. 12).

Making followers of Christ and equipping were again reflected in the participant pastor's interpretations of Matthew 28:19 and 20 and Ephesians 4:11. Seventy-five percent believed that making followers of Christ was Christ's directive to his disciples while 62.5% asserted that equipping their parishioners was one of the gifts given to pastors/teachers in Ephesians 4. Both answers fall under the umbrella of discipleship (Burggraff, 2005, p. 22, 398; Kopiczko, 2017, p. 66; Kidder, 2009, p. 20, 21; Geiger and Peck, 2016, p. 37; Vanden Langenberg, 2016, p. 205). Before members can go out to accomplish the gospel commission, they must be empowered. The researcher, as a pastor, believed that his colleagues prioritized what they consider important in ministry.

The researcher believed that though most participant pastors believed that the great commission was to disciple and the giftedness of pastors/teachers gave them the ability to equip, most pastors did not consider equipping amongst their greatest responsibilities nor highly prioritize it as one of their primary duties. The 2015 Barna study also reflected this for when pastors were asked if they felt that today's churches are doing well at discipleship, only one percent said that churches were discipling very well. Measuring their parish, eight percent of pastors said they were doing well. Fifty-six percent said that they were doing somewhat well (Barna, 2015, p. 9, 10). Another telling statistic amongst the pastors that participated in the study was that only "26 percent say discipleship is their number one priority" (p. 11).

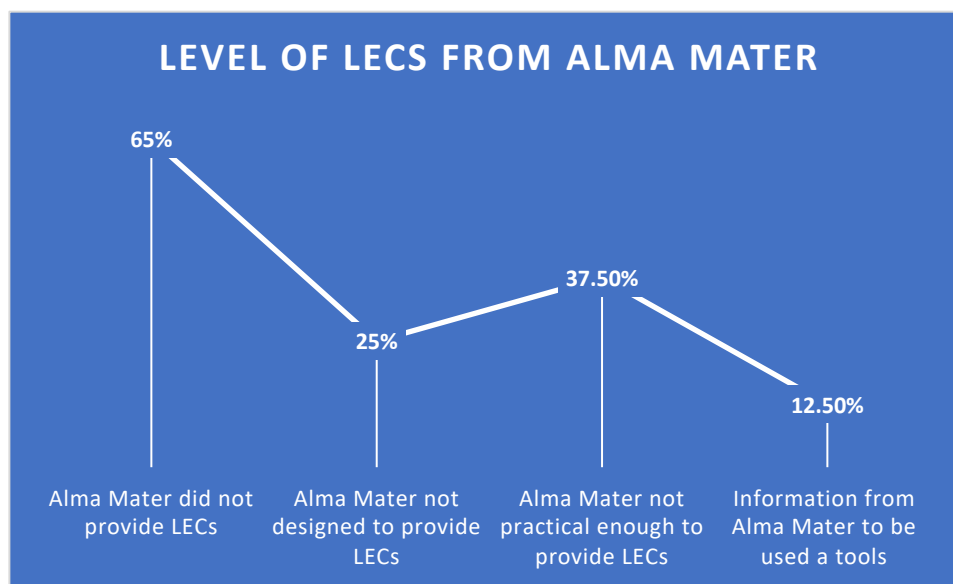


**RQ2 – RQ3 - Pastors felt that they had not received the proper LECs from their alma mater.**

Ferreira and Chipenvu (2021) agree that pastors should be trained to “identify members gifts and then nurture them accordingly” (p. 42). The researcher believed that seminaries are best positioned to provide future pastors with LECs. Most of the pastors in this study felt that they had not received the proper LECs from seminary.

**Figure 11**

*Level of LECs from Alma Mater*



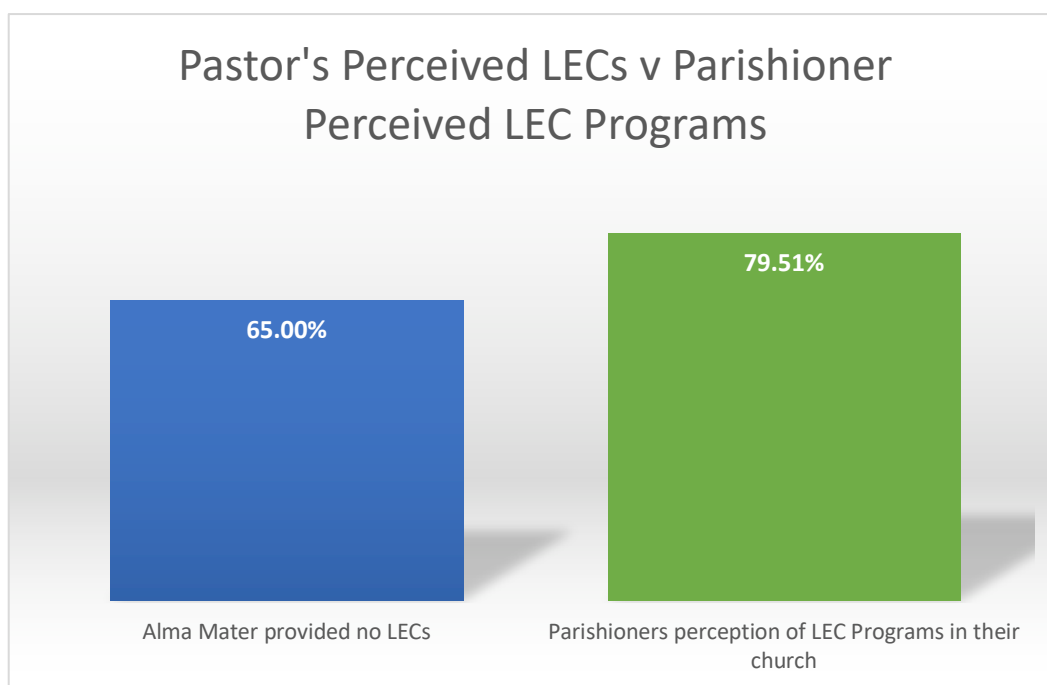
About 65% of participant pastors ( $n=8$ ) did not believe that their alma mater provided them with proper LECs. Twenty-five percent believed that seminary was not designed to provide LECs. Further 37.5% did not find their seminary education practical enough to provide their parishioners LECs (See Figure 10). These pastors sought outside resources to fill in the gaps left by seminary.

How does the participant pastor’s perceived lack of LECs effect their performance in their churches according to their parishioners? When asked if their churches had formal equipping programs, 34.21% said that their church did not have a program. Additionally, 45.3%

of lay participants ( $n=125$ ) said that their church did not have a discipleship or equipping program, the concept was not applicable to their church or their church's equipping program had serious limitations. Thus, 79.51% of parishioners felt that their churches lacked effective LEC programs (See Figure 11).

**Figure 12**

*Pastor's Perceived LECs v Parishioner Perceived LEC Programs*



The researcher believed that seminary's emphasis on theological development and their lack of emphasis on LEC development within future pastors has directly affected the equipping of church parishioners for the gospel commission (Shelley, 1993, p. 42, 43; Greig, 1999, p. 2). Further, the data revealed that pastors are aware that they are supposed to equip their members for ministry (see answers to theme one), but they did not have the knowledge to set up systems within their churches to accomplish this. In a study done amongst five seminaries of varied

Christian denominations (Princeton Theological Seminary, Catholic Theological Union, Luther Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary and Duke Divinity School), it was determined that though seminaries were good at teaching the importance of lay vocational ministry, they had “done a relatively poor job of equipping them [pastors, former seminarians] to help their people recognize and claim their vocational identity in their lives in God's world" (p. 388).

The researcher believed that seminary’s emphasis on theological development and their lack of emphasis on LEC development within future pastors has directly affected the equipping of church parishioners for the gospel commission (Shelley, 1993, p. 42, 43; Greig, 1999, p. 2). Further, the data revealed that pastors are aware that they are supposed to equip their members for ministry (see answers to theme one), but they did not have the knowledge to set up systems within their churches to accomplish this. In a study done amongst five seminaries of varied Christian denominations (Princeton Theological Seminary, Catholic Theological Union, Luther Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary and Duke Divinity School, it was determined that though seminaries were good at teaching the importance of lay vocational ministry, they had “done a relatively poor job of equipping them [pastors, former seminarians] to help their people recognize and claim their vocational identity in their lives in God's world" (Lose, et al., 2015, p. 388).

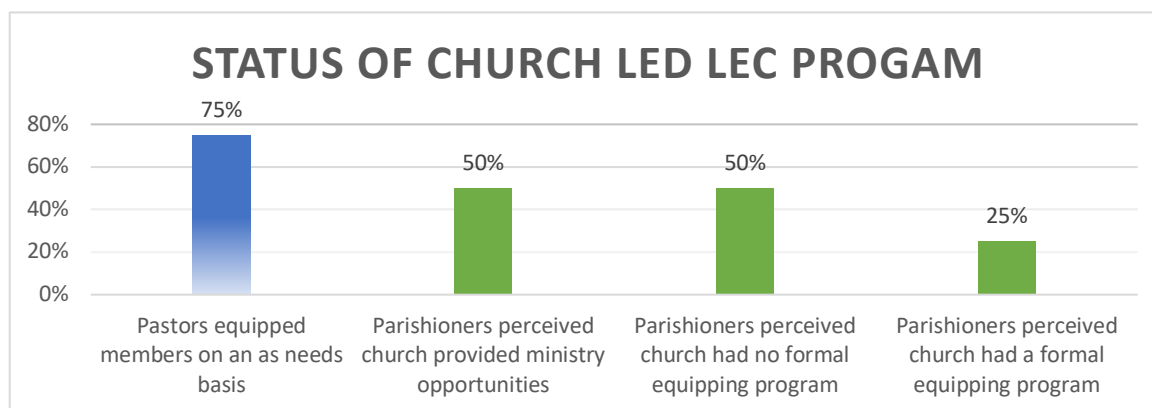
Realistically, pastors have and do serve as extensions of seminary and are front line disciple-makers (VanDenburg, 1992, p. 79; Lose, et al., 2015, p. 388) for church parishioners are, in fact, ministers (VanDenburg, 1992, p. 79). Thus, ministers must be taught “*formatively* rather than *performatively*” so that the LECs they utilize in their parishes will not simply foster function but transformation (Lose, et al., 2015, p. 388).

The pastors in this study ( $n=8$ ) instituted various kinds of training in their parish to

educate their members in ministry. This training was not systematic in nature but provided their parishioners with skills for a specific event like a community service activity or an evangelistic program. Seventy-five percent of participant pastors said that they offered training in their churches for specific events and on an as needs basis. The participant pastor's perceptions on training coincides with nearly 50% of their parishioners, who believed that their churches offered many opportunities for ministry but admitted that their churches did not have a formal equipping program. The other half of parishioners believed, in various ways, that their church did not have any kind of equipping program. Interestingly, 25% of parishioners stated that their churches had

**Figure 13**

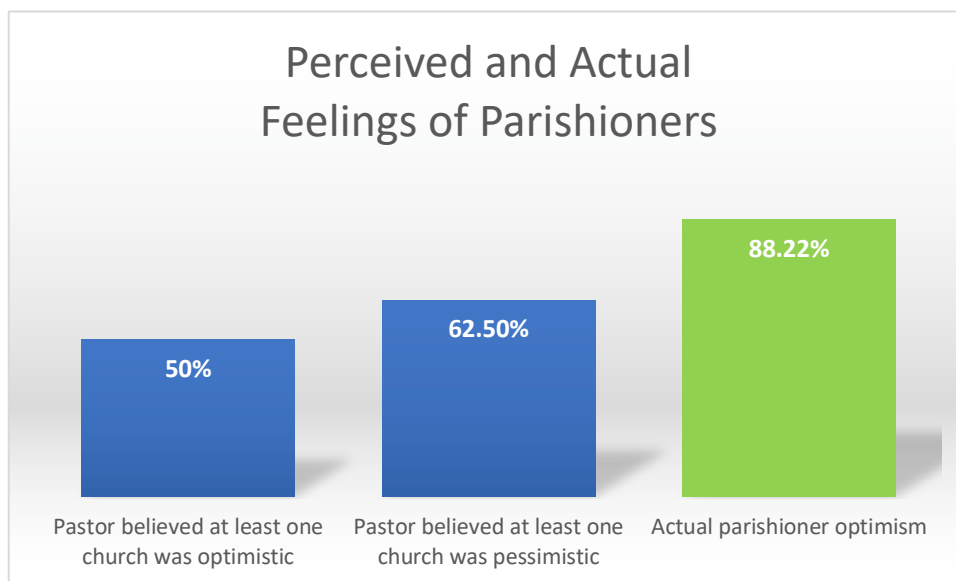
*Perceived Status of church's LEC Program*



an equipping curriculum (See Figure 12). Since parishioners are volunteer ministers, the LECs of pastors should include the examination of present training practices and the designing practical learning experiences for their parishioners (Urban, 2013, p. 17-19).

**RQ4 and RQ5 - Church members were more optimistic about their churches than pastors believed.**

The church measures growth in many ways, including “attendance, participation, frequency of scripture reading, subscription to a set of beliefs, and feelings about the pastor”

**Figure 14***Perceived and Actual Feelings of Parishioners*

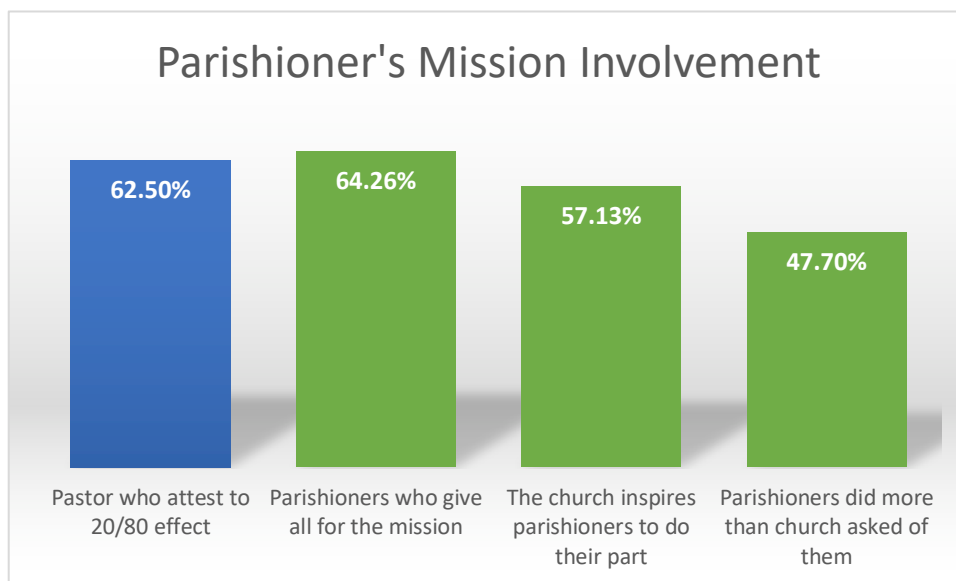
Half of the pastors ( $n=8$ ) in this study believed that their church attendees were excited (Ghorpade, Lackritz, and Moore, 2012, p. 285). This study primarily considered “attendance” as the measure of church growth. The researcher believed that the parishioner’s consideration about church growth correlated with their commitment to their church and its mission. Sixty-two and a half percent of them felt that at least one of their churches were pessimistic because of their church’s attendance decline.

The participant parishioners expressed greater optimism about their churches than their pastors perceived. An overall average of 88.22% of parishioners ( $n=125$ ), across all demographics were excited about the growth of their church (See Figure 13). Additionally, 84.75% of parishioners disagreed with the statement, “It doesn't matter to me whether the church grows or not.” The lowered pastoral perceptions regarding their parishioners could be based on churches within their districts that did not take part in the survey. Additionally, the pastor’s

definition of success could have been different from their churches.

**Figure 15**

*Perceived involvement of parishioners by pastors and parishioners*



It's worth noting that according to Ephesians 4:11, well-rounded church growth is provided by the LECs of pastors who intern develop the gifts of their members (Ferreira & Chipenvu, 2021, p. 42). The converse is also true. Church decline is a direct result of pastoral failures to develop the spiritual gifts of each church member. Thus, "the believers' active involvement leads to church growth" (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021, p. 42).

***RQ6 - The participant pastor's perception of their parishioner's church activity nearly mirrored their parishioners.***

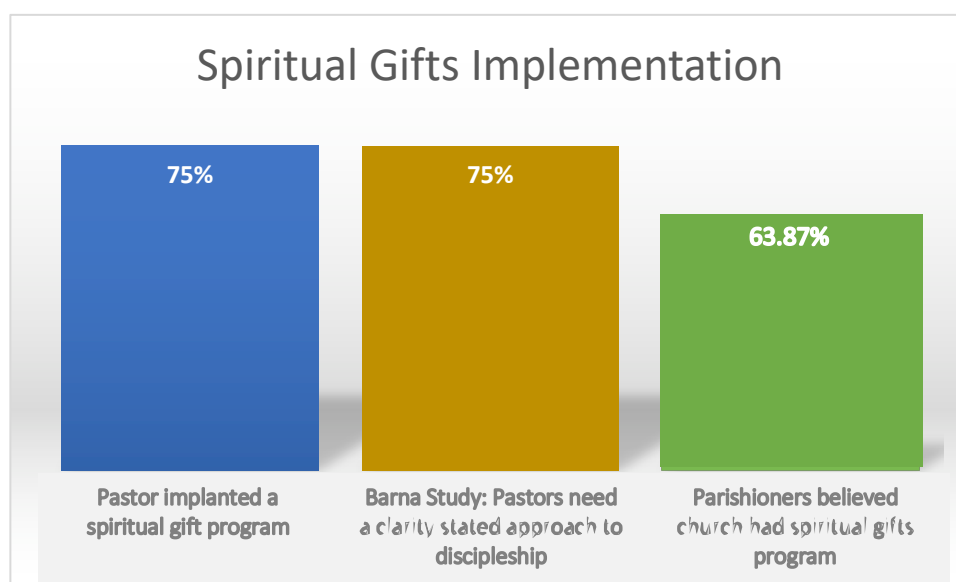
The 20/80 Effect is a commitment concept and was mentioned by several of the participant pastors in interviews. Sixty-two and a half percent stated that twenty percent of their membership did eighty percent of the work.

The participant parishioners communicated an almost equal level of commitment, also known as behavior related commitment (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979). An overall average of

64.26% stated that they would do whatever they could, no matter how difficult, to progress the church's mission (See Figure 14). Further, 57.13% of church attendees agreed that the church inspired the best in them by providing ways for them to use their spiritual gifts to fulfill the church's mission, which reflects attitudinal commitment, which associates the institution and its mission with the participant's identity (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979, pp. 224–247).

**Figure 16**

*Implementation of Spiritual Gifts*



It's worth noting that most of the church attendees that participated in this study were members and leaders in their churches so the higher percentages might be skewed. Additionally, 47.70% felt that they did more than their pastor and church asked of them.

***RQ5 - Some of parishioners were not aware of the spiritual gifts program implemented by the pastor in this study.***

This study also sought to determine if the pastors in this study, as the primary church equippers, had implemented a program to determine the spiritual gifts of their parishioners (Covert, 1910, p. 429; Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021). Seventy-five percent of the pastors stated

that they implemented a program to decipher their parishioner's spiritual gifts. Interestingly, 75% of pastor in the 2015 Barna study believed that "Senior leadership vision or endorsement is critical to (discipleship) along with a clearly articulate approach to discipleship" (p. 11). Barna (2015) also found that "Fifty-nine percent of church leaders believed it was 'precious' for Christians to be involved in a systematic curriculum or program of discipleship" (p. 12).

When asked if the pastor and church were aware of their spiritual gifts, 63.87% of participating parishioners, across all demographics stated that they did (See Figure 15). A lesser percentage of parishioners (11.13% less) were aware of their church's spiritual gifts programs than pastors that said that they had implemented a spiritual gifts program. There might be a breakdown in communicating the spiritual gifts programs in some of the churches. Again, most of the lay participants in this study held a position of leadership in their church which might also mean that many of them might not feel that they are using their gifts properly in church ministry.

***RQ6 - Partnership displayed by the solving of ministry problems through consensus.***

The pastors in this study were asked how they solved ministry problems that arose in their churches. Malphur (2005) believed that issues like problem solving should be achieved by the church board. They should use the "policy approach" which consist of "the board making decisions based on biblically based policies centered on the church's vision (p. 59). In this study, working by consensus contributes to partnership within the church body.

Seventy-five percent of the participant pastors stated that they solved ministry problems, in their churches, by consensus, which consisted of bringing problems before a body of leaders, like the church board, and allowing them to discuss the issues at hand and come up with solutions.



**Figure 17**

*Solving ministry problems by consensus*



When the participating church attendees were approached, in the questionnaire, with a similar assertion, 72.62% affirmed that their pastor and leaders of the church worked together for the Kingdom of God, thus there appeared to be a consistent agreement that most of the churches, that participated in this studied handled church problems by consensus. It is worth noting that 81.82% of males agreed with the statement that their pastors and leaders worked together for the Kingdom of God while only 49.02% of females believed the same. The researcher considered that maybe because all the pastors in this study were male, the males in this study felt closer to their pastors than the females (See Figure 16).

Overall, the researcher believed that the belief by most that the leaders and pastor work by consensus makes sense because the Seventh-day Adventist Church's structure favors member-led governance, where at the highest levels, the membership, not the pastors make the fundamental decisions for the local church and the worldwide denomination.

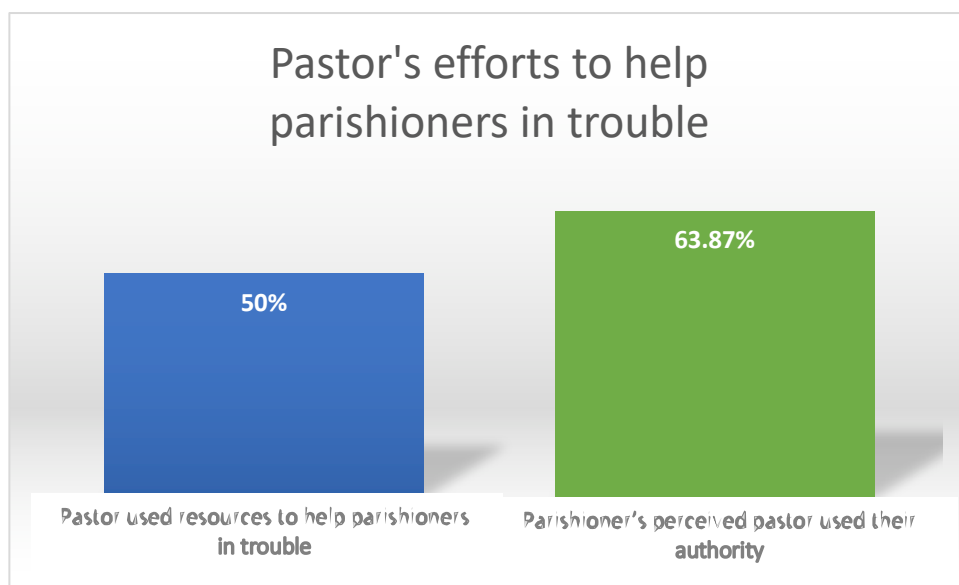
***RQ6 - Some of the participant pastors showed partnership with parishioners by using their resources to help their parishioners in trouble.***

Throughout the history of the Christian movement, the church has been more than a place to exchange theological ideas. It has also been a place where attendees can get help for their many afflictions (Allen, Davey, & Davey, 2010, pp 117-134; Lourens, 2012, pp. 161-173).

When the pastors in this study ( $n=8$ ) were asked if they used the resources at their disposal to help their parishioners who were in trouble, 50% said that they did. Some of them used their influence to release church funds to help members facing financial difficulties. Others publicly defended and protected repentant members who faced moral problems. The other fifty percent said that they would defer problemed members to a committee within the church like the church board.

**Figure 18**

*Perceived help of parishioners by their pastors*



The parishioners of the pastors in this study had a slightly higher opinion on the matter. Amongst all demographics in this study, an overall average of 63.87% stated that their pastor used his

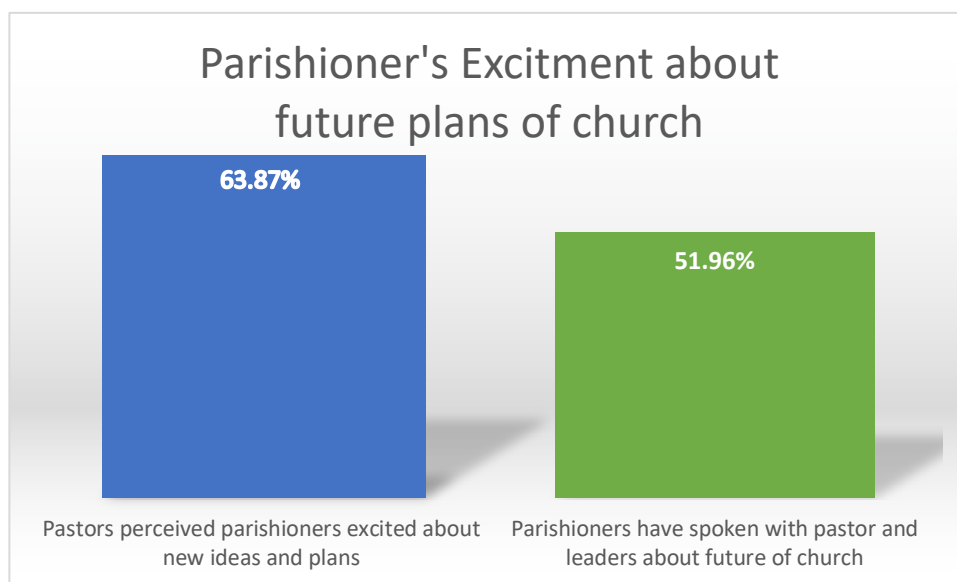
authority to help them when they were in trouble. Most of the parishioners perceived that their pastors would come to their rescue if they were in trouble (See figure 17).

This perception might have been based on past experiences. Additionally, because most of the participants are leaders in their churches, they might have felt that the relationship between themselves and their pastors would warrant the personal touch of their pastors if they were in trouble.

***RQ6 - Lack of partnership: Half of parishioners were not at the decision-making table.***

**Figure 19**

*Perceived help of parishioners by their pastors*



In this study, the researcher wanted to know how the pastors perceived the excitement level of their church's parishioners regarding new ideas and plans. Only half of the participant pastors believed that their parishioners harmonized with this statement. Interestingly, 51.96% of lay participants agreed with the statement, "I have spoken with the pastor and leaders of this church about the future direction of our church (See Figure 18)."

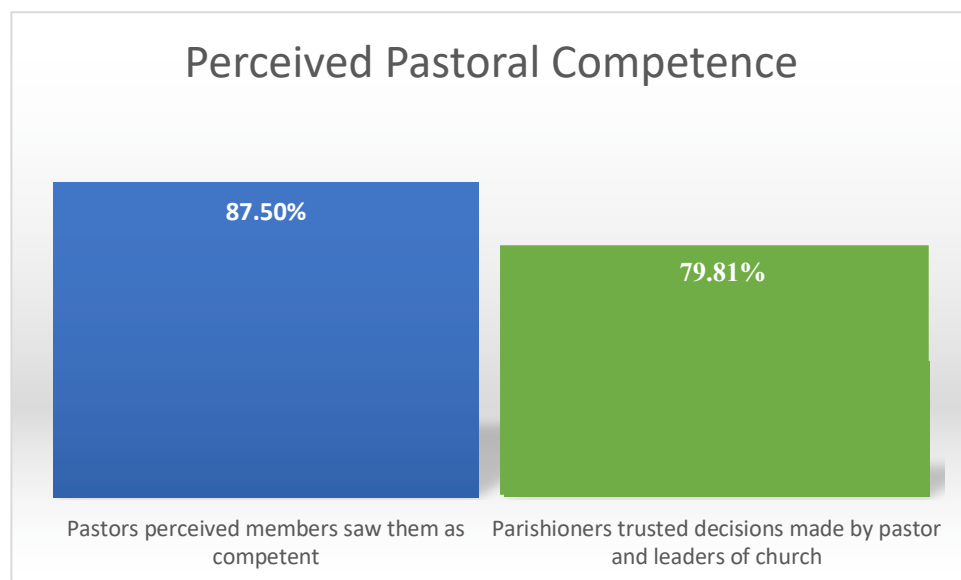
The researcher concluded that the excitement, or lack thereof, of new ideas and plans of the church could be because the parishioners were not at the table when ideas about the church were discussed. Further, almost half of them inferred that they had not the privilege of discussing the future of their church with their pastor.

People like Hosseini, Meyer & Cremus (2022) believe that religious involvement significantly contributes to mental health in the church. It counters negativity and could counter cognitive deterioration in the elderly (pp. 208-225). The researcher believed that religious involvement included opportunities to take part in the brainstorming and decision making of the church. The researcher also believed kinds of involvement helped members to develop a sense of ownership, which is another form of partnership in their church.

***RQ6 - Most pastors in this study were perceived as competent.***

**Figure 20**

*Perceived Pastoral Competency*



In many parishes, pastors are the go-to person for almost everything. This places a great deal of pressure on the pastor (Ingram, 1981, p. 119; Posey, 1997, p. 470).

Additionally, the heightened role of the pastor as the go-to person has developed the unfortunate result of some pastors having a “dominant attitude” amongst their parishioners (Ingram, 1981, p. 119). With this in mind, the researcher discovered that 87.5% of pastors, in this study, perceived that their members saw them as competent, while 79.91% of parishioners across all demographics in this study said that they trusted the decisions that their pastors and church leaders made (See Figure 19).

These results seem to coincide with Ingram’s (1981) findings. He stated that one of the reasons for pastors’ dominant attitude is the parishioner’s expectations and the ambiguity in responsibilities that could lead to congregations that are “unwilling to follow pastoral initiative” (p. 119). According to Ingram, the parishioners in this study had higher expectations for their pastors; expectations that might have heightened their opinions of their pastor’s competency. Intern, the parishioner’s perceived competency heightened the participant pastor’s opinion of their own competence (Hwang, 2008, p. 192). According to Ingram, one of the reasons for pastors' dominant attitude is the parishioner’s expectations and the ambiguity in responsibilities that could lead to congregations that are "unwilling to follow pastoral initiative" (Ingram, 1981, p. 119). The cyclical effects of pastoral ambiguity and member apathy lead pastors to hypocrisy, abdication [the pastor resigning from ministry] and manipulation. (Ingram, 1981, pp. 123-125).

***RQ6 - Members perceived relationship with pastor appeared deeper than the pastors perceived.***

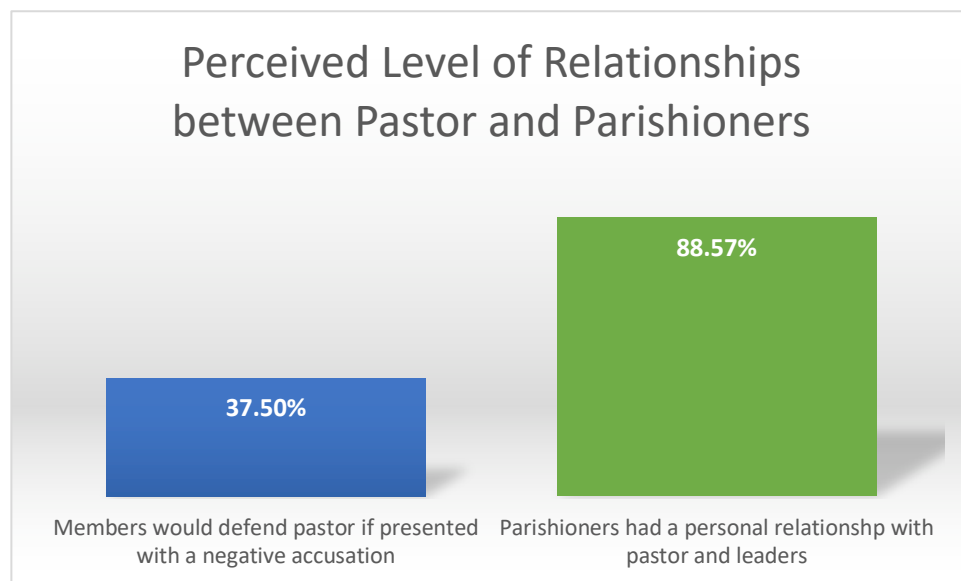
Personal positive relationships result in positive relational responses in a variety of circumstances. Most of the parishioners in this study perceived that they had special relationship with their pastors and church leaders. The researcher believed that stronger relationships in church equate stronger partnership between the pastor and his parishioners. In the researcher’s

study, a whopping 88.57% of participant parishioners perceived that they knew their pastors and other church leaders personally.

Pastors did not perceive that many their parishioners felt that they had a personal connection with them, especially in the face of a negative accusation. Only 37.5% of participant pastors felt that their members would defend and stand with them if a damaging accusation surfaced. This perception might be reflected in the behavior of accused pastors.

**Figure 21**

*Perceived Level of Relationships between Pastor and Parishioners*

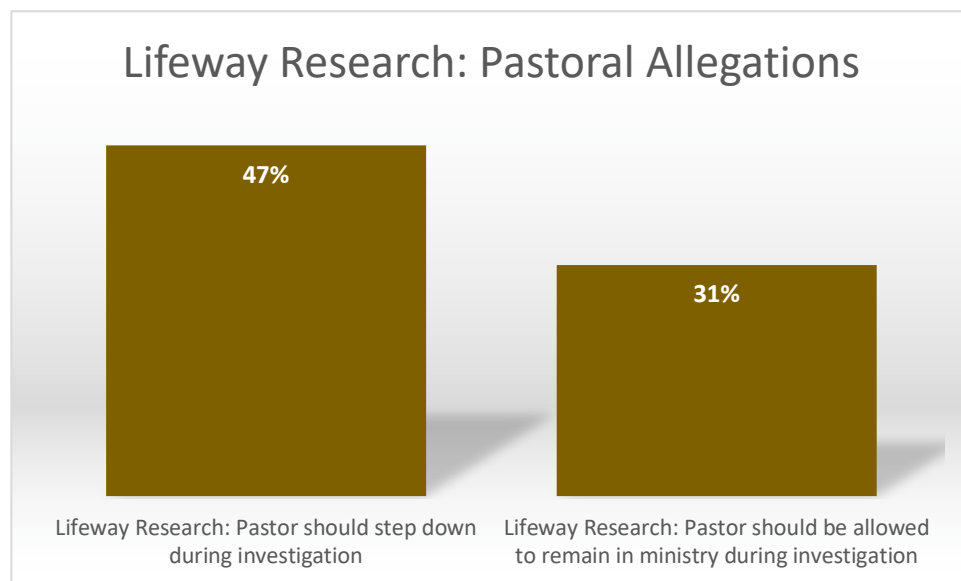


A Lifeway Research survey (2016) assessed 1,000 pastors to determine what responses the church and parishioners should have, considering an allegation against them. Seventy-three percent of participants said that church leaders “should keep allegations in confidence during an investigation.” Only 13% believed that information about allegations should be imparted to their parishioners. Fourteen percent were not sure. This researcher believed that the 73% of pastors, who saw wisdom in withholding information on a damaging allegation against them during an investigation, might have felt that such information could potentially divide their churches and

hinder or even derail future plans for ministry. This researcher believed that these pastor's responses reflected, as in his study, a lowered perception, by the pastors, of a personal connection with their parishioners that could affect their partnership with their parishioners (See Figure 20). When asked how pastors should be treated by their church or parent organization when facing an accusation or allegation, 47% of pastors in the Lifeway Research survey said that pastors "should step aside while church leaders investigated the allegation."

**Figure 22**

*Lifeway Research: Information given during an investigation*



Thirty-one percent said that the pastor should be allowed to continue his pastoral functions during an investigation. Twenty-one percent were not sure (See Figure 21). The researcher believed that the 31% of pastors that stated that pastors who were facing allegations should not step down, might have also believed, as the 37.5% did, in his study, that their members would probably defend and stand by them when confronted with a damaging allegation. Their personal relationships and past experiences would play a major part in their loyalty to their pastor in wake

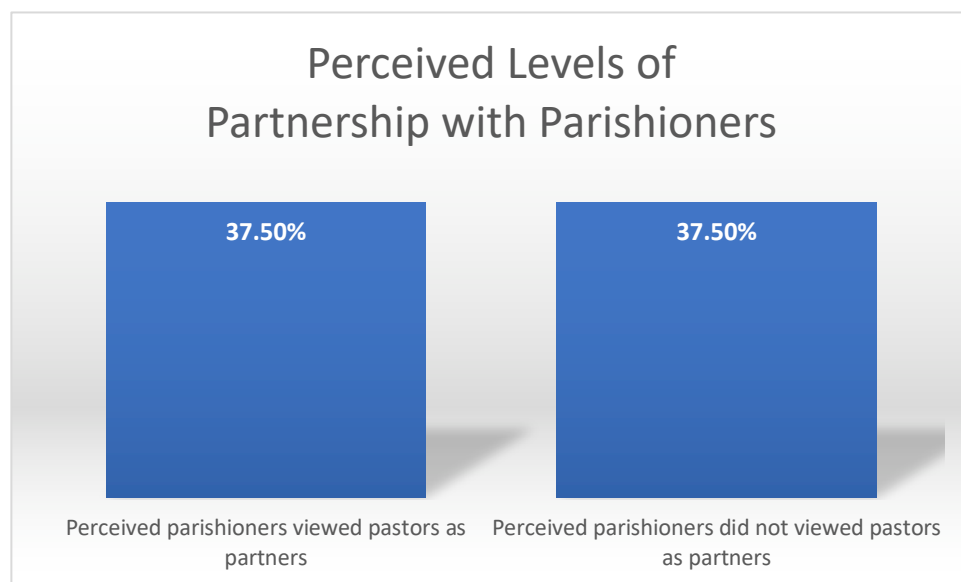
of an allegation. The researcher believed that this loyalty reflected the partnership between the pastor and his supportive parishioners.

***RQ6 - Parishioner's perception of partnership with their pastor was stronger than their pastor's perception of partnership with them.***

Dyadic partnerships between the pastor and his parishioners place the parishioners on a steady trajectory towards leadership (Graen, George and Uhl-Bien, 1991, p. 33).

**Figure 23**

*Pastoral Perception on Partnership with Parishioners*



When addressing the subject of partnership in this study, again their appeared to be a difference of opinion between the parishioners and their pastors. Thirty-seven and half percent of participant pastors perceived that their members viewed them as partners in the ministry while another 37.5% stated that their members did not see them as partners in ministry (See Figure 22)

On the other hand, the data from this study shows that the perceived partnership of the parishioners are significantly higher than that of their pastors. Further, there is evidence, in this study, that the parishioners are aware of this gap. Eighty-seven and a half percent of parishioners



believed that their pastor was aware of the kind of service they gave to fulfill the mission of their churches. Additionally, 79.91% believed that their pastor was aware of their personal situation and 68.75% stated that their pastor and church were aware of their spiritual gifts. A lesser 56.25% of parishioners believed that their pastors were content with their service in the mission of the church while 39.06% felt that their pastors were not content with their service (See Figure 23).

**Figure 24**

*Parishioner Perception on Partnership with their Pastor*



The gap between the pastor and parishioner in perceived partnership might be based on the pastor's perceived failures in successful discipleship of his parishioners (Barna 2015, pp. 9-13; Lose, D. et al., 2015, p. 388) and the parishioners limited understanding of the level of discipleship expected by their pastors along with Christian norms related to discipleship (Lose, D. et al., 2015, p. 388).

### **Research Limitations**

This study was limited to Master of Divinity graduates who are senior pastors that have been in their parish for at least three years and were working within two conferences in the Mid-American Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventist. This criterion excluded two pastors that taken part of the study and could have contributed to this study. The study could have been opened to other seminary master's programs, which could have offered a comparison element. This would have allowed the researcher to include PP9, a female pastor that completed a Masters in Pastoral Ministry (MAPMin). It's worth noting that PP9 believed that her primary responsibility was to hear God's voice and do exactly what he told her to do. This included her responsibility as a disciple maker and an equipper. She emphasized the life and ministry of Jesus before her parishioners. Unlike most of the participants in the researcher's study, PP9 believed that the MAPMin curriculum, which is a curriculum that emphasizes the development of practical pastoral skills, prepared her for ministry. However, she stated that she would have liked to have taken more practical classes regarding one-on-one Bible Studies, evangelism and leading a church during a pandemic. The skills she gained in the MAPMin helped her to formulate a discipleship program for her church. She 1) emphasized the life and ministry of Jesus before her parishioners at every opportunity she had, 2) gave her members a spiritual gifts assessment test, 3) interviewed members to discuss their tests and conveying ministries that would coincide with their spiritual gifts and 4) distributed an involvement form listing all the available ministries in the church.

Her program made a difference in the perception of her parishioners. One hundred percent of 021 the lay participants from PP9's church stated that their church had a spiritual gifts program, an equipping curriculum, or both and were eager to do their part in ministry of their

church. The researcher concluded, from the data presented in PP9's study, that a more practical curriculum that emphasized discovering the spiritual gifts of future parishioners and equipping them to participate in a corporate ministry plan could increase partnership and church commitment.

This study did not include pastors and churches who were a part of other conferences outside of the two conferences of focus in the Mid-American Union. Because of this limitation, the researcher did not have a more diverse population. Further, by expanding the number of eligible conferences, the researcher could have increased his chances of including female pastors in this study, which would have given his research an important perspective to consider.

This study was limited to regular attendees of the participant pastor's parishes that were 18 years old or older. The participant parishioners had to attend services in person (not online). This limited the overall number of participants due to the results of COVID-19. Nearly all the pastors in this study believed that a large number of their members were too fearful to attend church in person, thus settling to watch church services on social media.

The researcher limited the questionnaire, in phase two, to statements that corresponded with the LMX-7 and the OCQ-9. Though these statements helped the researcher determine the partnership of the participant parishioners with their pastors and their commitment to their church and its mission, information on the specific programs the members believed their pastors implemented was missing. That information could have been acquired qualitatively.

In phase one, many of the pastors discussed the limitations of COVID-19 on their attendance. In retrospect, the researcher could have probed deeper into the effects of the pandemic on church attendance.

A couple of the pastors ministered in multiple church districts. The researcher did not pursue this path, but in retrospect could have delved into the subject deeper to determine how the pastors felt their inability to attend one church every week hindered them from fostering partnership and commitment with their parishioners and what they did to compensate for their inabilities.

The researcher asked the pastors in the study how they perceived their members would respond if they were presented with a negative accusation about their pastor? The research questions did not provide a specific scenario nor did the researcher address this subject with the participant pastor's parishioners. A more complete probe into this subject could have provided the researcher with a more complete picture of the partnership of the parishioners with their pastors.

The researcher did not provide a clear definition of discipleship to the pastors or their parishioner's. Though scripture gives a general definition, the researcher needed to be clearer on the definition for this study.

### **Further Research**

Though this researcher answered many questions about equipping pastors to equip their members, the research provided substantial opportunities for further research. This researcher suggests the following:

1. Two of the ten participants in this study did not qualify to take part in this study because they had not received a Master of Divinity. One pastor had only received a Bachelor of Arts in theology and the other received a Master in Pastoral Ministry. The latter was not only interviewed by the researcher, but her church fully participated in the study. Most of her parishioners are actively involved in ministry. A future study could compare the LECs of different master's programs in seminary.
2. In this study, the researcher learned that pastors felt uncertain about the reaction of their parishioners if negative accusations surfaced in their ministry. As the researcher searched for additional scholarly sources, he discovered a possible gap in the

research. A future study could seek to determine the various responses parishioners would give to different kinds of accusations against their pastors.

3. In this study, the researcher was confronted with several pastors that ministered in multi-church districts. A future study could compare the challenges that pastors in multi-church districts face with the challenges that pastors face with one church.
4. Additionally, most of the pastors in multi-church parishes protested the kinds of training they received in seminary. They stated that most of the teaching they received were geared towards one church parishes. A future study could consider how much scholarship in seminary is relevant to multi-church districts.
5. The researcher discovered that pastors and parishioners had different definitions of discipleship. A future study could investigate the various definitions that both pastors and parishioners have for discipleship and how those definitions effect the expectations of ministry for both groups.
6. This study included eight male pastors. The female pastors in the target conferences did not qualify for this study. A future study could focus on female pastor's ability to equip their parishioners for church ministry compared to their male counterparts.

### **Summary**

The gospel commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20, which is Jesus prime directive to his disciples, compels pastors to make disciples that can intern make disciples (Vincent, 1887, p. 149; Dockery, 1992, p. 567). The disciple-making process is to eventually crescendo into the gospel reaching every person on Earth (Matthew 24:14). But statistics amongst evangelical churches reveals something different. Evangelical churches are experiencing a steep decline in membership. Burggraff (2015) states, "According to Dickerson's surveys, the evangelical church is losing members at the rate of 2.6 million per decade" (p. 22). The decline of church growth and the failure of the church to fulfill the gospel commission is due to the failures of pastors who have been tasked, according to Ephesians 4:11, to spearhead church growth (Ferreira, I. W., & Chipenyu, W., 2021). Pastors are not to perform the gospel commission alone, but to equip every member to carry on the work of the gospel ministry (Ephesians 4:11; Ferreira, I. W., & Chipenyu, W., 2021; Lose, D. et al., 2015, p. 79). But the real culprit is the seminary, for the

pastor is only an extension of the seminary (Lose, D. et al., 2015, p. 338; VanDenburg, 1992).

This researcher has sought to determine if the completed Master of Divinity programs of pastors in two conferences in the Mid-American Union of Seventh-day Adventist provided them with the necessary Lay Equipping Competencies (LEC) to equip their members and if those competencies were adequately equipping and mobilizing their members in the gospel ministry.

To that aim, this study has used a Multiphase iterative mixed-method study to determine if the lay equipping competencies of the participant senior pastors was adequate to influence their church's discipleship programs and develop partnership with their parishioners in ministry and commitment for their church's mission. Through qualitative, semi-structured interviews, this researcher has found that the pastors in this study did not feel that they received the necessary LECs to effectively equip their members by developing partnership and commitment.

On the other hand, through a mixed method questionnaire this researcher discovered that the participant pastor's parishioners felt a higher level of partnership with their pastors and commitment to their churches than their pastors did. Further, there is evidence from the responses of the parishioners in the questionnaire that they were aware that their pastors felt that their partnership and commitment did the measure up to their pastor's standards.

This study should enlighten seminary educators of future pastor's need to obtain relevant training on how to develop partnership with their parishioners in the gospel ministry and commitment to their church's specific ministry. This study must also educate future pastors on mobilizing every parishioner in the gospel ministry. The answering of the six RQs that steered this study should provide valuable data that can be used in future studies as educators and pastors work together to equip the laity to finish the gospel commission. The researcher hopes that this

study will inspire both seminary educators to start thinking of ways to reorder the curriculum to practically train pastors to equip their members for ministry.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**REQUEST EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT LEAD PASTOR**

April 15, 2021

Dear [Name of prospective participant]:

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of this study is to compare the church discipleship programs of graduate lead pastors from a denominational theological seminary with a graduate lead pastor from a non-denominational theological seminary to determine if their lay-equipping competencies affect their parishioners' partnerships with them in ministry and their commitments to their churches and their churches' mission.

Each participant must be 18 years of age or older and attend the (name of church or church campus) at least two times a month. If willing, participants will be asked to participate in an online questionnaire, which will take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. The questionnaire will be administered anonymously online. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. Each survey will be connected to the participant church by a number code.

To participate, please click here [hyperlink from Qualtrics will be provided] to complete a short screening questionnaire.

After successfully completing the screening process, each potential participant will be given access to the consent form. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate in this study, please click the button at the end of the consent document. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to participate in the survey. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

**APPENDIX B**  
**REQUEST EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT PARISHIONER**

April 15, 2021

Dear [Name of prospective participant]:

As a doctoral candidate at the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for an Education Doctorate degree. The purpose of this study is to compare the church discipleship programs of lead graduate pastors from a denominational theological seminary with a graduate lead pastor from a non-denominational theological seminary to determine if their lay equipping competencies affect their parishioner's partnership with them in ministry and their commitment to their churches and their church's mission.

Each participant must be 18 years of age or older and attend the (name of church or church campus) at least two times a month. If willing, participants will be asked to participate in an online (or paper) survey, which will take approximately 15-minutes to complete. The survey will be administered anonymously online. For attendees who do not have access to a computer, a paper copy will be provided to them by the lead pastor of the participant church or church campus. Each survey will be connected to the participant church by a number code. The number code key will be safely stored in my password-protected computer. Only I will have access to the participant's personal information. All personal data will be destroyed after three years in accordance with the IRB policies of Liberty University.

To participate, please click here [hyperlink from Qualtrics will be provided] to complete a short screening questionnaire. After successfully completing the screening process, each potential participant will be given access to the consent form, provided via a hyperlink. The consent document contains additional information about my research.

After completing the consent process, if you choose to participate in this study, you will need to push the submit button at the end of the consent document. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like access to the survey. By pressing the submit button, you will have full access to the survey. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

**APPENDIX C**  
**FOLLOW-UP EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT PARISHIONER**

Dear [Name of the prospective participant),

As a doctoral candidate at the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for an Education Doctorate degree. The purpose of this study is to compare the church discipleship programs of lead graduate pastors from a denominational theological seminary with a graduate lead pastor from a non-denominational theological seminary to determine if their lay equipping competencies affect their parishioner's partnership with them in ministry and their commitment to their churches and their church's mission.

In this follow-up email, I am inviting you to participate in an online (or paper) survey, which will take approximately 15-minutes to complete. The survey will be administered anonymously online. Each participant must be 18 years of age or older and attend the (name of church or church campus) at least two times a month. For attendees who do not have access to a computer, a paper copy will be provided to them by the lead pastor of the participant church or church campus. Each survey will be connected to the participant church by a number code. The number code key will be safely stored in my password-protected computer. Only I will have access to the participant's personal information. All personal data will be destroyed after three years in accordance with the IRB policies of Liberty University.

To participate, please click here [hyperlink from Qualtrics will be provided] to complete a short screening questionnaire. After successfully completing the screening process, each potential participant will be given access to the consent form, provided via a hyperlink. The consent document contains additional information about my research.

After completing the consent process, if you choose to participate in this study, you will need to push the submit button at the end of the consent document. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like access to the survey. By pressing the submit button, you will have full access to the survey. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature and name of the sender.

## APPENDIX D

### PARTICIPANT LEAD PASTOR'S CONSENT FORM

**Title of the Project:** A Multiphase Iterative Mixed-Method Study of Lay-Equipping Competencies of Lead Pastors from a Denominational and Non-denominational Seminary  
**Principal Investigator:** Gary S. Collins, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be a part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, graduates from one of the participating institutions of higher learning (Institutional identifiers have been removed to preserve their confidentiality) between 2013 and 2017, lead pastors in their parish or church campus within the denomination of the alma mater for at least three years and have completed at least one of the lay equipping competency (LEC) course offered at their alma mater between the years 2010 and 2017 (LEC courses will be listed within the screening process). Participants must also agree to provide email addresses for their congregation in order for the researcher to request their participation in a survey. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to compare the church discipleship programs of graduate lead pastors from a denominational and non-denominational theological seminary to determine if their lay-equipping competencies affect their parishioners' partnerships with them in ministry and their commitments to their churches and their churches' missions.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a video-recorded interview through Zoom. The interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes to complete. After transcribing the interview, I will email it to you for your review to ensure its accuracy.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study if you are chosen?

As the leader of your flock, you will receive the results and analysis from this study for your church, which could help you to improve your church's lay equipping program.

A possible benefit to our Christian institutions of higher learning is a way forward to provide future pastors with greater lay equipping skills and more concrete ways for their future parishioners to use those skills in the church's mission.

#### What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study include are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

#### How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

#### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. As the lead pastor in your church, you will receive a \$50.00 check through the mail for participating in the study.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or you alma mater. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Gary S. Collins. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at xxx-xxx-xxxx (call or text). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Joseph Butler, at [jebutler@liberty.edu](mailto:jebutler@liberty.edu).

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

#### **Your Consent**

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records]. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

By consenting, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you consent. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you click the button below, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge:

☐ The researcher has my permission to video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Your participation in the study is voluntary. You are 18 years of age. You are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation at any time for any reason. If you consent to the terms of this study, you will be contacted by Gary Collins to schedule your interview.

☐ I consent, begin the study.

☐ I do not consent, I do not wish to participate.

---

## APPENDIX E

### PARTICIPANT PARISHIONER'S CONSENT FORM

**Title of the Project:** A Multiphase Iterative Mixed-Method Study of Lay-Equipping Competencies of Lead Pastors from a Denominational and Non-denominational Seminary  
**Principal Investigator:** Gary S. Collins, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and regularly attending your church at least twice a month. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to compare the church discipleship programs of graduate lead pastors from a denominational and non-denominational theological seminary to determine if their lay-equipping competencies affect their parishioners' partnerships with them in ministry and their commitments to their churches and their churches' missions.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following thing:

1. Complete an online questionnaire through Qualtrics. The questionnaire should take between 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

A possible benefit to our Christian institutions of higher learning is a way forward to provide future pastors with greater lay equipping skills and more concrete ways for their future parishioners to use those skills in the church's mission.

#### What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study include are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

#### How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Participant responses will be anonymous.

- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Questionnaires will be coded based on the church affiliation typed in the second question of the screening questionnaire, to match questionnaire with the church that the participants attend.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the questionnaire without affecting those relationships.

### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the questionnaire and close your internet browser if you are taking the questionnaire electronically. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Gary S. Collins. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at xxx-xxx-cccc (call or text). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Joseph Butler, at [jebutler@liberty.edu](mailto:jebutler@liberty.edu).

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

### **Your Consent**

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.



**APPENDIX F**  
**PARTICIPANT LEAD PASTOR'S SCREENING QUESTIONS**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you 18-years-old or older? [click]      Yes      or      No
2. What church are you presently pastoring? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you pastored there? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you the lead pastor in your church? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many members are on your churches or church campus's role?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the average weekly attendance at your church or church campus? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Did you graduate from one of the participating higher learning institutions between 2013 and 2017? [click]      Yes      or      No
8. Did you take the following classes from you alma mater (choose the classes offered by your alma mater)?

Denominational Theological Seminary

- [LEC Course}
- [LEC Course}
- [LEC Course}
- [LEC Course}

Non-denominational Theological Seminary

- [LEC Course}
- [LEC Course}
- [LEC Course}
- [LEC Course}

Would you like to take part in this study? [click]      Yes      or      N

## APPENDIX G

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following interview questions for phase two of this study will serve as primers to other questions not foreseen by the researcher. The research tool for phase two are semi-structured interviews with the participant lead pastors in this study.	
1	As the shepherd of your parish, what do you believe your foremost responsibility is?
2	What do you think Jesus meant when he said to his disciples in Matthew 28:19, 20 to make disciples of all people?
3	Paul states in Ephesians 4:11, 12 that God gave pastors and teachers (amongst others) for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ. What does that mean to you?
4	Do you believe that [Institution of Higher Education] prepared you to equip your church members for ministry? If so, how? If not, why not?
5	The following courses at [Institution of Higher Education] are considered to be lay equipping competency courses. I will go through them one by one. Can you tell me some of the primary skills that you learned from these courses?
6	<p>What program do you have in your parish to equip your parishioners for ministry?</p> <p>A. (If the church has an equipping program) How effective do you believe that program is?</p> <p>B. (Perceived involvement in programs could be requested and numbers of people using their giftedness for God's Kingdom should be sought in follow-up questions).</p>
7	In what ways has [Institution of Higher Education] helped you to effectively equip your parishioners for active ministry?
8	Regarding commitment, do you believe that your members are willing to put forth more significant effort than expected to succeed in the church's mission? What percentage? Can you give a couple of examples?
9	How do you think your parishioners feel about this organization?
10	What do you perceive your parishioners are willing to do for the success of this church's mission?
11	How would you describe the values of your parishioners as compared to the values of your church?
12	How would you describe the performance of your parishioners in the ministries of this church?
13	Describe how your parishioners feel about the fate of this church?
14	Describe how your members respond when you present a new idea or plan for the church members to participate in.
15	How do you believe your parishioners perceive your competencies in leading them to fulfill the church's mission?
16	Explain how you seek out the potential gifts of the members of your church? How do you utilize those gifts in a cooperative church ministry plan?

17	What are the ways that you help your parishioners solve ministry problems?
18	What are the ways that you have used your authority to help a parishioner that is in trouble?
19	If a lousy accusation was made against you, how do you think that your members would respond?
20	How do you think your parishioners would characterize your working relationship with them?

## APPENDIX H

### INTERVIEW KEY

The interview key is an analyzing tool for the researcher's use only. Questions one through seven give open ended questions. On the right, the purpose for the question is offered. Questions 8 – 23 coincides with the survey questions on commitment and partnership asked in phase three (OCQ-9 & LMX-7). The two left columns for questions 8-23 present the survey question that the sim-structured interview question coincides with. The interview key allows the researcher to compare the answers given by the participant lead pastors with the answers given by their parishioners in the quantitative portion of the survey in phase three.

	<b>Perception of Alma Mater Protocol Questions</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
1	As the shepherd of your parish, what do you believe your foremost responsibility is?	To determine whether the participant pastor has any awareness of his or her responsibility to make disciples of those attending; equipping them to accomplish their part in the great commission of Matthew 28:19, 20.
2	What do you think Jesus meant when he said to his disciples in Matthew 28:19, 20 to make disciples of all people?	To determine what definition the pastor has of discipleship and see if that definition includes equipping individuals to fulfill their part in the great commission.
3	Paul states in Ephesians 4:11, 12 that God gave pastors and teachers (amongst others) for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ. What does that mean to you?	To understand if the participant pastor understands his role as the leading equipper in his parish.
4	Do you believe that [Institution of Higher Education] prepared you to equip your church members for ministry? If so, how? If not, why not?	To see if the participant pastor perceives that his alma mater prepared him or her to equip the parish members or not.
5	The following courses at [Institution of Higher Education] are considered to be lay equipping competency courses. I will go through them one by one. Can you tell me some of the primary skills that you learned from these courses?	To determine what skills the participant pastor learned from the identified LEC courses.
6	What program do you have in your parish to equip your parishioners for ministry? C. (If the church has an equipping program) How effective do you believe that program is? D. (Perceived involvement in programs could be requested and numbers of people using their giftedness for God's Kingdom should be sought in follow-up questions).	To determine if there is an equipping program in the church and how effective that program is?

7	In what ways has [Institution of Higher Education] helped you to effectively equip your parishioners for active ministry?	To determine if the pastor perceives that the LECs gained from their alma mater relevantly translates into their parish's lay equipping program.
<b>Interview Protocol Questions Related to the OCQ-9 For Parishioner Commitment</b>		

<b>Original OCQ-9 question</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Developed Interview Question</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>
1	I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond the standard expected to help the organization be successful.	8	Regarding commitment, do you believe that your members are willing to put forth more significant effort than expected to succeed in the church's mission? What percentage? Can you give a couple of examples?
2	I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.	9	How do you think your parishioners feel about this organization?
3	I would accept almost any type of job assignment to keep working for this organization.	10	What do you perceive your parishioners are willing to do for the success of this church's mission?
4	I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.	11	How would you describe the values of your parishioners as compared to the values of your church?
5	I am proud to tell others that I am a part of this organization.	12	See interview question 2.
6	This organization inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.	13	How would you describe the performance of your parishioners in the ministries of this church?
7	I am delighted that I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined.	14	See interview question 2
8	I care about the fate of this organization.	15	Describe how your parishioners feel about the fate of this church?
9	For me, this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work.	16	See interview question 2.

**Interview Protocol Questions Related to the LMX-7 For Parishioner Partnership**

<b>Original LMX-7 question</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Developed Interview Question</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>
1	Do you know where you stand with your leader? Do you usually know	17	Describe how your members respond when you present a new

	how satisfied your leader is with what you do?		idea or plan for the church members to participate in.
2	How well does your leader understand job problems and needs?	18	How do you believe your parishioners perceive your competencies in leading them to fulfill the church's mission?
3	How well does your leader recognize your potential?	19	Explain how you seek out the potential gifts of the members of your church? How do you utilize those gifts in a cooperative church ministry plan?
4	Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, what are the chances that your leader would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work?	20	What are the ways that you help your parishioners solve ministry problems?
5	Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your leader has, what are the chances that he/she would "bail you out" at his/her expense?	21	What are the ways that you have used your authority to help a parishioner that is in trouble?
6	I have enough confidence in my leader that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so?	22	If a lousy accusation was made against you, how do you think that your members would respond?
7	How would you characterize your working relationship with your leader?	23	How do you think your parishioners would characterize your working relationship with them?

<b>Total – 20 Questions – Estimated Interview Time – 90 minutes</b>
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**APPENDIX I**  
**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE – PART I AND II**

***I. Basic Information***

1. Attending Church \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle one.

2. Gender (1) Male                      (2) Female

3. Age Group:    (1) 18-32        (2) 33-40        (3) 41-49        (4) 50-64        (5) 65 +

4. What answer below describes your church standing (Circle your answer)

- A. I am visiting the church for the first time (in person or online).
- B. I have been attending the church several times a month (in person or online).
- C. I have started preparing for baptism by taking Bible Studies.
- D. I am a newly baptized member (within the last two years).
- E. I have been a member for more than two years but do not regularly attend (in person or online).
- F. I have been a member for more than two years and regularly attend (in person or online).

5. What stage are you presently in (circle the answer most appropriate)?

- A. I am a newcomer not attending any classes.
- B. I am a newcomer involved in one of this church's small groups.
- C. I am a newcomer attending a baptismal class.
- D. I am a newcomer attending a newcomer's class.
- E. I am a baptized member involved in a spiritual gifts or equipping class.
- F. I am a baptized member holding a church office.
- G. I am a baptized member and am a part of a small group.
- H. I am a baptized member but not involved in church ministry.

6. Describe your church.

- A. My church has a spiritual gifts program for its members.
- B. My church has an equipping curriculum to help members find and use their gifts to spread the gospel.
- C. My church does not have a spiritual gifts or equipping curriculum.

7. Describe your pastor.

- A. My pastor is skilled at implementing programs that help me to discover my spiritual gifts.
- B. My pastor is skilled at getting me involved in activities that help me to use my spiritual gifts.

- C. My pastor is not skilled at implementing programs that help me to discover my spiritual gifts.
- D. My pastor is not skilled at getting me involved in activities that help me use my spiritual gifts.

8. How would you describe your church's discipleship program?

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## II. *Commitment and Partnership Survey*

Please circle the number that best reflects your answer: Strongly Disagree [SD] (1); Disagree [D](2); Not Sure [NS] (3); Agree [A] (4); Strongly Agree [SA] (5).

#	Questions	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1	My pastor is familiar with my personal situation.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I know my pastor and the leaders of my church personally.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I do my best to accommodate my pastor and the church when asked to help out.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I trust the decisions that my pastor and the church leaders make.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I enjoy working with my pastor rather than working by myself.	1	2	3	4	5
6	My pastor is aware of the kind of service I give to fulfill the mission of my church.	1	2	3	4	5
7	My pastor is content with my service in the mission of the church.	1	2	3	4	5
8	My pastor and the church are aware of my spiritual gifts.	1	2	3	4	5
9	My pastor used his authority to help me when I was in trouble.	1	2	3	4	5
10	My pastor and the leaders of the church work together for the Kingdom of God.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I feel distant from my pastor.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I am a lay leader working with my pastor and the church to build up the Kingdom of God.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I do more than what is asked of me by my pastor and the church.	1	2	3	4	5
14	My pastor used his resources to help me when I was in trouble.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I know the level of service my pastor and the church expect from me.	1	2	3	4	5
16	With all my heart, I cooperate with my pastor and the church to fulfill the gospel commission.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I am fully aware of the vision for my church's mission, as expressed by the pastor and the church leaders.	1	2	3	4	5
18	My vision and the vision of my pastor and the church are identical.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I fully support the vision of my pastor and the church.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I am willing to do more than what is expected to help my church be triumphant.	1	2	3	4	5
21	I love to tell people I meet about my church.	1	2	3	4	5
22	When the opportunity avails itself, I advise others to visit the church because it is a great place to be.	1	2	3	4	5

23	I will do whatever I can (no matter how difficult) to progress the church's mission.	1	2	3	4	5
24	I am proud to tell others that I am a member of this church.	1	2	3	4	5
25	This church inspires the best in me by providing tangible ways for me to use my spiritual gifts to fulfill the church's mission.	1	2	3	4	5
26	I made the right decision to choose this church to join over other churches I was considering.	1	2	3	4	5
27	In my opinion, this church is the best church to attend and minister.	1	2	3	4	5
28	Except for unavoidable circumstances (trips outside the city, sickness, etc.) I always attend worship services at this church, either in person or online.	1	2	3	4	5
29	I am so grateful for my church.	1	2	3	4	5
30	I give as much as I can to make sure that the church successfully performs its mission.	1	2	3	4	5
31	I have spoken with the pastor and leaders of this church about the future direction of our church.	1	2	3	4	5
32	I will not abandon this church, even in difficult times.	1	2	3	4	5
33	My suggestions are taken seriously by my pastor and the leaders of my church.	1	2	3	4	5
34	I am very interested in the growth of this church.	1	2	3	4	5
35	I cannot imagine my life without this church.	1	2	3	4	5
36	When the church is successful in fulfilling its mission, I rejoice.	1	2	3	4	5
37	I am reluctant to support the church financially.	1	2	3	4	5
38	I do not like to hear criticism about my church.	1	2	3	4	5
39	I clearly understand the mission plans and goals of my church.	1	2	3	4	5
40	I do all I can to make sure that this church achieves its mission objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
41	It doesn't matter to me whether the church grows or not.	1	2	3	4	5
42	I am incredibly blessed to attend this church.	1	2	3	4	5
43	I know what my spiritual gift(s) are.	1	2	3	4	5
44	I know how my spiritual gift(s) fit into the overall mission of my church.	1	2	3	4	5

**APPENDIX J**  
**SURVEY KEY**

<b>ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE-9 PROTOCOL</b>			
The survey key displays the original OCQ-9 and LMX-7 questions (two left columns) and how they correspond with the questions in this study's survey (two right columns).			
1	I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond the standard expected to help the organization be successful.	14	I have personally sacrificed my time, talents and resources for the benefit of the church.
		20	I am willing to do more than what is expected to help my church be triumphant.
		30	I give as much as I can to make sure that the church successfully performs its mission.
		37	I am reluctant to support the church financially.
2	I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.	21	I love to tell people I meet about my church.
		22	When the opportunity avails itself, I advise others to visit the church because it is a great place to be.
3	I would accept almost any type of job assignment to keep working for this organization.	23	I will do whatever I can (no matter how difficult) to progress the church's mission.
		43	I know what my spiritual gift(s) are.
		44	I know how my spiritual gift(s) fit into the overall mission of my church.
4	I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.	39	I clearly understand the mission plans and goals of my church.
5	I am proud to tell others that I am a part of this organization.	24	I am proud to tell others that I am a member of this church.
		42	I am incredibly blessed to attend this church.
6	This organization inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.	25	This church inspires the best in me by providing tangible ways for me to use my spiritual gifts to fulfill the church's mission.
		40	I do all I can to make sure that this church achieves its mission objectives.
7	I am delighted that I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined.	26	I made the right decision to choose this church to join over other churches I was considering.
		29	I am so grateful for my church.
8	I care about the fate of this organization.	28	Except for unavoidable circumstances (trips outside the city, sickness, etc.) I always attend worship services at this church, either in person or online.
		32	I will not abandon this church, even in difficult times.

		34	I am very interested in the growth of this church.
		35	I cannot imagine my life without this church.
		36	When the church is thriving in fulfilling its mission, I rejoice.
		38	I do not like to hear criticism about my church.
		41	It doesn't matter to me whether the church grows or not.
9	For me, this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work.	27	In my opinion, this church is the best church to attend and minister.
<b>LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE-7 PROTOCOL</b>			
<b>Original LMX-7 question</b>	<b>Questions</b>		
1	Do you know where you stand with your leader...do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?	2	I know my pastor and the leaders of my church personally.
		7	My pastor is content with my service in the mission of the church.
		11	I feel distant from my pastor.
		13	I do more than what is asked of me by my pastor and the church.
		15	I know the level of service my pastor and the church expect from me.
		17	I am fully aware of the vision for my church's mission, as expressed by the pastor and the church leaders.
		18	My vision and the vision of my pastor and the church are identical.
		33	My suggestions are taken seriously by my pastor and the leaders of my church.
2	How well does your leader understand job problems and needs?	1	My pastor is familiar with my situation.
		6	My pastor is aware of the kind of service I give to fulfill the mission of my church.
3	How well does your leader recognize your potential?	8	My pastor and the church are aware of my spiritual gifts.
4	Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, what are the chances that your leader would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work?	9	My pastor had used his authority to help me when I was in trouble.

5	Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your leader has, what are the chances that he/she would "bail you out" at his/her expense?	14	My pastor used his resources to help me when I was in trouble.
6	I have enough confidence in my leader that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so?	4	I trust the decisions that my pastor and the church leaders make.
		19	I fully support the vision of my pastor and the church.
7	How would you characterize your working relationship with your leader?	3	I do my best to accommodate my pastor and the church when asked to help out.
		5	I enjoy working with my pastor rather than working by myself.
		10	My pastor and the leaders of the church work together for the Kingdom of God.
		12	I am a lay leader working with my pastor and the church to build up the Kingdom of God.
		16	With all my heart, I cooperate with my pastor and the church to fulfill the gospel commission.
		31	I have spoken with the pastor and leaders of this church about the future direction of our church.