

BETHEL UNIVERSITY
BETHEL SEMINARY ST. PAUL

LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION: A CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR
THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
IN LEADING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

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ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

JUNE 2011

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GLOSSARY

Contingency Plan: A plan of action for the extended life of the church.

Central Authority: An affiliation with an umbrella hierarchical organization and authority.

Discipleship: The process of educating and enabling believers regarding church doctrine for spiritual growth and maturity.

Effective Leadership: Leadership needed to implement a contingency plan for the church (Eph. 3:7).

Healthy Church: A church body whose membership is reproductive and has a strategic plan for successive leadership.

Independent Church: A self-governing church with no affiliation with a denomination or other external ecclesiastical authority.

Leadership Succession: The transference of leadership from one generation to the next.

Leadership Legacy: The material and spiritual benefits left as an inheritance for succeeding leaders and congregations.

Peer Mentor: A person who oversees the progress of a peer and imparts knowledge and resources for the mentee's spiritual development.

Organic Unity: A phrase that defines how local churches maintain an harmonious relationship between them and parachurch institutions. Organic unity further considers how churches and parachurches can mutually operate together as the Body of Christ.

Sterility of Leadership: The condition that exists when a group of maturing elders consists exclusively of members from within its own generation.

Visionary Leadership: Leadership that follows a biblical vision, understands and commits to the mission, and recognizes problems and attempts to solve them.

Key Informants: Pastors and those in church ministry best qualified to provide vital information relating to leadership succession.

ABSTRACT

Faith Community Church is an independent community church located in the small New England town of Plainfield, Connecticut. The church needs a contingency plan that will contribute to the longevity of the church and ministry. The project addresses leadership succession and the difficulty that all churches experience with this vital need.

Independent churches are a trend in the twenty-first century, but are they fully equipped for longevity and do they have a contingency plan for the next generation? A successful leadership succession depends upon a well-planned transition. Leadership succession is also dependent on a number of time-related factors.

The research centered upon the independent church phenomenon and a case study of four small independent churches. The research showed that independent churches are a repudiation of a dry orthodoxy. This study found the independent church movement was a quest for freedom from the traditional hierarchies of denominations.

During the study, the researcher discovered that churches have both common and unique DNA. Through grounded theory and coding of the data, the researcher identified factors that contribute to both the positives and obstacles to a good leadership succession. The research provided evidence that a renewed apostolic approach to leadership succession is more effective than traditional methods.

“The greatest thing this generation can do
is to lay a few stepping stones for the next generation.”
Charles F. Kettering

CHAPTER ONE: LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION

The Problem of Leadership Succession

This project addresses the need of a contingency plan for leadership succession in small independent churches in order to meet their ongoing leadership needs. In response to the problem, the researcher will seek to understand the independent church and review leadership succession in the Bible with a primary concentration on the Book of Acts and the Pastoral Epistles.

Independent churches may be free of denominational authority and traditions but are not free from the authority of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. The study will examine the contrasts between centralized and decentralized authority.

The research includes a literature review that addresses the independent church as an emerging phenomenon. The researcher is also interested in how well these churches develop leaders, prepare, and include them for leadership succession. Another important factor is leadership succession is a process that needs harmonious relationships. The researcher will seek to find ways this is possible.

The research will primarily focus on leadership succession through a case study of four independent churches. The project includes a proposed model for leadership that will aid in the development of a strategy for a good leadership succession. At some point, every church will need new leadership and therefore it is important to plan and have a strategy for it.

Delimitations

The research will focus primarily on autonomous independent churches. The research will be in Eastern Connecticut and Western Rhode Island. The research will consist of interviews, documents, constitutions, and statements of faith from selected churches. Lastly, the research will concentrate on previous studies and literature related to leadership succession.

Assumptions

No one is born a leader, so leaders must emerge and become over time. The researcher assumes that God has provided local churches with the resources necessary for leadership succession. Although God provides the human resources, the church must be proving grounds for them to emerge. The researcher also assumes that the Bible provides the vision and methods for leadership succession. A third assumption is that the Holy Spirit oversees the functions of the church. The researcher assumes that leadership is cyclical and needs to reproduce. The final assumption is that the longevity of an independent church is directly related to leadership succession.

Subproblems

The first subproblem is to seek an understanding of the independent church phenomenon. The second subproblem is to review how the Scriptures address leadership succession. In the third subproblem the researcher will explore journals and contemporary literature that focus on leadership succession. The fourth subproblem is to

select small independent churches for case studies. The fifth subproblem is to conduct onsite interviews with pastors and clergy who are currently in need of a plan of action for leadership succession. During the course of the interviews, the researcher will seek to discern aspects of theology that directly relate to the subject of leadership succession. The researcher will request access to doctrinal statements, mission statements, constitutions and other documents, which will aid in understanding the problem of leadership succession in small independent community churches. The research should provide the data and information for presenting a plan for implementing a strategy for extending the longevity of small independent churches.

Setting of the Project

The setting of the project is Moosup, Connecticut, a small New England post-mill town. Moosup is a village in the Town of Plainfield, Connecticut with a population of 3,237.¹ The Town of Plainfield has a population of 14,619.² In Plainfield most of the local churches cooperate in an ecumenical spirit and, despite doctrinal differences, work together by reaching out to people in need. These churches demonstrate this by taking their turns at the local food bank. Twice a year the churches assemble for services on Thanksgiving and on the National Day of Prayer. These churches come together to pray for the community and nation.

Faith Community Church (FCC) relocated from Norwich, Connecticut to Moosup in December 2004. FCC started meeting in homes and later conducted services at the

¹ American Towns, <http://www.americantowns.com/ct/moosup-information> (accessed September 2, 2010).

² Ibid.

Norwich Grange. The church was formed in 1995, the result of a dispute that fractured relations with the leadership of another church. Currently the leadership of FCC consists of a pastor and a core group of elders, deacons, deaconesses, and a missions and education overseer.

For the past four and a half years, FCC has occupied the site of the former Moosup Baptist Church (MBC), an American Baptist Church which merged with a church of same denomination. Unlike MBC, FCC, being independent, must take an alternative approach regarding leadership succession. Because FCC lacks an affiliation or other external backing, it could cease to exist as a viable ministry. For this reason FCC and its leadership must take a proactive approach with respect to leadership succession.

Recently, FCC terminated its lease with the former MBC and has since moved to another location in town. The recent move to a new location in town provides the right opportunity to pursue a leadership succession plan. After the move, the church has affirmed its commitment to the community. FCC decided to relocate within Moosup in order to keep the local church in the vicinity and reduce travel hardships on the congregation. A second commitment was to relocate recovery groups that were meeting at the church. Through prayer and God's providence, FCC has been able to fulfill its commitments to the community.

Importance of the Project

The Importance of the Project to the Researcher

The project is important to the researcher because the church needs a strategic plan for its longevity if it is going to reach the next generation. It is important for the

pastor to provide a biblical vision for the church to succeed in its ministry (Prov. 29:18). The lack of a leadership development plan may result in sterility of leadership and negatively impact the church. The researcher's passion and objectives are to stimulate others within his sphere of influence to take a proactive approach toward leadership succession. While some are passive in regard to leadership succession, the Scriptures do not teach this as an option. The church cannot be aloof and oblivious to the need for taking this approach. On the contrary, the Great Commission instructs the church to be proactive in developing leaders (Matt. 28:18-20).

The Importance of the Project to FCC

The importance of the project to FCC has to do with its purpose and mission. If the church is to succeed in its mission, others have to be prepared for leadership positions within the church. Currently the average age of the core group of elders and leaders is sixty.

FCC therefore needs to prepare leaders by helping newer members discover and develop their spiritual gifts for ministry. The church must turn new disciples into productive members. This can only happen by providing the opportunity for new disciples to take an active part in the ministry. Without doing so, there is little hope for the church to continue. This suggests that the outlook is grim and that, without any church growth, there would be little hope for the church to continue as a viable ministry.

According to a study done by the Hartford Institute for Religious Research,

We know very little about independent congregations...The best guess is that there are thirty-five thousand independent congregations currently with approximately ten million members in the United States, making these

congregations a large but relatively anonymous presence in the U.S. religious landscape.³

This study reveals the need for more research in understanding the independent church phenomenon. In response to these findings, the project is of considerable benefit both for churches and for academic institutions.

The Importance of the Project to the Church

The primary importance of the project is the need for longevity. Although a leadership succession plan may be less of a problem for denominational affiliates, such is not the case for independent churches.

Because of immigration and differences in ethnicity, languages and culture, churches today face theological and philosophical issues that challenge the core beliefs of Christianity. These core beliefs include the deity, death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. A denial of these truths represents a departure from our founding fathers' vision of "advancing the Christian faith"⁴ (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

According to the Pew Research Forum of Religion (PRF), New England ranks at the bottom of the following four measures: the importance of religion in people's lives, frequency of attendance at worship services, frequency of prayer and absolute certainty of belief in God.⁵ Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island average 30% in weekly

³ Scott Thumma, Hartford Institute for Religious Research, "What God Makes Free is Free Indeed," http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article5.html (accessed December 27, 2009).

⁴ Caleb Johnson, "Mayflower History," <http://www.mayflowerhistory.com/PrimarySources/MayflowerCompact.php> (accessed September 1, 2010).

⁵ The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "How Religious is your State," Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=504> (accessed March 6, 2010).

church attendance while Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont average is 23%. In considering the importance of religion, Connecticut and Rhode Island lead at 44% while Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont follow at 42, 40 and 36% respectively. The research shows that Connecticut and Rhode Island rank forty-second in the nation while the rest of the New England states fall further behind. This indicates that the geographical setting is well below the national average of 56%.

The PRF reports that although at least 85% of people living in Mississippi, South Carolina and Alabama say they are certain God exists, that number is 60% in the Northeast. In light of this evidence, it is not surprising that independent churches in the Northeast are up against real challenges to their continued existence and viability. While the churches rightly define their theology in terms of the doctrine of God, man, sin, salvation, resurrection, and the authority of Scriptures, there is little consideration for leadership succession which is vital for the longevity of the church. Marcus Bieschke considers the significance of leadership and succession:

Many organizations are just one step away from extinction. Sounds harsh, but think about it. If Jesus hadn't intentionally infused His values, teachings, vision and Spirit into the lives of several high-potential followers, would the church exist today? No. But it flourishes today because Jesus recognized that there can be no success without a successor. "As the Father sent Me, so I send you," He said (John 20:21). Thus, the critical importance of leadership succession continues.⁶

Bieschke accentuates the necessity for churches to take a proactive approach to this subject. The Lord, in giving the commission to His disciples, intended for them to take a proactive approach in leadership succession—"I am with you to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

⁶ Marcus D. Bieschke, "Five Succession Planning Values to Keep Your Organization Alive," http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/lao/issue_6/pdf/Bieschke_%20five_succession.pdf (accessed March 11, 2010).

A further hindrance, however, to a proactive approach is the inclination toward passivity, an aimless response. Just being faithful in church attendance and Bible study does not necessarily make one compliant with the Great Commission. Rather it is by implementing the vision outlined in the Commission that leaders fulfill its practical aspects.

While some may hold to a passive approach (“the Lord will build His church,”) the Scriptures do not suggest that the church has that option. The church cannot be passive in taking a proactive approach with leadership succession. Reaching the next generation is necessary if the church is going to contend with a culture that is averse to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:2). Passing the torch to the next generation is dependent on how well the present leadership prepares to do this (Ps. 78:6).

Putting forth FCC as an example, the researcher sees a five to ten year window of opportunity for the church to provide the new leadership necessary for its longevity. The present leaders have the ability and the means to go beyond the issues of doctrinal purity and survival to turn this leadership need around but they must do so according to the biblical vision provided by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. However, it will take a collective effort and require the willingness of the existent leadership to do so.

Visionary leadership understands and commits to the mission, follows a biblical vision, recognizes problems, and tries to solve them. A lack of visionary leadership results in an atrophy of the leadership needed for succession. Today there is a clarion call for visionary leadership. In the *State of the Church 2002* George Barna emphasizes the urgency of leadership:

Churches all over the country are crying out for strong, visionary, godly leadership. The people who fill the positions of leadership in churches today are,

for the most part, teachers—good people, lovers of God, well-educated, gifted communicators—but not leaders. They do not have or understand vision. They are incapable of motivating and mobilizing people around God’s vision. They fail to direct people’s energies and resources effectively and efficiently. The Church suffers for this absence of genuine leadership. Pastors themselves are not to blame. They have emerged from a system that so esteems scholarly pursuits that leadership has been left by the wayside, and the Church has suffered accordingly. In the future, for the Church to become strong again we must heed the guidance of the leaders God has called and gifted for that purpose, while growing through the focused teaching of those who are gifted to explicate His Word and its profound implications for our lives. The failure to do so will result in greater unnecessary setbacks and suffering for the Church in this nation.⁷

While Barna makes the case for the lack of visionary leadership in churches, the researcher believes that churches have the capacity to acquire this leadership. In order to become visionary, churches have to reconsider their mission and purpose. The Lord has provided the church with a vision for leadership succession (Matt. 28:19-20). A primary concern of the Great Commission is how to reach the next generation. The Great Commission is relevant to the end of the age. This research project accentuates the need for churches to reach the next generation.

Research and Methodology

Nature of the Research

This project will be qualitative in nature. A case study of four independent churches will be the primary approach combined with grounded theory research methods. Methodology and the collection of data will include onsite observations, interviews, and written documents. Methodological tools and instruments will include electronic survey questionnaires and personal interviews. The researcher will utilize technology such as software that will aid him in the organization and analysis of data throughout the tenure

⁷ George Barna, *The State of the Church 2002* (Ventura, CA: Issachar Resources, 2002), 130.

of the project. The research is among small New England churches with memberships between 50 and 100 members and attendees.

Data

Primary Data

Primary data will consist of Scripture, interviews with key informants and participant responses to questionnaires, interviews and observation data composed and gathered by the researcher. Primary data gathered by the researcher from a previous Doctor of Ministry project will also be included.

Secondary Data

Secondary data will consist of church constitutions, mission statements, doctrinal statements, websites and any other information collected by, but not directly composed by, the researcher. Resource literature will consist of books directly related to the subject of leadership transference and succession from both business and ecclesiastical institutions. The research includes electronic journals and libraries containing commentaries and other literature that informs the research. The research data gathered by a previous Doctor of Ministry project is helpful with logistics and other information useful for this project.

Project Overview

The first step in research will examine Faith Community Church documents and assess its constitution and mission statement in order to integrate any previous material useful for the study. A previous Doctor of Ministry project from Understanding Congregational Systems was useful as a reference as it provides supporting data for this project.

The second step in research will be to conduct a review of literature closely related to the interests of this study. The researcher will search the Theological Research Exchange Network (TREN) database to find other project theses which consider the subject of leadership succession. In addition, the researcher will browse journals on the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) database, which contains similar information about the subject.

The third step in research will be to select four independent churches with memberships of one hundred or less for a collective case study. This selection will include churches, which emphasize their autonomy and closely reflect those of the researcher's own church.

In order to expand and broaden the study the researcher will include other churches in the project. This will require some of the research and surveys to come from the internet. Of particular interest are those churches that have addressed leadership development and succession.

The fourth step in research is to construct research instruments, which will facilitate the research. Research tools will include questionnaires and surveys needed for interviews.

The fifth step in the research process will be to interview key informants and collect, analyze and synthesize data that will provide the researcher with resources needed to formulate a plan of action, which will address the research problem.

Subproblem Treatment

Subproblem One

The first subproblem will look at the emergence of independent churches to gain a perspective of them as a phenomenon.

Data Needed: The researcher will review written publications compiled by historians and theologians that shed light on this phenomenon.

Criteria for Acceptable Data: Acceptable data will include scholarly reference works, which will inform the researcher. Acceptable data are any materials that add substance to the research.

Location of the Data: The data are located in journals, books, articles, and selected case studies. These resources come from libraries, databases and websites on the Internet. Key informants will provide information during the interviews and onsite visits.

Securing the Data: The resources will be secured through the researcher's own library, information in TREN and ATLA.

Use of the Data: The data will be organized and stored so that the researcher will have access as needed. The researcher will continually review the data for the purpose of observing trends and other themes as they may emerge.

Subproblem Two

The second subproblem is to review literature that relates to leadership succession.

Data Needed: The data needed consists of related literature and biblical narratives that address leadership succession.

Criteria for Acceptable Data: Acceptable data is that which informs the researcher and validates leadership and succession.

Location of Data: Available data are contained within the Scriptures, journals, doctoral dissertations, biblical commentaries and Bible software programs. Church web sites are another source for the researcher to find data for the project.

Securing the Data: The researcher will find the data needed through available open sources at their respective locations.

Use of the Data: The data will be used to facilitate the construction of instruments that will provide maximum effectiveness for the study of leadership succession.

Subproblem Three

The third subproblem is to evaluate documents that may be useful to the researcher.

Data Needed: Data will consist of doctrinal statements, mission statements, church constitutions, creeds, and symbols.

Criteria for Acceptable Data: Acceptable data consists of that which is useful for assessing and evaluating a church's theology for leadership succession.

Location of Data: Data is located at sites selected for the research. Locations external to the selected sites will include relevant websites.

The Securing of Data: Data will be secured through hard copies of documents and other material that will be useful to the researcher.

Use of the Data: The data will be compiled to determine what documents are useful to address leadership development and succession.

Subproblem Four

The fourth subproblem is to conduct personal interviews with key informants.

Data Needed: The researcher will seek data and permission to interview key informants with surveys and questionnaires.

Criteria for Acceptable Data: Acceptable data will come from the responses of the informants during the interviews.

Location of Data: The data primarily are located at the selected churches.

Use of Data: The data will be used to validate the case for leadership development and construct a proposal leading to leadership and succession in independent churches.

Subproblem Five

The fifth subproblem is to produce a model for leadership development that will extend the longevity of small independent churches.

Data Needed: Data consist of observations and information collected from subproblems one through four.

Criteria for Acceptable Data: Acceptable data includes the information from the preceding subproblems that is useful for developing a model for leadership succession.

Location of the Data: The data is located in the possession of the researcher and in word processing programs.

Usefulness of the Data: The researcher will use the data to compose a formula for longevity of ministry for FCC and other small churches. A post project presentation of the findings of this study will be composed to inform and stimulate other pastors and churches to take a proactive approach to leadership succession.

CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP

The Biblical Basis for Leadership Succession

The first sub-problem was to seek an understanding of the independent church phenomenon. In response to this problem, it was necessary for the researcher to have a clear understanding of what constitutes a church. In the Gospels, *ekklesia* is used first in Matthew 16:18 and twice in Matthew 18:17.¹ “The word is used 24 times in Acts and over 60 times in Paul’s Epistles.”² The literal translation of *ekklesia* is “called out assembly.” Another significant use is found in the Septuagint, where it refers to the congregation of Israel.³ A narrative of the apostolic church is contained in the Book of Acts. The Gospels and the Book of Acts provide an important place to begin a study for understanding the church.

In the New Testament, unity was a primary concern of the early church. The emphasis on unity comes from the didactic passages that accentuate its importance.⁴ Because the Lord emphasized the need of unity, all churches need to consider this subject. The Scriptures at least initially do not support independent churches

¹ Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 16.

² Ibid.

³ *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 42.

⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 1130.

(John 17:20-21). Erickson for example supports the call for an organic unity that would be a distinguishing mark of the church.⁵

Some of the synonyms from a cultural understanding of “independent” as it relates to a church includes self-governing, autonomous, self-regulating, sovereign, liberated, not dependent thus operating on its own authority. This modern cultural perspective appears to differ from those of the early church. After Pentecost unity was one of defining marks of the early church (Acts 2:42-47).

The New Testament emphasis on unity causes Christian leaders to reconsider some of the reasons for the independent church. Thus, the independent church as an emerging phenomenon needs consideration, especially if it might be detrimental and impede organic unity. This situation is not unique. Even before the formation of the church, the Lord’s disciples struggled with unity and identity issues and thought of others outside their fellowship as not included in their mission.

“Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.” “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward” (Mark 9:38-41).⁶

In seeking to understand the independent church from a scriptural perspective, the concern for unity is clear. Yet those the Lord called to evangelize the world lacked an understanding of the inclusiveness of others in ministry, as the Lord’s high priestly prayer in John implies (John 17:20). Still today, there is much divisiveness and division, which does not resemble what the Lord had in mind for His church:

⁵ Erickson, 1130.

⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Colorado Springs, CO: International Bible Society, 1984).

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20-23).

The Lord's high priestly prayer in John 17:20-23 makes a case for unity and cooperation among believers. The Scriptures in Mark are emphatic and affirm the inclusiveness of others in the fellowship of believers (Mark 9:38-41).

In Acts, the apostles await the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the empowerment to become witnesses of the gospel to the surrounding culture and ultimately the world (Acts 1:8). The Book of Acts provides an historical record and connects to the Gospels. Acts contains an account of the apostles, which includes the problems they faced in reaching out to the culture with the gospel. Despite persecution, the apostles had to contend with internal problems.

The achievements and success of the early church were not without challenges to unity. The beginning church consisted of the Jewish followers of Jesus and Hellenistic Jewish converts (Acts 6:1-7). Such a blended culture allowed certain prejudices to exist such as the daily food ministrations. In a time of rapid growth and conflict, the apostles found it necessary to appoint seven men full of the Holy Spirit to take part in the ministry.⁷ The choosing of the seven by the local congregation suggests not only a resolution of the problem, but also provides opportunity for further growth in the

⁷ *Holman Bible Dictionary*, Electronic ed. (Omaha: Parsons Technology, Inc), 1998.

church.⁸ Through dialogue and congregational consensus, the apostles were able to minimize the challenges to unity and manage the conflict.

Managing and resolving church conflict was a continuous norm for the early church. The Apostle Paul's struggle was often with the Jewish followers of Jesus imposing circumcision on their Gentile converts (Acts 15:1-2). The Apostle Paul, a product of both the Jewish and Hellenistic cultures, was specifically called to bridge the gap of separation and unite the church (Eph. 2:11-22). Managing conflict and resolving problems is a challenge of the contemporary church as well. The Apostle Paul utilized the Scriptures in reconciling the differences between Judaism and Christianity. Christianity was not so much a sect of Judaism as an extension and fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures:

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

The Scriptures focus on unity and illustrate a household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ as the cornerstone. In addressing leadership succession, Ephesians 2:19-22 reveals the church is both an individual and collective body.⁹ Yet history records the splits that have occurred throughout church history.

⁸ C. Peter Wagner, *Spreading the Fire* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books 1994), 182.

⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The New Testament, Vol. 2 of The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1989), 25.

A brief survey of the American Church Lists shows that numerous denominations have emerged throughout history.¹⁰ Similarly, there is a movement away from denominations in favor of independent churches and churches that function as nondenominational churches.¹¹ Thus, the researcher considers the need for understanding the emerging movement to be part of this research project.

The researcher will seek to discover if there is a means for churches to pursue a cooperative unity in the midst of doctrinal difference. Cooperative unity is necessary for the local church. Cooperative unity must be kept in the forefront if the church is to work together and succeed with a contingency plan for leadership succession.

The researcher is currently pastor of an independent Bible church that needs to address the subject of leadership succession. The Bible contains many examples of God's call to leadership in both Testaments. Leadership must consider and reach out to the next generation in order to succeed and prolong the life of an individual church. The Bible includes many examples of how God reached the next generation through those He called. In addressing leadership succession, the researcher will seek to emulate practices that have worked in the past.

Apostolic succession also needs study before a proper perspective for leadership succession is attainable. The researcher explored leadership in Acts and the Epistles. Leadership succession contains other closely related subjects such as central and delegated authority. Church authority needs careful examination (Matt. 28:18).

¹⁰ InfoUsa, Church Demographics, <http://www.americanlists.com/UsChurches/ChurchDemographics.aspx> (accessed August 12, 2009.)

¹¹ Leith Anderson, *Leadership that Works* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1999), 97.

Some other closely related subjects that need investigation are visionary and reproductive leadership. These subjects provide important elements, which are needed for leadership succession. The Book of Acts contains 28 chapters in which the Apostles Peter and Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, are the primary agents of the church's succession. Acts gives an account of the church in the apostles' ministry and recounts their legacy. The researcher will include other Scriptures that provide a narrative of the apostle's ministry and mission. The researcher seeks to adopt their methods into a contemporary context.

The Significance of Leadership

The Scriptures provide a prophetic glimpse of leadership succession. Isaiah proclaimed the Lord's vision for universal evangelism (Isa. 9:6-7, 42:1-10). Isaiah's vision points to its future fulfillment through the person and work of Christ. The Lord's condemnation of the Pharisees shows that few of them understood the vision (Matt. 23:15). Clearly, the pharisaical leadership was lacking vision and considered itself its own authority (Matt. 23:1-39).

The importance of sound leadership is evidenced in the Lord's condemnation of the Pharisees. Several times within Matthew 23:16-26 the Lord refers to the Pharisees as "blind." They are not condemned for their religiosity but rather for their lack of spiritual insight and vision. At least 87 times the Gospels refer to them negatively. Today, as then, the need for spiritual understanding and application is crucial, especially if the Lord has commanded those He has called and chosen to bear fruit (John 15:16).

In order for the church to succeed, it must be fruitful and productive in its mission. The church must be intentional and take a proactive approach in its pursuit of longevity by making disciples who will fulfill the mandate of reaching others with the gospel. Many who are newly converted breathe new life into the church and ensure the longevity of the church for the next generation.

Leadership must consider the importance of providing future leaders. According to George Barna, the significance of leadership cannot be understated:

The more important the conclusion the more convinced I need to be that I have covered all the bases and have astutely analyzed and interpreted the data. Now, after fifteen years of diligent digging into the world around me, I have reached several conclusions regarding the future of the Christian Church in America. The central is that the American church is dying due to a lack of strong leadership. In this time of unprecedented resources, the church is actually losing influence. The primary reason is the lack of leadership. Nothing is more important than leadership.¹²

The Biblical Call of Leadership

Throughout the Bible, there are various allusions to leadership and succession. God, through the Scriptures, continues to play an active part in choosing leaders. The common feature among these leaders is their calling by God for a particular task of extending and expanding the Kingdom of God to their own generation.

In Noah's situation, the calling was to bestow grace and deliverance from the flood. God's calling to Abraham included a covenant, which would eventually establish a messianic family and provide salvation for all those responding to the gospel. God's calling of Moses was for deliverance of a particular people and nation from slavery in Egypt. God's calling of the prophets mostly had to do with repentance and restoration. He

¹² George Barna, *Leaders on Leadership* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 18.

also used the prophets to proclaim prophetic events thus preparing for those events.

God's calling through the Lord Jesus Christ was for the regathering of His people and the calling of the nations to repentance and faith (Isa. 9:1-2). Preparation for future events such as the coming of the Messiah pointed to the need of leadership succession through successive generations.

The scriptural examples of Abram (Gen.12:1-5), Moses (Exod. 3:6) and even the Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:4) show leadership and leadership succession are dependent upon obedience.

In Genesis 12 the Lord called Abram to follow Him in the direction of the Lord's choosing. Abram's calling reveals God's vision of a worldwide global community:

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen.12:1-3).

Abram's calling was a direct summons from God for the purpose of making a great nation and lineage that would eventually bring forth God's Son in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:1-18). Abraham's calling had less to do with his own leadership skills and more with obedience in fulfilling God's purposes in him.¹³

The calling of the apostles was not only to obedience but also a purpose, namely, making "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:17-23). Later the Scriptures provide a glimpse of the initial work of the apostles seeking the lost tribes of Israel (Matt.10:1-5). The meaning of the word used for calling, προσκαλεσάμενος a summons or a calling to oneself, is

¹³ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, ed, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1999), 71.

significant. The significance of God's calling cannot be understated; its relevance is for all generations and includes those called in the church age (Acts 2:38-39).

The Old Testament and Leadership

Leadership and succession are significant and relevant throughout the Old Testament. The relationship between Moses and Joshua typifies leadership and succession needed for the nation to succeed in the Promised Land.

Because of Israel's lack of faith in the Lord, their quest of the Promised Land had to continue forty years resulting in their deaths in the desert (Num.14:32-33). The expeditionary conquest for the Promised Land resulted in the expiration of the generation that God said would not see the land. Thus, leadership and succession between generations was a major consideration in settling Israel in the Promised Land:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go up this mountain in the Abarim range and see the land I have given the Israelites. After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, for when the community rebelled at the waters in the Desert of Zin, both of you disobeyed my command to honor me as holy before their eyes." . . . So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. . . . At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in" (Num. 27:12-21).

The context of this passage is the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua. In analyzing the situation, God initiates the transition and chooses the successor. The Scriptures clearly show that an orderly transfer of leadership is about to take place. This transfer involves a gradual transition.

Significantly, the Scriptures show the cooperation of the predecessor and his successor in front of the whole community. Moses as the outgoing leader is concerned for

the community and appeals to the Lord to appoint a successor to take his place.¹⁴ The transfer of divine authority is a process bestowed and delegated (Num. 27:20). A formal ceremony takes place before the community that precedes the eventual transfer of leadership succession (Num. 27:18-23).

Other leaders, such as Aaron the Priest, were also subject to transferring responsibilities (Num. 20:22-29).¹⁵ In both situations, leadership succession is for continuity between successive generations. In Deuteronomy, the Scriptures provide another account of an orderly transfer of leadership and succession. Again, the transference and succession of leadership is in front of the entire congregation and nation:

Then Moses went out and spoke these words to all Israel: “I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has said to me, ‘You shall not cross the Jordan.’ The LORD your God himself will cross over ahead of you. . . . Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their forefathers to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” (Deut. 31:1-8).

In Deuteronomy 31:1-2 Moses the Lawgiver acknowledges his own mortality and stands in front of the community and reminds them of their dependence upon the Lord. Moses formally summons and charges Joshua to lead them into the land promised to their ancestors (Deut. 31:7). The Scriptures show that Moses as Joshua’s predecessor sets the context of the mission. Even though Moses is not going into the land, he still provided the vision for his successor.

¹⁴ Frank E. Gaebelien, *The Expositors Bible Commentary Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1990), 945.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Moses' anticipated departure now becomes the primary focus of Deuteronomy.¹⁶

Significant within the relationship of Moses and Joshua is the preparation for the eventual transfer of leadership and its succession (Num. 27:12-21, Deut.31:1-8). In the transference of leadership from Moses to Joshua, the succession of the covenant continues on to the next generation.

Similarly, leadership succession was prevalent among the prophets. One example is found in 1 Kings 19:16 where Elijah is told by the Lord to anoint Elisha who will be his eventual successor. As it was with Moses and Joshua, so it was in like manner with Elijah and Elisha. God initiated the act and was actively involved in selecting both the predecessor and his successor:

So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. "Let me kiss my father and mother good-by," he said, "and then I will come with you." "Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?" So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant (1 Kings 19:19-21).

Throwing a prophet's cloak around a person symbolized the passing of power and authority. Elisha's response indicates that he was fully aware of its meaning for he immediately abandoned his own work to follow Elijah. Elisha in slaughtering his yoke of oxen and burning his farming equipment shows a life change direction and commitment to his mentor.¹⁷ The close relationship between the mentor Elijah and Elisha the mentee continues until Elijah's ascension into heaven. This association is so unique that the

¹⁶ P. C. Craigie, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 369.

¹⁷ Walvoord and Zuck, 529.

mentee is unwilling to separate himself from his mentor as the time draws near for the assumption.

The Scriptures disclose three occurrences of Elisha refusing to leave his mentor's side. While Elisha's loyalty is evident, his wisdom stands out. The Scriptures reveal that Elisha had the option of waiting for Elijah to return from his trips but Elisha declined.

Furthermore, three times Elisha had the option to stand fast and wait for his mentor's return and all three times Elisha chose to accompany him on the mission.¹⁸ Some considerations about Elijah's departure and Elisha's response may have to do with the conveyance of the mentor's blessings. Significantly, Elijah's last actions and words left an indelible mark and legacy for his mentee. The relationship between Elijah and Elisha is a noteworthy example of leadership succession for the next generation. The Scriptures reveal that God was present and involved at the ascension of Elijah and provided the "double blessing" endowment for Elisha. The double blessing Elisha was seeking is not necessarily twice as much as Elijah's portion but rather the inheritance of a son from a father (Deut. 21:17).¹⁹

In summarizing the similarities between Moses and Joshua and Elijah and Elisha, the predecessors and successors are appointed by God to lead and witness to a people. God called Moses to declare Himself to Pharaoh and the people of Israel (Exod. 3:14). Moses, prior to his departure, asks the Lord to provide a successor for the nation (Num. 27:12-21). In the same manner, the Lord instructs Elijah to anoint Elisha (1 Kings 19:16-21).

¹⁸ Ibid., 540.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Moreover, both of these examples have to do with leadership and succession. Another distinction is that in each case the predecessor played an important part in preparing his successor to succeed in the predecessor's place.

Although this practice was in the Old Testament, the principles and practices are just as relevant for today. Similarly, the contemporary leader needs to rely on the Lord for additional laborers (Matt. 9:37-38). Current leaders can practice the biblical principles of the patriarchs by taking part in the selection of their successors and guiding them in their spiritual formation.

The New Testament and Leadership

The consideration of leadership succession is frequent throughout the New Testament. Additionally, a clear vision for ministry and leadership development is in the Scriptures. The vision of Christ links the Gospels with the Acts of the Apostles. The vision needs to become the mission. It consists of (going, baptizing and teaching) and succinctly spells out what the church is to do:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

This commission is a mandate entrusted to the church "to the very end of the age." The intention is for continuance of the mission and prolonged existence of the church until the Lord's return. The church is literally a "called out assembly" body of believers. Wiersbe states the church can consist of both a local or universal body.²⁰ Christ introduced the concept of the church with His question, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" In

²⁰ Wiersbe, 58.

reply, the Apostle Peter stated, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This response is followed by a commendation to Peter and a statement by the Lord declaring that upon the apostle’s confession He would build His church (Matt. 16:18).

In Matthew 18:15-20 the subject is revisited and expands the previous vision explaining how the Lord intended to build His church beyond the original apostles. This revelation coming from divine authority is a prelude to the Great Commission and suggests a basis for inclusive leadership. Leadership succession is not just an exclusive appointment for the original apostles—the following Scriptures show that others are included in its administration:

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them (Matt. 18:15-20).

The above Scriptures reveal the church was to operate as a body of believers working together in managing its daily affairs and discipline. Administering discipline includes authority.

Leadership succession has to address authority matters. Matthew 18:15-20 raises the question of central authority through “binding and loosing,” that is, permitting and allowing, a matter familiar to the rabbis. Wiersbe considers authority:

This implies applying God’s Word to people. In 18:18 this is used of church discipline, and the power is given to all the disciples, not Peter alone. In Jesus’ day, the Jews spoke of “binding and loosing” when a rabbi would forbid something or permit something. The more accurate translation is in the Williams translation of the NT: “Whatsoever you forbid on earth must be what is already

forbidden in heaven, and whatsoever you permit on earth must be what is already permitted in heaven” (v. 19, WMS). The church does not tell heaven what to do, but obeys on earth what heaven commands the church to do!

Wiersbe concludes: “The church does not get man’s will done in heaven; it obeys God’s will on earth.”²¹

Central authority is not exercised first on earth and then accepted in heaven but rather comes from heaven as the Lord’s Prayer declares: “Our Father in heaven, . . . your will be done on earth as in heaven. . . . Amen” (Matt.6:9-13). This implies it is necessary to know God’s will through incessant prayer and reflection. Therefore, the Scriptures reveal that central authority originates in heaven and is required on earth (Rom.12:2). Authority is linked to apostolic succession and the church.

Apostolic Succession

“Apostolic succession” is a Roman Catholic theological term that links a line of bishops with the original apostles. The historical record for this concept is vague and the validity is weak.²² However, the case for apostolic succession (the term apostolic succession is not in the Scriptures) is in the Bible as a fulfillment of Psalm 109:8. The Apostle Peter quoted from this psalm and set the criteria for another to take Judas’ place of leadership (Acts 1:20).

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection (Acts 1:21-22).

²¹ Ibid., 59.

²² Erickson, 1074.

This text reveals that apostolic succession was exclusive to the original apostles and is distinct from what some today consider a continuous link with the original apostles. This term needs investigation in order to avoid any ambiguity with the subject of leadership succession.

The Scriptures reveal the lot went to Matthias, later numbered with the twelve apostles. Although Matthias was one of the eyewitnesses, there is little known of him beyond that. Moreover, the Apostle Peter set the criteria for apostolic succession within the will of God and as a noble attempt to ensure that successors were authentic. It was the Lord's later selection of the Apostle Paul that indicates apostolic succession would not be restrictive to Peter's criteria. Instead, others would be included according to the Lord's authority and sovereignty (Acts 9:15, 22:14-16).

Wiersbe points out that Paul was clear that he was not in the same category as the Twelve (1 Cor.15:8, Gal.1:15-24).²³ Although the Apostle Paul was not one of the original apostles and an eyewitness of Peter's criteria for apostleship, he was nevertheless included later with the other apostles by the will of God (Acts 22:14-15). In seeing, the "Righteous One" Paul became qualified as an apostle, (1 Cor. 9:1, 15:8).²⁴ The Scriptures show the apostles were legitimate witnesses of the Lord. The study needs to address their successors.

The phrase "apostolic succession" did not appear before about 170 A.D. This term came about as a response to the Gnostics' claim to have unknown traditions handed down to them through the original apostles. "As a counterclaim, the Catholic Church pointed to

²³ Wiersbe, 405.

²⁴ Walvoord and Zuck, 418.

each bishop as a true successor to the apostle who founded the see and therefore to the truth the apostles taught.”²⁵

Because independent churches lack an affiliation with a major denomination, certain subjects surface and need consideration. Apostolicity and its relationship to the church is one such concern. “Apostolicity” is a term that describes how a church relates to the original apostles.

Ecclesiastical authority and succession are subjects in need of examination. In general, independent churches have congregational forms of government, which are typical of some major denominations, namely Baptist and Congregational churches. In many instances, independent churches retain much of the denominational traditions. In particular the pulpit and search committees for new leadership.

A prime consideration all Reformed churches face is their relationship to the original apostles. There is no evidence that the original apostles left instructions on how to transfer their apostleship to their successors other than through their writings (Titus 1:4-5). Churches need to understand that their authority comes from the apostle’s writings. There can be no further successors, apart from the original apostle’s teachings and writings (Eph. 2:20).²⁶

Churches have access to the apostle’s teachings and inspired writings. It is in this capacity they operate according to their traditions and spirit and are able to make their case for their succession. It is important for churches to understand how they continue as the apostles’ successors. Churches need to continue in the apostle’s mission of reaching

²⁵ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1984), 73.

²⁶ Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 355.

people groups from every nation with the gospel. In this sense, the church succeeds as the apostle's successors who are responsible to reach the next generation to whom the torch is passed.

The Scriptures further indicate that the apostles continued building the foundation on the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). Today it is still possible to take part in the apostolic mission by following their teachings. A spiritual link with the original apostles, conveyed through the Scriptures and the Spirit, still exists. In the early community, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). In order to succeed in the apostolic beliefs and traditions the church needs to continue following the apostles' teachings. The mission and vision of the original apostles remains and churches must continue in them until the Lord returns.²⁷

While the mandate for making disciples and administering the ordinances of baptism and communion were given to the first disciples, it was not for them only. It includes all those who receive their testimony: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message" (John 17:20). This transfer of leadership and authority is passed on to non-witnesses of the events from John's baptism until the resurrection of Jesus Christ: "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Erickson points out an exception to the exclusiveness of apostolic succession: "Acts 6:6 speaks of the apostles laying their hands on the seven at Jerusalem, Timothy

²⁷ Ibid.

received his gift when the elders laid hands on him” (1 Tim. 4:14).²⁸ The Scriptures show that Timothy’s gift included the inclusiveness of others besides the original apostles. Exegesis of Acts reveals how the apostles ordained others for leadership (Acts 14:23). The Book of Acts provides a descriptive narrative of how the church progressed through various crises. The church of the apostles had little organizational structure or hierarchy, yet continued to expand with a “profound sense of oneness.”²⁹

A later crisis over the distribution of food provided the opportunity for the apostles to expand their ministry and to include others in leadership (Acts 6:1-2).³⁰ The apostles solved this crisis by setting the criteria for others to become leaders of a church community (Acts 6:1-7). In so doing, they delegated some of their authority to others. This act allowed the apostles to continue preaching and teaching the Word and solved a potentially divisive crisis. Choosing men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom contributed to the expansion of the gospel and the Kingdom of God. The apostles in including others in their ministry and delegating some of their authority to them actually laid the groundwork for leadership succession in the church. Thus leadership succession must consider the subjects of divine and delegated authority.

Leadership and Authority

According to the Bible, God created the cosmos and everything in it through His own power. Because He is supreme, He is able to make things happen according to His

²⁸ Erickson, 1074.

²⁹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 390.

³⁰ Ibid.

purpose and glory (Ps. 19:1). The capacity to create substance out of nothing or to speak something into existence by His word requires the authority to do so (Heb.11:3). Divine authority has the power to create all things and enforce spiritual and natural laws according to divine purpose. God, by His own creative will, demonstrates His power over matter by calling things into existence that were not (Gen.1:1, 16). The Bible shows God to be the creative and sustaining force over the heavens and the earth (Rev. 4:11).

Divine authority has to be understood in order to properly implement in a Christian context. Authority matters are important because this is how God was able to reach out to His creation and include them in the redemptive process.

The Scriptures show that God the Father delegated authority to His Son (Deut.18:15-19). The Apostle Peter later affirms this (Acts 3:22). Divine authority was one of the primary reasons that many were convinced of the authenticity of the Lord's person and work, The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him' (Mark 1:27).

Divine authority was one of the issues the Lord Jesus had to confront and defend during His earthly mission: "Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. 'By what authority are you doing these things?' they asked. 'And who gave you this authority?'" (Matt. 21:23). The Lord in displaying divine authority over the supernatural and natural worlds affirmed His authority over all creation. Mark records this authority over the natural world, "He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down

and it was completely calm” (Mark 4:39). The Scriptures show that the Lord Jesus’ authority is equal to His Father’s and demonstrates equality in the godhead.

The Nicene Creed affirms the authority of the Holy Spirit: “And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spake by the prophets.” The Holy Spirit is delegated by the Father and the Son to act on their behalf (John 14:26, 15:26).

Divine authority was delegated to the original apostles: “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’” (John 20:21). God’s intention of delegating authority to others extends to the end of the age (Matt.28:18-20). Authority of such magnitude must have a central and primary source that provides direction for delegates to utilize in ministry. This is why it is important and vital for delegates to rely on the Scriptures as the primary source of direction in fulfilling the Church’s purpose in the Great Commission.

Central Authority

God’s authority is within Himself. He rules from His throne and has the ability to enforce His will on all of creation (Rev. 4:1-11). The Lord’s Prayer reveals that believers are to pray for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt.6:9-15). While the Lord was with His disciples, He embodied divine authority (John 14:9). After the ascension, Christ delegated authority to the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26). While the Lord informed the disciples of another authority that would later guide and direct them, it is

prior to the ascension, they are told to wait for the Holy Spirit to empower them for ministry (Acts 1:8).

The Holy Spirit is the divine authority linked with the throne in heaven (Acts 13:1-2). The Spirit oversees the mission and is an active voice in the affairs of the local church. The Apostle Peter referred to Him as God (Acts 5:1-4). The Apostle Paul describes the Holy Spirit's authority in determining and distributing spiritual gifts to the church (1 Cor.12:7-11).

At Antioch, the church was confronted with such a potentially divisive crisis that it had to appeal to central authority in addressing the conflict:

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved" This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question (Acts 15:1-2).

The crisis resulted in the appointment of Paul and Barnabas to appear before the apostles and elders at the church in Jerusalem to seek their authority and perspectives about a critical doctrinal issue from the Law of Moses pertaining to circumcision and salvation.

The church at Antioch realized the necessity of appealing to a higher authority in resolving the crisis. The Antioch dispute was of such scale that an impasse was reached which required a central authority in judgment. This impasse was only resolved through sound leadership and without compromising the integrity of the Scriptures. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem evaluated the Antioch crisis with Scriptures. They carefully considered the words of the prophets and understood how to use them in proper context. The things that were still relevant in the law they kept:

Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath (Acts 15:15-21).

The resolution sent back to Antioch reveals that the apostles in Jerusalem rendered their decision in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. In appealing to the Holy Spirit, the apostles relied on central authority from heaven:

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.

The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message (Acts 15:24-29).

In Ephesus, the Apostle Paul reminds the elders that the Holy Spirit has made them overseers of the church of God: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The Apostle Paul in giving these imperatives to the elders makes the case for eldership. Further, the Scriptures in Acts emphasize that the Holy Spirit is the “administrator of the church’s affairs.”³¹

In the first century, the Holy Spirit was actively involved with the administration and spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to the utter most parts of the earth. Today, the Holy Spirit still provides the power to individuals and churches that accept and submit to His authority. Erickson points out, “The church is now indwelt by the Spirit on both an individual and collective basis. . . . Dwelling within the church, the Holy Spirit imparts

³¹ Herbert Lockyear, *All about the Holy Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 1981), 22.

His life to it.”³² Erickson’s insight diminishes any perceived advantages major denominations have over independent churches. All churches are subject to the Holy Spirit’s authority and direction (Acts 13:2, 1 Cor. 12:11).

Some may question the authenticity of independent churches in contrast with mainline denominations. Some pastors of such churches may lack formal or seminary education. In this respect, major denominations have an advantage with respect to leadership and succession. The Roman Catholics and Methodists have bishops in charge of their respective districts to provide leadership as needed or directed. The major advantage is that the denominational churches have the option of receiving material and human resources through their affiliation. If an independent church is to succeed or survive, it must create and rely on internal means. It must also look for ways of networking or partnering with other churches. “Organic unity” is one way churches are able to network and partner with each other. “Organic unity” describes how local churches can share in each other’s burden. Erickson again provides insight relating to this concern: “The Spirit, being one, also produces a unity within the body. This does not mean uniformity, but a oneness in aim and action.”³³ Although the church is composed of many different cultures and subcultures, it is similar in its mission (Matt. 28:19-20). As such, the church is supportive across cultural lines as in the collection and gift from the Corinthian church to church at Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1-3).

The focus is on reaching out to one’s culture in an ecumenical vision and mission (Matt. 28:19-20). Besides supporting one another across cultural lines, churches are alike through proclaiming an evangelical message (1 Cor.15:1-4). This message contains what

³² Erickson, 1039.

³³ Ibid., 1040.

the churches must believe in order to be orthodox. Thus, a theological unity is possible through the mission and the message. Organic unity is possible through the same apostolic networking that existed in the early church.

The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures have described the mission so knowing what to do is not as big a problem as how to do it. How to provide a leadership succession plan that extends the longevity of the church and brings a viable organization to succeeding generations must be considered. The most important of all aspects in addressing this issue is prayer. The Jerusalem Council appealed to the Holy Spirit and successfully resolved complex concerns. Churches likewise need to seek the Holy Spirit through prayer and meditation in matters of succession.

Leadership for the next Generation

In order for a local church to continue, it must utilize and manage its human and material resources with a vision for the next generation. This calls for sensitive leadership that is able to deal with both present and future functions. Beside the concerns of limited life, churches must continually adjust and adapt to the limitations and complexities of the times. Leadership requires careful thought about the conditions and complications (diverse culture) faced in ministry. The ability of a church to exist and function into the next generation depends on how well it is prepared to face them.

Churches reaching the next generation have to utilize the giftedness and skills of all members. Utilizing the skills of the entire organization is a multiple generational approach that links to the next generation. An important function of leadership is to find and recruit successors and then prepare them for leadership.

Camille F. Bishop affirms this premise in her findings.³⁴ Bishop's book shows how organizations are able to succeed by learning how to navigate among diverse generations. Her book considers the diversity of four distinctive generations working together in one place at the same time. She also introduces other factors pertaining to differences in behavior between the generations. Bishop gives a fictionalized account of how four distinct generations navigate through rapids and turbulence and learn to depend upon another. Her research in the characterization of each generation is sound and worthy of consideration for any church or other organization. While Bishop considers multiple generations the Bible's main concern is for the next one (Ps. 78:6, 145:4).

Leadership between the Generations

Leadership succession is inclusive of all generations (Ps. 119:90, 135:13). The Scriptures reveal that those in leadership are primarily responsible for their own generation (Acts 13:36). The Greek word for "generation" (*genea*) can consist of those present at a given time.

King David through facing his own mortality implemented his own succession and prepared his successor by summoning and admonishing him to find success in following Lord:³⁵

When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son. "I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, and that the LORD may keep his promise to me: 'If your descendants watch how they live,

³⁴ Camille F. Bishop, *We're in This Boat Together* (Grand Rapids, MI: Authentic Publishing, 2008), 5.

³⁵ Ibid.

and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel”(1 Kings 2:1-4).

King David transferred the kingship to his successor and provided his son Solomon with instructions that would sustain the monarchy. The Scriptures later reveal that a successful succession depends upon how well the successor responds to his predecessor’s guidance (1 Kings 11:11-13).

Corporate America and Leadership Succession

Research into family and small businesses reveals that most do not survive into the second generation without a plan of succession and transition. One reason for this may relate to a leader’s lack of readiness or willingness to address his or her mortality issues.³⁶ Organizational life and its durability depend upon planning for a smooth transition of leadership. Yet many churches today have not considered the duration of life and transition. The Scriptures address leadership succession and encourage a positive response yet for various reasons it seems to be a subject not often considered by churches.

Leadership Succession, the Unspoken Subject

In the *Elephant and the Boardroom*, the authors state their findings: “One aspect has been consistent across all these churches: they do not plan for the inevitable moment when their current pastor leaves. . . . Most churches do not have a plan in place to sustain

³⁶ Ibid., 161.

excellence and continuity in succession planning.”³⁷ In order for the church to continue, a strategic plan is necessary that enables those so entrusted to leave a legacy.³⁸

The authors point out that the Lord Jesus Christ managed the major leadership transitions in His life. He managed the succession of His predecessor John the Baptist by affirming and succeeding in his ministry (Matt. 11:7-14). He appointed the apostles His successors (John 20:21). He even managed His own departure. The Lord appointed those He chose to succeed Him in His work, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name” (John 15:16). In order for spiritual fruit to last it must be reproductive.

The corporate world has succeeded in ways for longevity of the organization. Donna Schaper writes: “In the nonprofit world, retiring executives often stay on as consultants with the new director. . . . Thus the protocols in this world are teamwork across generations, on the job training of new leaders, and promoting from within.”³⁹ Schaper’s essay shows that the corporate world chooses its own successors. This is not unique as the Lord chose His own successors and the church is commissioned to do the same (John 20:21).

³⁷ Weese, 2.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Donna Schaper, “Leadership Transitions: What the Nonprofit World Can Teach Us,” *Congregations* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 33-37.

Leadership Principles

The researcher found a number of leadership principles that interrelate within leadership succession. These principles can contribute to effective and efficient leadership. It takes effective and efficient leadership to develop an intentional plan for the longevity and succession of the church. The Scriptures support this proposition and imply that it takes God's operative working power to bring about this caliber of leadership (ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ) (Eph.3:7). Effective leaders are those who utilize God's power in leadership.

Leadership begins with a divine calling. The Lord's calling is a higher calling (Phil. 3:14), a holy calling (2 Tim.1:9), a heavenly calling (Heb.3:1), and an effective calling (1 Cor.15:10). The effective calling of God is divine and as such extraordinary. Leaders need to connect with their calling in order to fulfill it. Leaders who are called by God are able to follow His vision in meeting the leadership needs and then a plan of action in achieving the desired results.⁴⁰

Effective Leadership and Calling

The Scriptures show that God calls and contributes to the spiritual formation of effective leaders. These leaders recognize and appropriately respond to His authority as the prophets and apostles have throughout the Bible. These leaders did not develop in a vacuum but rather in their own ministry contexts. In each case, there was a positive response to God's calling. It is important for those so called to respond. Also, leaders need to utilize and develop their spiritual gifts by relying on God's grace in fulfilling

⁴⁰ Anderson, 51.

their calling as the Apostle Paul declares: “Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power” (Eph. 3:7).

In order to be an effective leader one has to connect with his or her calling. As Sam Rima points out, “An effective leader must consistently engage in activity that is not only informed by insight but is also generated by a strong inner sense of purpose or calling.”⁴¹ This sense of ultimate purpose for the believer is empowerment and divine guidance by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.12:7, 11). The “Spirit was present at the birth of the church as well as at Bethlehem, and the church is dependent on the power of the Spirit just as Jesus was.”⁴² It takes Holy Spirit filled leadership to impart a vision for longevity in a church. For the church to be effective in its mission, it must be dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

Respect for God’s Sovereignty

Effective leaders recognize God is sovereign over all creation (Rev. 4:11). In order to succeed, these leaders must humbly accept God’s sovereignty and do as He commands. The Lord Jesus emphasized this to His disciples. “He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’” (Acts 1:7-8).

⁴¹ Samuel D. Rima, *Leading From The Inside Out: The Art of Self Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 2000), 55.

⁴² Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 113.

Because God is sovereign, God is able to share His sovereignty and authority with His Son. “As the God-man, the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ manifests his authority in a dual capacity.”⁴³

On one hand his authority is that of one who is the Son of God and is intrinsic to him and not derived. On the other hand as the incarnate Son, who is the Son of man, he acts in submission and obedience to the Father. So he can say in one and the same breath concerning his plans to lay down his life, “No one has taken it away from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again, and this commandment I received from my Father” (John 10:18).⁴⁴

The Scriptures reveal that a leader’s effectiveness is dependent upon remaining connected to the source of effectiveness. Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). It is vital that leaders accept that God is sovereign, submit to God’s authority, and appropriately respond with fruit from its source. Leaders must accept that the Lord has delegated the mission and the ministry to His disciples and will hold them accountable.

Leaders and Discipline

Leaders exercise control over their lifestyles through discipline. They regulate and order their daily activities through spiritual formation. The Apostle Paul offers spiritual insight relating to Christian discipline:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom. 12:1-2).

⁴³ Elwell, 137.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Leaders who are transformed are able to lead others in the direction they need to go. They do not lose sight of their purpose but continue steadfastly, guided by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. It is through daily discipline of mind-renewal that leaders mature and become capable of formulating a plan of leadership and succession.

A primary supposition of leadership emergence theory is that leaders emerge over time.⁴⁵ Daily discipline is needed for leaders to mature. How a leader develops over time is exemplified through the Apostle Paul's approach, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (Rom. 12:12). To be joyful and patient in affliction requires a disciple to utilize discipline in prayer. Sometimes every thought needs to measure up with Scripture. "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor.10:5). This seems to be a radical approach and perhaps according to a contemporary view it may be; however, it worked very well for the apostle Paul as evidenced by his legacy.

Leadership emergence theory defines a leader as "a person with a God-given capacity and a God-given responsibility to influence a specific group of God's people toward His purposes for the group."⁴⁶ This dynamic process takes time and extraordinary discipline. In the course of this study, the researcher seeks to find how this process may be useful in developing a contingency plan for leadership succession.

⁴⁵ J. Robert Clinton, *Leadership Emergence Theory* (Madison, WI: Printing Plus, 1989), 69.

⁴⁶ J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of A Leader* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1988), 245.

Leadership Development

In Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Church*, the acronym SHAPE (spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality and experiences) assumes leaders are developed in the church context. For example, the Scriptures explain that discipleship precedes leadership (1Tim.3:6-7). The acronym further relates to how God shapes one for ministry. Warren states:

God is consistent in his plan for our lives. He would not give each of us inborn abilities, temperaments, talents, spiritual gifts and life experiences and then not use them! By identifying and understanding the five shape factors, we can discover God's will for our lives. . . . When it comes to ministry, your function flows out of the way God formed you.⁴⁷

The ministry context and actual life experiences develop the leader. In the everyday environment disciples grow, mature, and thus develop into leaders, tried and tested. The church is a laboratory for disciples to learn through life experiences.

Leadership emergence theory describes this phenomenon through symbolic notation: $L = f(p, t, r)$. L means "development of a leader," f means "a function of," or "can be explained by," p means "processing," t means "time," r means "response patterns of a leader."⁴⁸

Process items are the very things God uses for the spiritual development of a leader. According to Clinton, process items can consist of "providential events, people, circumstances, special interventions, inner life lessons, God uses in the leadership

⁴⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 370

⁴⁸ Clinton, *Leadership Emergence*, 29.

selection process.”⁴⁹ In leadership emergence theory, a developing leader will respond either positively or negatively to the process items.

Leaders and Vision

Visionary leadership remains steadfast in the activities of the present and prepares for the events of the future. The vision of the church was imparted to the Lord’s disciples before He ordained it (Matt.16:18). Robert Coleman in his classic *Master Plan of Evangelism* observes that the Lord “kept the vision before them by His activity and in His call again to the four fisherman, He reminded them that following Him they were to be fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19).⁵⁰

In Acts, the Apostle Paul and Barnabas edified the church by confirming elders necessary for leadership in each church (Acts 14:22-23). The Scriptures show this as a lengthy process. The disciples that measured up were ordained as elders. This was a deliberate approach for installing the leadership necessary for the longevity of those churches.

The case for leadership succession in Paul’s letter to Timothy is clearly made: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2).

Visionary leaders emulate the apostles. The same Scriptures and Holy Spirit that directed the apostles guide contemporary visionaries. Visionary leaders must adjust and adapt to the changes of technology and a globalized culture. Visionary leaders guide the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 253.

⁵⁰ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1972), 83.

church and engage the culture by knowing how to utilize technology and contend with changes.

Creating a Capacity for Leadership

Leadership creates the capacity for the development of other leaders. There is an urgency and sense of necessity for those in leadership to create the capacity for future leaders. Nothing stays the same and the challenges of tomorrow threaten to be greater and more complex. Creating the capacity includes providing the opportunities for those in the congregation to take part in the functions of the church. Leadership must take a proactive approach in creating the capacity for leadership development.

The challenges of the future point to the eventual necessity of new leadership through either attrition or crisis. This condition exists when a pastor, elder, or Sunday school superintendent moves, leaving a void. The losses consist of those irreplaceable qualities that are unique to the leader and difficult to replicate. Another negative is the lack of skills that were not transferred.⁵¹ Leaders must recognize the potential for gaps and create an environment for the duplication of leadership skills.

Leadership capacity includes the discovery and development of talents and competence. Leaders must follow a biblical approach to leadership development. The Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians shows how the church can create the capacity for future leaders. "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Eph.4:16). The capacity for leadership increases as each member gets involved and takes his or her part in ministry.

⁵¹ Weese, 23.

Leadership and Mentoring

In John the Lord chose and appointed His disciples to go and bear fruit, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name” (John 15:16). The Lord intended for the fruit to remain and reproduce.

The Apostle Paul’s pastoral letters to Timothy show the close relationship between the apostle and his younger protégé. The apostle provides encouragement and sound theological instruction that a young pastor needs (1Tim. 4:6-16). In Paul’s last letter to Timothy, he exhorts him to continue in the faith and acknowledges his own departure (2 Tim. 4:1-7). This close affiliation is in contemporary terms a mentoring relationship. In this relationship, the mentor transfers his or her skills to a mentee. A mentee is often a potential successor of a mentor.

Another example comes from early church history. The church historian Eusebius writes concerning Polycarp Bishop of Smyrna, “An intimate disciple of the apostles who received the episcopate of the church at Smyrna, at the hands of the eyewitnesses and servants of the Lord.”⁵² The case is made for leadership succession and the transition of leadership from the original apostles.

The early church fathers were not too distant from the original apostles. As the apostles successors they provide a close link. Through successive intimate relationships with the original apostles, these later apologists defended the faith and defined its

⁵² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 100.

creeds.⁵³ Through mentoring, the apostles created a leadership succession plan for the next generation of the church. The apostles were effective teachers and mentors and imparted their knowledge and spiritual insight to those they mentored.

In *Connecting* the authors describe mentoring as a relational experience in which “one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources.”⁵⁴ This phenomenon is biblical—it worked with the original apostles and is relevant for the church today. An expanded definition fully describes the process:

Mentoring is a relational process in which a mentor, who knows or has experienced something, transfers that something (resources of wisdom, information, experience, confidence, insight, relationships, status, etc.) to a mentoree, at an appropriate time and manner, so that it facilitates development or empowerment.⁵⁵

The mentoring experience is a practical means for an independent church to create the capacity for longevity. The Apostle Paul exemplifies mentoring through intimate relationships that mentors and mentees experience. “For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory”(1 Thess.2:11-12). Mentors need to emulate the apostle by encouraging, comforting and urging mentees to mature and grow in the faith.

⁵³ Robert C. Walton, *Chronological Background Charts of Church History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986).

⁵⁴ Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1992), 33.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

Leaving a Legacy

The mentoring relationship shows that good leadership leaves a legacy for the next generation to carry on in its ministry. This legacy includes such things as material and spiritual resources consisting of capital goods and personal experience. Leaving a legacy is an intentional act of visionary leaders who have realistically considered their own mortality and planned for the eventual succession and transition of leadership.

The corporate world has prepared for leadership succession and appropriately responded. The Gilburg Leadership Institute (GLI) specializes in leadership and legacy. The institute is the culmination of 15 years of research experience with leadership and legacy.

The Leadership Legacy Project is the culmination of 15 years of research, observation and experience. We apply our expertise in generational diversity and tested leadership development methodology to help organizations with both the mentoring and the development of future Gen X leaders. The Leadership Legacy Project is a program designed to help leaders in the Baby Boom generation articulate the legacy they want to leave behind them, and answer the questions: What will happen when I leave? Who will be there to take the reins? What does the next generation need to be successful?⁵⁶

The above questions designed by GLI are useful for all organizations. These questions contain foresight that is relevant to reaching the next generation which every institution needs to do if it desires longevity. Yet some of the research done by GLI shows that, despite the necessity of planning for eventual leadership transitions, few organizations have planned for them:

As the largest generation in US history is approaching retirement, it is time for Baby Boomers to contemplate and promote the leadership legacy they wish to leave behind. Despite the growing awareness of serious concerns about workforce

⁵⁶ Gilburg Leadership Institute, Leadership Legacy Project, <http://www.gilburgleadership.com/leadlegacy.htm> (accessed September 17, 2009).

demographics, employee retention, knowledge retention, global market competition and the health of our corporate culture, most organizations have done little or no planning or programming for leadership succession.⁵⁷

The basic questions the Gilburg Institute asks about leaving a legacy are as relevant to churches as they are to private corporations and public institutions.

Summary of Leadership Succession

In regard to the first sub-problem, the Book of Acts did not initially provide an understanding of the independent church phenomenon or an explicit prescriptive means for a strategic plan for leadership and succession. Instead, early on, the focus is on church unity (Acts 2:42-47). Unity is still a vital component in constructing a plan for the longevity of the church. The church congregation needs to have a singleness of mind regarding leadership succession. It will take the willingness of those in leadership to communicate the necessity for those in the congregation to respond to the call for leadership. Leaders must have a vision for reaching the next generation. They must convey the vision and inspire the congregation to become part of the process.

Leadership and leadership succession are ongoing throughout the Bible and portrayed throughout the Scriptures. God uses those He redeems to accomplish His redemptive purposes through all generations and has established and fulfilled covenants through them (Gen.17:7).

In regard to the second sub-problem, the Scriptures provided biblical examples of leadership in the apostolic church. The theological review provided leadership application principles which are necessary for leadership succession. At some point, every church and everyone in ministry must consider his or her organization in light of its

⁵⁷ Ibid.

human limitations. A natural tendency is to avoid leadership succession, an immense subject that most would rather defer than address. It is time for leaders to consider their organizations above themselves and grapple with this important subject.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The researcher explored written works that were useful for understanding the emergence of independent churches. The research involved looking at literature written about how churches are able to succeed in reaching the next generation with the gospel. All churches must have a strategy and a plan in order to succeed in reaching the next generation.

A recent study shows that a proportion of Protestantism has declined in recent decades while the portion of the population not affiliated with any religion has increased.¹ Thus, the study indicates that American Protestantism, which identifies with large mainline Protestant denominations, has declined while the Protestants identifying with evangelical denominations has increased.² This trend has resulted in a condition that churches need to understand and consider if they want to continue in the twenty-first century. Historically, the church has had to adapt and respond to the cultural setting in

¹ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "The Religious Composition of the United States," <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-chapter-1.pdf> (Accessed May 12, 2010).

² Ibid.

which it was immersed. The researcher reviewed literature that addressed some of the historical perspectives of the apostolic church as it compared with the emerging church of today.

Leadership succession is important to the church, which must adapt to the challenges of its culture and context. How a church addresses leadership succession is proportional to the longevity of its ministry. Currently, independent churches represent an emerging movement that has not yet reached its peak. Of interest to the researcher is how these churches are to succeed without the support or affiliation of a major denomination.

The Apostolic Church

In the last chapter, the researcher addressed leadership succession from the Scriptures. The research relied primarily on the Bible, theological works and biblical commentaries. The Book of Acts provided the basis and the Epistles supplied an in-depth visual of leadership succession. In order to apply biblical truth, it is necessary to distinguish leadership succession from apostolic succession (2 Tim. 2:15). In coming to a general understanding of what constitutes apostolic succession, the Scriptures provide the basis for understanding (Acts 2:42-47). The local church needs to know it can succeed in the spirit and likeness of the apostles. In his commentary *Spreading the Fire: The Acts of the Holy Spirit*, C. Peter Wagner offers his perspectives for understanding the apostolic ministry and movement.³ Wagner believes the apostolic ministry was not just confined to the original apostles.

³ Wagner, 160.

Hans Küng in *The Church* offers a somewhat different perspective on the apostle's ministry by directly addressing the subject of apostolic succession:

What then can "apostolic succession" mean? As direct witnesses and messengers of the risen Lord, the apostles can have no successors. No further apostles were called. Apostleship in the sense of the original and fundamental ministry of the first witnesses and messengers died out with the death of the last apostle. Apostleship in this sense of witness and mission cannot be repeated or continued. What remains is a task and a commission. The apostolic commission is not finished, but will remain to the end of time. The apostolic task is not completed; it embraces all peoples to the end of the earth.⁴

Küng later writes: "the Church is the successor of the apostles and it is their ministry that is entrusted to the Church."⁵ In this sense, the researcher agrees with Küng that the original apostles were unique and it is not necessary for the contemporary church to duplicate in the purest sense the original apostle's ministry or foundation but to continue in their mission (Eph. 2:20).

The researcher agrees that the church has been included and is entrusted with the apostle's mission. The Holy Spirit has been actively involved in the formation and functions of churches from the Day of Pentecost. In adhering to the apostle's doctrine, contemporary churches operate according to the same Spirit. Churches also come under the spiritual authority of the Scriptures and thus connect to the Holy Spirit who directs the churches with His influence. The Holy Spirit has been a continual force in churches since Pentecost and is the source that guides them in the apostolic mission.

In *Spreading the Fire*, Wagner vividly describes the beginning of inclusive leadership in the early church. Wagner explains the reason for the inclusiveness was an expansion from a mono-cultural Jewish fellowship to a bi-cultural Jewish and Hellenistic

⁴ Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 354-359.

⁵ Ibid.

one.⁶ Missiologists describe this action as “indigenization of the culture.”⁷ For example, the first interchurch conflict, which might have led to a sharp division, was averted through the Holy Spirit’s directed leadership. This inclusive act of leadership fully equipped and enabled the recipients to meet the crisis and avert a split (Acts 6:1-4).

David Cannistraci in his book *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement* addresses the subject of apostolic succession and the apostolic ministry.⁸ His book offers insight into the authority and transfer of apostolic authority. Cannistraci describes the apostolic ministry as an emerging movement. The author describes this movement as “God restoring the church to its New Testament pattern.”⁹ This restoration is a continual work in progress, the church ever striving with the counter philosophy of a secular culture. The church needs to follow the apostolic approach in reaching out to the culture.

Cannistraci summarizes: “Wherever authority is in place people must submit to each other in a spirit of love and unity (Eph. 5:21).”

As the church approaches the apostolic dimension, we must investigate the principles that guided the apostles of the first century replicated in our century. We must be willing as a movement to practice the principles of interdependent cooperation, voluntary submission, local autonomy, and mutual accountability.

The author described the patterns of apostles’ authority not so much as hierarchical, but rather horizontal, according to how God used them in situations and time through regional and relational aspects.¹⁰ The Apostle Paul, in advancing the gospel to

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ David Cannistraci, *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement* (Ventura, CA: Renew Books, 1996), 29.

⁹ Ibid., 174.

¹⁰ Ibid., 153.

the Gentiles when appealing to the Jerusalem Council, suggests that apostolic authority was within the leadership of the apostles.

Cannistraci's view of apostolic succession shows bestowal of divine authority rather than institutional conferral. This authority is not successional or imperial according to the will of a man or institution. Cannistraci also infers that succession is not hierarchical and leadership is subject to change as the situation and God may dictate.¹¹ However, some do view succession as hierarchical. This view is refuted in an article in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* which describes such understanding of apostolic succession as unbiblical:

First of all, the Catholic case for its papal and episcopal *doctrines* is lacking any direct and clear biblical foundations. Even if it can be shown from the later epistles of the New Testament that the apostolic office is passed on to successors through the laying on of hands, and the nuclear form of the episcopal office is then already visible, there is still a great distance between this picture of the bishop's office in the New Testament and the later dogmas which have been built up around the office. In other words, the claim of the succession theory to be the exclusive guarantor of valid ministries and sacraments is not to be found in the New Testament, but is a result of the later struggles between orthodoxy and heresy, in particular the Gnostic heresy.¹²

Nevertheless, the church continues to emerge despite the doctrinal differences that have been so divisive throughout the centuries. The church throughout the centuries has emerged changing its structure over time. On the first Pentecost after the ascension, the church was apostolic, pervading the culture. With Constantine's conversion and conferral, the culture pervaded the church. Today the church is between its apostolic roots and an immense pluralism of a global culture.

¹¹ Ibid., 145.

¹² Carl E. Braaten, "The Reunited Church in the Future," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 4, no. 4 (Fall 1967): 621.

The Emerging Church

The emerging church is a changing and evolving church in response to the political, economic and social climates. The emergence of the church throughout history is in the presence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). In considering the emergence of the church in America, Sydney Ahlstrom in *A Religious History of the American People* writes about many of the events that prompted and ultimately paved the way for the expansion and decline of church denominations. In his book, Ahlstrom provides a comprehensive history of the cultural and political landscape. He also informs the reader of the denominations and the sects of twentieth century America.¹³

Many of the denominations emerged because they could under the first amendment of the United States Constitution: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” This disestablishment clause opened the door for the emergence and establishment of free religion and practice. Ahlstrom writes: “Statesman and denominational leaders solved the problems of American pluralism in the only way that was consonant with the ideals and necessities of the American Revolution.”¹⁴ This set the stage for the emergence of many of the church denominations of America.

Ahlstrom chronologically described nostalgic incidents of twentieth century America that contributed to the decline of denominations. His references to the turbulent

¹³ Sydney E Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972),1021.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 382.

sixties and the radical turn in religion and morals in the latter half of the century provide the reader with perspectives:

The decade of the sixties seems in many ways to have marked a new stage in the long development of American religious history. Not only did this intense and fiercely lived span of years have a character of its own, but it may have ended a distinct quadricentennium—a unified four-hundred year period—in the Anglo-American experience.¹⁵

Ahlstrom depicts an intense radicalism that turned America upside down and leaves one wondering if it will ever get over the culture shock. The radical sixties, as the author points out, was a time of government expansion in social programming and the “moral revolution.” The author declares that Judeo-Christian principles and moral traditionalisms were called into question by the progressivism prevalent at that time:

Like many of its elegant, gay, or roaring predecessors, the decade of the 1960s will probably gain a name or two. Men will, of course, identify it with President Kennedy’s New Frontier and President Johnson’s Great Society (though not without irony), and with the war in Southeast Asia. Adjectives like “secular” or “permissive” will probably commemorate other aspects of those ten eventful years. The decade may also be remembered for the “death of God” or the “Great Moral Revolution”; and these terms will rest on actualities far more persuasive than, say, the gaiety of the troubled nineties or the elegance of the eighties. New cosmic signs were being read in the sixties. The decade did experience a fundamental shift in American moral and religious attitudes. The decade of the sixties was a time, in short, when the old foundations of national confidence, patriotic idealism, moral traditionalism, and even Judeo-Christian theism, were awash. Presuppositions that had held firm for centuries—even millennia were being widely questioned. Some manifestations came and went (as fads and fashions will), but the existence of a basic shift of mood rooted in deep social and institutional dislocations was anything but ephemeral.¹⁶

Twenty-first century churches are certainly a product of this turbulent past. In the United States, churches have become a catalog variety with the many challenges of a global culture that stands in opposition to the traditional denominations of the past.

¹⁵ Ibid., 1079.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1080.

The challenges of past traditions go even deeper when churches must contend with the progressiveness of the courts and the culture. Many of the churches are still struggling with the abolishment of Sunday blue laws. The purpose of blue laws was for keeping religious traditions such as observance of Sunday as a day of rest. Many statutes restricting commerce on Sundays have been repealed and declared unconstitutional. These statutes made it easier for families to attend church. The decline in church attendance affects all churches. It means a decline of human resources for leadership succession.

Independent Churches

The independent church in many ways is mysterious and considered an alternative to traditional denominations. At first glance, an independent church appears to be at a distinct disadvantage; therefore, it would be in its best interests to affiliate with a denomination. However, this is not the case, as many of the denominational churches view themselves as autonomous and in most cases an affiliation with a parent institution is merely nominal. In his essay, "What God Makes Free is Free Indeed," Scott Thumma writes:

The nondenominational identity is in many ways an elusive category. . . . Likewise, with a large number of denominational congregations de-emphasizing their ties to their parent body and adopting a functional nondenominationalism, the distinction between "official" independent status and de facto nondenominationalism is increasingly blurred. What is clear is that this nondenominational congregational reality requires further research.¹⁷

¹⁷ Scott Thumma, "What God Makes Free is Free Indeed," http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article5.html (accessed October 14, 2009).

Thumma's description of the independent movement as "increasingly blurred and a work in progress" emphasizes the movement as a trend in need of consideration.¹⁸

Again, Thumma supports the researcher's supposition that the independent movement is very complex with many unexplained variables which need more consideration:

It is commonly assumed by sociologists of religion that the numbers of nondenominational congregations in the United States are swelling at a rapid rate. . . . In addition, if current research which examines the factors contributing to congregational identity in traditional denominations is correct (where 75% of denominational church members do not think of themselves in terms of a denominational identity, combined with their congregations' often partial appropriation of denominational resources and labels), the nondenominational reality is closer to and more descriptive of the way many denominational congregations are currently functioning. Therefore, for these and other reasons, this phenomenon deserves to be examined more closely.¹⁹

Thumma's supposition ("75% of denominational church members do not think of themselves in their denominational identity") shows that many denominational members are independent in spirit. The literary review shows that some consider this a trend, and wait for a prompting of the Holy Spirit to return to the apostolic church. As Thumma stated, this is certainly a phenomenon in need of more scrutiny. The outcomes of the independent church as a phenomenon remain unpredictable.

While the outcomes of the twenty-first century church are unpredictable, its quest for longevity is dependent on its leadership. The apostles depended on leadership succession and were able to reach, preach, teach and change their culture through successive leadership. While certain gifts for ministry may have been exclusive to the original apostles, their mission and ministry is not, and the church has been entrusted

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

with its succession. They provided leadership, which reached their next generation. This continuum must continue on to the Second Coming.

Apostolic Leadership

According to Reggie McNeal, there is a clarion call for the church to return to its apostolic roots which he implies is missing in the institutionalized church.²⁰ In *Revolution in Leadership* McNeal points out the parallels of the first and twenty-first century church in reaching their respective cultures with the gospel. McNeal cites three dynamics of the first-century apostolic church which would make an impact on the twenty-first century apostolic church:

First, the dynamic of the early church during the apostolic era remains a benchmark for missional effectiveness. Second the cultural arena at the beginning of the twenty-first century resembles at key points the cultural setting that first-century Christians faced. Third, and most significantly, the type of leadership the apostles practiced possesses certain qualities that not only made the early church effective but would raise the level of church leadership today as we face similar challenges and opportunities.

McNeal identifies the parallels as the global considerations of both the apostolic church of the first and twenty-first centuries. He sees religious pluralism and the heightened spiritual awareness as common to both eras. McNeal identifies the final parallel as a mission versus maintenance tension.²¹ This is the basis of the author's discussion which must be addressed if the church is to be effective in dealing with the other parallels. The apostles were mission minded and guided by the Holy Spirit in following the vision given to them in the Scriptures:

²⁰ Reggie McNeal, *Revolution in Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1998), 19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:44-49).

They knew the message they were to preach and to wait until they were imbued with power from on high. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

McNeal sees the need for churches to return to preaching and teaching according to the apostolic tradition. While it is certainly an ecumenical mission, it is the evangelical message in Acts 1:8 which propels the mission. Many of the contemporary denominational churches have become secularized and abandoned the evangelical message in favor of a socialized gospel whose main concerns are for social justice instead of evangelism. This condition has been prevalent throughout the history of the church and will probably continue until the Second Coming.

The researcher sees many of the denominational churches in New England as somewhere between the apostolic church and the contemporary church which is inundated with the philosophy of the culture (Matt. 25:1-13). Rather than contend with a highly secular culture and proclaim its relevance, the church often takes the path of least resistance and seeks safety and refuge in its buildings—circles the wagons instead of engaging the culture. McNeal sees the church becoming the dynamic force it was intended to be when it will take a proactive approach to evangelism. In taking the path of least resistance, the church does not follow the biblical vision of the apostolic gospel that

it was given. Instead, it will probably resemble a club and follow its mentality in pursuing its mission.

Paradigm Shifts

McNeal contends that churches have to be aware of shifting paradigms. Leaders must continually evaluate their current paradigms against present realities. McNeal states:

Paradigms can and do shift. The changes that precipitate these shifts can be either gradual or abrupt. The pressure to shift paradigms can come from outside or inside the person or organization. The shift may be perceived by people or organizations as positive or threatening. Whatever the impetus or circumstances, paradigm shifts always reflect the bottom line: the rules of the game have changed. Previous actions or values, once unquestioned, now may be suspect, counter-productive, or no longer tolerated because they violate new rules.²²

One issue churches must consider is the use of technology and its integration in the functions of the church. Another paradigm issue which is the focus of this project concerns leadership succession. McNeal illustrates how the rules of evangelism change through the priesthood of all believers.²³

McNeal further contends: “Paradigm paralysis occurs when an individual or organization holds on too tightly to one paradigm.”²⁴ The researcher concurs that paradigm shifts are threatening to some, but necessary and need to be continually evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness in ministry. Trying to make things that worked in the past succeed in the present may not work.

²² Ibid., 74.

²³ Ibid., 77.

²⁴ Ibid., 75.

The traditional approaches and typical responses are not in the apostolic tradition. The apostles embraced the missional approach of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Yet traditional approaches have worked in the past and there is a natural tendency to hold on to them as long as possible. Despite this fact, it is still necessary and expedient for the church to return to the apostolic missional approach to expanding the Kingdom through the priesthood of all believers and not just the professional clergy.

The Church in Crisis

Before any plan of action for leadership succession can be put in place, current leaders will have to understand the “signs of the times” (2 Tim. 4:1-4). One sign relevant to the church today is the need for “sound doctrine.” The Apostle Paul’s warning reminds the church that whenever it becomes inundated with the philosophy of the secular culture, it loses its apostolic vision and mission. By way of contrast, it will take godly leadership in the church to make the case for relevance to the culture and community in which it is immersed. George Barna’s *The Frog in the Kettle* provided a vivid depiction of what the church would look like in the year 2000.²⁵ Barna, a decade ago asked: “Will the Christian community be like the frog,” cooked because it was unresponsive to the changing world around it?

Although Barna’s use of the “frog in the kettle” was analogous to where the church was headed almost two decades ago, another reptile (the turtle) describes its current likeness. A turtle will venture out of its shell and slowly proceed forward. It will go on its way until a potential predator engages it and then take refuge in its shell. Before

²⁵ George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 21-22.

leaders can address leadership succession they must acknowledge the hostile climate they are in. A highly secularized mainstream media has, during the current decade, utilized the power of its influence to misrepresent and vilify evangelical churches which are most represented by conservative independent churches. To some degree they have been successful and through their influence have been able to marginalize many Catholic and evangelical churches. This response by the mainstream media may be because of these churches' theological beliefs on moral issues.

In considering Barna's pessimism, much of what he has described concerning the future has played out. He has described the technological and spiritual climate in which the church is currently immersed:

During this decade, the Church will be pressured from all sides to give up the battle. The intensity of the spiritual warfare unraveling in our midst will accelerate. . . . An evaluation of the behavior of the American Church over the past two decades surely indicates that one reason why we have had such limited impact is that we have acted as a splintered Body, striving without vision and without a set of priorities for outreach.²⁶

The church must take an optimistic approach in turning this trend around. It must also make the case to a highly skeptical media and culture about its relevance and concern for the benefits of moral virtues (Prov. 29:18). Until this is the case, there is little chance that anything will change soon.

Barna's research includes a biblical approach to turning this degenerate condition around. He lists ten priorities necessary for the church to become relevant again:

1. Win people to Christ by taking a proactive approach.
2. Raise Bible knowledge by encouraging people to read the Bible regularly.
3. Equip the Christian body.

²⁶ Ibid., 224.

4. Establish Christian community.
5. Renew Christian behavior.
6. Enhance the image of the Christian church.
7. Champion Christian morals.
8. Live by a Christian philosophy of life.
9. Restore peoples' self-esteem.
10. Focus on reaching the world for Christ.

Although Barna's book is now considered a classic, the church is still struggling with the reptilian syndrome. The church must make one of two choices: acquiesce to philosophy and popular norms of the culture or pursue the biblical principles above. Barna's ten priorities are timeless principles, which describe how local churches can either remain or become effective and relevant in fulfilling their part in the Great Commission.

Leadership Factors

The many challenges to leadership and succession require those in leadership to respond and meet them. A major challenge occurs when there is a lack of spiritual and numerical growth through attrition or other circumstances. In the discourse of the literature review, certain factors emerged which pertain to leadership succession. These factors consist of leadership turnover and transience, leadership development and transitioning.

Turnover and transience are factors which cause demand for new leadership. It is the latter, leadership development and transitioning, which sustain and enhance it. Additionally, it takes transformational leadership to respond appropriately to a spiritual

crisis. Transformational leadership is able to do this because it is informed by God and knows what His will is for a given situation. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom. 12:2).

Heidi Unruh introduces seven components that lead to transformational ministry and leadership:

What does it take for a church to make it through the process of change, despite the obstacles? Research suggests seven critical components for church mobilization: a healthy foundation; a compelling vision; a plan for action; missional resources; a motivational catalyst; change-sustaining relationships; and transformational leadership skills. . . . Note that these components are not how-to steps to developing community ministry. They are, rather, characteristics of a church that is ready to take effective steps toward developing community ministry.²⁷

Unruh’s proposal further implies that it takes transformational leaders who know God’s will and take a proactive and practical approach to ministry. These leaders are not afraid to take the initiative in their approach to ministry and are willing to take a risk despite the old cliché “We never did it that way.” Instead, the local church would benefit from visionary leaders—risk takers who are entrepreneurial in spirit. They consider the cost of not taking a proactive approach to leadership succession. In order for a local church to continue and remain orthodox, it must make disciples and reach the next generation (Ps.78:4-7).

Reaching the next generation requires transformed visionary leaders who will provide environments in which future leaders discover and develop their spiritual gifts. This practical approach for leadership succession is rooted in the Scriptures

²⁷ Heidi Unruh, “Building the Church's Readiness for a Transformational Ministry Journey,” *Family and Community Ministries* 22, no 4 (Winter 2009): 22-26.

(Eph. 4:11-16). In contemporary terms this is organizational systems theory—a called out body of believers working together to fulfill its purpose.

Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck in *Management for Your Church* make the case for organizational systems theory. The authors show how a systems approach is preferred over previous organizational approaches. They emphasize a systems theory approach as the most effective in dealing with the complexities of a technological and sophisticated culture.²⁸

The systems theory approach explains how a local church functions within its environment. The input system consists of new people, money, hired personnel, and technology that are needed for transformation. In organizational systems human resources become productive and processed for ministry. The transforming process of a church comprises three factors that are always in dynamic relationship to one another: theological-missional purposes, organizational structures and intra-personal relationships.²⁹

Theology and mission purposes consist of theological biblical beliefs, the values of the church and reasons for existence. Organizational structures are composed of the combinations of human, physical and spiritual resources the church affects and policies implemented in conducting its affairs. Intra and interpersonal relationships are a product of the organizational structure that the church creates to accomplish its theological-missional purposes. The ultimate purpose and function of the transformational system is to receive input material and resources from the environment and process them for

²⁸ Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck, *Management for Your Church* (Nashville, TN: Organizational Resources Press, 1984), 23.

²⁹ Ibid.

ministry. This is a socially innovative approach for the good of the church and societal transformation.

The biblical basis for implementing such a system and process relates to evangelism and outreach (Matt. 28:19-20, Eph. 4:11-16). According to this model, transformation takes place through resources that come in from the environment and process in the church and later filter back into the environment to influence change. Transformed leaders recognize these dynamics and are enabled to encapsulate resources for use. However, nothing is static for any church or organization and external and internal changes are constant. Organizational succession is a constant. Leaders must consider such factors as technological obsolescence and personal turnover.

Leadership Turnover and Transience

Local churches must respond to a rapidly changing globalized and technological culture. There is a need for leaders to recognize and adapt to these conditions because they are always changing and in many instances beyond control. In this world, little is static and leaders have to respond to transience and turnover, factors which make an impact and affect every organization.

Earl Creps, in "Leading the High-Turnover Small Church," described the ill effects of turnover. Creps, through his own experience, explained how social forces have a detrimental effect on small churches by identifying logistics and economics as two factors that have contributed to turnover.

Frequently, “In a military environment, the relocation of service members were commonplace; every three years military personnel were transferred and thus the church was continually recycled.”³⁰

Creps discusses the downside of turnover and how the migration of members impacted the congregation. Creps identified four factors which were detrimental to his ministry. Organizationally, “The problem was not so much a lack of warm bodies to fill positions as a lack of qualified leaders to motivate, train, and direct those willing to serve.” This constant turnover made it difficult to develop future leaders and teachers.

Another negative of frequent turnover was relationships within the church body. Creps commenting on the downside: “No one felt like they knew, or could ever hope to know, more than a small percentage of the whole body. I was constantly asked, ‘Who is that new person?’ or ‘Whatever happened to so-and-so?’” Creps later added “When many of our permanent members lost close friends in the waves of out-migration, their incentive to get to know new people diminished—why expend the energy to get to know someone when, in a short time, they would leave?”

High turnover contributed to two other negative factors; the grief the congregation suffered in departing members and the desire for long-term friendship and the low self-esteem the congregation felt. As Creps summarized, “It was as if each departing family took a piece of our strength with them.” Creps, however, indicates there is hope amidst a leadership crisis:

Is there any hope? Yes! Pastors can lead a high-turnover church, but it calls for the following assumptions. . . . I am continually reminded that I do not own my people, I only lease them. Each person that the Lord brings to a church belongs to

³⁰ Earl Creps, “Leading the High-Turnover Small Church,” https://www.agts.edu/faculty/faculty_publications/articles/high_turnover.pdf (accessed December 7, 2009).

him exclusively. My job is to be a good steward of the people until the Lord moves them on. I had to teach the congregation that we were a *bakery* and not a *warehouse*. God had called us, in part, to process people for shipment, not to store them for inventory . . . The good news about high-turnover settings is that new people move in. We wove each new person into the fabric of the church's life rapidly. We did this primarily by offering small group fellowships. Since worship services can be the loneliest place on earth for a new attendee, our fellowship groups provided a climate for getting to know one another and for personal ministry. These groups also gave our permanent people an island of security in a sea of change.³¹

Although Creps has been able to accentuate the positives, frequent turnover is still not good and underscores the necessity of taking a proactive approach to leadership. Even though Creps' situation was unique, high turnover in most cases is not just relocating families. It is just as likely that high turnover may be the result of the local church not meeting the needs or interests of the congregation.

The effects of high turnover are still detrimental to a local church regardless of the causes. It negatively affects the whole church organizationally and spiritually. While some turnover is a part of life through transience, attrition or in positive ways for ministry reassignment, it still must be a consideration of the local church leadership. If turnover is not for normal reasons, it will have a negative impact on the congregation. However, turnover does happen and effective leadership must make provisions for it. All organizations are subject to transience. For an organization to succeed it must have a succession plan in place that addresses these considerations.

Leadership and Reproduction

One source that provides a vision for reproducing successive leadership is Robert Coleman's classic *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Although this book is primarily

³¹ Ibid.

concerned with universal evangelism, it provides a model for developing leadership. Coleman introduces eight principles the Lord used in preparing His followers for ministry. Reproduction of others is an important principle and churches must be concerned with it or face the inevitable diminution for not taking a proactive approach with leadership development.

In reviewing Coleman's classic the reader is reminded of the Lord's purpose in reproduction (John 15:16):

The ultimate goal of Jesus for His disciples was that His life would be reproduced through them in the lives of others. The fact that the group of men he led was small made little difference. . . . The ultimate victory would come through their faithful witness of him. His gospel would conquer as they reproduced and taught their disciples to reproduce.³²

Churches which take a proactive approach actually reproduce through a multiplier effect.³³ Coleman makes the case for the local church to be proactive and intentional in evangelism which includes edifying others for reaching the next generation. Coleman states: "The test of any work of evangelism thus is not what is seen at the moment, or in the Conference Report, but in the effectiveness with which the work continues in the next generation."³⁴

In summary, local churches need to be proactive and take an intentional approach to evangelism. It is the responsibility of the local church to create the environment for its disciples to discover and develop their spiritual gifts for ministry—"Shortcuts Have

³² Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1972), 173.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 110.

Failed.”³⁵ There is no easy way for assuring that a local church will reach the next generation or make a positive leadership succession. However, it is more apt to do so if it takes the initiative. Similarly, Oswald Sanders makes a compelling case for succession through leadership reproduction. He writes “that the leader’s attitude in reproducing other leaders to the extent they train others will not just succeed their mentors, but also rather supersede them.”³⁶ Leadership and succession issues are a constant because of the incessant demands for them.

One aspect of Sanders’s focus is on the leadership ability and qualities of those aspiring for leadership, which is a much-needed component (1 Tim. 3:1). Another facet integrates the leader’s natural abilities with the spiritual qualities supplied by God for those who rely on Him through prayer.³⁷ Of significant importance is the wisdom of the leader to recognize the need to combine one’s own natural God-given abilities with the spiritual giftedness from the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7, 11).

Sanders’s insight reminds leaders of the need to acknowledge God’s active involvement with His church and those He called for ministry.

Sanders position:

Only one leader holds office forever; no successor is needed for Him. The disciples made no move to appoint a replacement for Jesus, tacit evidence that they were conscious of His abiding presence, their living leader and Lord. At times the church has lost a vivid sense of Jesus’ presence. . . . The perils and distress of the church weigh deeply on Jesus’ heart.³⁸

³⁵ Ibid., 111.

³⁶ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1994), 147.

³⁷ Ibid.,92.

³⁸ Ibid.,146.

In congruence with the Lord's perpetual involvement with the church, Sanders cautions leaders of the perils associated with leadership (1 Cor. 9:27). Spiritual leadership is a higher calling and requires vigilance of those so endowed (Phil. 3:14).

George Barna in *Leaders on Leadership* describes how far a great leader and ministry team will go in the reproduction of others. He writes about the Graham ministry team:

Behind this tremendous leader is a team of men and women who follow, regardless of the sacrifice, to see the ministry work in partnership with the local church. The goal is to produce men and women who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, to see them grow in that relationship so that they develop the ability to reproduce the life of Christ in others.

Leadership Succession and Transitions

Every organization must deal with the eventuality of time related changes. Nothing is static. Time does not stand still. All organizations must plan for the inevitable and the eventuality of leadership transience and those in leadership positions must likewise face the facts of their own mortality. In extending longevity of the organization, it is in the best interests of those in leadership to take a proactive approach with planning for leadership changes. The researcher has reviewed several sources which have comprehensively considered the subject.

One source *The Elephant in the Boardroom* broadens the perspectives and convincingly emboldens a pastor or elder to introduce the "big subject" to those that are challenged with leadership succession. Some of the obstacles the researcher has faced in dealing with a "sea of change" are holding fast to traditions and resistance to change. Sometimes there is an unwillingness to come out of one's comfort zone and take the

initiative in facing the incessant demands of a vastly changing culture. The authors' main purpose in the book is to convict pastors, elder boards and churches about the necessity to prepare for the eventuality of leadership succession. Leadership succession is dependent on variable factors such as a well-planned transition. The authors' emphasis on the subject conveys that successful transitions in leadership do not happen by chance or overnight, and should not be left to chance, but rather through an intentional preplanned procedure by the organization.

In making the case for the importance of transitions, the authors include eight questions for church leadership:

1. Do you have a strategic plan that defines where your church is going and how is it going to get there?
2. Do you have a clear understanding of your particular church culture and the specific advantages and risks posed to that culture by a pastoral transition?
3. Have you had an honest, structured discussion with your governing board about what is going to happen to the church when the pastor leaves?
4. Does your governing board have a clear, biblically based, shared understanding of the spiritual principles that should inform a pastoral transition process?
5. Do you have a pastoral transition plan in place that describes in detail how your church will maintain excellence at the point when the current pastor leaves and a new pastor is called?
6. Do you have a crisis plan in place, should something happen that requires the pastor to leave suddenly?
7. Have you identified in advance the consultant resources you will need in order to

- make a successful pastoral transition, and have you made sure they have a proven track record of effectiveness? This includes denominational agencies serving as consultants.
8. Has your governing board calculated all the various costs that would be associated with a poorly managed pastoral transition?

Weese and Crabtree's answer to the above questions is an emphatic no: "When it comes to dealing with a pastoral transition, many strong leaders stop leading."³⁹ These questions need further query. Why the passivity for such a primal subject? Perhaps it is just taking the path of least resistance toward anticipated push-back. Whatever the reason, taking the path of least resistance is ignoring leadership succession. Passivity with such an important subject as leadership succession is detrimental to both the church and Kingdom.

Barna in *Leaders on Leadership* establishes a good leadership succession with a carefully planned transition:

In every succession, the organization's credibility, momentum, vision and values are at risk. A poor transition can drain corporate energy and resources for years to come. Every ministry, regardless of its size or purpose, must carefully plan and execute the transition of leadership. Without a smooth succession, lasting success cannot be achieved. Some of the world's leaders experienced great success, but because they failed miserably at succession, their life accomplishments collapsed shortly after their departure. It is true that "succession" follows "success" in the dictionary; however, it rarely follows in real life. Hundreds of books have been written about the subject of success; almost none about succession.

Barna's assessment of the key players in a successful succession agrees with the writers of the *Elephant in the Board Room*:

In any kind of leadership transition, the three key players are: the incumbent, the board and the successor. For the transition to be smooth, efficient and successful,

³⁹ Ibid.

each player has a major role to play. In each of these areas there is a mind-set to develop, decisions to make, tasks to perform and hindrances to overcome. If each of the three players is successful, they can celebrate.⁴⁰

Donna Schaper in “Leadership Transitions What the Nonprofit World Can Teach Us” explains:

The not-for-profit world is different than the world of church when it comes to leadership transitions. In the nonprofit world, “retiring” executives often stay on as codirectors with the new director. They also often choose their own successors. They rarely leave in full and sometimes remain on the board of directors. Thus the protocols in this world are teamwork across generations, on-the-job training of new leaders, and promoting from within. The advantages nonprofits see in these practices include retention of organizational memory, the use of trial periods to test out new leaders, and the opportunity to have former leaders share their knowledge with new ones. . . . In other words moving people from within can be a very good thing for a healthy congregation but a less good thing for a not-so-healthy one.⁴¹

Leadership transitions are more likely to take place in healthy churches. In her article, Schaper references the nonprofit world, which may consist of charitable, and government agencies.

The advantages she sees include the retention of organizational memory, trial periods of new leadership and the extended opportunity for out-going leadership to share their experiences, expertise, concerns and vision for the future. Schaper points out that in the ecclesiastical world a tendency is to dismiss this practice:

In the church, we often prohibit associate or assistant pastors from moving up. Hiring from within may have advantages in not-for-profits, but it does not necessarily have them in congregations. Pastors need social capital. On the first day of any ministry, we may have the most social capital we are ever going to have. It often decreases over time as projected hopes are not realized: the church may not grow; the problem in the family may not be solved. An assistant who

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Donna Schaper, “What the Nonprofit World Can Teach Us,” *Congregations*, (Winter 2009) <http://search.atlaonline.com/pls/eli/ec.pdfapp.showpdf?myaid=ATLA0001698683> (accessed December 18, 2009)

moves up will have no honeymoon. These realities underscore the need for pastors to name their own criteria for success and to resist projections. We are not magicians; we are pastors. Some of us have the good fortune and the skills to increase our social capital over time. Sometimes this increase comes from institutional memory and on-the-job training.⁴²

Schaper is clear that churches often prohibit promoting from within. This seems the common practice of smaller churches. In the event of a need for a pastor, through a crisis or other means the common approach is either for the elders, trustees or deacon board to form a pulpit or search committee.

It is evident that poorly managed leadership transitions may contribute to dysfunction within the church and forfeit many of the blessings such as retention of institutional memory coming from the experiences and expertise of the outgoing pastors and other leaders within the church or organization.

Leadership and Legacy

Schaper describes how leaving a legacy can enhance and be beneficial for the organization. A legacy consists of that which a predecessor leaves for his or her successors. A well-planned transition contributes to the retention of institutional memory. A good transition allows for the exchange of ideas along with the experience and expertise of the predecessor upon his or her successors. This exchange takes place through discipleship or in a mentoring relationship. The researcher has considered this relationship and has found several suitable resources and references that relate well with the subject of leaving a legacy.

⁴² Ibid.

One such source *The Accent of a Leader* illustrates how mentoring contributes to longevity in ministry through character development.⁴³ This concept is illustrated by what the authors describe as a capacity ladder. The capacity ladder works when leadership creates the environment, thus creating the capacity, for disciples or mentees to advance upward on the rungs. On the bottom rung is an environment for the disciple to discover what he or she can do. The second rung provides the occasion for spiritual giftedness development. On the third rung the disciple encounters the opportunity to advance and acquire a title and position while at the last rung he or she attains individual potential.

Another apposite source describes how leaders leave a legacy. In *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*, the authors introduce the concept of the mentor ministry as an intimate relationship between the mentor and mentee.⁴⁴ A mentor is an experienced advisor and supporter of his or her mentee who provides the spiritual and material resources to a mentee thus empowering a mentee for ministry.

Stanley and Clinton expand the mentoring concept with a life-long networking model called the *Constellation Model*, which graphically depicts and illustrates horizontal and vertical relationships.⁴⁵ The horizontal relationships include co-peer mentors internal and external to the mentee. The vertical relationships consist of both upward and downward mentoring relationships that describe upward as those who have gone before, and downward as those the believer is mentoring. The Constellation Model of mentoring relationships is attractive because of its usefulness in longevity and continuity. It

⁴³ Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath, *The Accent of a Leader* (San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass, 1999), 18.

⁴⁴ Stanley, 32.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

connects believers upwardly with both historical and contemporary figures (Heb. 13:7-8). Historical figures may include Christian leaders such as D.L. Moody or Hudson Taylor and biblical figures such as the apostles. In the downward direction, the believer mentors an understudy and contributes to the next generation of leaders of the church.

In order to leave a legacy, leaders must finish their ministry well. Leaders that finish well do so because of the disciplined life they lead. They are able to leave a legacy because they have developed one over the course of their lifetime. Don Payne, Associate Dean at Denver Seminary writes in a segment of his article on mentoring:

Mentoring is just as essential for the second half of our lives as for any other phase, even though it may be more challenging to find these mentors or to admit our need for them. Is it worth the effort? As I look into the midst of my own remaining time, anticipating opportunities and quivering at how I will yet be tested, I realize that I need mentoring as much now as ever. Whether we are already so far spent that we don't know if we can put in one more day or just wondering about the next stage, now is the time to ask God for a "finishing well" mentor and to make that phone call! It may prove to be the difference between finishing and not finishing. For most of us, though, I suppose it could mean the difference between sputtering across the finish line exhausted and jaded, and finishing (as was said in *Chariots of Fire*) with "hope in our hearts and wings on our heels."

J. Robert Clinton further expounds on this and describes a legacy as the "Ultimate Contribution."

An *ultimate contribution* is a lasting legacy of a Christian worker for which he or she is remembered and which furthers the cause of Christianity by one or more of the following: setting standards for life and ministry, impacting lives by enfolded them in God's kingdom or developing them once in the kingdom, serving as a stimulus for change which betters the world, leaving behind an organization, institution, or movement that will further channel God's work, the discovery of ideas, communication of them, or promotion of them so that they further God's work.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ J. Robert Clinton, Definition—Ultimate Contribution, <http://bobbyclinton.com/?p=6>, (accessed December 18, 2009).

The literature review broadened the researcher's perspective about the importance of a legacy over the course of a leader's lifetime. Leaving a legacy is another component of leadership succession. The experiences and expertise of preceding generations are available and passed on as institutional memory to succeeding generations.

Summary of Literature Review

In summary, the literature review considered the nature and nomenclature of the independent church movement. The literary review revealed multiple reasons for the emergence of independent churches including, but not limited to, the conflict of modernism and the inundation of a secular culture. Although the research did not establish a definite link between the earlier movements and the emerging ones of today, those in leadership still have to consider their emergence as a backlash of not meeting the spiritual needs of its community and culture.

The focus of this project is leadership succession and how to reach the next generation with the gospel. In order to do this churches need to remain mission and message minded. Churches need to take part in the ecumenical mission and proclaim an evangelical message (Matt. 28:19-20, 1 Cor. 15:1-5).

Kingdom expansion and evangelism go hand-in-hand; the mission and the message are intertwined. Reaching the next generation and thus achieving a positive succession is through evangelism. Churches are likely to succeed when they are in a right relationship with God. This means doing what He expects His churches to do.

Churches must also be concerned about and take a proactive approach toward preparing their constituency for leadership succession. The literary review confirmed the

need for those currently in leadership to create the opportunity and have a willingness to commission others in the task. In so doing, those in leadership delegate some of their responsibilities and tasks to others.

Providing a practical environment and the capacity for others to emerge into leadership positions contributes to the longevity of the church. Nothing is static, transformed leaders are those that have the best interests of their churches and organizations in mind and plan for eventual leadership changes.

In conclusion, the researcher found that a good leadership succession is enhanced through preparation and planning for transitions. Good transitions do not happen by chance. A good transition allows for the exchange of ideas along with the experience and expertise of the predecessor passed on to his or her successors. Churches are more likely to experience good leadership transitions when they have prepared and planned for them. Good leadership transitions can contribute to good leadership successions. Healthy churches are those that prepare for changes and leave nothing for chance. They do not fear failure and because they are empowered by an entrepreneurial spirit will take risks and come out of their traditions and comfort zones.

The theology and literature reviews have prepared the researcher for practical aspects of the project. The research has produced other categories, themes, ideas, phrases and keywords that relate to leadership succession. These categories will be beginning starter codes incorporated in the research instruments.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Implementation

The project began with an astute awareness of the need for a strategic plan for leadership succession. In particular, how are small independent churches able to succeed in reaching the next generation? While the subject of leadership is well-informed, there is a lack of information about leadership succession. In order for churches to succeed in reaching the next generation for Christ, they must give more than a passing glance to training future leaders. How well they do in reaching the next generation depends on how well they have prepared for it.

In the theology section, the researcher looked at commentaries, journal articles and the Bible's perspective of leadership succession. The Scriptures contained numerous examples from both Testaments. Additionally, the literature research addressed other related subjects such as leadership transience, turnover, character, development and transitions.

In order to begin the research, it was necessary to construct research instruments for interviews and to select churches. The construction of questionnaires required careful thought and needed preliminary tryouts. This process allowed the researcher to consider better questions and omit ambiguous ones. The researcher also requested doctrinal

statements, mission statements, constitutions and other documents which helped inform and facilitate the research. The researcher pursued the project with a passion to stimulate others to take a proactive approach to leadership succession. It was necessary to make a compelling case to fellow pastors who in turn would advance the research. The researcher sees this as a work in progress and plans to construct a presentation that will persuade churches to take a proactive approach toward leadership succession.

The research consisted of a multiple case study of four independent churches with grounded theory as the methodology. Grounded theory was best suited for this project and allowed the researcher to be grounded in the data gathered at the respective sites.¹ In looking for prospective churches, the researcher noted that he did not find any within his vicinity that had a strategic plan in place or even had considered leadership succession. A reason for this may lie with the negative perception of such a topic—no one really wants to address transience.

However, the subject is not unique; the researcher did locate several churches on the internet that were in the process of developing a plan for leadership succession. The researcher notes that this is the exception and not the norm. Moreover, none of these churches wanted to participate in the project as they were still in the process of formulating a plan and respectfully declined to discuss their progress and process at that point.

¹ Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research*, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, 2005), 140.

Qualitative Research

The researcher considered the advantages and disadvantages of the qualitative and quantitative research designs and decided that the qualitative approach would better suit the project. The decision to choose a qualitative methodology and grounded theory was the nature of the research and subject matter.² The research was not a hypothesis to be tested, but rather a series of complex questions in need of findings.³

The importance of empirical data was a consideration; however, the subject matter was more in-line with qualitative methods. A multiple case study required information and data from key informants at their locations. Any empirical data from a quantitative perspective was available from a previous study done by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.⁴ The Hartford Institute for Religious Research has posted results of their research which has provided the project with a general profile of nondenominational churches.

A major challenge in gathering data was separating useful information from biased conjecture. This task was difficult and required the researcher to examine his own presuppositions and assumptions prior to interpreting the data.

The methodology provided suitable environments for field based activities. Creswell defines a case study as an exploration of a “bounded system” or a case (or

² Leedy, 94.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Scott Thumma, “What God Makes Free is Free Indeed: Nondenominational Church Identity and its Networks of Support”, http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article5.html, (accessed October 14, 2009).

multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context.

In choosing a case study, several items needed consideration. The primary considerations were how many churches to include in the study and the boundaries of the project. In considering the boundaries, the researcher had to consider the time for the interviews and certain anonymity concerns of the informants. In finalizing the boundaries, a case study consisting of four churches was within the original time constraints outlined in the project proposal.

Design of Questionnaires

The researcher arranged for several preliminary interviews with pastors within the researcher's area. After these interviews, the researcher rephrased and modified some of the questions until he felt confident that he had constructed the right questions for the research.

The researcher constructed two types of research instruments. The first type was for onsite interviews with the key informants at their respective locations (Appendix A). The questionnaire contained a brief introductory paragraph that gave a general overview of the interview. The questions were in three segments. The first segment pertained to the informant's calling and educational background. The second group of questions considered the key informant's philosophy and theology of ministry. These questions also revealed the interviewee's philosophy and theology about the advantages and disadvantages of an independent church. Included within the interviewee's philosophy and theology were how he or she felt about leadership succession and authority. In the

second group, the questions were essay type and were voice recorded for transcription. In the last part, the questions pertained to the informants' church. These questions explored the church's policy on leadership succession. The questions were both open-ended and closed. Some of the open-ended type allowed for short essays. The idea was to create a constructive setting which would provide the stimulus for other questions not previously addressed. This strategy positively affected the interview and provided additional information.

The second research instrument was an on-line survey (Appendix B). The purpose of the on-line survey was to expand the research beyond the formal interviews to obtain additional data. The researcher sought to utilize the church website and requested the web master to post the survey on line. The survey included a general introductory paragraph. The survey contained three sections. The first two sections were concerned with leadership succession and leadership development respectively. These questions were short essay and contained some closed numerical rankings. The last section investigated leadership structure, worship services and music. These questions were simple preference type and closed. The primary focus of this survey was leadership succession, and secondarily for discerning the church's preferences for organizational structure and worship services.

The Selection of Churches

The criterion for the selection of churches was a weekly attendance between twenty-five and one-hundred people. Smaller congregations were chosen because those of this size would have a smaller governing body and more likely only one pastor. Thus,

the selection was based on the need. While every church needs reserve leadership, larger churches can respond easier to an unexpected crisis. In the event of a sudden leadership crisis, a church with one pastor faces an immediate need. Although all churches should have a contingency plan in place it is vital that smaller churches do.

The researcher contacted the prospective informants a week prior to the interview. Additionally, he reviewed the church's websites to prepare for the interview. This was helpful and provided information about the church's doctrinal beliefs and theologies.

Case Studies

Open Bible Baptist Church: Brooklyn, Connecticut

Open Bible Baptist Church (OBBC) was founded in 1998 and held its first service in April of that year at a local firehouse. Pastor Ricky Davis was called after a short pastorate in Georgia which he described as his Macedonian experience similar to that in Acts 16. He described this phenomenon as a "pioneering spirit."

Having learned of a couple who wanted a good Bible preaching church in their area, Ricky and Cindy Davis and family traveled up from Georgia in September of 1997 to survey the Plainfield area. The purpose was to see if there was indeed a need for such a church. Throughout the time spent in Plainfield, both Rick and Cindy knew that God was indeed calling them to Connecticut to start Open Bible Baptist Church. March 21, 1998 found them headed north with all their belongings in order to see this accomplished. The first services were held on April 11, 1998 at the Atwood Fire Hose Station in Wauregan, CT. However, the facilities were costly, so the Lord led us to rent two rooms at Quinebaug Valley Family and Children's Services building in the fall of that year.⁵

The church later entered into a lease agreement with the Brooklyn Grange with an option to buy. That same year the church purchased the building and continues to succeed by

⁵ Open Bible Baptist Church, "History of Our Church"
<http://openbiblebaptistbrooklynct.com/gpage7.html> (accessed November 17, 2010).

reaching out to the community with the gospel and supporting missions near and far.

When asked about the advantages of an independent church, Pastor Rick replied:

It is not governed by a religious hierarchy or home office. That in itself makes it autonomous: which is the type of churches that were established in the New Testament. Such a church has a voice in how its business is conducted; what missionaries and mission boards or agencies it chooses to support; how its officers and teachers are selected and called to office along with the length of service if applicable (i.e. how long a man may serve as a deacon or officer before he rotates out); establishing its own Constitution and Statement of Faith based on the authority of Scripture and not a religious organization; and the ability to freely preach and teach the Word of God as led by the Holy Spirit, not directed by a religious book written by the hierarchy of the Church.⁶

Pastor Davis emphasized that the primary advantages of independent churches are having the ability to worship freely and to teach the Scriptures. He also looks forward to remaining viable for the next generation. “In 1998, God established Open Bible Baptist Church as a lighthouse to this area. By God’s grace we pray that it will remain so for many decades to come.”⁷ This quote from the church’s website shows that Pastor Davis is planning to reach the next generation for Christ. Thus, the need for a strategic plan to do so is in order.

When asked about his philosophy of leadership succession, Pastor Davis felt that new leadership could come from both outside and internal sources. Davis described some of the obstacles to leadership succession: “Differences in goals or expectations . . . new leaders wanting to make too many changes too quickly.”⁸ He described some factors that

⁶ Rick Davis, interview by author, Moosup, CT, September 21, 2010.

⁷ Open Bible Baptist Church, “History of Our Church” <http://openbiblebaptistbrooklynct.com/gpage7.html> (accessed November 17, 2010).

⁸ Rick Davis, interview by author, Moosup, CT, September 21, 2010.

contribute to a positive leadership succession, “The successor should be like-minded in his doctrine, his desire, and his direction as the person he is succeeding.”⁹

Pastor Davis’s outlook for leadership succession suggests multiple time related factors and considerations. It takes much time to find, evaluate, mentor and disciple a like-minded successor. To be like-minded in doctrine, desire and direction requires an intimate relationship that develops over time. When this relationship comes to fruition, a like-minded successor has been shaped. In order to reach the next generation, mentoring relationships between a senior and an associate, such as Paul and Timothy, are crucial.

OBBC is still in its formative state and young in comparison with many of the churches in New England. The church is currently doing well, guided by a pastor with a love of the Scriptures and a heart for God. Leadership succession is certainly relevant in this church. Even though it is doing well, circumstances and time change things. Every church needs to plan for the eventual turnover of leadership. Although this is a consideration for all churches, it is the smaller churches that must consider leadership succession in some situations for their very survival.

Norwich Worship Center: Norwich, Connecticut

Church records show that the Norwich Worship Center (NWC) formally incorporated as a church in 1978. After building up churches in Kansas and Nebraska, Pastor Michael Maixner was led by the Lord to relocate to Norwich, Connecticut in 1979. Pastor Maixner was the first full-time pastor of the NWC and faithfully led the fellowship

⁹ Ibid.

for 20 years.¹⁰ In May of 1999, Pastor Maixner passed on the role of senior pastor to Jeff Sharp.

Pastor Jeff Sharp has been pastor at Norwich Worship Center (NWC) since May 16, 1999. Pastor Jeff came to NWC in August of 1987 in the position of youth minister and never left. He has also served the church as a missionary, mission's director and associate pastor. Pastor Jeff had the privilege of working alongside his predecessor and mentor for twelve of those years.

The church believes that its leadership needs are met within the church.¹¹ The focus on the uniqueness of the individual is a distinctive characteristic of NWC. The church has provided an environment for believers to discover and develop their spiritual gifts for ministry. During the course of this study, the researcher has noticed that Christian churches have certain aspects that make them alike and some that make them uniquely different.

We believe that the Bible points out the uniqueness of each individual, and that each individual has a unique gift to bring to and offer to the church fellowship. We look forward to your joining with us and bringing your gift of ministry to the body here at Norwich Worship Center.¹²

When asked about leadership succession Pastor Sharp replied, "Leadership succession is from within; in-ministry training. Although not completely addressed in the New

¹⁰ Norwich Worship Center, <http://norwichworshipcenter.com/cgi-bin/gx.cgi/AppLogic+FTContentServer?pagename=FaithHighway/10000/6000/454NO/faq> (accessed October 13, 2010).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Norwich Worship Center, <http://norwichworshipcenter.com/cgi-bin/gx.cgi/AppLogic+FTContentServer?pagename=FaithHighway/10000/6000/454NO/faq> (accessed October 13, 2010).

Testament, establishment and succession came from within. Train up others from within the church (2 Tim. 2:2). Leadership is brought up within the local church.”¹³

In answering the question about what factors can contribute to a positive leadership succession, Pastor Sharp responded by sharing his own experience: “The positive was the public transference in front of the congregation where the mantle was passed in a formal ceremony. Symbolic was the elements of the prayer shawl and staff.”¹⁴ The researcher notes that this event made an indelible impact on the succeeding pastor by reminding him of the shoes he was going to fill and, more importantly, who he represents.

Pastor Sharp is actively involved in several community outreaches. He is also the co-coordinating Police Chaplain for the Norwich Police Department. NPD Chaplains serve and support police personnel as well as provide services to the community. “One of life's greatest pleasures is the opportunity to meet new people and cultivate lasting friendships. That's especially true in a growing church like ours, so we never take lightly the people that God brings across our path.”¹⁵

Home Group Ministries (HGM) is a ministry that the church uses to promote fellowship. HGM is also a strategy that the church uses to meet new people and cultivate lasting friendships. Through this ministry, the church is able to reach out to the community with the gospel and make church fellowship attractive. The researcher adds that the burden for making church fellowship attractive falls on the church. The church must create an environment that is attractive to the culture and church community.

¹³ Jeff Sharp, interview by author, Norwich, CT, October 13, 2010.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

The research shows that church seekers are looking for genuine relationships with God and meaningful fellowship within the church. HGM is a means of creating the opportunity for fellowship:

Norwich Worship Center Home Group Ministries is in transition. We are looking for homes for Bible studies to meet on a weekly basis that can discuss the Sunday sermon, and other topics of interest. The goal is fellowship and growing into a Christian family relationship with one another. The intent of the groups is that everyone at Norwich Worship Center will be involved in a home group and as folks join the fellowship at Norwich Worship Center that the home groups would allow for a smooth transition into the fellowship.¹⁶

The Shackles Dance Team is another way the church reaches out to its community with the gospel.

Shackles is a dance team that goes out to different events and churches to spread the good news about Jesus. We have 2 Songs we dance to right now. We are currently working on a third. The first one is “Shackles” by Mary which is more of a hip hop song. Second is “Glorious” by Martha Munizzi a Latin, more of a worship dance. Shackles our name comes from the first song by Mary Mary. We need to continually break those shackles/chains that keep us bound, understanding that God has set us free from all that. Also, people who don't know our Savior, we fight for them and let them know the truth. As a dance team, we go out to take back what the devil has stolen from the people of God. And we have fun doing it!¹⁷

Through dance, NWC is able to communicate the gospel by using visuals and dramas that have an effect and make an impact on its community. A distinctive characteristic of NWC is worship.

The researcher notes that even though this church does not have a formal plan for leadership succession it has followed biblical examples and principles. It has succeeded in its first transfer of leadership and implemented a well-processed transition. Pastor

¹⁶ Norwich Worship Center, <http://norwichworshipcenter.com/cgi-bin/gx.cgi/AppLogic+FTContentServer?pagename=FaithHighway/10000/6000/454NO/ministry6> (accessed October 13, 2010).

¹⁷ Ibid.

Sharp's predecessor is available and assists him when needed. The church in following biblical principles has prepared for its leadership changes and transitions.

Preston City Bible Church: Preston Connecticut

The Preston City Bible Church (PCBC) was established in 1812 as the Preston City Baptist Church. This church has a long history in the Town of Preston and its building is designated an historical site. The church's web site contains a well-defined doctrinal statement that states its leadership perspectives:

We believe that the local church is the pillar and ground for all church age doctrines (I Timothy 3:15). The local church is a body of called out believers in Christ who assemble for teaching and fellowship with God which consists in prayer and the Lord's Table (Acts 2:42). The local church is to protect the Word of God through sound Bible based teaching. The local church is also the base from which missionaries are sent forth to teach the gospel. . . . We believe the Bible teaches that the offices of Pastor-Teacher and Deacons are to be filled by males only. We do not believe in females holding the position of pastor or deacon. Any other office in the church may be held by an appointed man or woman.¹⁸

The above text from the church's website defines its distinctive focus on communion and fellowship with "sound Bible based teaching." This statement explicitly spells out the church's leadership beliefs. Although the positions of pastor-teacher and deacons are restrictive, the church is inclusive with other positions by appointments. This indicates the church primarily relies on its own homegrown leadership.

The above reference to "sending missionaries to teach the gospel," shows that the church is evangelical which is typical in Bible-believing churches. The researcher notes that churches, like people, have similar characteristics and distinctive qualities. New leadership must fit the doctrinal criteria and distinctive qualities.

¹⁸ Preston City Bible Church, Doctrinal Statement, <http://prestoncitybible.org/docstatement.php> (accessed November 30, 2010).

Here the common aspect is the teaching and preaching of the gospel (Matt.4:23, Mark 9:35, Acts 15:35). What Bible-believing churches primarily have in common is the mandate to go and teach and preach the gospel to all creation. Their distinctiveness is how they go about fulfilling their part in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

The distinctive elements include how the church conducts its worship services and goes about its business. The following quotation from the PCBC website shows that leadership is through pastoral appointments.

The moderator of all business meetings will be the chairman of the Board of Deacons. The head of the Board is the Pastor-Teacher and he appoints deacons as the congregation makes known their candidates. He seeks to appoint men of integrity and who are trustworthy based upon their past performance, attendance in prayer and Bible classes, enthusiasm about the ministry and reputation among the congregation members. The Pastor-Teacher shall work with the Deacons in the decision-making processes required to keep the ministry operating.¹⁹

The criteria for leadership in the diaconate are men who display good character and conduct in the church and meet the requirements for leadership. This is consistent with the apostle's teachings in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:10-16). The above quotation shows that concern for teaching doctrine is a distinctive feature of this church. Bible study is a trademark of this church, which is exemplified by a sign on the front lawn displaying Hebrews 4:12.

Pastor David Roseland reflected on his calling and call to PCBC as “the Lord putting His people where He wants them.” Pastor Roseland graduated from the Military Academy at West Point and was commissioned as an Army officer. In the beginning of the interview, Pastor Roseland provided the researcher with a brief description of his calling to ministry and to PCBC:

¹⁹ Ibid.

I identified that I was gifted as a pastor in that formative time when I was deciding what I was going to do with my life. Ministry is kind of where my interests were. This began a process where I was saying okay is that what God wants me to be, is this what God wants me to do? I identified my calling in part by desire. It was what I wanted first. I sought council from pastors and mentors and it became more and more obvious this is where I was supposed to be. And so I considered everything else as training in this direction.²⁰

After completing his military obligations, Captain Roseland left the Army and pursued a Master of Theology degree at Dallas Theological Seminary. Pastor Roseland described his calling to PCBC as the result of his friendship with his predecessor, “The call to this church, that was networking.”²¹ Pastor Roseland’s connection to PCBC began through his home church in Texas. Both he and his predecessor had family in the same church. Pastor Roseland briefly described the situation: “West Point was three hours away and so I would come to see him . . . When he had to go back home and he was looking for his replacement I was just starting seminary.” Pastor Roseland summarized his calling to PCBC: “You have seen our doctrinal statement, the church was looking for someone who doctrinally aligns and was trained by leaders who were of similar mindset to its pastor.”²² Pastor Roseland’s theology of leadership succession:

I would say the most important factor is making disciples by teaching them as Jesus taught His disciples, who then lead others to follow Christ. Our church's ecclesiology puts the person with the gift we have observed in the position where he can use it. We put someone with a gift of leadership in a leadership position of responsibility. The spiritual growth principle is: you grow into what you are. That growth through teaching is the most important factor in developing leaders. And if you do that, you do not have to scheme and maneuver to make leaders; there is your next pastor. I am also intent on developing a strong enough core for the next round of leading.²³

²⁰ David Roseland, interview by author, Lisbon, CT., October 25, 2010.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

Pastor Roseland's supposition reflects that of the researcher's biblical and literature review. Leadership succession comes through spiritual development. Churches need to create the capacity for disciples to discover and develop their spiritual gifts for ministry.

Pastor Roseland briefly described his personal views about leadership training:

The man charts his course and God directs the steps so we do plan but our plans are contingent on the Lord's will. So we are always training our replacement, I believe, two generations deep or more if possible. The people I am training now, for instance, I give them everything I got at Dallas Theological Seminary. Seminary is not about us being smart; it is about equipping other people. My bullpen (Pool of pulpit suppliers in the church) that I am working with . . . my associate pastor for example, he is a seminary student and my number one intern; there is always a contingency. My associate could take over and do a fine job. He is always there if needed.²⁴

Pastor David's response to leadership shows that he believes he should take a proactive approach in leadership training, but he also believes that God is the final authority in church leadership matters. Stating that he believes training should go two generations deep shows his consideration for leadership succession. However, he is also fully confident that his associate could lead if required to.

North Stonington Bible Church: North Stonington, Connecticut

The North Stonington Bible Church (NSBC) is an independent Bible-believing church that began in 1978. The church is located in North Stonington, a town in eastern Connecticut. NSBC is expanding and recently the church celebrated a groundbreaking ceremony on its current location. This building project will accommodate more people and expand the church's ministry.

²⁴ Ibid.

Pastor Larry Chappell described most of the church's history with his own calling. "Was I called to be the pastor? Well, in a sense. I would rather say from the moment of salvation I was gifted to be a teacher."²⁵ From this quote, Pastor Chappell chronicled his spiritual journey and his life at NSBC.

Pastor Larry's calling was part of his secular vocation. He taught school for thirty-two years in the North Stonington School system. In his vocation, he developed his teaching gift and became proficient using it to teach at his church. Pastor Chappell in describing his calling began with his own testimony:

"Was I called to be the pastor? Well, in a sense . . . When we became a Church here in 1978, I was very involved. My dad was a pastor; I was very involved in all the internal workings of the church helping him even though at that point I wasn't even a deacon. I was doing a deacon's job. I was doing everything I could possibly do to relieve him of having to do everything but pray and study the Word. And so, somewhere along the line from 1978, I was helping out in all areas of the ministry. Then I became a deacon and then eventually I became an elder, we are elder ruled here, a plurality of elders. I became an elder and got very involved in the internal works of the church on an elder's level. And then, quite a ways back . . . almost right from the very beginning about thirty years ago, over thirty years ago, I was teaching when my dad would go on vacation."²⁶

Pastor Chappell's testimony shows that he was best able to identify his spiritual gifts for ministry in his secular vocation and then fully develop them in a church context.

Although the church is a place of worship and fellowship, it can be a laboratory and a place where believers can become proficient in discovering and developing their spiritual giftedness.

²⁵ Larry Chappell, interview by author, North Stonington, CT, November 18, 2010.

²⁶ Ibid.

During the interview, Pastor Chappell shared how he filled in for his father pastor, James Chappell, the church's first pastor. He described a turn of events, brought on by the terminal illness of his father:

“In 2005, my dad was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. . . . It was evident that my dad was very sick . . . and so I, and my wife, had been praying two to three to four years before this, that whenever we should stop teaching in the public school system and support my dad more fully (even before he got sick he was very heavily burdened). He needed help here so we had been praying that God would give us clear direction [and if necessary] stop teaching in the public school system, and help here. . . . In January 2006, my wife and I made the decision. I would stop teaching in the public school system at the end of the year in 2006. . . . So in January in 2006 at an elders meeting, I told the elders that I was willing to stop teaching at school and be here to help full-time. Well immediately, the elder board said that is what we have been praying for about two months and we have been waiting for you to tell us.”²⁷

During the interview, Pastor Chappell described another important subject, the transition of leadership:

The elder board had voted me as pastor in January 2008. . . . It was such a smooth transition that nothing really changed; we had already been functioning like this for many, many years. . . . I was already part of the leadership team being an elder, and when it finally happened, it was as if the heartbeat of the church never changed. It just went ba-bump, ba-bump, ba-bump, ba-bump from one day to the next day, from one month to the next month, and we transitioned from my father to me and the announcement was made that the elders had voted that I would be pastor.²⁸

Pastor Chappell later remarked that the transition was “seamless.” In reflecting on such a flawless transition, it does not just happen by chance, but rather through long tenure and process.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

Discipleship Process

Pastor Chappell shared some of his thoughts about how parachurch organizations such as seminaries can contribute to the discipleship process:

“In our situation here, the way para-churches or seminaries can contribute is with the languages; if a man is going to get into the Greek and Hebrew and be trained, we need seminary involvement in that. . . . I will say that as far as biblically equipping the man accurately in the Word of God, we are taking care of that internally in two ways, [the preaching] through the ministry of the pulpit that goes out to the entire congregation and then we offer a curriculum that is called BTCP it’s Bible Training Center for Pastors.”

Pastor Chappell accentuated the fact that he preaches the Word from the pulpit and challenges those in the congregation with “ears to hear” to respond to the Word (2 Tim. 2:2). He believes that this Scripture is paramount to the succession of the church. Those who respond and demonstrate evidence of their calling in ministry have the opportunity to enter Bible training through a ten-course curriculum designed at BTCP. The pastor and the elders provide opportunities for those in the congregation to get into the ministry. The researcher agrees that this proactive approach is necessary for leadership succession. This practice creates the capacity for future leadership. For this to happen there needs to be a mutual willingness between members of the congregation to step up and elders willing to let them. This is the case at NSBC.

Coding the Data

The coding of data involves looking over the raw data gathered from the interviews and surveys and marking up obvious categories. The constant review and comparison of data in reference to categories allows the researcher to find other codes and nodes that link and show a relationship to the data.

The researcher followed the suggested principles for grounded theory used in qualitative data research. The purpose was to derive a theory from the data collected in a natural setting.²⁹ A systematic approach of reading the raw data and then organizing it for classification of categories and derived meanings was followed.³⁰ This procedure was necessary to scrutinize the data and offer a consensus from it.

The coding of the data is a part of the process. Coding the data involves constant reviewing of the data searching for new categories, the emergence of patterns and ideas, emerging themes, new topics, phrases, terms, and keywords, which are marked for later analysis and comparisons. The researcher began the process of open coding by reading and reflecting on the entire text. In axial coding, the second stage, the researcher looked for connections and relationships between the categories. Here the researcher looked to select codes that best fit the categories. To become familiar with the interactive coding process the researcher observed a few You Tube presentations.

The researcher utilized WEFTQDA, an open-source software tool in order to organize and process the data gathered from the on-site interviews and on-line surveys. This program enabled the researcher to codify and interpret the raw data to describe the findings in the project report.

The analysis of the data began with the first of the data gathered from the interviews.³¹ The researcher perused the raw data looking for emerging themes and codes.³² As a novice, the researcher had to seek online instruction in qualitative data

²⁹ Leedy, 144.

³⁰ Ibid., 151.

³¹ William Myers, *Research in Ministry* (Chicago: Exploration Plus, 2002),70.

³² Leedy,151.

grounded theory applications.³³ This process allowed the researcher to become absorbed quickly in the data. Other data gathered during the research came from church constitutions, doctrinal statements, websites and interviews with informants.

The researcher began the process by first identifying the category codes. These category codes began to emerge during the theological and literature reviews. The category or starter codes are key terms contained within the questionnaires and research instruments. In analyzing the data, the researcher observed the responses and linked the category codes with their derivatives or nodal codes. These nodal codes formed the basis for finding patterns and emerging themes. The software has the capacity to allow for instant retrievals and comparative analysis of the data.

The purpose behind such an approach was to ascertain what the researcher would discover in the data, aside from any of his previous presuppositions and biases. Instead, this approach allowed the researcher to look objectively, for new ideas and emerging themes. Thus, the researcher was able to focus better on the in-coming data and identify what it was saying instead of what the researcher may have wanted it to.

The coding process for the interviews was as follows: the researcher voice recorded the interviews and inserted the transcriptions into the WEFTQDA program and began the coding. The researcher assigned a combined 122 codes and nodes to the research interviews and 66 to the online surveys.

³³ Graham R. Gibbs, Celia Taylor, Online QDA. http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk/Intro_QDA/how_what_to_code.php, (accessed October 7, 2010).

Coding Applications

The researcher applied the coding in two ways. He first combined all the interviews, coded them, and then did this again by church. The researcher intermittently coded the online surveys and reviewed them through the time of the project.

CHAPTER FIVE: PROJECT ANALYSIS

Research Findings

Although leadership succession is a major concern for all churches, the independent and non-denominational churches face a greater challenge. Independent churches lack the support of a parent denomination. All of those interviewed in the case study readily acknowledged this disadvantage. On the opposite side, the advantages far outweighed the disadvantages. The researcher asked the interviewees about their preferences for independent churches. The number one response was “there is freedom from denomination hierarchy.”¹ It is uncertain exactly what this means. It may be a perception, or a repudiation of traditional denominational polity and policy.

Nevertheless, the independent church movement is still a phenomenon, which has not reached its peak. The researcher attended various independent churches and confirmed his initial hypothesis; people attend independent churches for a sense of freedom from traditional churches. They also are drawn toward the freedom to express themselves and relational experience in worship.

The researcher’s interest in reviewing independent churches was for familiarization in understanding these churches in relation to leadership succession. While the number of independent churches appears to be rising, they still must develop new leadership and take a proactive approach to leadership succession. Good leadership

¹ David Roseland, interview by author, Lisbon, CT, October 25, 2010.

succession does not stand alone, nor does it happen by chance; it is dependent on a well-planned transition.

The data gathered during the research shows that none of the churches in this study is in immediate danger or lacking leadership. However, the research shows that there is little regard for pre-planning for leadership succession. Although three of the churches in this study have made a succession, the research shows a tendency to defer. A reason for this aloofness may be a lack of consideration given to it in seminaries and Bible colleges.

The researcher asked the interviewees about their past seminary courses and experiences with leadership succession. None could remember if leadership succession was included in their course curriculums. Additionally, none of the interviewees recalled attending a seminar or conference on the subject. It is presumptuous for the researcher to assume that Christian centers of learning have a complete disregard for the subject. However, the subject appears to lack status in Christian education.

Another finding is that none of the interviewees has brought up leadership succession with his church. During the literature review, the researcher discovered that in many churches leadership succession is the “elephant in the boardroom,” a big subject that no one really wants to talk about. Yet the Bible shows how the Lord Jesus chose and prepared His apostles to succeed in the mission. The Lord took a proactive approach to leadership succession. The Apostle Peter’s initial response was to resist and to defer their readiness to assume leadership (Matt.16:13-21). If the Lord did not leave such a subject to chance, then neither should any of His churches.

Because three of the interviewees are from churches that have gone through leadership successions, the case for taking a proactive approach may seem a moot point. Thus, a passive approach, defer until necessary, may have some standing. However, the questions still stand, how well have they succeeded? How can independent community churches succeed and reach the next generation?

The theology and literature reviews along with the research all underscore the need to follow the apostolic principles for leadership succession. The Apostle Paul in his letter to Timothy directly focuses on leadership succession. The epistle suggests that pastors take a proactive approach by reproducing new leadership (2 Tim. 2:2). The focus is on apostolic instruction, personal character and teaching others to replicate the cycle.

Project Interviews

The literary review provided a basis for reproducing new leadership. Leadership must be reproductive and produce new leaders who are capable of performing leadership tasks. One way this is possible is to create the capacity for future leaders to discover and develop their spiritual gifts for ministry. This involves providing the opportunities for those in the congregation to take part in the functions of the church. It is by participating in the functions of the church that disciples demonstrate their calling and identify their spiritual gifts.

The research questions primarily pertain to leadership succession in an independent church (Appendix A). Other questions include the interviewee's theology of leadership and how to create the capacity in the church for leadership? How can parachurch organizations such as seminaries and Bible colleges contribute to leadership

development in the church? What are some of the factors that may contribute to leadership succession? What are some factors that may aid in leadership transitions?

Theology of Leadership Succession

A church's theology includes at least two statements; a statement on its moral views and a mission statement on how it fulfills its purpose in ministry. In addition, the Scriptures must be the source for both of these statements. The researcher asked the interviewees their perspectives on leadership succession as informed by the Scriptures.

The interviewee's scriptural basis for a theology of leadership succession was the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). All the interviewees indicated their motivation for missions came from this text. While the Scripture is clear about what disciples are to do in fulfilling the mission, little is said about how. This is left for the disciples, who must discern how to fulfill their part.

One response to a theology of leadership succession was that the Great Commission "did not pertain exclusively to those in leadership." The responder stated "every believer must take his part."¹ All of the codes, nodes, phrases and words for a theology of leadership succession refer to some form of training, and one in particular "establishment is from within."² Another response is "Scripture to recognize within." Another node "brought up within" suggests frequent evaluation of the progress of those in the congregation. These codes also make the case for pastors and churches to initiate a proactive approach to leadership development.

¹ Rick Davis, interview by author, Moosup, CT, September 22, 2010.

² Jeffrey Sharp, interview by author, Norwich, CT, October 13, 2010.

Pastor Larry Chappell of North Stonington Bible Church stated that his theology for leadership comes from Paul's letter to Timothy:

“This is something that we have been well taught here through the years and the people in the church know this is important . . . , The men in the church know that they are potentially being trained from the pulpit so that church is not just church. You're coming to church for the equipping of the ministry and so we seriously teach the Word of God here, it's not three poems and a song and you're out the door; it's lets open our Bibles tonight to . . . and dig into the Word and here is the mindset behind this, Paul in 2 Timothy 2:15”³

Pastor Chappell emphasized the necessity to prepare congregation members for ministry through personal training. He believes that it is in the local church that disciples become equipped for ministry. He also stressed the importance for disciples to be well grounded in the truth of Scripture:

“Paul placed a heavy emphasis on preparing men who could teach and rightly divide the Word of God. And therein lies the, probably well-hidden, secret of why churches do not have good succession of leadership because this training is not going on internally, and going on in the church today. A lot of times you go to a church today and a lot of times it's a good feel good social club message. And it's not a serious, it's not a serious study of the Word of God. Because as it says in Ephesians 4, which I already alluded to in talking about the gifts. And He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and some pastor teacher for the purpose of why these gifts were given for the gift of ministry, equipping the saints for the work of ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ until we come to the unity of the faith.”⁴

Pastor Chappell talked a lot about spiritual gifts and equipping the believers for ministry.

The levels of leadership are another code/node, which the researcher assigned to a theology of leadership. Here Pastor Chappell was referring to the processing and emerging of future leadership. He often referred to the governing body consisting of

³ Larry Chappell, interview by author, North Stonington, CT, November 18, 2010.

⁴ Ibid.

elders and deacons. “I feel, that the Bible teaches elders should rule, a plurality of elders.”⁵

Obstacles to Leadership Succession

The research included some of the perceived obstacles to leadership. Two obstacles to leadership included impulsiveness—just make it happen to make it happen. A second similar act of interfering with the progress and the process—getting in the Holy Spirit’s way is detrimental to leadership.⁶ Pastor Ricky Davis of Open Bible Baptist Church offered his perspectives both pro and con. On the positive side: “The successor should be like-minded in his doctrine, his desire, and his direction as the person he is succeeding.”⁷ “The negative is not having the willingness or following the qualifications in Timothy and Titus.”⁸ Pastor David Roseland defined several obstacles:

“I would say human maneuvering and intrigue. I have seen it and that makes sense to me, when we get a Peter mentality and start thinking for yourself, instead of according to the Scriptures. We are our own worse enemy, and we need to be yielded.”⁹

The researcher assigned two other codes/nodes from his field notes; a lack of vision and a passive approach to succession. God has enabled His servants to look and think ahead. The parable of the talents shows that God expects His servants to reproduce and loudly speaks against passivity. In the parable, God rewards the servants who reproduce and those who take risks. In today’s context, the servants must be

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Davis, interview.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ David Roseland. interview by author, Lisbon, CT, October 25, 2010.

entrepreneurial in spirit and have the courage to expand the mission. The Parable of the Talents teaches that it is only the passive servant unwilling to take a risk who is condemned, “So *I was afraid and went out and hid your talent* in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you” (Matt.25:25). [emphasis mine].

Creating the Capacity for Leadership

The literature review and data gathered in the research show the need for local churches to create the capacity for new leadership. The capacity for leadership includes such things as maximum ability, capability and facilities. To maximize in the church means to make the most and best effort. Churches that create the capacity for leadership provide the opportunity for them to emerge.

The research data provided specific details for creating the capacity for leadership. The code/nodes for capacity that was most significant was training and discipling was the second most significant code. Phrases with this code define it as providing training so disciples can develop. This suggests an environment for disciples to develop. Another phrasal node includes “Power in the Holy Spirit.”The codes and derivative nodes for capacity expanded the details further by adding, “Internalized in the hearts through the teaching of Scripture.”¹⁰ Another significant node was emphasis of spiritual development. All of the codes and derivative nodes point to the significance of taking a proactive approach to leadership succession by creating the capacity for it to happen.

¹⁰ Chappell, interview.

As previously stated, churches need leaders who are entrepreneurial in spirit and who are risk-takers in expanding their facilities and in providing opportunities to get people in the congregation out of their seats and into the ministry. Pastor Larry Chappell at NSBC is in the process of expanding the facilities of the church. The new church is bigger and the current building will be useful for ministry. Pastor Larry shared his thoughts in creating the capacity for leadership:

I think the capacity is created in the hearts of the congregation, and the men of the congregation through the teaching of the Word and emphasizing passages such as 2 Timothy 2:2 and to show them that this is why you are coming to church and this is what this is about. This is not a game; we are not just playing church here. This is development for future leadership that is what we are looking at, and so when they start to look at church as I'm here being developed to be used of the Lord in whatever way He has planned for me, church becomes a whole lot different. The environment, it becomes different, and people become more serious about the Word of God and what we are doing here.¹¹

Pastor Chappell believes that people respond to preaching, the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures (John 14:26, 16:8-11). He believes that once the Word takes root in the hearts and minds of people, it will generate a response. The transcribed interview shows that the pastor must emphasize passages that pertain to leadership development and ultimately leadership succession.

The researcher agrees with Pastor Chappell's beliefs that the pastor must preach the message and, from time to time, emphasize certain texts that challenge those in the congregation to get involved in the ministries of the church. However, it is the responsibility of the pastor and elders to exercise the patience and the willingness to provide latitude for disciples to become competent and proficient in the discovery and development of their spiritual gifts.

¹¹ Ibid.

Leadership should allow the disciples the freedom to identify their giftedness and discern what is not. It is important that the pastor and elders help disciples identify their giftedness and encourage them to utilize and develop their gifts more (2 Tim. 1:6). Identifying and discerning one's giftedness set is a two-fold process that anticipates success and failure. Clinton in *The Making of a Leader* simply refers to this as processing with a process item.¹² Failure is not a negative in this sense, but rather the means of becoming more mature and proficient in a particular skill or simply discerning what is not one's skill set.

Clinton views the emerging leader as unique and equipped with his or her own giftedness set:

Giftedness is a set, including natural abilities, acquired skills and spiritual gifts. Over the years, God refines an individual in the giftedness development pattern. This involves seeing the strengths of natural abilities and how they relate to ministry effectiveness. It involves identification and development of spiritual gifts, eventually recognizing a gift cluster and roles that will best enhance that gift-cluster. It also involves the acquisition of skills that enhance both natural abilities and spiritual gifts and that are needed in available ministries.¹³

The researcher sees this combination of giftedness as a dynamic equipping by God that needs processing over time. Pastors and elders are able to create the capacity for leadership by having the willingness and the patience in the process. One assumption of the researcher is that God has provided the resources for leadership succession.

¹² J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1989), 33.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 183.

Parachurch and Leadership Development

Parachurch organizations primarily are Christian-based institutions that provide support and resources to the Christian community. The Greek prefix “para” with “church” means “alongside the church.” Parachurch can also be national organizations like the Promise Keepers, Christianity Today a producer of periodicals, or international organizations such as Wycliffe Bible Translators. One well-known company is Christian Book Distributors located in Peabody Massachusetts a supplier of Christian resources.

The company’s website provides a brief history and the products they distribute:

“Christianbook.com is the online home of Christian Book Distributors, a company formed long before the Internet even began to take shape. The company was started in 1978 . . . By 1996 CBD had completely outgrown the site and built a new facility across the street, where it remains today. The facility is now 300,000 square feet, and we employ a staff of just over 500 . . . We are the largest catalog/Internet company serving the Christian marketplace, frequently cited as “the source” for Christian products.”¹⁴

CBD is the largest catalog/Internet company serving the Christian marketplace. The potential is wide-open for CBD and other like institutions to partner and network with churches or academic institutions. A networking link is possible between CBD, seminaries and churches.

The seminary is a parachurch organization whose primary purpose is to provide theological education and prepare Christians for ministry. The researcher’s interest in parachurch organizations pertains to how they may be useful in contributing to leadership in small local churches. The researcher believes that independent or small community churches can benefit in innumerable ways through parachurch organizations. During the

¹⁴ Christian Book Distributors, [http://www.christianbook.com/about us](http://www.christianbook.com/about-us) (accessed December 4, 2010).

interviews, the researcher asked, “How can parachurch organizations such as seminaries and Bible colleges contribute to leadership development?” Pastor Larry Chappell believes seminaries are helpful with academics, research skills and tools. He also sees parachurch organizations as useful for training in the local churches:

I would say primarily tools acquisition for the next round of leaders or the current round of leaders, they are there to get tools. Research skills, all the things you did as a seminary student, skills acquisition, seminary provides training in the church for evangelism. Another example is Child Evangelism Fellowship which provides training in child evangelism. Another is mission objectives for what we want and there are organizations that can accomplish those things. Cooperation with parachurch organizations can provide the knowledge and skills.¹⁵

The researcher sees cooperative networks established where one institution is supportive of another. Pastor David Roseland stated that seminaries are useful for training in languages and hermeneutics: “In our situation here, the way parachurches or seminaries can contribute is: we need help with the languages. If a man is going to be trained, he needs Greek and Hebrew. We need seminary involvement in that.”¹⁶ This supports the need for parachurch involvement in local churches. The use of networking is beneficial for leadership succession. During the interview, Pastor Roseland stated that his calling to PCBC was the result of networking. The codes for calling and leadership succession both have an axial link to networking. Another axial link code is partnering with parachurch organizations. The codes for leadership development also connect with networking and partnering. Training and other forms of it are some of the nodes that connect leadership development with parachurch involvement. Similarly, the training nodes are linked to networking and partnering.

¹⁵ Chappell, interview.

¹⁶ Roseland, interview.

Factors that Contribute to Leadership Succession

Much has been written about leadership which suggests that there are certain factors that can contribute to leadership. Although this is the case for leadership, little has been written about succession. The researcher looked for certain factors, both pro and con that can affect leadership succession. The researcher framed this question into two queries: What are some factors that can contribute positively to leadership succession? What are some of the obstacles to leadership succession?

The apostolic principles of evangelism in Ephesians 4:11-16 show how the replication process works in the church. Evangelism is making disciples and equipping them through education, edification, encouragement and empowerment. In the local church, disciples discover and develop their spiritual gifts. The church is where new disciples receive education and edification. It is in the church that these disciples should obtain encouragement and empowerment. The dynamic of leadership succession is in evangelism.

Good leadership succession depends upon certain components and variables. The determinants are the factors that cause or influence desired results. Besides the evangelism components above, what are some of the factors that can have a positive effect on leadership succession?

Pastor Ricky Davis believes that “the successor should be like-minded in his doctrine, his desire, and his direction as the person he is succeeding.”¹⁷ This suggests that a successor’s motivation should be similar to the predecessor’s. Leaders should be properly motivated and doctrine should be a factor that stimulates a vision and direction.

¹⁷ Davis, interview.

Pastor David Roseland's response was "It is a spiritual growth thing, you grow into what you are; that is the most important factor in developing leaders. I am also about developing a strong enough core for the next round of leading."¹⁸ Codes for these factors were "training disciples and leadership emerges." Providing an environment for in-ministry training and evaluation of disciples are phrasal codes associated with factors. Leaders evaluating the spiritual growth of their disciples are an important factor for leadership succession.

One negative factor that interferes with the discipleship process was impulsive leadership. Human maneuvering and operating according to the flesh are other responses coded with obstacles to leadership succession.

Leadership and Transitions

The primary purpose of the project was to understand leadership succession in small independent churches. A significant consideration was "What factors contribute to leadership successions and how can they happen?" The theological and the literary reviews have provided many examples of how congregations and churches succeed in reaching the next generation.

The research shows that leadership successions need pre-planning. The literature review and the research show that few churches take a proactive approach toward leadership transitions. Yet, transitions are a vital part of succession in churches. Several churches in this project have recently gone through leadership successions and shared their experiences regarding the transitions.

¹⁸ Roseland, interview.

Leadership Transitions the Key to Successions

Pastor Jeff Sharp of Norwich Worship Center described his transition to senior pastor as a positive one. He believes it was the result of the relationship he enjoyed with his predecessor. Pastor Jeff started out as the youth pastor and had twelve years of a mentoring relationship with his predecessor. This is in synchronization with the Bible record and the literary research, where the Lord Jesus “affirmed his predecessor, John the Baptist and chose His successors, the apostles.” Pastor Jeff was well prepared and ready to assume the pastorate. He reflected on the culmination of the process with the passing of the mantle and the prayer shawl and staff in ceremony in front of the entire congregation as something more than symbolic. The researcher sees this as an indelible act that reminds the successor and the congregation of the shoes he is to fill and who he represents.

At North Stonington Bible Church, the researcher found a second church that recently made a positive transition in leadership. Pastor Larry Chappell described his transition as nothing short of smooth: “It was such a smooth transition that nothing really changed. . . . We had already been functioning like this for many, many years.”¹⁹ Pastor Chappell summarized the transition as “seamless.”²⁰

The coded data reflect those of the case studies. In both churches, the transitions were works already in progress. The nodes that refer to transitions support this. At the Norwich Worship Center, the following codes came through: well-planned, preparation, very careful. These codes definitely fit with the transition that happened. The researcher

¹⁹ Chappell, interview.

²⁰ Ibid.

notes that transition was a lengthy process. In a sense, the whole church was a part of the process.

The North Stonington Bible Church produced similar nodes: take time, planning, preparation, preparing, verify biblical qualifications. These nodes also fit the narrative at Norwich Worship Center. The researcher notes that the transition was always a work in progress here and the congregation was a witness and part of the process.

The Preston City Bible Church triangulated the codes for transitions with nodes planning for them, mentoring successor, and internship. The researcher notes that in each case there was not a strategic plan or a policy to follow for implementing the transitions. Nevertheless, they happened. There are similarities and differences with the three leadership successions. At the NWC and NSBC the successions of pastoral leadership were the result of a lengthy leadership development, while the succession of pastoral leadership at PCBC was through networking.

The researcher was concerned about how to reach a saturation point with a particular code or theme and so he included online surveys in addition to the interviews with the informants. The survey data show transitions contain some form of planning reaching 50% with respect to other nodes. Other like nodes that were found in the church narratives were seek the council of leaders, mentoring the prospective leader and involve the congregation in some aspects.

In one survey, the responder reflected on the sensitive nature of transitions: “Start now looking to the future. Turnover is inevitable. Having a plan for that turnover will ensure that the church will continue. Ignoring the inevitable is “deadly.” Another responder considered the necessity of prayer: “Pray and allow the Holy Spirit to lead the

people.” The researcher concurs that God definitely must be a part of the process (Acts 14:23).

Another responder believed that a policy and procedure was necessary for transitions: “Have rules and a plan already in place, mentoring time prior to old one leaving. Involve the congregation in some aspects.”²¹ This response included a consideration for the congregation in the process. The researcher agrees that the congregation needs to be a part of the transition process. The transition also needs to be a positive experience for both the new leader and the congregation. This becomes a part of the church’s history. The transition includes the transfer of knowledge and experience between the predecessor and successor.

The Components of a Leadership Transition

In searching for churches for this project, the researcher met with a pastor who was preparing to retire in a few months. The researcher asked the pastor how the transition process was going. It was at this early time in the research that the obvious became clear. A good leadership succession does not happen in a vacuum. It involves many factors and components.

The pastor was asked if he had discussed the transition with the elders and their plans for implementing the transition. The pastor openly discussed the components of an orderly transition and he agreed to meet again and discuss his feelings for such a transition. Just prior to retiring, the pastor met again with the researcher and shared his personal feelings about the process and progress. The pastor stated that he was at the

²¹ Anonymous, Online Surveys.

church since its inception and that he was a homegrown product. He was concerned for a successful transfer of ministry and offered his services to the elders in the planning and implementation of the transition.

The researcher notes that unlike the transitions in the Norwich Worship Center and the North Stonington Bible Church, which were internal homegrown products, the transition in this anonymous church was the product of the search committee.

The transitioning pastor met with the elders and suggested a transition plan. The following include some of the pastor's considerations:

Almost all resistance to organizational change is emotional, even though it is perceived as rational. Transition presents the potential for the church to experience emotional, organic and emotional stress. Jesus was involved in transition, both coming in (after John the Baptist) and going out (as He passed the mantle to the apostles). His example was that the present leader should be involved in a successful transition. Considerations for the Incoming Leader: Honor thy predecessor; speak to members about past leadership; be compassionate with members who remember the past; confirm the importance of the past; build on that which is healthy; and complete the past.²²

Similarly, he thought about the departing leader: "Considerations for the Departing Leader: Envision abundance for the future; build on the capacity for leadership; transfer skills, those irreplaceable qualities; and affirm and recognize new leadership."²³

The retiring pastor also described what he perceived as a healthy transition and the key players in a healthy transition. Healthy Transition enables the church to move forward into the next phrase of external and internal development with a new leader and with a minimum of spiritual, programmatic, material and people loss. It is holistic, developmental and conserving.

²² Anonymous Source.

²³ Ibid.

The Pieces of a Healthy Transition: recruitment orientation-briefings, introductions, mentoring, coaching, information transfers; record reviews; communicate with staff and congregation; maintain a climate of health (fellowship, stewardship, ministry); continuity of key ministries is important; maintain spiritual growth; the role of the former pastor properly defined; and the retiring pastor also provided his suggested specific intentions during the transition.²⁴

This leader also commented about the important issues in the immediate transition:

Short-term (first 30 days): Spend time with incoming pastor reviewing everything in the Constitution and Bylaws Policy Manual, the history of the church, the people of the church, and the traditions of the church; familiarize incoming pastor with conference and events over the years, the place of the purpose-driven life in the church; do a run through of a typical week; plan and participate in the installation service; and be available as needed.²⁵

The transitioning pastor has now entered into a new ministry and stated he was available for post transition needs. The researcher agrees with the transitioning pastor that a poor transition exists “when there is a lack of a clear bridging . . . causing pain and frustration even with good intentions can lead to costly results.”²⁶ A poorly implemented transition may produce an interim instead of a successful long-term pastor.²⁷

Church DNA and Transitions

DNA is a genetic code discovered nearly sixty years ago by scientists James Watson and Francis Crick in 1953.²⁸ In the natural world, the DNA is the internal code that replicates and multiplies each cell in its proper place in the body. In a similar sense,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Anonymous, interview.

²⁷ Weese, 33.

²⁸ National Library of Medicine, “The Discovery of the Double Helix, 1951-1953,” <http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/SC/Views/Exhibit/narrative/doublehelix.html> (accessed November 27, 2010).

the process continues in the church body. Just as DNA multiplies itself identically in the human body, DNA is the same throughout the Body of Christ. The DNA is the pattern of Kingdom life from the smallest unit, the disciple in Christ, to the largest unit, a family of churches.²⁹

The Scriptures provide the DNA for how the church body should look in its character and conduct (Matt.28:19-20). In John 13:34-35 love and relationships are common factors for establishing a Christian identity. In the Great Commission, the Lord instructs His disciples to make new ones through teaching and replication. Church DNA consists of three factors: Divine truth, nurtured relationship and apostolic mission.³⁰ These components are the DNA of a healthy church. Anything less is a mutation.

Since 1985 forensic science has been able to identify unique DNA which has solved many cold cases.³¹ DNA consists of the human code of life; how humans are alike. Paradoxically, forensic scientists also have been able to establish the uniqueness—a positive identity of an individual.

Church DNA is similar: Healthy churches have common factors with the Body of Christ. The researcher has found a likeness in the churches, divine truth, nurturing relationships and mission motivated. The researcher has also found that they have their own unique characteristics. The uniqueness is how these churches fulfill their part in their own context.

²⁹ Neil Cole, “The DNA of Christ,” Church Multiplication Associates, <http://www.cmaresources.org/article/dna> (accessed November 27, 2010).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ DNA Initiative, “History of Forensic DNA Analysis,” <http://www.dna.gov/basics/analysishistory/> (accessed January 9, 2011).

The churches in this study displayed a healthy DNA in respect to their common DNA. The uniqueness consists of how they go about proclaiming divine truth. In two of the churches, the focus is on study, doctrine and evangelism. In another church, members evangelized through a mime dramatization. A distinct characterization for such churches is that they will put aside traditions in favor of evangelism. It is important for churches to recognize that they have their own DNA.

Nancy Ammerman expands this concept further: “In addition to being shaped by a theological tradition, congregations are also, of course, shaped by the larger secular culture in which they are located.”³² Ammerman believes that churches are unique and a product of their own cultures:

A congregational culture is constructed out of all the materials we have been discussing—theological and denominational traditions, expectations from a larger culture, patterns of a social class and ethnicity, and the like. All those things are carried into the congregation by its members and leaders. Whenever any of those elements changes, the congregation will inevitably as well.³³

Ammerman also believes that churches have the ability to adapt to cultural changes. The researcher does not dispute this, but rather considers the duration of time. Leadership successions and transitions are subject to time-related factors. The potential problem in recruiting leadership outside the local church is the possibility of a mismatch of congregational DNA. The researcher sees that it is probably best for a local church to develop its own homegrown leadership than to struggle waiting for the congregation to adapt to subtle changes.

³² Ammerman, 79.

³³ Ibid., 82.

Amalgamation of the Research

In analyzing the data, the researcher noted that there was a tendency for local churches to follow the methods of the culture in selecting leadership. Admittedly, the researcher does not dispute that there are some benefits in this. The corporate world has proven this. The corporation has longevity and successful corporations have deliberate plans for reaching the next generation and ensuring their profit margins. The literary review showed how the corporate world succeeds in reaching the next generation.³⁴ The literary review also considered how the ecclesiastical world succeeds in dealing with leadership and change: “Research suggests seven critical components for church mobilization: a healthy foundation; a compelling vision; a plan for action; missional resources; a motivational catalyst; change-sustaining relationships; and transformational leadership skills.”³⁵ The researcher sees a healthy foundation, a compelling vision and a plan of action as the dynamic components of leadership transitions. A church’s healthy foundation is dependent on its congregational DNA. The local church’s leadership is responsible to maintain a healthy church.

Traditional Leadership Succession

The leadership in most Protestant churches is usually of two classes a professional or clergy and the laity. In most of these churches, the professional is the pastor and the laity is the elders, deacons, trustees and other positions. In these churches, the pastor is

³⁴ Donna Schaper, “Leadership Transitions: What the Nonprofit World Can Teach Us,” *Congregations* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 33-37

³⁵ Heidi Unruh, “Building the Church's Readiness for a Transformational Ministry Journey,” *Family and Community Ministries* 22, no 4 (Winter 2009): 22-26.

the spiritual leader while the laity serves in other capacities within the church. However, when there is a need for a pastor the laity is responsible to find one. This is a major paradox. Suddenly, the laity must find a match between the potential candidates and the congregation.

Traditionally, such churches have formed committees to search for a professional clergyman. This committee is a search or pulpit committee and has a specific task of finding a pastor. The search committee is a short-term task committee that disbands after it has completed its task of finding a pastoral replacement.

Another committee that is prevalent in small independent churches is the nominating committee. The nominating committee is different from the pulpit or search committee in that they serve to keep the laity positions filled. The nominating committee's primary function is to fill any vacancy that occurs within the church. Another function is to rotate members in and out of leadership positions according to church constitutions. In some of the smaller churches, this practice has become a ritual or routine. In some situations, it is whomever the nominating committee can get to occupy the position.

In some churches, the practice is to meet annually and inquire who wants to remain in their current position. There is little or no regard for matching a particular person's skill with a specified position. These traditions affect how churches address leadership succession.

Another potential problem is there is little evaluation of the church's leadership *needs*. This can result in leadership atrophy and stagnation. The theology review of Acts has shown these practices are not in accordance with the apostles' actions (Acts 6:1-7).

The biblical record shows that leadership progresses; Stephen a deacon discovers and develops his spiritual gifts for ministry and takes part in the apostolic mission.

In either pulpit or nominating committees, the researcher sees the potential for flaws and not contributing to the well-being of a local church. Previous studies have shown that search committees must be prepared to take months or several years in selecting a potential candidate. The potential for exhaustion in search committees is another consideration. The pulpit or search committees may not produce a candidate that matches the church's DNA. A mismatch is detrimental to both the incoming pastor and the congregation. The researcher contrasts the traditional approaches to leadership succession and the renewed apostolic tradition.

Pulpit Committee

The criterion for a pulpit or search committee is usually found in a church's constitution. The following description of how a pulpit committee operates comes from a typical church constitution:

In the case of a vacancy in the pulpit a pulpit committee shall be elected, consisting of five members, one from the Board of Deacons, one from the Board of Christian Education, one from the Board of Trustees, and two active members. The pulpit committee shall control the pulpit supply during the interim and shall seek a suitable man to present to the church as pastor. The church shall consider only one candidate at a time, after due notice of at least one Sunday has been given.³⁶

The common use of the pulpit committee to locate a new pastor prompted research that revealed very little. This practice is more traditional than biblical. The origin of the pulpit or search committee is obscure.

³⁶ Fitchville Baptist Church, "Pulpit Committee," Church Constitution, Bozrah, CT.

When a vacancy occurs, a pulpit committee is usually assembled and consists of several members of the deacon board and several appointed members of a congregation. A typical pulpit committee finds candidates, screens resumes and reviews qualifications of potential candidates. Upon agreement on a perspective candidate, the committee arranges for the candidate to preach in front of the congregation.

The case can be made for traditional approaches to leadership succession. Many older churches have followed traditional approaches to leadership succession and are still viable and reaching the next generation with the gospel. The pulpit committee has contributed to church succession and acts as a stabilizing means of providing a reactionary plan in time of need.

Counter to this supposition is how well has the pulpit committee performed in the past and what has it contributed to leadership development? None of the church constitutions that the researcher evaluated showed how such a committee contributed to leadership development. In all fairness, this is not what a pulpit committee was designed to do. The researcher was familiar with the history of one independent Baptist church and some of its past leadership changes.

Fitchville Baptist Church

Fitchville Baptist Church (FBC) has a long-storied history dating back to 1852. In the entrance of the church is a display plaque with the following dedication inscription:

In memory of Asa Fitch born May 6th 1787 died October 30, 1865 by those manifested this church was erected. It was dedicated to worship of God on the 4th of August 1852. Rev. H.P. Arms of the First Church Norwich and from the text St. Luke VII: V “He loveth our nation and hath built us a synagogue.”

FBC still reflects the church's DNA of the past one-hundred and fifty-eight years and stands as a memorial attesting to the church's heritage. Heritage includes the generations that have served and passed on the church's traditions and benefits of its progeny.

Asa Fitch, after whom the village is named, built the church. The village stands as an historical landmark of a post New England mill and textile borough in the Town of Bozrah, Connecticut. Around the church are mill houses whose purpose was to house the mill-families over one hundred years ago. Below the church are the catacombs of the 1800's, which were useful during the frozen winters of their era. Today FBC is an independent Baptist Church. In times past, the church affiliated with The Conservative Baptist Association of New England.

The church has an historic legacy that has been passed on to succeeding generations. In some cases, those that have attended the church throughout the years were of the same biological family. In looking over the church's current constitution, the researcher notes that the church has succeeded for one-hundred and fifty-eight years.

Pastor Stephen Kurczy has been the pastor of FBC since November 1991. His affiliation with the church began when he met his wife Linda in college. Linda's formative years were spent at FBC where she sang in the junior choir and attended the youth groups. During their courtship, Stephen attended FBC and became familiar with the congregation. After he married Linda, he became a member, and in time discovered and developed his spiritual gifts for ministry. Pastor Kurczy served FBC as a deacon and a teacher.

In the course of time, the couple purchased a home out of town and attended another church. Sometime later Pastor Kurczy and Linda felt the call to sell their home

and for Stephen to go to Bible college. Upon completing Bible college, Stephen and Linda were called to a small church in New England. Because Linda's parents and family were still attending FBC the couple would occasionally attend services at their home church.

Circumstances and time eventually brought the Kurczys back to FBC. Several factors point to a divine appointment. Linda's parents were getting older and FBC was without a pastor for about a year. The deacons made every effort to keep the church and services going. During one of the Kurczys' visits, the FBC diaconate informed Pastor Kurczy of the need for a pastor. Sometime later Pastor Stephen and Linda answered the call and returned to FBC. Currently, Pastor Kurczy and Linda have successfully served at FBC for the past 19 years. The researcher notes that Pastor Kurczy and Linda were both homegrown in FBC. Their church DNA was a match with the congregation. Another factor to consider is both Pastor Kurczy and Linda worked within the community. Pastor drove a school bus while Linda substituted at the elementary school across from the parsonage and later pursued teacher's certification and a Master's Degree. Their three children were helpful in reaching other children for youth groups. The researcher sees it is important to match the DNA of the community where the church is located. The community and the culture are not so much an adversary as they are the church's mission.

The researcher notes that three of the previous pastors of FBC were products of the traditional pulpit committee. Although they served the church faithfully and well their stay time was considerably less. It is not within the scope of this project to make assumptions as to why other than to point out that Pastor Kurczy's return to FBC was not

through a pulpit committee, but through networking. This was also the case with Pastor Roseland's calling at the Preston City Bible Church.

The researcher notes that good leadership transitions are likely to happen when leaders develop in their home church. Both Pastor Kurczy and Pastor Chappell of the North Stonington Bible Church were homegrown and experienced good transitions.

The researcher is not advocating for the demise of the traditional pulpit committee. The pulpit committee is an alternative to meeting a pastoral leadership crisis. The research did convince the researcher that a renewed apostolic approach to leadership succession reduces the need for such ad hoc committees.

The project was a case study of four independent churches of which three had made at least one recent leadership succession. Those in the churches making a leadership succession attributed the success to a smooth transition. Leadership succession in the churches of this study was not the product of the traditional pulpit committee.

In a comparison of the two approaches, the traditional approach to leadership succession is passive while the apostolic approach is proactive. The pulpit committee is task-oriented while the apostolic model is mission-driven. The pulpit committee assembles when there is a need and dissolves when the task is complete. If the pulpit committee is not included in the transition, it goes back to the constitutional shelf to await its next appointed time.

In small churches, the pulpit committee's purpose is stated in the church constitution and those serving on the committee have guidelines to follow in the selection of a candidate. The pulpit committee evaluates academic credentials, while the apostolic

approach includes evidence of spiritual giftedness in ministry (2 Tim. 2:2,15). The pulpit committee is temporal, while the apostolic approach is continual.

Table 5.1 **Renewed Apostolic Model**

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."(Matt. 28:19-20).

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust (Acts 14:23).

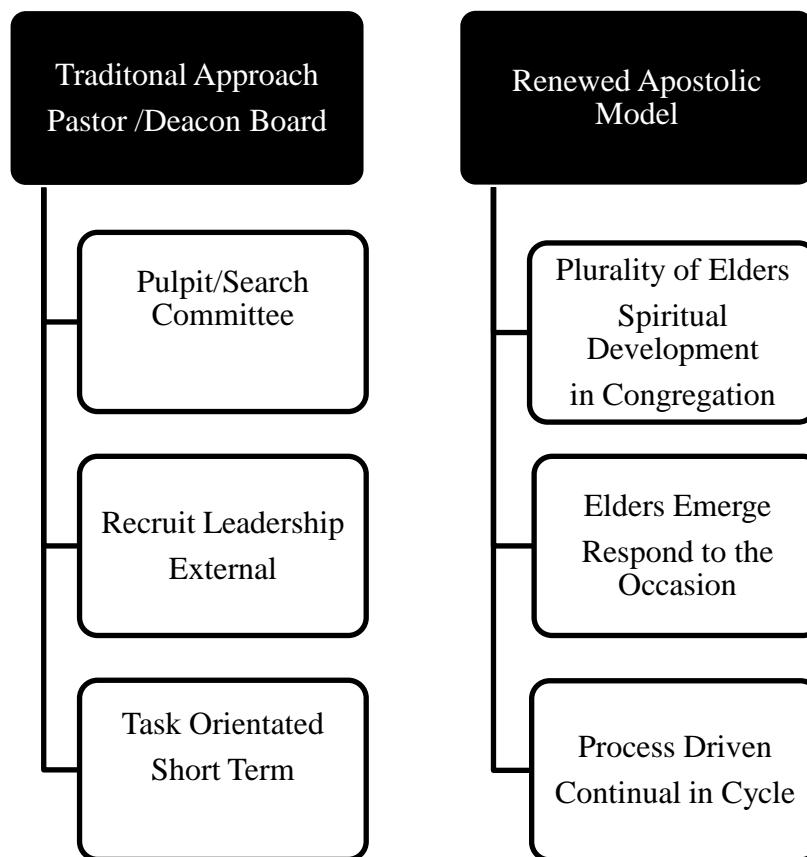
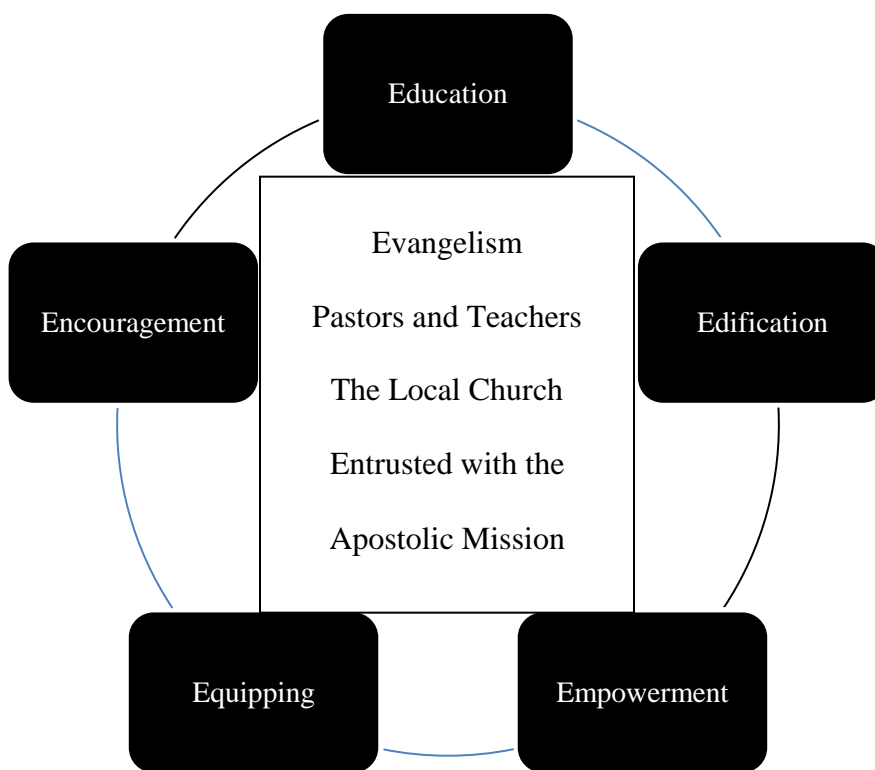


Table 5.2 Apostolic Mission

Ephesians 4:11-16 synthesizes how evangelism works in the local church for leadership replication. The pastor and elders make disciples by creating the capacity and environment for the disciples to discover and develop spiritual gifts for ministry to the congregation (2 Tim. 2:2).



The literary review and the research have suggested that the capacity for leadership development is in a practical environment. Future leadership discovers and develops their spiritual gifts for ministry in ministry. The research has shown that emerging leaders need to be properly prepared for ministry. Education is empowerment. Emerging leaders need to be encouraged to utilize their gifts in the ministry. Emerging leaders need support and equipping for ministry. Emerging leaders need to be edified so they can become confident and competent for ministry (Eph. 4:11-16).

CHAPTER SIX

EVALUATION OF PROJECT

Strengths of the Project

The project presented the researcher with the opportunity to address the need and importance of leadership succession. All churches need to have a means of developing their own leadership. Without taking a proactive approach in producing new leadership, churches face the potential for stagnation. This is one reason churches are to edify their members so each person will do their part (Eph.4:16).

The longevity and well-being of small community churches needs a well-developed plan and strategy. In the region, many small independent churches need not only a strategy for leadership, but also a safeguard or contingency plan for leadership.

Every church needs to consider leadership succession because all churches are subject to transience. A church taking a passive approach toward leadership succession faces the possibility of sterility in leadership. Churches that are proactive continually evaluate their leadership process and the progress of their members. While it is true that leaders emerge and rise to the occasion, they still have to be prepared.

The coded data from the research interviews strongly emphasized that leadership is not just following the protocol of the traditions contained in a church constitution. Traditions can be either useable or inappropriate for the time and situation. The Pharisees held to their traditions to the degree that they inappropriately applied them in respect to the law (Matt. 15:1-6). The church must not commit similar acts of omission.

The pulpit committee seems to be more traditional than biblical. The pulpit or search committees in small churches are limited in most cases to replacing pastoral leadership. Leadership is more than pastoral leadership; it is also inclusive in all positions of a church. While the pulpit or search committees are a feasible alternative for fulfilling a leadership void, it should not be a substitute for apostolic approach.

Practicality of the Project

The Bible, the literary review and the research all show the practicality of the project. It is within a church's ability to address and implement a strategic plan for leadership succession. Creating the capacity for future leadership to discover and develop spiritual gifts is doable. It takes willingness in some cases to let go and let God into the process. After all, it is His church, which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

The practicable aspects are attainable through discipleship and mentoring. The Scriptures emphasize the necessity for creating the capacity to let those so equipped lead. In Romans 12:8 the word for leadership is προϊστάμενος a participle which indicates an ongoing process. The church is capable and responsible for creating an

environment for its own leadership development. God has provided the means of leadership; the church can provide opportunities for leaders to emerge. Leadership skills are best processed in a practical environment. Essentially, the church is a laboratory that can provide such a setting. In this setting, disciples and mentees encounter reality and not just theory. There is no better place to learn and mature than in a practical setting.

The practical aspects require an intentional approach taken by the pastor, teacher or mentor. The Scriptures provide a practical process for creating an environment that allows for the emergence of new leaders (Eph. 4:11-16). An assumption is that God has provided the churches with the material and human resources for their own leadership development. It is up to the church to encourage and equip those within its community to discover their spiritual gifts for ministry and become proficient in using them.

Timeliness of the Project

Leadership needs to respond to the times. The political and cultural landscapes are continually changing. In the literary review, the researcher explored the independent church as a phenomenon. The research found that this phenomenon is a response to the times. Currently there is a backlash against the institutional church by the mainstream media and those subject to its influence. Similarly, Christians seem to be moving away from the denominational traditions. The research found this to be true. The coded data for the “advantages of the independent church,” showed a strong repudiation to “denomination hierarchy,” and “traditions.” While there is a movement

away from denominations and traditions, there is still the necessity of replicating leadership for the next generation.

The Research Design

The qualitative grounded theory approach allowed the researcher to scrutinize the data gathered during the project. The case studies produced the right settings for the researcher to apply grounded theory to the research questions. Each informant and church contributed what the researcher needed to complete the research. The use of a qualitative data program allowed the researcher to retrieve the data for instant comparisons, links and select the codes that were most relevant to the research.

The Open Bible Baptist Church was significant in that it shed light on the emergence of independent churches. Pastor Ricky Davis described what he termed as his “Macedonian” experience led by the Holy Spirit to start a church in eastern Connecticut. He provided much in understanding the advantages of independent churches.

The Norwich Worship Center was instrumental for understanding how important it is to pre-plan for leadership transitions. Pastor Jeffrey Sharp described the significance of the symbolism in passing the prayer shawl and staff in a formal ceremony in front of the congregation. More importantly, the emphasis was on the long-term mentoring relationship he experienced with his predecessor. In listening to the interview, the researcher reflected on how this relationship was similar to Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha in the theological review.

The Preston City Bible Church (PCBC) was helpful in finding alternative ways to fulfill leadership needs. Pastor David Roseland shared his testimony and his calling to ministry and in particular his calling to PCBC. Pastor Roseland explained that his calling to PCBC was the result of “networking” which was assigned as a node of leadership succession. He also described how important it was for him to align with the church’s doctrinal statement.

The North Stonington Bible Church (NSBC) provided the researcher with much information about “leadership successions” and healthy “transitions.” Pastor Larry Chappell affirmed his belief that leadership successions are within the local church. In describing NSBC theology for leadership succession, he affirmed “plurality of elders” which the researcher assigned as a node of “leadership succession.” His description of his transition into pastor-elder as “seamless” showed that there are ways above and beyond a well-documented procedure.

Importance of the Project

During the proposal of the project, the researcher broached leadership succession with many of his colleagues and inquired about their personal views and experiences with leadership and succession. Humbly, very few said they had considered the subject nor offered any insight. This response indicated the need and importance of the subject.

In the *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, the authors stated their research found that very few churches have a plan of leadership succession.¹ After reading the book, it was evident that planned leadership transitions are an important part of a successful leadership succession.

The importance of leadership succession cannot be understated and is a fact for life. After introducing the subject matter to the key informants, it was evident that the subject matter resonated with the responders. All those interviewed and those that participated in the project expressed an interest in transitions. A successful leadership succession does not happen through mediocrity and is too important a subject to assume that a mediocre attempt is adequate. A successful leadership succession depends upon a pre-determined plan for well-sanctioned transition.

The Weaknesses of the Project Design

The independent church is still emerging and this meant that the researcher faced certain limitations and restrictions. The limitations did not hinder the researcher in his quest for fulfilling the objectives outlined in the proposal. He did gain a general understanding and became more familiar with the independent church as a phenomenon.

The researcher was disappointed in the responses to the online surveys. The researcher arranged with the webmaster to post a survey online (Appendix B) to expand the research. Even though the researcher contacted other pastors via e-mail, there were no responses to the church website. There was also a minimal response to

¹ Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004)

the surveys sent to various churches. Despite these mal-factors, the researcher was able to expand the research and reach a saturation point with the coded data.

At three intervals during the time of the research, the researcher appealed to pastors for their participation in the research. The researcher was disappointed because the low responses restricted him from quantifying the data. A reason for the minimal response may be that people are too busy. It is more likely, that the perception of the subject is negative. After all, who wants to address their departure when they are still in their prime?

Lack of Prior Research

While there was an abundant amount of information about the independent church and leadership there is little on the subject of leadership succession. The researcher found a widespread amount of information on leadership at the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and Theological Research and Exchange Network (TREN). However, there was very little on leadership succession. The vast number of hits with the word succession had to do with apostolic succession. The researcher did manage to work around the situation through the Internet. The vastness of the Internet did provide information and links to the subject matter.

Resistance to the Subject Matter

The subject matter is not popular because it forces human beings to consider their mortality. Transience is not something mortals look forward to addressing. Another issue is resistance to change; few want to come out of their comfort zones

and deal with change. The innate desire to stay comfortable, in control and in one's zone is a constant. Those in leadership positions are reluctant to train their replacements, while those that they lead and serve are equally willing to remain passive. This is an outlandish paradox. The well-being and effectiveness of the church depends upon encouraging others to discover and develop spiritual gifts for ministry.

Implementation of the Project

The project served as a stimulus and provided the incentives and motivation for Faith Community Church to put into practice the proposed model and plan for a strategy and plan for longevity of the church. The church is taking a proactive response to the challenges of creating the capacity for others to discover and develop their spiritual gifts for ministry. Those in leadership positions are now intentionally seeking a one-on-one relationship in sharing their knowledge and empowering those on the bench to get into the service.

Gary Gonzales in his dissertation "Rebooting the Mission: Back To The Future" offers good advice for the church "simplify church structure" and "devise better ways of training its people for ministry."² Although Gonzales suggests a simple approach, it is biblical, practical and apostolic. In facilitating a simple yet direct approach to training, the situation for one-on-one relationship exists and contributes to the "multiplication of leadership." The process reminds the researcher of the simple song, "If you tell two people then two more people will know." In a leadership

² Gary Gonzales, "Rebooting the Mission: Back To the Future" (D. Min. Thesis Project, Bethel Theological Seminary, 2008), 150.

succession context the principle is equally true; if one trains two people, then two more people can lead.

The researcher will utilize this project in his ministry. Segments of this project will be included in presentations to other churches within the researcher's sphere of influence.

Suggested Modifications for Improvement

The Pastor and Church's Role in Mentoring

One area of improvement is more time for other subjects connected with leadership succession such as how the pastor and church's role in leadership and mentoring enhances leadership succession. A mentoring ministry provides the roots for leadership. This project has focused on internalized leadership development in the local church. Internalization is creating the capacity for others to discover and develop their spiritual gifts for ministry. Mentors are encouragers like Barnabas who encouraged his mentees and when it was necessary advocated for them.

The research showed that emphasizing leadership needs is a step in the right direction. It is necessary to communicate the church's leadership needs to the congregation. Those that respond need to be developed and processed. Mentoring provides that and disciples are able to discover their spiritual gifts and develop them. This does not happen without mentors who encourage, observe and evaluate the mentees progress.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

The project presented the researcher with the opportunity to address leadership succession in the church where he is currently the pastor. It was also a positive source for generating an interest in leadership succession. If the church is to remain a viable entity, it must take a proactive approach to leadership. Leadership must reproduce new leaders in order to reach the next generation. It must provide an environment that will allow its members to emerge into the leadership necessary to reach the next generation. The project did generate an interest with the subject at Faith Community Church and it is now time to stimulate the interest beyond the local context.

The research showed that in most cases there is a tendency to resist change and hold on to the past. Oftentimes it is the traditions of the past that stand in the way of emerging movements and churches that resist change suffer the consequences for their negligence. Churches that hold on to traditions at all costs fall behind in the benefits of technology. Although a church's theology and worship may be biblical, it may also be dry and not appealing to younger generations who know how to utilize the new technology in worship and service. Many are familiar with modern

technology and prefer modern worship style. They know that what God has declared free is free indeed (John 8:32).¹

Senior Pastor's Role

Consideration for the longevity of the church depends on the leadership of the church. In particular, what is one thing that leadership needs to do to assure the local church reaches the next generation? During the time of this study, the researcher attended a seminar entitled: "Surviving a Church Plant" at Bethel Seminary of the East. The speaker shared his experiences in a church plant. He reflected on his two core beliefs: "That I would be disobeying God if I didn't try and even if we failed, it was an honorable thing to fail at."² This suggests that churches need to take risks in providing an environment for church expansion and growth. Pastor Atwater reflecting on his own experience shared that the senior pastor needs to "paint the vision."³ Atwater in supporting his supposition stated, "People don't come to a young church because of what it is now. They come and commit because of what they believe it will be."⁴ Although the seminar was about church planting certain parts of it were relevant for all churches.

The researcher agrees with Pastor Atwater's position that the pastor and leadership need to paint a fresh vision for reaching the next generation. Leadership

¹ Scott Thumma, *What God Makes Free Is Free Indeed*, http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article5.html accessed October 14, 2009).

² Paul Atwater, "Surviving a Church Plant" (Seminar, Bethel Seminary of the East, Auburn, MA. November 9, 2010).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

succession depends upon leadership development that requires a vision and a *modus operandi* for providing new leadership. If there is a lack of vision, the congregation will take a passive approach and become stagnant. Even though a congregation may be faithful in church attendance and Bible study, it will still run a risk and pay the price for not moving forward. Passivity and complacency are two negatives that need to be avoided.

During the time of this project, the researcher attended numerous services outside his normal venue. One thing the researcher found through this study was that people are seeking churches where they will experience a genuine relationship with God and fellow believers. In these churches, they are attracted to a spiritual experience and freedom of expression in worship. Even though churches may be orthodox in their doctrine, they still have to make the case for relevance to the community and culture. Although this project is about leadership succession, church leaders must respond to the times.

The researcher found that churches have their own respective DNA. They have a common DNA which consists of the factors within the Body of Christ. Churches are also a part and product of their culture and community.⁵ It is not enough for leaders to know their church's DNA; they must also understand the DNA of its community and culture in order to make an intimate connection. It is hopeful that the "Renewed Apostolic Approach" to leadership succession will generate more than a passing glance and others will expand and build on its concepts.

⁵ Ammerman, *Studying Congregations*, 79.

Personal Growth through the Project

Although the researcher believes that his seminary experience properly trained and prepared for him for ministry, he still felt the necessity to enroll in the Doctor of Ministry Program “Leading from the Inside Out” because of the compelling need to provide a fresh vision for the church in reaching the next generation with the gospel. Faith Community Church (FCC) needed to take a proactive approach to developing new leadership. Currently, the church is taking a positive approach and is creating the capacity for the emergence of new leadership. The church is also adapting and adjusting to new technology. This is still a work in progress.

During the time of the study, there were nagging issues such as the relocation of FCC. The move to a nearby location took a considerable amount of time and required adaptation and adjustments to a different environment. However, the move did provide an opportunity to emphasize the need for a leadership strategy and succession plan that will contribute to longevity of the church. The researcher accentuated the fact that the move does not change the mission or the message. Throughout the adaptation and adjustment phases, the church has positively responded and come together. FCC had to rely on its source of strength and depend on God’s power (Zech.4:6, Ps.127:1).

The researcher began this project with a burden for the community and a church in need of a strategy for leadership development. The researcher had to consider the church’s options and alternatives along with a myriad of other considerations relevant to expansion problems typical of a small independent church. Alternatives and options consisted of affiliating or merging with a denomination that

identified with the church's doctrine or remain an independent Bible believing church. The church and the researcher decided to forgo the alternatives and embrace the last option of staying an independent church. Staying an independent church in such a context requires taking a proactive approach to leadership development.

The researcher learned how not to focus on the negatives, but instead to work around them. Times of challenge are times to grow and, when stretched, one is able to develop and mature. The researcher has become more flexible in dealing with complex situations. Adjusting and adapting to situations and crises that appear overwhelming requires flexibility. In this context, the researcher had to reconsider some of his original presuppositions.

The literary review provided inspiration and reasons for taking a proactive approach to leadership succession. Initially, the researcher thought that it was necessary to have a well-articulated document and policy in place to ensure the church would follow through in pursuing a strategy for leadership succession. The researcher has since altered his position. Admittedly, a well-articulated document can define a purpose and articulate a vision. However, the project has showed that it is equally important to be applying biblical principles in such matters.

Research Questions Generated by the Project

Leadership succession, transience and transitioning could have formed the nucleus for three separate research questions. In pursuing the objectives of the project, other potential research questions surfaced that had to be deferred to another time and for another project. Several subjects generated by the project come up as

possible research questions. Qualitative case studies are typically limited to the setting. The researcher constructed online surveys with the thought of expanding the data. However, the responses to the surveys were minimal and the researcher declined quantifying the data.

The Combination of Qualitative and Quantitative Study

This is a good question for consideration because a qualitative methodology allows the researcher to be absorbed in the setting and the data while the quantitative approach supplies the empirical data that confirms the hypothesis of the researcher. The qualitative study provides a firsthand assessment of the actual situation. It seems a qualitative grounded theory study could be stronger if quantifying the data is possible. Another question to address: Is there the potential for different methodologies to counteract each other? Perhaps a brief review of other similar projects that have integrated the two methods would be helpful.

The coding of much data seemingly suggests the need to quantify it. While qualitative data consists of words and pictures its quantitative counterpart consists of numbers and statistics. The researcher wonders if there is ever a compatibility with the research methodologies. How could a combination quantitative/qualitative project design enhance a case study?

Modern Technology and Leadership Succession

This question considers the ways churches can link together through the Internet. Modern technology has made it possible for global church communities to

fellowship, pray, and meet each other's needs. Social media such as Skype is useful for multitasking and contains personal profiles. This technology could be useful for linking churches and seminaries together in an Internet highway that could be useful for educational purposes in leadership development and may become a provisional device for meeting a church's specific leadership needs. A future research question may consider how churches can become more proficient in with modern technology.

Networking and Mutual Unity

Pastor David Roseland of the Preston City Bible Church indicated that his calling at his current church was a product of "Networking." In the theology review, the Scriptures revealed that the Lord was against sectarianism (Mark 9:38-40). Scriptures show the Lord was not averse to "Networking" within the "Body of Christ" (John 17:20-23). Henceforth the researcher is not a proponent of the individualism that is so prevalent among the New England mindset and therefore is open to networking within the Body of Christ. What are other positive ways networking can be useful for the church meeting their leadership needs?

Church Polity and Leadership Succession

There are many well-articulated procedures for churches to follow for a pulpit /search committee. Yet the research from this project has found that churches may experience positives without a well-written policy. The case for following apostolic principles seems to negate the need for search committees.

The North Stonington Bible Church (NSBC) has recently completed a change of leadership. There was no evidence that a well-articulated written document had anything to do with the magnitude or dynamics of the transition. Instead, as Pastor Jeffrey Chappell has mentioned, a “smooth transition” was the result of just following the apostolic principles in the Scriptures (2 Tim.2:2). The research at NSBC did affirm the researcher’s initial supposition that God has provided the human resources for leadership succession within the local congregation. The researcher also found that there is less of a need for traditional pulpit/search committees when there is a “plurality of elders” in leadership. Nevertheless, the researcher does not advocate churches to discard traditional approaches to leadership succession such as the pulpit committee. In what ways can a well-articulated plan still enhance leadership succession and be compatible with Scripture?

The Relationship between Parachurch Organizations and the Church

The research shows there is a need for churches and parachurches to interact and support each other. Through networking, churches and parachurches become socially innovative and intimate. This increases the potential for maximizing spiritual capital and resources through mutual cooperativeness and unity. The churches’ leadership demands could be facilitated through networking and partnering with parachurches.

Although the majority of the responses showed that most considered parachurch organizations as places of learning, one responder thought that a seminary is a good source for a partnership. In moving from open to axial coding, the

researcher linked networking with partnership. In what capacity, the researcher is uncertain, but some sort of cooperative joint project is plausible and possible. The researcher recalls his own seminary experience at the “Seminary of the East.” Upon reflection the researcher recalls that a faculty advisor visited his church each semester and discussed his progress with the pastor. This was a very positive experience and mutually appreciated.

In a similar situation, a link with a seminary and local church could be established. Seminary curriculums do not have to be restricted to academics such as hermeneutics and languages. Seminaries do not have to produce just academic scholars. Smaller curriculums composed for the expressed purpose of leadership development could be useful for small community churches to meet their leadership needs.

One responder described the cost of seminary education and on-site training as “cost-prohibitive.” Smaller programs with concentrations in leadership would be more cost effective and at the same time provide the leadership skills needed in smaller community churches. Bethel Seminary of the East is one academic institution that has leadership certificate programs. The researcher believes this type of program is able to meet a local church’s leadership needs. Additionally, the researcher believes that this program needs widespread marketing. Most of the responders believed that parachurch organizations and seminaries could be useful for local churches with leadership succession. Bethel Seminary of the East has and continues to reach out to local churches with programs for leadership development. “Church-Seminary

Partnership” is one such program. A research question may consider the mutual benefits of such a partnership.

APPENDIX A
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Instruments and Data

Primary Source: Key Informant Interviews

Purpose of Interview

The purpose of this interview is to evaluate the local church's theology for leadership succession.

Questions 1-5 relate to Pastors calling and education background.

1. How long have you been at this church?
2. How were you called to ministry?
3. Formal Education: Seminary () Bible College () University () College ()
4. Informal Education: Internal training in church for leadership ()
5. Have you ever served or had membership in a major denomination? Yes () No ()
6. Was the subject of leadership succession ever addressed in any of your Bible College or Seminary courses?
7. Have you ever attended any seminars or conferences, which have considered the subject of leadership succession?

Questions 8-16 relate to pastors theology of ministry.

8. Can you share some of the advantages of an independent church?
9. Can you share some of its disadvantages?
10. What is your theology of apostolic succession? Note 1 below
11. What is your theology for leadership succession?
12. How do you feel this church can fulfill its part in the Great Commission?
13. What is your theology for ecclesiastical authority?
14. What is your theology of central authority?

15. What is your theology for apostolicity and authority?
16. Can you describe any obstacles to leadership succession?

Note 1 Theology: How is your understanding of a subject informed by the Scripture?

Questions 17 to 26 relate to the pastor and church.

17. Approximately how old is this church?
18. In your opinion, are there factors that can contribute to leadership succession?
19. How do you feel your church should approach the subject of leadership succession? Utilizing external sources outside the church Passive () or developing leaders through internal in-ministry Proactive () Combination of both ()
20. Does this church fellowship with other community churches on occasions?
Yes () No () Sometimes special services ()
21. Does your church have associate pastors? Yes () No ()
22. Is there a mentoring ministry and discipleship groups? Yes () No ()
23. Do the elders and deacons preach and teach? Yes () No () Sometimes ()
24. Does your church have a contingency plan for leadership succession?
Yes () No () Not at this time ()
25. Does your church have a crisis plan for leadership succession?
Yes () No () Not at this time ()
26. Have you discussed the subject of leadership succession and transition with the church elders, deacons, boards and congregation? Yes () No ()
Not at this time ()

Interview Release Form

Project Name: LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION: A CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR THE
INDEPENDENT CHURCH

Name of Interviewer: Henry J. Barry, Jr.

Name of Interviewee:

By signing the form below, you give your permission for any tapes and /or photographs made during this project to be used for public purposes including publications, internet, and presentations.

By giving your permission, you do not give up any copyright or performance rights that you may hold.

I agree to the uses of these materials described above, except for any restrictions, noted below. *

Name Please Print

Signature of person interviewed:

Date

Interviewer's Signature

Date:

*Restriction Description:

APPENDIX B
ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

On Line Survey Questions

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the local church's policy and procedures in meeting its own leadership concerns and needs. The following questions relate to the subject of leadership succession and development in the church.

Section I

Leadership Succession

1. Does your church have a contingency plan for leadership succession? Yes () No()
2. In your opinion, how can the local church take a more direct approach in meeting its own leadership needs?
3. What are some of your perspectives, for facilitating a good leadership succession?
4. How does your church deal with leadership transience and turnover?
5. In what ways can the local church facilitate a successful transition?

Section II

Leadership Development

1. What character qualities are needed for leaders?
2. In what ways can the church be proactive in leadership development?
3. How can the local church create the capacity for leadership development?
4. In what ways can parachurch organizations such as seminaries be useful for in-house ministry development?
5. In your opinion how can discipleship groups be effective in leadership development?

Please numerically rank your perspectives for character qualities of leadership

Personal Calling ()

Personal Character ()

Personal Discipline ()

Aptitude and Ability ()

Competence and Confidence ()

Previous Education ()

Spiritual Giftedness ()

Life Experiences ()

Vocation ()

Visionary ()

Please numerically rank your perspectives on the purpose of the church

Worship of God ()

Evangelism: Reaching the Community with the Gospel ()

Communities and Social Interests ()

Fellowship with Believers ()

Spiritual Experience with God ()

Family Relationships ()

Weekly Prayer Meeting ()

Discipleship Groups: Includes Youth Group, Bible Study, Sunday Schools ()

Missions Support ()

Education Programs ()

Music Ministry ()

Section III

Organizational Structure and Services

The following three-categories pertain to the effectiveness of the local church in government and worship activities. Please compare subjects and check your preferences.

Vertical Structure Leadership Top down Authority ()

Flat Structure Horizontal Servant Relationship ()

Structured Services Church Bulletin Directs the Service ()

Flexible Services Church Bulletin is more for informational purposes ()

Worship Traditional Worship Hymn Book ()

Worship Local Church Musicians Compose Worship Songs ()

Please include additional perspectives, which add to the research

Thank You: Your participation and perspectives is greatly appreciated

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