

AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN FAILED SENIOR PASTOR APPOINTMENTS
IN THREE LARGE UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES
AND SEMINARY PREPARATION, PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY,
AND PERSON – ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School
of The Ohio State University

By

Mary Laura Lutz, B.A., M.S. Ed.

The Ohio State University

2007

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Leonard Baird

Dr. Antoinette Miranda

Dr. Robert F. Rodgers, Adviser

Approved by

Adviser

College of Education

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ABSTRACT

This research project involves three large churches in a particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church, where the Senior Pastor experienced a failure in the appointment process, lasting for a period of three years or less in a specific large church setting before a move was initiated. In addition to interviewing the Senior Pastor in each of these three settings, interviews were conducted with a lay leader from within the church, a member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, and the District Superintendent from the time of the move of the Senior Pastor from the church. An extensive overview of the research concerning the seminary preparation of clergy, the development of clergy professional identity, the fit between the pastor and the particular church setting, and the itinerant system in general is included.

Results will provide an overview of the salient issues and important elements related to the stories from each of the three settings, with an emphasis on the issues, common patterns and themes, along with discrepant data. The conflict related themes and patterns that emerged in the three cases included a history of conflict, difficulties in transition, a conflict in style of worship, a conflict in direction or focus of ministry, a conflict in style and strength of leadership, and a conflict in ownership.

Implications for both research and practice are discussed, including a number of recommendations for the leadership of the United Methodist Church.

Recommendations related to practice include: relocation support, longer terms, District Superintendents, smaller districts, salary, confidentiality, de-briefing, profiles, the introduction, training churches and clergy, the guaranteed appointment, guidelines, mediation, interim appointments, recommendations for new pastors, supervision, and the cluster system and mentoring relationships.

This dissertation is dedicated to the unsung heroes who made this study possible,
including the department secretaries, librarians and especially the participants.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In spite of the fact that this journey was at times a solitary one, there is no doubt that I have gained much from the support and assistance of a number of fellow travelers along the way. Thanks to those in my family who have supported me personally on this journey, especially dad and Carolyn, Jeff and Mary, John, and Susie. Thanks to my church family, especially in the women's Bible study, and to the youth who taught me a great deal about life and ministry. Thanks to my friends in the Emmaus community for your support and your prayers.

Thanks to the faculty, staff and students from Ohio State University that I had an opportunity to work with, especially John Berry, my writing group partner whose humor made the process more bearable. Thanks to my adviser and mentor, Dr. Robert Rodgers, for your collegial advice and for modeling a ministry of teaching. Thanks to Dr. Leonard Baird, Dr. Antoinette Miranda for your encouragement and support.

In my family of faith, I want to thank Melissa Shaffer, Mary Kaufmann, Kathi Andrick, Christine Ramsey, Connie Johnston, Christine Yowell, Anne Halley, Sharon Ricketts, and Shannon Wilson. I also want to thank Mike and Ali Chann, Todd and Linda Hickerson, Del and Anne Robinson, Larry and Cheryl Lorence, Greg and Debi Ketter, Roy and Reola Miracle, Donnie and Shannon Wilson, and Jan Tigyer. Thank you for believing in me and teaching me, all in your unique ways to believe in myself.

This journey has not been without questions or struggle, but perhaps little that is truly worthwhile ever is. On a personal level, I have learned that I am more persistent than I thought, though less ambitious too. Those who know me well understand that this will not be the first time in my life that I have transitioned from one adventure to another. No doubt, it will likely not be the last either. But, as I seek to close the final chapter of my dissertation work, I must confess that I do not yet have complete clarity as to what is next. And although I'm certain that my life will change, I do not yet know what that will look like. None of us can really say for certain where God will lead in the future, and I am certainly no exception in that regard. But, I do know that God is faithful, and that he never changes. Consistent with God's leading of the Old Testament prophets, or the relationship that Jesus had with his disciples in the New Testament, three things remain constant. I am reminded again to trust that there is something that I have been specifically created to do to advance the kingdom of God on earth, that I do not need to be afraid, and that God is with me.

I am looking forward to spending my time differently, no longer forced to spend an inordinate amount of time covering thousands of miles to conduct interviews, or in the solitary confinement of slaving away in front of a computer screen in all my spare time. The Bible reminds us that there is a time for everything, a season for every purpose under heaven. With that in mind, let me formally invite you to celebrate with me in this change of seasons in my life. It seems hard to believe, but IT IS FINISHED!

VITA

February 11, 1962... Born – Columbus, Ohio

1984..... B.A. Psychology, Sociology Minor
Chapman College, Orange, California

1987..... M.S. Higher Education & Student Affairs, Indiana University,
Bloomington, Indiana

1987..... Assistant Director, Residence Life, Northrop University, Los
Angeles, California

1987-1988..... Director of Housing, Residence Life, Northrop University, Los
Angeles, California

1988..... Consultant, Stores Protective Association, Los Angeles,
California

1988- 1989..... Child Care Worker, M.L.Webb Children’s Shelter, Glendale,
California

1989-1991..... Human Resource Specialist & Network Administrator, Campus
Crusade for Christ, Arrowhead Springs, California

1991-1992..... Area Coordinator & Interim Co-Director, Residence Life, Saint
Leo College, Saint Leo, Florida

1992-1993..... Area Coordinator, Residence Life, Saint Leo College, Saint
Leo, Florida

1993-1994..... Coordinator, Residence Life, Saint Leo College, Saint Leo,
Florida

1994-1996..... Area Coordinator, Campus & Residential Life, Denison
University, Granville, Ohio

1996-1998..... Graduate Administrative Associate, Student Activities, The
Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1998-2000.....	Ph.D. Staff Assistant, Residence Life, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
2000-2004.....	Minister of Youth, First United Methodist Church, Newark, Ohio
2004-2005.....	Minister of Youth and Adult Discipleship, First United Methodist Church, Newark, Ohio
2006-present.....	Director of Spiritual Formation & Lay Ministry Development, First United Methodist Church, Newark, Ohio

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field of Study: Education

Emphasis: Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background Information

In order to set the stage for this research project, I have provided a brief overview of my research interests. More specifically, I describe my original research project, and the transitional turmoil in the United Methodist Church where I currently serve as a lay staff person, along with my accompanying lament and the natural evolution of my interests.

Initial Research Project

Originally, my sights were set on exploring the development of professional identity for two different groups of youth ministers employed in a particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church. The two groups included those who had been prepared on the job, learning by doing the work of youth ministry, and those who had completed a certification program and/or a seminary education. However, it quickly became clear that this work was untenable because the particular Mid-Western Conference did not have an accurate list of all those individuals employed full-time in youth ministry at United Methodist Churches, even though the Bishop thought that this information would be available from the District offices.

My first indication of this discrepancy was that several colleagues were not on the list that I received from the District Superintendent presiding over the United Methodist Churches where we were all serving in youth ministry. Further, for reasons I was unable to explain, my name was not even on the list. In fact, the District Superintendent who presided over the church where I had already been employed for three years by the time the list had been published had attended our church often, and her husband was at the time an active member of our church. Nevertheless, this District Superintendent was still unaware that I had been a full-time staff member for roughly three years. This was one of my first interactions with a District Superintendent in the United Methodist Church, and a clear indication of the overwhelming responsibilities inherent in the role.

I could have compiled a list of youth ministers employed in the particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church by hand, but it would have been time consuming and cumbersome. Given the reality that the average tenure for youth ministers across denominations is roughly one year, by the time I would have completed an initial list of youth ministers, it is likely that there would have been some turnover. In short, unless I wanted to quickly contact over 1,200 individual United Methodist Churches of the particular Mid-Western Conference to develop an accurate list of youth ministers to even begin to select a purposive sample, it did not make sense to pursue my original research idea.

A Church in Transitional Turmoil

At the same time that the proverbial bottom was falling out of my initial research project, the church where I was employed was in turmoil. A long-term Senior Pastor was promoted against his wishes to the level of a District Superintendent in another area of the state. A new Senior Pastor was appointed to the church. The Associate Pastor was then moved to another church, later followed by a new Associate Pastor. This transition was followed by the appointment of yet another Senior Pastor when the “new” Senior Pastor was moved within two years of his assignment to the church. In short, I had worked with three different Senior Pastors and two different Associate Pastors in a span of roughly twenty months during my employment at the church. Frankly, I was close to becoming itinerant myself, simply packing up and moving on to another job elsewhere.

In the process of the transitional turmoil, I suddenly became the longest-running full-time staff member in this large United Methodist Church, even though I had only been employed by the church for just over four years. It was out of the sense of living inside a turnstile that this dissertation topic has emerged. In fact, Mills (1959) asserts that the people in the United States of America need to recognize deeply personal struggles in relation to social issues, and interpret social issues as personal struggles. It was precisely because I recognized that my transitional weariness was intricately related to failed appointments within the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church that naturally changed the focus of my work.

Lament

In a very real sense, this dissertation is a kind of lament in not just one but two ways. Not only did it grow out of my frustrations, concerns, and questions related to the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church. But, the process used in the methodology is based on the work of Kegan and Lahey (2001), which moves from a complaint or concern, to an implied conviction, and finally to a commitment or deeply held value. The very flow of this process seems to be consistent with the Biblical form of a lament.

This research project provides a fresh perspective on the impact of a process of lament on the participants involved in the study. And, although the dissertation topic itself evolved out of my frustration relative to a failed appointment within the itinerant system, it has been a rather daunting task to explore the very system in which one is employed as a layperson. Perhaps a quote often attributed to Augustine is instructive here: "Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage; anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are." It is precisely the hope that the challenges in the itinerancy can be strengthened to make a central tenet of United Methodism even stronger in the future that serves as the foundation of this project.

Importance

The dearth of research related to failed large church appointments in the United Methodist Church has left a number of unanswered questions. This study will explore this uncharted territory, examining the issue from four different perspectives

in each of the three case studies of failed appointments of Senior Pastors in large United Methodist Churches. These perspectives include the perceptions of the Senior Pastor whose ministry failed, the District Superintendent who supervised the Senior Pastor at the time of the move from the church, a lay leader in the church, and a member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

In addition to reporting the results of these four different perspectives in each of the three case studies, the project will also compare and contrast the perspectives of these twelve different participants among and across roles. But, in order to first situate the study in the larger context of spirituality in the United States, an overview of current status of the United Methodist Church is provided, along with a glimpse of the national interest in spiritual matters.

The United Methodist Church

In the United States, roughly ten million people are involved in over 35,000 United Methodist congregations (Schaller, 2004). More specifically, according to Treese (1991), the denomination of the United Methodist Church is composed of 37,514 local churches. And, although the United Methodist Church is “the second largest religious body in North America” based on the number of congregations, it is the third largest denomination when using the average weekend worship attendance as the measurement for size (Schaller, 2004, p. 115). Suffice it to say that the United Methodist Church directly impacts the lives of millions of people in the United States alone.

However, in spite of the enormity of this vast and diverse denomination, all is not entirely well. Because the United Methodist Church is not reaching out to new individuals or nurturing young people, Messer (1998) asserts that the United Methodist Church has lost 245 members a day for the last 20 years. Finke and Stark (2000) report that the number of Americans who consider themselves part of the Methodist denomination has decreased from eighty-four to thirty-six out of every one thousand individuals between 1890 and 1990. Messer (1998) also discusses eight trends related to the church in contemporary American culture, including becoming increasingly disestablished, a decrease in denominational loyalty, a new ecumenism, denominations not disappearing, a loss of power and influence among national and church hierarchies and bureaucracies, local churches in danger of becoming the object rather than agent of the mission, paralysis due to theological and political polarization, and a future that is constantly changing due to increased globalization. Clearly, in spite of the fact that the United Methodist Church may be one of the largest denominations in the United States, there is still much work to be done.

Background and Related Questions

Several different but related questions provide the background and inform the framework of this study. Although each of these questions alone could serve as the basis for sufficient motivation for a research project, together they form an elaborate integration of perspectives, combining to form the foundation for this study. The major topical areas related to the research questions include unsuccessful Senior Pastors, seminary preparation for large church pastoral roles, the development of a

professional identity, the itinerant system of appointments, person-environment interaction, and the variety of individuals that interact with Senior Pastors of large United Methodist Churches. In short, all of the following could potentially serve as patterns or factors in the fit, or lack of fit between a Senior Pastor and a large local congregation of the United Methodist Church.

Senior Pastors

In 1995, according to the United States Department of Education projections, 1,358,000 students would be enrolled in roughly 750 graduate programs in America (American Council on Education, 1992, pp. 21-24). Baird (1993) cites a number of reasons why graduate education should be an area of concern for society, including the number of students involved, the future leadership represented, and the high costs per student. Of the students enrolled in Protestant seminaries in the United States, there were 5,439 men and women enrolled in United Methodist Seminaries in the fall of 2000 (Lane, 2002). Many of these individuals will move on to the ranks of the ordained clergy, including some in the United Methodist Church.

The future of any institution is dependent upon resources, whether they are capital or human. The future of the United Methodist Church society is primarily dependent upon the human resources for the leadership of future generations. Both formal and informal education, training, and experience play a role in the leadership of the church. Naturally, this includes the more specific role of the ordained clergy, including Senior Pastors of large churches in this particular Mid-Western Conference.

Efforts to understand why some appointed Senior Pastors in large churches fail could potentially result in informed strategies to enhance the long-term effectiveness of the institution of the church in American society. This is especially true since a Senior Pastor plays such a key role in the direction and success of the church. More specifically, this study will be concerned with understanding the failure of executive leadership of large United Methodist Church Senior Pastors in a particular Mid-Western Conference. This understanding could ultimately result in a more refined and effective system of enacting the itinerancy, not to mention a church that is better equipped to deal with the challenges of spiritual formation in a rapidly changing global society.

Person-Environment Interaction

Given the failure of some Senior Pastors from large United Methodist Churches in the appointive process, questions naturally emerge related to the degree of fit between the pastors and churches in those specific situations. What variables most affected the failure in leadership that might have been known before the appointment was made? What qualities or characteristics of pastors and churches seem to be the biggest factors related to the decision to remove a Senior Pastor because of what has been deemed a poor fit? It is important to note that all of the following considerations could be important factors related to fit.

Seminary Preparation

In the past ten to twenty years, there has been a noticeable shift in the seminary student population, from a more traditional student body just out of college to a

marked increase in older students who are pursuing a second career in the ministry. This trend of an increasingly non-traditional student population in Association of Theological Seminary schools has been well documented in the literature (Larsen, 1992; Messer, 1995). The Book of Discipline, the handbook of the United Methodist Church, makes it clear that ordination is an important component of the hiring process for these seminary graduates (2004). Is there any relationship between a failure at the executive leadership level of a large United Methodist Church and the program of studies and internships at particular seminaries? Are there perceived gaps in seminary preparation programs that are believed to be contributing factors leading to a failure of an appointment as a Senior Pastor in a large United Methodist Church?

Professional Identity

It may be important to explore whether or not there are any missing pieces in the development of a professional identity as a Senior Pastor, factors that may have led to the failure in leadership in some way. Consistent with the work of Carroll (1971), are there structural effects and constraints in seminaries that later impact the clergy? What, if any, are the missing pieces in developing a professional identity as a Senior Pastor for those individuals who have personally experienced a failure in their leadership? Further, what has been the impact of experiencing leadership failure on the professional identity of these Senior Pastors from large United Methodist Churches? How do these individuals make meaning of their experience of failure? How do they evaluate the appointive process of the United Methodist Church based on their experiences?

Finally, what do these Senior Pastors most need in the appointive process? In retrospect, are there processes or elements that they wish had been in place which might have helped them to succeed, or even avert these failed appointments in the first place? What kinds of assistance or resources would have been helpful to them before, during, or at the conclusion of the failed appointment? Are the District Superintendents aware of these dimensions of the candidates and the needs of churches, and are these factors considered as decisions are made when appointments are made?

Variety of Perspectives and Levels of Responsibility

In any system, the failure of an executive leader impacts and is impacted by a variety of factors and is viewed perhaps differently by the perspectives at varying levels of responsibility. In the United Methodist Church, there are a variety of roles that influence and interact directly with the Senior Pastor.

What similarities and differences in perspectives currently exist among the individuals involved at various levels of the organizational structure of the United Methodist Church concerning the failure of executive leadership at the Senior Pastor level? Further, how do these perspectives compare and contrast with one another, both within each particular setting as well as across cases?

Summary

This study has emerged because of the dearth of research related to the failure of executive leadership among the clergy ranks, including the United Methodist Church. The purpose of this study is two-fold:

1. To learn the perceived reasons for the failure of these executive leaders from large churches in a particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church from a variety of perspectives. This study focuses on self constructed reasons and perceptions on why the appointment did not work out, the potential gaps in the development of the professional identity of the Senior Pastor, the potential gaps in the seminary preparation of the Senior Pastor, possible mismatches in the person-environment fit, and an evaluation of the itinerant appointment process by the participants.
2. To identify any transformations in self construction or focused perceptions that results from Kegan and Lahey's (2001) cognitive developmental reflection process over a period of one month.

The purpose of this study then is to gain a better understanding of the reasons for the failure of executive leadership at large United Methodist Churches, where the Senior Pastors lasted for a period of three years or less before a move had to be initiated. The study also extends the use of the reflective process created by Kegan and Lahey (2001) to a qualitative research process in the ministerial context to explore whether it results in transformation in self perceptions. In the end, it is hoped that this study will provide useful information to the leadership of the United Methodist Church, clergy and laity alike, concerning the varying perspectives related to gaps in seminary preparation and the development of the professional identity of Senior Pastors, the reasons for failed appointments based on the fit between the Senior

Pastors and the churches, and the itinerant system in general. Also included are recommendations for the future.

The essence of education is to help people make meaning of their experience, and to employ critical thinking skills to everyday life. This study relates directly to higher education in that it explores the relationship between the failure of executive leadership in large United Methodist Churches and perceived gaps in the development of the professional identity of the Senior Pastors involved and a particular form of higher education focused on seminaries. In addition, the emphasis upon a cognitive-development framework for the interview protocols, coupled with an exploration of the issues and questions related to the interaction between the Senior Pastors and the environment of large United Methodist Churches, makes this study particularly suited to perspectives studied in higher education. Utilizing an eclectic blend of theoretical frameworks, this study highlights the importance of using theory to interpret the results of research, employing the service of teaching and learning across disciplinary lines to the church in society.

This qualitative research project has also been conducted in such a way as to facilitate an evaluation of the participant's construction of the failed ministry, the pastor-church environmental fit, perceptions of the adequacy of seminary preparation and the professional identity development of ministers, and the itinerant system. The patterns of these perceptions are explored, and the participants were encouraged to reflect on these perceptions and the ways that they make meaning of their experiences in these situations. Participants also had an opportunity to engage in a process of

reflection related to the interview questions and their responses for a pre-determined period of time as a potential means of increased self awareness and perhaps change in cognitive development. Chapter two will provide a review of the literature as it relates to this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

While chapter one provided the background and purpose of the study, in this chapter the literature concerning the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church will be reviewed. Also explored will be the literature related to the salient issues in the initial training of clergy in seminary, the development of clergy professional identity, and the fit between the pastor and a church. In addition, the process of self reflection and the dynamics of personality type using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and person-environment interaction will be explained.

It is important to note that the goal in developing a review of the literature is to provide the conceptual capital that will be useful in comparing and discussing the results of this particular study to the existing body of knowledge. Even so, it may not be entirely possible to anticipate every variation on the theme of clergy failure that may emerge during the course of this study. For purposes already established in relation to higher education, the literature pertaining to the seminary preparation of Senior Pastors will be discussed in greater detail. Because of the emergent nature of this qualitative research design, this literature review is intended to provide an

overview in broad strokes, but also be flexible enough to address specific issues that may surface in the interview process.

Bounds of the Research

Perhaps just as important as defining the specific focus of the study is identifying those areas that will not be addressed by this review of the literature. Interestingly enough, the itinerancy is not only a distinctive of the United Methodist Church, but in spite of the variety of perspectives concerning the way that the itinerancy is enacted, it seems to be a unifying core value of the denomination.

In recent years, there has been increased tension in the United Methodist church related to the doctrinal integrity of a number of issues, sparking a flurry of literature related to the arguments posed (Howell, 2003; Case, n.d.; Schaller, 2004). To be sure, the United Methodist Church is not alone in its denominational wrestling to come to terms with a Biblical perspective concerning issues of diversity in contemporary American culture. Even so, this particular research project makes no attempt to address the diversity of political, theological and ideological perspectives currently held within the United Methodist Church. The focus of this study will instead be specifically related to the ways in which the three case studies add to an understanding of the failure of the Senior Pastors in the appointive system of the United Methodist Church, often referred to as the itinerancy or itinerant system.

It is important to note that this overview of the literature does not include any research concerning clergy from non-Protestant denominations, precisely because of the marked differences in theology and theological training. Also not addressed in this

review of the literature are works related to liturgy or the lectionary, Biblical interpretation and theological questions, as these issues are not central to the purposes of this study. In short, for the specific purposes of this study, the focus is on this common denominator in the United Methodist Church called the itinerancy, and the failure of the seminary trained executive leaders or Senior Pastors in three large United Methodist Churches in this particular Mid-Western Conference.

Also, no attempt will be made to situate the itinerant system in either a Biblical or historical context, except to provide a general framework as a brief background for this study. Existing summaries already provide an overview of the historical and Biblical background on the itinerant system, and any attempt to add these elements to the current project would undoubtedly serve to make it unmanageable. Readers seeking this historical and Biblical perspective should refer to the work of Heitzenrater (1993), who provides a thoughtful and concise overview of research related to United Methodist Ministry from 1944 to 1988, and King (1981), who explores the history of ministerial authority in American Methodism from 1760 to 1940. Voorhees (2005) provides a nice summary of the itinerant or appointive system of the United Methodist Church, while McCulloh (1960) and Denison (1985) address a recovery or renewal of the itinerancy. I have simply elected not to provide a more thorough overview of the history and development of the itinerancy, except for a brief overview, as more comprehensive works devoted specifically to that topic are already available.

In addition, there will be no attempt to provide an historical overview of theological or seminary education. These include Roscoe's (1948) very "short

history” of theological education across cultures and denominations from New Testament times to the 19th century. Research related to the personality of clergy as measured by instruments other than the Myers-Briggs will be excluded from this study as well. Finally, this review of the literature does not include the research related to specific characteristics of seminary students.

In short, the focus of this study will be specifically related to the ways in which the three case studies add to an understanding of gaps in seminary preparation and the development of clergy professional identity, as well as the fit between the Senior Pastor and the specific environment of the large church, and the failure of Senior Pastors in the appointive system of large United Methodist Churches. This naturally includes the multitude of ways that the existing literature informs both the foundation of this research project, and the degree to which the results are consistent with the existing literature.

The United Methodist Church

At the outset, it would seem to be helpful to provide a brief overview of the United Methodist Church as it relates to the purposes of this study. The recent works of Schaller (2004), Frank (2002), Tuell (2002) and Harnish (2000) have served to provide a foundational perspective on the current status of the organization, polity and challenges of the United Methodist Church. This overview includes the gifts of United Methodism, the structure of the United Methodist Church, the itinerancy, and those individuals playing key roles related to this research project. It is important to

note that a more detailed description of the roles played by participants in the study is included in chapter three.

The Gifts of United Methodism

Schaller (2004) identifies the common ground of United Methodists, regardless of political or ideological persuasion. These “similarities” include: “a deep commitment to the gospel;” “a willingness to act on our convictions;” “an evangelical zeal to share our beliefs;” “a belief that our faith understanding should inform...action;” and “a deep frustration when our voices are not heard...and when our beliefs do not find expression” (Schaller, 2004, p. 147). Further, it is clear that both passion and the ability to organize are two of the gifts of United Methodism (Schaller, 2004).

The Structure of the United Methodist Church

There are essentially five different layers of organization in the United Methodist Church. At the smallest level, the congregation or local church represents a group of people who worship in a particular setting. A District is a collection of churches in a limited geographical area usually confined to a number of counties. A Conference is a collection of Districts in a wider geographic area like a state or part of a state. A Jurisdiction is one of five larger geographic areas composed of multiple Conferences. And, the General Conference not only includes the five jurisdictions in the United States, but also includes the Central Conferences from around the world. For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on a particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church, one of seventy-two different Conferences

in the United States. This particular Mid-Western Conference includes roughly 1,200 local churches currently divided into eight different districts.

The Itinerancy

According to Mathews (1985, p. 197), “The capstone, the most essential ingredient to this system of plan, was its itinerancy – its traveling ministry. This was the sine quo non that lent coherence to the whole connection and conference structure.” Originally the pattern of the itinerancy in Colonial America was that clergy would travel to all of the churches in their respective circuits every quarter, taking the fifth Sunday as a day off for special preaching. But, over time, the pastors have become more stationary and localized. Richey (1991, p. 24) provides a helpful overview of the itinerancy of early Methodism, explaining that it is frequently seen as the “the most distinguishing feature of the movement,” pointedly asking if in contemporary American culture “the itinerancy has transmuted itself into something else.”

Although the early disadvantages of the itinerant system were often cited as some responsibilities being neglected, the turnover of pastors on a circuit, and the challenge of keeping pastors in the itinerant system, it seems that the challenges of contemporary American culture are far more complex (Schaller, 2004; Messer, 1991; McCulloch, 1960). And whereas appointments usually lasted from three to six months when the itinerancy was first implemented, the range in appointments now is typically much longer. Harnish (2000, p. 145-6) states, “The linkage between conference membership and itinerancy is one of our most important links with our

history and a characteristic of the Methodist movement.” The author goes on to explain that the unintended consequence of decisions concerning United Methodist polity over the years could be to fundamentally change the understanding of the itinerancy, by modifying the relationship between the itinerancy and conference membership.

Much has been written on the itinerant system in recent years, and the conversation is divided among those who see the itinerant system as a hindrance in attracting quality clergy (Hoyle, 2005; Nixon, 2001), and those who cite the benefits of the system (Carr, 2005; Cotton, 2005; Warner, 2005). However, most cite at least some improvements that need to be made to the itinerant system, including addressing clergy compensation (Warner, 2005), revisiting the guaranteed appointment (Pennel, 2005; Schaller, 2004; Frank, 2002), employing consultants to help churches work through change (Hoyle, 2005), and utilizing interim ministers in churches in transition (Hoyle, 2005).

There have been a number of studies exploring the itinerant system in the United Methodist Church specifically focused on cross-racial appointments and ministry (Kim, 2006; Kim, 2002), multiple point charges (Fanin, 2005), the Western North Carolina Conference (Hancock, 1987), the Central Jurisdiction (Dixon, 1955), the California-Nevada Annual Conference (Hillman, 1999), and the Central New York Conference (Hall, 1979). Other studies and articles have focused on the open itinerancy or the idea that all appointments are equally available to all clergy in the United Methodist Church (Robinson, 2005; Sadio, 1984; Schreckengost, 1984). The

results of these studies indicate that there need to be intentional efforts to become a more inclusive church in a global marketplace, and that diversity can breathe new life into the denomination, but that leadership is essential to bring about change, especially in providing training to local congregations.

Variations in Language

It is important to note that throughout the literature there are two variations on the actual spelling of itinerancy. The first, consistent with the Library of Congress list of subject headings, is itineracy, most likely based on the writing related to the implementation of this system in colonial America, but also reflecting the original spelling in the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church. For the purposes of this project, unless specifically noted otherwise in a quote, I have chosen to use the more contemporary version of the spelling, namely itinerancy.

Chaotic Itinerancy

It is interesting to note that in the chaos theory branch of physics there is a term called chaotic itinerancy (Kaneko, 2003). Chaotic itinerancy is a feature of a complex biological system, one composed of complex subsystems. And, the subsystems have certain notable characteristics called chaotic attractors. These chaotic attractors decay over time, and are replaced by newly formed attractors, causing a kind of interaction between organization and chaos.

Clearly, this concept of chaotic itinerancy could be applied to the complex system of large United Methodist Churches as well. This is especially true in the case

of the failed appointment of a Senior Pastor, where a sometimes literal “chaotic attractor” is replaced by a potentially more suitable leader (Doty, 2007).

Major Tenets of the Itinerancy

Messer, D.L. (1991) provides an overview of the six major assumptions of the itinerant system. These include a connectional and not a congregational system, clergy yielding their rights to selecting assignments, appointments made by an objective Bishop, a covenant agreement, a guaranteed appointment for every pastor and clergy for every church, and equal opportunity for all clergy to serve in all places. For the purposes of this study, a number of terms are defined in the context of the United Methodist Church, including Ordained Elders, appointments, District Superintendent, Bishop, consultation, Staff Parish Relations Committee, Local Pastors, and connectional.

Ordained Elders

Although it is commonly held that every Christian is in fact a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, there are two variations of ordained clergy in the United Methodist Church, as revised at the 1996 General Conference, namely Deacons and Elders (Harnish, 2000). In the United Methodist Church, ordination is based in the apostolic ministry, and carries with it a new identity (Harnish, 2000).

The focus of this study will be on the Ordained Elders, those individuals who are called by God, affirmed by their local churches and ultimately the Board of Ordained Ministry before being confirmed by the ordained ministers in full connection at the Annual Conference for a lifetime of ministry. (Tuell, 2002; Harnish, 2000).

Candidates for ordained ministry are approved by no less than a two-thirds majority of their local churches (Tuell, 2002). And, where Ordained Deacons are typically called to a ministry of word and service, Ordained Elders are called to a ministry of service, word, sacrament and order. (Tuell, 2002).

Appointment

Schaller (2004, p. 173) states that the goal of “every appointment represents as close to an ideal match between the gifts, skill, personality, experience, theological stance, and priorities of that minister, and the needs of that position.” Appointments are made by the Bishop, with assistance from the Cabinet of District Superintendents. Ideally, the fit between the Senior Pastor and the church are congruent, where the needs of the church match the gifts of the Senior Pastor. The variables noted above are important considerations related to this study.

District Superintendent

Schaller (2004) reports that in 1966, a District Superintendent had shared with him that after taking two years to learn the job there was only four years left to actually do the job. Schaller (2004, p. 50) asserts that “Today, a reasonable expectation is that a new District Superintendent who is a lifelong learner...should be able to master the set of skills required for that particular district in somewhere between ten and twenty years.” The author goes on to challenge the term of office of a District Superintendent of a maximum of six to eight years, noting that what may have been appropriate in 1955 may no longer be the best fit. Schaller (2004, p. 49) also explains that “the District Superintendent is expected to bring a far higher level of

competence than was required as recently as the 1970's," in a myriad of areas. In what way does the limited term of the complex role of District Superintendents impact the large church appointment failures?

Usually impacted in positive ways as a result of their experiences as a part of the Cabinet (Thomas, 1982), District Superintendents have been described as "a key catalyst" related to renewal in the United Methodist Church (Matthews, 1991). They can also facilitate the development of growth and change when supporting ineffective clergy (McCoy, 1991). Although there are indeed times when District Superintendents transition back into the role of a Senior Pastor, typically in larger churches (Chisholm, 1984), necessitating transition assistance of their own, it has also been noted that a District Superintendent has an impact on the competency of the local church pastor (Jones, 1987). In what ways does a District Superintendent role relate to the competency of the Senior Pastors in the failed appointments?

More specifically, in a study of Houston North District of the Texas Conference in the United Methodist Church, Jones (1987) asserts that the District Superintendent can provide invaluable assistance to the Senior Pastor and the Staff Parish Relations Committee through effective supervision, positively impacting the ministry of the church. Similarly, Isaman (2005, p. 121) notes that "effective ministry is due to a complex set of dynamics working in harmony," but that "District Superintendents not only have the opportunity but the responsibility to help nurture an environment of learning and encourage the pastors in their districts to continue to grow." To what degree is the supervision provided by a District Superintendent of the

clergy and the Staff Parish Relations Committees an issue in the failed appointments of Senior Pastors in large United Methodist Churches?

Bishop

Mathews (1985, p. 202) defines the role of Bishops in the United Methodist Church as responsible to provide general oversight of a complex system where the clergy and churches relinquish their 'rights' for self determinism in favor of a more objective or impartial authority who "acts on behalf of the whole church." Currently, there is an eight-year limitation on the tenure of a Bishop in the United Methodist Church. But, in special circumstances defined as missional purposes, a Bishop can be appointed to serve an additional four years by a two-thirds majority vote of the jurisdictional Episcopal Committee. In any case, however, according to the Book of Discipline, a Bishop can only serve actively until age seventy, at which point s/he would need to retire. How does the tenure, actions and decisions of a Bishop relate to failed large church Senior Pastor appointments?

Staff Parish Relations Committee

A standing committee in each United Methodist Church, the Staff Parish Relations Committee, also called the Pastor Parish Relations Committee, is responsible for the staffing and professional development in the local church. As a general rule, the District Superintendent is always available to the Staff Parish Relations Committee in each local church to answer questions and serve as a resource. In addition, meetings of this group never take place without the knowledge of the Senior Pastor and/or District Superintendent. This group is one of several standing

committees in the local church that report to the Administrative Board or executive committee of each local United Methodist Church.

Several studies have explored the Staff Parish Relations Committee in the United Methodist Church, including the supervision of this committee in a process of staff change (Bailey, 1991), maximizing the role of this group within a church (Aldridge, 1991), and exploring the consultation process (Crook, 1987). The results of these studies indicate that here again, the relationship with the District Superintendent is critical because of the catalytic role played in relationship to this essential committee in United Methodist Churches. Specifically, the District Superintendent consults with the Staff Parish Relations Committee concerning the mission and needs of the church, and provides assistance and support in pursuing a vision for ministry, especially in the midst of leadership change and transition. How does this particular Committee, and the relationship between District Superintendents and the Staff Parish Relations Committees in these large United Methodist Churches relate to the failed appointments?

Consultation

Consultation is the name for the process that the District Superintendents currently use to discuss how things are going in each local church with the respective clergy and the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Geis (1991, p. 104-105) points out that the consultation process has evolved from the “changes in family structure and life-style” of clergy, “greater racial and gender inclusiveness,” and that “changes in the mix brought changes in power distribution.” Geis (1991, p. 113) encourages

leadership to “not settle for structural alternations of the clergy itinerancy system alone as the solution to our uncertainty about the mission of the church in a pluralistic world.”

The Bishop, in conjunction with the Cabinet of Bishops, uses a process of spiritual discernment, exploring churches with vacancies or potential vacancies, along with the list of all clergy in the conference as possible candidates. This prospectus is based on profiles developed by the District Superintendents in their consultation with the Staff Parish Relations Committees of the churches in their respective Districts. Millard (1991, p. 71) suggests a return to the process of “spiritual discernment” in the itinerant system, based on the idea that God is present and able to help people understand what is best if we only listen, calling District Superintendents, pastors, and Staff Parish Relations Committees in “developing a similar deep desire to live in vital relationship with God.” What do the results of this process of spiritual discernment look like in large United Methodist Churches that have experienced a failed Senior Pastor appointment?

Local Pastors

Aspiring Ordained Elders, Local Pastors either go to seminary or participate in an alternative course of study, taking classes at a slower pace because of vocational and/or financial constraints, like on the weekends, in the evening or during summer breaks. Many individuals who pursue a Local Pastor’s License are second career, and/or bi-vocational pastors, serving a church or churches in addition to their full time jobs.

Connectional

Connectional is a term with roots in the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions. It refers to the belief that every church exists in connection with every other church in a given conference of the United Methodist Church. In addition, it is important to note that Ordained Elders are not considered members of a local church, but instead are considered to be servants of God and members of the greater connectional United Methodist Church (Tuell, 2002). Harnish (2000, p. 136) explains, “For clergy, membership in the conference takes precedence over identification over any specific local church.” Harnish (2000, p. 136, 137) goes on to say, “The Annual Conference clergy session becomes, in a very real way, their congregation,” and “their commitment to the ministry of the connection takes precedence over ministry in a specific congregation.”

Summary of Itinerancy and Related Roles

Clearly, the concepts of ordination, connection, and the itinerancy are all interrelated. McCulloh (1960, p. 37) states:

Conceivably the connectional system is operative apart from the itinerant principle; but the reverse is inconceivable. The connection was needed to weld into tight bond the wandering prophets of the itinerancy. In turning to the latter, we should be clear on its dual form, consisting of circulation within circulation.

Similarly, Harnish (2000, p. 131, 141), referring to the “dual membership” of conference membership and ordination that make up the itinerant system, explains, “For Elders, conference membership and itinerancy need to be seen as a mission

strategy, rather than as a support system for members of the Order.” Harnish (2000, p. 132) summarizing the intended purpose of the itinerancy by stating: “Through many changes across the years, the basic commitment to be sent, rather than to be called or to initiate their own appointment, characterized the covenant of Methodist clergy,” naturally growing out of a shared evangelistic mission. Messer (1991, p. 18) points out that the system of seniority for clergy in the United Methodist Church “has encouraged a progressive rise in status and money over time.” Treese (1991, p. 80) agrees that “salaries and seniority dominate itineracy to the point of idolatry.”

Oden (1991, 52-54) describes a number of “pressure points” in the itinerant system. These include two career families, housing allowances instead of parsonages, limited appointments for women and minorities, and new and non-traditional lifestyles of pastors. Also included are the diverse understanding of consultation, self-limiting family concerns, the commitment of pastors to unofficial groups and caucuses, a rigid seniority system, growing salary disparity, appointments beyond the local church, and large church pastors. Combined, these challenges put enormous strain on the existing system of appointing pastors to churches. Similarly, Treese (1991) identifies several challenges for the itinerant system, including salaries and seniority, dual careers, and ineffective pastors. Schaller (1991) asks if the clergy or the congregation is the client in the process of making appointments.

Oden (1991, p. 60) suggests a number of “ingredients to redeem and renew” the itinerant system, including: a clear and consistent consultation policy and process, the supervisory role of District Superintendents, honesty in the Cabinet environment, a

safety net to discover and nurture the overlooked and underutilized, a coordinated and consistent process of interpreting the nature of itinerant ministry, a clarifying and reclaiming process for incompetent and ineffective pastors, and exiting procedures that are fair and caring. Millard (1991) highlights the importance of prayer and spiritual discernment in the consultation process. And, Carder (2005, p. 25) discusses the relationship between clergy compensation and morale in the itinerant system, sharing a particular example where a series of promotions for one pastor “gave him more money and salary but robbed him of satisfaction and the rural churches of very effective pastoral leadership.”

Additional Related Terminology

There are several other essential terms that relate to the purposes of this study some of which are particular to the operation or interpretation of the United Methodist Church. These terms include: General Conference, call to ministry, Book of Discipline, guaranteed appointments, pastoral charge, local church, and long-term appointments.

General Conference

The General Conference, composed of both lay and clergy delegates elected by their peers, is the policy making body of the United Methodist church, one that represents the different geographic based conferences around the world. The General Conference is convened for a period of two weeks every four years, and is slated to meet again in the summer of 2008.

Call to Ministry

Certainly one of the hallmarks of ordained ministry is the idea of an inward call to ministry, a kind of discerning from the deepest parts of one's being that there is a summons to serve in ministry out of a sense that one was created for that particular purpose. With respect to this call, McCulloh (1960, P. 16) states, "The assertion of the 'inward call to preach' characterizes distinctively, the Wesleyan Methodist understanding of the ministry" where an individual responds to the initiative of God with the affirmation of the Church. Willimon (1983) points out that this call to the ministry is not only discerned individually, and affirmed corporately, but that it also marks a responsibility corporately to the denomination. Harnish (2000, p. 75) states, "ordination represents the outward call of the Church, affirming the inward call of the individual responding in faith to God's initiative." However, at the same time, "it is important to note here that our Church has never attempted to put a particular interpretation on just what a 'call' is, believing that God is capable of calling persons in an infinite variety of ways" (Tuell, 2002, p. 18).

Book of Discipline

Often referred to as the Discipline, The Book of Discipline (2004) is the set of rules or book of law pertaining to the United Methodist Church. Proposed changes to the Book of Discipline are voted on every four years during meetings of the General Conference.

Guaranteed Appointment

The idea of the guaranteed appointment is part of the covenant agreement between the United Methodist Church, who agrees to care for the pastors and their families, and the individual pastors, who are members of the connectional system and not the local church. In turn, the individual pastors agree to serve at the pleasure of the Bishop, or where asked to serve, upholding the order, liturgy, doctrine and discipline of the United Methodist Church as set forth in the Book of Discipline and the Book of Worship. A number of individuals agree that this outmoded concept of the guaranteed appointment be abolished (Hillman, 1999; Oden, 1991; Treese, 1991).

Un (1991) attributes the growth in Korean Methodism, as well as longer pastorates, enhanced relationships between pastors and District Superintendents, and a more empowered laity to the abolishment of the guaranteed appointment in 1978.

Harnish (2000, p. 135) asserts:

there is a need for support systems for clergy...But if conference membership is seen primarily as a tenure track with guarantee of salary and benefits; if the Orders become lobbying groups for their members; if itinerancy and Episcopal appointment are viewed as job security rather than as a missional strategy, we will never see the revival of Methodism as a movement capable of bringing new life and holiness to the world.

Pastoral Charge

A pastoral charge is the particular community or communities of faith over whom a pastor is appointed by a Bishop to serve. In most cases this would represent a single church. However, there are also a number of pastors who serve what are called multiple point charges, usually smaller, and more rural churches.

Local Church

According to Tuell (2002), the heritage of the United Methodist Church is to serve the world in which it is situated, a context for life and ministry out of which the local church has grown. The author goes on to explain that this model grows out of the model of Jesus Christ, who lived to serve others. Naturally, the idea of serving out of gratitude for all the blessings that one has received has naturally provided a kind of necessary balance between worship and service.

Issues Related To the Itinerant System

There are also a number of issues related to the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church. These complicating factors include: long-term appointments, interim pastors, clergy couples, spouses and families, and employment relocation.

Long Term Appointments

A study related to long-term pastorates revealed six benefits, including deeper relationships between the clergy and congregation members, increased experience for the clergyperson and the church, increased stability, enhanced spiritual growth potential, and personal benefits for the clergyperson (Oswald, 1983). Oswald also noted some potential liabilities of a long-term pastorate, including the increased likelihood of clergy burnout, a stagnant climate, and a tendency toward over identification between the clergyperson and the church.

With respect to the appointment system, Schaller (2004, p. 72) states, "While long pastorates do not automatically produce large churches, it is rare to find a large Protestant church in America that has not benefited from a long pastorate." Schaller

(2004, p. 172-173) goes on to say that “the ideal goal will be for twenty years to be viewed as the minimum.” While the common belief is often articulated that United Methodist Pastors are moved every two to four years, the current reality is that the typical tenure for many Senior Pastors is often now much longer. Ludwig (2002) advises new pastors to be intentional about providing clear goals, providing pastoral care, fostering mutual accountability, and building trust in beginning what will hopefully be a long term appointment.

Buck (2003, p. 73) explored the tenure of pastors in planting churches, reporting three “primary reasons” for clergy turnover as “leadership conflict, pressure to produce results, and emotional burnout.” His significant findings potentially applicable to this study include the importance of “experience, training and tenure expectations” of the clergy; the critical “role of the supervisor and ‘support system;”” the “selection” process being “one of the most strategic decisions;” and to attend to “the traumatic impact of a pastoral transition...is not to be underestimated” (Buck, 2003, pp. 69-70).

Danielson (2001) interviewed twenty pastors affiliated with the Western New York Conference of the United Methodist Church who followed long-term predecessors, after his own less than gratifying experience in the same situation. With respect to the individual displacing the long term pastor, he noted the paramount importance of communicating love, self awareness on the part of the pastor, the need to understand the dynamics in the congregation, and the foundational role of ego strength in effective leadership. Danielson (2001, p. 38) emphasizes the importance of

assessing the appropriate style of leadership for the church, delineating between a rancher, who equips others for ministry, and a shepherd, who personally care for people, based on the work of Schaller (1977).

Danielson (2001, p. 4) points out that a “pastoral transition inevitably plunges a church into a period of instability,” highlighting the importance of building trusting relationships, entering into and studying the culture of the church, listening, and being especially attentive to the dynamics of grief over the loss of their former pastor.

Danielson (2001, p. 91) states, “The most common issue regarding predecessors involved pastors who had moved on to other ministry positions in other communities but continued to make contact with members of the congregation.” Danielson (2001, p. 92) explains, “The most successful transitions took place when predecessors were able to step away from the role of pastor,” adding that doing so “requires considerable ego strength” and “a ‘self’ that is not overly attached to vocation.” Danielson (2001, p. 92) goes on to say, “Most pastors appear to have a strong need to be needed.

Unable to separate self from the pastoral role, some predecessors have contributed to very difficult transitions” and “continue to interfere in the dynamics of the church because they are unable not to be the pastor.”

Seymour (2000) discussing the value of long-term appointments, explains that a good fit between a pastor and a congregation enhances the leadership possibilities rarely possible when there are frequent pastoral changes. Even so, there does seem to be a trend toward longer pastorates in the United Methodist Church, unlike what seemed to be the case in earlier years (Danielson, 2001). In order to increase the

likelihood of a long term appointment that leads to sustained growth , clergy are advised to be cautious about making changes for at least the first year, love the people, display strong leadership, and exhibit self awareness (Danielson, 2001).

While the topic of these studies seems loosely connected to a failure of large church Senior Pastors, the notion of a long-term pastorate is increasingly the ideal in the United Methodist Church. To the extent that the systemic deficiencies are addressed, this ideal could easily be a reality.

Interim Pastors

The need for interim pastors immediately following long-term appointments in local churches is beginning to gain widespread support as a strategy to assist congregations in addressing their grief (Weisberg, 2002). Weisberg (2002) described his journey as a pastor who was brought into a church setting following a moral failure of a long-term appointment, describing the devastation in the church and a toxic environment for leadership. Gebhart (1999) also followed a long-term pastor in an appointment, writing about his experience. Miles (2000) provides an overview of the theology and practice of intentional interim ministry.

Though the work of Clark (1981) focuses more generally on a Protestant church, she does make it clear that following a long-term pastor requires a skilled interim minister, but that the nature of some of the work is related to grief and loss. Suffice it to say that several authors have explored the unintended consequence of pastors inadvertently serving only on an interim basis immediately following a long-term pastor in a local church (Danielson, 2001).

Holland (2005, pp. 26-27) identifies three different types of interim ministers, including pastors who are “filling the gap” until a new appointment is set to arrive, pastors who are serving in “intentional interim ministry” who have “a stated agreement,” and “ordinary appointments” dispatched to a church in turmoil. Holland (2005, p. 27) explains that intentional interim ministry is “not yet successfully translated into United Methodist vocabulary, polity, and practice,” although it is used by other denominations, recommending that this model for ministry be used more widely by the United Methodist Church.

Gebhart (1999) provides some perspectives of transitional leadership after long term pastorates, after following a pastor who had been in the same church for thirty-three years, noting that clergy tenure impacts a church’s response to change. For clergy who have found themselves inadvertently in an interim appointment Holland (2005) adds, it “does not remove the sense of failure, the bruises from the conflict, or the agony of moving once again so soon. Holland (2005, p. 27) goes on to note that the spiritual anguish of a disrupted call to ministry will be slow to heal for both pastor and congregation.” Kerr (1988) facilitated four group sessions with two different churches following a sudden change in pastoral leadership. Kerr (1988) discussed the resulting impact on members of the congregation who were struggling to resolve their issues related to grief, noting that unresolved loss was triggered by the pastoral transition.

Women and Minorities

Rader (2005) notes that advances have been made for women in the ministry. Others suggest making the itinerant system truly equitable in practice for women and minorities (Alsgaard, 2005), allowing some variation of free agency for pastors and/or churches (Frank, 2002; Nixon, 2001), and exploring whether the current system is the best method (Hoyle, 2005; Pearl, 2005; Frank, 2002). Similarly, Perl and Chang (2000, p. 184, 185) note that women clergy in Protestant denominations “receive lower income returns to their degrees than men” and “highly educated women” also “are disproportionately excluded from prestigious (and financially rewarding) Senior Pastor positions and shunted into less desirable congregations.” Because previous research suggests that women are often relegated to smaller churches, and less visible roles, it will be interesting to see to what degree women will play a part in this study involving twelve participants from three randomly selected large church settings (Pearl and Chang, 2000; Stevens, 1989; Carroll, Hargrove and Lummis, 1983; Lehman, 1980).

Clergy Couples

Messer (1991, p. 21) states that “there are now more than nine hundred clergy couples in United Methodism,” and “one-fourth of all clergywomen are part of a clergy couple.” Waters and Waters (1991, p. 144) describe their challenges as a clergy couple and members of a global ethnic community. They assert that “Those who are candidates for ordination continue to be frustrated by pressure to conform to a mostly white, male, and relatively affluent model of ministry.” They go on to say that “it is

not the problematic aspect of our presence, but the potentiality of our presence for positive ministry that confronts the itineracy system and coaxes it to change” (Waters and Waters, 1991, pp. 145). Messer (1991, p. 15) asserts, “Clergy couples are committed to serving the church, but, not if their relationship is broken by the pressure of living hundreds of miles apart.” More specifically, they challenge the leadership of the United Methodist Church to view their presence as a clergy couple positively instead of as a problem, find equitable ways to compensate clergy couples, and show sensitivity to the experiences of clergy couples by listening more.

Spouses and Families

Messer and Stovall (1991, p. 132-133) eloquently address the challenges of the itineracy on clergy spouses and families, and state, “Many question whether itineracy is not a utilitarian concept that places the good of the larger church over the good of its individual members, in particular, the families of clergy.” Messer and Stovall (1991, p. 132-133) go on to assert that “the church needs to find a more equitable balance between the needs of the institutional church and the clergy families who faithfully serve it” Messer and Stovall (1991, p. 132-133). Messer (1991, p.15) adds, “In a time when both clergy and spouses may have professional identities and may feel economic pressures, arbitrary actions may not only disrupt callings and careers, but also destroy marriages and families.”

Watson (1991) conducted a survey of United Methodist ministers and their spouses in the state of North Carolina, and found that greater stress was experienced by younger ministers and their spouses, couples with children as opposed to those with

no children, and couples where the spouse was employed outside the home. Also, spouses generally experienced higher levels of stress than the ministers, probably due to the fact that they had not signed on as itinerant, but simply had to live with the impact of that system chosen by their spouse. Also, according to Darling and Hill (2006, p. 459), “Clergy fathers with young children are more likely to be in senior or solo pastorates than clergy without children because denominational leaders promote male clergy with families to serve in larger churches where salaries are higher.”

Darling, Hill, and McWey (2004, p. 263) assert that “compassion fatigue,” and “intrusions on family boundaries” place unique pressures on clergypersons and their spouses, recommending attending to their own spiritual life, a network of support, continuing education, required internships, feedback from their churches, increasing clergy compensation, spending more time with their families, and further research. Specifically, Darling, Hill and McWey (2004, p. 275) note that “clergy need increased and on-going support networks for themselves and their families,” since “The isolation clergy feel is real and will not dissipate unless support systems are built into the structure of their denominational hierarchy and polity.” And, with respect to continuing educational programs, they suggest ones “that would address pertinent parish-congregational boundary issues, family process issues, financial management issues, administrative management issues, and health and family wellness issues,” emphasizing that “creating a forum for sharing is critical” (Darling, Hill, and McWey, 2004, p. 275).

Employment Relocation

Watson (1984) documented his ministry transition to a new church, noting that he had underestimated the significant level of stress that resulted from the attachment that he and his family had to the last church, as he detailed the sources and levels of stress for each family member. He recommended pastors reflect on their own history, develop a historical profile of the church, and spend a considerable amount of time in learning the context and how the church does things in planning for the future.

Consistent with the work of Watson (1984), Oswald (1984, p. 15) notes that “clergy need to take the first impressions parishioners have of them very seriously,” because “people made impulsive decisions about their new pastor” and those “impressions ended up being rather permanent.”

Lewis and Lewis, 1996) provide a nice overview of a context for organizational change in making work places more family friendly. More specifically as it relates to the subject of this study, Cooper (1996) discusses the impact of corporate relocation on the incidence of coronary heart disease, increased levels of stress, and strain on finances, friends and family relationships. Cooper (1996, p. 93) notes that not only is it “the case that there are many situations in which employers will require employees to be mobile,” but with an “imposed” relocation “the individual and the family are likely to suffer in the short and medium term, and the organization in the longer term.”

Cooper (1996, p. 95) asserts:

Clearly relocation policies can be unfriendly to all families at certain stages, in so far as they produce difficulties for employees, their spouses, and their

children, unless properly handled. However, decisions about job mobility and relocation can be particularly difficult for dual-career families, who are now the most typical family form. The problems of relocating can be considerable, even for single earners, who have to take account of factors such as children's educational and social networks.

Cooper (1996, p. 97-98) states, "Employees who are single, or whose spouses are also ready for a move, may welcome a change of location; but dual career spouses should not be compelled to compete with those in different family circumstances." Cooper (1996, p. 98) goes on to say that "A more liberal attitude could be taken toward those who refuse to relocate at certain stages in the life cycle so that it does not prejudice their opportunities of promotion later in their careers."

Cooper (1996, p. 98) asserts, "The spouse's role in the individual's job and career development has been almost ignored by employing organizations," and that "Organizations will also have to reconsider attitudes towards women executives." Cooper (1996, p. 98) also discusses a variety of support systems that can be put in place to assist individuals and families in transition, including counseling services, flexible schedules, assistance with buying and selling a home, and job finding assistance for the working spouse. In discussing the challenges of dealing with uncertainty related to career plans and opportunities, Cooper (1996, p. 98) states that current and "honest communication can only help to minimize the level of uncertainty about prospective developments and provide for greater acceptance and a smoother transition when it occurs."

Price (1999) examined the perceptions of twenty wives concerning the relocation of their husbands for employment purposes within the past year. The study

highlights the importance of establishing a routine, the loss and loneliness experienced in the move, the desire to establish a new social network, and the concern related to the adjustment of children still living at home. Reeher (1994) explored the relocation of clergy and families in the Florida United Methodist Conference, suggesting pre-relocation support and a post-relocation retreat and resources to support the entire family. Could it be that pastors might need additional supports for themselves and their families, or that there are added issues to address following an experience of leadership failure that resulted in yet another employment-related relocation?

Frame (1993) compared the well-being of relocated United Methodist clergy and spouses with the well being of clergy and spouses who were not relocated in the itinerant system of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. The results of her study revealed no significant differences between those who were moved and those who were not moved. But, even though the clergy spouses exhibited significantly lower levels of well being than did the clergy, perhaps it was because most women were employed outside the home and lacked the built-in support of clergy colleagues in the area. The author noted that, on the average across the denomination the United Methodist clergy in this nation move every four years. Oddly enough, Frame (1993) consciously chose to exclude women and ethnic minority clergy from her study, simply because they composed a relatively small number of the clergy in the conference. However, she did not see that as a limitation of her study.

Cooper (1996, p. 95) states, “There are therefore strong quality of life and business rationales for companies to modify their relocation practices, as stress can have substantial costs for organizations.” Cooper (1996, p. 95) goes on to say, “There are also gender issues to be considered...with a particular focus on dual-career families.” The author concludes by encouraging creativity and flexibility in relocation policies and support programs and services that are responsive to changing needs (Cooper, 1996).

Summary

Hancock (1987) points out that contemporary American culture includes clergy couples, women in ministry, and economic realities for clergy families where both the clergy and spouse work outside the home, emphasizing the growing complexity in the appointive system of the United Methodist Church. Hancock (1987) goes on to remind readers of the reality that the itinerant system was developed when single pastors were the rule, as opposed to what now is clearly the exception in ministry. Messer (1991, p. 16) concurs, noting, “A ‘redeemed and renewed’ itineracy requires more theological and sociological attention to the drastically changed family structures of contemporary and future United Methodist clergy.”

Robinson (2005, p. 22) notes that “The itinerant system is at its best when the committee on pastor/parish relations is able to articulate the needs, characteristics, and opportunities for mission of the church.” Robinson (2005, p. 22) goes on to say that “The same is true when the pastor’s profile reflects his or her gifts, evidence of God’s grace, professional experience, expectations, and the needs of the pastor’s family.”

Harnish (2000, p. 107) concludes, “Though under great strain today, Methodism’s unique form of itinerancy has been one of our strengths.”

Operation of the Itinerancy

There are a number of elements in the itinerant system that relate to this research project. These include requests for transfer, issues related to the transition of pastors, and the philosophy and practice of open itinerancy.

Requests for Transfer

Edwards, (2000) conducted a study of clergy in the United Methodist Church, attempting to identify the factors that made them request a transfer to another assignment. The author determined that there seemed to be no dominant theme or pattern, and that the decision was based on the beliefs of the individual pastor. Are there dominant themes or patterns in the origin and nature of requests for transfer in the case of failed appointments at large United Methodist Churches?

Transition

Danielson (2001, p. 6) defines an unsuccessful transition as “a succession in which the new pastor cannot state that he or she has become a respected leader for the congregation and in which destructive conflict is present in the congregation.” Yet, at the same time, Danielson (2001) only included pastors in his study who had not only followed a long-term appointment, but who had also been in that appointment for a minimum of two years. Danielson (2001, p. 5) asserts that “the rate of failure could be reduced if pastors and churches build a strategy for success based on accurate information regarding such transitions.” Also, oddly enough, Danielson (2001) was

unable to find enough pastors to be included in his sample, so he added an another member not from the sample to keep his number of participants at an even twenty, not to mention his pilot being based on interviews with pastors who only met part of the criteria for his study. Are there specific factors or gaps in information that lead to an unsuccessful transition of a newly appointed pastor to a large United Methodist Church?

Open Itinerancy

Morrison and Caldwell (1991) charge that there are still contested boundaries in the itinerant system, because every appointment is not truly “open” to women and minorities. The authors assert that although there is an assumption “that major resistance to open itineracy is rooted within the attitudes of the laity,” that pastors have occasionally used that excuse ‘to justify moving slowly in the appointment process’ (Morrison and Caldwell, 1991, p. 119).

Kim (2002) explored cross-racial appointments in two churches in a dissertation including two chapters of one page each in length. The review of the literature that listed his sources included no additional information. Ultimately, Kim (2002) encouraged cross racial appointments as a means of facilitating racial harmony in the local church.

Hall (1979) provides an overview of the placement process for United Methodist pastors in the Central New York Conference. Sadio (1984) uses two case studies to examine the degree to which the itinerant system truly is open, and appointments are made without respect to difference. Sadio (1984) affirms the value

of open itinerancy and expresses frustration with congregational attitudes toward open itinerancy.

Schreckengost (1984) examined the effect of racial, ethnic and sexual bias on the system of open itinerancy in the East Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. The author surveyed 933 laypersons from 161 local churches with a full-time pastor, finding that younger pastors and those with solid counseling skills were met with greater receptivity. In addition, respondents who attended church more regularly, or who had women pastors also displayed a greater receptivity to difference. Not only was latent bias found to be more significant than overt prejudice based on levels of receptivity, but reported experiences of racism or sexism education had little effect, as did having a pastor who differed ethnically. Although the work of Kim, Schreckengost (1984), and Sadio (1984) relate more generally to the appointment of ministers in the United Methodist Church than to the failure of appointed Senior Pastors, these studies do indeed inform the current project. More specifically, it is critical to be attentive to the multitude of ways that prejudice may be a factor in undermining the appointed Senior Pastors.

Unique Challenges

Treese (1991, p. 76) notes that the “itinerancy functions continually on four levels.” This author goes on to identify these levels as theological in best responding to the needs of the whole church, administrative in fitting people into a system, related to values because salary is the impetus behind appointments, and the culture. Treese (1991, p. 76) explains that the culture of United Methodism “assumes that

contemporary life-styles and career expectations simply are not open to appeals for sacrifice and self-denial, however demanding missional needs may be in specific appointment situations.” Schaller (1991) rightly points out that part of the current challenge with the itinerancy is in identifying the client. And, Treese (1991) identifies one of the challenges related to the enactment of the itinerancy as differing views of its missional purpose of the seventy-two different conferences and 37,514 local churches. There was only one remark that I read related to the potential fallibility of the itinerant system from a presiding Bishop. Simply stated, this refreshing admission was: “We will make mistakes and create bad matches, and we can correct those mistakes” (Whitfield, 2005).

Summary

Oden (1991, p. 52-54) describes what he calls the “pressure points” on the itinerant system, asserting that serving “‘without reserve’ has lost much of its meaning.” These “pressure points” include: two career families, the provision of housing allowances instead of parsonages, a limited number of appointments for women and minorities who tend to serve at smaller churches with less pay, and the new and non-traditional life styles of pastors. Also included in the author’s discussion of “pressure points” are the wide variety of perspectives on the consultation process, self-limiting family concerns, the commitment of pastors to unofficial groups and caucuses, a rigid system of seniority, a growing salary disparity, appointments beyond the local church, and large-church pastorates.

Oden (1991, p 60) suggests seven ingredients as part of a larger recipe designed to renew the itinerancy. These include “a clear and concise consultation policy and process,” confidentiality in cabinet proceedings, “a safety net to discover and nurture the overlooked and underutilized,” and consistency in articulating the itinerancy. The author also suggests an equitable way of dealing with individuals pondering other vocational options, the paramount role and nature of District Superintendent supervision, and “a clarifying and reclaiming process for incompetent and ineffective pastors with track records of destructive patterns toward themselves and/or their congregations.”

Oden (1991, p. 56) states, “the issue before the United Methodist Church is not an itinerant vs. nonitinerant ministry. The issue is that of a vital itinerancy that is ‘redeemed and renewed’ or a weakened itinerancy that reacts defensively to all the pressure points on the system.” Messer (1991, 158) provides perhaps the most comprehensive contemporary perspective of the itinerancy, summarizing the “crisis of confidence” in the system, advocating a “redemptive renewal” and a “radical removal.”

Based on my reading and experience in the United Methodist Church, it does seem that the itinerant system ideally relies on the maximum functioning of all the major parts of the system. These major parts include the local churches involved, represented by the Staff Parish Relations Committee, the Cabinet represented by the District Superintendents, and the Senior Pastors. Naturally, when dealing with human systems, sometimes there are systemic failures. It will be interesting to explore the

nature of these three specific failures in the itinerancy, as well as the ways in which my experience has been the exception or the rule in the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church.

Similar to Burnett's (1976) work, my goal in pursuing this current research project is not primarily as a means of complaint, but to encourage reflection.

However, unlike Burnett, I acknowledge that this dissertation is birthed out of a deeply personal lament related to my own, rather limited experience in the United Methodist Church. But, my intention is not to stop there, but to model reflective practice as I work on this project, and conversely as it works on me.

Issues of Fit

Three different theoretical frames, along with the literature base related to clergy leadership were utilized to bring some potential clarity to the fit between the Senior Pastor and the specific environment of a particular large United Methodist Church. These include person – environment interaction, cognitive structural development, and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Each of these theories is explained in more detail below, along with a review of the literature related to clergy leadership.

Person – Environment Interaction

Kurt Lewin was a social psychologist, often credited as coining the phrase “action research,” who developed what is commonly known as field theory.

Hall and Lindzey (1978) summarize Lewin's field theory framework as follows:

$B = f(P \times E)$. Specifically, behavior is understood as a function of the characteristics of a person interacting with the characteristics of his or her environment. The emphasis is in the degree of interaction as degrees of fit and/or misfit as determined by characteristics of the person (P) and the environment (E) that are related to the behavior (B) in question.

Cognitive Structural Development

Robert Kegan is a cognitive structural theorist who developed a framework to understand the development of meaning making capacity in a person, extending the work of Piaget and Kohlberg. Kegan (1994, p. 314-315) describes ego development as moving toward making meaning cognitively, intrapersonally, and interpersonally in increasingly more orderly, complex, and objective ways. He proposed five levels or stages of consciousness, where at each level the most complex structure for making meaning is unconscious to a person and is called the self or subject. Previous less complex ways of meaning making are conscious to a person, and can be consciously used and manipulated. These levels are objects that can be known and used by a person.

Initially, a baby has no self-awareness, but naturally develops mental images resulting from using their senses and reflexes. Their subject is their senses and reflexes, in that they are their senses and reflexes. In the first order of consciousness, the impulsive self, young children are their impulses and perceptions, and their senses and reflexes are objects that can be controlled. But, at this stage, they do not realize that others have a point of view, and there is only their impulses and perceptions.

In the second order of consciousness, the imperial self, a child's unconscious subject is their wants and needs, and their impulses and perceptions have become objects that can be consciously controlled in order to meet their subjective needs and wants. In the third order of consciousness, the interpersonal self, an individual can subjectively internalize the norms and contents of important external individuals and groups with whom they identify. The self fuses with concrete groups and important individuals, marking the beginning of conscience and the potential for guilt, shame and empathy. Kegan's data would estimate that approximately seventy percent of the adults in contemporary American culture are stage 3 or below in their most complex capacity to make meaning.

In the fourth order of consciousness, the institutional self, an individual develops the capacity for autonomy or self authorship based on locus of control moving from external individuals and groups to self chosen content. The self creates itself and individuals and groups can be relativized and prioritized objectively. And, in the fifth order of consciousness, the inter-individual self, the self is unconsciously believed to be incomplete and in need of incorporating new pieces as new experiences and people in life. The capacity for self authorship is now a conscious capacity, and new people, ideas and cultures are occasions for extending the self, as respect for diversity is possible and genuine, including a diversity of culture, ideas, theologies and ways of relating.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Carl Jung was a psychiatrist in Switzerland who believed that people were driven by natural preferences instead of by learned characteristics. His theory of psychological type was popularized by Isabel Myers and Katheryn Briggs. Based on the pioneering work of Jung, Myers and Briggs outlined four pairs of preferences based on the Jungian system, and developed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, an instrument that delineated sixteen combinations of the four different dimensions of preference (Keirsey and Bates, 1984, p. 3 - 4).

Now widely used around the world, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator has been translated into over 24 languages and was administered to over three million people in 1994 alone (Barger and Kirby, 1995, p. 17). For the purposes of this study, personality will be explored as it related to Jungian typology as operationalized by Isabel Myers and Katheryn Briggs, using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

The four pairs of preferences, based on the Jungian system, include Introversion and Extraversion, Sensing and Intuition, Thinking and Feeling, and Judging and Perceiving. These four dimensions of personality will now be defined in more detail.

Dimensions of Personality

The first pair of preferences, Introversion - Extraversion refers to "where people direct their energy and attention, where they get their energy, and where they do their primary processing" (Barger and Kirby, 1995, p. 18). While the energy of an individual who prefers Introversion is directed inward in reflection, the Extravert is

energized and expressed more outwardly interacting with people and things, and tends to be more gregarious in interacting with people and things.

The second pair of preferences, Sensing and Intuition, indicates "the kinds of information people tend to notice, the kinds of information people give weight to, how people typically take in information, and how they normally give information to others" (Barger and Kirby, 1995, p. 23). Individuals who are Intuitive are typically visionaries who tend to focus on the big picture, and provide theoretical information, while those who prefer Sensing naturally focus on the details, specifics and factual information related to the present moment.

The third pair of preferences, Thinking - Feeling represents the decision-making function, two rational bases for categorizing and making meaning of information (Kroegeer and Thusen, 1992, p. 36). Not to be confused with those who feel and those who do not, individuals who make decisions through Feeling tend to use prioritized values in making decisions, factoring into their decisions how self and others feel about the various choices. Thinking individuals focus on matters that are more objective in nature, using logical categories and analysis, often not factoring the feelings of people into their scrutiny.

Finally, the fourth pair of preferences, Judging - Perceiving, describes "how people prefer to arrange their external lives," their life styles (Barger and Kirby, 1995, p. 33). Individuals who have a preference for Perceiving like to keep their options open and prefer a flexible, spontaneous life style. Those who prefer Judging tend to

live a more structured, scheduled, decisive life style. In short, these four pairs of preferences, when combined, result in sixteen possible personality types.

Psychological Type and Religious Organizations

Numerous studies have examined the psychological types among individuals employed by a religious organization, including Protestant ministers (Ashbrook, 1965; Macdaid, McCulley, and Kainz, 1986; Rader, 1968; and Ruppert, 1985, cited in Ross, 1993). Most of these studies confirm 75-84% Feeling and 65-74% Judging preferences, as “the overrepresentation of FJ’s applies to both female and male clergy groups” (Ross, 1993, p. 29). Ross (1993, p. 29) continues, “studies of individuals with a full-time religious vocation indicate a consistent over representation of FJ’s, whether the person is an ordained clergy person or a professed nun or monk.”

Two studies have examined the personality types of seminary students. Howard (1998) sought to examine the relationship between personality type and career development and the educational satisfaction of 231 graduates of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Consistent with other research, there was a relationship between personality type and career development. Even so, the results indicated no significant differences among the variables in the study, probably because of the high degree of homogeneity of participants from a highly conservative seminary. Berryhill (1991) compared the forms of 100 students from three North American seminaries, comparing Forms D and E of the Myers Briggs Type Inventory with the 1990 version of the Theological School Inventory. Consistent with the work of Myers and

McCaulley (1985) who examined the typological preferences of male clergy, both male and female students tended to express a preference for feeling.

With respect to spirituality, “Jungian typology...is a way of putting the individual into conscious and active participation with the broad lines in his or her own personality” (Spoto, 1995, p. 33). Faucett and Faucett (1987, p. xviii) describe typology as “both a gift and a tool to a deeper relationship with God, a greater self understanding, and a help in living out the Christian call to love...a new dimension in our journey...and a passageway into...spiritual awakening.” Consistent with the work of Oswald and Kroeger (1988) concerning prayer, the greatest gift that individuals can give is their own growth and development. Although the study does not include any formal personality assessment, it is true that personality is evident based on the behavior of individuals. It will be interesting to note if the failure of fit between these Senior Pastors and United Methodist Churches is at all related to differences in personality.

Leadership

There are roughly 3000 dissertations related to leadership and the church, but only one related to the failure of leadership in a United Methodist Church. More specifically the study was focused on the failure of lay leadership in adult ministries, which is not at all consistent with the focus of this current research project (Padgett, 1982). However, there has been some research more generally related to leadership in the church, including Trujillo’s (1984) exploration of stress and strain, Fannin’s (2005) study of factors related to shared ministry, Huntington’s (1985) research

involving power and authority in senior and Associate Pastor relationships, Oetting's (2002) examination of risk-taking leadership, and Zabel's (1994) focus on self-defeating behavior in clergy. Results of these studies indicate that it is important to reduce stress in the ministry, have a vision of shared ministry, attend to issues of power and authority in working relationships, noting that risk-taking leaders are bold, and build consensus. The results of these studies also note the importance of an ability to reframe perceived failure, an ability to follow an internal vision without a focus on self, and the need to combine the practices of healthy communication and continuous improvement for transformation.

As is the case in many systems, there does seem to be an emphasis on outcomes in the United Methodist Church, like worship attendance, monies raised, and the like. But perhaps, less emphasis should be placed on performance, and more on preparation (Schaller, 2004). Precisely because of the competitive marketplace in contemporary American culture, even with respect to church selection, Schaller (2004, p. 49) notes, "One of the consequences is the bar has been raised in the evaluation of performance." Schaller (2004, p. 49) goes on to say, "It is far more difficult to be an effective parish pastor today than it was in the 1960's. The expectations people bring to church are both greater in number and variety as well as more difficult to meet."

Given the wealth of literature concerning leadership, little exists related to the failure of executive leadership. Most of the studies that do exist relate to United States presidents and government officials, war, public policy, and foreign government officials and policy. Still other studies relate to business and industry, managers and

organizational culture and change, health care, and the field of education. The only studies closely resembling a spiritual nature include a historical study involving a religious organization, a study of charismatic churches that have closed, and a study related to the pastors of congregational churches. For the purposes of this project, the latter two studies are included because of possible connections, along with some additional general references to the corporate sector.

Kegin (1990) did a project primarily involving pastors who were charismatic, and not associated with any denominational structure examining the demise of churches as it related to the leadership and management abilities of the pastor. Kegin (1990, p. 206) noted that part “of the success of a church depends on the pastor’s ability to lead and manage,” concluding that “it seems imperative that training in this area be afforded every seminary student.”

Mueller and McDuff (2004, p. 270) explored poor matches of clergy in churches in a congregational system, concluding that “clergy-congregation mismatches do more than create job dissatisfaction for the liberal clergy who are mismatched; the mismatch also increases the likelihood that these clergy will quit and congregations will have to search for and recruit another minister.” They explain that conservative clergy do not seem to be as dissatisfied with being matched with a liberal congregation as the liberal clergy are to being matched with a conservative congregation because of the greater number of conservative congregations as compared to clergy in the two denominations. Specifically, Mueller and McDuff (2004, p. 270) note, “it is likely that liberal clergy have little choice about accepting a

call to a more conservative congregation” and because “conservative congregations are by definition resistant to change, thus creating a situation in which clergy are frustrated and dissatisfied with their jobs.” The authors conclude, “The intrinsic rewards of clergy work could be improved with essentially no monetary cost, however, as could closer theological matches,” and “both the clergy and congregations would benefit” (Mueller and McDuff, 2004, p. 270).

There seems to be a growing body of literature related to the failure of executive leadership, although much of it available on-line with scant references to original sources. Spannaus (2005) cites that a Manchester study reported that forty percent of executives quit, were fired, or performed well below their abilities within the first eighteen months. Reasons cited include a poor fit for the job because the promotion was based on success in a different role, exceedingly high expectations, lack of leadership coaching. In addition, nearly half of the new leaders were reported to have failed to build teamwork.

Nadler (2004) provides an overview of a research project of individuals related to eight chief executive officers who failed, coupled with forty-five additional cases of chief executive officer failure in major European and United States corporations. Results indicated that the failure of these promising chief executive officers early in their careers was due to the legacy left of the former chief executive officer, avoiding difficult issues, dealing poorly with succession or making major strategic mistakes needing to be corrected at the end of their tenure. Also cited for reasons of the chief executive officer failure was a difference in skill sets, where the incoming leaders had

solid content skills, following outgoing leaders with strong context skills, making them unable to facilitate the full potential of the organization.

Suggesting post-hire support, a study of 100 senior executives and recruitment specialists in Britain Canada, and the United States indicates that most corporations do little to facilitate the integration of new executives. And, although the expectation is that they will be at optimal performance at six months, a period of at least nine to eighteen months was a more realistic goal, and thirty to forty percent of these individuals were either fired, quit, or were significantly under-performing within a year or two of their date of hire (The Globe and Mail, 2004). Is it possible that the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church is not patient enough with the newly appointed Senior Pastors of large churches, giving them every chance to succeed? Or, could it be that there are additional steps that could be taken to better facilitate the successful integration of these large-church pastors into their new roles? To what degree should a large United Methodist Church allow or patiently endure incongruence in the role of the Senior Pastor?

Lamenting what he referred to as the “United Methodist membership hemorrhage,” and his accompanying frustration with clergy colleagues, Hiserote (1999, p. 2) explored the impact of spiritual disciplines, reading and training seminars on the visionary and transformational leadership of twenty pastors in the Southern New Jersey Conference. After a mailing to the nearly 500 members of the Conference, the first twenty “acceptable” individuals who responded to the invitation were invited to participate, receiving a copy of a workbook for a Bible study,

participating in an initial interview, attending a five hour seminar, reading another book, attending another five hour seminar, participating in a follow up interview, and completing a mailed training process evaluation form (Hiserote, 1999, pp. 18-19). The author later describes purposive sampling based on gender, race and the districts represented in the conference, before adding a footnote that the “first twenty-three or twenty-four qualified clergy were actually selected,” which was different than his first indication of selecting the first twenty respondents and curious because he seemed uncertain of the number of participants selected. But, in discussing the limitations of the study, he noted that “the gender and racial composition of the study...did not match” that of the conference (Hiserote, 1999, p. 207). He skipped over some planned pieces in his workshop because he ran out of time, and also assumed that the results of the study translate to other denominations. The results of the study highlight the essential nature of the spiritual disciplines, and indicated that it was possible to enhance vision and leadership awareness, adding that traditionally trained clergy benefit from the training but that it takes a genuine commitment to life-long learning to shift from a management paradigm to one emphasizing leadership. In addition, the author noted that it was critical for clergy in transition to draw their support system for themselves from the United Methodist connection.

Other studies have focused more generally on effectiveness in ministry (Pense, 1996; White, 1988), concluding that clergy who were transformational in their approach were perceived to be more effective by leaders in the church who were more satisfied, and that professional growth and development might result from treating

clergy as adults and providing continuing education opportunities, respectively.

Additional studies have explored the skills and competencies of clergy, noting that the biggest challenges were in time and conflict management, and that effective clergy are attuned to the needs, interests and desires of the people in their churches (Joyce, 1995; Hewitt, 1991; Scott, 1987). Still others have examined roles and role expectations of clergy, concluding that increased differentiation leads to a collaborative approach to conflict and less ambiguity and overload, that churches in an appointive system practice a hierarchical form of leadership, and that church primarily expect pastors to preach, but that there are often challenges in relationships and with administrative functions (Beebe, 2004; Huntington, 1985; Klubnik, 1984).

Schooling (1998) studied two successive pastors in a small Nazarene church for a period of eighteen months, noting, “Changes that have not been accepted in a church may lead to withdrawal of parishioners or the termination of the pastor,” because of a perceived “psychological contract” or expectations in the local context. Pointing out that the church expected the pastor to provide leadership, Schooling (1998, pp. 114-115) goes on to explain that “Changes in the program were accepted without violating the psychological contracts of the parishioners,” and “Any perceived violation of the contract led to a lowering of the source credibility of the pastor.”

Tunncliffe (2005) interviewed pastors of churches that grew their churches to at least 2001 members, exploring their leadership development influences, identifying “the high school years” as “a time of building confidence and building leadership efficacy,” while “the college years” were a time of “transition” in “how leadership

development occurs,” and “the post-college years” typically when they attended seminary was a “vocational apprenticeship.” Noting that the results of the study point to experiences typically beyond the seminary curriculum, Tunnickliff (2005, p. 154) identifies four categories of leadership development, including parallel leadership experiences, actual leadership experiences, influential role models, and significant learning experiences.”

Others have cited the necessity of leadership coaching and cultivating leadership during the process of executive succession, including Dobzinski and Hatton (1999), Horn and Font (2004), Dearlove and Crainer (2004), and George (2005). These authors suggest looking past obvious criteria when evaluating potential, focusing on the requirements for the role rather than on the individual, avoiding the safe candidates, using rigorous and objective criteria, and grooming future leaders, not to mention a need to focus on vision, trust, communication, caring, accountability, engagement, and building on strengths. To what degree could leadership coaching have helped to avert the failures experienced by these appointed pastors?

Hurst (2006, p. 154) asserts, “The church and those responsible for the affirming, equipping, and sustaining of ministers must do things differently,” and that a “tacit acceptance and nonchalant ignoring of the huge numbers of pastors who are lost to ministry must no longer be tolerated within the United Methodist Church or Christendom as a whole.”

There is no doubt that leadership is a critical component of the success of pastors in large United Methodist Churches. The literature does provide some useful

information relative to the performance versus preparation of clergy, as well as some information related to executive leadership, leadership in general and a strength based approach to leadership.

Summary

The three cases in the study will be explored through the theoretical frames of person – environment interaction, cognitive structural development, and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, along with the literature related to clergy leadership. Like a suitable pair of lenses that provide new clarity and correct some vision impairment, it will be interesting to “see” what clarity these perspectives bring to the cases in this study.

Development of Professional Identity

According to Ellis and Fouts (1996, p. 178), "...socialization is the process whereby individuals are inducted into the norms, values, rules, etc., of a group." Ellis and Fouts (1996, p. 178) go on to say that, "Socializing processes are used to inform people of ways of behaving toward others and of comporting themselves in general within the bounds of society." Pavalko (1976b, p. 112) asserts that "...a universal function of education is the socialization of the young into the culture of society." But, contrary to the belief that socialization was only a process that occurred in childhood, Pavalko states, "...there is a wealth of experiences from everyday life to suggest that adults do have socialization experiences that alter their personality and behavior" (Pavalko, 1976a, p. 151).

It is important to note that the term socialization has evolved out of the field of behavioral psychology, and has traditionally been the topic of quantitative research, as it refers to the external social influences that shape a person in some way. And, instruments have even been developed to explore the professional socialization of pastors (Foose, 1994; Singleton, 1993). However, more recently the socialization of ministers has been the subject of qualitative research as well (Runion, 1998; Widstrom, 1998; Stein, 1992). Whether investigated quantitatively or qualitatively, the socialization of ministers is also referred widely across the literature as career development of pastors and the formation or development of a professional identity.

Regardless of the specific nature of developing a professional identity, it is important to note that the process is clearly a two-way street. Johnston asserts (1995, p. 287) that for graduate students, "movement up the academic ladder is associated with discipline specialization and therefore an acute sense of the more particular academic community to which one belongs." The same could be said regarding the heightened expectations of Senior Pastors from large churches. Johnston (1995, p. 288) goes on to say:

There is more to becoming a post graduate student and moving into an academic community than becoming an expert in the discipline...It is how the participants view the situation that is important. Building a sense of community, then, is about building a sense of solidarity and a sense of significance among the members of the community. Achieving these ends requires commitment and the implementation of specific strategies from those who are already members of the community.

There is no doubt that on some level, a failed appointment indeed represents a failure to build community.

According to Gerholm (1990, p. 263), "any person entering a new group with the ambition of becoming a fully fledged competent member has to learn to comply with its fundamental cultural rules." Gerholm (1990, p. 263) goes on to say that a "Failure to acquire this implicit knowledge is often taken as a failure to have acquired the explicit knowledge itself." Perhaps this is true of Senior Pastors assigned to large churches that have experienced a failed appointment. Could it be that there was some underlying failure to read and respond to the cultural landscape?

Pavalko (1971) noted that professional identities are developed in both formal settings, and during practice. DeBord and Millner (1992, p. 70), focusing on graduate students, assert that "a greater effort to link...programming and support to individual student needs may result in more confident and more competent performance on their part." It will be interesting to be attentive to the possible ways in which there may be gaps in the professional identity of the Senior Pastors who have experienced failed appointments, ones that could be addressed by professional development in the particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Gerholm (1990) reminds us that attitude is always an important element in this process, as people live out a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy with respect to their endeavors. Although Gerholm's comments were focused on the academic endeavors of graduate students, it will also be important to be mindful of the ways that the attitudes of all the individuals involved – not just the Senior Pastors – contributed to the failed appointment. More specifically, in what ways do the attitudes of the Bishop, the District Superintendents, and the lay leadership in the local churches, as

represented by the Staff Parish Relations Committee and other lay leaders impact the failed Senior Pastor appointments in large United Methodist Churches?

Likewise, there is no doubt that one of the questions related to the itinerancy is the degree to which the current system provides enough support for pastors. Are there not "some kinds of help more instrumental to career success than others" (Corcoran and Clark, 1984, p. 131). And, with respect to professional socialization, Baird (1992, p. 5) states that "The incorporation of these community defined forms of thinking and discourse...plays a vital process in...socialization to the professional role." No doubt that failed appointments could result in part because of a mismatch between the thinking and discourse of the Senior Pastor and the congregation. According to Johnston (1995, p. 289):

There is evidence that induction into any new culture is not an easy or automatic process. The boundaries that must be crossed to gain membership of a new community are differently perceived by different individuals within and outside the community.

Clearly, one of the challenges of the itinerant system is in the degree of fluidity to which the Senior Pastors can navigate the process of integration into the culture of a new congregational assignment.

One environmental factor in the socialization of graduate students is isolation. Johnston (1995, pp. 282) suggests group supervision or having students read one another's papers as a means of combating isolation, a potential contributing factor in the satisfaction with the academic advisor, explaining that "it was clear that this isolation easily led to uncertainty about expectations and progress." Johnston (1995, p. 283) goes on to say that "most of the students voiced their own version of a sense of

isolation and a lack of belonging in the university as they described how lonely they felt and how difficult it was for them to understand where they were heading."

Consistent with the work of Hockey (1994), Johnston (1995, p. 280) states that "the way in which postgraduate research is structured within the social sciences...within education... leads to a much greater chance of isolation" than with other disciplines.

Not only do Senior Pastors need to develop of a professional identity, but they often have to do so in isolation, since they are not members of the local church. Clearly, the question remains to what degree do Senior Pastors from failed appointments feel isolated? The current study may be able to address the question of isolation for both practicing and aspiring Senior Pastors of large United Methodist Churches.

Quick (1990, p. 102) notes that clergy are expected to be competent in three areas, including their people skills, their preaching skills and their "production" skills, adding that deficiencies in any one area can be amplified by insecurity related to "areas of weakness," formerly experiencing "a major embarrassment" in an area, when "selling themselves as omni-competent, and when "the present pastor suffers in an area where the former pastor excelled." Quick (1990, p. 104) suggests that clergy have the courage to admit being in an appointment that is not fitting, suggesting that honesty in conversation with the laity is important so "the church doesn't suffer," providing an opportunity for the church to respond by augmenting the clergy with other staff or laypersons, or additional training.

Manwaring (2004) designed and implemented a training program for 21 probationary members of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church for

new pastors following seminary focusing on leadership, relationships, management, and administration. The six retreats focused on relational skills, administration and management, worship and proclamation, making disciples, leadership, and an evaluation of the program. While the participants felt adequately prepared in seminary for their worship responsibilities and therefore reported the least amount of change in this area, they did gain from a panel presentation of clergy representing a variety of worship styles. The biggest weakness cited related to the training program was that it did not help the clergy to select and train leadership, and the greatest felt need was the lack of leadership and management skills, along with conflict management skills. Not surprisingly, those who were connected to support groups had an easier time relationally, consistent with the work of Johnston (1995).

Klubnik (1984) surveyed 458 alumni-pastors of Dallas Theological Seminary, and 1088 selected members of their congregations to determine the expectations of the pastoral role, as well as the sources of conflict. Interestingly enough, 83 residents of Houston, Texas who listened to a Christian radio station served to verify the findings from the various congregations. Results indicated that the primary role expectation of both pastors and congregations, that of teaching the word of God, was being met. The conflicts that emerged in the course of the study were related to administrative responsibilities and interpersonal relationships. So, to what degree were these failed appointments related not to preaching or teaching, but to relationships and administrative responsibilities? It will be interesting to note the degree to which these same issues are sources of clergy-congregation conflict in failed appointments.

Mathis (1995) surveyed students, faculty, administrators, and trustees affiliated with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, along with the clergy and laypersons in the states served by the seminary. Gathering a total of 332 surveys, the author sought to learn the perceptions of the basic ministerial competencies. Participants determined that all of the competencies were very important, some more so than others. Attitude was ranked the highest of all the competencies, and internal spiritual attitudes were seen as more important than religious beliefs, which were seen as more important than attitudes related to other people. Skills were ranked just behind attitudes, including personal communication, pastoral ministry and administration in that order. Ministry knowledge was ranked the lowest of the three major competency areas, knowledge competencies was ranked higher than practical theology, which was ranked higher than classical studies. Trustees ranked religious beliefs higher than did the ministers and laypersons ranked religious beliefs higher than ministers did and the students. And, with respect to skills in the area of pastoral ministry, the clergy ranked this item lower than both laypersons and students. Here again, what is the impact of these perceived areas of competency on the failure of executive leadership in a large United Methodist Church?

Examining the traditional roles of clergy, Thomas (1968) noted that, in addition to the role of a shepherd providing support and guidance, in most denominations, there was a primary emphasis on the pastor as a preacher and worship leader, and the amount of time spent on administrative activities was related to the size of the church and number of staff members. Similarly, Osmann (1996, p. 172)

explored how United Methodist churches in the Virginia Conference impact the practice of ministry, including the particular roles, and devised “an experiential learning program” called “Contextual Pastoral Education” to “address the immediate competency needs seminary students will have in their initial occupational functioning” focused on direct care ministries. Osmann (1996, p. 166) noted, “Rudimentary competency in public speaking skills and worship leadership is important even as ministers begin their careers,” adding that while learning these skills “can begin in an academic setting,” that “nothing teaches like actual practice.” Osmann (1996, p. 159) identified three different clusters of occupational activities for pastors, including direct care ministries, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and organizational programming, noting that more time was spent in large churches on organizational and programming functions.

Wesley interviewed thirty Ordained Elders in the United Methodist Church who had participated in a two-year spiritual formation program, noting the reported absence of the practice of spiritual disciplines in the lives of the clergy prior to enrolling in the program. Wesley (2004, p. 154) highlights the reported difference in the spiritual lives of the clergy following the program, recommending the exploration of “an alternative pastoral paradigm of pastor as spiritual director” would encourage the clergy in the areas of “spiritual discipline and spiritual nurture.”

Burnett (1976) explored why roughly two hundred United Methodist pastors had left, currently were in the process of leaving or were thinking about leaving the Mississippi Conference between 1955 and 1974. By his own admission, drawing any

conclusions from the student would be suspect, because his questionnaires did not have corresponding choice options for the various groups surveyed. Although it will be important to be sensitive to the multitude of ways that these issues could surface in the enactment of the itinerant system in the particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church, perhaps the most important parallel between Burnett's work and this project relates to the way that an individual involved in the particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church may choose to deal with frustrations related to the institutional church.

Burnett (1981) presumably conducting a follow-up study in the same area, sought to identify the greatest need for continuing education needs among 142 United Methodist pastors in the Mississippi Conference. The results indicated that the critical continuing education needs include: time management, producing church growth, evangelism, involving church members in ministry, group leadership and pastoral counseling. The job stress in the ministry was not perceived to be related to continuing education needs among the clergy as much as it was related to those issues to which the pastors felt that they had little control over in their ministries. It will be important to be sensitive to these areas of critical need and the ways in which a perceived lack of a developed professional identity in these areas may have contributed to the leadership failure.

Following his detailed review of the history of the itinerant system, Denison (1985, p. 97) suggests that the various Conferences within the structure of the United Methodist Church should "assert their responsibility for ministerial training by

providing some of what the theological schools cannot provide.” Similarly, Belsheim (1988, p. 72, 73) noted that it is essential for continuing education delivery systems to understand the purpose and context of their work, as they “arrange effective learning encounters” with “learning activities which are somewhat more individualized and specific to the practitioner’s work setting,” along with “learning activities which are of longer duration and are sequential in nature.” What kind of learning sequence would best meet the needs of clergy who aspire to serve as a Senior Pastor in a large United Methodist Church?

A few studies have focused on the transition from seminary to full-time employment. One study examined the interview process of pastoral search committees as the point of entry into the profession (Foose, 1994). The core issues of the interview process were identified as integrity and authenticity, self-awareness, history, theology, money, the nature of the community and leadership style and work schedule. A workshop on these core elements in interviewing was conducted for graduating students, followed by periodic counseling sessions with individuals throughout the process of their job search. A survey was used to measure the effectiveness that the ministerial candidates had in gathering information by using the training as a guide in the process, as well as their satisfaction with the position they ultimately accepted. Results indicated that the candidates not only rated the effectiveness in gaining information on the components from the training as high, but they were also extremely satisfied with their newly acquired positions. The author recommends that this work be expanded and used in assisting pastors and search

committees. Although this work focused on a congregational system, to what degree was there a breakdown in the information gathering process when the pastor first met with the Staff Parish Relations Committee that potentially led, at least in part, to the failed appointment?

Lewis (2000) examined the impact and involvement of the local church in the professional socialization of pastors, surveying 800 pastors from different denominations in a mid-west region. Results indicated that a seminary education, contrary to the education gained from a Bible college, enhanced the sense of readiness that a pastor seemed to feel about beginning their new roles. Internships less than nine months or longer than two years did not help pastors feel more ready to handle their new assignments. However, Lewis (2000, p. 163) notes that internships between nine months and two years seemed to be an optimal time to contribute to the readiness of a pastor for a new role, especially if “purposefully exposed to a broad range of ministry experiences,” a finding consistent with the expressed need for more practical experience related to theological education. It was interesting that although the clergy reported feeling generally prepared for the ministry, less than half reported being involved in helping to prepare others for the ministry. The author noted that field experience was a key, because the internships consistently increased a sense of readiness for ministry in the area of preaching or teaching. Would an internship related to an assignment in a large United Methodist Church better prepare these pastors who experienced failure for a successful appointment?

Runion (1998), in a study of the graduates of Nazarene Theological Seminary and Nazarene Bible College, also examines the professional socialization and practice of the clergy. This case study involved document analysis in an effort to understand how the institutions seek to prepare students, as well as the impacts of the programs upon the graduates. Results indicated that while skill development was not highly influenced through the socialization process of the institution, the relationships to authority were slightly related to the expectations and patterns of the institution, and both opportunity and mobility were highly influenced by institutional type. The author points out the power of the institutional mission statement, expectations and patterns of socialization in the program to potentially expand or limit employment opportunities. If it is true that skill development is not highly impacted by the process of current seminary socialization, are there additional contextual elements that could be added to enhance clergy preparation?

Reeves (1982) sought to analyze selected factors that presented potential problems in the transition from seminary training to vocational Christian service, distributing a questionnaire to all of the 1979 graduates of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, of which 176 responded. The twenty-seven questions covered three areas, including background information, competencies and preparation, and problems and orientation. The graduates seemed to feel confident in their administrative abilities, staff relationships were identified as a source of conflict, and the seminary was viewed as a source of support during their transition. The author recommends using a placement office to coordinate field education, and adding a

course that would include spiritual foundations, financial orientation, the basic tools of ministry, a stronger competency and course orientation, and the variety of opportunities available for women including that of a church staff wife. What kinds of preparation would best assist United Methodist clergy in being successful as a Senior Pastor of a large church?

Stein (1992) investigates the identity with and commitment to a professional role among 13 Masters of Divinity students at a Protestant seminary. Qualitative interviews were conducted in an effort to understand the process of identity and commitment to the clergy role, and which role dimensions were the focus of identity and commitment. Results indicated that acquiring professional knowledge was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of professional identity and commitment, but that knowledge was needed for students to change their understanding of the clergy role in a manner that is compatible with their self-concept. Encouraging educational institutions to address the non-academic arenas of professional socialization, the author highlights the importance of applying a multidimensional framework to the study and professional socialization. Here again, it will be important to identify the needs of the clergy with respect to preparation to serve as a Senior Pastor in a large United Methodist church.

Still other research extends beyond a seminary education to the development of a professional identity of pastors and the practice of ministry. Turner (2001) explored the dichotomy between seminary practice and ministerial realities, comparing minister perceptions of leadership with development to the courses offered in Masters of

Divinity programs at 30 different mainline denominational seminaries. Results indicate that while the ministers are confident in their theological training, they feel ill prepared with respect to their personal, leadership and management skills. The author points out that relatively few of the credit hours in a typical program, roughly 18 out of a total of 90, address the kinds of issues that ministers say that they most need. The author concludes by stating that seminaries are neither meeting the expectations of their own graduates, nor are they meeting the educational purposes set forth in their own mission statements, urging these institutions to begin addressing the issues raised by ministers. The implications of this research for the current study clearly relate to the similarities and differences between the kinds of leadership and management skills needed by Senior Pastors of large United Methodist Churches, as opposed to the training that they received. Here again, are there specific training opportunities that could be provided to assist Senior Pastors of large churches in averting failure in their assignments?

Carroll (1971) completed a fascinating study of 1,451 clergy graduates from 21 Protestant seminaries, dividing the seminaries into three different types based on the rankings of the four goals of theological education by the participants to determine potential structural effects. The four goal areas in the study related to the mastery of the Christian tradition, practical competence, spiritual formation and secular awareness, with the assumption that the emphasis of goals varies from one seminary to the next. Results of the study support the notion that different types of seminaries have an impact on “theological orientation as part of the process of socialization into

ministry,” emphasizing the “contextual effects of socializing agencies (Carroll, 1971, p. 71, 72).”

Shostrom (1985) sought to define what it means to have a professional identity as a pastor, and designed an instrument to assess its presence. Using the expertise of 32 educators, all members of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, a 135-item assessment Likert scale instrument was developed. The instrument was administered to four groups of people, including seminarians, recent graduates, veteran pastors and laypersons from three different Protestant denominations. Results indicated that the assumption that there would be varying degrees of professional identity based on the length of tenure in ministry was inaccurate, or the sub-scales needed further refinement. Shostrom (1985) noted that it was a mistake to use laity in the sample as a control group, and that part of the lack of distinct differences between the degree of an established professional identity was perhaps due to the nature of a call to ministry. The author also recommends additional research related to pastoral professional identity. This interdenominational research serves as a reminder about the importance of not making assumptions based on the length of tenure in ministry relative to the nature, extent or degree of professional identification.

Mentors

Runkel (1982), explored the role of mentors in the career development of ministers by sending surveys to graduates from an interdenominational seminary four years after they had received their degrees, along with surveys to available mentors. Mentoring was not only associated with a supportive environment, but the absence of

a mentor was considered to be a disadvantage. While the mentors gained satisfaction from the growth of their students, the graduates expressed an attraction to the mentors because of their experience, and valued the time they spent together because it was encouraging and helped them to set realistic expectations. The author recommends further research concerning mentoring across occupational and organizational lines, surveys of mentors, specific mentor and protégée behaviors, and developing quantitative measures of effective mentors, as the mentors and protégés seemed to focus on different aspects of the relationship. For the purposes of the current study, it will be important to explore the ways that individuals in various roles conceptualize their role as Senior Pastors, not to mention the perceived impact of mentors or the lack of mentors.

Similarly, Naicker (2004) surveyed 14 pastors of para-church organizations or mega-churches visited by the Beeson Institute group of pastors as part of a doctoral program at Asbury Theological Seminary, learning that most had initiated their own mentoring connections, but felt empowered as a result of those relationships. Naicker (2004, p. 96) stated that all of the pastors were actively involved in mentoring others. Specifically, the author noted that participants indicated that they had gained the most from the mentoring experience in personal growth, enhanced leadership skills, in their visioning, in clarifying their calling, and gained a “passion for ministry.” After completing a seminary education, what kinds of professional development programs would be most helpful in preparing pastors to succeed in a large United Methodist Church?

Seminary Education

A wealth of research exists in an attempt to understand the demographics and characteristics, experiences, learning styles, abilities, attitudes and behaviors of seminary students, not to mention the particular effect of a class or educational intervention. In addition, other works have focused on anticipatory socialization, the professional preparation of clergy, delivery systems, and proposed models of seminary education.

Anticipatory Socialization

In recent years, some books have emerged related to what is not addressed in a seminary education, either directed toward students prior to enrolling in seminary, or to those who will be graduating and are hopeful to be serving in the setting of a local church. These works range from one written by a pastor (Best-Boss, 1999), to others written by seminary professors (Killinger, 2006; Malphurs, 1997).

Best-Boss (1999) focuses her work on surviving the first year in a church, emphasizing the practical concerns related to visitation, preaching and worship, counseling, and administering the sacraments, while balancing your family life and maintaining your own spiritual life. Best-Boss (1999) shares her own story of transition to a church and community, pointing out the need to gather information about the history and current status of the church, along with facts related to the community.

Malphurs (1997) provides an overview of the organizational tools not addressed in seminary education, including developing a mission, vision, core values

and strategy. And, Killinger (2006) cites seven specific things not taught in seminary, with chapters on how a church is an institution and not a center of spirituality, in most churches “appearances are more important than reality,” successful pastors are “drowning in a sea of minutia,” how “pastoral search committees seldom know or tell the truth,” that preaching weekly is difficult, that “there is a meanness in some church members that is simply incredible,” and that a calling to serve as a pastor “transcends all the problems.” Still another book (Foster, Dahill, Golemon, and Toletino, 2006) provides an overview of five traditions of seminary education, along with classroom and communal pedagogies in forming a pastoral, priestly or rabbinic imagination, and teaching practices. This book is part of a larger project emerging from the Carnegie Foundation on professional preparation.

With respect to the work by Killinger (2006) and Malphurs (1997), I was curious why seminary professors would write book focused on what was not included in a seminary education program instead of developing a course, or series of courses to inhabit those particular gaps. Coupled with the emphasis among clergy on the lack of practical skills training in seminary, and the emergence of a relatively new book by Horton (2006) billed as “the portable seminary,” based on the popular literature one wonders why an individual would choose to go to seminary at all, except for the particular requirements of various denominations.

In addition, there have been other books published for prospective seminary students. Parker (1998) offers a user-friendly and concise work guiding potential seminary students through a discernment process regarding the specific nature of a call

to ministry, providing practical answers to relevant questions. Although the specific references to women clergy are limited to a brief section related to the prospects for women seeking a job in the ministry, Parker (1998) does use inclusive language in reference to clergy throughout the text.

Similarly, George (1981) details the challenges of seminary life for prospective students, especially for women, including navigating the ordination process and finding a job in the ministry. Although this borders on an overly simplistic testimonial that is devoid of theoretical frame, George's (1981) work does provide a practical users guide to seminary life for students who may not be familiar with the challenges and opportunities of graduate education.

Professional Preparation through Seminary Training

A growing body of literature has emerged related to the learning of ministry roles and the development of a professional self-concept through seminary training. For pastors, it is important to note that this integration process includes elements not just related to their training and expertise, but also their relationship with God (Oates, 1982), their vocational calling (Shostrom, 1985), and a developing sense of self (Arnold, 1982), because at the very heart of ministry is the self (Switzer, 1975). Also, Kemery (2006) point out that clergy satisfaction could potentially be increased by training the laity, providing the tools to run meetings, work together, and deal with conflict.

Singleton (1993) conducted a study designed to provide administrators empirical data to assist in policy formation and the educational construction of

theological socialization. The author examined the impact on spiritual formation and commitment to ministry by the general exposure to seminary, mentoring within and outside the seminary, ministry role practices and recent life adjustments of a stratified random sample of students from Dallas Theological Seminary. Results indicated that ministry role practices had both a consistent and significant positive impact on commitment to ministry. And, while mentoring in seminary had a positive impact on the spiritual formation of the students, outside mentoring had a negative impact on the spiritual formation of these students. Also examined in this study was the impact of ministry role practices and mentoring outside seminary on the number of courses enrolled in a sequence on small group mentoring, and no predictive relationship was found. Daniels (1983) emphasizes the importance of mentoring to facilitate the spiritual formation of students during their seminary years. It will be interesting to note the degree to which mentoring plays a part in these failed appointments.

Delamarter, Alanis, Haitch and others (2007, p. 64) presented five case studies related to “technology, pedagogy and transformation in theological education.” They emphasized that regardless of what information is presented, and how, the students will likely experience some level of change.

Davies (1994) examined written materials and used interviews and questionnaires with students enrolled in four sections of a required course in Bangor Theological Seminary in Maine, one that attempts to engage the students in the social construction of reality. Results indicated that the students would develop and employ critical insights when they had an active part in their own learning, and when they

were provided with the basic sociological tools to analyze, and make meaning of cultural contexts. Students also showed gains in their understanding and application of critical insights when they understood their own life story in both a historical and social context, and when they could put their new insights into practice. To what degree have pastors from failed appointments been unable to accurately read the cultural landscape of the church?

Barnett (2003) examined the attitudes and perceptions of the graduates and faculty of a Southern Baptist theological seminary, ultimately proposing that “the seminary develop a portfolio for each student,” providing the means “in tracking the progress of competency levels of students. Mercer (2006) recommends having students study various congregations as a means on contextualizing their theological education.

Foster, Dahill, Golemon, and Tolentino (2006, p. 33) differentiate the education of clergy from other professions, explaining that they are expected to be proficient in tasks, but that there is also a public expectation that they will “be” a certain kind of individual, necessitating a formative element to the program. They explored seminary education from a broad range of faith traditions, identifying four different areas of emphasis, including facilitating the ability of students in “interpreting texts,” attending to the “formation” of the student, increasing the awareness of students concerning the “historical and contemporary contexts,” and improving their “performance in clergy roles.”

Finke and Dougherty (2002, p. 116) explored the social and religious capital acquired in seminaries in a way that was consistent with the work of Stark and Finke (2000), differentiating between “training that stresses a mastery of the religious culture and training that emphasizes an emotional attachment to the culture.” They tested two different propositions related to religious capital using surveys of all the clergy in one Wisconsin county, and a national survey of all graduating seminarians. In spite of the fact that the surveys were taken at two different points in time and the national sample of graduates included seminary trained laity where the Wisconsin survey did not, the findings were interesting. Results indicate that seminaries do seem to emphasize the mastery of religious culture, “which includes instruction in religious doctrine, religious history, and the performance of rituals” (Finke and Dougherty, p. 116). However, contrary to conventional wisdom, the clergy with seminary training focused less on prayer and meditation, and “the emphasis seminaries give to spiritual formation has a lasting effect on the clergy’s reported commitment to and practice of their spiritual religious culture.”

Kleinman (1984, p. 212) studied a professional theology program involving 300 students, roughly one-third of whom were women, where the institution has communicated a formal position related to women in ministry and where a “humanistic ideology” is infused through the curriculum. In spite of these moves of institutional support, the women students still experienced the roles of women and minister as contradictory because of the lack of role models and the responses of others, personally, academically and professionally. Kleinman (1984b, p. 217) states,

“Since the ideology suggests that one can minister in all ways, some of the women, when considering the possible conflict between their family and career plans, talked about how they might really be called to be mothers and wives.” In short, although the prevailing philosophy of the seminary was supportive, it “also made them vulnerable in unintended ways when they had to face male bias in the occupational structure and expectations for gender roles in marriage” something Kleinman (1984, p. 217, 218) referred to as having “boomerang effects.”

In exploring youth minister socialization, Widstrom (1998) concludes that seminaries are only one piece in the proverbial puzzle of what should be a life long process of learning. He goes on to say that seminary programs need to match the process of what students need to learn at the appropriate time, and that there needs to be adequate program diversity in a seminary to address the varying needs and values of students, as they internalize the knowledge, skills and values of the profession. Similarly, Freidson (1970) pointed out that professional training was not just about internalizing the knowledge and skills to do the work, but to also acquire the particular social constructions of a particular occupation. For clergy in the United Methodist Church, seminary is an important part of the process of learning the social constructions of pastoral ministry.

McFayden (1994) traces the development of Protestant theological education and examines both the conscious and unconscious dynamics of group processes and threats to the formation of pastoral identity in theological education using the Tavistock model of group relations. With the help of the students enrolled in a

Masters of Divinity course at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the author identifies the threats of using group process in pastoral identity formation within theological education. The threats cited include: depersonalization, being watched, inadequacy, isolation, rejection, being overpowered, being viewed as a 'know-it-all,' orthodoxy, losing oneself, and change as religious traditions are challenged. Using the shared praxis approach, the author then seeks to minimize these threats to pastoral identity formation in theological education. Is there a relationship between these threats to pastoral identity formation and failed appointments in large United Methodist Churches?

Campbell (1988, 14) asserts that the United Methodist Church is “struggling to deal with the nature of theological education for ordained ministry,” noting, “Virtually everyone has an opinion about the proper elements of an education for ministry, and the extent to which the church should control education for ordination (p. 15).” Consistent the assertions of Duewel (1952) and Ferris (1990) concerning the need for fundamental change in seminary education, Kelsey (2002, p. 3) discusses the “fragmentation,” and Giles and Morgan (1994, p. 74) asserted that seminaries are facing a “crisis of credibility,” because the structural lack of integration in seminary programs between knowing and doing was producing ministers who were proficient in Biblical languages and ignorant of the culture. Kelsey (2002, p. 5) asserts:

The more basic issue is not how to make theological schooling more excellent, important and pressing as that indisputably is, but rather a logistically prior question about what concepts to use to frame in a properly theological way the problems we face in seeking excellence in theological education.

Coulter (2003) agrees, proposing that mentoring programs, with a pre-admission and post-graduation assessment component as a means to track the progress of students. Messer (1995, p. 67) cites a number of trends in seminary education, noting that aside from the challenges of gender, cultural and faith tradition barriers where progress is being made, albeit gradually, that there are increasing numbers of part-time and non-traditional students who “sometimes bring with them the marks and scars of current culture,” with less training in religion and an increased debt load upon graduation. Farley (1983) was highly critical of theological education, asserting that it has not been developed intentionally, but in a haphazard manner.

Wheeler (1993, p. 87) summarizes the major criticisms of theological education as the chasm between theory and practice, a lack of integration of the major components of “Bible, theology, history, and practice,” and seminary graduates who are “unprepared for the complex demands and stresses of ministry practice.” Wheeler (1993, p. 95-96) goes on to say, “Education designed to be convenient, widely accessible, and affordable – qualities that have been the hallmarks of new seminary programs in recent years – confers much less authority and social power” than programs designed “for high-status roles in American life,” which are “selective, demanding, rigorous, and usually expensive.” However, she cautions against programs designed to “deal in appearances,” because “formative theological education answers a deeper need” for programs “to offer models of thought and action that make a real difference to both their own adherents and to those who honor their values but do not share their systems of belief” (Wheeler, 1993, p. 96). Wheeler (1993, p. 96)

concludes, saying “Theological schools and programs that take seriously the formation of mind and character not only produce leaders who can teach and demonstrate religious thinking and behavior,” but “also become centers to which religious communities can bring their deepest questions and best ideas about what their models of faith and action in contemporary circumstances should be.”

Delivery Systems

Baxter (2004) explored the experience of students in an internet-based on-line seminary program. Results of this study indicated that the predominantly non-traditional students experienced meaningful community, enjoyed greater diversity, felt their professors were more available, encouraged in their active learning, indicated that they had grown spiritually, and benefited from being able to stay in their communities, jobs and home churches. Baxter (2004, p. 75) added that “almost all the students described the overall quality of the on-line...courses as being superior to their experience of traditional courses.”

While Landtroop (1998) examined student persistence in distance education programs, Duncan (2005) examined the perspectives of administrators and faculty on the reasons for pursuing alternative delivery options, the impact of the program on the culture and mission of the educational institution, and the impact of the delivery on the gender patterns and spiritual formation for students in both the traditional and non-traditional program. Duncan (2005) reports that many of the faculty felt that on-line courses were timely innovations in response to contemporary demands, highlighting student feedback indicating perceptions of a greater responsiveness to student needs in

the on-line courses, and an increase in the number of women students in the alternative program.

Proposed Models

Calian (2002, p. 17) explains that “faculty and administrators believe the curriculum in their schools is already so crowded with required and elective courses that including courses on leadership is not feasible.” Calian (2002, p. 17) notes that some have suggested adding a year, which may be problematic, and suggests “a “two-year mentorship program in Christian leadership could be introduced following ordination” through a local certificate program utilizing a team approach of clergy, professors, and laity.

Harkness (2001, p. 152) asserts that “a sound principle of curriculum theory is that the setting in which learning occurs should reflect the objectives of the learning.” Harkness (2001, p. 152) goes on to argue that the schooling model of learning practiced in seminaries is counter to the education of clergy, which should utilize “non-formal settings reinforced by formal settings, rather than vice versa.” Banks (1999) discusses the major approaches to theological education, the classical and vocational models, suggesting a missional alternative. Farley and Wheeler (1991) argue in favor a classical model of theological education. Hough and Cobb (1985) assert the there needs to be more of a connection between theological education and the local church towards the end of educating practical theologians, proposing a vocational model consistent with the work of Stackhouse (1994). And while, Chopp (1995), Kelsey (1992) and Wood (1987) propose a more dialectical model of

theological education, Muller (1991) advocates a confessional model. There is no doubt that the various models have a particularly unique focus. Calian (2002, p. 60), provides a concise explanation:

The classical model in theological education places an emphasis on moral and cognitive wisdom; the vocational model relates the Christian story to contemporary issues with an emphasis on discernment; the dialectical model relates theological studies to the ethos or the context where theology takes place, seeking insight along with cognition; the confessional model places emphasis on gaining theological information and understanding, seeking revelatory knowledge to express in doctrinal and ethical form; and the missional model seeks to acquire ‘cognitive, spiritual, and practical obedience’ in the classroom and in the world. The emphasis of this model is on service.

Calian (2002, p. 60) summarized the challenges related to future of theological education, saying that “there is something to learn from each model” and “no composite ‘super-model’ of theological education exists that will satisfy all interested parties.”

Calian (2002) wrote a compelling book related to he perceived to be the ideal seminary, addressing institutional and programmatic challenges, coupled with student concerns in a global society, including ideas and summary comments at the end of each chapter to serve as “discussion starters.” One of the most intriguing features of the book is the proposal for seminaries to consider a more integrated curriculum. Specifically, an “integrated curriculum on forgiving” would be “a significant way to restore theological coherence” in the “historic four-fold seminary disciplines – Bible, theology, church history and practical theology,” emphasizing “the “universal application among churches and communities” and a “pedagogy that is open to all God’s people” (Calian, 2002, p. 45, 53, 12). Calian continues:

Seminary education should call us to wrestle honestly with the questions of effective and ineffective leadership, to dig more deeply into our traditions for examples, and through a process of dialogue to shape new paradigms of leadership to empower the people of God into a renewed partnership with God (p. 11).

Norris (1999) proposes a similarly integrative seminary curriculum centered on Christology. Norris (1999, p. 397) explains that “Perhaps we are not close to the heart of the malaise affecting much theology heretofore: the many tracts were simply disconnected from one another and also from the centre.”

Noting that “none of the 243 accredited seminaries and divinity schools within the ATS” are “ideal,” Calian (2002, p. 111, 10) acknowledged that they are all “works in progress,” adding that the “need to nurture leaders in our churches can wait no longer” and this “leadership crunch among churches affects us all.” Foster, Dahill, Golemon, and Tolentino (2005, p. 217) assert that regardless of the particular pedagogical approach in theological education, that through: cognitive activities centered on the interpretation of texts, they are cultivating” in students:

ways of thinking associated with their assumptions about the professional identity and roles of clergy, expanding their consciousness to the influence of historic and contemporary contexts on the interpretive task, and preparing them through a variety of assignments for the performance of their interpretive skills in a variety of public settings.

Summary

There is no doubt that seminary education plays a vital role in the formative development of clergy. It will be important to note the perceived gaps in the seminary preparation programs of the United Methodist Senior Pastors who experienced a failed appointment in a large church setting.

Research Questions

Purnell (2001, p. 217) described an exercise he facilitated with emergency response workers following an earthquake, having them bring a physical piece of the destruction and reflect on it, before working together to construct a “communal sculpture” or “healing image” that “would put together what had been pulled apart.” Consistent with the work of Purnell (2001, p. 217), who asserts that “healing images reintegrate people,” my hope is that the participants will gain some benefit from this project. Four research questions, based on the work of Kegan and Lahey (2001) guide this study. It is important to note that individuals in each of the four roles will be asked to respond to the following questions from their particular perspectives. More specifically, the variation of these questions crafted for the Senior Pastors who have experienced failures in a large church appointment includes the following:

Schedule for Initial Interviews

1. I would like to hear more about your most recent experience with the itinerant system, where you were in a particular church for a period of three years or less and why things did not work out with that particular appointment. Before you tell your story, please make a list of words and phrases that will remind you of all of the factors, complaints, and concerns that you have as to why things did not work out with that particular appointment. Please be thorough and take as much time as you need.

I would like to share with you a personal example that illustrates the process that we will be using as a framework to talk about your situation, helping you to

understand the potential connections from your own experience. I was recently involved in a minor car accident. I was waiting at a stop light at a busy intersection, when my car was hit from behind. The man who ran into my car with his car was reaching for something on the floor of his car and inadvertently had taken his foot off of the brake pedal of his car.

Naturally, one of my complaints or concerns was that this accident, although minor, still left its proverbial mark on my car. The driver of the vehicle that hit my car was distracted, resulting in unsafe behavior, like taking his foot off of the brake pedal.

2. As you reflect on your experience, what is one of the factors, complaints or concerns that you have as to why the appointment did not work out?

As I mentioned earlier, one of my complaints or concerns about this relatively minor car accident was that there was some damage to my car. My underlying or unconscious conviction was that my car should be rightfully restored to its new condition, and at no cost to me, simply because the accident was no fault of my own.

3. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by your complaint or concern?

In my situation, not only was there damage to my car that I felt should be repaired at no cost to me, but the more deeply held value or commitment on which my conviction was based was that because my car was in effect a representation of me. And, because I believe in taking care of myself and all that is an extension of me, it would be exercising poor stewardship not to take care of this damage to my car.

4. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions two through four until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to potential gaps in your seminary preparation program, where you were less than prepared for this particular appointment. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to potential gaps in your seminary preparation program, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

5. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to potential gaps in your seminary preparation program?
6. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to potential gaps in your seminary preparation program?
7. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions five through seven until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to

potential gaps in the development of your professional identity as a Senior Pastor, where you were less than prepared for this particular appointment in a large church setting. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to potential gaps in the development of your professional identity, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

8. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the development of your professional identity as a Senior Pastor of a large church?
9. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?
10. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions eight through ten until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to the itinerant system in general. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to the itinerant system in general, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

11. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the itinerant system in general?
12. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the itinerant system in general?
13. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions eleven through thirteen until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns you feel relate to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

14. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?
15. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the fit

between you as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

16. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions fourteen through sixteen until the list is exhausted.)

17. What else, if anything, would you like to add about any of these four particular areas of focus...your seminary preparation, the development of your professional identity, the itinerant system in general, or the fit between yourself as a pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

Once a week for the next month, please read the transcript of our conversation and write any new insights related to your comments. In the journal that has been provided, please write down anything new that surfaces in your thinking and feeling about your experience with your seminary preparation for this position, the itinerant system in general, or the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the environment of the church, especially as it relates to your insights regarding factors, complaints or concerns, underlying or unconscious convictions, or deeply held values or commitments. Please do not write your name in the journal, but include the date of your entry and any insights you may have

At the end of a month, I will collect your journal, and use your insights along with information you have shared in your interviews to help provide a better

understanding of the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church. For purposes of clarity, I have reprinted the interview questions and these directions on a piece of paper and have attached it to the inside cover of the journal, along with my contact information. If you have any questions, or if I can be of assistance during the course of the next month as you are reflecting and journaling about your experience, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by cell phone or e-mail.

Summary

Ultimately, Messer (1991, p. 172) encourages experimentation with new ideals, and for change to rise from the grass roots, referring to an Irish proverb stating “reform always comes from the disadvantaged because the person with four aces never asks for a redeal.” Chopp (1991, p 157) encourages deep exploration of the issues and questions related to the itinerancy, because:

we must have a structure of ministry in which ministers will not just maintain institutions, but will become community formers by using the traditions and practices of Christianity to help persons form new communities in which they can live justly and experience renewal.

This study intentionally includes a variety of individuals directly involved in the fray to share their perspectives on the appointment failures of Senior Pastors in large United Methodist Churches.

Morrison and Caldwell (1991, p. 115, 120) call the United Methodist Church to exercise “leadership beyond our denominational boundaries,” beginning with an effort to “transcend our own boundaries” by seeking to “broaden and deepen the cultural vision of churches and individuals” as a “gift to the world.” Morrison and Caldwell (1991, p. 119) note that “gender and race are still considered barriers in the

appointment process,” and suggest clearly articulating and reinforcing the commitment to gender and racial inclusiveness at every level. While Schaller (2004) suggests focusing on the outcomes of the system instead of inputs, like the appointive system, his work falls short of suggesting useful alternatives or specific outcomes. Even so, it is possible that this project could be another step at expanding the denominational boundaries of the United Methodist Church.

Clearly, there are definitely more questions than answers. Messer (1998) describes a cartoon where two young men are sitting in the sun wearing baseball caps backward, and one young man laments that it would be good if someone would invent a cap that could provide some shade. Messer (1998, p. 4) then asks rather pointedly “If ...we need to reinvent the purpose of the church, or...simply...readjust it so we can discover anew its fundamental purpose?” Perhaps this research project can facilitate a new appreciation for the itinerant system, while also identifying areas for organizational development that are similarly hidden in plain sight.

In delineating key questions related to the future of the United Methodist Church, Schaller (2004, p. 200-201, 202) asserts that “the best years...lie in the future,” and that “the future of this denomination can be better than in the past.” Patton (2003, p. 87) asserts that “From a systems perspective, because programs and projects are usually embedded in larger organizational contexts, improving programs and projects may be linked to and even dependent on changing the organizations of which they are a part.” The information gathered in this study could potentially be useful in informing the specific practices relative to the enactment of the itinerancy in

the particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church, and possibly beyond to a regional, national or international level. The following chapter provides an overview of the design used in this study in an attempt to ask some questions not addressed by previous research.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Definition of Terms

At the outset it is important to define the terms related to this study, especially those words that may be particular to the vernacular of the United Methodist Church. More specifically, these terms include: Itinerant, Senior Pastor, Lay Leader, District Superintendent, Staff Parish Relations Committee, the particular Mid-Western Conference, and the United Methodist Church.

Itinerant

The United Methodist Church functions on the basis of an appointive system for pastors. Like the draft in the National Football League, the Ordained Elders or ministers in the church are assigned to the particular place where the appointing authorities believe that they will best serve the needs of the United Methodist Church. These placement decisions are based, at least in theory, on mobilizing and maximizing the perceived gifts and abilities of the entire team of clergy in the particular Conference where they are geographically situated given the needs of the local churches or congregations within the particular Mid-Western Conference.

However, unlike the draft in the National Football League, every player is assigned to teams by a single authority and players cannot bargain for themselves or through an agent. Further, in the appointive system, every single Ordained Elder is subject to a potential move based on the needs of the entire system as an annual free agent, and the most prestigious positions or Senior Pastorates in the largest churches are generally filled first. For example, a single move of a pastor to the role of a District Superintendent can sometimes result in forty or more moves within the Conference, as Ordained Elders are moved to larger churches and positions of greater responsibility and then their old positions, or pastorates of lesser responsibility, are filled. In short, the appointive system seems to be like a chain of empty pastoral positions, much like placing a whole set of dominoes on end until all of the proverbial pieces fall into place, from the positions at the highest to the very lowest level. The entire system of appointments is the itinerant system of placement used in the United Methodist Church within each Conference.

Senior Pastor

These individuals are full-time employees of the United Methodist Church, typically an Ordained Elder. For the purposes of this study, only Senior Pastors who served in what are considered large United Methodist Churches in a particular Mid-Western Conference, and who were in an appointment for less than three years before a new move was initiated are included.

Mid-Western Conference

There are seventy-two different United Methodist Conferences in the United States. In recent years, several different Conferences have downsized the number of Districts, naturally resulting in fewer District Superintendents. In these cases, each District Superintendent has become responsible for an even larger geographical area including a greater number of local churches and Clergy. Although the reasons for this move seem to be financial in nature, based on the communications from this particular Mid-Western Conference office, it is not clear what impact this significant shift will have on the itinerant system in the future. Even so, it would seem to make the job of a District Superintendent even larger in scope and perhaps more difficult and unwieldy.

District Superintendent

These individuals are full-time employees of the United Methodist Church, and without exception are Ordained Elders. Often times, District Superintendents have been appointed from some of the largest churches in the conference to serve by the Bishop in this administrative capacity. These individuals serve in a strategic role where they are expected to know the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of the pastors and churches within their district. Their knowledge of pastors and churches serves as a foundation for recommending possible appointments to the Bishop as part of the Cabinet in each Conference.

Bishop

Also ordained elders in the United Methodist Church, these individuals are elected to preside over an entire conference of United Methodist Churches that are divided into a number of districts. In this particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church, the area of focus for this study, the Bishop ultimately presides over roughly 1,200 churches. The Cabinet, composed primarily of the Bishop and District Superintendents, along with some administrative support, is responsible for finalizing the slate of personnel appointments for the clergy assigned to all of the United Methodist Churches in this particular Mid-Western Conference on an annual basis.

Lay Leader

These individuals are laypersons nominated and approved by each local congregation of the United Methodist Church as part of a slate of officers for the church. At times, these individuals assist in worship services, act as spokespersons for the local church, and serve as a liaison between the church and both the District and the Conference. The specific role(s) that these individuals play varies from one local church to the next.

Large Church

This particular study is focused on United Methodist Churches in a particular Mid-Western Conference with an average weekend attendance of at least 400 or more members. Within that particular context, three case studies of these large churches

where the Senior Pastors were in an appointment for two years or less will be described in detail.

There are essentially two reasons why average attendance serves as the narrowing focus for the purposes of this particular study. First, it is not only “one of the most sensitive indicators”, but second, because it “tends to be a more uniform criterion than membership because of the huge variations in defining who is a member” (Schaller, 2004, p. 31).

Staff Parish Relations Committee Members

These individuals are laypersons nominated and approved by the Lay Leadership Board of each local congregation of the United Methodist Church, who have agreed to serve on the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Also called the Pastor Parish Relations Committee, the Staff Parish Relations Committee is a group typically of five to nine individuals that make recommendations to the church leadership concerning staffing, structure, job descriptions, continuing education and salaries.

Summary

In short, this study will focus on three of the large local United Methodist Churches from a particular Mid-Western Conference who have recently experienced a situation within the last three years with an appointment of a Senior Pastor that lasted for a period of three years or less. Interviews will be conducted with the District Superintendent, Senior Pastor, a member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, and a Lay Leader from each of the three settings, following random selection of the three cases from a list of churches eligible for the study.

Methodology

Purpose

As previously noted in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study is two-fold:

1. To learn the perceived reasons for the failure of these executive leaders from large churches in a particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church from a variety of perspectives. This study focuses on self constructed reasons and perceptions on why the appointment did not work out, the potential gaps in the development of the professional identity of the Senior Pastor, the potential gaps in the seminary preparation of the Senior Pastor, possible mismatches in the person-environment fit, and an evaluation of the itinerant appointment process by the participants.
2. To identify any transformations in self construction or focused perceptions that results from Kegan and Lahey's (2001) cognitive developmental reflection process over a period of one month.

Overview

The intent of this study is to gain a better understanding of the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church through the lens of a failure of executive leadership or where the appointed Senior Pastor served in a particular local church for a period of three years or less before being moved to another church. This chapter provides an overview of the methods employed in this particular study, as well as the philosophical and conceptual underpinnings that have served to guide the research process.

As previously noted, this study has evolved out of my rather negative experiences with the itinerant system itself, coupled with the multitude of questions about the relative lack of research related to failed large church appointments. The purpose of this study, then, was to not only gain a better understanding of three particular stories of failed executive leadership in the United Methodist Church, but also to compare and contrast the complaints or concerns, underlying or unconscious convictions, and deeply held values or commitments between the various perspectives. The primary areas of focus for the study related to potential gaps in seminary preparation and the development of pastoral professional identity, the position appointment in the itinerant system in general, and the fit between the Senior Pastor and the particular large church setting.

In an effort to provide a variety of perspectives on the itinerant system, three case studies involving four individuals each will be interviewed, including the District Superintendent, the former Senior Pastor, a Lay Leader, and a member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee. In short, it is hoped that these varying roles will contribute to a more comprehensive set of perspectives related to the failure of executive leadership in large United Methodist Churches.

In addition to providing information that might illuminate the salient issues and the stories of failed appointments in three different large churches in the United Methodist Churches, it will be important to explore possible similarities and differences in the stories that emerge. It is certainly possible that not only the individuals involved in this particular study will gain from the opportunity for

reflection, but that the particular conference of the affiliated denomination might also benefit from such a study as well.

Research Questions

Four research questions, based on the work of Kegan and Lahey (2001) guide this study. It is important to note that individuals in each of the four roles will be asked to respond to the following questions from their particular perspectives. More specifically, the variation of these questions crafted for the Senior Pastors who have experienced failed appointments in their churches, as found in Appendix A include the following:

1. I would like to hear more about your most recent experience with the itinerant system, where you were in a particular church for a period of three years or less and why things did not work out with that particular appointment. Before you tell your story, please make a list of words and phrases that will remind you of all of the factors, complaints, and concerns that you have as to why things did not work out with that particular appointment. Please be thorough and take as much time as you need.

I would like to share with you a personal example that illustrates the process that we will be using as a framework to talk about your situation, helping you to understand the potential connections from your own experience. I was recently involved in a minor car accident. I was waiting at a stop light at a busy intersection, when my car was hit from behind. The man who ran into my car with his car was

reaching for something on the floor of his car and inadvertently had taken his foot off of the brake pedal of his car.

Naturally, one of my complaints or concerns was that this accident, although minor, still left its proverbial mark on my car. The driver of the vehicle that hit my car was distracted, resulting in unsafe behavior, like taking his foot off of the brake pedal.

2. As you reflect on your experience, what is one of the factors, complaints or concerns that you have as to why the appointment did not work out?

As I mentioned earlier, one of my complaints or concerns about this relatively minor car accident was that there was some damage to my car. My underlying or unconscious conviction was that my car should be rightfully restored to its new condition, and at no cost to me, simply because the accident was no fault of my own.

3. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by your complaint or concern?

In my situation, not only was there damage to my car that I felt should be repaired at no cost to me, but the more deeply held value or commitment on which my conviction was based was that because my car was in effect a representation of me. And, because I believe in taking care of myself and all that is an extension of me, it would be exercising poor stewardship not to take care of this damage to my car.

4. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions two through four until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to potential gaps in your seminary preparation program, where you were less than prepared for this particular appointment. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to potential gaps in your seminary preparation program, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

5. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to potential gaps in your seminary preparation program?
6. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to potential gaps in your seminary preparation program?
7. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions five through seven until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to potential gaps in the development of your professional identity as a Senior Pastor, where you were less than prepared for this particular appointment in a large church setting. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or

concerns do you feel relate to potential gaps in the development of your professional identity, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

8. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the development of your professional identity as a Senior Pastor of a large church?
9. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?
10. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions eight through ten until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to the itinerant system in general. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to the itinerant system in general, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

11. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the itinerant system in general?

12. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the itinerant system in general?

13. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions eleven through thirteen until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns you feel relate to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

14. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

15. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the fit between you as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

16. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions fourteen through sixteen until the list is exhausted.)

17. What else, if anything, would you like to add about any of these four particular areas of focus...your seminary preparation, the development of your professional identity, the itinerant system in general, or the fit between yourself as a pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

Once a week for the next month, please read the transcript of our conversation and write any new insights related to your comments. In the journal that has been provided, please write down anything new that surfaces in your thinking and feeling about your experience with your seminary preparation for this position, the itinerant system in general, or the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the environment of the church, especially as it relates to your insights regarding factors, complaints or concerns, underlying or unconscious convictions, or deeply held values or commitments. Please do not write your name in the journal, but include the date of your entry and any insights you may have

At the end of a month, I will collect your journal, and use your insights along with information you have shared in your interviews to help provide a better understanding of the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church. For purposes of clarity, I have reprinted the interview questions and these directions on a piece of

paper and have attached it to the inside cover of the journal, along with my contact information. If you have any questions, or if I can be of assistance during the course of the next month as you are reflecting and journaling about your experience, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by cell phone or e-mail.

Following the interview, participants are asked to read through the transcript of the interview at least once a week for the next month, writing down in a journal that has been provided, especially those thoughts and feelings related to their insights regarding complaints or concerns, underlying or unconscious convictions, or deeply held values or commitments. Once the thirty days have passed, I will collect the journals and conduct a second - more emergent - interview, asking them about their reflection and journaling over the course of the last month, following up with them on their experience.

Naturalistic Inquiry

In order to maximize the potential of useful information from this research project, the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) serves as a useful framework in constructing this study. Pioneers in the development and design of naturalistic inquiry, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed five axioms or philosophical underpinnings of the research process. These five principles, described as “basic beliefs” and “fundamental values” by Guba (1985) are the foundations of naturalistic inquiry. These standards in naturalistic inquiry address the nature of reality, the relationship between the researcher and the participants, the purpose of the inquiry, the way of making meaning from information provided, and the active role that values

play in a research project. For the purpose of clarity, each of these foundational principles of naturalistic inquiry will be enumerated further as they relate to this particular study.

The Nature of Reality

First, with respect to the nature of reality itself, naturalistic inquiry takes into account the different perspectives of reality. Because Guba (1985, p. 86) asserts that “It is in principle impossible to separate any phenomenon from its environment without losing critical aspects of meaning,” the information provided in the interviews and the synthesis of the data served to inform my imperfect understanding of the multiple realities involved in the study. In effect, I served as an interpreter of the various perspectives on reality that were presented in the interviews by all of the participants. And, although they also played an active role in assisting with this process as the study progressed, it is possible that the individuals interviewed in each case could have different perceptions and constructions of this same information.

The Relationship between the Researcher and the Participants

Second, in terms of the actual relationship between the researcher and the participants in the study, it clearly is something that is mutually influencing and develops over the course of time (Guba, 1981). Like Anderson (1993), I find it difficult to gather data “through minimal human contact and minimal interrelationship” (p. 47). Instead, my hope is to establish “an atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation” with participants (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p. 229). Naturally, establishing this kind of atmosphere hardly happens in an instant, and I did

my best to involve participants in decisions that were made as the study progressed, as well as the interpretations of the data provided.

I must also be aware of my values and the influence of values on both the collection and interpretation of data (Christians, 2000). My identity characteristics are also important factors, as gender, for example, can influence the dynamic between myself and the participants (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Being a while female in a study where many of the participants could be white males is another dynamic for reflection when analyzing the data, especially in ensuring that the participant meaning is being conveyed.

In addition, I serve as an “insider” to the extent that I have served on the staff at a United Methodist Church for well over seven years, first as a Minister of Youth, then as a Minister of Youth and Adult Discipleship, and currently as a Direction of Spiritual Formation and Lay Ministry Development. Ladson-Billings (2000) and Swisher (1998) believe that when the researcher is an insider, it ensures greater accuracy to the meaning of the data, along with sensitivity to the group being studied. At the same time, although I am a Certified Lay Speaker in the United Methodist District where I serve, I am not ordained at this time, nor am I am member of the three large churches that serve as features of this study. And, as a result, I could potentially be perceived as an outsider.

In short, if I am considered an insider, this could serve as a benefit in getting both clergy and laity to agree to participate in the study, and in understanding the specific jargon of the United Methodist Church. But, if participants are hesitant to be

open and honest in their remarks because I am a woman, or because I am perceived as an outsider, the trustworthiness of this study could be compromised. As a result, I will keep gender, values and insider/outsider dynamics in mind as I try to be aware of the effects these characteristics could potentially have on the collection and interpretation of the data.

The Purpose of the Inquiry

Third, as far as the purpose of the inquiry itself, rather than look for pre-determined outcomes, my desire is to be attentive to both similarities and differences in the interview data. Consistent with the assertions of Guba and Lincoln (1982), my goal is to be descriptive about the complexity of interview content, as well as the process used to extract common threads and themes.

Making Meaning from Information Provided

Fourth, with respect to the very nature of causality or way of making meaning from information provided, rather than asserting a cause-effect relationship, it is understood that there are multiple realities and perspectives possible in this study. In an effort to provide the reader with a sense of context, a thick or detailed description of information that leads to a particular conclusion is provided. More specifically, the content, concepts, patterns and relationships are described and explored.

The Active Role of Values in a Research Project.

Finally, there is no doubt that values played an active role in this research project. From research topic to design and methodology, my personal values as a researcher play an active role in this process of inquiry (Lincoln, 1982). As a

researcher, my role is to do my best to make explicit the values that impact the research process, raising to the surface and explaining the markings of my internal compass that has served to guide this process.

Characteristics of Inquiry

In addition to the five axioms that provided a foundation for this study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) also outlined fourteen different characteristics of inquiry that serve as the guideposts of naturalistic research design. Described in more detail to follow, these fourteen characteristics include: natural setting, human instrument, utilization of tacit knowledge, qualitative methods, purposive sampling, inductive data analysis, grounded theory, emergent design, negotiated outcomes, case study reporting mode, idiographic interpretation, tentative application, focused-determined boundaries, and special criteria for trustworthiness.

Natural Setting

Because Lincoln (1985) believed that something needed to be studied in its natural habitat to be best understood, when research conducted in a natural setting, as opposed to a laboratory, the researcher maximizes the opportunity to gain an understanding of the dynamics involved. Consistent with the idea that there is value in a natural setting, interviews were conducted in locations selected by the participants and at times that were most convenient for them. In addition, journals were provided for the participants, along with the transcript of the initial interview, so they could continue their reflection for a period of one month following the initial interview.

Human Instrument

Lincoln (1985) also maintained that the researcher was a kind of human instrument used in the research process, one that can lead to emotional connection and mutual learning. Here, my skills as an active listener, not to mention my sense of humor were valuable, as I sought to connect with participants, helping them to feel comfortable in sharing their stories. I will briefly share the evolution of my research project, as stated at the outset, to connect my story to their experience and in a sense share openly my interests in gaining a better understanding from them about their experience. And, as always, I will have had the opportunity to get to know the participants and allow them to get to know me, operating from pedagogy of both teacher and student, learning from those that I teach.

Tacit Knowledge

Described as intuition, using tacit knowledge in research, according to Lincoln (1985, p. 144), “takes into account the constant construction of environments by the actors in it...” My familiarity with the hierarchy of the United Methodist Church, coupled with my faith, interpersonal abilities, professional experience and academic training all served to enable me to ask questions based on my “sixth sense,” as I often followed unspoken leads. These intuitive hunches, along with both the verbal and the non-verbal communication from in the interviews that led to them, are described in my research journal, a tool outlined later in this chapter.

Qualitative Methods

The methodology selected for this study was qualitative research. Naturalistic inquiry lends itself to qualitative research methods. More specifically, focused interviews were used to gain a holistic understanding of both the content or elements of the failure of appointed Senior Pastors in large churches of the particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church, as well as the process itself (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieth, 1996). Common concepts, patterns or themes among participant responses will be an indication that internal validity. The transcripts will be checked with the participants for accuracy of interpretation, and their prolonged reflection on the interview transcripts over a period of one month following their receipt of the interview transcripts provides an opportunity for additional reflection and insight.

Although the primary focus of this particular study is on participant interviews, additional research methods were also utilized. In an effort to familiarize myself with the itinerant system, and to learn more about this particular specialization in the world of ministry, I also reviewed documents pertinent to the itinerancy. These documents included the official guiding document of the United Methodist Church called the Book of Discipline (2004), and the proverbial handbook on the roles and opportunities for leadership in the United Methodist Church (Kohler and Garcia, 1997).

Instead of simply gathering information from one particular vantage point or position, like that of a student, this study will facilitate the gathering of “complimentary and supporting perspectives with the writing of one informing the

other” (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p. 216), by including interviews from four perspectives on each of three different cases.

Purposive Sampling

Participants were randomly selected from a sample of large churches in the particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church who had experienced a failure of executive leadership in a five year period. The Office of the Bishop of this Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church annually publishes journals that I used to identify the list of churches in the sample. The various individuals serving in the proscribed roles of District Superintendent, and Senior Pastor were also obtained by reviewing the Conference Journals. The names of the laypersons who were serving in their participating churches at the time of the conflict and transition, including both a Lay Leader and a Staff Parish Relations Committee member were identified by the current Senior Pastors of the participating churches, all of whom expressed support for the study.

Inductive Data Analysis

In contrast to deductive reasoning where conclusions are drawn from a premise or predetermined assertion, Patton (1990) defines inductive data analysis as an understanding that evolves from the setting, coupled with the active interplay between the researcher and participants. Employing inductive analysis, I can work with the participants to extract meaning from their interview transcripts.

Grounded Theory

Using an amended version of the constant comparison method, where concepts, patterns and themes evolve from the data, my interviews will be focused only on three cases, and I will not continue to sample cases until no new patterns or categories emerge (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). My experience, coupled with the resulting data that evolves from participant interaction will enable me to proceed with “theoretical sensitivity...having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capacity to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 42). In an effort to discern discrepant data, as well as patterns that emerge from the information gathered in this study, I will examine, code and analyze the interview data by hand. This will not only be consistent with my visual-kinesthetic learning style, but will also help me to become more familiar with the nuances of the data, having lived with it so-to-speak. In addition, it does not seem necessary to use specialized software or computer programs for data analysis, because of the three case study research design.

Although I will seek to be attentive to discrepant data, my goal is to not allow it to become the primary focus of the story by using coding as simply as path to greater understanding of the complexities of life in providing leadership in a large church setting (Van Mannen, 1988, p. 94). My goal with respect to data analysis is to move beyond surface reporting to read the data story in more complicated ways, as I seek to balance introspection and objectification, experience and interpretation (Van

Mannen, 1988, p. 93). This will make it possible for the data story to give birth to new potential (James-Brown, 1995).

Emergent Design

It is important to note that there was not a predetermined agenda or outcome of this study. The initial research questions, along with the proposed interview schedule, while providing some initial structure and boundaries to this research project, merely form the framework to begin the developing dialogue. In this respect, the research design is emergent in that it is shaped over time through the interaction between myself as the researcher and the participants in the study. Additional questions for the potential follow-up interviews served as further evidence of the emergent design of the study.

Negotiated Outcomes

Because I believe that this study is in a sense co-created between myself as a researcher and the participants, in addition to field notes and a reflexive journal, member checks will be conducted to establish the credibility of findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In short, my hope is that my reflexive journal will be a “self-reflective meditation on the nature of ethnographic understanding” of the failure of executive leadership in the United Methodist Church (Van Mannen, 1988, p. 77). Together with the member checks, this process will be “a delightful dance” of negotiated outcomes because I recognize that as a researcher, I am “both vessel and a vehicle of knowledge” (Van Mannen, 1988, p. 92).

Case Study Reporting Mode

Statements made by the participants will be taken at face value, both positive and negative. All participants were asked to not discuss the interviews with anyone from their church, so as not to bias the results of the study. Although each individual was informed that s/he would be one of four participants interviewed from each of three settings, the names of the other interviewees were not revealed. The participants were informed that the results from the study would be shared with the leadership of this particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church, but that their names and any other identifying characteristics would be kept confidential. In order to provide assistance in maintaining confidentiality, all participants were asked to select a pseudonym. In short, it is assumed that the participants were honest, and that, as requested, there was not discussion among participants concerning the study. In addition, the interview tapes, transcripts, journals and other material related to the study have been kept in a locked file.

It is important to note that every effort will be made to safeguard the anonymity of the participants in this study, insofar as this is possible. The fact that the study possibly includes all moves from a term of three years or less in large United Methodist Churches of this particular Mid-Western Conference in a five year period, coupled with the safeguards in place relative to confidentiality would make it challenging for most people to ascertain the identity of individuals in the study.

The interview transcripts were shared with the respective participants for their feedback. This information was shared with participants with the understanding that

they would be able to make changes in their respective transcripts for the purposes of clarity, based on the intended meaning they had hoped to convey.

Idiographic Interpretation

With respect to idiographic interpretation, the assumption is that the information gathered is based in the context of the study. Consistent with the foundations of naturalistic inquiry, the goal is to describe the experiences of the participants interviewed, and make meaning based on the particular context.

Tentative Application

This research project is also conducted with the understanding that only tentative applications and conclusions can be drawn. As such, the goal of this particular research project is not to obtain “generalizable” results, but to provide enough information about the context to enable readers to make informed decisions about the transferability of findings to other settings (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p. 229). And, one again, although the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) described the process of interviewing until saturation is achieved or no new categories emerge, for pragmatic reasons this study focuses only on three cases.

Focused-Determined Boundaries

In naturalistic inquiry, the boundaries of a particular study can be determined based on factors like time, distance of travel, available funds and the like. The focused boundaries for this particular study were pre-determined in conjunction with my advisor and committee chairperson, Dr. Robert Rodgers.

Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln (1985), in order to establish trustworthiness, four factors need to be present in a research project. These important factors include confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability, each of which will be explained in more detail below.

Confirmability

The principle of confirmability necessitates that I seek to be transparent with respect to my objectivity in the study. In other words, the extent to which the results are based on data from the study insures that “data, interpretations and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator and are not simply figments of the evaluator’s imagination” (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are two methods that can help to establish confirmability in a research study, namely triangulation and reflexivity.

Triangulation

As previously noted, in addition to interviewing a Senior Pastor from each setting who had experienced a failure in an appointment or church assignment, interviews were also conducted with three other perspectives in each particular local church situation. A wide variety of both printed and electronic materials relative to the itinerancy were also reviewed for the purposes of this study.

Reflexive Journal

In addition to the triangulation of research sources, consistent with Richardson’s (1994) recommendation, I used a reflexive or research journal

throughout the duration of the data collection process, beginning with the moment the first draft of the dissertation proposal was completed. This additional source of data, external to the research study, reflects my internal process and is organized by date. Because Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 319) encourage researchers to keep what they call an “audit trail,” or a “residue of records stemming from inquiry,” I also organized and kept all transcripts, recordings, records, correspondence, journals and entries used for the purpose of this study. Once transcribed from the tapes and printed, interview transcripts were filed and file folders were used to keep signed consent forms, notes and other correspondence. In order to facilitate ease of comparison, evolving concepts and research codes were organized on my computer. All the materials pertaining to the study have been stored in a locked file cabinet, along with a flash drive containing all the related computer files.

Credibility

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), there are six different ways to establish and maintain credibility in a research project. Specifically, these ways to establish and maintain credibility include: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, progressive subjectivity, and member checks. Each of these methods of fieldwork increase the probability that my assertions as a researcher match the “constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them” (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 237). These six methods are all enumerated in more detail below.

Prolonged Engagement

Prolonged engagement means that I have gained an understanding of my particular study, by spending time with the participants representing a variety of perspectives, developing my relationship with each person and that I have actively involved them in the study. In addition, I completed all of the transcription of the interviews, and reviewed each of the interviews several times in an effort to get the data “in my bones” (Lather, 2000). In order to establish this relationship, I am planning on spending at least three to five hours with each participant in face-to-face interviews.

Persistent Observation

Closely related, persistent observation required that I take the necessary time to gather information. Time was spent gathering observation data at each of the three churches included in the study. In addition, I tried to be attentive to both what was and was not communicated in response to the questions asked during the interviews. I also worked hard to listen with all of my senses in the process of gathering data.

Peer Debriefing

Concerning peer debriefing, I worked with another doctoral student in a writing group in the early stages of the study. In addition to providing support through the initial phases of this dissertation experience, this colleague helped me to learn by challenging my thinking, and at times provided a different perspective on the denominational assumptions inherent in my writing, along with my corresponding conclusions. My advisor also made substantive comments related to my developing

dissertation, providing helpful feedback. I also worked with my advisor in an on-going conversation related to data collection and analysis, along with providing records of this process for his perusal. My advisor also read all of the interview transcripts from both the initial and follow-up interviews of each of the twelve participants in the study.

Negative Case Analysis

Fourth, negative case analysis is a process where the researcher tests other potential hypothesis or conclusions in order to strengthen the credibility of the study. The ultimate goal of this process is to examine and eliminate all alternative research conclusions until a best fit is obtained (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

Progressive Subjectivity

Fifth, with respect to progressive subjectivity, it was important to have some checks and balances to the potential abuse of privilege that I could exercise as a researcher in the course of this study (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). By working with my advisor, along with another doctoral student peer in a writing group, I was able to process and receive feedback on my developing construction in this study. This regular communication and feedback was also recorded in my research journal.

Member Checks

Finally or sixth, related to member checks, as previously mentioned, all participants were provided with copies of transcripts from their respective initial interviews. Once reviewed, all participants had an opportunity to make changes in their respective interview transcripts or to comment on the emerging results. In

addition, participants were asked to read and reflect on the interview transcripts at least once a week, writing new insights in a journal that had been provided. In the second interview, following this time of reflection, the journals and transcripts were collected and this additional information was also incorporated into the study. A few participants requested that they be able to keep their copy of the initial interview transcripts. The specific information relative to this constant feedback is enumerated in my reflexive journal.

Dependability

In contrast to the traditional research paradigm, where changes in research methodology in the course of a research project have a detrimental effect on the reliability of the study, the modifications of methodological construction are expected in the maturing process of a researcher involved with an emergent design (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). My efforts to document the evolving process of the research, or dependability audit, along with the confirmability of the results, or content of the results are detailed in the previous section concerning confirmability.

Transferability

As previously discussed with respect to tentative application, this research project has not been conducted in order to be able to generalize the results to other similar settings. Instead, the goal of this particular project is to provide sufficient information for others to make decisions concerning the application or transferability of these results to other settings. In the course of this study, I will seek to situate the thick description, providing “an extensive and careful description of the time, the

place, the context, the culture in which those hypotheses were found to be salient” (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 241-242).

Research Design

Participants

All total, twelve individuals were interviewed for the purposes of this study. In each of three church settings, I interviewed a District Superintendent, a Lay Leader, and a Staff Parish Relations Committee member, in addition to the Senior Pastor who had experienced a failure in that locale. An information gathering interview was conducted with the individual employed in the conference office assigned the responsibility of leadership development. And, I spoke with the current Senior Pastors in each of the three churches randomly selected for inclusion in this study in order to gain access to the names and contact information for the lay persons included in the study. Please refer to Appendices A, B, and C for the specific interview schedules used in the initial interviews during the course of the study. Appendices D, E, and F include the study consent form, the letter of introduction, and the schedule for the follow-up interviews respectively.

Research Sites

All interviews were conducted at the current offices of the participants in the study or other locations that they selected. At times the interviews were held on the site of the particular church in question, and even in the particular offices or rooms where these individuals had conducted much of their work or meetings, with the exception of the Senior Pastors who have since been moved to new appointments.

Procedure

Prior to scheduling any interviews, a meeting with a staff member in the Conference Office who had specific responsibilities for leadership development was arranged. The individual and his assistant served as a kind of gatekeeper, sending a letter on my behalf in support of this research project to the Institutional Review Board.

A random sample was selected of three cases involving large United Methodist Churches in this particular Mid-Western Conference where the Senior Pastors lasted for a period of three years or less before a move was initiated. Four potential participants were identified in each setting as previously outlined. Private interview spaces were obtained, consent for participation was granted, and access was gained to information pertinent to the study.

The three cases were randomly selected from single list made from the intersection of two records provided by the Conference. The two records provided by the Office of the Bishop included a list of large churches with a published average attendance of over 400 individuals in weekly worship services. This final list of possible large churches was confirmed through the Conference journals. Focusing only on the large churches, I made a list of all the instances of experiencing a transition of a Senior Pastor within the last five years, where a move was initiated in a period of three years or less following an appointment. The list for this study was then compiled based on all of the churches from the approximately 1,200 in the Conference. The accompanying list of District Superintendents in this particular Mid-

Western Conference of the United Methodist Church was obtained through the same Conference publications and confirmed by checking the Conference web site and/or in conversations with the current Senior Pastors of the churches randomly selected for inclusion in the study.

Information relative to the participants in each of the three cases is summarized in the three tables below, including the pseudonym selected by the participant or by myself if they had no preference, and the gender of the individual. In addition, the category of each participant is delineated, including the specific role they played in the setting. Originally, I intended to also list the age in the table, but it was decided that age would not be included in order to protect the anonymity of the participants in the study, particularly those who were Senior Pastors and District Superintendents. More specifically, the participants in the cases were as follows:

Pseudonym	Gender	Category/Role
Frank	Male	Former Senior Pastor
Mickey	Male	Staff Parish Relations Committee
Jim	Male	Lay Leader
Todd	Male	District Superintendent

Table 3.1: Case 1 Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Category/Role
Larry	Male	Former Senior Pastor
Del	Male	Staff Parish Relations Committee
Scott	Male	Lay Leader
Mike	Male	District Superintendent

Table 3.2: Case 2 Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Category/Role
Larry	Male	Former Senior Pastor
Clarence	Male	Staff Parish Relations Committee
John	Male	Lay Leader
Jeff	Male	District Superintendent

Table 3.3: Case 3 Participants

I met privately with each participant and explained both the purpose and context of the study. I indicated to the participants that, although the information that they provide will be summarized for the purposes of the report, their names would be confidential, and asked them to select a pseudonym. I also explained that the particular Mid-Western Conference office would be provided with a copy of the dissertation. Initial, semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with all

participants, based on a list of questions described in Appendices A, B, and C. All interview notes were transcribed from tapes to facilitate the ease of analysis. Once the interviews were transcribed, the tapes and the interview transcriptions were kept in a locked file, along with my reflexive journal, field notes and their reflection journals.

Interviews

In the initial interview, participants were asked to respond to a series of questions based on the particular situation they had personally encountered involving a failed appointment of a Senior Pastor in the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church as previously defined. The interview questions were designed to elicit feedback on the perspective of participants related to potential gaps in the seminary preparation of the pastor for the role, potential gaps in the development of the Senior Pastor's professional identity, the itinerant system in general, and the fit between the Senior Pastor and the church. More specifically, participants were asked to share their own stories relative to the failure in the Senior Pastor position and placement through the itinerant system, along with their complaints or concerns, underlying or even unconscious conviction, and deeply held values or commitments. The above sequence of questions was repeated until the list of complaints or concerns that the participant developed in response to the prompt had been exhausted.

Following the initial interview and transcription work, participants were mailed a copy of their respective transcripts, along with a blank journal with printed instructions. As indicated in the initial interview, participants were asked to read through their respective transcripts at least once a week for a month, writing any new

insights in a journal that has been provided. Participants were asked to be especially attentive to their insights regarding complaints or concerns, underlying convictions, or commitments related to the four areas of focus. It is important to note that, consistent with the work of Kvale (1983), the focus of this reflection information will allow me “to discover the categories of meaning” for the participants (Fetterman, 1989, p. 48).

Based on the work of Spradley (1980), the agenda for any follow-up interviews was somewhat structured, yet flexible enough to allow for the exploration of issues as they arise, including the emerging themes. This approach facilitated the process of “allowing the categories and conceptions to emerge from the research site” (Sackman, 1991, p. 184). This interview process is consistent with the work of Bogdan and Biklen (1982), who call qualitative interviews “a purposeful conversation,” and explain that it may be instructive to use “different types of interviews...at different stages in the study” (pp. 135-136). The interview schedule for the Senior Pastors can be found in Appendix A, while the interview schedules for District Superintendents can be found in Appendix B, and the interview schedule for Lay Leaders, and Staff Parish Relations Committee members can be found in Appendix C. The consent form can be found in Appendix D. The letter of introduction can be found in Appendix E. And, the interview schedule for the follow up interview can be found in Appendix F.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the beginning of this research project, my proposal was evaluated favorably by the Human Subjects Review Board, when I applied for and received permission to conduct a study involving human subjects. I then mailed potential

participants a letter of introduction, found in Appendix E, following up with telephone calls to set up the initial interviews. After meeting the potential participants, I introduced myself and reviewed the points enumerated on an informed consent form, before asking participants to sign the form. The consent form used in the study is located in Appendix D. As previously mentioned, all participants were asked to supply their own pseudonym, and informed that the information they shared would not be attached to their names. I explained that although they would not be personally identified in the results, the information they shared in the course of the study would be used to inform the categories and patterns, and that specific quotes could be used to illustrate a category or pattern. All other identifying characteristics were removed when the interviews were transcribed, and the transcripts of taped interview conversations and participant journals will be kept as required for a period of three years in a locked filing cabinet. I also made certain to answer any questions that participants had, to the best of my ability, prior to their involvement in the study. Second interviews were set up by telephone or e-mail once I had received approval from the Institutional Review Board for the follow up interview schedule found in Appendix F.

Politics of Representation

Instead of being methodologically silent, I will attempt to unmask my fieldwork to some degree through a reflexive journal and field notes, providing a glimpse into the picture of my perspective as a researcher as one of a blurred account (Van Mannen, 1988). Here I will attempt to ponder such questions as how I make

explicit the theory at the center of my analysis (Honan, Knobel, Baker & Davies, 2000, p. 9), what constraints of context I have taken for granted and are invisible (Chase & Bell, 1990, p. 173) and the focus of comments by the participants. Again, my reflexive journal and field notes are also stored in a locked file cabinet.

Limitations of the Study

Time prohibited case studies involving individuals connected to every large church in the particular Mid-Western Conference that experienced a failure of an executive leader or Senior Pastor. While the study does provide some depth of understanding concerning particular churches that experienced a failure of executive leadership, because I did not keep selecting cases until no new categories emerged, like most studies concerning leadership, this study lacked breadth. More specifically, this study did not address the perceptions of all the variations on perspectives and roles connected to these and other similar situations involving failed appointments in large churches within this particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Naturally, the imposed categories related to the data are based on both the interests I brought to the field and my reading of the literature. It's important at the very outset to note that these categories of meaning represent but a partial truth (Van Mannen, 1988, p. 94). It is also important to acknowledge the potential for researcher bias, given my employment in a United Methodist Church. However, my limited tenure in the ministry, coupled with my eclectic denominational background and graduate work elsewhere serves to minimize this potential prejudice.

Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the process used in the course of this particular research project, setting the stage for the information gathered concerning the failure of executive leadership in three large United Methodist Churches within this particular Mid-Western Conference. The following chapters will address the content of the study and describe the information provided in a manner that will illuminate an understanding of the interpretations that have emerged from the study.

CHAPTER 4

CASE 1 RESULTS

Purpose of the Study

As previously indicated, the purpose of this study is two-fold:

1. To learn the perceived reasons for the failure of these executive leaders from large churches in a particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church from a variety of perspectives. This study focuses on self constructed reasons and perceptions on why the appointment did not work out, the potential gaps in the development of the professional identity of the Senior Pastor, the potential gaps in the seminary preparation of the Senior Pastor, possible mismatches in the person-environment fit, and an evaluation of the itinerant appointment process by the participants.
2. To identify any transformations in self construction or focused perceptions that results from Kegan and Lahey's (2001) cognitive developmental reflection process over a period of one month.

Format

Chapters four, five and six are each devoted to cases one, two, and three in the study respectively. For each case, a general description of the context is followed by

the varying perspectives of a former Senior Pastor, a Staff Parish Relations Committee member, a Lay Leader, and the District Superintendent involved with the transition of the Senior Pastor from the church. An analysis of each case is included, beginning with a comparison and summary of the issues related to what happened, followed by an overview of the four major areas of focus. In communicating the results of the project, an effort was made to include as much of the participant perspectives as possible, and to do so in their own words. Chapter four is focused on case one.

Case 1

General Description

This church is located in a metropolitan area that has experienced rapid growth in recent years. Although there are clearly traditional and contemporary factions in the church, based on architecture both inside and out, the church is a traditional presence in the community.

Senior Pastor

I met with Frank in his office on two different occasions. During the initial interview, Frank seemed candid in his remarks and genuine in manner. But, in the follow up interview, Frank seemed distracted with a family situation, concerned that the pattern from the last appointment was repeating itself, and generally less present.

What Happened

At the outset, Frank stated, “I’m not sure if things did or didn’t work out the way they were supposed to be, meant to be, or whatever,” adding, it was an “experience that I was not accustomed to” and it was “quite painful to be truthful.” He

described a “long interview process,” where it seemed that that Staff Parish Relations Committee was “trying to feel out particular stances that I would have, primarily around homosexuality and that kind of thing.” Frank never did provide, “a direct answer or something that they were looking for.” Instead, Frank described how he had “tried to help them see my focus and my energy, which was primarily on trying to get the gospel, the good news within people, and to get people to become followers of Christ, and let the spirit work within them” so they could “see where they come out on particular issues.” Following a unanimous decision by the Staff Parish Relations Committee to approve Frank as the next Senior Pastor, he moved with his family, spending the first year “just trying to get acquainted with the people” and “their hearts,” and “sharing myself” with them.

Frank talked about his “work...with the leadership team,” to set a “pattern of priorities for the church,” citing three, including a “vision” for “a satellite campus” that was a “doable” goal based on some site visits and discussions with fundraisers. He talked about the staff, noting “I think we had a...pretty good relationship as far as the team,” describing the “fun,” “creativity,” and “experimenting” with new ideas, adding that there was “a really good, good spirit.” Frank described the culmination of the visioning process, where the congregation was asked two questions, including “does the Spirit of God within you agree that this is the direction that God is leading us to go as a church,” and “are you willing to give of your time and money to support this vision.” Frank noted an overwhelmingly positive response where “98.2 percent

said yes to both of those questions,” which to him “looked to me like a big green light.”

Frank talked about the people that “were...quite excited,” and that they had “even started...the fundraising,” but that “what we didn’t know, what I didn’t know, was that there were...two” adult Sunday school “classes” that “met somewhere off site” that same Sunday, “and decided how this wasn’t going to happen.” He added that “they began to call members of the congregation and sow a lot of seeds of question,” which “began to...affect the mood.” Frank said, “then I began to understand that there was a long standing tension between those who wanted to move on and branch out in terms of...evangelical witness, and those who ...had a tradition of saying...this is the way that we want it to be.” He shared that how the conflict escalated, adding “there were stories that...came back, even personal things,” that were not true, about how the conflict “took on a life of its own.” Frank said it quickly became “a really ugly thing.” He went on to say, “I’d never been through anything like that before,” and that he “didn’t know...how to how to stop it,” but that “essentially, the wheels just kind of fell off.”

Frank talked about how some of the younger families in the church were disappointed and some left the church, saying “as word of this got around...there was this feeling among...many of the younger, progressive people ...‘They’re going to win again’...so they began to be real discouraged, and started dropping out.” He went on to say, “It was that bad” that “Toward the end” some people in the church were leaving because they sensed “something wrong,” even though they had no idea what

was happening. As a result, they had even brought in “a mediator from the conference.” He noted his surprise that there had been a history of mediation at the church, and that there had been this underground movement of resistance, saying “I feel...sucker punched.” Although Frank “floundered for a while,” and expressed there were perhaps “other things that I might have...done differently,” he “concluded that...the deep seated problems were there even before I came,” adding that “there was just...no holding it together.” Frank talked about his wrestling with the situation, saying “I went through that period and what did I do” was “in trying...find out...my role, and my culpability,” adding “I felt bad...for the people, and for everything,” and that “it was a painful thing.” In the end, he commented, “I don’t know that... it could have been avoided” unless “there was someone who...was maybe a real...strong, forceful leader.” Frank noted, “I was following a pastor who was very directive” but recognized it was not his style, because “I like to try to nurture and love...all the people.” With respect to the eventual move, Frank said, “probably it was...the thing that needed to happen.”

Frank talked about the diametrically opposed factions of “visioning and its corollary division,” and how frustrating it was to not be able to identify the individuals or groups expressing the concerns. He shared that it was “covert – behind the scenes,” that he “tried for a long time to try to put a face or a name” to the concerns. Frank described being told “I heard” or “some people are saying,” adding “that kind of cloak and hiddenness was part of the problem,” and that it “just wasn’t up front and out in the open.” Frank talked about how he felt “there were some pretty large egos of

people” in the controlling groups,” noting that the resulting “disillusionment among a lot of people...who had expectations and hopes.”

Frank indicated that the point at which the underlying division became clear was when people in the church were asked for their personal investment and involvement. He explained, “I think the division was always there, but the precipitating thing, I think, came at the, at the time when we were asking for money.” He went on to say “there were people who would say one thing, and...pretend to go along, but when the rubber met the road, and now its time to do something about this, then...that's when this kind of...blew up.” Frank added, “I just got the feeling it was okay for a lot of people to say, well you can talk and say what ever you want as long as we don't do anything, but once you start to put some teeth in this and ask for the, for the money...that was a problem.”

Frank said, “I spent lots of time trying to” figure out “what” I “could” or “should...have done differently,” and that “I played that for a long time.” He added, “I think ultimately, it became clear to others, and then to me, that the kind of...personality, or...leadership in a Senior Pastor would take a different skill set...then what I had.” Frank explained, “I like the creative, loving, fun kind of thing, and there were problems that that...couldn't address.”

Frank talked about how all of the pieces fell into place with the vision they had worked so hard to develop, including a gift of land, “in addition to the green light and the fund-raising,” concluding “I believed it was a God thing, and others did too.” Telling a story about working with someone when he was growing up who taught him

a great deal about life, he said “I don't ask anybody to do anything that I'm not willing to do myself.” Frank went on to share how he had internalized that lesson as in his “value system.” Frank continued, “I believe that the vision was a God-given vision, and therefore I set the example,” going on to describe how he and his family sacrificed when they were asking for people to make commitments financially.

Frank talked about his value of excellence, explaining “I like to do things well...I like the creative part of starting with...a clean slate, and...visioning...and... the excitement and talking that up, but certainly need a team...of people working together.” Frank noted that “we had some that were very much in and on board and giving of themselves, and others that didn't,” which was “what made it so, so hard because...there were strong personalities...in both camps.” He commented that “those who were really...putting their energy and heart and stuff into it... there was a whole group...of people who were, who were disillusioned,” because they were unable “to see something through...to ride the storm.” Frank added that “there's always going to be challenges” because “anything you endeavor to do...that's worthwhile... will have resistances...that come to it.” Frank went on to say, “we felt, essentially betrayal, and then abandonment...and those are two pretty tough things.” Frank said that the “surprise or shock, or whatever was...was hard,” and “there was a lot of hurt” and attempts at “understanding...what's doing this.”

Frank also talked about his struggle with the hidden nature of the conflict, saying “I value integrity.” He referred to “the passage of Scripture that says speak the truth in love,” he said “I'm very much open for people to disagree, and, and still love.”

Frank went on to say that “if you don't agree with this vision, and you don't want to support it, you know, that's fine, just don't give.” Frank continued, but “what I don't understand...is the kind of subterfuge and undermining of the group of people” who “really worked together to get the vision.”

Frank talked about the shock and confusion, saying “we spent so much time in trying to hear and listen to everybody.” Frank said that “another reason why that... was such a surprise, because it, it didn't really surface in any of the... groundwork in the visioning process.” But, Frank continued, “when I would try to nail down...who had the issues and who had the problems...because I was willing to talk with anybody ...there was this...wall or whatever.” Frank said, “I never really knew who the real influencers were.” Frank noted, “it could have been sightless and for me nameless, but they were there...and influenced other people.” Frank added that “it was a disappointment to me...when some would say I've heard people say this or express this or whatever, when I...inquired who that might be, it was you know almost like they would be betraying a trust if they...shared or this was shared in confidence.” But, Frank said, “to me, the issues weren't of a confidential nature, they were of visioning and stuff, not like breaking a confidence...or a secret of someone.” Frank concluded, “I suppose people had to choose,” and that “I guess in some respects I would...have been the less trustworthy,” because “we're talking relationships that go back twenty-thirty-forty years, and I'm the new kid on the block.” Frank added, “pastors come, and pastors go, but this is our church,” was “an expression that I heard,

which...was repeated” because “they didn’t want to be led in ways that they didn’t want to go.”

Frank expressed values of working together as a collaborative team, of excellence, and being persistent through difficulties, describing how they had “instilled... deep friendships...born...through the battle...of this experience.” Frank noted that “it is a value to be able...to endure...and acknowledge that...there are good days and bad days,” but that it was “a disappointment, that we weren’t able to, to ride through the negative...to come out on the other side.” Frank went on to share a story about redemptive suffering, adding “I also believe...that the older I get it is hard to look at a situation and to be able to say kind of clearly whether this is a good thing that happened or a bad thing,” since “I see so frequently how...God uses bad things that happen. Finally, he acknowledged that it was painful getting to a place of trust, saying “It’s a little easier to reflect on now, because I was hurt for a while, quite a while after that,” and that he could now “say that maybe this is something that...needed to happen and maybe the good is coming for it.” Frank added, “it’s a trust...and you have to trust that even when it looks like things are bad” and “I trust that I think.”

With respect to his personality and leadership style, Frank indicated that “it was, in the beginning, a good match,” adding “there was a lot of creativity, and a lot of dreaming,” and that he “worked with the staff” and “charted the course and worked together.” Frank went on to say, “once this other dynamic took on a life of its own...I was not prepared, or equipped...to be able to deal with that,” adding “someone else I think...may have been able to do that.” He talked about feeling inadequate to address

the situation, saying “There were lots of times that I felt” that “I don’t know what to do.” Frank explained how one of the redemptive pieces in the experience for him was that it facilitated the development of his thinking related to conflict, adding that “conflict resolution became something that I learned a great deal about, and, and it has helped me.” This enabled him to develop his own model of addressing conflict. However, he expressed that “the biggest thing,” and “the thing that so amazed me, awestruck me in this dynamic was that this thing actually began to live and breathe, and took on, this ugly thing, a life of its own.” Frank quickly added that “nobody could...strangle it, could confine it,” and that it had really become “its own thing” involving “stories, and stuff that were blown way out of proportion.”

Seminary Preparation

With respect to potential gaps in his seminary preparation, Frank indicated, “Seminary was a long time ago for me, and a lot of learning,” going on to say “I felt” that “my seminary experience was good and helpful.” He commented, “Obviously, you can’t learn everything and know everything about pastoral ministry in seminary,” but “I did find myself kind of ill-equipped.” Frank continued, “It was like it was like I was into it before I knew” and “it’s like slipping me into a ring with a prizefighter, and you find yourself way...outclassed.” Frank concluded, “by then it’s probably too late...to get your training.”

Towards the end of the interview, Frank returned to the issue of seminary preparation, saying “I don’t know how much it has changed recently, because I don’t go back to seminary,” but “there was a big kind of, I won’t say disconnect, but a huge

gap between what I was studying there in seminary, and where my...farm people were out there.” Frank said “there wasn’t a lot of really good preparation in a lot of areas.” However, he expressed that he did gain from his seminary education, adding that it was solid “theologically,” and “I focused, quite frankly on...trying to take counseling courses,” adding “I thought those were very beneficial, when you do case studies,” and “those were helpful to me.”

Professional Identity

Concerning the development of his professional identity, Frank said “I felt I had support from the District Superintendent,” who was “a friend of mine” and “a colleague, but also a mentor.” Frank indicated that they “had” many “long discussions” concerning “the situation,” adding that the Bishop “was also supportive, and was bending over backwards to try to help.” In talking about the inevitable nature of the conflict, Frank said “the seeds and stuff were already there” and that it was “natural” that “it surfaced itself in the Senior Pastor,” because “that position, that role is the leader” and the person “who is ultimately responsible for whether the church succeeds or fails.” Frank went on to say that “there’s a part of me that says there wasn’t anything that anybody was going to be able to do to fix this,” or to “make it better,” since “the trust” and “the ethos were such that they weren’t going to listen to anybody from the conference.” Frank added that “it doesn’t matter how good the mediator was,” because “it was” a “headstrong” and “head butting wills kinds of feel.”

With respect to his own skill set, Frank acknowledged that he can always learn more, but that it probably would not have made a difference in this situation, saying

“there’s always a growing edge for everyone.” Frank continued, “I could grow” in “conflict resolution,” but “there’s a point at which I sensed that people would ask me to be something other than who I was,” and “I don’t feel, that you can...have integrity with yourself when you step outside of whatever that, that line is...to not be who you are.” Frank went on to say “that’s the point at which I think” the Staff Parish Relations Committee “and others recognized” it was “going to take somebody different” to move forward. Frank commented that “opportunities for continuing education” and “learning things as you go along” certainly “would have been appropriate,” especially “continuing education events” to “identify” and “deal” with “conflicts.” Frank felt strongly however that additional training “would have been good and helpful to a point, but not to the point at which I would need to be somebody different.”

Itinerancy

Frank said that he “felt good about the interview” at the church in question. Frank also shared a story of the subsequent introduction in his career, which he described as a “bad experience” and a “disaster” when he “was still, kind of reeling and hurting emotionally,” and “still hadn’t worked through all of this that had happened.” He felt really misunderstood because of the way that that District Superintendent handled the situation. Frank then quickly added that although it was a “hard time,” that he then arrived at his new appointment, where he was “the only pastor of a smaller church,” and that he was “having a wonderful time” with “great people,” so “who knows?”

Frank talked about trying to recover from the stunning turn of events in the transition, commenting on the “shock” because he “had” some “visions of long term kinds of ministry” at the church where things did not work out. He agreed that he might have benefited from something in place to help him work through the dynamics that occurred, saying that “time” for a “sabbatical” or a “debriefing processing time” could have helped. Frank went on to say, but “I didn’t realize it” and “at the time you don’t even know how” wounded you are, because “you don’t even know what all’s going on,” so “that would have been a very, very helpful thing.”

At the end of the interview, Frank had much more to say about his perspective on the itinerant system, talking at length about his call to ministry. Specifically, Frank said “the only way that I could function in the itinerant system” when “we were appointed at each of the churches” was to recognize that “Every place” I was appointed “was a blessing,” and that “the system” was “good.” Frank went on to say that his “attitude” is to “stay” at a church “forever, until God or the Cabinet or the church decides, or we get that call.” Frank added, “we never had the intention that we’ll be here for a few years and then we’ll go somewhere else,” which “took a lot of the weight” or pressure off,” and “I was never looking at any other place” that he focused on “just ministering and working with the people.”

Frank talked about how he tried to avoid getting caught up in the politics, but that he believed in the itinerant system. Frank said that although the “system has been good,” over time “you hear more” and have “questions,” but “every situation has a lot of different perspectives from a lot of different people,” so he tried to stay out of “the

politic of it.” Frank added that “ultimately, God has blessed us very much” and “I think it’s a good thing.” Frank continued, “I do think” that “there are times, particularly, when you go through” a “really rough experience” much “like I did,” that “maybe some more sensitivity” would have been helpful. Frank noted that “the interview right after that” was a “fiasco” and that “emotionally,” it “was a hard, hard time for us.” He went on to say, “I’m not complaining, but I’m saying that I didn’t even know how badly I was” hurt or all that I “carried in that strain,” pointing out that “I can still feel it” now, “years later.” Frank also talked about the additional blow of being offered a smaller church. Specifically, saying it “seemed to be, if there such a wording can be a step down,” because “it was a lot less pay, and it was almost like well you blew the other interview,” so “you’re going to have to take this, or we may not find you anything.” Frank described this as “an added low,” because “there wasn’t a lot of feeling” of “support, particularly when I was doubting” myself or thinking I would “do something wrong.”

Frank talked about the process of the itinerant system, saying, “hopefully” the “best people” were “elected” to serve “on the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee,” and “you trust that they will make the decisions for the whole group.” He said the itinerant system was “as good” of “a system as any,” adding “I don’t have any issue” with “the itinerancy” or “the appointment system.” Frank went on to say, “A lot of it has to do with the personality of the Bishop, and how the Bishop and the Cabinet work together, and how they make appointments, and how sensitive and stuff they are” especially when a conflict is escalating and in situations where “it was hard for the

church.” Frank expressed gratitude that his current appointment “has been a blessing.”

Person - Environment Fit

Concerning the fit, Frank talked about “hindsight,” saying “Had we known of these dynamics, I think it...ultimately was not a good fit.” He acknowledged that he “could have taken the people” in the overwhelming majority “and said let's do this,” and that “We could have had a wonderful time” and it would have been “fun.” But, Frank added “the reality” was that this “church” simply “was made up” of “mixtures” that “clashed,” and “ultimately” it “was not a good fit.”

Without blaming anyone, Frank felt that had he been made aware of kind of the depth and scope of the dynamics in the church and their long history of conflict, that it might have been a cue to him that it was not a good fit from the beginning. Specifically, Frank said, “Had I known that there were these kinds of dynamics and how deeply and strongly they were” in the church, “I would have...questioned” if it “would have been” a good fit. Frank said, I did assume that “the Bishop and Cabinet” knew the “congregation and the history itself well enough.” He made it clear that he was “not blaming them,” but pointed out “they did know,” the “history of the conflicts.” Frank went on to say, “they knew the history of the church,” and that “they did have some issues,” but that he thought the Cabinet was “hopeful” that I could “lead them in the way that those problems” would “surface,” adding that “they sure did,” in ways that were “huge.”

Frank said “I knew that there were a fairly substantial group of people” who “wanted really to branch out was different styles of worship, and different settings,” but he did not know that the same “group” had “been trying” for the last several years “to move that way,” and had been “finding this resistance.” He added, “I think they saw, probably in me” that “at least initially” some “great hope,” but “when that didn’t happen” naturally “they were disillusioned.” Frank went on to say “when you lose” some “young families” and “professional people” who “are giving, everything goes down, attendance goes down, giving goes down” and the “big momentum” can work in “both directions.”

Follow-Up Interview

Concerning his time of reflection and journaling, Frank said “I’m not very good at journaling, and I didn’t do a good job at all,” but said that reflection is part of his daily discipline. Frank noted, “I found as I reflected upon my past experiences that there was a range of emotions within me.” He said, “At times, I would feel really down, and, and discouraged, and other times, you know, pretty hopeful.” Frank agreed that feelings are a way God connects us to our interior landscape, pointing out that the Psalms provide a full range of emotions. And, Frank shared a prayer he had written, including:

How will we survive with so many leaving? Is it happening all over again, Lord? Is this my fault? Should I have been more proactive? Should I have seen it coming sooner? I don’t know what to do to stop it or how to turn it around. What do you want me to do, Lord? Is this a sign that I’m not effective (or competent) as a pastor?

Clearly, as Frank acknowledged in the interview, he was wondering if what had happened in his last appointment was repeating itself in his current church.

Frank talked about the paradox of humanity living with the illusion of control, saying “probably the biggest and most profound” new insight is remembering “that God’s ways are bigger than our ways” and God’s “thoughts” were “beyond ours.” He explained that “we have a limited amount to control in terms of what happens in the bigger picture, and the challenge is to “continually” work “to realign my will with God’s will,” and “accept” what “I can’t change,” but to also “do what I can to, to make things better.” Frank also talked about his “struggle” with the delicate balance of how to “in love work toward holding each other accountable for what we all know God wants us to be and do,” especially with “a range of people, and when you cannot control the “behaviors and actions” of others.

Related to his participation in the project, Frank said “The reflective time, I think, has helped me” a great deal “because when you’ve gone through” something difficult, “the temptation is just to, kind of put that away, and get very involved” with whatever “you’re currently doing.” Frank continued, “The reflective time I think has been helpful to me, particularly” whenever “I go through times of emotions or whatever and try to recognize how many of those emotions are tied in or related to what’s happened before,” or “the fear” that it is “happening again,” even though he had “hope” and “the insight” that “there are new dynamics here,” that “are different.”

Frank agreed that God provides redemptive opportunities for deeper levels of healing, noting that “Some things we carry with us” for “a long time,” but “healing”

will “come when we” are able to “face the realities in ourselves” and “recognize that there is redemption.” He went on to say, “you do live and learn from experiences,” adding that “the bigger lesson” is there are “forces in play” which “are beyond my power to change, but the awareness of them” is “helpful.” Frank talked about how he was “very unaware” of “some of the dynamics,” but “now” could “see” the “reality” that “there are some people, even within the church, who are very destructive” and “unaware of some of the destructive tendencies they would have in things like spreading gossip.” Frank also talked about the “momentum and energy” when “you watch national championship games” and see “struggles about the flow” and “when the tide begins to turn,” adding “there are dynamics there in play” that “you almost have to behold them, but you can’t really force it or make it,” because “it’s, something that just happens.”

For the record, Frank expressed “appreciation” for my “awareness” that “churches in general, and pastors in particular are facing some really challenging times,” going on to say in “my history” there has never “been...a time when it is so very difficult to lead what we call an authentic church.” Frank talked about the “challenge to help people to see” the “bigger picture,” adding that “church is not a high priority for a lot of people.” Frank added that “for some who do have church as a part of their life, they see it more as a good thing for them to add on, as opposed to the real center and focus of their life.” He said he believed “the church is of God and will exist till the end of time,” but described “the real challenge” in “how it changes” and “what” we “do to change and be faithful” to “our call.” Frank thanked me, saying “I

hope that your work” does “reveal some things” that “will help the church” and “pastors in particular.”

Staff Parish Relations Committee Member

While the initial interview with Mickey was in a restaurant, the follow up interview was at his office. I found Mickey to be gregarious, talkative, sensitive, genuine, funny, and insightful.

What Happened

At the outset, Mickey stated that Frank followed “a stalwart” Senior Pastor even though he said that he, personally was “not totally in agreement” with this former Senior Pastor “philosophically.” Mickey said that Frank “had probably the toughest situation to come into for an interview because the church had their minds made up that the Cabinet was going to send us somebody that was a Cabinet boy, right down the line,” and that they “were going to make us pay our apportionments.” He said “it was interesting because when we got done with the interview” with Frank, “about half the people on the committee were stunned at how wonderful we thought this guy was.” And, at the outset, Mickey expressed high praise of Frank, commenting that “of all the ministers I’ve ever known in my life, I think that (he) represented to me the person of a shepherd more than anybody.” Mickey added that Frank “really was the most caring person I think I’ve ever met, ever,” noting “I’ve had some wonderful relationships... with pastors.”

In describing the introduction, Mickey said that Frank “came in, and it was asked about apportionments, and his answer was so good.” According to Mickey,

Frank said, “there might be some things” that “we may not agree with,” but “if we pay our apportionments, it also helps those little churches out there that are struggling to make ends meet.” Mickey indicated that Frank emphasized that “there’s a lot of good that comes with these apportionments,” encouraging them to not just focus on how “we’re supporting maybe a philosophy that this church doesn’t believe in.” Mickey went on to say “it was the gay issue, if I remember right, that was the strong issue at the time,” adding “I was very fortunate to be taught that we just love everybody no matter what,” and “I was kind of lucky in that respect.” Mickey went on to say that although “there were a lot of people that were just not wanting a Cabinet flunkie to come in here and tell us what to do,” it went so well that “the impression was, man, this guy is a great guy,” and he was fairly certain that “it was unanimous.” Mickey added that “it was so cool,” because “some of the staunchest people that came in there thinking he’s sent here with an agenda were the ones that softened the most.”

Mickey talked about the immediate changes and resulting backlash, explaining how Frank’s “ministry started off, and he did things differently” or in “his style” by not staying in “the holy pulpit,” and that he “would dare stand in front and walk down the aisle.” Mickey went on to say, “then there was a movement to go to more of a praise oriented worship” service, but that we “were an old traditional church, and I think the bottom line” was that there “were too many people that were too set in their ways.” Mickey continued, saying, “then, it seemed like people would come to Staff Parish with little, to me petty, petty little things that were going on” and that Frank

“was getting hammered, just hammered by these little petty things, and they started to add up.”

Mickey described some of the specific complaints. These complaints included: “I’m just not being spiritually fed;” that Frank “did not understand the traditional practices” of our church; that there was “too much change too fast;” that Frank was “leaving the pulpit too much;” that “he’s not preaching the gospel;” that “he doesn’t have a plan;” and that Frank was “not caring for the opinions of those...who have always been there.” Mickey shared one story, “I had a woman come up to me say, if you shaved (Frank’s) head, it would say 666 on it.” Because Mickey felt that this comment was “just the most absurd thing I ever heard,” he indicated that he responded in disbelief because I thought that Frank was “one of the most God fearing, gospel reaching, saltwater guys I’ve ever met in my life.” Mickey also said that there was a major argument “over the phraseology that was used in a brochure” that “started a holy war in that church” that “was bizarre.” Mickey added, “Some people got mad because he closed his eyes” during “his sermon.” Mickey went on to say that when he asked Frank why he did that, Frank replied “when I close my eyes, I focus better on what God wants me to say while I’m talking.” Mickey noted, “I thought it was kind of cool.”

Mickey talked about an influential group in the church who did not care for Frank. He described “a Sunday school class that couldn’t stand him” that was “made up of a lot of the traditional older people” who “would constantly come to me,” asking “What would your mother say?” Mickey indicated, “I always made them mad”

because I would tell them “Oh, I think she’d like him.” Mickey said “they felt that he was not open to opposing views” and that he was “insensitive to special families,” because “there were people in our church that felt they should receive special attention because their family has done so much for the church.” Mickey went on to say that it “was all jealousy,” and that “it wasn’t just change, it was people thought he was coming in and usurping their actual power that they had in that church.” Mickey commented, “we lost a lot of money givers, because all our tithe givers left,” because “they were not about to support something financially they didn’t believe in.”

Mickey talked about the conversations that took place in other groups within the church, saying “I promised in my Sunday school class, and in my adult cell groups we all promised that we weren’t going to get bitter about this situation.” But, Mickey said that he was “so disappointed that some people cut and ran that it really hurt me” and that he “looked at it as abandonment.” Mickey went on to say, “My only way of getting through it was saying if they are being ...spiritually fed somewhere else then that’s fine,” but that “it seemed to me to be very, very selfish.” Mickey added, “I didn’t feel that the new guy was given a chance.” Mickey concluded, “Everyone wanted to sit at the right side of Jesus is what it was,” noting “the complaints were absurd,” but “that group” was “looking for him to fail” and “wanted him to fail.”

In reflecting on the entire sequence of events, Mickey said, “maybe it was just too different, too fast for a church that was really, really reactionary.” Mickey noted, “I think the church was so strongly programmed by his predecessor to believe certain things, that it was the philosophy of many people that it’s okay to be close minded

because we're right...which is really what was happening." Mickey wondered about the rapid changes and how much was directed by the Senior Pastor, or by the Bishop and Cabinet. Specifically, he said, "one thing we never know is that as a committee or just a regular churchgoer is how much is dictated from above, and how much do they really want to do." Mickey also wondered if they were prepared enough as a church for the change, and if the Staff Parish Relations Committee had done enough. Mickey stated, "it's really possible that when (Frank) came that we weren't in-serviced enough perhaps." Mickey continued, "maybe the message...didn't get out...that hey, we interviewed this guy, and when we got done and we prayed, we all had an epiphany" that "we've got to have this guy" who "has been sent here from God."

Mickey told a story from when he was much younger about an elderly woman who confronted a group when they were complaining about the pastor in a meeting. Mickey noted that the woman told them, "Go to Lakeside some day and see all of the bozos that are there and maybe you'll be real happy with what you got." Mickey added that the woman said that every pastor has certain people who are loyal, but that "it doesn't matter who comes in, some get a real good shot, some don't...and that's just the way that it is." In sharing his personal feelings about the itinerancy, Mickey said "I always like...all my ministers," but "unfortunately, I got very attached to them, because then you get hurt through the itinerant ministry."

Mickey described the varying factions of people related to the conflict at the church. Specifically, Mickey said, "some wanted him out" and were threatening to leave, while there were other "people leaving the church." Mickey said that there

were some people “who felt” that “the church wasn’t moving fast enough to go to praise and worship,” and others who were going to leave “if we have two different services, I’m never coming back,” as well as “old folks” who thought “some guy comes in here and tries to change everything.” Mickey said that Frank “had upset one family” when a “good whippersnapper youth pastor...came in with a philosophy of the cell group ministry” and they worked together to implement “a new approach to Sunday School.” Mickey indicated that “some people who had been teaching Sunday School all of their lives kind of lost their jobs” and “felt that they were railroaded out.” Mickey added, that “it was a family that had been very influential in that church,” and the decision was made to leave because they were “not getting the right answers,” adding that “when they left, it just started snowballing.” In the end, Mickey said that Frank “tried to allow a lot of people get involved, and that was one of the problems,” specifically noting that Frank “had trouble probably either reigning people in or saying no.”

Mickey talked about his struggle with the situation as a member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, saying, “I just... sometimes wonder” what would have happened “if I’d fought it.” Mickey went on to say, “I wasn’t afraid to fight it for me” and “they can be mad at me all they want,” but “I tried to put his emotional state above what was going on” because “I saw the hurt in his eyes,” and “it was going to get worse.” He talked about how he had defended Frank in previous meetings, saying “this is bull crap,” that “we’re killing this guy,” that “he hadn’t had enough time,” that “we need to be more patient,” that “we need to be loving,” and that “we need to be

Christ-like.” Mickey added, “I couldn’t bash the guy,” because “I believed with all my heart that he’d been sent there by God.” Mickey continued, “it got down to the nitty-gritty of deciding...whether we should recommend that (Frank) not come back, and everybody in that room knew that there is no way...I’m going to vote for (Frank) to be gone,” but I said “I will vote for him to leave to save him from this torture, this crucifixion.” Mickey added, “to this day, I don’t think it was probably the right thing to do, but I loved him so much,” and “it was just killing me to see him get hammered,” because “I didn’t want him hurt.” Mickey added, “I hope he knows how much I cared for what he was trying to do there.” Mickey concluded, “we just left him hanging I guess...by me ultimately voting” and “I just felt like I was betraying the guy.” Mickey added, “I suppose Judas thought he was doing the right thing too,” but “because you have an itinerant ministry system...there’s an easy out too.”

Mickey talked about his difficult visit with Frank the following day, saying “I drove out to his house balling like a baby” and “said I just could not let you get hurt anymore.” Mickey indicated that he talked with Frank, saying “I’m telling you this out of love,” and “I really thought change would be good for him, and the church wasn’t going to accept him.” Mickey continued, “I can remember it like it was yesterday...telling him I voted for you to move because I can’t see you hurting,” adding “it’s killing me now.” Mickey shared, “I was so upset with that church” that I talked about leaving but my wife, “who just hates the itinerant ministry,” convinced me otherwise. Mickey added that the new pastor has led the church through some

healing, and although “we’re not done being bitter...it sure is better than it was” at that time.

Mickey talked about the challenging role of a Senior Pastor in a large church within the itinerant system, saying, “the one thing I don’t think the church understands about the itinerant ministry” is that Senior Pastors are “lightning rods no matter what.” Mickey noted, ultimately “we’re not supposed to be attached” to them. He went on to say, Senior Pastors are “supposed to equip us to be the hands, the feet of Christ,” and that his mother taught him when their Pastor would move and “we’d lose...a dear friend,” that “we can’t be selfish” because “other people need to learn to love this wonderful person too.”

In summarizing Frank’s gifts, Mickey said, “I thought that he preached the gospel better than the predecessor had, and didn’t try to turn us into little robots.” Mickey said that Frank “gave us a lot of food for thought to think about” and that “he got into my mind and my heart.” Mickey went on to say, “I wasn’t as fed before as when (Frank) got there,” although he acknowledged that “I hate to say that, because I said, the guy that was there before I really loved to talk to one on one” and “I thought he was a brilliant man.” Mickey also indicated, “I suppose there are people that are visionary, and I believe that (Frank) is,” adding that he “didn’t seem to be impatient.” Mickey concluded, “I thought that (Frank) was just one of the closest things to what I think Jesus is supposed to be” that is possible,” adding “that’s probably why he got destroyed.”

In summarizing the conflict and resulting transition, Mickey said that “if you got the wrong family upset,” about “values” and “money” that “it just spread,” adding that it was “like a cancer” that “was infectious.” Mickey indicated, concerning the church, “We’ve not recovered since money-wise, although we built a new building,” and “there’s still a fight to do any kind of praise worship there, and so we have two services, and, and one’s traditional and one’s blended.” Mickey went on to say, “there’s so much potential” in spite of “the narrow mindedness of people,” but that the current Senior Pastor “realizes that this church is going to take a lot longer than we think.” Mickey added, that “we haven’t met our financial obligations since, although we still pay our apportionments.”

Seminary Preparation

Mickey described his perceptions of the Senior Pastor’s seminary preparation, saying that on the whole it was “very solid” and “impeccable.” Concerning Frank’s “visitation” skill set, Mickey said “I did not hear complaints, except like maybe every once in a while,” when people would complain that “he didn’t stay long enough” or “people would get offended” if “he didn’t recognize” them outside of the church setting, but “when you’re new, that happens.” And, because Mickey was not certain if “they get that precise”, asking “In seminary, do they tell you...to stay in the pulpit?” Mostly, Mickey seemed to be at a loss, saying, “I don’t know how that all works” and “I guess I can’t answer your question” since “I don’t know all that they do there.”

Mickey talked about Frank’s gifts, saying “his number one strength was being the shepherd example that Christ was,” adding “whether that was all him or things that

had added to that from seminary, I just don't know." Mickey also said that Frank "had his points when he gave his" sermon and that he "didn't distract with ridiculous jokes." He said that Frank "seemed to be very time on task, and I thought that his training had to have been good." Mickey went on to say, Frank "was very analytical in his thought processes," that "he was called," that "his communication skills were just fantastic" regardless of "what some people said." Mickey continued, saying that Frank's "delivery was good." Mickey talked about differing opinions, explaining "there were people" who "would say, wow, that was a great sermon" when they would "all go to lunch," but "some people would say, I got nothing out of that." Mickey concluded that the varying opinions had nothing to do with Frank's "training." Mickey also indicated that Frank "knew the Bible inside and out," including "exactly where to find whatever he needed to find, even in a meeting," saying "he had that down."

Mickey commented that "according to most people" Frank's "management skills" were "weak," and "people ripped on his management skills." Mickey went on to say, "I did not look at it that way, because I thought he listened to people all the time," and "if I had a complaint, he listened to too many people too much." Mickey said, "so maybe, in a seminary if they said listen, you, you're going to lose somebody in the church by saying no, but you've got to be able to put your foot down" it would be good. But, Mickey noted, "I don't think he, he liked doing that" and "I don't think he did that enough, perhaps." Mickey concluded, saying, "If I were really trying to be

objective, and trying to help the guy” that on the management part” Frank “would not get an A grade.”

Mickey used a football analogy to talk about Frank’s management skills, saying “He’d have been a great offensive or defensive coordinator,” but “not necessarily a head coach,” because “then you don’t have to worry about management skills.” He went on to say, “Let the head coach do all the management stuff,” and “you just call a great offense, because nobody can call it better than you can,” adding “that’s the way he was.” But Mickey recognized “those guys need to be in churches too eventually,” and that “you can’t be an assistant forever,” because “With the itinerant ministry process, everybody’s moving up all of the time.” Mickey acknowledged, Frank “probably wasn’t mean enough,” adding “I don’t know if he would have kicked out the money-changers,” but “I think he would have talked to them,” saying “you know, really you shouldn’t do that.” But, Mickey went on to say that he felt that was a “terrible” thing “to say because” Frank was “Christ-like.”

Mickey said that there was a gap in Frank’s “parenting skills, which nobody has a license for anyway,” because he needed “to be more forceful.” He went on to say that Frank “can’t be mean” and “doesn’t have a mean bone in his body,” but that “maybe, in his way, he thought he was.” Mickey talked about how the people “were used to” the style of the former Senior Pastor, pounding his fist on the table, saying, “Nobody messed with (him)” and “if you did” that “you left” and “nobody cared if you left.” Mickey added, “I’m a big boy and not too much scares me,” but that the

former Senior Pastor “scared me,” which was perhaps “why I enjoyed Frank so much, because he was the meekest, mildest, nicest guy.”

Mickey continued to talk about how he tried to deal with the complaints, saying “when some people said, well he just didn’t treat me very well, I knew they had to be lying,” because “I could, I could just tick him off to no end and he’d forgive me in a heartbeat” and “I just know him.” Mickey continued, “I just didn’t believe that people thought he was a little bit abrupt” and that “they would take his phrases” and ask me if I could “believe he said that,” describing one situation where when he responded by saying “no” and the person asked “Well, are you calling me a liar?” Mickey talked about how he responded to the question by saying “Well, no” and suggested the person talk with Frank because, that’s biblical.” Mickey added that he told this person “if you’re not satisfied, then come to the church leaders and we’ll talk about it” and “if we have to go to the body, we’ll go to the body.” But, Mickey said “Nobody would go to him” and they “wouldn’t follow the plan,” which “really drove me nuts.”

In the end, talking about the transition, Mickey said, “I just thought it was too tough an act to follow under the circumstances.” Specifically, Mickey said, “you don’t want to follow the great coach,” but “you want to follow the guy that followed the great coach, then its okay.” Mickey continued talking about how the church had put the former Senior Pastor “on a pedestal so high that it was Babel-ish” and “ridiculous,” although he meant no “disrespect.” Mickey said, “Our church got so conservative,” which was “such a contrast” to what he had been “taught to love

everybody” by his mother. Mickey said that he had come from a church background that was more “progressively moderate” adding “thank God.” Mickey shared how difficult the transition to the church had been for him personally, saying that with the former Senior Pastor “I was just stunned” and “I kind of closed off my mind.” Mickey added that when Frank “came in, all I heard was love.”

Mickey shared his perceptions of United Methodist clergy. He said, “the Methodist ministers that I’ve seen” in “the last five years...have been extremely well prepared for the pulpit,” so “whoever’s doing that part of the teaching process, I think they’re doing a brilliant job.” But, Mickey went on to say, “I think that everybody that’s up there gets horsewhipped,” suggesting it might be nice to “have a ten minute sermon one time.” But, Mickey noted, “the preachers...have so much to say,” and “that’s what they’re good at” is “bringing it back.” Mickey added, “Using the multi-media stuff is great” and “very beneficial to the service.”

Mickey talked about the challenges of teaching or parenting, saying that “no one will give you a license to parent, but once you are one, you learn sometimes by the seat of your pants.” Mickey indicated that educators learn “in college, how to be a good presenter of the material,” but that they do not teach “what you do when a kid poops his pants in a class, or a parent runs in and screams at you in the middle of class.” Mickey concluded that “management skills is all about the person that’s managing,” adding that “there are some that are better than others.” Mickey noted that management “wasn’t” Frank’s “strong suit,” but that “maybe he’s tweaked some things because of what happened here.”

Professional Identity

With respect to Frank's professional identity, Mickey said, "I don't think he'd ever dealt with massive numbers of people before" even though Frank "was just brilliant beyond belief." Mickey added, "it's ridiculous how smart Frank is," but that "he was able to not make you feel like you're an idiot, and that's really a gift." Mickey also "liked" that Frank was able to "talk the language" of each person. Mickey indicated that the staff "went to the big, large church seminar" and "came back with these wonderful ideas," only "to fall on deaf ears." Mickey added that Frank "was a rookie in that area" and that "he was really trying to learn on the run." Mickey said "they were very, very impressed with the large church conference" and "came back" really excited and "higher than a kite." Mickey continued, saying he was impressed and "thought, what a great bunch" because "even though they think they know what they're doing, they want to do more and they can do more." Mickey said, "that's when (Frank) started delegating more" to different "people who had never done things before." Mickey noted that it disturbed others "who had already done it before" when they "didn't get to do it, and that wasn't fine" with those people.

Mickey went on to say, "I think that, perhaps, some didn't read it all the right way," because "I don't know if people are comfortable with a minister who doesn't act like they have all the answers." Mickey described how, although Frank was continuing to learn" and "was bringing some people up to speed along with him," that there was great discomfort with a Senior Pastor who was so open about his need to learn. Mickey continued, saying that the former Senior Pastor would have never

attended the seminar. Mickey went on to say that Frank “didn’t get to pull it off where he was” working “with somebody else’s recruits,” because “just too many people that loved the former coach” and “didn’t think he should have left.”

Itinerancy

Mickey talked about the mistrust of the itinerant system, saying “I think that there’s a tendency to believe, as I had mentioned before, that the Cabinet tries to send you people either to reward you for your wonderful service, or to stick to you because you haven’t been doing your part.” Mickey added, it “is more than just a consensus,” and “is about as unanimous of a thought process from the laypeople as you can get.” Mickey noted, “That’s why Frank blew us away,” because “we weren’t ready for that” and we “thought we had a company boy, all the way” that would make us “pay our apportionments.” Mickey went on to say, but “when he answered the question” about apportionments “we all felt guilty that we didn’t pay them,” adding that it “was so great, because I never wanted us not to” pay our apportionments. Mickey noted, “I always thought the apportionment thing was a good idea” because “we need to do our part to help all regardless of where some of it goes.” Mickey added, “there’s too much good with it, and we need it,” adding that paying apportionments was “like tithing.”

Mickey shared that there was a scarcity mentality related to competent clergy. Specifically, Mickey said, “there’s a feeling that there aren’t a lot of good ones out there...with enough talent to do it all,” along with worries about “what kind of goober are we going to get.” Mickey talked about the process of gathering information from churches through the Staff Parish Relations Committee, where they list “what they

want.” He recognized how hard it is to “fit this box” of perceived needs, because “you can’t be all things to all people.” Mickey talked about the pool of available ordained clergy, saying there have “not been enough ways of attracting people into the ministry.” Mickey said that many “feel like” there is “too much of the same just being moved around, and were not getting enough in” the United Methodist Church. Mickey also expressed concerns related to the way the Cabinet makes appointments, either to reward or punish the church. Mickey indicated that he often heard “we don’t have any choice anyway,” that it “doesn’t matter what we say,” and that their feedback “doesn’t make any difference if we like the guy or not.” Mickey added that “the general major perception is” that the appointment is “done.” Further, Mickey said that in “every Staff Parish interview session” someone has said “the bottom line” is “you’re going to stick us who you want to stick us with.”

Mickey mentioned how people on Staff Parish Relations Committees and in the church in general have diametrically opposed perceptions of the itinerant system, causing them to respond either in fear or in faith, saying that “the fear is huge, and the faith based is small.” He added, “About one tenth of your Staff Parish Committee,” including “me” has faith in the process, but most people “don’t trust the Cabinet.” However, Mickey did suggest that “if the Cabinet is going to send anybody to a large church, then they should send them to the conference on large church worship before” they start at their new church. Mickey noted that it would help if “they don’t feel there’s a need after they get there” and were “not put...in a place where they feel that

it's over their head." Mickey added, "I think they figured Frank was smart enough" and his instincts "would take over."

In the end Mickey summarized the situation, saying that Frank "was probably at a nice church, did things well, and came to ours thinking it was just going to be the same way, and he wasn't ready for Division I football." Mickey added, "that's how it was looked at by most people." Mickey continued, "We have tremendous people with tremendous talents with tremendous heart, and many of them are using" their gifts "to the glory of God." Mickey noted, "we're not a dead church" because "I've seen some," but that "it's still a tough crowd" even though "most of the tough has left." Mickey concluded, saying "I really believe (Frank) was sent to us," but that many did not see it that way. Mickey noted that "it's no different than when Jesus was around" because "he didn't measure up either," and that it was "natural, I suppose to not think you're going to get all you should get."

Person - Environment Fit

Mickey talked about the appointment of Frank, who was very different from his predecessor, saying "I don't think the Cabinet was real happy" with the former Senior Pastor. Mickey went on to say, "I think they saw this great, Jesus, Christ-like guy" and decided "that's what this place needs is just love and they'll see it." Mickey noted that the Cabinet "probably had the same frustration that Jesus had with his disciples," because "we just didn't see it." Mickey said that perhaps the bottom line was that "it just wasn't the guy that followed" our last Senior Pastor, adding that it

“could be that simple.” Mickey concluded, with respect to the itinerant system, that “maybe it is just a crapshoot...a congregational crapshoot.”

Mickey went on to talk about the introduction meeting with Frank, and how it was affirming to him even though “most people had an agenda” and had decided in advance that this appointment was not going to work out. Mickey continued, “I didn’t say much during that meeting” but “I just watched,” explaining that the process “was almost like dominoes, just falling for what was right.” Mickey added, “it was the coolest thing,” and that “I felt like I personally was rewarded for believing the way you’re supposed to believe about the process.” Mickey described the meeting, in general, as “a God moment” that was “tremendous,” and “powerfully marvelous.” Mickey concluded, “I don’t think it was a misfit” since it was “such a change,” even though “it was a long process.” Mickey added, “It was a great moment.”

Commenting on the fit, Mickey said, “looking back, I believe with all my heart” that “it was a God thing that the Cabinet felt inspired to send” Frank to our church, and that they “were probably shocked in the reception that he got. Mickey went on to say, “I could be wrong, but “I don’t think that they expected that” kind of a reaction. He continued, saying “when it comes to fitting, I believe that the Cabinet believed that he fit,” and that “the Staff Parish” also “believed that.” Mickey noted, “But after the three years” Frank was not “the right fit, not because of him, but because of us.” Mickey said that ultimately what happened “was the church’s fault,” not Frank’s because “I don’t think he failed.” Mickey said that Frank “did what he was supposed to do,” drawing an analogy to the life and ministry of Jesus. Mickey

added, “I believe that he was so Christ-like that he got crucified,” and “it was like reading the Bible and watching it happen. The similarities were astonishing.” Mickey went on to say, “I don’t know why God allowed me to see in that way, and not other people, and I’m thankful that he did so that I didn’t get into that crap.” Mickey said, “there were so many petty issues, it was almost like there’s a force here that’s working to the negative in the Nth degree.” Mickey added “I’m just not a negative guy,” talking about how he “really struggled with trying to understand why” everything was “happening to this guy.” Mickey wondered if the Staff Parish Relations Committee had done everything possible to address the escalating conflict, saying, “I didn’t realize we were going to be as mean as we were, and as picky, and as close-minded,” but “maybe I didn’t do my homework.”

Mickey talked about his role on the Staff Parish Relations Committee, and how he finally voted for Frank to leave because it seemed the only response on behalf of his family based on the “love that he was teaching us.” But, Mickey indicated that he continues to wrestle with whether or not he did the right thing. Mickey said, “I guess I kissed him on the cheek and told him you need to go,” but “I don’t know,” because “I still haven’t figured that one out.” Mickey noted, “I don’t lose sleep over it, but I still think I was doing him a favor.” Mickey talked about how “it ended up a unanimous vote” for Frank “to leave.” He said that he “was the last one to cave in,” and that the rest of the committee “couldn’t believe it when I said go ahead,” adding that he “was crying then.” Mickey went on to say that he told the committee “get him out of here right now, and let him live” and “ease his pain,” because “we’re killing him.”

Mickey talked about how he still wrestled with whether he did the right thing today, saying “I’m not sure what God wanted me to do.” Mickey explained, “I didn’t get the voice” or “the nudge,” but “was in that meeting and I just remember sitting there going I must say it’s time to go.” Mickey said, “I told the whole Staff Parish Committee that I’m going to his house tomorrow, and I’m going to tell him. And I don’t care if you call him tonight,” but “I’m going to tell him that it was unanimous,” and “that it was a butt kicker, and I’m going to tell him that I love him.”

Mickey described the meeting with Frank the following day, saying “I was sobbing,” but Frank “barely shed a tear.” He added that Frank “was disappointed in me, a little bit,” and “he was disappointed in the whole process.” In closing, Mickey said, “and I don’t know if we ever did ease his pain, because I think he’ll look at it as, oh my three losing seasons,” but “I hope he doesn’t. I think he’s smarter than that.” In the end Mickey indicated that he had tried to do what was right, commenting that “I would beat myself up more if I felt that I had done the wrong thing totally.”

Mickey talked about how Frank had attempted to make a change in one of the major worship traditions of the church, noting “the crap hit the fan so fast you wouldn’t believe it.” Mickey used a sports analogy of knowing the statistics to talk about how part of the preparation of pastors needs to be related to the traditions of the particular church. Specifically, he said, “You’ve got to tell them,” and “I think they don’t do that enough,” but “that would be very beneficial,” and that it is important to know.” Mickey added, “that’s what I would try to get across to the new guy coming in, and I don’t know if they do that or not,” but “I’m assuming they probably tell you

something.” Mickey emphasized “They’ve got to be honest with you to tell you all the bad history too,” adding the need to know “who are the big cheeses” and how important it was politically to “let them feel like they are even if they’re not anymore.” Theologically, Mickey noted, “I don’t think Jesus zapped him with a wand and made Peter a leader,” but Peter “probably had those skills” and Jesus “brought it out in him.” Mickey emphasized the importance of preparing pastors “for what they’re getting into,” including “the truth about the history of the place” and “as much as you can find out about the actual traditions.”

At the close of the interview, Mickey said, “I’ve spilled my gut, and my heart,” and “the one thing I’m never going to stop thinking about is that, the last vote.” Mickey went on to say, “I could have abstained” or “said no,” but that “he would have gone anyway.” Mickey went on to say, “I’m always going to wonder if it was the right thing,” adding “I really don’t think I’ll ever know.” Mickey commented, “if he’s happy now, then it was the right thing maybe.” Mickey indicated, “You probably don’t want Staff Parish people like me” since he still agonizes so much over the situation. Mickey concluded, saying “a lot of people that thought it was best that Frank just get out of Dodge.”

Follow-Up Interview

Most of Mickey’s reflection centered on what he considered to be effective characteristics of leaders, including listening, giving, caring, managing the people, bringing people together for a common goal, articulating your game plan, and heading a church in the right direction. Mickey gave both the current and the former Senior

Pastors a letter grade on his perception of how they were doing in each area of leadership. In a number of the categories, like managing the people, bringing people together for a common goal, articulating your game plan, and heading a church in the right direction, he had given Frank a 'C' because "he had trouble telling people no," and "because his goal was sound, but he couldn't get the people to follow." Mickey went on to say, as a leader...you can't let people walk over you, or the church, or the staff, or whatever."

Mickey talked about how the church was still recovering from all of the "changes in leadership," noting it was "typical of the itinerant ministry to a degree." Mickey added that "with our situation, we have not quite recaptured the vigor that I think may have been there before" because of financial struggles which "is pretty typical of many mainstream churches today." Mickey noted that "the constant throughout is the stubbornness of the congregation," especially in "people who don't like change." Mickey said that some of the people who had left the church must be happy "because they haven't returned," adding that "what I don't think they know is how much fun we are having, and how blessed we feel we are." He expressed a new appreciation for the church and the number of ways that he has grown under the new leadership. Mickey talked about the slow changes in worship, and how the current Senior Pastor is helping them to continue the healing journey, commenting that he is "very considerate of their desires," and that "we are still working things out." Mickey concluded by saying, "it must be tough to attempt to lead the modern church," adding that "the emphasis on reaching out to others, especially the unchurched is still a hard

sell in many traditional churches.” Mickey said that in churches that have “had some dirty linen that’s been exposed, I suppose you’re even less apt to want to invite people.”

Regarding the impact of his participation in this project, Mickey said “I’ve reflected on my leadership skills,” and “this process helped me re-evaluate my leadership and my leadership skills, and, and how I should allow myself in all honestly to be spiritually led.” Mickey also talked about his job, learning about spiritual gifts and his natural inclination to be a peacemaker, and God’s leading in his life and how all his learning through this process was “connected.”

In the end, Mickey said that he did not have anything more to add, but thanked me, commenting “Anytime you help people get closure and get things off their chest” that “it’s really nice to, to be a part of something like that.” Mickey added, “I’m really glad I did this,” noting the “therapeutic effect” of his participation in the project. Mickey went on to say that my “response” really “helped me so much,” because I had made an observation following the first interview about his choice to ask the Senior Pastor to leave based on a concern for the well-being of him and his family. Specifically, I noted that from what he had described, it seemed that he had made a decision based on love. Mickey said “that’s what I needed to hear,” adding “thank you,” and “I cried,” because “It hit me...right there,” pointing to his heart.

Lay Leader

Although Jim was somewhat initially reluctant, he was willing and eager to participate in the project once his questions were answered. We met at the church for both interviews, and I found Jim to be passionate, honest and genuine.

What Happened

At the outset, Jim said, “the reason why this did not work out” was because “the previous Pastor” was “a dynamic and visionary leader,” someone who exercised “very strong leadership with his personnel” and was a “dynamic” and “old style preacher.” More specifically, Jim said that in the situation at hand, Frank “did not do a good job of keeping our youth pastor in line,” or “to provide leadership to the youth minister who had an in your face approach,” because there was no “changed behavior.” Jim described this as “the biggest issue.”

Jim talked about how the confrontational approach of the youth minister “went against the wrong people,” explaining that this youth minister “was a big visionary” and “knew what we needed to do.” But, Jim noted, this youth minister’s “style was more of an in your face” approach, and he was “very controversial in dealing with people,” especially “the people that did not want to jump on the bandwagon with him.” So, following some initial conversations with the Frank about his concerns, “when nothing” happened “to remedy that situation,” this influential member of the church who “had grandchildren” involved “in the youth program” began “to pick at everything that Frank did.” Essentially Jim said that the complaints about Frank were because “it was just different.” Specifically, there were complaints that Frank “wasn’t

in the pulpit all of the time,” and “whatever programs” were implemented in “trying to expand the church.”

Jim talked about how this one family was connected to other families in the church. Jim noted that “many of the people that got really disturbed were people” who had family at the church “in 1954 when the church was built,” causing everything to spread “like wildfire.” Jim went on to say that “the only thing I know is that all of a sudden” they began “having these meetings,” where they were trying to build “a justification of why we needed to get rid of this new pastor.” Jim said “I went to one of those meetings and I left,” because “I was absolutely disgusted.” Specifically, Jim said that after the mediator described the process of dealing with concerns, in the end the focus was still on how they could get rid of Frank. And, although the mediator indicated “the issue doesn’t sound significant enough to get rid of him at this point” but that it seemed “we need to have leadership,” Jim said “the whole situation” quickly “got out of control.” Jim added, “the more it got out of control with the minister, then the more the youth minister felt isolated, and the more he became critical” and “distrustful of people in the program, which then made him be more in your face with other people.”

Jim talked about “the non-traditional approach of the new staff, citing “not being in the pulpit all of the time,” and “not sticking” to a single “text” as approaches that were “non traditional” and “different,” but that “not being in the pulpit was the biggie.” Jim went on to talk about the resistance to change, even in spite of a campaign to encourage openness to new ideas, saying “that went over like a lead

balloon.” Jim said that there was such a strong sense of tradition and sentiment that “the people” in the church “are what is important, as opposed to the “importance of outreach” which they felt was “secondary.” Jim shared about how people struggled with the “idea” of having “a contemporary service” that “may not necessarily involve the organ, or the hymnal” or the choir. Jim went on to say that they “were willing to accept the hands in the air,” but that “they just weren’t willing to accept the fact that it wasn’t going to necessarily involve the organist.” Jim added that there was similar resistance in the area of “outreach,” because of the “very non traditional outreach” ideas that included “cell groups” and to “establish a secondary campus for the church.”

Jim talked about the relative “inexperience of the other staff members in handling difficult situations in the church.” He contrasted that with the former Senior Pastor, who was such a “strong leader of his staff” and “a very strong leader with the congregation.” With respect to the former Senior Pastor, Jim said that “his staff didn’t need to have a lot of experience in dealing with difficult situations, because he dealt with it,” and the leaders in the church “acquiesced to his power.” And, “without strong leadership” from Frank, coupled with the “seeming leadership” of the maverick youth pastor, whose “outreach programs...were solid,” Jim said that this youth pastor caused a great deal of conflict in the church because of “his approach.” Jim indicated that this youth pastor had misinterpreted the district ideal of radical hospitality, explaining, “Radical doesn’t mean in your face, radical means different.” Jim added

that there was an understanding that “we need to bring people into the church,” but that “we didn’t have leadership in the middle, trying to show us how we can do that.”

Jim said that one of the factors leading to the change was the Senior Pastor and his staff failed to accurately read the political landscape of the church. He noted, “They were not only inexperienced...with the issues within the church, but they were very unfamiliar with the movers in the church.” Jim explained that when Frank’s “appointment was made here, it was supported by a faction of our church, because they knew his family,” and that it seemed like Frank “thought that these people that wanted him here were the majority of the church.” Jim went on to say “that faction, which had been long time members” and had “really supported him” initially “were ready to retire” and “were not going to be here,” because they “were going to go to Texas or Florida.” Jim explained “they were at one time a majority, but now were a minority,” and that “the majority of people” had a primary interest” in “the youth.” Jim added “the church wasn’t as old as it seemed” even though “We had a lot of blue hairs” attending “on Sunday mornings” that “may have even been in the majority on Sunday mornings, but they weren’t the majority of givers any more.”

Jim talked about a conflict in values related to youth that happened in a change of youth ministers, explaining that a “majority of givers” believed “the number one thing that we should be focusing on” as a priority was “the youth of our church.” Jim stated, “The majority of our givers at the time saw the next round of leadership within the Methodist church” as coming “from our youth,” but that they needed to work on “building it from within, not building it by going out.” Jim said that this was

consistent with the philosophy of “the youth leader that was here before” who “had the same vision.” But, when the new youth minister used “that base that had been built” by the former youth minister “as a way of outreaching into the schools” and “communities,” and the “primary focus became outreach. Jim said that there wasn’t enough done to minister” to the existing youth, so “they lost that community” that had been established in the youth ministry. Jim concluded by saying, “when people started to criticize” or “try to talk” about those concerns, the new youth minister would simply say “this is what we need to be doing to build the church of the future,” but that “people didn’t want to hear that.” Jim added that they “wanted to hear the old tried and true” philosophy of ministry of the former youth minister “that the leaders of the church are here, and to build the church then we have them marry and do all that other kind of stuff and bring people into the fold, kind of like we always have.”

Seminary Preparation

Regarding potential gaps in the seminary preparation of the Senior Pastor, Jim said “I can’t deal with that,” adding that he had “no knowledge” of this area. However, Jim did go on to say, “I’m not sure” if “it was his lack of experience in a big church” that was the “issue.” Jim added that perhaps it was related to not understanding the size of the town and that the church was “a big player,” or that Frank or the District assumed that “this older group was going to help lead.”

Professional Identity

Although Jim made it clear that he “wasn’t in on the committee that hired Frank,” with respect to the development of Frank’s professional identity, he said that it

was possible that Frank was less experienced because “he was younger than all of our previous pastors had been.” He noted that most of his predecessors “were at the tail end of their careers,” and “at the maximum, he was in the middle of his career.” But, Jim was quick to add that it was not clear if this perception began before or after the conflict had started, because “it also could have been the interpretation” of the church “once things started going awry” that “he’s too young to handle this kind of experienced church.” Jim went on to say that regardless of when the perception originated that it “did not allow” the “swell of criticism to get stopped.” Jim added that “once the swell started, it really started to go, and it started to go quickly,” because of Frank’s “seeming lack of experience on the part of the church.”

Jim also talked about how inexperience made it difficult for Frank to recognize and respond to the fact that the youth minister pushing his agenda of reaching out to the community at the expense of reaching in to the church by equipping people for ministry was contrary to the existing values of the church. Jim also noted that Frank’s inability to manage his staff made it seem like he was less experienced. In the end, Jim talked about how “it was definitely a conflict of leadership expectations,” where Frank “thought more of the lay leadership in this church,” but that “the church thought they needed more leadership out of his position.” Jim concluded, it just “wasn’t meshing.”

Itinerancy

With respect to the itinerant system, Jim said “I don’t know exactly why they chose Frank to come here, but I suspected all along that he was brought here because

of his outreach approach.” Jim speculated that “the District thought” our church was “not doing enough in our community to provide outreach.” He added that “if he was brought here to provide that leadership to change our church,” then “I don’t like that.” Jim went on to say, “I don’t like the decision being made on that basis” which is “the way I interpreted it from the very beginning,” as “the District is telling a local church, this is what you’re going to do whether you like it or not.” Noting that, “I don’t disagree with that approach” or idea “that we should be more outreach oriented,” Jim expressed suspicion because all of the changes were so drastic and happened so quickly. Jim added that some of the suspicion came from the fact that he had some connections to “a lot of the old people in the church, and his family knew them pretty well, and so it makes perfect sense that he’s here.” But, Jim noted, there was a drastic change in the outreach, because “the focus just changed to being one in which we were, we were extremely outreach oriented,” and that “it wasn’t over the course of time, it was immediate.” Jim said that it “was possibly the decision that was made on the District’s part,” and “I don’t disagree with that priority,” but that “I just don’t think the majority of our church was ready for that” drastic change.

Jim talked about the pattern of how their church would “always get the old guys” with “strong leadership” skills, noting that they were “the ones that were on the last few years, and they were going to be riding it out.” Jim then said, “and so all of a sudden we got a young” and “dynamic guy” who has a “vision” for “outreach” and that it was “cool.” But, again Jim also wondered if it was an intentional move by the District or Conference to make the church more focused on reaching out to the

community and to pay their apportionments. Jim went on to say that the “church had had issues with the District before,” and that “the whole issue of not paying apportionments was a major thing that stuck in the craw of the Bishop, I’m sure.” Jim noted, “When you’ve got one of your largest churches” in a “District that are refusing” it was “pretty big.” He added “we all know within this church that there has been for years a combative nature between our church” and “the District.”

Jim went on to say, “the other thing that bothered me more than anything else was the, the lack of leadership.” Jim explained that “it didn’t seem to me like Frank was providing leadership to our staff effectively,” that “our staff was providing effective leadership to the” leaders “of the church,” or that “Frank was getting much leadership from the District” or “the Conference.” Jim added “if they would have helped him,” just “knowing that we had issues” earlier “with the Conference and with the District,” perhaps “they would have brought somebody in a lot earlier than they did” just “to try to stem the flow.” Jim went on to say, “It was like they threw him in here, and expected that because he knew this faction over here that everything was going to be okay in changing the outreach or the program of the church.”

With respect to the itinerant system, Jim said, “the system itself is not flawed, the flawed part of the system is” when “you make an appointment” and “leave that pastor out there to dry” and “not provide leadership,” it is “a potential for disaster.” Jim noted, “I can’t think that our church is the only church that has had these issues during this period of time,” adding “the system itself isn’t flawed, it’s the application of the system that was flawed.”

Jim also indicated that he saw positive things on the horizon related to the itinerant system, talking about how the Bishop “is very good,” and “says the right things.” He also said “our Superintendent” also “is very good,” and “exceptional at communicating” with church leadership. Jim also was excited about some of the recent initiatives in his church related to spiritual formation and leadership development. And, Jim talked about the potential in having interim ministers who would serve in a church for a brief time.

Jim felt good about the relatively new church cluster model, saying “that sounds so exciting to me,” and that it “is a great idea,” because when there are issues in a church, “there are other guys that are going to be having the same issues, and they can talk about it.” Jim expressed hope for the future of the itinerant system because of the new cluster system. Specifically, he stated, “I think all those things are going to foster better communication, and then foster better leadership on the part of the laypeople at the church, and the part of the ministerial staff, and then within the community.” Jim went on to say “I just hope we don’t go back to the old system” where someone is appointed and abandoned, allowing “the person flap in the wind... until they prove that they can’t do it and then it’s too late.”

Person - Environment Fit

Jim felt that if Frank “been given better leadership, the fit would have been excellent,” because he was an effective “communicator,” and was not viewed “as being an old foggie” by a “majority of people in the church.” Jim felt with the “initial appointment” and Frank’s connections to “the previous leadership to the church,”

coupled with “his desire to try new things in the pulpit” and “in programming, the fit potentially was excellent.” Jim said, “Personally, I really, really, really enjoyed” Frank, and “liked his different approach” and “his message” that “the Bible is an overall document that is about an overall way of life.” Jim went on to say that “I loved the idea that we were going to do outreach things,” and “I liked his personal approach to people,” adding that “all of those things were potentially strong gifts that he brought to the fit of this church.”

Jim talked about “how bad it was” for him, personally, saying that “there were three times in my life that I’ve cried” or really “wept,” and one of those times was when Frank “left, because he was the right fit.” Jim said that Frank “was the person that was the right style of person that we needed to lead the church,” but that “he wasn’t given any leadership.” Jim went on to say, “Everything was in place that this should have worked” and “the majority of our church was ready for something different.” But, Jim noted, “the only reason why this did not work had to have been because of poor leadership, and “an ineffective system,” which was what he “saw from the leadership of our district.” Jim added that because the youth pastor “was about himself and his program,” that he “didn’t see anything until was too late.” Jim continued, explaining that the leadership “started coming and trying” to help once “it was already too late. Jim closed by saying that it was a good fit, but that once Frank was appointed, he was left on his own, and that “there didn’t seem to be any more assistance” provided “from both sides, from on top and on bottom.” Adding that the staff was too inexperienced and unaware of the informal leaders of the church, Jim

said “it didn’t seem like he was getting a lot of direction from the church after the appointment was made” either. Jim concluded that Frank “was left out to dry.”

Follow-Up Interview

Although at first, Jim indicated, “I don’t think I had any new insights,” he described how he gained valuable information related to dealing with current and future situations at the church. In talking about the practical application of his learning from this experience, Jim said, “I guess it was more along the line of wanting to reflect on what we had talked about, and then maybe analyze how it may apply.”

With respect to the impact of his participation in the project, Jim said, “the biggest thing” was the reminder that “the situation that we’ve gone through was emotional.” Jim went on to say “I’m not a very emotional person,” but “when I do get emotional, I don’t really know how to handle the situation very well.” Jim talked about feeling anger and disappointment in the midst of their difficult situation, explaining that “going through this process helped me to, I guess, not shed the emotions, but understand that the emotions are a logical” and “normal part of a transition scenario,” including “extreme emotions.” Jim said, “this process has helped me reflect upon my own emotional status” and “where it kind of simply got buried.” Jim went on to say, “once we had made the change, then we were going just go forward” and “I emotionally buried it down there somewhere.” Jim continued, saying that by participating in this project it “let it come to the surface” and “get placed somewhere,” making it possible for him to normalize his experience and some of the specific nuances of transition in general by processing the pieces for himself.

Jim said, “Hopefully I don’t have to go through this same situation again,” but if so “I will be able to handle it differently,” explaining that his “frustration with this situation was targeted towards the congregation, and towards the Conference.” Jim explained, “I couldn’t understand why” they “couldn’t help each other out.” Jim went on to say, in the event of a similar situation, “I would know how to maybe make that happen better,” describing his increased “confidence,” “experience,” and “the knowledge of where to go to get some assistance.” Jim indicated, “part of my issue last time, was that...I didn’t know where to go” and that “before I was unsure about the whole process.”

In closing, Jim said “I’ve always been a person that enjoys coming to church,” and “being a part” of it, “but never really saw myself” as “a leader in the church.” Jim added that he became the lay leader because of an assumption that since he “had been in the church the longest,” that “he was “in the middle of the road” and “could draw people into the center.” Jim went on to say, “I didn’t know how to handle the situation so I was more emotional,” and “more of a...perceived peacemaker” instead of “having any skills or any experience on how to make that happen.” Jim explained that he too was “left out there without any leadership skills” or “any experience in negotiating this role of mediating between factions of the church.”

Jim indicated that he now felt “more confident in knowing what to do,” that he had a better understanding of his role, and that he now had some tools to use based on what he had learned from this difficult situation to help the church move forward. Jim talked about specific transitional challenges that he was helping the church work

through, adding “without going through the reflective process that we’ve done” that he would have been “emotionally upset” by the responses of some people, adding “we’ll get ‘er done” but “it’s just a matter of, who’s going to go with us, and who’s going to be unwilling to go with us.” Jim commented “I appreciate you very much” for “allowing me to go through this process.” Jim said, “You just never know,” because it seems “this is the greatest fit,” but “for some reason it just doesn’t work out.” Jim explained that sometimes “it’s completely different than, than what people anticipate,” which “was certainly the case in our situation” when “just one thing” started, before “everything...seemed like it was a difficulty,” making it unstoppable.

District Superintendent

I found Todd to be an extremely insightful and a deeply reflective and engaging conversationalist. Both interviews were in his office.

What Happened

Todd cited several factors as reasons for why the appointment did not work out, specifically describing a controlling older generation in the church that “eventually began to reclaim control when things were going, or were starting to go directions they didn’t like.” This was contrary, Todd said, to the work of “the elected leadership” who “tended to be the middle aged and younger people in the church.” But in spite of their best efforts, although Todd said it “was a church that needed to move in new directions, this undercurrent of long-time members “through their influence, kind of brought things down.” Todd noted that there “was nothing out of order” on the part of the Senior Pastor because he did “work with the elected

leadership of the church.” As a result, Todd added that the church “become quite divisive, or polarized,” making it “very difficult to manage there for a while, until finally we did make the appointment change.” And even though there was not a church split, per se, Todd indicated several families left, including “some families... connected with the older generation that left initially,” and “a number of younger families” that became disillusioned. Todd added that “there were other charges in town that certainly benefited” from the exodus of people from the church.

Todd specifically cited two factors related to why this appointment did not work out, including “that sense of old guard control,” and “that the authority in this situation was taken out of my hands.” Todd talked about how the situation challenged his former organizational and theological perspective that “churches should be able to avoid significant conflict in making choices for their future.” Todd explained that he used to think that, when working with the elected leadership and “in consultation with the broader membership,” that “intentional working together” in a church “can bring a collective sense of God’s will.” Todd went on to say that “in most cases, church organizations...do not have the capacity to function effectively as organizations.” Todd explained that it was increasingly difficult “for churches to...handle all the decision making effectively,” or to deal with conflict.

After saying, “you are jarring me into some deeper thinking then I’ve done for a while about that,” Todd commented “the church is an agent for God to work in this world to connect with people and to bring about redemptive work in the community.” However, Todd noted that “with the changing of culture, for the church to be effective

it requires changes in...the organization itself,” adding “that churches that have not been able to do that over time have grown weaker, sometimes died.” Todd also said that, theologically, he had gone through “some pretty radical shifts in the whole issue of God’s will,” and “the corporate discernment of God’s will,” in that “we attribute things to God that are not real,” ultimately resulting in interpersonal conflict.

Todd talked about how common it was in his role as a District Superintendent to get letters of complaint from churches, noting that sometimes letters of complaint would be sent to the Bishop when people do not get the answers they are seeking. Because that happened in this situation, “at one point the Bishop decided to step in,” and Todd added “I don’t think I anticipated...the effect that that would have.” Todd went on to say “it kind of elevated the...playing field, where it ended up that the Bishop was calling the shots,” which “essentially put me in...an un-powered position with the church, and with the leadership of the church.” Todd indicated that this resulted in putting him “simply in a pastoral role,” and to serve “in a bit of an advisory capacity for the Bishop.” This, in turn, “changed the timeline” and “it changed the focus of who people were looking to...for answers...and directions.” Todd went on to say that in “slowing the process down” that “it suspended the issue.” Todd explained that he believed that if the Bishop had not played as much of a role as he did, that the Senior Pastor would have been there longer, but that “over time then, it became an unsolved issue, rather than...an issue that was being solved or resolved.”

Todd said that “what happened in the process of...suspended, leadership...was things were kind of put on hold” in the church, “so they weren’t moving ahead with

anything.” Todd commented “that’s where the ministry began to lose momentum” and the formal leadership began to get discouraged because nothing was happening. Todd explained further, “...I may have been able to work at resolving it while the ministry continued, so that the younger generations felt like they were still going someplace.” Todd indicated that “...the District Superintendent needs to be empowered by the Bishop, with the Bishop always as the final authority,” emphasizing “the inherent power of the Episcopal design to church administration and organization.”

Seminary Preparation

Todd said that there did not seem to be any specific void in Frank’s seminary education related to the situation at hand, “except for the, the general gap.” Todd went on to say that “Seminaries don’t prepare anybody for this kind of stuff.” Todd continued, “Seminaries don’t educate pastors” to deal with “these kinds of challenges.” He explaining that the Frank “was probably very well-trained,” but expressed what he called his “the general complaint,” and his “disappointment” with seminary education. There was some discussion as to the relevance of this question because it had been so long since Frank had been in seminary.

Todd stated, “Well, I can’t speak for what’s happening in the last few years in seminaries, but up to the point” of “this particular incident, and for years prior to that” that “most seminaries were still training pastors for the 1950’s,” in part because of “old faculty” who “had been around teaching for twenty and thirty years.” Todd commented that most pastors pursue continuing education through Para-Church

organizations instead of seminaries, “because that’s where they’re getting the stuff they want in church development and re-development,” and “anything cutting edge.” Todd added, “You don’t go to seminaries for cutting edge stuff,” and “Seminaries are, are bogged down by their own institutionalism.” As a result, Todd said, “they cannot be very innovative or risk-taking.” Todd indicated that “a lot of seminary education was not pertinent to the immediate task, and that leadership” was “largely untouched,” and “that what is lacking in seminary education” are “the organizational tools for helping congregations move through change.” His advice now would be to “encourage a student to try to find more of the kinds of courses in the, organizational empowerment,” even “at the risk of taking some of the traditional studies that seminaries offer. Todd also emphasized the need for pastors in contemporary American culture to “be” an “anthropologist” and to know “all of the sociological stuff.” Todd added, “The leadership issues,” and “the organizational change issues” in churches “have been a big gap for seminaries.”

Professional Identity

Todd did not think that there were any gaps related to the development of Frank’s professional identity as a Senior Pastor in a large church setting. Todd noted that because Frank had some additional coursework beyond seminary, he “was probably getting some of the best stuff to be offered.” Todd added, “We all make mistakes,” and that Frank had not “made very many mistakes in what he was doing.” But, Todd noted that Frank had “just come up against a brick wall” of “the old guard” who “would settle for nothing less than a showdown.” Todd said Frank’s “training

was certainly adequate,” but that “you can’t work through conflict unless both parties” were “willing to work at it.”

Todd discussed “the sad thing about conflict in the church,” sharing a conversation he had with a well-known author, consultant and trainer on church conflict, where he was told that the “success record here in consulting with churches” facilitating movement “through conflict” to “resolution” was “about a third.” Todd went on to say hearing this from “the best in the country” at “working with churches in conflict when the conflict focuses around the pastor” made him realize there was “not a lot of hope,” adding that churches are “just not equipped organizationally or theologically to really be effective organizations.” Todd concluded, “Part of the problem there is our thinking of them as organizations,” although “that’s not really what the church started out as, adding that we have “made it into that,” so ultimately “we’ve made our problem.”

Itinerancy

Todd discussed the increasing complexity of the appointment process, saying that “it just complicates the picture” for the Cabinet to attempt to sensitively factor in variables like the employment of a spouse, and clergy who own their homes. Todd also said, “At the surface, the itinerancy is an old concept really struggling to find its place in today’s world.” He indicated that if they could get past the two biggest hurdles, including “the guaranteed appointment” and “the idea every church gets a Pastor,” that “the itinerancy will be more functional.” Todd openly shared “I’m getting to be an antique with all this kind of stuff,” because “I’ve never said no to an

appointment” and have “never asked for an appointment change.” Then Todd went on to say that there would also be a need to address “the challenge of the changing values” of the “succeeding generations of Pastors” that “don’t have the loyalty to the institution” of the United Methodist Church “that the previous did.”

Todd also described what he saw as a deeper layer of concerns related to the itinerancy, where there were “real important questions about what the nature of the church is really meant to be,” and “what our individual congregations are meant to be.” Todd talked about the ways that the church is generally disconnected from the world, living in a sub culture. Todd went on to say that he didn’t have “much confidence at all that the church will do anything more than tweak” some things or make “cosmetic changes,” which was “the sad part of it.” Todd said that Ordained Elders tend to be “disconnected,” and “keep the status quo going,” in some ways resulting in the addition of the new Deacon order of ministry. Todd summarized “some real important issues for the church,” to address “those kinds of things” that “keep us separated from the world” and “foster our existence as a sub-culture,” along with the “theological issues that have to do with our exclusive nature.”

Person - Environment Fit

With respect to issues of fit, Todd noted that this church “had been basically a flagship church,” with certain expectations of “the kind of pastor that would come there, but also how the Bishop would respond to their demands.” Todd went on to say that the expectations seemed to be “more personality oriented” in a conflict that was between the formal and informal leadership of the church. Todd noted that,

historically, “the most successful Pastors there were the ones who could just throw it right back at them.” In contrast, Todd described Frank as “more of a lover,” and “more one to absorb the impact than to throw it back.” Todd added, “I think in every other way I’m still convinced that it was a good appointment.”

Follow-Up Interview

Todd said that he had “a hard time getting myself to it,” in reference to the reflection and journaling, in part “because I’m kind of a calendar driven person” and “tend” to pay more attention to the most pressing matters and let things like this “slide.” Todd added that “a couple of my dates that have kind of got crunched together” with respect to his journal entries. Todd went on to say that, because he tended to talk things out, he initially did not have any response, as evidenced by his first entry. However, Todd noted that “with more reflection, I found myself kind of going deeper” to “more theoretical stuff” and “getting to more of the functional stuff.” Specifically with respect to his reflection, Todd indicated that “self –examination,” “whether it’s individually or organizationally” is “pretty hard to do.” He explained that “we tend to live in our own worlds,” going on to say that “things can be pretty good in our own world,” but that “when things don’t work” that “we try to problem solve...from within the bubble.” Todd continued, “Other people have comments to make” and “We need to hear those” and “somehow get outside of the bubble” in order “to do that.”

Todd likened the work of the Cabinet with local churches to “being a parent from a distance,” since “the Cabinet is responsible for ministry that happens in places

where they don't live." Todd also said that "in more of a purely administrative world of the Cabinet, and the "isolated bubble" that "we tend just to work more on the creation side rather than discovery." Todd went on to say that, "the problem is" that "we tend to develop systems of thought and processes designed to accomplish our goals" within "our own worlds" as if "we're trying to create life" or "the future." But, Todd stated, "the older I get, the more I think that life is to be discovered instead of created."

Todd stressed that a District Superintendent can gain a better understanding of their territory with hard work "over a period of six to eight years," but "that's going to be increasingly challenging" now with the larger Districts. Todd commented, "When you're not in the context, I think you will, you will tend more to try to make things happen rather than try to discover your way through it." He talked about how the process of discovery takes time and discernment, but that "our systems aren't designed for taking time sometimes."

With respect to the fit between the pastor and the church, Todd said, "it occurred to me when the Cabinet anticipates certain dynamics of change" that "it's really important to assess the centers of power." Todd went on to say, "that can be difficult from a distance as well." Todd stated that the better a District Superintendent "knows a congregation" the "more likely" that "he or she will know" whether or not "the power does reside within elected leaders." He added that at the church in question, "certain power" did reside "within the elected leaders," but that "the old

guard still held certain powers” that “was probably underestimated, or not, not really fully known in that situation.”

In discussing the appointment process, Todd indicated that “the Cabinet often has more of a vision for a congregation than the congregation has for itself,” noting how they tend to “think strategically from a distance” based on trend data. But, Todd pointed out that the strategy developed by the Cabinet “may not be the congregation’s vision.” Todd went on to say that “in order for that pastoral appointment to be a good fit, then that vision really needs to be communicated,” not only “to the pastor” and “to the elected leaders,” but “also any other identified power centers.” Todd continued, saying “if we are going to continue to try to effect change in congregations, and not just provide chaplains” to maintain the status quo, “then we have to keep the issue of Episcopal authority,” where “the Bishop or Bishop/Cabinet makes the appointment” central “rather than churches hiring their pastors” specifically “to do what they want them to do.” Todd quickly added that “probably guaranteed appointment has to go,” where each Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church is guaranteed a job.

Todd talked about how the particular Mid-Western Conference was saturated with clergy, explaining “we have fewer congregations in our conference that really can support full time leadership, but we get this abundance of leadership.” Todd stated, “we’re out of balance,” and that “it would be better to be on the lean side, where we really don’t have enough clergy,” but that it was “just so hard for us as a Conference to come to that decision.” Todd went on to ask “if it takes us so long, and it’s so hard to do that, then how do we deal with the issue of guaranteed appointment?” Todd

explained further by saying “We all want our jobs,” so “after a while, like in any system, like in the military or anything else, you get used to being taken care of,” adding that there was a resulting “learned helplessness.” And, because “We don’t know what we’d do without the guaranteed appointment,” Todd indicated “it may happen” that it is eliminated, but went on to say that “it’d be a while happening.”

Todd discussed a “conflict of values,” explaining that “we value the authority of the Annual Conference in matters of appointment and property issues,” a belief that is “historic” and “a real defining characteristic of our denomination.” But Todd went on to say that “the autonomy of the local congregation in determining its ministry” is “a deeply held value” in local churches often comes into conflict with that perspective. Todd added that this conflict “was...a big part of that” situation involving this church, but “probably not one that we really talked about,” pointing out that “to recognize it doesn’t help you get beyond it.”

Todd went on to say that this conflict was “amplified” by the reality that there are increasingly individuals serving on Staff Parish Relations Committees coming from the business world that “have their own organizational values.” Further, Todd noted that they also increasingly had backgrounds in other denominations that operate differently with respect to finding pastors. In both cases, Todd indicated that the United Methodist system is “really foreign to them.” Todd added, “You have to respect somebody for living out their values,” but that “those are two major values that are constantly in conflict, and put a real challenge” in the itinerancy and “the appointive process,” adding that “the Cabinet tends to live in a bubble around that.”

Todd indicated that the project, for him, “dug up some old anger.” Todd said that he “had to kind of deal with that emotionally,” but that “it helped me to kind of further disconnect emotionally from our Conference systems,” and “from my former role,” and from “future possibilities of roles.” Todd explained that it was not simply about “not wanting to do that again,” but “of feeling like all the frustration, even sometimes the futility that goes along with our polity.” Todd added, “I really don’t want to be a part of trying to solve these problems,” and “that’s not where I want to put my energies at this point in my life.” Todd explained, “I don’t know that they’re solvable,” and “there are things that are.” Todd talked about how he had chosen to deal with the anger triggered by this process, by disconnecting from his former role, and coming to a place of deciding he did not want to spend his time that way. Todd shared that he participated in a monthly spiritual formation group, and in meeting every other week with a colleague to have coffee and to “process a lot of stuff together” related to frustrations, or disappointments, or hopes, or dreams, or new ideas.” Todd also commented “I’ve been pretty busy,” so that the emotion “doesn’t distract me for long.”

Todd told a story about an encounter over twenty-five years ago with a former District Superintendent who was retired, where “it seemed to me that he was in a really pessimistic mood” concerning “what you can really accomplish.” But, Todd said, “Being young and idealistic, I can remember thinking” that “it just takes the right skills, or it just takes the right commitment, or enough time and energy and stuff like that.” Todd went on to say “I probably share” much “more of his sentiments now than

I did then.” Todd also made a strong statement about not knowing if the problems are solvable, adding “I think what might make a difference” is “if we can come to the point of saying it’s okay, that they are unsolvable,” and “maybe it’s not until we say it’s okay that they are unsolvable that we’ll truly began to find some answers.” Todd emphasized the need to “get outside the bubble” through death and resurrection.

Todd talked about how he does “miss some of the dynamics” of what was a “unique experience of intimacy” on the Cabinet. Specifically, Todd said that “having however many other people...who have, by job description, the same authority and power that you have” where “the playing field is really pretty level, except for what advantage you can work out because you feel you have some seniority” or “strong rhetorical powers” or “you just naturally have more experience in this area” was unusual. Todd commented “that was, that was a very unique experience, which I’ll always be grateful for,” but that it was “not something I have to have.” Todd concluded, “I guess I’m glad I don’t have it now.”

Todd described the sense of community he experienced as a member of the Cabinet. He said, “once you get appointed to the Cabinet, it’s really a set-apartness,” explaining how it was “difficult to relate to other clergy,” and that he would find himself “drawn” to this group “at a conference meeting that didn’t have any defined responsibility for Superintendents” somewhat “automatically” simply “because of the kind of work that we did with each other.” But, Todd was also quick to add that they would “go back to Cabinet meeting and commiserate with each other,” which “isn’t all

that helpful in solving problems.” Todd explained, saying “as long as we keep trying to fix something that can’t be fixed,” then “we really won’t get outside the bubble.”

Providing additional clarification, especially with respect to the problems not being solvable and death and resurrection as the only hope, Todd stressed the importance of “recognizing the signs,” and having “the faith that what might feel like failure could be the work of God dismantling things.” Todd pointed out that “we don’t like weakness,” and described some of the salient signs as being “constantly influenced” both “by secularism” and “worldly standards of success.” Todd indicated, “We continually build our towers of Babel,” which “God is always tearing down, or working confusion in us.” Todd concluded, “It’s probably a pretty important theological task, because our tendency is to want to trust ourselves, and trust our systems.”

Todd pointed out that “The Bishop has a vision for every local congregation to be about twenty-seven words that he rattles off all in a row about being healthy, and effective, and all that kind of stuff,” including “a lot of good language.” Todd said, “We also have to learn” and “to see” those “redeeming possibilities to what seems like failure to us, and not fool ourselves” by “trying to turn the direction we’ve had to go into some kind of grand vision that we’ve figured out.” Emphasizing “detachment” and “getting outside of that bubble if we can,” Todd indicated not only is it true that “the closer I stay to, to the systems that have been operating,” I will “be continually drawn to try to fix” the “systems,” but also “they’ll just simply occupy my mind.” Todd went on to say that “by intentionally removing myself from the presence,” of

trying to solve problems, “I really have found” that “my mind” is “freed up to think about other possibilities,” describing that as “a joyful thing.”

Todd shared the analogy of how “a think tank of a farmer, and a housewife, and a school teacher” evaluated a complicated engineering problem, “and somebody’s got the answer in two minutes,” even though it was something that “the corporation has had fifty engineers working on...for three years, and they can’t solve the problem.” Todd said that, consistent with the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the likelihood of finding “more answers to the issues that plague us, or that frustrate us, frustrate the ministry we want to do, as we detach, and explore, and discover,” is greater. Todd added that “the death part of the detachment” was “recognizing that we can’t do it,” and that “it’s dependant upon a higher power,” adding that “resurrection isn’t up to us,” that “we can’t make that happen,” and “we live in advent for a long time.”

Case 1 Summary

The results of case 1 are compared, analyzed, and summarized below. The stories of the four participants are summarized based on the issues, common themes, and patterns that resulted, along with discrepant data.

Issues, Common Themes, and Patterns in What Happened and Discrepancies

There were several themes that emerged from the issues raised by these four different perspectives. These included a history of conflict within the church and between the church and the District and Conference, a conflict in style of worship, a

conflict in direction or focus of ministry, a conflict in personal style and strength of leadership, and a conflict in ownership.

A History of Conflict

Frank shared his perception that he had picked up on some long standing tension between the church and the District or Conference. The history of conflict resulted in a lack of trust of the District and Conference by some of the older, powerful people in the church. Mickey agreed, noting that the Staff Parish Relations Committee had decided that they were not going to accept a “Cabinet boy” who was going to make them pay their apportionments and tell them what to do. The new minister, Frank, followed “a stalwart” Senior Pastor. So, it was stunning when Frank received a unanimous approval at the conclusion of the lengthy conversation with the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Similarly, although Jim did not disagree with Frank’s initiatives or the future direction of the church, he suspected that Frank had been appointed by the Cabinet to make the church more outreach oriented. Jim also indicated that the church previously had issues with the Bishop, and that the church had not been paying their apportionments as an act of defiance, something that he was sure bothered the Bishop. So, there was a combative relationship between the church and the District and Conference before Frank ever arrived.

Frank talked about the long history of conflict at the church, including a history of mediation. And, Frank emphasized that he had not been made aware of these conflicts or prior mediation attempts until after the conflict between his new vision and some of the church members surfaced. Frank noted that the church was not

going to listen to anyone who spoke on behalf of the District or the Conference. Frank described his conflict with the church as inevitable and also indicated that he would have known that his assignment would not have been a good fit if the Bishop and Cabinet had made him aware of the depth and scope of these conflicts from the very beginning. The Bishop and Cabinet knew this long history of conflict within the church, and between the church and the District and Conference, and had not communicated that information to him as the new Senior Pastor.

Frank went on to describe how an older and powerful group of people in the church worked to undermine all that the younger generation of formal leaders of the church had sought to accomplish. Frank was shocked when the new vision of the future of the church was not really supported at all, even though it was approved by an overwhelming vote of the membership present. Frank indicated that the proverbial wheels fell off the new vision when rumors that were started by the powerful group began to spread through the congregation. Frank did not know how to stop the conflict from escalating. But, it was intriguing that Frank was the only one interviewed who was not aware of the identity of the person who led the charge to have him removed as the Senior Pastor. Mickey and Jim agreed that nobody really wanted to talk with Frank about the conflict, and that the situation quickly spun out of control, noting that the church did not respond well to change.

Some members of the church were suspicious of the motives behind the proposed changes, and wondered if Frank was a mouthpiece for the District and Conference. So, it appears that if there is a history of internal dynamics in a church of

conflict between two polarized groups. And, there was a history of dynamics between the church and the District or Conference. The general sentiment was that the information about the history of conflict needs to be shared with possible appointees before they accept their assignment. Frank walked into a situation where a number of church leaders were suspicious of why the District and/or Conference appointed him to their church. It appears that they would oppose any change from their status quo created by strong, previous Senior Pastor. There was a strong sentiment on the part of the church that the District Superintendent or Bishop was not going to tell them what to do.

A Conflict in Style of Worship

Mickey talked about how Frank did things differently than his predecessor, by not staying in the pulpit when he preached, by closing his eyes when he gave his sermon, and in a movement toward more of a contemporary or praise oriented style of worship. These difficulties caused great backlash in the church. Mickey and Jim both said that some people felt that Frank was not preaching the gospel because he would use several passages of Scripture and synthesize them in his sermons, instead of focusing on one text as his predecessor had done. This deviated from what they were accustomed to hearing, and was interpreted as not preaching the gospel in the right way. Some people also felt that the contemporary service was not worship because it did not involve the organ, although they were somewhat willing to accept people raising their hands in praise. A number of people in the church made the style of the previous Senior Pastor “absolute,” reacting in negative ways to any other style. This

could be a pattern when a long standing previous Senior Pastor is very popular, and the new Senior Pastor will face an issue of not changing how the former leader did things at the church. This issue could be a serious obstacle to an effective new ministry.

A Conflict In Direction or Focus of Ministry

Frank described a long interview process during his introduction to the Staff Parish Relations Committee. The committee asked questions about “particular stances” he had about issues, including “homosexuality.” Rather than answer the questions directly and engage in an issue where he perceived potential conflict, Frank talked about his philosophy of ministry. Mickey, having also been in this initial meeting, concurred, pointing out that Frank’s philosophy and answers were so good that it changed the opinion of the group in a powerful way. This was especially true of Frank’s explanation of why it is important to pay apportionments, emphasizing not so much using their money to support a particular philosophy, but pointing out the critical need to support all of the churches that are really struggling.

Frank pointed out that there was a long history of tension in the church between people who wanted to reach out to others in the community, and those who wanted the focus on the current membership. Once this conflict in focus of attention began to escalate, Frank noted that some of the younger, more progressive families began to get discouraged and leave the church. Mickey and Jim concurred that the church did not respond well to any changes, especially in the youth ministry. The youth minister’s style and direction of his ministry was unacceptable to this older,

powerful group in the church. The youth minister wanted to reach out to other young people in the community. But, most of the financial base of the church felt that the future leadership of the church would come from within the church, and the youth minister should focus on the youth who were already members. Todd also acknowledged that the conflict was between an older and younger generations who clearly had different ideas about what it meant to be the church. Todd also noted that the churches that have not been able to adjust to a changing culture have died. So, one trend in this case that could hinder any new Senior Pastor is a clash in the emphasis between outreach and an internal focus. This clash may be a generational issue compounded by the previous minister's emphasis. This issue was central to this case and could potentially be a dynamic in other failed appointments.

A Conflict in Style & Strength of Leadership

Frank noted that perhaps the conflict could have been avoided if he had been “a strong, forceful leader,” or simply more directive like the previous Senior Pastor. But, this was not his style. Frank also said that it became evident to the church, and then to him personally that the church wanted a different kind of leader. Frank saw himself as fun loving and creative, but the church wanted a directive and serious Senior Pastor. Frank described feeling “in over his head” in this particular appointment. Frank acknowledged that he could have grown in the area of conflict resolution, but also indicated that he was not able to continue at the church with any kind of integrity because the situation warranted a fundamentally different kind of leader. Mickey concurred, noting that the church had been programmed by Frank's

predecessor, and that the church was closed-minded as a result. Todd agreed that ultimately a different kind of leader was needed for this church. It seemed that the former Senior Pastor, based on his behavior, had a personality preference of Extraversion-Sensing-Thinking-Judging as more of a fighter. This was what seemed to be in direct contrast to Frank's Extraversion-Intuition-Feeling-Perceiving style as a lover of people, based on his behavior.

Mickey and Jim both talked about Frank's inability or unwillingness to make the youth minister do what the older members wanted in the youth ministry. The powerful group in the church wanted a youth ministry focused on the young people who were already involved in the church, in contrast to the youth minister's focus on outreach. The youth minister's refusal to change the direction of his outreach ministry, and Frank's failure to direct the youth pastor to change and control him was the issue that triggered the entire conflict.

Mickey asserted that Frank's management skills were more consistent with the leadership responsibilities of an assistant coach. And, while Mickey viewed Frank's management skills as more inconsistent with the leadership responsibilities of a head coach, Jim felt that Frank was not sufficiently forceful, unable to control his staff, or good at learning the direction and style of the church and their desired ministry.

Jim went on to express his frustration with the District and Conference in failing to provide leadership to Frank once he started in his new role at the church, noting that Frank was less experienced than their previous Senior Pastors. Like Jim, who felt that Frank had failed to accurately read the political landscape at the church,

Todd acknowledged that it was critical to assess the centers of power in the church when making appointments.

Both Jim and Mickey seemed to assume that Frank should have been more forceful and directive. They believed that Frank should have either ultimately assessed the situation and joined the internal focused ministry desired by the powerful people in the church, or should have been more forceful and directive in dealing with these members as he forged his own path. In either case, both lay persons clearly indicated that a powerful and directive Senior Pastor was needed in their church.

A Conflict in Ownership

There was also a conflict related to the ownership of the church and who would ultimately decide on the current and future ministry, and whether the agenda would be set by the District and Conference, Frank, or the church. Frank was aware that there were some pretty large egos involved in this conflict, and added that the underlying division in the church became clear when people were asked for their personal involvement and financial investment in the new vision. Mickey concurred, indicating that the Staff Parish Relations Committee received numerous complaints that Frank did not care for the opinions of the people that had been in the church for a long time. These members believed that they should receive special attention from Frank. Todd said that the controlling, older generation in the church sought to reclaim power when the younger, elected leadership began moving in new directions under Frank's leadership. This ultimately polarized the church.

The older, controlling generation believed that Frank was usurping their power, and according to Mickey and Jim, a number of big financial supporters ultimately left the church. Essentially Frank had upset the wrong family by not addressing their concerns related to the youth minister and the direction of his ministry. Mickey and Jim agreed that once this powerful family was alienated, the conflict spread like cancer and was unstoppable. Similarly, Todd noted that Frank was destined for a showdown with this group, and they were unwilling to work through conflict. From their point of view, there was nothing to work through, because Frank had to go and their view would prevail. This attitude may be a factor in other failed appointments. Mickey also noted that the church has still not recovered from this rift, nor had they fully recaptured their vigor or financial stability.

Todd expressed frustration about the Bishop choosing to intervene. He felt this action indicated a lack of confidence in his leadership as a District Superintendent. Todd added that it eliminated any power he had in working with the situation and stopped any progress in dealing with the issues in the church. In Todd's opinion, this course of action chosen by the Bishop resulted in some of the elected leaders and younger families leaving the church because progress was halted, and made Frank's departure from the church inevitable.

In discussing the appointment process, Todd did talk about the Cabinet often having a vision for the particular church, but that vision should probably be communicated to the clergy and all of the identified centers of power in order to effect change in local churches. Todd also noted the conflict of values, saying the Cabinet

values the authority of the annual conference, but the local churches tend to value the autonomy they have to determine their own ministry. Todd pointed out that this dynamic was especially present in this case.

Jim described how a campaign to encourage openness to new ideas did not go over well in this very traditional church. Todd also indicated that this conflict was amplified because members of the Staff Parish Relations Committee had values that differed from those of the District and Conference. Specifically, although this church seemed interested in operating on a business model and hiring their own pastor, in the United Methodist Church the clergy are appointed by the Cabinet, composed of the District Superintendents and the Bishop. This particular ownership issue involving this conflict in the values of the authority of the Cabinet versus the autonomy of the local church could be a factor in other failed appointments. Further, if the local church is hostile toward the direction of the appointment process used in the United Methodist Church, it is possible that the pastor will last only as long as s/he aligns herself/himself with the desires of the church, and not the Conference or the District.

Summary

The lack of trust in this particular situation had grown over time from differing judgments about who owns the church and resulting ministry, a conflict that had been fueled to some degree by at least one of the former Senior Pastors. Coupled with the marked division within the formal and informal leadership of the church concerning the focus and style of ministry, it was inevitable that this conflict would eventually surface.

Areas of Focus

The intent of the study was to explore the three cases by examining more closely potential gaps in the seminary preparation or professional identity of the Senior Pastors, the itinerant system in general and the fit between the Senior Pastor and the particular large church setting. The stories of each of the four perspectives are summarized below as they relate to what was shared relative to these four major areas of focus in the study.

Seminary Preparation

Both laypersons in this first case seemed to be at a loss in responding to potential gaps in Frank's seminary preparation. However, both agreed that Frank seemed to be less prepared for a large church setting. Mickey went on to say that Frank's seminary preparation was good in many areas, but that Frank was lacking in his management skills, and needed to be more forceful in working with people. Mickey also talked about the contrasting styles of Frank and the former Senior Pastor. While Frank was supportive and facilitative, the former Senior Pastor was assertive and directive. This led some people not to want to talk with Frank about their concerns or the conflict. The assumption seems to be that you talk to the Senior Pastor so that s/he can take charge and solve the concerns as you desire. And, if s/he is not willing or able to do this, you do not talk with him/her about a conflict.

Frank felt that his seminary preparation was generally good, especially theologically and because of his counseling courses. However, he acknowledged that his education was not exhaustive. Frank was not sure of the current status of

preparation programs, but commented on the “huge gap” and lack of “really good preparation in a lot of areas.” Frank described feeling “in over his head” in this church situation. Frank seems to assume that preparation can help you alter your basic personality orientation or at least give you skill so you can be directive or assertive. However, this may not be the case. For example, if the former Senior Pastor had a natural preference for Thinking-Judging, and Frank had a natural preference for Feeling – Perceiving, there are foundational underpinnings to their natural styles, and to act otherwise has limits. There are some things that can be learned, but one cannot change one’s natural personality preferences.

Similarly, Todd, the District Superintendent, indicated that there did not seem to be any specific void in Frank’s seminary education related to the situation at hand, “except for the, the general gap.” Todd explained that “seminaries don’t prepare anybody for this kind of stuff.” Todd stated that “the leadership issues” and “the organizational tools for helping congregations move through change” in churches “have been a big gap for seminaries.” This implies the need to study organizational development and change in seminaries as it relates to voluntary religious organizations.

Professional Identity

The two laypersons focused on Frank’s relative lack of experience. Jim felt that Frank’s inexperience was a hindrance in appropriately supervising, and even controlling the youth minister. Jim also indicated that Frank seemed unable to recognize and respond appropriately to the conflicting values between the older

members and the direction of the youth minister, and to address the conflict. Mickey stated that although Frank was a brilliant and enthusiastic and effective communicator, he was not familiar with the landscape the large church or how to lead in a context where the people were still grieving the loss of their former leader. Mickey suggested that Senior Pastors be sent to a conference before starting a large church appointment so they do not feel so overwhelmed by being forced to learn on the run.

The clergy both indicated that they felt the conflict was inevitable and irresolvable. Frank indicated that he felt supported by both the District Superintendent and the Bishop, noting that the conflict was inevitable and was naturally directed at the leader. Frank noted that the situation was simply not resolvable because of the conflicts with and lack of trust in the conference on the part of the church. Todd added that Frank was destined for a showdown with the old guard, a group that was not willing to work on the conflict, and concluded that Frank had to leave.

However, the clergy did seem to disagree about the development of Frank's professional identity as a Senior Pastor. Frank acknowledged that he could learn more about conflict management, but that the situation required someone with a different leadership style. Frank added that he was unable to adjust to be a different kind of leader with integrity. But, Todd did not think that there were gaps related to the development of Frank's professional identity that could be addressed by additional coursework beyond seminary.

Itinerancy

Frank talked about his positive experience with the introduction interview, adding that it was shocking when he was later asked to leave by the same group. He expressed a commitment to the itinerant system, even though he said there was a need for more support and sensitivity on the part of the Cabinet and Bishop when pastors go through a difficult appointment and are already discouraged. This was especially true because of what he felt was a demotion to a smaller church in the wake of the transition, following a negative introduction meeting in another church. Frank also talked about how essential it is to appoint appropriate people to the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Frank commented that he functions in the itinerant system by looking at every appointment as good and a blessing, and that he will be staying at a church forever. For Frank, this approach relieved the pressure of the transitory nature of the itinerant system.

In contrast, Todd was more theoretical. He discussed the increasing complexity of the appointment process, especially the challenges of enacting the itinerant system in contemporary American culture. The two biggest problems in the itinerant system, according to Todd, were the guaranteed appointment and the belief that every church gets a pastor. In making appointments, Todd did stress that it was critical for the Cabinet to “access the centers of power” in a church with accuracy. However, Todd noted that getting to know a church will be even more difficult in the larger districts. Todd likened the work of the Cabinet with local churches to “being a

parent from a distance,” and said that “the Cabinet often has more of a vision for a congregation than the congregation has for itself.”

Todd acknowledged the conflict of values between the authority of the Conference and the autonomy of the local church. He emphasized that the conflict is amplified by the increasingly diverse individuals serving on Staff Parish Relations Committees who are not familiar with the organization and operation of the United Methodist Church. Todd’s perception of the itinerant system seems to be based on several value assumptions. He believes in the validity of the authorities of the church hierarchy to make appointments, rather than the local church deciding who they will choose as their minister. In this case, many of the older and powerful members disagree, and this is one of the sources of much of the historical conflict with the District Superintendent and Bishop. Todd used the metaphor of the Cabinet as a “parent” to local churches, who appear to be the “children.” This seems to be based on the assumption that the parent has better vision for their children than the children have for themselves. In this case, a number of people in the church disagreed, and this opposing force asserted their collective will against Frank.

Todd noted that the vision and appointment strategy developed by the Cabinet “may not be the congregation’s vision,” and “in order for that pastoral appointment to be a good fit, then that vision really needs to be communicated.” This assumes that “communicated” will change the mind and will of the congregation. Todd also expressed that it was essential “to keep the Episcopal authority” central in order to

“effect change in congregations.” He emphasized the need to do away with the guaranteed appointment, in part, because the Conference is saturated with clergy.

Mickey talked about the scarcity mentality related to competent clergy, and the perception that appointments are made to reward or punish churches so that it does not really matter what the church wants. He described the itinerant system as “a congregational crapshoot.” This view confirms the clash of values that permeates this case. Most of the members of the Staff Parish Relations Committee diametrically opposed hierarchical appointments, but a few members had faith in the process. Mickey believed that his church did not trust the Bishop and Cabinet. Ultimately, Mickey reiterated that his church was a tough crowd, and that Frank was not ready for the appointment, even though the Bishop and Cabinet seemed to think that he would be smart enough to figure things out as he began working at the church.

Jim explained how the church was suspicious of the motivation for Frank’s drastic change in philosophy related to reaching out to the community. He personally did not like the agenda for the future of the church being imposed by the Cabinet through Frank. He noted a history of a divisive relationship between the church and the District, and believed that only older, seasoned veteran clergy would serve at his church. Jim cited the major problem was not the itinerant system but the translation of the system to practice. He noted leadership problems at every level, and expressed his belief that Frank was appointed to the church then abandoned by the District and Conference.

There were also attempts to situate their understanding of the itinerant system theologically. Although Mickey felt there was a clear parallel between the way the church treated Frank and to the Biblical narrative of the life of Jesus, not surprisingly, it was the clergy who focused more on the concepts of God in this situation. At the outset of our initial conversation, Frank expressed confidence in the sovereignty of God. Frank also expressed tentative trust in redemptive suffering, where God can use bad things that happen in our lives. And, Frank noted that we have a limited amount of control over what happens in our lives, especially where there are people involved who have destructive tendencies.

Todd indicated that there is a human tendency to attribute things to God and His will that are inappropriate, that may not actually be the case, and that ultimately result in conflict. The question related to where the will of God resides, with the local church, with the visioning process of the Cabinet, or somewhere else, seems to be central to the conflict in this church.

Person - Environment Fit

Frank indicated that it seemed like a good fit initially. However, if he had known of the history and depth of the internal dynamics in the church from the beginning, including their clash with the Bishop and Cabinet, Frank stated he would have questioned whether or not it was a good fit, and probably would have known that it would not work out. Without blaming the Bishop or the Cabinet for what happened, Frank did point out that they did know the long history of both the conflict within the church, and between the church and the District and Conference.

Mickey concurred with Frank. Mickey described in detail the way that everything fell into place initially, but that it later became clear that Frank was not the right fit for the conflicted church, in part because he was so very different from his predecessor and what the church expected or needed. Mickey went on to give voice to his wrestling with whether or not the Staff Parish Relations Committee did the right thing in asking Frank to leave. He also emphasized the importance of preparing clergy by sharing with them the history of a church.

Jim also agreed that initially Frank was a good fit for the church, talking about the gifts that Frank brought to the church. But Jim seemed to differ in his strong opinion that Frank would have been able to continue at the church had he been given more advice and leadership from the District and the church. Jim went on to explain that once Frank was appointed, he was left on his own by the District. He also believed that the church staff was too inexperienced to be able to help Frank to read the needs of the formal and informal leadership structure of the church. It is possible that the needs of the opposition eventually were perceived, but the style and direction of ministry they desired were unacceptable to Frank.

Todd too felt that it had been a good appointment, except for the conflict between the formal, younger leadership and the informal, older leadership of the church. Todd also cited the contrasting expectations of the personality of the previous Senior Pastor with Frank's style, along with the church's expectations of how the Bishop and Cabinet "would respond to their demands."

Summary

Chapter 4 included the results of Case 1, along with an overview of the salient themes and patterns, including comparisons and discrepant data. Chapter 5 will provide a similar overview, analysis and summary of Case 2.

CHAPTER 5

CASE 2 RESULTS

While Chapter 4 focused on case one, Chapter 5 is devoted to Case 2. Like Chapter 4, this Chapter provides a general description of the context, followed by the varying perspectives of the Senior Pastor, a Staff Parish Relations Committee member, a Lay Leader, and the District Superintendent involved with the transition of the Senior Pastor from the church. An analysis of Case 2 is included, beginning with a comparison and summary of the issues related to what happened, followed by an overview of the four major areas of focus. Here again, in communicating the results of the project, an effort was made to include as much of the participant perspectives as possible, and to do so in their own words.

Case 2

General Description

This church is located in a growing suburban area that serves as a county seat. The acclaimed physical structure of the church is a testimony to the rich heritage of the area, coupled with the traditional emphasis on worship.

Senior Pastor

Gary agreed to participate in the study, but when I arrived to meet with him for the initial interview, he talked about not being certain that he wanted to go through

with it, before asking a couple of questions and agreeing again to participate. Gary seemed a little angry and bitter by what had transpired with this church, although his manner did seem to soften significantly between the two interviews, both of which took place at his office. His garbled speech was at times difficult to understand.

What Happened

At the outset, Gary said the appointment did not work out because of “who has control” and “who runs the church.” Specifically, Gary indicated that “there is one particular man who has run that church for years,” and that he was asked during the introduction if he could “reign in Scott, because he is out of control.” Gary said, “I told them that at that particular time I could if I was supported by the congregation.” Gary commented, “We began to work” on “many different projects,” but that “Scott didn't like what was going on, and left the church for six months.” During that time, Gary said, “all of the committees ran beautifully, wonderfully,” the “finances were coming in good,” the “building was being repaired,” and “people were doing things that they had never done before because, basically, he wasn't controlling things.” Gary continued, when Scott “decided that he could not stand it anymore,” although he had been “attending a church” elsewhere, “he came back to the church, and immediately things started going down.” Gary perceived that “because things were running so well, he attacked me full force, as hard as he possibly could because he knew I was the one that was running, making it run.” Gary noted, “It went fine, with what it was, for as long as it could.” Gary explained that “numerous people in the congregation loved me” and “supported me,” and that “the PPR committee supported

me 100% in what I was doing, feeling that we were beginning to move in the right direction.”

Gary went on to say that when “Scott was being blocked by many different things,” he began to spread “innuendos and thoughts.” Gary said that Scott “wanted to go to the PPR committee, and they wouldn’t do it,” explaining that they declined when he expressed an interest in sharing his concerns with them. But, when Scott “demanded an open meeting with the congregation,” the Staff Parish Relations Committee “agreed to that.” Gary continued, “At that open meeting” Scott said “everybody was leaving the church because of me,” but when “the chairman of the PPR committee challenged him” to provide “the names of the people,” Scott was not able to do that.

Scott also “challenged” Gary “at that open meeting” because he felt “that an estate of money” given to the church “was being misused.” Gary explained that he called the District Superintendent about “the check,” which had been “for a considerable amount” and “no strings were attached.” Gary said that he was “told” by the District Superintendent to take “it to” the “finance committee for their recommendation” and then to “the administrative counsel,” so they could “make their recommendation about how the money was going to be spent.” Gary added, “They made the decision to spend it paying conference apportionments, because we were behind at that particular time,” but that Scott was not happy with that decision.

Gary went on to say that “Scott and I clashed,” even “though people were joining the church by profession of faith.” Gary continued, saying “they kept after me,

and after me,” attacking “my health, saying “I had a stroke which I did not have.”

Gary said there were complaints saying “I couldn't do any administration, which was wrong because the church was running beautifully under my administration.”

Ultimately, Gary indicated that they “attacked the financial base, and the small group pulled all their money out to try to get rid of me, which made it even tighter for us.”

In the end, Gary said, “they began attacking my wife” and “after 2½ years, I basically opened up the door for the Cabinet and said, I've done all I could.” Gary said that he expressed an interest in moving “any place else” or “I will stay here.”

Gary talked about several factors as to why the appointment did not work out. Specifically, Gary said there was a “power struggle” or “control issue” related to “who is going to run the church. Gary indicated that even people “downtown” recognized me as “the pastor of” Scott’s “church,” since “one-person basically controls everything in the church.” Gary went on to say that he “was always told” that you cannot “do anything without Scott’s blessing” and “you have to go along with Scott” or “you're not going to be here very long.” Gary talked about how he felt that power should be shared in a community of faith, saying “if you are going to grow a church,” it is important “to get everybody involved.” But, Gary noted, “when you have a power struggle” and someone “does not want to give up any power, and won't share that power with anybody else, then the others just begin to drop off,” adding that “everybody has their own special niche.” Gary said that Scott “had his positives,” but that “he doesn't need to dictate for everything else,” adding that Scott would disagree. Gary went on to say that his “deep conviction” was that “power needs to be shared in

community” since “God loves us all.” Gary stated, “In my entire ministry, I’ve been a person centered pastor,” and want to “reach out” to “people who don’t feel that they can even raise their voice because if they do they’ll be shot down.” Gary explained that he believed that “we can all do something,” and that we are “all basically ambassadors for God.”

Gary talked about philosophical differences in “the way to run the church,” saying that he tries to work “through my committees” and “get people involved,” because it empowered more people to make decisions in the church.” Gary explained that he met “one-on-one” with “my strongest person who was in power,” adding that “we were at a standstill right off the bat,” because Scott did not “believe in any committees,” and felt that “one person needs to make all the decisions.” Gary went on to say that “when we lead with committees” the people “take ownership.” But, Gary noted, “if you have one person making all the decisions” or if “he influences all the decisions” than “everybody is trying” to “appease one person.” As a result, Gary said, “you don’t have” any “new ideas,” adding that “many times a new idea might be the most beautiful ministry.” Gary concluded, we all “can carry Christ with us in many different ways,” and that it is our “openness and diversity” that can serve to advance the gospel message, although he noted that he was “not a Universalist.”

Gary also indicated that there were conflicting “views on what the church should do to be the church.” Specifically, Gary said, “I was trying to move” the church “to look out into the community” and “to be in ministry beyond themselves” and “in mission in other ways” and “to try to reach out to other people.” But, Gary

added, in the “power struggle, people were putting all their emphasis on protecting the wonderful building.” Gary went on to say that “my philosophy is the church that constantly looks inwardly is a dying church,” and that churches need “to look out” to ways they “can minister to people.” But, Gary noted, “if we stay as cloistered inside of our own little walls, soon these walls will choke us, choke us and kill us.” So, in contrast to “the philosophy that we have a beautiful building, we opened the doors, and people will come,” Gary felt that people needed to be reached on their own turf. Specifically, Gary said, “you may have to do things different than you did twenty-five years ago to reach them,” because “everybody needs to hear the word of God” and we need to “get outside of our walls and reach out to them” in “different ways.” Gary stated that this was especially true since “we are living in a non-Christian society now.

Seminary Preparation

Initially, Gary indicated that he did not feel that his seminary education could have better prepared him for an appointment as a Senior Pastor in a large church setting since he did not move directly from seminary into the large church appointment. Later, Gary stated, “I don't know whether I had anything in my seminary that would help me to be a Senior Pastor.” Gary pointed out that the emphasis on people skills in psychology courses was applicable to the dynamics of leading a large church, saying “I appreciate my seminary that way.” Gary, upon further reflection, said “Most of my church administration I basically learned on my own,” because of a less than engaging professor in that area. Gary explained that it would have been helpful logistically and more efficient to have learned more of an

administrative road map of the different committees and their relationship with one another in seminary. Gary also indicated that he could have benefited from an understanding of the bigger picture of a vision, mission, and core values, noting “after being in the ministry for over thirty years” there is “a lot that I have learned, sometimes the hard way” and “by trial and error.” Gary said, “My seminary preparation was a very good foundation as far as Biblical scholarship” and “my Old and New Testament professors were excellent,” describing how they covered the basics and helped him to understand how to learn on his own from the text. Gary indicated that, “my seminary training, plus also my early life also gave me a good sense of mission work” and “reaching out.” And, Gary talked about the importance of being able to translate theory into practice, explaining “no matter what your seminary education teaches you.” Gary added, “you learn a lot more” when “you’ve actually put it in practice,” because “that’s when it makes all the difference in the world.”

Professional Identity

Gary talked about how he felt prepared to serve as a Senior Pastor in a large United Methodist Church, but said he felt a considerable amount of pressure related to the appointment. Specifically, Gary said, “I felt challenged and blessed” and “I went in with fear and trepidation.” Gary stated, “my District Superintendent who appointed me there told me that he wanted me to reign in this one particular person” and that “this could make or break” my “entire ministry career,” both in terms of “whether I would take” the appointment “or not,” and that “what I did” there “could either make or break my ministry career.” Gary said this District Superintendent “asked me to go

back home, and pray about it” and “gave me a challenge,” telling me “that anytime I wanted out he would get me out.” But, Gary added, then “I got a new District Superintendent.” Gary went on to say, “there was a lot of pressure that was put on me” because the appointment “wasn’t offered to me until two weeks before Annual Conference” and “they’d already placed somebody at the church where I was serving.” Gary went on to say, “for two months, I was sitting there not knowing where I was going to be.” Gary concluded, “there was pressure do I take it or do I not take it,” and “there was pressure I don’t know whether you can do this job where I am sending you.”

At first, Gary indicated that he did not feel there was anything else in terms of on-going professional development that would have been helpful to him to better navigate the dynamics in this church. But, then he recalled “taking some continuing education course” in an effort “to help myself understand what was going on” at the church “when I was getting into this conflict.” Gary said, “I tried to use some of the stuff,” but “some of it worked” and “some of it didn’t,” which he said is true “whenever you take a leadership course.” Gary indicated that he felt like this seminar on conflict management “might have been” helpful “earlier” in his career, saying it was “useful” even though he initially commented “I can’t even remember what it was.” In addition to citing conflict management and church growth by size as the most valuable of his “many continuing education” seminars, Gary said the “church growth by size” seminar “was very, very meaningful and helpful.” Specifically, Gary said, “when I was going through” this “power struggle with Scott, I felt well maybe I

can learn a little more about conflict management” and “I took this course” on “conflict management.” He described it as “a two-day seminar” that “helped some” and “was valuable learning” that “was conducted by laypeople.” Gary agreed that it might have been helpful if he had some of the church management, church growth by size, or conflict management seminars even earlier in his career. Specifically, Gary said, “It might have helped,” but was quick to add “although I don’t think it would have,” because the conflict and ensuing change “would have just happened the same way.”

Gary talked about his preparation for the role of a Senior Pastor in a large United Methodist Church, saying “as a Senior Pastor you need to learn” how important it is to “share responsibilities” and “the leadership of the church,” adding “and I did learn to do that a long time ago” and “I went in with the idea.” Gary described how a colleague at the church said that s/he “had a very good working relationship with me,” going on to say that it was “a better working relationship” than others that s/he knew “had with other Pastors.” Following his description of this “encouraging feedback,” Gary said that he had “worked out that relationship beautifully.” Gary added, “I had been an Associate one time before” and “had been on a staff,” so “when I became Senior Pastor” I knew what to expect. Gary concluded, “I basically worked with the situation, knowing what I was in before, and as far as I was concerned I thought I’d bettered the situation than what I had when I was an Associate” in “my first Senior Pastorate.”

Itinerancy

Gary talked about an expectation of being cared for, having served in the ministry for a long time. Specifically, Gary said, “when you leave us out there hanging, not knowing where we’re going,” and “when I didn’t find out until two weeks before Annual Conference, where I was going,” that “I had the question in the back of my mind, if I say no to this two weeks before annual conference” then “What’s going to happen to me if I say no?” Gary also implied that he felt torn between the attraction “to be a Senior Pastor and have a nice staff” and the opportunity “to say no,” when the District Superintendent asked him to make a decision about the potential appointment.

Gary described the many and varied pressures he felt in his situation. Gary indicated that waiting to hear the news as to whether they were leaving and if so where they would be moving prior to this church situation “put untold pressure on my wife.” More specifically, Gary indicated that it was hard not knowing whether they were leaving, noting “we didn’t even know we were leaving definitely.” And, Gary said, once we found out “we were leaving,” Gary talked about how it was hard “to begin to start packing, and not know where you are going.” Gary added, “If I had had kids at that time, it would have been terrible,” since “they would have been asking me” questions. With respect to the questions, Gary said, “I got enough from the congregation,” but “if I had had to put up with it by my own family, it would have been even worse.”

Gary also talked about the pressure he felt in not knowing where he was going to be appointed up until two weeks prior to conference, especially after his replacement had already been named. Gary stated, "It's very, very hard when you know that you are moving." Gary noted, "I knew that I was moving when the Cabinet came and introduced" the new Pastor "at the present church" while I was "sitting there" about "the week after Easter." Gary went on to say, there was "considerable pressure that my people who I served for seven years at the present church were coming up to me, asking me" questions about where I was going, because they knew "who's coming here." Gary continued, "I lived with that for two months," and "when I did announce that I was going to" a particular church, "I had one of the dear old men" respond, "Now I can sleep at night because I know you have been taken care of by the Cabinet." Gary concluded, "I had to live with that for two months," asking myself, "What had I done wrong" to "suddenly" be "out on a limb?"

Gary also talked about the expectation of succession, in finding out where you will be appointed before the church you are serving is told who their new pastor will be as a way of communicating care for the clergy. Specifically, Gary noted, "if I want to say anything about the itinerancy, I would say never put somebody underneath somebody, without the first person being taken care of." Gary went on to say, "this is the only time it's ever happened in my system" or experience, because "I always knew where I was going" and "I've had numerous appointments." But, Gary added, "suddenly" the decision about this appointment "is being thrown at me, just coming off of a" long "pastorate," and "after I had already served the United Methodist

Church” for a very long time. Gary continued, “when I came to my present appointment, I knew where I was going” even “before the church” where I was leaving “knew who was coming there, which is the way I think it should be.”

Gary also talked about the added pressure of not knowing whether to take the appointment that he was offered. Specifically, “it looked very nice” and “beautiful on the paper” and “I had no objections.” But, Gary added, to learn that “I was going to have a power struggle” during the “introduction,” and then to be told by the District Superintendent, that “we hope that you’ll take this, but it could make or break your ministry,” Gary said, “I wrestled with that.” Gary went on to say, “Basically, I was feeling like I had no choice,” because even though I was given “two weeks” to make the decision. Gary concluded, “knowing that my present District Superintendent had probably worked to get me what she thought was a very good appointment,” and “then to have that District Superintendent say” that “if you don’t do well here, who knows what’s going to happen to you?” made it very difficult.

Concerning “the itinerant system,” Gary added, “sometimes I think that the Cabinet doesn’t quite take into consideration all of the family needs.” But, Gary was quick to note this concern “has nothing to do with the” particular “situation” he faced at the church, but that it was “because of what some of the pastors have told me.” Specifically, Gary felt it was important to be attentive to the specific needs of a Pastor and his/her family in making appointments, especially if “they have children” with “special needs.” Gary cited a situation where a Pastor was moved from an area that provided specialized support, adding “we are an itinerant people,” but “there ought to

be some way that we can be itinerant” and also have the “personal needs met.” Gary concluded “you need to be concerned for a person’s views” and “considerate with people,” adding “I’ve served all over” and have “never said, I have to stay in one particular area.”

Person-Environment Fit

Gary indicated that based on the information he had received related to the appointment, it was a perfect fit and that “it sounded very good.” Specifically, Gary said, “When they offered” the appointment to me, “they wanted somebody” who was “accessible at all times,” a Senior Pastor “who was strong in administration,” who would “preach Biblical sermons,” who was “musically” gifted, and who was able to handle “pastor calling” or visitation. Gary stated, “it was a straight fit” of “all my strong suits.” In short, “based on what the Pastor Parish Relations Committee gave to the District Superintendent,” Gary said, “it would have been a fit.”

However, Gary described an undercurrent related to one controlling influence in the church. Specifically, Gary said, “To be honest with you, I went into that introduction thinking that it was a complete fit, and was a little bit blind-sighted” to find out “there was one man who controlled the whole church.” Gary said that “it was not spoken until I went for the interview,” and “the fit was not even talked about” except in asking if I could “control this man in the church.” Gary continued to say that this person “who had caused problems for the last three pastors” then “became the focus of the interview,” but “that had never come up” earlier “when I was offered” the position. Gary added that having more complete information “helps you respond on a

positive note if you know what you're going into," otherwise "you have a tendency to" not be able to articulate "what you really need to say." Emphasizing that the information given to clergy prior to the introduction needs to be a more complete out of fairness, Gary was sure that the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the District Superintendent "knew the problem," but said that "it was unspoken." Gary went on to say that "the committee wanted to try to do something about it" and that "they were behind me all the way." Specifically, Gary said, "I really honestly feel that committee wanted to do something about it, because they knew that was the cancer in the church." Gary added, "The Cabinet felt that I could handle it, and I could bring him under control," and "if they felt that, I give them praise that they felt that I was that good as far as my ability was concerned." Gary indicated that the Staff Parish Relations Committee was more forthright about their issues when talking with the Pastor at the next introduction. Specifically, Gary stated, "Now, the person who followed me knew exactly what they were talking about" because "the committee basically said, 'This is our problem.'" And, going back to the issue of fit, Gary added, "If they would have gone with just the fit and my strengths, I would say yes, it was a good fit."

Follow-Up Interview

At the outset, Gary seemed eager to share what he had written in his journal, saying that he "had about four things" to add after reading "the transcript." He talked about the surprise related to his pattern of speech in the transcript, saying "I normally don't speak" like that, adding "I must have been struggling thinking about words to

say.” He talked about the conflict in the church that led to his move, saying “I had the run in with Scott,” when “I felt the church was starting to grow,” and “I felt” that “all the antagonism that he created against me, it basically destroyed everything that we were starting.” Gary added, “I left” and was “really sorry that it didn’t work out.” He went on to talk about the blessing of his current appointment in the midst of what had been a painful transition, saying “And yet, glory to be, they sent me here, and I’ve had a wonderful ministry.” Gary went on to say, “this has been one of the best churches that I’ve had.” He described the focus of the church on missions, as well as the growth and changes in the physical facilities.

Concerning his reflection and journaling, he said, “I read through the transcript at least two to three times,” and there were a few things that “basically came to my mind afterwards.” He added, “There may have been some other things, but nothing else seemed to be touching me,” explaining “I tried doing it between a very busy schedule here at this church.” He also indicated, “I’m not a journaler,” and “I never have been,” although “I’ve tried that many times,” but “that never has worked for me.” But, Gary added, “I did the best I could.”

He talked about his new insight related to the power struggle at the church, saying “I guess the only new insight that I would have” is that if “two people” are “struggling for power in a church,” that “sometimes you can work together on projects, and sometimes you can’t work together.” Gary then noted, “I don’t know whether it is really a new insight.” Gary explained, “my effort was to try to work with this other power,” but that “his effort was not to work with me.” Gary went on to say,

“it became very evident as I read” the transcript” that “when I left it was probably the best thing to do for my sake and maybe even for the church’s sake.”

In terms of the impact of his participation in the project, he said that it had been difficult and indicated that the process had touched on some emotions. Specifically, Gary commented that “it was a pretty rough two or three days until I could really put this back into perspective” following the “initial interview.” He went on to describe his perspective on his ministry and struggle to make meaning of his experience, saying “even as I look back at the initial interview,” perhaps “for some reason or another God sent me” to that church, but “I still do not know why.” Gary continued, saying “from there, God basically moved me to my present church, which has been an excellent ministry.” Gary added, “Wherever I’ve been I try to look and try to find where God’s been,” and although “I can see God in some of that,” there is “some of it I can’t see God in.” Gary concluded, “that’s probably one, when I’m finally called up to heaven, I’m going to ask why.”

He did feel that participating in the project had, for him, been redemptive, but did not have anything else to add, saying “I think I was pretty clear,” and that “partly” it had provided “some closure.” He went on to say that “I still think that there was an opportunity that might have been wasted,” because “I was sent there for a purpose.” Gary said that “the majority of the people in the church were following my leadership,” but “it only takes a small group” of people “to destroy what you’re doing.”

Staff Parish Relations Committee Member

Del was an experienced businessman who had served on the Staff Parish Relations Committee during a challenging time. For the initial interview, I met Del at the church, and the follow up interview was at his home during a garage sale. Del seemed to be honest and thorough in his remarks, but was clearly deeply committed to the itinerant system through a family connection in ministry.

What Happened

Del talked about the progression of a conflict that started before Gary ever arrived for the introduction. Specifically, Del said “they had it in for Gary from day one” when “somebody from the conference was friends” with “one of our secretaries” and told her “who was coming prior to the appointment.” Del went on to say that “this woman’s father who was on Staff Parish at the time really raised a stink about him” and “didn’t want” Gary “because he’d heard that Gary was being moved from some place” because “they were unhappy with him.” Del, added “so we were getting a minister that the congregation was unhappy with” and “this gentleman did not want Gary to be the minister.” However, Del indicated that the District Superintendent “essentially said” that “he’s yours and you’ve got him, and that’s what this itinerant business is all about.” Del said that, as a result, he was left to “play mediator between the groups.”

Del went on to say that the church has “an old history” of “killing pastors,” because of “a very tight-knit group in the congregation,” who “view the church, in my opinion as more of ownership, instead of a house of God, a place of worship.” Del

continued, saying “from that group there’s very little give and take to the pastor.” Del continued, saying that Scott, “to meet is a fine person,” but “any pastor that ran afoul” with Scott “was short-lived,” adding that “there’s really only Scott’s way of doing things.” Del said, “Scott added people to the membership rolls if they donated money,” which “effects your apportionments” and “everything goes up.”

Del talked about how he was involved in a number of administrative matters at the church in his role on the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Specifically, Scott explained that “they had no insurance covering sexual misconduct” or “sexual harassment;” that “the liability insurance was very weak;” that there were “no contracts with any of the contracted staff members;” that “they were not paying Social Security on their secretary;” and although the office staff “were paid” hourly, “there was no time kept.” Del also indicated that a prior Senior Pastor had “negotiated a reduction in salary, not taking an increase in salary by getting more vacation.” Del added that it was “great” for the first “couple of years, but over time what happens is your Senior Pastor’s salary is not moving up” and “progressing forward.” As a result, Del said “the people that you get” typically “have less experience” and “are less qualified for a large church.” And, just as he had addressed the other problems, and had to “negotiate” several conflicts for Gary, Del said, “I tried to correct that, by reducing the vacation” and “changing the salary.”

Del said that the conflict really escalated when Scott “met with the District Superintendent on his own,” saying “we’ve got to get rid of him.” Del noted, “I criticized” the District Superintendent “for doing that” and “undermining” the Staff

Parish Relations Committee who was trying to work with Gary. Del explained that the District Superintendent “asked me to meet with the congregation” and “get people’s input about what’s going on.” But, Del indicated that “Scott and his entourage showed up and they sat in the back in one pew,” and although “we tried to get people to talk about what the problems were with Gary, and they wouldn’t talk.” Del said the new Senior Pastor “criticized us” and told me “that we should have never met without an Elder being present.” Del stated that Gary “was unhappy that we met,” and “the secretary was unhappy that we met,” adding “everybody was unhappy” but the District Superintendent “told us to meet.” Del continued, saying the conference “brought in a mediator, and the people on Staff Parish Relations” were “not invited to meet with the mediator.” Further, Del indicated that during “a preliminary report” to the congregation, the mediator said, “there’s a lot of things going on at this church, a lot of good things” and “some bad things.” Del continued, noting that the mediator added, “one of the bad things was” that “the wheels came off the train when (Del) met with the congregation as chairman of Staff Parish Relations without an elder being present.”

Del went on to say, “you’ll find the same problems going on right now, because nothing was solved.” Specifically, Del indicated, “as long as Scott” continues to be “a member of that congregation,” they will “have that problem.” Del said, “the church is a place for them to worship, not a place for them to fight with each other.” Del continued, “I don’t think” that church “has learned to fight fair” or how to be “truly loving and forgiving.” Del added that “when you go to a Church, and you know

the congregation is fighting with each other, you, you can sense it when you walk through the door.” Del concluded, saying “there will be folks who have the same perspective” and others who do not, because “people see it in different ways,” and “that’s life.”

Del indicated that from his perspective there were five reasons why the appointment did not work out. First, Del indicated that the ownership issues of the church extended beyond the itinerant system and their presumed preference of electing their own pastor to the control of the physical facilities. Specifically, Del stated, the church “would rather elect a pastor instead of having one given to them.” Del went on to say that “getting and receiving and loving a new pastor, simply because the district or conference gives you a new pastor impinges” on their style, because “there’s a collision” of beliefs. Indicating that there is a belief that “they own the church,” Del said what the church “really needs is an African-American strong willed woman,” because “they’re bigots.” Del noted that “poor Gary didn’t stand a chance” because he “was not a strong-willed person,” and “it takes a lot of strong will to run against” Scott. Del went on to say, many believed “the pastor’s got nothing to do with the physical structure of the building,” and “they don’t want you involved with that” or “with the Trustees,” who “have their own money,” since “in that church the Trustees do not report to the Administrative Board.” Del said “it’s my understanding that the Senior Pastor is the person that’s accountable to the Bishop” and that “the church is not owned by the congregation.” Del went on to explain that the “physical structure that we’re sitting in here is owned” by “the particular Mid-Western Conference.” Del

concluded, “I don’t think” the church “understands the relationship of the local church to the conference.”

Second, Del talked about how Gary had difficulty in delivering a sermon. Specifically, Del said the church wanted “a person who” was able to “inspire me in his sermons,” adding that “Gary could not do that,” because of “a speech problem.” Del continued, “I talked to him about it,” encouraging him “to go” and “see a doctor, to find out...if you might have had a stroke at one time.” Del went on to say, “I don’t think he could deliver an effective sermon,” because “he would wind up his mouth before he would talk.” Del described that Gary’s preaching was “like” they were “watching a Japanese film” with a time delay between the movement of his mouth and the words they would hear, adding “that was another strike against him.” With respect to “the people who could care less about” the conflict and “the bickering that was going on,” Del said, “if you’re not part of the fray, and you come to church,” you want “to be able to take a message home, you don’t want to have problems hearing it and understanding it.” Del added, “I don’t feel like Gary was delivering the good, quality sermons.” Del continued, “if you’re a minister, and you can’t deliver a good, quality sermon, they’ll run you out of town.” Del explained that “you’ve got to be able to do that,” because the church will “overlook a lot of stuff because people will come to listen to your sermons.” Del concluded, “if they were going to elect somebody” to be their Senior Pastor, “they would try to elect somebody would could deliver a good sermon, who would care less about the physical structure of the building because that’s theirs, they own that church.”

Third, Del said that with Gary there was some “forgetfulness.” Del shared “a story about Gary preaching a funeral, and using the wrong person’s name.” Del went on to say that Gary “denies it,” even though “the undertaker” and others say “he did it.” Del said, “I don’t know, but that story went around the congregation, you know, with no love attached to it,” adding that it was “just another brick in the wall.” Del went on to say, “Gary wasn’t perfect,” but that he was “a good man” and “loved you to death.” But, Del added, “I firmly believe that if Gary tried to get into the ministry today, they wouldn’t let him in,” because Gary “couldn’t pass” the “review board now.” Del continued, “Back in the old days, if you could stand upright and carry a Bible, you were in,” but that “the elder process is so much more stringent today because they’ve got plenty of ministers.” Del commented “there’s two times when you can’t forget a person’s name,” adding “the first time they’ll forgive you,” is “when you do a wedding, because everybody’s happy,” and then they have a party.” Del concluded, saying “at a funeral, everybody’s sad” and “somewhat depressed about the losing of a loved one.” But, Del continued, they “come to the funeral out of respect” and after “you go to the cemetery” you leave thinking “he even said the wrong name,” and “there’s nothing” after that to “switch the gears” because “there’s no party.”

Fourth, Del indicated that Gary “was not prepared” for the appointment. Specifically, Del said that Gary was not “keyed into things that they were looking for.” Further, Del said that Gary “didn’t know diddly-squat” about the church, that “he wasn’t prepared for the issues.” Del also indicated that Gary “didn’t know about

Scott,” and that “he was unaware of congregation expectations.” Del surmised that “Either Gary wasn’t able to ask” the right “questions” and “secure the answers ahead of time, or he didn’t know to ask the questions.” Del stated, “Maybe Gary had the faith” and “the underlying conviction that the” church “would open their arms to him, and support him, and love him as their pastor simply because of the itinerancy.” Del continued, “so he may have put his faith in God and said I will go where you send me, no questions asked.” But, Del was quick to add that “going where you send me does not mean that I take along with me information that I’m going to need when I’m there,” so “you prepare yourself.” Ultimately, Del concluded that it was the “responsibility” of the District Superintendent “to prepare ministers for their appointment.”

Finally, Del talked about how some people did not want Gary to be the Senior Pastor from the very beginning, making it “tough” and “uphill from the get-go.” Specifically, Del stated that Gary “didn’t stand a chance,” even though “it shouldn’t be that way.” Del said that ideally “it should be” that “we want you because we were given you” and “we want to love you, and we want to help you, and we want to, you know, because you’re our pastor.” Del went on to say, the attitude should be, “you’re our pastor” and “we’ll overlook a lot of things because you’re our pastor.” Del continued, saying a congregation should have the attitude that “we love you,” because you have “been appointed by the Bishop to our church, and so let’s work together here and make this, make this happen.” Del concluded, “If the congregation doesn’t want

you from the get-go, you know, it's like a hundred to one," adding "they're the hundred and you're the one."

Seminary Preparation

Del talked about both seminary preparation and the accompanying ordination process. More specifically, Del suggested a seminary course on how "to deliver a sermon" so "it gets the attention of your congregation" and a "person still remembers the message after they've had lunch." Del stated, "that's how I grade a sermon" and "if all you remember was good music and the choir" it was not enough, because you need to "remember what the sermon was about." Del stated, Gary could "take a couple of classes on sermon delivery" and "some education could help him improve," including "speech therapy." But, Del noted, "I hear from" Gary and "some friends" who "say he is doing a great job" and "he says he's happy" and "doing great now."

Del made an important distinction between "the educational process" of seminary and the "screening process" of ordination, saying "Just because you've graduated from seminary doesn't mean that you're going to make it through the Elder process." Specifically, Del said that "in the old days," when Gary probably went through ordination, the screening or "Elder process was just a paper thing," where "you filled out papers" and "you just went right on through." Del went on to say that now "Gary would have probably made it through the seminary process, but I don't think he'd have made it through the Elder process." Specifically, Del added that "Gary would have known where his strengths and weaknesses were" but "I don't think Gary would have been able to answer the deep theological questions that are raised

today,” concluding “I don’t think he would have passed.” Del continued, saying that he personally knew people who have “gone through it a couple of times and have been bounced,” but “they eventually make it.” Del added that the fact that “they’ve been screened” is “the important part.” Del admitted, I would have trouble” with the “very difficult” questions, even though I have “a dual major” in “sociology” and “philosophy” with “a minor in religion.” Del concluded, “I don’t believe that when Gary went through that the screening process” it was “sufficient to point out a person’s weaknesses so they could improve them.” Del also noted that “the screening process” today, which is “great” and “a lot harder” probably “would have helped prepare Gary.”

Professional Identity

Del felt strongly that the deck was stacked against Gary from the very beginning. Specifically, Del said, “Gary should have been able to deal” with the church and make the appointment work. Del indicated that this was especially true since “now” Gary was “dealing with a church that is even bigger.” Del noted that Gary “says they love him and the church is growing.” Del went on to express his frustration with the church and the process, saying that “no amount of training is going to teach you how to mediate between a congregation that doesn’t want you in the first place.” Del continued, saying “no amount of education is going to teach you how to make a congregation love you, and want you,” especially “if from the get-go they’ve decided they don’t want you.” Del added, when one of the members of the Staff Parish Relations Committee “knew before the D.S. got there” about “who the

appointee was” it was not a good situation, since this individual had “heard” about “problems” in “the church that he came from.” Del explained that it was then that “my heart went right to the floor” and “I knew we were in trouble.” Describing it as “the buzz saw,” Del concluded, “That’s why I said” this church “is known for eating pastors.”

Itinerancy

Del talked about what he thought related to the itinerancy, saying that it “is phenomenally great,” adding that it “is the system that we have.” He stated that, “if a minister ends up in the “wrong’ place, he could just kind of bide his time.” Del pointed out that Gary “could have just sat it out and said, okay Scott, whatever you want to do is fine with me,” because “in two to four years, I’ll be out of here.” Del talked about the process to request a move, saying that “in September I get to fill out my form,” one “that says please move me.” Del went on to explain that the “form goes into the District, and then up into the Conference, and you’re put into the mix and they’ll move you,” adding “trust me, they will move you.” Del said that “if you go and meet with your D.S., and say I’ve got to get out of here, you’ve got to help me move,” that “he’ll help you.” With respect to the situation involving Gary, Del said that the church could have accepted that “we got Gary” and decided to “put up with him for a couple of years” and “just let it go,” recognizing that with the itinerant system “we can even fill it out next year and say we want a new Pastor.” Del felt that a more patient approach would have been better than “this haranguing” and posturing

to “drive your minister away.” Instead, Del concluded, “You can say, hey, we’re not getting along here” and “we’re not going to get along here,” and “you’re out of here.”

Del compared the itinerant system to one used in another denomination, where they may “give you thirty days,” but “you’re gone” and “you’re history,” adding then “you go and preach to another congregation, and they get to decide whether they like you or not.” On the other hand, Del added, “If they love you, you’re there for like twenty-five, thirty years if you want,” but said “I don’t think” that “spending twenty years or thirty years in a congregation is healthy for a minister.” In the end, Del concluded that with other systems, “there’s so much instability.”

Del talked about the condition of different church parsonages that he has seen, and his perspective on the housing options for clergy, saying “I think the parsonage system needs to be looked at” by churches. Del added that “it would save the congregations a lot of hassle” in not having to constantly battle the deferred maintenance when a new pastor comes into town. Del explained that he had “appointed a committee to go over to the parsonage” and “couldn’t believe the condition the parsonage was in.” Del noted that “we had to do a lot of work.” Del also pointed out that sometimes “the parsonage is right next door to the church,” making it difficult for a Pastor to “get away.” Del recommended, “I think the Conference ought to look at encouraging congregations to” just “sell their parsonage.” Del noted that some churches could “really” use a “shot in the arm from the sale of the parsonage,” because “a parsonage is a thing of the past.”

Del also talked about how he liked the “housing” provision for Ordained Elders, but expressed a preference for clergy owning their own homes over church parsonages. Del said there are “too many tax advantages that ministers lose out on when they don’t have their own home.” Del went on to say, “if a minister has been in the itinerancy ministry parsonage system for his entire life, he’s got nothing,” including “no place to live,” and “no equity.” Del said, “when you own your own house, you take care of it, because, you know, eventually you want to sell it,” as the “primary reason” that “you buy a house” is “to sell, not to live in.” Del added, when clergy “get ready to move, you just sell it,” since “you know ahead of time that you’re going to be moving.” His advice to clergy was “just buy a house” so you “have equity.”

Del made some comments with respect to the project, saying, “I would just like to say that this is a huge job that you’ve undertaken.” Del thanked me, adding, “It’s been cathartic on my behalf.” Del also asked “how” I was “going to analyze” the information,” and noted that it would be a big “job.” He acknowledged that “there are other perspectives” related to “this whole issue” and that he would “respectfully disagree with the mediator’s report.” Del went on to state that “it didn’t represent any of the people that were on Staff Parish at the time,” since “he never interviewed any of us.” Del added that the mediator only talked with “two of us after the report had already been written.”

Person-Environment Fit

Del spent some time reflecting on the lack of fit between Gary as the Senior Pastor and the environment of their church. Specifically, Del stated that in “thinking about the fit” that Gary “didn’t fit at all.” Del explained that the church “wanted” someone who was “a dynamic minister to deliver a dynamic sermon.” But, Del noted, “they were looking for somebody they weren’t willing to pay for,” because “they hadn’t paid for it in the past” and “their salary wasn’t high enough to get the minister they were looking for.” Del added, “I think they would have preferred to have” a “doctoral” person or someone “that met their self esteem.” Del concluded that, “based on the skill set that he brought,” that Gary “didn’t fit from the beginning.” Del added that “Gary was not a negotiator either,” because I “actually negotiated” a situation when “he got into a squabble” with a staff member.

Del talked about the process used to communicate with the District and Conference related to the type of Pastor a church would ideally like. Del said, “I’d like to talk a little more about fit” because it impacts “pastors beyond Gary.” Del noted, “There’s a form that Staff Parish Relations fills out about the kind of pastor” that “they want,” but “I think that form is taken too lightly” and “it should be more of a community effort on the part of the congregation. Del went on to say, “the form” should “go through some other process before it gets to Staff Parish,” including perhaps “the music committee,” the “laity,” the “education committee,” and the “trustees.” Del suggested, “it ought to float around through the organizational structure of the church, where people are able to say,” either “I need this” or “it would

be nice to have this,” or “we need a person that can do this.” Del continued, “when it comes to the Staff Parish,” this form “reflects a broader range of what it is the congregation’s all about.” Del further added that “it should be approved by Church Council,” so “people understand this is what I’m asking for, and when I get it, I need to be happy with it.” Del continued, “Obviously you can’t ask for a saint, or expect to receive a saint,” before commenting that “Methodists don’t buy into the sainthood business.” Del added, “but you can’t ask for Jesus and expect to get Jesus, so there’s got to be some rationale to it.” Del explained that because the moves at their church “were all pastor initiated,” since “they wanted out of there,” the church “didn’t have that process” and “I never got to fill out one of those forms.” Del suggested, “The D.S. ought to come to a church and teach the congregation how to” complete the form in a “respectful, loving way.” Then, Del explained, when “the D.S. takes it to the table” to make appointments, “it more adequately reflects” the church and “what they say they want.” In the end, Del concluded that “there should be a coming together of a more thoughtful process.”

Del also expressed his concern regarding the way that people treated Pastors, in general. Specifically, Del felt that more people needed to be told that “you really can’t treat your pastor this way.” Del explained that congregation members should be told, “I know what you’ve said about your pastor,” and “you can’t talk about your pastor that way,” since “you don’t talk about” other people “that way.” Del said that people “didn’t give up anything” of their “civil human rights to be a Pastor,” even though they do try “to love the congregation and forgive.” Del went on to explain that

“if somebody’s been arrested for doing something, we don’t have to talk to that person, because, you know, we don’t want any problems.” But, Del added, Pastors have “given up” their rights “not to talk to that person” and have to “go to be with that person, but it doesn’t mean” they “can be abused in the process.” Del concluded, saying “there’s probably somebody in every congregation that thinks you can abuse the Pastor, because that’s how they were raised” and “maybe that’s the learned behavior, but it doesn’t mean that you have to do that just because you were abused.” Del added, “there has to be a break in that” and “we learn that in addictions” that “just because is not a reason,” so “just because” someone “is terrible to their Pastors, it doesn’t make it right.”

Follow-Up Interview

Del talked about reviewing the transcript, noting it was “tough to read” and “I feel sad about it,” because “it was digging up” some “old wounds.” In talking about how there are “a lot of sects” in that church, Del mentioned that he ran into the man who served as the mediator in this situation, adding that the mediator talked about current conflicts in the church, telling him that the “congregation just hasn’t learned how to get along.” Del said he reminded the mediator, “your report, it did not blame the congregation, it blamed certain people in Staff Parish” and “because you didn’t blame the congregation, the congregation didn’t learn anything.” Del indicated that the mediator seemed to be indifferent, like “I did my job” and “I was out of there,” so “I don’t want to talk about it anymore.” Del added, “I know the conference paid him a lot of money” for “that mediation” and “he didn’t mediate anything.”

Concerning his time of reflection and journaling, Del talked about the uncomfortable emotions that surfaced. Specifically, Del indicated that there was only “one entry,” because “as soon as I wrote” in the journal, “I picked it up and I started reading it, and I started feeling sad about it.” Del added, “I tried to set it aside” and “push it back,” and “I wouldn’t have been a good therapeutic patient.” Del went on to explain that based on everything he had heard about journaling, it might have been helpful for him to have a specific “time” when he would “reflect on stuff.” However, Del quickly added, “I’m typically not that kind of organization-type person.” Del concluded, saying that “the time was great,” but that “as soon as I hit that wall” of emotion or “sadness,” I was “done.”

Del indicated that he was already thinking a great deal about transition because of the family connection to the itinerant system, saying “I don’t think I had any particularly new insights,” but “I’m cognizant” of the transitory nature of the itinerant system.” Del stated, “I know that within a couple of years, we’ll be leaving,” and “I’m already planning in my head leaving.” With respect to his wife, Del said, “I hear her building a transitional bridge” also in our conversations. He talked about how hard it was to leave a community, saying “we have friends here, people we go to lunch with” and “dinner with” and “people” that we “play cards with.” Del added that they were “people whose parents have died, and their children have died, and we’ve gone to the funeral homes with them” and “we’ve shared their grief with them,” as well as “their happiness,” in “the baptism of their kids” and “birthday parties” and the like. Del talked about living in that constant tension, with “people in the community asking

us” to “live here” or “retire” here, and in trying to figure out what to do “if you have your own house.” Del indicated that they “try to fit in” and “become a member of the community,” but that “you’ve always got that thing in the back of your mind” that “you’re not going to be here forever,” so you cannot “root down.” Del concluded, saying “I think there’s a transition, you have it in your mind,” but “we’ll deal with it.”

With respect to the impact of his participation in the project, Del continued to describe the challenges of navigating practical commitments within a community when you are a part of the itinerant system. Specifically, Del said that “there’s always transition with the minister,” and because “sooner or later, you’re going to move, and either move because the minister wants to move, or the congregation wants you to move,” it is “difficult to make real close friends.” He described his dilemma when he was asked to serve in a leadership position for a community organization, saying “it’s tough” in good conscience “to make those commitments,” especially “knowing that we’re going to be leaving in two years.” Del added, “I don’t want to stick” a group by agreeing to do something and not being around to follow through. Del went on to say, “I’m thinking in my mind how much can I get done” while I am still here. Del concluded, noting “I think participating in this study is a risk,” which “is complex,” because it not only involves “digging up old memories,” but also is a reminder that “we are ourselves in the itinerant process.” Del added, “honestly, the Bishop could call” even “tomorrow” or “today” with “a situation,” saying “you’re the person I want to take care of that,” noting “ministers get moved.”

Del made a suggestion for seminars, saying, “I think there needs to be a course at the seminary on itinerancy.” Specifically, Del stated, “I would design the course around” the notion of “what it means to be itinerant,” and “the components that you will go through in the process.” Del explained, “there’s nothing that I’ve seen in any of the schedules” related “how to work with good congregations” and “difficult congregations,” or “how to prepare yourself for the itinerant process” and “how to build in a transition mindset.” Del continued, “I think a lot of the District Superintendents would have their own thought about what ought to go into that class.” Del added, “there’s clearly a need for help” because of what “happens all around” not just “the conference,” but “probably all around the country.” Del added, the class could also include how to “manage or negotiate,” because “they teach them how to study a congregation,” but they do not teach “how to work with it.” Del concluded, saying he did not have anything to add, but concerning the “memories” and “concerns” noted, “It does my heart no good to hear about congregations and ministers fighting with each other” and “not getting along,” but “maybe that’s just a part of the process.” Del acknowledged, “I know it happens a lot.”

Lay Leader

Scott was eager to participate in the project, and had a great deal to say about the situation when we met at his office for both the initial and follow-up interviews. He seemed to be honest, open, and told his story in a way that was dramatic and expressive, not wanting to leave out any information that might be relevant.

What Happened

Scott seemed to have good instincts about people, and said at the outset, “the first Sunday I knew within five minutes after church” had “started that we were in trouble.” Scott explained that Gary was unresponsive to gestures of kindness and that he was not “courteous” or “warm,” but “cold.” Scott talked about how he felt a Senior Pastor should be attentive to the needs of the people and the opportunities in the environment to connect with others. Scott concluded, “I don’t think he paid attention to anything at the church.” Specifically, that instead of being “kind” and “interested” in “people” and “what” they “are doing,” Scott said that Gary was “mean” and “just rude” because of “the way things were said” and “the way people were treated.” Scott added that “everyone was talking about how cold” and “condescending” Gary was, and that it seemed that “in meetings” Gary “just absolutely tried to make people scared.” Scott talked about his expectation that a Senior Pastor should model good relational skills, saying, they should “treat people nice,” and “smile,” making you feel “welcome.” Scott expressed his expectation that clergy “be happy that you’re there,” but said “it was the opposite.” Scott advised, a Senior Pastor should “skip the lying.” Scott concluded that it would be helpful if a Senior Pastor would “just tell it like it is” and “but be nice about it.”

Scott indicated that “within two months” the “Sunday attending membership of the church was starting to dwindle,” because of Gary’s lack of “personality,” and “compassion,” coupled with what seemed to be “homophobic or judgmental” attitudes. Scott shared his observation that “from the outside looking in” that Gary

“did not want to be here.” Scott described “the turning point” as a service following a crisis, when “everyone was hurting,” where “we had an Easter size crowd” of people “packed in the church” who needed and “wanted something, but Gary “blew it” and “there was nothing.” Scott went on to say, “People were so mad, they couldn’t see straight,” and “from that day forward, it went downhill, like horrendously fast.” Scott added that Gary “made every person in the church that had money mad.”

Scott also talked about the increasingly difficult financial situation at the church, saying “I paid the phone bill one month out of my own money,” because “they had shut the phones off,” and the “next year, we barely” paid any “apportionments.” Reacting to what someone had said about how “the congregation has forgot how to give for apportionments,” Scott said, “that’s not true.” Scott continued, saying “don’t blame it on the congregation it’s not the congregations fault, it’s the man at the helm,” because “anything” Gary “touched or did failed.” Scott said that Gary “never wanted to publish financial information, because, he didn’t want people to see how bad it was,” and that Gary “blamed that a lot on the financial secretary and that was not the truth.” Scott added, “we didn’t have a stewardship campaign for the two years he was there.” Scott said that money was one of the primary indicators of decline, pointing out that “if the money isn’t coming in to pay the hierarchy of the church, then there’s something wrong, when it was being done before.” Scott wondered “when the Conference and the District sees the money dwindling,” do they ask “what’s going on,” or “why” a church went “from paying their apportionments one hundred percent for fifty years” to not paying anything at all,” ultimately “sending up a red flag?”

Scott felt that it was “unethical the way things were done” by Gary. Specifically, Scott explained that some people in church leadership wanted the Trustees to cash in a certificate of deposit left specifically for building maintenance and upkeep to pay the conference apportionments so Gary would not look bad. Scott noted, “I have” the “exact words” that were “recorded” in “the minutes,” adding “that’s how much power he had.” Scott also said that he was aware that Gary had asked the Staff Parish Relations Committee about “how can we get rid of Scott” because I was a “detriment to the church” and “gay.” Scott believed that “it was very evident from the start that he hated my guts, without question,” adding that I “have all” the “documentation of every piece of correspondence.” Scott went on to say, the meeting “was about me, because I was the next thing to,” according to Gary, “the Antichrist,” because “I was trying to protect my church.” In addition to feeling that “there were a lot more important things to talk about than one member,” Scott said one of the Staff Parish Relations Committee Members has since apologized to him because the whole situation “bothered” her. Scott also said that he did lose some “lifelong friends” from the church, and that he was even assaulted by one man in the presence of witnesses in the church hallway for “going against the minister” since “you just don’t do that.” Scott concluded, “the trouble was, I saw right through” Gary, and “the funny thing is” that “I actually stayed.” But, Scott noted, “all the people that were so defensive,” they “are all gone now” and “don’t even come to church.”

Scott talked about his attempts to go “through the proper procedure,” to address his “complaint” related to Gary, first calling the office of the former District

Superintendent's, and being told to "start" with the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Scott stated, "I tried both avenues," attempting to talk with the "Chairperson" and "the Committee," and "the door was slammed in my face both times." Scott explained that the "District Superintendent told our Pastor Parish Relations Chairperson at the time" that "the members really had no right to contact the District office directly" in "a church council meeting." Scott continued, "I stood up fifteen shades of red, and said we're paying money," and that "we will call them and we will e-mail them." Scott went on to say, "my offering" helps in "paying his salary," so "I'll talk to any of them." Scott added, "They were pushing me out because I was making waves, because I could see what was happening." But, Scott said, "I was pushing behind the scenes," since the committee "would not talk to anyone that had a negative thing to say about the minister, because he had them so programmed that they were to protect him at all costs." Scott concluded, "They didn't even get" that "the name" of "the committee Staff PARISH," adding that instead that "staff protecting committee is what they thought they were."

Scott felt strongly that the Cabinet "should" be able "to tell that some of these ministers are just not fits," because the "appointment stuff of just taking whatever you get" is "not working anymore." Scott went on to say that "young people hate this appointment process" and "know everything is a choice." However, Scott noted that "the old guard" believes "you're going to take what we give you," and "if they need nurturing or learning, you have to do it." Scott asked, "How does a congregation do that" when "half of the people aren't college educated?" Scott asked, "How can you

do this to us?” Scott continued, “it’s almost like they don’t even see what is going on,” referring to the “hierarchy of the church.” Scott added, that the church “should have that right to say no,” because “most people can size someone up pretty quick.” However, Scott stated that it was “difficult” to “know there’s issues” when you are “thrown in a meeting like that” and “with no background.” Scott added that the process was asking “someone to make a decision without any information.” Scott continued, “I don’t know how it needs to be fixed,” referring to the process of appointments, “but something needs to be to be done.” Scott noted that the “young people of today are not going to swallow this stuff anymore,” and that “the time of just doing whatever the minister says is over.” Scott said, “Young people loathe this upper hierarchy crap of the church” and “hate it.” Scott added, “that guaranteed employment crap” is “crazy,” saying it is “the most asinine thing I ever heard of in my life” and “that needs to go.” Scott asked, “You think McDonald’s guarantees employment?” Scott concluded, “yet we ordain a human being that’s supposed to lead a church, that runs it into the ground, and we’re going to guarantee that yet they can go on and sink another one,” noting “that’s really sad” and “just sick.”

Scott said, “as if it wasn’t bad enough having him there for two years,” the current staff “and the church took the brunt of something that was” Gary’s “fault.” Scott went on to describe “that remnant,” indicating that the church has since “lost ten families, young families, because of a decision that was made by Gary. Specifically, Scott explained that Gary lied to the congregation, saying one of their volunteers was being transferred out of state for a promotion, when the person actually went to prison

for selling child pornography. Then, Scott indicated that Gary lied again when the person came back a year or so later, saying the promotion allegedly did not work out. Because this individual registered with the appropriate authorities, and someone from the church happened to see this individual's picture on a corresponding website for sex offenders, it caused the whole situation to "blow up." Scott said that some people "wanted him kicked out of the church," even though "nothing has happened at the church" or "on church property." Scott added, this person had even gone to Gary when everything happened and said, "I want to stand up and tell the church I need help, and I want them to pray for me and help me." However, Scott said that Gary "wouldn't let" this individual "do it" because Gary "was afraid" that "it would ruin the church, it would make terrible waves, and it would make people feel weary, and they would leave the church." Scott continued, "I think that took some big guts" that the individual "wanted to stand up," adding that the "counselor" of this individual "supported" the "decision." But, Scott noted that Gary "wouldn't let him do it" and "instead lied to the congregation twice." Scott concluded that Gary "didn't even tell the Conference" or "the District," and "none of the hierarchy of the church knew." However, the church "inherited this problem" from Gary and "parents" thought the current staff were "protecting the sexual abuser" when the situation did not involve them. Scott indicated that the resulting backlash on the "safe sanctuaries policy" of the church was naturally significant.

Seminary Preparation

Scott talked briefly about his perception of Gary's seminary preparation, saying "I don't know what goes on in seminary." But, Scott said, it would be "wonderful" if there was "a class on how to smile, and how to be nice," and "somewhat lively." Scott said that there are "good" and "practical" characteristic "ways you treat each other when you meet someone new," adding it was "that common sense" or "common courtesy." Focusing briefly on Gary's history in ministry, Scott felt that Gary was able to "climb the ropes pretty quickly" because of the influential role of his father in the United Methodist Church. Scott believed that Gary's "other appointments were very brief as well," but added "I could be wrong" and "I can't remember."

Professional Identity

With respect to the development of Gary's professional identity as a Senior Pastor, Scott again reiterated his comments related to common sense and common courtesy. Initially, Scott wondered if people were "born with that." But, Scott concluded, "I think it's learned." Other than that, Scott said, "I don't know if I can" add anything else.

Itinerancy

Scott cited several examples of long-term Pastors in this particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church, along with the number of years they have served at their appointments. Scott said, "I don't understand why some churches" seem to "get shown favoritism," because they have long-term pastors, since

“the longest we’ve ever had” a Pastor “as long as I’ve been alive is eight years.” Scott stated he had “documentation” in a letter stating “that it’s the highest priority of the Bishop and the Cabinet that this appointment be made” in relation to another church. Scott expressed frustration at the specific inclusion of “highest priority” as it related to this other church when “the rest of us are bleeding and dying and getting yelled at because we can’t pay the apportionments.” Scott felt that this was “favoritism” in the appointment process, and “political, just like everything else.”

Scott went on to express a deep personal desire for longevity in the pastoral leadership of his church, explaining “I want somebody here that long as well” even though “that is selfish.” Specifically, Scott said “I just want somebody that wants to be” at my church and in my city, “and participate in the community like we’ve seen can be done in the past.” Citing a number of personal losses in his life, including Pastors who have been moved, Scott said “I’ve never been the same.” Scott said that he used to leave church so “inspired” that he “wanted to go to church.” But, Scott said, he takes “the whole summer off now,” which he acknowledged was “sad.” Scott went on to talk about “laity Sunday,” explaining that there has only been “one Sunday in the last five years” that was “fabulous” and “amazing,” where he “walked out inspired.” Scott said that he “used to feel” that way “every Sunday.” Scott concluded that he felt “lost” without a solid clergy presence.” Scott added that if the Bishop and Cabinet would “just for once” give them “one good minister,” and “see what we could do” that “the doors would be bursting at the seams again.” Scott went on to say, “I

guarantee you, we could turn the place around in six months.” Wrestling with losing hope in the system of appointments, Scott added, “one more flunkie” and “I am done.”

Scott went on to express mixed feelings about the itinerant system, saying, “When something’s working, I don’t understand why” the Pastors “have to be moved.” But, Scott added, “on the other hand, when something isn’t working, I’m glad they’re moved.” Scott went on to say emphatically, “this, guaranteed employment stuff is for the birds.” Scott continued, “if you’re an evil, mean person, you don’t get a job,” asking “what gives them the guaranteed right of employment whether they’re bad or good” so “we have to keep employing the bad?” He expressed anger at Gary, because they had “something blow up that we didn’t even know about” which “even hurt our church more” when everything was “coming together,” causing the previous “wound” to become “worse.” Scott concluded, it would be helpful if “they would look at past records,” or “talk to people instead of just sitting in their little Cabinet” and deciding “we’re going to put them here,” and “not even do research and find out if the person has had major complaints.” Scott added, “that’s why I applaud you for this report, because maybe they’ll think about it, but I’m not holding my breath.”

Person-Environment Fit

Scott expressed frustration at the short tenure of clergy in his church, saying that “every other denomination around” did things differently. Scott talked about the processes used where the churches “pick their minister” and “invite them to come.” He cited a specific example of a pastor who had been at another local church of a

different denomination “for thirty-eight years.” Scott went on to say “they need to do something” to better discern if it will be a good fit, with the help of “lay people” and “the church that’s getting a new minister,” prior to finalizing an appointment.”

Specifically, Scott suggested that people “go and talk to a church they’re coming from,” or “meet him or go hear him speak” prior to an appointment being made.

Follow Up Interview

In the follow-up interview Scott did not have anything to add related to the interview transcript, noting “It’s fine.” Scott went on to say that the transcript reflected what he had shared, adding “it’s all wonderful.” And consistent with how Scott felt about the interview transcript being a rather complete reflection of his perspective, he commented that he did not do any more reflection or journaling “because it was all okay.” Scott concluded, “I don’t need to add anymore or delete anything,” saying “You got it all.”

With respect to the impact of his participation in the project Scott expressed that it had given him a sense of closure. More specifically, he indicated “You’ll be happy to know that I found all of my old notes and everything from back in the day when I was corresponding with everything, and I just shredded it all.” Scott added, “I said it’s time to move on” and “I’m done with it.” In closing, Scott stated, “I’m just done,” adding “I’m so thankful” for the chance to process what happened.

District Superintendent

We met at Mike’s office for both the initial and follow-up interviews. He was somewhat reluctant participate in the project initially primarily because, in his own

words, “I don’t like to do stuff like this” because “I’m not good at it.” Both interviews were brief, and I found his remarks to be both concise and incisive, though his manner seemed somewhat abrupt and aloof.

What Happened

Mike indicated that there were four factors related to why this appointment did not work out including preaching skills, financial stewardship, administration and conflict. Concerning Gary’s “preaching skills,” Mike said, “preaching should be able to be understood, and should give some sense of encouragement for the struggles or issues of life.” Mike indicated that “the phrase I’ve heard many times” was that people felt they were “not being fed.”

With respect to “financial stewardship,” Mike made it clear that “my complaint is stewardship,” because Gary “wasn’t able to lead them in a financial stewardship process that brought in the needed income.” Mike went on to say that since “less money came in,” the congregation was “concerned” because they felt that “the church ought to be financially stable.” Mike explained that people in the church they did not “want to be a part of an institution that is at risk and brings worry and concern.”

Regarding the “administration” of the church, Mike indicated that “the concern was” the “lack of order” and “confusion.” Mike described a general picture was pretty nebulous, leading to people “feeling lost” and “feeling like they’re following someone that’s just not clear on where they’re headed.” Mike stated, “No one knew what they were doing.” Mike explained that although “they knew what they were doing in their own little compartment” of the church, “when it came time to fit that compartment

into the rest, it didn't fit," since "there was no order." Mike continued, "if I'm on a committee trying to keep things in order, and I go find out that all the work I've done didn't matter because the broader sense of order isn't there," that people felt "frustration with something they committed to" when it "gets undercut" or would be "at odds" with the bigger picture."

Concerning the "conflict," Mike said that it was "with the wrong people" and was "really at the root of all the others." Mike explained that "if that wasn't there, they would have put up with all the other three" concerns, including the preaching skills, financial stewardship, and the administration of the church. Mike indicated that the financial concerns were "rooted in" the conflict, noting that "many people were withholding their, their income, their giving" since "they did not want to support, for whatever reasons, the ministry." Mike added that "for some it was control," but "others just left, so they were controlling by their lack of presence, thereby lack of giving as well." Mike went on to say, "While the underlying conviction is, again from my perspective," is one of "control," that if Gary "would have played the political game with this group of people, he'd still be there." But, Mike added, Gary "chose not to," adding it "was not necessarily the wrong thing to do, but he clearly had to leave." Mike explained what he perceived to be "the deeply held value" of the people, namely "that our church needs to be a respected presence in the community." Mike indicated "that showed" in the physical facilities and "in essence Trustees issues." Mike continued, "if you've ever seen" their "building and church, it's pristine" and "if anything's wrong, they want to fix it with the utmost care." Mike noted that "the

building became a bit of an icon as to this whole story,” although “there will be disagreement on this.”

Mike concluded, “Well, I think it would be safe to say that they felt that it was not a good match.” Mike went on to say, “many people didn’t agree with that, so it wasn’t unanimous.” But, Mike noted, “some of the flags” beyond the varying “personal opinions” included “the church was in trouble financially” and “attendance” was declining, adding “it’s a vague memory.”

Seminary Preparation

At the outset, Mike indicated that not every pastor can be trained for this church. Mike elaborated, saying “I’m not sure that’s true” that “all pastors are able to be trained to handle complexity” and “I’m not sure the Pastor could have been trained to handle the complexity.” Mike indicated that the needs “in seminary training for this kind of a situation” are “relationship skills, conflict management, basic administration and leadership.” Concerning Gary, Mike indicated “his administration” was “rooted in an inability to communicate.” Mike stated, it “would have been fine if he could have communicated with the right people at the right time, learning how to keep everything above the table.” But, Mike said there were “so many things under the table” at the church “that no one knew about.” Mike added that Gary “didn’t know how to navigate that” or how “to lead in a very conflicted situation.” Mike added that “you don’t necessarily have to have the skill sets,” because God “can create in us” and “provide us skills sets that we know nothing about” in and “through the seminary and training.”

Mike also expressed that the goal of seminary education was not to prepare every person for every possible appointment, but to enhance the maximum possibilities of a pastor being able to fit. Specifically, Mike stated, “I think seminary needs to do the training so that they can move further on that continuum,” but “not that all of them are capable of going to” a complex appointment. Mike explained that some “can pastor ninety percent of the churches that we lay before them,” and “some people will succeed” just about “everywhere they go.” On the other hand, Mike said, “others will succeed at certain places and not succeed in others.” Mike concluded, not “every person can be trained to lead every church, or every large church.”

Mike added, “the familial system of a small church” is one “rooted in essence in the rural context of our culture, which is now still present,” but “very low on the influence range.” Mike went on to say that “most of our churches are in rural settings” and “are small,” even though “most of are people are in metro settings” and “most of our situations we find ourselves in are in large contexts.” Mike suggested that “if you want to come out of seminary capable of leading today, you must come out of seminary capable” to lead “more of an administrative” or “complex system” and “not a familial system.” Mike concluded, “The value for me, in essence is, not that we reflect our culture, but that we have to work within that culture to provide the gospel.” Mike added that “this particular culture in this particular time in history needs us to come out of seminary capable of leading packed churches of over two hundred in attendance the day we walk out of the seminary.”

Professional Identity

Mike talked about how Gary's training was from a different era emphasizing needs that were adequate at the time, but that also prove to be a difficult fit in a more contemporary setting with different needs. Specifically, Mike indicated that Gary "was trained to, to be with people, to be among people, to be one of the people" and that "his training came out of a setting where that would have been adequate." Mike added, "I'm pretty sure he wouldn't" have said "he was trained to do" the job at that church. Mike continued, Gary's training was "about relationships" and how to "know their names" and "be with them in the transitions of life," like "the baptisms, the burials, the marriages, crises." And, although "I believe he was completely trained for that, and adequately trained for that," Mike said that "in a complex system" and "in our present culture" that approach "is not at all adequate." Mike went on to say that because "the training to be among" was rooted in a "base belief that "everyone will be on the same page," when "someone's not on the same page" they "might have a little disagreement," but everyone will "move on." Mike added that this "training had no sense of the complexity of conflict, and how do deal with it, and how to navigate it, and how to succeed in bringing two extremely varied sides together."

Mike also talked about a cultural shift in learning as it relates to this situation, noting that previously, "there was a sense of training being adequate for the remainder of their life." But, Mike noted, "in the present culture, everyone knows that whatever they graduate with is only the beginning of what they have to know." Mike went on to say, "Most of what we've discussed is managerial, meaning even if he'd been trained

in the area of conflict, and in the area of personal relationship skills at a much more complex level,” Gary “may have not had to move after three years, but he still has to have a visioning leadership training piece that he did not have to take the church to a place that they’ve not been, to, to lead them into a preferred future.” Mike agreed that there were a multitude of opportunities following seminary to gain a better understanding of the leadership visioning process. But, Mike added that the “low commitment to development” resulting from a different cultural understanding of learning made it less likely that those opportunities would be pursued.

Itinerancy

Mike talked at length about the ways that salary factors into appointment decisions. Specifically, Mike said, “salary” was “an issue because here’s a person who should have never been given a complex system, now making money at a higher level than he should have ever made, having to accept in a transition not a move forward, but a move backward.” Mike went on to say that “in this particular case” Gary “ended up level, but it was with a bit of shame” because “he was not feeling rewarded,” but “slapped, by the church, by the Bishop,” and “by me.” Mike explained that there had to be some negotiations with the church that followed to at least come close to matching Gary’s salary at the appointment that did not work out. Mike added that “if he had succeeded, Gary “would have been moved ‘up,’” and “many from the old paradigm” or “the old training viewed their whole life is simply moving up to a good job,” adding that a “good job means holding things together” so “my next move will be up.”

Mike talked about the corresponding changes in reward systems that take place in a new cultural context. Specifically, Mike indicated that “what was rewarded in the past” in “just being faithful and showing up, and knowing the people, loving people, being there with during the transitions is certainly not enough in a complex system” or “the present cultural realities.” As a result, Mike said that Gary “ended up leaving” feeling “punished” rather than feeling “rewarded.” Mike went on to explain that “in his particular case,” Gary “didn’t hold it together,” but “it fell apart,” and “a move had to be made” from “a crisis context,” so Gary “knew it wasn’t leaving in good stead.” Mike noted the negative impact on morale, saying Gary “went into the next part of our system,” which “didn’t help him because he went into the next setting feeling beaten,” even though “he’s a good hearted person who wasn’t capable of a complex system.” Mike concluded that Gary “should have never gone there, but for whatever reason he did, and in the itinerant system, we had to live with that reality.”

Mike talked briefly about the importance of providing laity, especially the Staff Parish Relations Committees, with information on the itinerant system. Specifically, Mike said, “it’s our system” even though he acknowledged “I’m not saying it’s the right system,” but that “I try to help people understand it” as compared to those used by other denominations. Mike acknowledged that providing this critical information helps the Staff Parish Relations Committees do their jobs, adding “they usually appreciate it” and “without training, some of our Staff Parish Relations Committees just believe that they’re congregational and they don’t know they’re not.”

Mike added, “my point isn’t that you’re way’s wrong and my way’s right, it’s just so that you understand it, thereby we work on the same page.”

Mike talked about the ways in which the cultural shift also meant that the notion of a guaranteed appointment no longer fits, necessarily limiting the number of appointment options that the United Methodist Church has by virtue of their own policy. Specifically, Mike said that “salary just opened the door to that other conversation,” but that “the guaranteed appointment concept kept him in ministry.” Mike continued, saying if the guaranteed appointment had “not been in place,” it was “possible” Gary “would not even be in ministry.” Mike went on to explain, that “the value” that the United Methodist Church has “of a guaranteed appointment no longer fits our culture, because more and more of our churches are going to move to complex.” Mike indicated that increasingly “churches that are going to survive the next twenty years will be the more complex larger systems.” Mike added, “we are going to have to have leaders that can lead those systems, and we cannot keep everyone that we presently have guaranteed a full time appointment,” because of “a multiple of levels.” Mike explained that these included the ability to deal with “complexity,” the necessity “to be trained” in order “to help a church vision a future where they can thrive,” and the “financial” risk. Mike concluded, saying “if you are Ordained an Elder you are guaranteed an appointment,” at least in the “system now,” noting “when the Bishop lays his hands on your head, you are” by definition “probably a multi-million dollar unfunded liability.” As a result, Mike stated, “you must be able to help churches move forward, not backward.”

With respect to other disadvantages of the itinerant system, Mike talked about the high expectations of increasingly smaller churches in the conference. Mike said that in this particular Mid-Western Conference, “we have probably half of our congregations under sixty in attendance, maybe it’s seventy,” and “we have twelve hundred churches.” Mike noted that roughly “six hundred” of the “very small churches” represent “a strong drain” of the “energies and resources.” Mike went on to say that “all” of these churches feel they have “the right to be there” and are hopeful to get “the best leader they can find.” However, even though “many small churches are becoming smaller and smaller, not larger,” Mike said that “they continue to want the same leader” like “you would hear described for a larger church.” Mike went on to describe what he perceived to be “a component on the other end of this story,” saying, “I hear almost the same profile, church after church after church, unless there’s been an issue then they’ll nuance the profile with things that will respond to the problems that they had with the past pastor.” Mike, specifically cited several common themes in profiles from churches, including “someone to give direction and lead” since “they don’t know where to go,” and that they want to grow” but “they don’t know how,” summarizing that churches “want someone who will come and direct them, not just be among them.” Mike concluded, saying “very few” churches “actually are still in that category of just wanting someone among them,” but that “most of them know they can’t afford that.” With respect to these churches, Mike said that their expectations were “just not viable,” because “they have no children in their church,” and “they have

no youth,” or “young adults.” As a result, Mike added, “they know that something’s got to change.”

Person-Environment Fit

With respect to the fit between Gary and the particular environment of the church, Mike focused on the complexity of the itinerant system. Explaining the process, Mike said, “because of guaranteed appointments, and because when we make appointments we think of our whole system,” that Gary had to be placed somewhere.” Mike said that, in considering the options, “you don’t think of just Gary” and the particular church,” but “you have to think of the eighty churches that are open, and the eighty pastors who have asked to moved or been asked to move,” also factoring in “salary level.” Mike went on to say that the pastor “isn’t the focal point,” but “the whole system is” and “you’re putting your best leaders at your best places.” Mike continued, saying “the more complex, divided settings probably need your best leader, but many times don’t get it because we’d rather send our best leader to the church that’s ready to move forward.” Mike concluded, other settings “end up, sadly, with pastors that aren’t as equipped to lead them.”

Mike also talked about Gary’s appointment, saying “Gary didn’t fit, but it didn’t matter,” because “Gary had to fit” and “Gary had to go somewhere.” Specifically, Mike explained that “a person like Gary is normally asked to move,” adding that “it wasn’t like he could go back to his present church and stay there,” because Gary “had to leave.” This necessitated that the Cabinet “find him a church that year because of guaranteed appointment.” Mike said, “Sometimes you have to

find a church that's willing to accept" a minister, and "you're hoping that it's a match, but at the same time, there's some churches that are far more grace filled than others." Mike indicated that, ideally "you're hoping that when they meet him, they will show grace and be able to move forward." Mike, concluded, saying, "Gary's a very amicable person, so there was certainly the hope that it would work, but statistically you would pretty well know that the chances were against it." Mike acknowledged that it was "sad," because "we didn't want to move him three years later" since their "plan was to keep him there." Mike explained that it was "one of the down sides" of the itinerant "system."

Follow Up Interview

In providing feedback about the interview transcript, Mike said, "Well, as I read it, I was amazed at how much I stuttered" but that "in essence the core content of it would stay the same, even today." Mike noted, "My stuttering from the first meeting" was because "I felt very uncomfortable" talking about "a very specific appointment with someone outside the Cabinet." In describing his time of reflection and journaling, Mike indicated, "I'm in the midst of moving, and still have appointments to do, so my reflection was about a few minutes after receiving it." Mike indicated that "nothing comes to mind" with respect to new insights, except again that it was unusual for him to discuss specific appointments outside the confines of the Cabinet. But he went on to say, with respect to his participation in the project, that "I don't know that it's had any impact personally," noting "these are the kind of things I think and deal with all the time." Mike described his wrestling with issues

related to the itinerancy as “a lot of dispersed conversations” that take place “in a lot of contexts” that are “going a lot of directions” where there are “a lot of opinions.” Mike summarized the focus of these conversations, noting “a strong direction toward vision, toward health, toward bearing fruit” and “toward leadership enhancement training.” Mike added that there was “a willingness to embrace more radical thoughts” because of the “strong undertow of continued decline if nothing radical is done.”

In closing, Mike expressed skepticism, saying that “diagnosing issues from within our system is a constant practice of many, which perhaps you’ve included yourself with this dissertation.” But, Mike said, “What we need are things from outside our system that speak to a more radical adjustment to how to do ministry” and “what ministry looks like in the future.” Mike concluded, “I’m not sure researching through the lens of a Superintendent” or others “within the system will give you as much clarification for what’s really needed,” because “our conversations are still within our system, and our system is in steady, on-going decline.”

Case 2 Summary

The results of case 2 are compared, analyzed, and summarized below. The stories of the four participants are summarized based on the issues, common themes, and patterns that resulted, along with discrepant data.

Issues, Common Themes, and Patterns in What Happened and Discrepancies

There were several themes that emerged from the issues raised by these four different perspectives. These included a history of conflict within the church,

difficulties in transition, a conflict in direction or focus of ministry, a conflict in personal style and strength of leadership, and a conflict in ownership.

A History of Conflict

There had been a long history of internal conflict at the church, such that the Staff Parish Relations Committee asked Gary at the introduction interview if he could handle Scott, a controlling force in the church. Gary mentioned that he was surprised in the introduction to learn that one individual seemingly controlled the church, expressing concern that this information had not been made available to him by the District Superintendent prior to the meeting. Del concurred that Gary should have known about this individual prior to the introduction interview, and that he was not prepared for the appointment by the District Superintendent. Del noted that Gary was either unable to ask the right questions, or the District Superintendent had not adequately prepared him for the introduction. Del added that Gary did not have information about congregational expectations, but that he was about to serve a church that was known for eating pastors without knowing any of their history.

Difficulties in Transition

Gary admitted that in his prior appointment he did not feel cared for by the Conference, since he was forced to wait for two months after his replacement was named before he was informed where he would be assigned next. For Gary, this was an embarrassing and stressful situation, especially because he felt that he deserved better treatment given his years of service in the ministry. Although everyone else interviewed seemed to be aware of this reality, Gary was unaware that his previous

church had asked for him to be moved. Prior to the introduction, members of this new church found out that there had been some complaints about Gary from his former church. This initiated questions about the desirability and acceptability of Gary before the appointment was ever officially discussed in the introduction.

A Conflict in Direction or Focus of Ministry

Gary indicated that he was trying to get the church to look beyond themselves, and minister to the community, but that the church seemed to be more concerned about protecting their beautiful building. Gary emphasized that things may need to be done differently to get more people involved and bring in new ideas. Del noted that his church focused on controlling the physical facilities, and the District Superintendent concurred. Mike commented on how the facilities were in pristine condition and that the building was a bit of an icon in the conflict. Scott indicated that the Trustees took great pride in caring for the facilities.

A Conflict in Style and Strength of Leadership

Del noted that the church wanted a strong and dynamic leader and preacher, but that they were unable, due to past decisions, to offer the salary they needed to provide in order to get the level of a Senior Pastor that they wanted. The former Senior Pastor was permitted to obtain an increase of vacation time instead of salary increases over the years, leaving the church with a relatively low salary for their new Senior Pastor.

Gary indicated that the church was running well under his leadership. Scott did not like the direction that things were going under Gary's leadership and attended

another church for roughly six months. During that time, Gary perceived that he and the church functioned well. However, Del had somewhat different perceptions. Del indicated that Gary lacked administrative skills, forcing him to be personally involved in a number of administrative matters at the church, correcting issues that were problematic and negotiating disputes. Scott was critical of a number of decisions that Gary had made, and his administrative skills. Similarly, Mike noted the general lack of order and the presence of confusion in the administration of the church. Mike believed that Gary did not have the ability to integrate the different administrative pieces of the church into a structured whole. So, with the exception of Gary himself, everyone perceived that Gary's administrative skills were an area of weakness.

Del talked about an expectation that Gary be able to deliver an inspiring sermon. Del believed that churches often will overlook a lot of things if there are high quality sermons, but said this was not possible because Gary had a speech problem. Scott concurred, as did Mike. Specifically, Mike said that people should be able to understand the sermon and encouraged by it. Instead, members complained that they were not being spiritually fed.

Scott expressed a desire for a more outgoing, warm, and caring leader who was attentive to the needs of the members. He perceived that Gary was more of a behind the scenes servant leader. Scott also said that it seemed like Gary did not want to be at their church, because he acted in ways that made those who had money mad. This resulted in people leaving, and subsequent financial difficulties. Mike indicated that Gary was not able to lead a financial stewardship process that generated adequate

income for the church. Scott concurred. As a result, Mike said that church members were concerned about the financial stability of the church.

Del also noted that Gary seemed to be forgetful, and even inept. For example, Gary used the wrong person's name in a funeral. While affirming Gary's good nature, Del expressed doubts as to whether he would be able to navigate the questions necessary to pass the Board of Ordained Ministry process today. Del noted that Gary did not stand a chance in this church because he did not have a strong will. Scott felt that Gary tried to scare people and had lied to the church. Scot also cited a specific example illustrating how the church has continued to suffer from Gary's poor decisions and actions long after his departure.

It does make it difficult for a newly assigned Senior Pastor to start over in a new church when the leadership hears rumblings from this individual's former church about particular conflicts and concerns they had with him/her. It presents an ethical question of whether a new church should know about the history of the Senior Pastor, just as the Senior Pastor desires to know about the history of the church. But, regardless of whether or not the history is shared on either end, if a pastor struggles with preaching and administrative skills, s/he will likely fail at most churches, especially in a large church setting. It is an additional challenge when a minister seems totally unaware of his/her shortcomings.

A Conflict in Ownership

Gary pointed out that the essence of the conflict was related to who runs the church or has control, citing Scott as the individual who attempted to control the

church. Gary concluded that Scott did not like the fact that things were working well in his absence, so he returned and attacked Gary. Gary indicated that Scott spread rumors and demanded an open meeting, where he personally attacked Gary. Gary also believed that Scott eventually convinced the financial base of the church to withhold their money. Del indicated that the church, led by Scott, had a history of getting rid of pastors because they believed that the members owned the church.

Mike indicated that Gary had a conflict with the wrong people, and that some individuals sought to regain control by withholding their money. Gary was expected by congregational members to lead the church in such a way as to be a respected presence in the community. However, according to Mike, Gary was either unwilling or unable to play the political game necessary to make that happen. Mike noted that it was not possible to resolve conflicts if people are not willing to work together, even with a mediator from the Conference.

Gary also indicated that when the church began attacking his wife, he expressed an openness to be moved to another church. Gary commented that people downtown joked around about it being Scott's church, but said he felt that power and the money used to keep the facilities in pristine condition should be shared in a community of faith. Gary felt that this would increase the possibility for new ideas and ministries to emerge. This view was contrary to Scott's perspective that monetary gifts designated to maintaining the facilities should not be used for other operating purposes.

Del discussed the progression of the conflict that began prior to the introduction with a breach of confidentiality from the Conference office. A member of the church office staff was informed by someone in the Conference office that Gary was being moved from his previous church because his church wanted to get rid of him. This member of the church office staff then reportedly shared the information with a member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee. This committee member complained that they were getting a pastor that they did not want. But the District Superintendent made it clear that the committee had no say in the decision, leaving Del, as the chairperson of the committee, to try to mediate the conflict.

Scott challenged Gary concerning a decision to spend what he perceived to be a designated gift to the church for facility maintenance on conference apportionments. Del noted that the conflict escalated when Scott met with the District Superintendent in an effort to get rid of Gary, because the Staff Parish Relations Committee was trying to work with Gary in the situation. Del was directed by the District Superintendent to meet with the congregation to talk about how things were going, but was later told by the succeeding Senior Pastor that the meeting should not have happened without an Ordained Elder being present.

The Conference sent a mediator to deal with the situation, but the mediator did not even interview anyone from the Staff Parish Relations Committee prior to issuing a preliminary report to the congregation placing the blame on when the Staff Parish Relations Committee had a congregational meeting without an Ordained Elder present. Del added that the mediator later met with two members of the Committee after his

final report had been written, and that this man had been paid a lot of money even though he did not mediate anything. Del was also frustrated by the mediator's attitude in a recent conversation about the situation in the church.

Del pointed out that this church really wanted to elect their own pastor, and that there was a belief that the building and money donated to maintain it belonged to the Trustees. This was contrary to Del's opinion that the Senior Pastor was in charge because he was accountable to the Bishop, and that the physical facilities were owned by the Conference. Del went on to say that the church did not understand the relationship between the local church and the Conference. He also felt that Gary did not really stand a chance from the beginning, and that training would not help him to mediate in a church that had already decided that they did not want him.

Scott indicated that contrary to some opinions, the church had not forgotten to pay their apportionments, but that it was Gary's fault because he failed at everything he did, including his attempts to encourage giving. Scott also believed that Gary did not want to publish the financial information about the church because he did not want the congregation to know how bleak the financial picture was at the church. But, Gary had blamed the problems on the financial secretary and the church lay leadership for not being more attentive to a church in financial trouble. Scott said that he was even assaulted by a member of the church for going against Gary, and protecting his church from an incompetent minister. Having tried to work through the proper procedures to express his concerns about Gary, Scott noted that his money helped to pay the salary of the District Superintendent so he had a right to express his concerns. Scott also said

that he felt that the Staff Parish Relations Committee was all about protecting Gary. Gary described a new insight related to the power struggle in the church, explaining that sometimes people can work together and sometimes they cannot, but that it was probably best for him and for the church when he left.

Summary

The Senior Pastor was appointed to serve in a church even though the Cabinet reportedly had some serious doubts as to whether he could succeed. This dynamic was amplified by a breach in confidentiality from the Conference office prior to the introduction meeting, resulting in a member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee lobbying to get rid of Gary before the appointment was ever finalized. In spite of the best efforts of the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee to mediate between warring factions and make things work, the gap between Gary's abilities and the needs of a complex church became increasingly evident. Coupled with constant conflict involving a controlling and influential leader of the church, Gary eventually requested to be moved to another church.

Areas of Focus

The intent of the study was to explore the three cases by examining more closely potential gaps in the seminary preparation or professional identity of the Senior Pastors, the itinerant system in general and the fit between the Senior Pastor and the particular large church setting. The stories of each of the four perspectives are summarized below as they relate to what was shared relative to these four major areas of focus in the study.

Seminary Preparation

Gary was not certain that he could have been better prepared in his seminary education for an appointment as a Senior Pastor in a large church setting, in part because he did not move directly from seminary into the setting of a large church. But, later Gary indicated he was not sure that he learned anything in seminary that helped him to be a Senior Pastor in a large church context. Although he initially said that the emphasis on people skills in psychology courses was applicable to the dynamics of leading a large church, he acknowledged that he had learned most of his administrative skills on his own.

Del made an important distinction between seminary education and the following ordination process, explaining that while ordination was more of a formality in prior years, completing a seminary degree did not guarantee ordination in the current market. He believed that the rigor in the current process would have prevented Gary from becoming ordained, because he would not have been able to answer some of the questions. Scott expressed a lack of knowledge related to seminary education, but suggested coursework on basic interpersonal skills, while Del suggested courses on sermon delivery and perhaps some speech therapy. Del also suggested a class on the itinerancy that would deal with working with congregations and navigating a transition to a new ministry, as well as managing or negotiating.

Mike indicated that not every pastor can be trained for this church, or to deal with complexity. Specifically Mike believed that Gary had difficulty navigating and leading in a conflicted situation. Mike explained that there was a need for relational,

conflict management and basic administration skills in this church. He believed that seminary could not prepare every person for every possible appointment, but it could maximize the possibilities of a pastor being able to fit. Mike added that capable leaders coming out of seminary must be able to provide leadership in a complex and diverse system, instead of a familial system found more frequently in a small church context.

Professional Identity

Gary talked at length about the considerable pressure he felt to take and succeed in this appointment, in spite of generally feeling that he was prepared and knew what to expect. Initially, Gary indicated that he did not feel there was anything else in terms of on-going professional development that would have been helpful to him to better navigate the dynamics in this church. But, he later acknowledged that seminars on conflict management, church management, and church growth by size might have been useful earlier in his career.

With respect to the development of Gary's professional identity as a Senior Pastor, Scott indicated that Gary did not seem to have common sense and common courtesy. Del explained that the deck was stacked against Gary from the very beginning. Del felt strongly that training would not help you mediate in a church that does not want you there in the first place. Del explained that the problems started when one of the members of the Staff Parish Relations Committee learned who had been appointed and referred to problems at a previous appointment during the introduction.

Mike talked about how Gary's training was from a different era emphasizing needs that were adequate at the time, but that the training and approach was a difficult fit in a more contemporary setting with different needs and a great deal of complexity. Mike also explained a cultural shift in learning as it relates to Gary, noting that there were a multitude of opportunities following seminary to gain a better understanding of the leadership visioning process, but added that Gary had a "low commitment to development." Mike indicated that this resulted from a different cultural understanding of learning that made it less likely that those opportunities would be pursued. In short, according to Mike, the training approach in the past was not consistent with the needs of a more contemporary culture, where it is expected that one will actively seek opportunities for professional development.

Itinerancy

Gary talked about an expectation of being cared for, having served in the ministry for a long time. He described the varied pressures he and his wife felt when they did not know where he was going to be appointed until two weeks prior to the Annual Conference, even though his replacement had already been named. Gary also talked about the expectation of succession, and the proper care of ministers. Specifically, he said that ministers should be told where they will be appointed before they and the church find out who the replacement is going to be. In addition, Gary felt added pressure and uncertainty concerning whether or not to take the appointment that he was offered. This was especially true after he was told by the District Superintendent that this new assignment could make or break his ministry. So, even

though it looked good on paper, Gary felt that he really had no choice and was pressured to take the appointment.

Gary expressed that he felt that God had sent him to the church for a particular purpose, but that he was still trying to understand that purpose and the meaning in his experience. Gary felt the Cabinet does not always consider the specific needs of a family when making appointments, although he noted that this was not true of his particular situation.

Del expressed support for the itinerant system, even though it was challenging to be fully present in a community knowing that your stay is only temporary and for an undetermined amount of time. He also compared the itinerant system to those of other denominations, but concluded that with other systems there was a great deal of instability. Del was thinking a great deal about transition because of his family connections to the itinerancy. He described the challenges of living in the constant tension of preparing to leave, and indicated that his participation in the study surfaced some feelings and memories related to the challenges of living in a transitory system. Del also described his reluctance to make commitments in the community knowing that he would likely be moving soon.

Del talked about the physical condition of different church parsonages that he has seen, indicating that they are relics of the past, and recommending churches sell the parsonages to benefit financially and to avoid deferred maintenance in clergy transitions. Del added that it was good to provide housing for Ordained Elders, but expressed a strong preference for clergy owning their own homes for tax advantages

and equity purposes, not to mention just to get away from what is often housing adjacent to the church.

Scott indicated that the itinerant system was full of favoritism and political appointments, expressing a deep personal desire for longevity in the pastoral leadership of his church. He described wrestling with losing hope in the itinerant system of appointments. Scott was angry about guaranteeing an appointment, saying that it simply perpetuated the problem pastors. Scott suggested that the Cabinet talk with people or look at records as a means of assessment instead of just making decisions. He expressed little hope that his suggestions would make any difference.

Scott expressed strong expectations that the Cabinet needed to do a better job of doing their homework to find the right fit between a pastor and a church. He described generational differences in expectations related to involvement in the itinerant system, indicating that the younger people in his church would like to have more of a say in the clergy appointment process. And, Scott believed that it was not appropriate to expect the church to develop the Senior Pastor, but that a compatible and congruent minister needed to be appointed to the church. Scott went on to say that the guaranteed appointment was crazy, and that younger people in the church will not do anything the Pastor says just because of his/her position.

Gary expressed feeling encouraged that the Cabinet had confidence in his ability to navigate the difficult situation in this church. But, according to the District Superintendent, the appointment was made not because it was a perceived fit but because the Cabinet had to put Gary somewhere. Gary did not seem to be aware that

he had been moved from his former appointment at the request of his church, even though the District Superintendent and those in his new church seemed to understand this to be the case.

Mike explained that what had been rewarded in the past was no longer enough in a complex, modern system. He also believed that the guaranteed appointment no longer worked. Mike indicated that Ordained Elders are “a multi-million-dollar unfunded liability” who should help churches move forward, not backward. He also stated that it was important to provide the laity, especially the Staff Parish Relations Committees, with information on the itinerant system so they can do their jobs. Mike said there were an increasing number of smaller churches in the Conference, all of which express a desire for the same kind of a leader that a large church wanted. Mike described hearing the exact same desired profile described from one church to the next regardless of size.

There were a number of commonalities, and a few differences, related to perceptions of the itinerancy and its future. Gary believed that the length of service earned care and rewards for clergy regardless of changes in church needs or demands on ministers. Gary also recommended that all ministers know their assignments as early as possible, and before the church they were currently serving found out who the new pastor would be. Both lay persons and the District Superintendent felt that the guaranteed appointment no longer makes sense. Further, the lay persons believed that the local church needed to be more involved in the process of selecting their minister. Although the views of one individual implied the power to veto an appointment by the

Cabinet, an improved system of involving the local church in the profile process would go a long way toward making this and perhaps other lay persons feel that their concerns have been heard. The District Superintendent wanted the churches to have a better understanding of how the itinerant system operates. And, although he felt this would solve the problem the lay persons would likely disagree. Their desire was not to better understand the system, but for the system to change so they could have some say concerning their new pastor. Scott suggested formal assessment, prior to appointing a competent pastor who is compatible with the congregation, not one who is developed on the job. Scott also felt that clergy who were perpetually problems should not be in the ministry.

Person-Environment Fit

Gary indicated that based on the information he had received related to the appointment, it was a perfect fit because his strong suit was his accessibility, administration, preaching Biblical sermons, being musically gifted, and his ability to handle visitation. However, Gary described the undercurrent related to one controlling influence in the church that became the focus of the introduction, emphasizing the need for the District Superintendent and/or Cabinet to provide more complete information in advance.

The lay persons both agreed that Gary did not fit the skill set they were looking for at all. Gary was not a good administrator, was not personable, and was not able to preach effectively because of a speech problem. Del believed that the salary level was not high enough to get the kind of Senior Pastor they wanted or felt they deserved.

Del also talked about the process used to communicate with the District and Conference related to the type of Senior Pastor a church would ideally like, suggesting that the form completed by the Staff Parish Relations Committee was taken too lightly. Del continued, saying that the content written in the profile, describing the church and their expectations or needs in a Senior Pastor, should be more of a community effort on the part of the congregation, including other committees. Del indicated that the church did not fill out the form when the Pastor initiated a move, but probably should be completed anytime there is an opening, for whatever reason. Del believed that the process should be more thoughtful and the District Superintendent should go to a church and teach them how to complete the form, so it is an accurate representation of their desires.

Scott was frustrated with the short tenure of clergy in his church, and said that more should be done to ensure a good fit prior to making an appointment. He suggested that lay leaders should have access to the name of a church where the proposed minister is currently serving and they should be able to hear a sermon and talk with people in that church before an appointment is made.

Mike talked about the complexity of the itinerant system, adding that the system, not the individual pastor, was the focus. Mike said that the more complex and divided settings often need the best pastors but do not get them because they send their best leaders to churches ready to move forward. Scott referred to this process as making political appointments. Mike essentially indicated that they had to put Gary somewhere because of the guaranteed appointment, adding that Gary was typically

asked to move. Mike indicated that he believed that Gary was a nice person, and said that the Cabinet had hoped that the church would be gracious and accept him, even though they knew that the appointment was not a good fit. The lay leaders in the church wanted this kind of hopeful process in making appointments to stop.

Chapter 5 included the results of Case 2, along with an overview of the salient themes and patterns, including comparisons and discrepant data. Chapter 6 will provide a similar overview, analysis and summary of Case 3.

CHAPTER 6

CASE 3 RESULTS

While Chapters 4 and 5 focused on cases one and two respectively, Chapter 6 is devoted to Case 3. Like the previous two chapters, this chapter also provides a general description of the context, followed by the varying perspectives of the Senior Pastor, a Staff Parish Relations Committee member, a Lay Leader, and the District Superintendent involved with the transition of the Senior Pastor from the church. An analysis of Case 3 is included, beginning with a comparison and summary of the issues related to what happened, followed by an overview of the four major areas of focus. And, in communicating the results of the project, again an effort was made to include as much of the participant perspectives as possible, and to do so in their own words.

General Description

This church is located in the midst of a growing suburban area. In spite of a traditional physical structure, the church is composed of both contemporary and traditional factions.

Senior Pastor

We met at two different restaurants for the initial and follow-up interviews, and his wife even joined us for the initial interview. Larry was perceptive, genuine, humble and winsome in our interaction.

What Happened

Larry talked about the initial appointment and how he seemed to hit the ground running, saying “during the first two years of that appointment,” the church was growing “and things were going very well.” Larry indicated that he was “theologically compatible with a female Associate Pastor who had been appointed at the same time.” But, Larry noted that the Associate Pastor had been in a difficult situation in her former church, noting “I think there was some struggle with her own ministry,” one “that left her trying to figure out where she was at, and who she was in ministry.”

Larry talked about the contrast between himself and the former Senior Pastor, Jeff, who “was a superb administrator.” Larry said, “the element I brought to the church was...more of a spiritual growth and deepening.” Larry explained that because of Jeff’s “administrative abilities, the church...had gotten themselves into some situations financially where they were really, really burdened down with debt.” Larry noted that the church was “overextended, just flat-out.” Larry went on to share his perspective of the prevailing attitude of the church. Specifically, Larry said, “Because they were a city church, and their former pastor was now a District Superintendent, they were full of themselves.” Larry added, “it wasn't very long” even though “I'm

not Mr. Super Administrator” that “I could see where we were headed.” As a result, Larry said, “I spent a lot of time trying to talk to my Associate about this,” explaining that the church had “two generalists on staff, two Bishop appointed Elders.” Larry went on to say he had told the Associate Pastor, “I don't think this church can afford that for very much longer” and “I don't think this is wise.” Larry said that in order “to keep this momentum of growth going,” he had tried to get the Associate Pastor “to specialize” in some form of “disciple-making,” like “Christian education” or working with “children.” Larry added, although “we had a full-time youth pastor...we didn't have a children's minister” or a “Christian education director.”

Larry talked about his perspective of the staffing configuration that was at odds with the existing structure, saying that for “a church that size,” that “I felt deplete in certain staffing positions.” Larry added that “the only reason why they had two Bishop-appointed Elders there was because they felt like they needed it.” But, Larry explained, “I had to work really hard on keeping (the Associate Pastor) busy, because she was trained as a generalist.” Larry indicated, “I know that she felt like a fish out of water, groping for her place,” because “she could see what was going on, but she didn't know what to do about it.” Larry indicated that it also seemed that “she felt threatened by another change.” Larry explained, “She had built up a group of people in the church...that were strong supporters of the status quo with her there.” Larry noted, “I have nothing against (her),” because “she is an awesome pastor” and “I have a great deal of respect for her.” Larry added, “We worked really well together, in spite of all this stuff that was going on.” Larry went on to say, “we moved to a purpose

driven church model,” which has “worked” and is “still working quite well with that church,” because “that’s what they needed to do in order to get off the dime.”

Larry talked about the evolution of the conflicts that led to his leaving, saying “during that third year” that “Jeff was my District Superintendent...we were trying to make a transition out of this administrative mode into a growth mode for the church.” Larry went on to say that “it started getting really complicated,” primarily because “those same supporters of the status quo were also good friends of (Jeff’s).” Larry continued, saying that “they went running to (Jeff) a great deal, and (Jeff) got involved.” Larry said, “I want to give him the benefit of the doubt,” and “I think he got sucked into it a whole lot quicker than he realized, and it became very, very political at that point.” Larry added, with respect to his leadership, “I felt like I was being undercut.” Larry noted that “The congregation responded quite well,” but that some people “were frustrated with my lack of administrative prowess.” Larry continued, “we made some major changes” and “we moved some very good things in place” that are still being utilized by the Senior Pastor that followed.” Larry described how in some ways he felt vindicated in the end when the Conference followed his recommendations “to make a clean sweep” of both him and the Associate Pastor and bring in only “one Elder.” As a result, Larry said, “The church has stabilized really quick, and is doing excellent healthy ministry now.”

Larry talked about his perspective on the lay leadership and his own style, explaining that the church “was full of middle management...executives that were frustrated at work, who decided to come to church and sit on the board.” Larry added

that “it was probably one of the most stressful times of my entire ministry.” He went on to say, “I’m not a management pastor,” but “the itinerancy works the best when you have management pastors or maintenance pastors,” and “I was caught between a rock and a hard place.” Larry believed “I could have led the church,” and indicated that he told Jeff that “if you’d just stay out of my way, I could lead this church through this transition.” Larry continued, “Jeff was still entrenched in that congregation,” although he understood how that would naturally happen when you were in a place a long time, but that it “never was a problem with me.” Larry added, “I never felt threatened” by those connections “until, and I didn’t even realize it was happening till at the end, when he started showing up” at different meetings.” Larry added, “Then I realized that he’d been invited to step in” and that “my leadership wasn’t there,” so I asked him to “appoint me someplace else.”

Larry talked about wrestling with the difference between what he believed about the itinerant system and what was happening, saying “from my theological perspective I know that the Bishop appoints, but I believe the Lord sent me there.” Larry indicated that “It was a good time” for the church, that they “were ready to move forward in some areas.” But, Larry noted, “I really felt...like I was being undercut from being able to do what I was sent there to do.” Larry talked about how the former Senior Pastor and “some” others, “were looking for a continuation of (Jeff’s) ministry,” even though the differences in style had been freely acknowledged and discussed from the very beginning. But, Larry said, “I really felt like I was being stifled and boxed in after a certain while,” and although “we had great ministry in

those first two years, but then the wheels fell off.” Larry went on to say, “After the wheels fell off, I was willing to stay there and to work it through.” But with “the issues in regards to the Associate Pastor, and then the interference,” Larry said, I felt like “I can’t win on this one,” which is “why I made the decision I did” to ask to be moved. Historically, Larry reflected on how churches had responded to his leadership, adding “I think that it would have been a good match, but I don’t think that it was allowed to be a good match.” Larry said, “Towards the end, some of the leaders said to me you didn’t understand our culture.” But, Larry commented, “I listened to that and I said I think I understood it a little bit better than what you’d given me credit for.”

Larry talked about a blurring of the lines of responsibility in terms of the “interference” on Jeff’s part. But, but “in being fair,” Larry acknowledged “I guess this was a learning experience for him too,” and “he didn’t realize that was going to happen as quickly as it did.” Larry continued, “I understand the relationships and the friendships that formed,” although “I didn’t feel threatened” by them “until toward the end when he started showing up.” Then, Larry said, “I realized that...he had at least entertained the people from...the leadership of my church in his office to hear things.” Larry went on to say, “I didn’t even know that that was happening,” and “I would have at least liked to have known if Jeff was listening to them.” Larry added that he could have told me what he was hearing so I could share my perspective, and “I just didn’t feel like...it was fair.”

Larry was careful to say, “I’m not placing all of the blame” on Jeff about it not being “allowed to function and to work,” acknowledging some of his mistakes in the

process. Specifically, Larry said, “I made the mistake of thinking that was an evangelical church,” adding that “it wasn’t” but that it was “a conservative church,” saying “there’s a difference.” Larry stated, “The people responded very well to my...evangelical input” because “I quickly figured that out.” Larry also talked about the worship “war” that was taking place in the church between the contemporary and traditional camps when he arrived in this “very traditional” church setting. Larry explained, “There was a war going on between those two factions, us and them, one “that (Jeff) had left when I arrived.” Larry added, “I never changed it,” but “we managed it quite well” and both services “grew significantly.”

Larry also noted several challenges in his family and in the family of the Associate Pastor, saying “the family adjustments were difficult.” He openly shared a number of family factors related to the transition, describing school changes at critical times for his children, resulting in one child going into a depression. Larry said that although this child “did extremely well,” the transition “left some serious scars.” Larry also talked about how his wife was struggling to find her place in the new appointment and went into a depression as a result, which added to the impact on the family system. Larry noted, “God really worked, but it really took a toll on our family.” Personally, Larry talked about how “very difficult it was,” commenting “I think that the rug was pulled out from under all of us.” Larry acknowledged, “at times, I’m not sure if I’ve completely worked through all of that yet.” Specifically, Larry indicated, “I was working really hard to help my wife find a place to fit in, and I was working to help my Associate find a place to fit in, and I was working to help

myself to fit in” after being in a long-term appointment. In the end, he decided that it was time to move on, saying “after a while...I saw the politics of it” and decided “this just isn’t worth it.” Larry concluded, ultimately “I chose my family over the political battle.”

Larry said, “At the very end” Jeff “brought in another District Superintendent” into the situation, and “I got the sense that” this second District Superintendent “thought that this was a gender issue, that I was somehow having problems working with a female Associate.” Larry commented, “I really resented that, because I bent over backwards to make that thing work,” and “I could not have hand-picked a better Associate, but that wasn’t the issue” even though “that’s what they tried to make it.” Larry explained “the politics of the thing” seemed out of control, and “no matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t straighten that one out.” Larry added, “I have a hunch that, even to this day, that’s some place in one of my files” indicating I have “trouble with female Associates,” but I feel that “I didn’t deserve that one.” Larry described the “real turning point...in the midst of all that stress” and it “was just very, very confusing,” explaining “I really felt like the Lord said to me at that moment...I’m not asking you to fight this one.”

Larry talked about how he considered staying, “if there had been a way that we could have worked through it,” but “I didn’t see any light at the end of that tunnel.” Larry and “I also knew that I would have paid a pretty heavy price for it, and I thought this isn’t worth it.” Larry continued, “I’m not privy to what the Bishop and the Cabinet puts in our files and what they, and how they categorize churches.” Larry

added, “I don’t know how that match-making” works, and “it is a mystery,” pointing out that “I’m being honest with you, because you said” that “I could be anonymous.” Larry concluded, “Every appointment...I’ve gone into it with that approach” that “wherever I’m at, that’s where I’m supposed to be,” because “I couldn’t function very long in the Methodist church if I didn’t have that understanding.”

Larry expressed an interest in the outcome of the project, saying that he was “curious” and that “it would be fun to watch” because he knew that “the itinerancy is going through a lot of scrutinizing.” Larry added that the itinerancy “needs” something, noting he did not “know how it’s going to turn out,” but “it’s by the grace and mercy of God it’s worked this long.”

Seminary Preparation

Larry expressed anger at the huge gap between his seminary preparation and lived reality in the ministry, especially in the area of leadership education, conflict management, church growth, and navigating change. More specifically, Larry talked about attending a leadership workshop that “was life changing,” where he was initially “extremely angry” that he was never “told” about “church dynamics and leadership.” Larry talked about two “colleagues that left the ministry,” still “good friends” who “were casualties of a system that did not prepare us for the dynamics of leadership and of congregational politics.” Larry also talked about the value of a course where he learned “to do archeological digs, how to understand the culture, how to dig through the culture of a congregation, thinking patterns, and then how to impact that culture.” Larry commented, “I never got any of that stuff” at my United Methodist Seminary.

In all fairness, Larry did note that “maybe they have made some changes,” but went on to say, “I don’t think the casualty rate has gone down much across the Conference.”

Larry went on to say, “If they are teaching differently, I still see a lot of new pastors and small churches closing and going belly up.”

Larry said, “I’ve thought long and hard about a lot of those things. I think that our seminaries, as well as our whole denomination, is so institutionally focused, rather than kingdom of God focused,” adding “for me, that’s a big difference.” He went on to describe how some District Superintendents have been “old school” in that they were really looking for pastors to simply maintain the status quo.” But, Larry noted, because of his life experience, he “was not surprised by the underbelly of congregational life.” Larry said he “was angry,” because “seminary did not help me in this at all.” Larry went on to say that “I think I would’ve been just fine if I’d have just been” a “manager” that only focused on “maintenance,” adding “I wish somebody would’ve taught me about conflict” and “more.” Larry said that his new learning was “good stuff” that “came at just the right time for me,” especially “in regards to conflict” and “growth” and “where the land mines were at and how to grow myself through the changes” in “the congregation.” Larry concluded, “One size does not fit all,” adding that “as I reflect on my seminary education, there was a big gap between my training and reality.”

Professional Identity

Concerning the development of his professional identity as a pastor, Larry said “for me to keep my sanity” and “what has helped me probably the most” has been

“what the conference is starting to do with these clusters,” with “ministry plan development,” and “in accountability groups.” Larry went on to say, “my greatest experiences and the most help” I have received “was not from other United Methodist pastors.” Larry added, “I don’t know if that was my own quirk or not, but I was more comfortable,” and “I got more accountability, more help,” and “more mentoring from pastors of different denominations, or different experiences,” and “different ages.”

Larry talked about his previous experience with a church cluster program, noting “I don’t know why,” but “it never worked,” perhaps because “it was too stiff.” Larry continued, “I’ve got high hopes for this clustering program for our Conference, but I’m scared to death they’re going to structure it to the point where it’s going to die.” Larry said this was true, “especially if we have to give monthly reports and quarterly reports,” adding “if you organize it, it’s the kiss of death.” Larry went on to say, “I think the concept of clusters, of mentoring is a good one,” and “that element somehow needs to be more a part of the training and in the education.” Larry added, “I went through supervised years” and “we had those things at school,” but although “some of my colleagues enjoyed” it, “I never got much out of those for some reason.” Larry explained that “in the pastorate, I’ve been able to find my own groups that have just helped me keep sane, and supported.”

Larry indicated that he has continued to maintain relationships developed with his former colleagues in ministry at different appointments, sharing ideas about staff meetings, preaching and the like, saying “it’s good when pastors look after each other like that.” Larry talked about an ecumenical “ministerial association” he had been a

part of” where “it’s difficult to describe but we loved each other,” going on to say “we really went to bat for each other, and helped each other and had a lot of fun.” Larry added that “it really splashed down onto the churches,” that “there wasn’t as much church hopping going on,” and “it really was a healthy situation there.” Larry also indicated that he has enjoyed coaching pastors of some smaller churches, noting “we’ve developed some good relationships,” but pointed out that he has had to find his own mentors in ministry along the way.

Itinerancy

Larry talked about the importance of some freedom of movement and how in his current appointment, he has weathered “some deep waters already” related to “some adjustments, some worship wars if you want to call it that, some power struggles, some conflicts.” Larry added, “The church has come out very, very healthy through it.” Larry went on to share how “one of the first questions to come up” in the midst of some “strategic planning” at his new church was about “how long” he would be at that appointment. Larry added, “I think we’re naive when we say, well it doesn’t really matter” since the congregation can just continue to “work the plan,” because “the pastor is a key factor” in the process. Larry explained how he talked with his District Superintendent about his desire to stay in his current appointment, asking if the Cabinet will “leave me alone for three to five years.” Larry indicated that his current District Superintendent said, “I think so” and “I think the Bishop is in that frame of mind that if you tell us you want to be left alone for three to five years it’s not a contract, but it’s an agreement of sorts.” Larry concluded by saying, “I think that’s

where we're headed," and "I think that's what itinerancy needs to allow for" is that kind of a commitment on the part of churches and pastors.

Larry compared his relationship with the District Superintendents in his current and former appointments, saying that while his current District Superintendent "says, I'm going to support you, that "I never remember (Jeff) saying anything like that." Larry added, "I did not feel" that my former District Superintendent "had confidence in me," and "I think the system needs to let leaders lead." Larry acknowledged the "perfect church" does not exist, but that his current District Superintendent "trusts my leadership" and "has confidence in letting me work" at "a strategic point" in the life of the church. Larry said, "I feel like that needs to happen a little bit more." Larry explained, "in the past," the response to "the politics of it" has typically been "to try to keep the boat from rocking," acknowledging "there are pastors that are bad eggs" and "that are problems." But, Larry indicated that "there needs to be a trust of leadership" and the "conference or the system needs to let pastors lead," adding "Churches that are growing" have "strong leadership." Larry concluded, "I've not always felt that the Conference had confidence in the pastors, maybe because of the politics."

Larry stressed the importance of language, saying that "I don't know" if either Jeff or the Bishop would have a "response" that they "really feel God sent us there," referring to his family moving to his former appointment. Larry continued, "Maybe the Bishop does, but I don't often hear that language," and that "maybe it's assumed," but "I hear more the political language." Larry went on to say, "I can't separate the system from my theology," and "I know the Bishop makes mistakes and the system is

full of mistakes” but “I believe that God works through mistakes to accomplish God’s purposes.” Larry concluded, “The day I can’t say that any more is the day I leave,” because “my theology has to line up with that.” Larry added, “as long as I believe that, I can stay in this flawed system,” but “otherwise I can’t be a part of that structure or that system.”

Person-Environment Fit

Larry talked about the fit between himself as the Senior Pastor and this particular church, saying, “I felt like it was a good fit,” and “I believe that the Lord sent me there.” Because it was a difficult move for his family at the time, he said that he and his wife “both had a peace in going, but it made absolutely no sense to go there.” Larry continued, “We felt it was a good match, but it was just really unfortunate how the thing played out,” because “it did not need to happen that way,” and “it could have and should have gone very different.” Larry went on to say, “I believe” that “the Lord was trying” to “move that congregation, and I think it was the right call.” But, Larry said, “I believe the interference, the lack of confidence caught us all off guard,” explaining that it “was very different from what they had expected to have happen, or at least what I think they expected to have happen.”

Larry shared how much he and his family learned and grew during this challenging time, and about the deep sense of peace in the midst of the conflict. Larry said that the church too grew in that “it kind-of broke or the loosened the ground a little bit,” making it easier for the pastor that followed. Larry indicated that contrary to what one might think, this difficult situation “didn’t destroy my confidence,” or

“shake my confidence as much as I thought it might.” Larry went on to say, “It may have actually solidified some things, kind of in a backhanded way.” In short, Larry expressed an unwavering confidence and connection to God that helped him to move through a difficult situation in a way that caused his wife to really marvel at his strength, especially when things were so very unsettled.

Follow-Up Interview

At the outset, Larry made one correction of a statement he had made in the initial interview, and retracted another comment, and we talked briefly about some of the metaphors commonly used to describe the appointment process. Larry noted that Jeff “did unexpectedly show up” at the Staff Parish Relations Committee, “and some special meetings” where “I was blind-sighted” because “I didn’t know he was coming.” Larry noted, in relation to these surprise visits by Jeff, “I asked him, what are you doing here.”

Early on in the course of our second meeting, Larry apologized for not keeping a journal in the way that was requested. But, in response to how the built-in time of reflection and journaling was for him in the midst of this research project, Larry said, “I think it’s been good,” and that it had “been very helpful and healing.” Larry added that “when I re-read the transcript I saw a lot of anger still, and bitterness still.” Larry went on to say, “And I feel a little differently now,” saying “it’s been helpful” and “I appreciate it.”

Based on his reflection, Larry also wanted to emphasize “how difficult it was for the family” to make the “move,” something he described as “a big adjustment” and

one that had left “some scars.” Larry added, “I’m not sure but that we all went through a period of depression.” Larry went on to say “a key factor” was “the difficulty” for us in “making the adjustment,” adding “I lay part of the blame for that on my District Superintendent at the time.” Larry explained that although “I always got along” with him, but “I’m not so sure he had my best interest in mind” and “I don’t think (he) was ever in favor of long pastorates” because he “was sort-of old school” and “preferred maintenance pastors.” Larry went on to say this District Superintendent’s “mentality” was that “any pastor that seemed somewhat successful, and built and grew the church somehow threatened the itinerant system.” Larry stated, even though “I can understand that to some degree,” that “knee-jerk reaction I don’t think is healthy for the church.” Larry added, “I think that’s the way it used to be” but that “was a mistake” and “I was caught up in that” philosophy. Larry also said this former District Superintendent emphasized that “your name keeps coming up” during “Cabinet meetings” and how he would “get your name off the table,” but that he said “I can’t protect you anymore” when he left.

In terms of new insights, Larry indicated that “one of the factors” in the “conflict” at the church “was my wife.” Larry explained that “She and I had been such a team” working together “in ministry” at his previous appointment, and that “we’ve always tried to be in ministry together.” Larry talked about how he had openly shared with the Staff Parish Relations Committee that he and his wife had been a team in ministry. But, Larry said “I don’t think they understood what that meant” because “their concept” was that “the spouse has their own career.”

Larry shared that it was difficult for all of the parties involved to adjust their expectations in the midst of a transition. Larry talked about how his wife felt “replaced” by a female Associate Pastor, which was “a very real struggle for her,” and that she would frequently say “I never knew where I fit.” Larry discussed the challenges of a move “from a rural to a city situation,” with “a very different mentality towards the pastor’s wife.” Larry talked about how he honestly “didn’t know how to help anybody else” work through this issue, either his wife or the female Associate Pastor. Larry commented that “some of the congregational leaders” “picked up on some of that too” and “could sense some of that undercurrent,” which he described as “very stressful.”

Concerning “the appointment process,” Larry stated, “I felt like I didn’t have very much say in building my staff.” Larry added, “I didn’t feel like I had much freedom” in leading “the staff and to build the staff for growth,” but “I felt like I was stepping into a situation where I needed to maintain what was already there,” adding initially “we did.” Larry noted, “I think that in the appointment process, they need to give the lead pastor a little bit more say, or freedom in how to build that staff and what is needed,” but “sometimes that’s not apparent right away” and “it takes a little while to figure it out.” Larry commented that “the war stories of Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor conflicts are legendary.” Larry said that he did not have any problems with other staff members in this regard, but that “part of the tension” was that he was not convinced that the church was staffed appropriately. Larry described how truly hard it is for a church” or “even key lay leaders, to envision future

possibilities apart from what they have always experienced in their church. Larry felt that this was especially true when there is a perception that they are “a healthy” or “an affluent church.”

Larry also indicated that for “the last five months” at the appointment in question, “I suffered with severe back problems.” Larry said that in an effort to gain some relief from the constant pain, “I did everything, change my shoes, my, I walked, I exercised, back stretching exercises.” Larry said that “during those five months, it was awful,” explaining how he had “tried” just about “everything you can imagine,” and “even had scheduled back surgery.” Larry added, “Nothing touched it till we got closer and closer to the move” and “it went away by itself and never returned,” emphasizing “I think I carried my stress in my back.”

With respect to his participation in the research project, although he had been somewhat reluctant to participate initially, Larry indicated that it had been helpful. Specifically, he said “It’s been very thought provoking and healing,” in “talking about it, and trying to figure out what happened.” Larry indicated that everything he had shared in this follow up interview was just as he had written it in his reflection notes.

Larry indicated, “I think it would have been helpful in seminary preparation to have had” additional “training or understanding of marriage, and family in ministry,” although “we had small groups, we had input from professors” who would “invite us over to their homes and we’d discuss things.” Larry went on to say, “I would have thought that there could have been something more intentional on the part of the seminary preparation to help, help the pastor and spouse understand themselves better,

what their strengths and weaknesses are,” since “the casualties in the ministry...are high.” Larry added, “I would think that there ought to be something that could be better,” regardless of “whether it’s building in accountability groups, married couples,” or “regular retreats.”

Larry asked “where does a pastor turn?” Larry went on to say, “I remember years ago they had a conference psychologist or counselor on staff,” but “I don’t know if anybody ever went to him or sought him out” because “it’s a big conference.” Larry added that “ministry can be awfully lonely when you’re trying to sort through some of these things.” Larry continued, saying the current cluster system was “an extremely good idea,” but that he felt “more comfortable, more relaxed around people who are not in the same boat that I’m in, as far as denomination is concerned.” Larry went on to say that “some of the best one’s I’ve been a part of have been non-Methodists.”

Larry noted that “I feel more kinship sometimes, theologically, with pastors of other denominations” because the United Methodist Church is “so diverse” theologically. And, even though he would have to explain the itinerant system and appointment process to pastors from “other denominations” because “they don’t have a clue,” Larry indicated that “their objectivity” has sometimes “been extremely helpful.” Larry said, “Some of my closest colleagues in ministry are not Methodists” because it is easier to share your heart with a group of people that you know will be there for a while because their denominations are less transient.

Staff Parish Relations Committee Member

Clarence was a no nonsense businessman who was somewhat reserved. Both interviews were conducted at the church.

What Happened

He talked about serving on then Staff Parish Relations Committee and his general perspective of the situation, saying that after Larry arrived “I was named to that committee.” Clarence recalled that Jeff not only “had been...our pastor for many years,” but also that “he was, he was pretty much an institution at this church” and “he left...to become District Superintendent.” Clarence continued, “I don’t know but I believe he probably had a role in naming his replacement.” But, later, Clarence indicated, “I don’t know...if he was actually was involved in the appointment or not,” but “when Larry left and the new appointment was made, I know he certainly had a role in the new appointment.” Clarence concluded, saying “as with any pastor who was well thought of, well liked...anyone who follows after him...has a high standard to live up to,” especially related to “the comparisons, the standards, the expectations,” because “you don’t do things the same way.”

Clarence talked about how Larry’s style was indeed “different” from Jeff’s, especially in “his traditional service.” Clarence noted that “it wasn’t what people had grown to become used to, and that ruffled some feathers with some of the people that were long time members.” He said, “I don’t go to the traditional things, so I didn’t really have a first-hand knowledge,” but commented “I heard...grumbings behind the scenes.” More specifically people complained that Larry “doesn’t say the Lord’s

Prayer every week;" and that "he didn't acknowledge" or include any special "mention" of "Veteran's Day," which "was really hurtful for some people." Clarence noted that even those were "little things," people felt that Larry's "priorities didn't seem to match up with some of the rest of the congregation."

Clarence went on to talk about the staffing configuration, conflicts, and financial pressures, saying "we were starting to lose some membership and there was some concern about financially, whether or not we could afford a Senior Pastor and an Associate Pastor." Clarence added that "in the last year, where we were making some tough decisions financially, they decided that they were no longer going to renew the Associate Pastor position." He mentioned "some conflicts between both pastors," where "they did not necessarily work well together." Clarence added that "the Associate Pastor...had come from a small church" and "I don't think she got a chance to preach very often," which "bothered her."

Clarence went on to talk about the leadership dynamics related to the ex-Senior Pastor, saying "there were members who felt they could call him and talk to him...as District Superintendent, because he was "a well-liked" former "Senior Pastor, who, who was still in the area." He went on to say, "I have no idea how he handled that situation, but I, I know without a doubt that it happened on more than one occasion, where he was called and asked questions and brought into the situation," adding that "there were just a lot of different issues going on." Clarence added, "My recollection was that there were discussions about not asking Larry to come back," but "I think the

final decision was we did ask him to come back and he chose not to” because “he did not feel like he had the support of the congregation.”

Clarence spoke about the “resistance to change” and how “there was naturally just...an awkward moment,” because “the congregation did not feel like they had any say in what had happened” when “their former pastor left, not because he was asked to leave, but because he chose to leave for a better career opportunity,” and “the appointed Pastor who came in...was an unknown.” Clarence went on to say “it’s different for everybody.” Specifically, Clarence noted that while “some people” are “not comfortable” with “change,” and “they’re going to dig their feet in and fight it,” there are “other people” who “don’t mind the change” but “just don’t like the style” because “that doesn’t fit” their “form of worship” or “expectations of the church.”

Clarence talked about how the church was really divided, expressing uncertainty “even if there was some say or some involvement” in the appointment process “that it would have made any difference,” because it “was not a black and white situation.” Clarence noted, “There were just as many people who appreciated the different things that Larry was doing as those who were resistant to what was happening.” He went on to explain, “There were a lot of people hurt” and “there was...a lot of internal damage to the congregation,” because “it was not all one-sided that everybody wanted him to leave.” Clarence continued, “He had a lot of support, was well thought of by people in the congregation.” Clarence agreed that, with both perspectives, there seemed to be some degree of psychological soreness with the change. Clarence also pointed out “people have a tendency to come and go based on

the style of worship” and “what benefits they receive from participating,” which “changes over time.”

Clarence summarized Larry’s strengths and weaknesses, saying he was not as proficient with “the business end of the church,” and that it “was a problem was as far as building consensus and team building in the church as an organization.” On the other hand, Clarence indicated that Larry “was very strong” in “ministering to people’s needs,” and “really good at...dealing with individuals and their needs...spiritual needs, physical needs.” Clarence went on to say that Larry “did not pay a lot of attention to detail,” and “was more of a feeling, caring person than he was a process person.” Clarence emphasizing the need for “a healthy balance between the two,” meaning the people and business aspects of the church,” adding “At least that’s the expectation here.”

Clarence indicated that “the current” Senior Pastor “has been successful because he is able to balance” the ministry and management functions. Clarence noted that this resulted either from the backlash of the situation with Larry not working out, or the corporate learning about what to look for based on the needs of the congregation, following “the pendulum swing of emotion.” Clarence added that in following a Senior Pastor that did not work out, “the next guy in automatically is going to be better than what you had” adding “not to say that that’s the case, but I think that’s some of human nature.”

Seminary Preparation

Concerning the seminary preparation of the Senior Pastor, Clarence said “I would have no idea” about “the curriculum.” But, Clarence noted, “I would anticipate they spend a lot of time focusing on the primary” emphasis of “the teaching of Jesus Christ, theology and everything else that goes along with it.” With respect to the “curriculum of a seminary student is as it relates to church business,” Clarence stated, “I would hope that would be a part of it, but I don’t know if that’s the case.” Clarence emphasized that a pastor understanding the business aspect of the church is “certainly is an expectation when they walk into a church.”

Professional Identity

Although he noted, “I don’t really remember what his background was before he came here,” Clarence said “I had the impression” that “he had been in that kind of role in the past.” Clarence continued, recalling that Larry had been in “similar sized churches,” but just “maybe not in an urban, suburban setting like this.” Clarence went on to say that perhaps the Senior Pastor’s experience was “maybe in more of a small town setting, but certainly similar in numbers and sizes of congregation.” But, Clarence was not certain “whether he even had an Associate Pastor report to him in the past,” or if “this was the, his first opportunity to do that.” Mostly, Clarence indicated, I don’t know what his roles were earlier in his career.”

Itinerancy

Clarence said, “I have been in the United Methodist Church virtually my whole life,” and that as a result “I’ve been through a number of changes over my life, as far

as pastors.” But, Clarence noted, this was “the first time that I’ve actually been... personally involved in changes,” and not “just a member of the congregation.” Generally speaking, with respect to the itinerancy, Clarence said, “I don’t know whether its good or bad,” going on to talk about “friends who are in other situations where they actually have to go out and recruit and hire their own, and they can go a year without having a pastor” when “going through a search process.” Clarence went on to say that “they have visiting people come in, or someone who comes in on an interim basis” which “to me, doesn’t sound much better.” Clarence concluded, “I don’t know if” one system “is better than another,” but “you have to trust” in “the Bishop, that there’s going to be an appropriate appointment for the needs of the church,” which “can be a problem.” Clarence added, “I know the Superintendent’s involved with it, but I guess the Bishop actually makes the appointment.”

In closing, Clarence said that on “most of those things, I’m really at a loss,” adding that “As a member of a local congregation, I don’t know that I have an appreciation for what happens.” We also had a brief conversation about his question as to whether he needed to know and talk with the other layperson in the project to “maybe use that person as a sounding block to help refresh my memory” about the situation. In the end, Clarence understood “it’s more about the feeling behind what’s happening, now that it’s behind us, and for what you can draw out of that as far as ways to modify and improve the system” in gathering different perspectives on each case involved in the project.

Person - Environment Fit

With respect to the fit between this Senior Pastor and the church, Clarence said, “There were a series of issues there, but you know, just as much as he...wasn’t a good fit for the church, there were a lot of people...that felt that he was a very good fit.” Clarence went on to say “If we had gone out on our own and, and solicited the right candidate, I think it would have depended who was on the selection committee” as to “whether or not that candidate would have been any better,” or “who puts together” the church “profile.” Clarence went on to talk about an evaluation of the Senior Pastor that they had completed following “a format” that included “preaching style” and “a Bible based approach,” where they identified “things that were important to us” and what they were “looking for” in a Senior Pastor. But, Clarence did not recall “how broad of input” they had gathered for this evaluation, if it was “a few select people that put this together, or whether there was really an attempt to really glean information” about needs from “a good cross section of the congregation.”

Follow Up Interview

With respect to his feedback on the initial transcript, Clarence said “Well, I’ve been involved in a number of court transcripts before” and “I’m kind of used to seeing this kind of thing.” He added, “I’m always surprised by my English, but aside from that not much,” and explained how he had to recognize “that’s what it was” following his initial inclination to “go in there and correct all of the little things.” He went on to say, concerning the transcript, “I read it right after you sent it to me” and “obviously” felt it was “an accurate reflection.”

Concerning his time of reflection and journaling, Clarence said “I guess I was a little surprised kind of by the way this is, has drawn out.” I talked about the importance of having the questions for the follow-up interviews approved by the Institutional Review Board prior to conducting the second round of interviews. He continued, indicating that he did not “have anything to add or to reflect more about” related to the situation.

Clarence talked about new insights and the application of his learning to the present challenges in the church, initially saying “I don’t have anything to add.” But, Clarence concluded that through recent challenges at the church, “I guess I’ve come to realize that there are a lot of dynamics in addition to the itinerant system itself that you’re talking about that effect the way a pastor can function, and the way the congregation relates to them.” He went on to describe the current challenges in dealing with “personnel issues” and the lack of “responses” from the District Superintendent and Bishop. Clarence added that “there appear to be issues inherent in the management of the church” and “that the local church just doesn’t understand.” Clarence described the process as “very one sided” in “responsiveness, feedback, communication types of things,” where “you communicate but you don’t get answers back.” Clarence went on to say, “I certainly don’t understand how the system works,” including “what everybody’s role is, what everybody’s responsibility is,” and “what the discipline says as to how things are supposed to work.” He added, “just from a layman’s perspective on the outside looking at the big picture,” some “frustrations” are “built in for the local congregation because of” the “restrictions that are in place in

what they can do, what they can say, how they can deal with issues,” as well as “their lack of control over those kinds of things.”

From a vocational perspective, Clarence talked about how the church operates differently than the business world. Clarence noted that in the business world “if there’s a problem, you address it and you move on.” He said that “sometimes the bigger the organization, the harder that is to do,” adding “the Methodist church is a big organization.” Clarence went on to say, “I can understand” that they have “protocol and procedures.” But, Clarence continued, “when the communication only can go to SPRC on personnel issues, and then SPRC’s hands are tied as far as communication to the rest of the congregation,” it presents challenges for “how” the “average” church member can “understand what’s going on.” He concluded, “All it does is lead to” some “speculation and gossip,” which “can run rampant,” and “can tear a church apart.”

Clarence indicated that participating in the project has “helped me focus on some of the dynamics of church leadership.” Clarence also noted that this process also “forced me to reflect” on things “that went on that I’d kind of put behind me and hadn’t really dealt with any further.” Clarence continued, saying “the change was made and it’s time to look forward and move ahead, rather than dwell on the past.” But, he noted the “opportunity to reflect on some of those things” and “get a little better understanding myself” concerning “some of the dynamics” of “what happened and maybe why it happened” has been good. As far as additional clarification, Clarence said “I can’t think of anything” and “I didn’t put anything in the journal.”

Clarence also noted concerning the transcript, “I didn’t mark that up either,” but “I’ve read it two or three times” and “it sounds fine.”

Lay Leader

As a lifetime United Methodist, John was extremely eager to participate in the project. While the initial interview was at the church, the follow up interview was at a coffee shop. John was passionate, outspoken, articulate, engaging, and insightful in his comments.

What Happened

At the outset, John described his role in the church. Specifically, John said he was “a very active lay person,” and a “lay leader” who served with Larry in several different contexts, including “on the worship planning committee” and “the ministry leadership team,” as well as being “in charge of evangelism.” John went on to say, concerning his relationship with Larry, “Personally we were very close,” just as he had been “with his predecessor,” Jeff. John added that because of his role in “the men’s ministry for Promise Keepers” he “took...literally” the commitment to “support your pastor.” John shared his perspective on the transition, saying he “felt” Larry “was a good fit for the church,” although he “was not involved with his placement.” John went on to say that “it was tough for (the clergy) coming in because of (Jeff’s) tenure,” since “he had families grow up with him.” John added “any pastor coming in to that sort of situation...is at a disadvantage” and “the next person coming in has just got an uphill battle coming in.” But, John noted, “I don’t think a lot of us who were younger thought of that,” because “we were excited that we were getting a new pastor.”

John described the structure and culture of the church, saying “we’re a very Bible based church” that is “a little more conservative than some.” John added that Larry “filled that perfectly” and “challenged us...spiritually, having people examine their faith” and “practicing” it “instead of...only” attending church. He went on to say that Larry “was much more mission minded than we had been – outwardly mission minded, not just supporting it financially.” John indicated “Some of the structure that was internal with how we were set up, I think, was difficult,” because Larry “was the one male person” on staff, adding that “gender probably did become an issue.” But, John was quick to say related to Larry being the only man on the staff team, that “one of the...rumors that...spread that he didn’t handle that well,” adding “that’s not true.” John explained, “I saw him” and “actually interacted with him with every type of person, young, old, male, female.” He continued, “When you look at a church structure,” where you have a Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor of different genders, “there are dynamics that go along with that,” but that Larry “was up front about it too” and “tried to work through any perceived obstacles or issues.”

John talked about his frustration with the structure of the United Methodist Church, and of his church in particular as it related to the transition” saying “through our discipline” the idea that “everything goes through Staff Parish is good and works” only if they are “equipped to handle human resources issues.” He commented, it is “great” if the Staff Parish Relations Committee is composed of “strong leaders within the church who care about the church, but if they don’t know how to handle the human factor of things, it’s a disadvantage in any church.” John continued, “The group that

was involved at that time” was “very tied to the former pastor,” and as a result “the new pastor didn’t have a shot, honestly.” He talked about how “the Staff Parish structure was seen more as a clearinghouse of finding out the problems of the pastor, versus looking at how to make the transition...to a new pastor.” John added that “it had been so long since any of us had gone through it that I don’t think people were trained or prepared for the transition.” He went on to say “the interview process” was “great,” including “the people involved,” and that the general “exposure to people throughout the congregation was good.” But, John indicated, “once problems started” to surface, “real or perceived, the Staff Parish was not prepared on how to handle that” information. He talked about the lack of “confidentiality” and how rumors “spread through the church,” and how “there wasn’t a clear protocol for addressing rumors, because a lot of it was gossip.”

John continued to express concern related to the lack of adequate preparation of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, saying “There was an issue of fit,” but they were “not prepared on how to handle” the situation. He suggested, “it would be fantastic” if the Staff Parish Relations Committees “were required to have human resources training on the human side, not the legal side, but the human side of handling difficult information.” John noted that this included “being responsible for confidential information,” and “addressing the parties involved directly.” He continued, “You can’t run a church like a business, and you shouldn’t, but you don’t go to everybody who’s your bud to ask their opinion, you focus on the facts.” But, John explained, the Staff Parish Relations Committee “focused on opinions.” In

defense of Larry, John said “I think Larry struggled with how this was being approached,” because “It was a fight – straight out, between he and the church and (the Associate Pastor).”

John talked about the dynamics related to the clergy, saying there was “a factor” with “the Associate Pastor,” because “it wasn’t a fit for her here either.” John said although “both” Pastors “had strengths, but in my opinion” the Associate Pastor “was less of a fit than Larry was.” John went on to say that the two clergy “were kind of thrust upon each other,” and were not “a good match.” John added, “I don’t know how much, if any, Larry had input on bringing on an Associate, because they both came on at the same time” and “I wasn’t involved” in that process. So instead of Larry, as the Senior Pastor, being able “to evaluate” the “congregation and...staff” in order to determine the needs “in” an “Associate,” John said that the decision was made to “replace...both” former clergy. John said this was “not a good idea for anybody coming in,” because there ended up being a “lack of fit between the Senior Pastor and his Associate Pastor.” John added, “I think we were trying to replicate a successful relationship which had occurred before, assuming that the same model worked, not thinking that we should even look at a different model.” John explained that the situation was complicated by the fact that, although we had “a Senior Pastor” with experience in that role, we “had an Associate Pastor who felt that she should be a Senior Pastor.” John added, “I don’t understand why she was or wasn’t...in the system.” John indicated that “there was just a lot of conflict on everything,” including “when to preach, what to preach, who to visit, when to visit” and so on, noting that

“the delineation of duties, it went down to that level.” Ultimately, John indicated that the conflict between the clergy “bred a feeling” that people were in “one camp or another,” adding that “very few people in the church were supportive of both” clergy.

John pointed out an additional structural component that was problematic and “needs to be addressed,” saying that although the configuration for “charge conference now is more district oriented” into clusters, “during our pastoral transition, we had just a lot a lot of junk brought up in front of the leaders of the church” at a “charge conference.” John explained that the conflicts escalated because “now you’re going from a group of ten on Staff Parish to a room of a hundred” people, where “a pastor has no chance, nor should a pastor be in a position to have to defend himself in front of a church.” John added, “If that kind of stuff happens, it’s over,” and that “it doesn’t matter whether it was right or wrong, or real or not,” because “it’s too late” to recover. John went on to say, “When you’re standing in front of your congregation apologizing for things that aren’t true, it doesn’t matter” because “people think they are.” John added that “it was unfortunate,” that “it was ugly,” and that “it was divisive.”

John expressed a concern for the tension in the church. He talked about “the joy of having...generations upon generations of people” in a church, which is “fantastic.” John also indicated that “the other thing that is unfortunate in traditional Methodist churches...is a generational shift occurring that the more tenured members of the congregation aren’t willing to embrace.” He went on to explain that “with the itinerant system” that it was true that people are “going to be here between pastors,” but that it “doesn’t give you the right to think that you make those decisions.” John

added, “I heard comments directly from people,” saying “well I’ll be here longer” and “no pastor will ever be here longer than me.” John indicated that he felt that attitude was unhealthy and “horrible.” John said, “There was a big split between the direction of the church and the vision of the church.” John added, “I think we’ve always been a church that has not wanted to fall into the pattern that is unfortunately affecting our District and our Conference of shrinking, of aging, of not reaching out to the community or spreading the gospel.” He continued, “Larry took (Jeff’s) building blocks and really pushed this forward,” and “that made people uncomfortable,” even though “part of our faith is to reach out.” But, John said, “when people haven’t been doing it and they’ve been looking to the pastor for everything – which Jeff was very good at – well now you have a new pastor who says no, it’s not me, it’s all of us, that’s a tough message.” John concluded, saying “there were people who were like how dare you,” because “it was very uncomfortable, but needed.” John concluded, saying that “spiritually, we needed it is a church.”

John indicated that Larry had walked into a divided church, saying that when he arrived, “we had just split into a three service format.” John continued, we “were just still really new into the contemporary service, having three services, adding “there was a dynamic that he walked into” that “the church feeling that we were three separate congregations, which we are, and always will be.” John explained, “That’s an incredible dynamic for a pastor to handle,” because “there was a lot of us and them things going on” already between the traditional and contemporary factions of the church.

John talked at length about what he perceived to be a mistake of the conference in appointing Jeff as a District Superintendent responsible for the church where he had formerly served for a number of years, describing it as a “bad move” even though he said “I love Jeff” and “we are very close.” John commented that “people were excited” that Jeff was “one step away” and that their District Superintendent “happened to be our former pastor.” John went on to say, “During this transition of Larry, I know people from Staff Parish called (Jeff) like he were still our pastor,” saying “we have this problem...and you need to do something about it.” He said that Jeff “handled himself as the D.S.” and “never compromised that,” but because “there was never a clean break for us...people used that relationship inappropriately.” John continued, “Larry felt very awkward about that, because he went to (Jeff) as his D.S., which he should be able to do, knowing that his church leadership” was essentially saying to Larry that they were unhappy because “you’re not (Jeff).” In “hindsight,” John said “the following Pastor has no shot” when “you have someone who is known throughout the conference” and “nationally.” So, John said, “you don’t make him your D.S.,” but “take the strength of that D.S.” and “move him into that position” in “another strong district, or a district that needs to grow...or an adjoining district.” John concluded, “It was difficult” for both the Senior Pastor and the Associate Pastor “to be able to go to the D.S. because they know that (Jeff) still had ties,” adding that Jeff “never played that card,” but that “we did.”

John talked about how he had “grown up in the Methodist Church” and had “been around itinerant ministries for forty some years,” listing another “one of the

faults of the system.” Specifically, he said, “should a pastor not work out, he or she has the choice to get out, regardless of the health of the church.” Likewise, John said that “the church has the option” to express a desire not to work with a pastor any longer. But, John added, “It doesn’t work” when “the church doesn’t know what’s going on” and a move “just happens,” because “by the time it gets to the body...not that we need the details, but it’s very random, or it’s perceived to be random, and it’s also very indiscriminate.” John suggested that “there needs to be a stronger H.R. type presence” to “go through” the “request” to determine “what” should be done and “who should be involved.” Presently, John described “the system” as “I’m the Bishop, I talk to the D.S and it happens...which I really don’t think works.” John further explained, saying “If their idea is to develop the bodies at each of the churches we have within our Conference, then we need to say, okay this transition means what to our District, and to that church, and to our Conference,” but “no one’s making those connections.” Instead, John noted, “we just go, oh crud, let’s get this done.” He went on to say, “There’s not a good sense of community with that” approach, and that “as a life long Methodist, it’s not true” that we are “connectional.” John added, “The only time I’ve seen connectionalism work is when I was a delegate to Conference, and the pastors get together and see each other, which is awesome because it’s a great fraternity of brothers and sisters.” But, John noted, “as a church, we haven’t been for decades, unfortunately.” John said, we had “a difficult situation in a healthy church” that we had not experienced “in the life of our church” or “in the life of the members who are still here,” and “it was laid upon our shoulders just to handle it.” But, John said,

“people weren’t prepared” either “as a Pastor, or as Staff Parish, or as a congregation. We just weren’t prepared.”

John shared some concerns related to the process of appointments in the itinerant system, saying “it’s become a personnel placement system,” which “doesn’t follow our beliefs.” He explained, saying “a pastor should be equipped to bring the message, have strengths in administration, have strengths in visitation.” But, John noted, in the areas where they may not have those strengths, “the Church needs to respond,” but “we don’t do that.” John suggested that “it would be great to talk to Larry” prior to the appointment, letting him know up front “this is going to be a three to five year stint,” and ask him if that is consistent with “what you’re looking for.” He added, it would also be helpful to say to Larry, “honestly, we had a strong pastor,” so “you’re probably going to be the rebound guy,” asking him if he wanted “to be a rebound guy,” if he was “good at being a rebound guy,” and if he had “those skills.” John suggested that the “itinerant ministry” examine “the pastor’s strengths coming in, knowing they’re going to be different than the strong pastor who was here,” and actually “talk to the congregation.” But, John said that it was not fair to the clergy to say, “we have fewer pastors, congregations are shrinking” and “if we don’t get a ten year commitment out of you, we really can’t place you,” because “that’s not itinerant ministry any more.” John added, “It would work better if it was more...like...an employment contract,” where “we’re going to have you there for three years and we’ll review it,” after talking “to the church” asking some questions “before we even start getting candidates,” basically doing “a little more digging.”

John talked about how there was a strong commitment to maintain the status quo or the “culture” of the church, adding that it was even “deeper” because of some “people who were willing to dig in, and not give up what they felt was important.” John acknowledged, “not that it was right” but that it was “just the underlying factor.” John indicated that the “rumors and gossip from staff and church leadership” resulted from comparisons between the current and former Senior Pastors, adding “they were night and day,” even though “theologically, they were very, very similar.” John went on to say, “People didn’t like that it was different,” that Larry had “a different approach” and “a different method,” but “instead of addressing it, they made rumors about him and his family.” John felt the rumors were motivated by the “mentality of the church” that “we are comfortable, that we are set in our ways,” and that they did not want to be “pushed” or “stretched.” John added, that when the sense of comfort in “I come, I socialize, I go home” was “threatened,” the resistance “grew.”

John said that another factor was that “Staff Parish was not equipped to handle or address a pastoral change, both from the transition of bringing a new pastor in, or having a pastor leave. He explained that “It’s a fault of the system” to focus on filling holes through the nominations process, adding “The idea of placing people based on their spiritual gifts, based on their willingness, their opportunity, their strengths, we just didn’t look at it. And we’re no different than every other Methodist church.” John noted, “We tend to say, Gosh, (he’s) vocal, he’s visible. Let’s put him on everything that is vocal and visible and it’s a mistake. Those people had no chance.” John added, “And I care for them deeply,” but “We lost some people who left the

church, because the, the process of the top of your church spiritually coming and leaving, they weren't prepared to handle." With respect to deeply held values, John explained that the Staff Parish Relations committee was able to "handle the smaller things, but not the bigger things." More specifically, John indicated that they were confident that "I can handle replacing a janitor. I can handle replacing a preschool leader. I didn't sign on to get rid of a pastor. These are lay people" and "this is so far out of the realm of what they normally do, or what they expect in the life of their church. It's just beyond a lay person's expectations, naturally."

John expressed concern that there was absolutely "no protocol for the Pastor or the Staff Parish to follow" in the transition, adding that "nothing is clear" from the Pastor to the District Superintendent to the Bishop, "nor is it clear from the Pastor to the Staff Parish" because "there's never an expectations meeting ever held." John added that "a debriefing" ideally "should happen prior to any pastor entering a church, or leaving a church." John went on to say, "Expectations aren't set up, either for the pastor to succeed, or for the Staff Parish to serve the pastor" and "the district is unwilling to take the time to foster their pastors."

Seminary Preparation

At the outset, John had a number of suggestions to make related to seminary preparation, saying "I think there needs to be a role of the Pastor course." John added that "it would be great to take the model of a church and say here are all of the factors you could be responsible for in the life of the church." John went on to say, "from my experience, seminaries tend to say here's your preaching track, here's your theology

track, here's your languages track," and have the students "put it together." John commented that additional information on "the foundation of the Methodist church," explaining the discipline based committees would also be helpful.

John talked about the matching process in the itinerant system, saying "there needs to be a spiritual gifts inventory that churches get," one "done again through seminary," so "we know that he's been prepared in the areas that fit that church that we are at this point." John said the current model of seminary education was dated, commenting "I don't think there's practical things given to seminarians to balance the class work," and "seminaries expect you to get that through student pastorates through osmosis." John added that it was "an old model" and "call a spade a spade; it's a generational model," because "younger people need to know why." He went on to say "It doesn't matter whether it's a pastor or not," but "younger people, younger seminarians, or new seminarians" have a "need to know the whys," because "we are a why culture" that looks at "the reasons behind what's happening, not just that it is."

John suggested seminaries offer additional coursework in a number of areas. These included "some sort of curriculum or class work for the pastor to assess" the quality of "the life of the church," to determine if it is "healthy" and areas of potential "opportunity" to "build." John went on to say, pastors also "need to learn how to build their team." But, John noted, "a fault" in "the Methodist standpoint" is to "think" that "whoever's in charge of the areas" according to "the Discipline" is "your leadership team." John added the recognition of "a strong leader" was important, but it was dangerous to assume you can best "use" someone "within the committee

structure,” because “maybe it’s not” the best place for an individual’s gifts and abilities. John also suggested courses in “group dynamics” and “communication,” as well as human resources “based courses” covering “simple things like assessments,” including teaching on “how to use” the “Myers Briggs.”

John talked about tapping into the human resources in a church. Specifically John indicated, “It’s not that hard,” because there are human resources “within churches that could be used to help pastors succeed.” John suggested using “a group of people within their church who are not the Staff Parish Committee who” provide “spiritual support” for the clergy. John went on to say, “I know that they’re trying to do that with the cluster piece, but right now, as an outside observer,” when the clusters are based on “close” proximity, instead of theological or personality compatibility, “it doesn’t work.”

John also suggested having human resource “people talk at seminary,” providing ideas on “how” to “deal with a difficult congregant,” adding “because what I think has been done is” that “pastors talk to pastors.” John went on to suggest seminaries “bring in somebody who’s trained and equipped” in “how you deal with humans,” answering “questions, which would be the best ideal thing,” and presenting material “from a church perspective, not from a business perspective.” John stressed that “any pastor must be prepared for his or her church,” and “I don’t think it should be gee, which job’s open, which is how it’s approached now,” pointing out the focus of “a bigger salary” often means a “need to go to a bigger church.” John concluded, “No one ever asks are you prepared,” but the focus is on if “you fit the Staff Parish,

and a few key people,” but “that’s not preparation.” John emphasized, “we have a duty to prepare our pastors for whatever church body they shepherd,” adding that “there should be a willingness and a passion from the pastor to say I will not go unless I am prepared.”

Professional Identity

John talked about Larry’s solid preparation through experience, saying “I think his skills, from my experience, were probably more well-rounded than other pastors that I had seen.” John explained, Larry “had had some mission work outside of the Methodist structure,” including “international experience,” and “diverse experiences with peoples of different cultures, ages, languages, which again prepared him to be a Senior Pastor of a large church.” John continued, “Unfortunately, most of our” United Methodist “churches are not that diverse,” but that his “mission work” gave Larry “an appreciation for finance,” and “budget” and “planning,” and even “doing without” which “gave him well-roundedness.”

John also addressed areas where Larry was not as strong, commenting “One area I think he was not prepared for,” according to some, was “administration.” But, John added, “I think he was” because it “is unrealistic” to “think a pastor should be everything.” John said, “He was not strong administratively,” but “that was not his spiritual gift,” noting “the problems” in “trying to prepare a super-human pastor” who “does everything, that puts in sixty hours a week, gets paid nominally but we pay for their house so they should be thankful.” John pointed out that this mentality “doesn’t focus on what their strengths are,” and “there needs to be a step where the church

evaluates what's needed in the Senior Pastor," because "it can't just be one way."

John noted, "I don't know who balances that or says if that's healthy or not." John said he saw as a pattern of "a lack" of "self reliance on the church's part," especially "if we're expecting the pastor to do everything, and all I do is show up and give my money," adding "we are not being the body" when that is the case. John went on to say, a "misconception is that the church is lost, and that the role of the pastor primarily should be to shepherd the congregation." John indicated that although "they can do all kinds of things," that expecting "them to be the spiritual everything" and where "we show up" is "a model" that "for a pastor to succeed, the odds are against them." John added that "the statistics bear this out."

Itinerancy

John expressed some frustration with respect to the itinerant system, saying "I think my biggest concern with the itinerant system is we don't focus, we don't have a good skill set knowledge of pastors." John went on to say "I think there, there needs to be a return to what matters to the Methodist Church in that we want to see our churches grow and thrive and reach people for Christ," but "I don't think our itinerant system matches our mission at all," adding "not even close." John explained that his perspective was based on what had been his experience in a number of United Methodist Churches where he has lived over the years. John went on to say, "there are large faults to the system, on the front end, getting people into it," and "at the end" in "letting people gracefully get out of it," adding the "successes" were "in the middle." John provided "great examples" where the most successful pastors in the United

Methodist Church are not really itinerant, specifically citing one particular mega-church. John noted that the Senior Pastor of that mega-church “has developed some amazing animal,” and “willingly or not, he would not go anywhere else.” John said that the attitude of the Conference seems to be “since he’s so successful, he doesn’t have to be itinerant, really.” John asked, “Who’s going to be that rebound pastor?”

John talked about his concern related to the mentality of upward mobility, saying “I think the system is wrong in that you have to go to bigger churches in order to move ahead financially,” adding “there is no reason for that.” John continued, “If you look at the business model, just because you’ve been in the system longer doesn’t mean you should get a bigger church” or “you should get a promotion.” Instead, John said, “you should get a promotion based on success” and “results.” John went on to say, “You should also allow a pastor to say, I love” serving in a small, country church “and I want to stay” here “and be a pastor here for twenty years.” But, John noted, “Our system doesn’t allow for that” expression of no desire to be “a bright shining star,” out of a sense of clarity about “where God has called” him/her in ministry.

John also expressed great concern about how he felt the United Methodist Church moved problem people around instead of addressing the issues. Specifically, John said “I think our system also allows” pastors “who are mediocre to move ahead,” not “addressing the problem” when “you’re not doing well” or “things aren’t working out.” John noted that “it’s the old system that I face in business.” John explained that in “the itinerant system” there is an emphasis to “don’t say anything,” and a “need to show grace” and “forgiveness,” but that “problems need to be addressed” and

“successes need to be shared.” John went on to say, “I don’t want to sound negative, but we need to be direct,” because the “reality” is that “pastors” too “are employees of a system.” John indicated that there was a duty to “help them” and “give them things to develop,” not just to “send them to the next District training,” because “it needs to be more intentional.” John said, “If I was Bishop, every D.S. would matter, every pastor would matter, and I would be much more hands on” in developing clergy and meeting their expectations and needs so “the church is moving forward and ahead through” them. John added, “If not, I’d be able to talk” with them “and say, we need to address this.” But, John noted that “we leave it upon the church, upon the Staff Parish Committees that aren’t equipped.” John continued, “There’s too many loopholes” allowing “you to sneak out if things aren’t working well,” that “it doesn’t allow you to stay if things are working well, professionally, and for the church.” John concluded, noting that it was “an antiquated system.”

John provided “a sports analogy” that illustrated the “result of the system” where the tail seems to wag the dog, acknowledging “we need pastors to fill positions,” because “churches have to have a pastor.” Specifically, John said, “When the Reds hired Ken Griffey, Junior,” there was a feeling that “we are going to be World Series people, and we haven’t been since.” John continued, saying although “he’s still a great person” and “a wonderful performer, and he’s going to do great,” that “alone he could not change the system.” John went on to say, “The itinerant system thinks if I put the right pastor in the church it will change,” but that it was “a misconception.” John added that “it can’t be” solely the responsibility of the Pastor,

because “the church is the body.” John admitted “the pastor is absolutely a part and leads that body,” but said it “never works” and “never will” to think “things will change” when the “right person” is there, simply because “system can’t change” when the response is, by definition, reactive.

John proposed “the solution” to the problem, stressing the need to be “realistic about it,” and being “intentional about all of our personnel changes” to “make the right fit for the church.” John acknowledged that “in a room full of District Superintendents, I could see the stones coming out right now, to just throw them at me,” claiming “we are intentional and you just don’t understand” or “know how hard it is.” John countered, “Yes I do,” adding “As a layperson who’s lived through it, in my profession, and I am in it all the time, I’ve found that when I am reactive in my placements, they fail.” John continued, “But, when I am intentional in my placements, people thrive.” John talked about how, “if the church is not doing well and isn’t healthy” it was important to “address that” and “be intentional to find that person who can handle what’s not going well.” John pointed out that the focus is “not just, hey we’re going to find the best person,” but that it is “we’re going to find the right person.” John added, it would be nice if in situations where “a person needs to be quiet and a listener, and that’s good for the church, someone who’s great administratively and weak in the pulpit, and that’s okay with them,” pointing out “maybe they use lay speakers instead of a Pastor to bring the message.” But, John noted, “we expect pastors to be everything,” and that it was “not fair” because “they can’t.”

Person - Environment Fit

John shared his perspective on the problems related to the fit between Larry and the church, saying that fit “was not a factor that was even considered coming in.” John went on to say that the focus was on whether or not he “was theologically” compatible, “more evangelical than not,” and “mission oriented.” John shared what he had learned from “one of my close friends in the Presbyterian Church,” where they have candidates “come and preach” once they are “finally placed,” adding “I think that would have been good.” John went on to say, “Larry’s an amazing pastor, in the pulpit, just wonderful, challenging, driving, emotional, but we didn’t know that,” because “there was no orientation period, for him, or for the church.” Instead of the practice of having a pastor give his/her “first sermon” on his/her “first Sunday,” John suggested that “it would be great to have a pastoral candidate come in and say, I’d like to check things out,” and “we could say, we’d like to check you out too, in the areas of leadership in the church.” John noted that this would enable the pastor and church to “get a feel for each other,” instead of “taking a shot in the dark.”

John talked about the current Senior Pastor and what he perceived to be a much more effective process in that appointment when Larry left. John pointed out that “this is where the D.S. relationship worked well.” John explained that Jeff could understand what “didn’t work well,” and in a process that was “more drawn out, it was much more intentional, and it made a fit.” John continued, “I wish I did know if Larry was asked how do you feel replacing a long-term pastor?” since “that’s a fit question

too.” John added that it might even be helpful to talk about “any experience” a pastor has had in dealing with such a situation.

John talked about the disparity between what the church ultimately realized it needed administratively and Larry’s skill set. Specifically, John said, “we had a fit initially.” John said that the match addressed “all of the surface things,” including “friendly, social, family guy, married, all the values that reflect in us, that looked like us, that talked like us,” adding that Larry “fit our picture of who we were demographically.” But, John went on to say that Larry was also “a strong male pastor, following a strong male pastor,” adding “I’m not saying that’s right, at all” and “It’s uncomfortable for me, honestly.” John continued, because “we weren’t straying too far from the path that we have had,” that “initially, for everybody, for Larry and the church, the fit was there.” But, John pointed out that “realistically, it never got below the surface of looks the same, talks the same, walks the same, on either end.” John added, “I don’t think he knew enough about us, and we didn’t know enough about him in order for it to succeed for both of us.” John expressed the value of “comfort” that was “systemic of everything we went through,” because neither “the church” nor “the D.S.” had any desire to “stretch” out of our comfort zones. John perceived that “they felt that was the best model to address a long-term change.” John added, “They may have known that that’s worked in the past,” but “we were never asked to look at ourselves internally and reflectively” concerning our expectations “in a Senior Pastor.” Instead, John said, “It was, oh we need a Senior Pastor, let’s get one that we’re used

to,” and “he was much different, which was wonderful” even though “we followed the model of, you know, let’s keep it safe.”

Follow Up Interview

With respect to the transcript from the initial interview, John expressed that he was “a little broad” in the initial interview. John commented that “when you look at the itinerant system, it’s hard to be concise” because of “too many mitigating factors based on congregations.” John went on to say that “The system, by itself, should work,” but because it is a human system it is more difficult. Mostly, John noticed that he had “covered a lot of different things.” Based on his experience in business John understood that that the itinerant system was a complex human system which includes layers of factors. John commented that “for a recruiting system, so-to-speak, it has value because we are trying to look at variety,” and “at fits,” but that “it’s difficult” when “we’re not as direct on listening to the pastor in the system” or “the church.”

As far as the built in time of reflection and journaling, John said, “I’m not very good at the journaling side,” and “I haven’t been, with my devotions or anything.” John went on to say, “I like the reflection part” and “being able to read back through it,” explaining “it made me understand more of the issues facing us in our last significant transition, having been away from it for some time.” John added, “I liked understanding and looking at it again” and “think it’s needed” and “smart to do.” But, concerning reflection, John indicated, “I don’t think we do it enough” except “when we look at larger situations like this.” John concluded, “I found a lot of value in it.”

In terms of new insights, John said “The biggest one was how emotional it became.” John added, “I can understand how difficult it is to try and be rational in looking at the itinerant system,” because “there are too many factors.” John went on to say, “The one thing that I forgot that we talked about was the issue of tradition when in a church,” and “I think that has value.” John continued, “However, as we see in our conference currently, because some churches are willing to hold on to tradition, they’re willing to die as well,” which “was difficult.” John added, “It was a lot more emotional reading it, versus just talking about it.” But, John noted, “That’s healthy because the emotion allows you to” evaluate the “changes.”

John added, “The other biggest reflection” and “the unfortunate part” was “the leak of confidentiality,” adding “If the system is to work, then it needs to” be confidential, “both from the selection process for the candidates,” and concerning “the church.” John went on to say, “Because we weren’t confidential,” the situation “involved too many people who didn’t have the facts,” adding “then the ball started rolling.”

John expressed concern about the lack of confidentiality in the itinerant system. Specifically, John said “a church leader can lead in certain aspects of the church,” but “there are certain pieces of information I don’t tell certain people” just because “they can’t handle it” and “don’t know how to process it.” John continued, “I don’t think it’s so much” to “be confidential,” as it needs to be on helping people “understand why we need to be confidential” and “what pieces need to be confidential.” John stressed the need to be intentional about “giving people a reason,

instead of just saying do it, because people don't handle that well." John went on to say, "I still get the sense from the District Superintendents" and the "Bishop" that they communicate "we'll make this work, you just have to trust us," but "that's not good hiring" and is "just very difficult." John added, "I would really love to see a D.S. be able to say" that "I've evaluated my staff, and this is where I see a fit, and this is how I know the life of my churches." But, John said, "We don't build that into their schedule" because "they're responsible" for "so much," that "I don't think they even have the time to" really "address it comprehensively," especially now that there are even "bigger districts."

John was troubled by something "one D.S. recently" said about a decision "to focus on the churches that are healthy, and the ones that aren't, we'll just let them happen." John asked, "What happens to that Pastor in that unhealthy church, when they need to leave or want to leave" and "the District and Superintendent might not even know who they are?" John asserted that perspective is "not good for the health of our church," and that it fails to bring life, health and growth to struggling churches. John said, "Systems tend to look at what's wrong, verses what's right," but "if we would focus on what worked right, on the whole, and then establish the system to fit the majority, the exceptions will fall out" or "they will be more blatant." John cautioned, "you address the exceptions on a case-by case basis," but should "quit trying to bend the system" in order "to fit what's not working." John added that "we tend to fix what's wrong, or what we perceive as wrong, instead of saying what's

right” or “what’s the best system to make this work,” ultimately doing things “backwards.”

With respect to the impact of his participation in the project, John indicated “I think it’s given me a better respect that someone within in the church is willing to look at a very touchy subject, something that would be seen as a sacred cow.” John went on to say how it is “interesting” and “we need to be very careful as a denomination,” because “we are built on laypeople,” but “we focus on staff.” John continued, “Personally I’ve learned that I need to remember to take a stake in this, to make sure that our church” continues “moving ahead objectively, is asking the tough” and “great questions that bring the next pastor in the right way.” John added, “we’ll be in another situation where we’ll have a long-term pastor” and the project “gave me some reminders to not let it be a dormant issue.”

For the record, John stated “I would like to make sure that this research isn’t just a paper.” John continued, “We would be shortsighted if somebody said, ‘Gee thanks, good job Mary. Way to go.’” John went on to say, “I know it’s going to work towards bestowing your degree, and it should,” but added “it’s vital to the church” that we “address this” because “it is one of the linchpins of our system.” John continued, saying that “for us not to act, or at least discuss” the issues “is a mistake.” John provided “a good example” of what he felt were misplaced priorities, saying “we’re coming up on the (Mid-Western) Conference” and “this is an issue that faces the church, versus which Sunday should (the annual Missions Fair) be.” John stressed that “there are action items before the church that could use our focus” and

“attention.” John went on to say, “The itinerant system is one of them,” both “from the pastoral side” and from the perspective of “churches,” asking several questions related to how pastors and churches feel and what they think about the itinerant system.

John spoke optimistically “about results coming out of this” study. John also said, “I would hope that all of our pastoral staff across the conference are strong,” but that “it sounds like they have little to no voice in a system” that is “run strictly from the top to fill holes,” which is “not a healthy system.” And, sharing an idea that “is just very out of the box,” John said “they should hire an H.R. person to say, this is how we recruit,” but “not” someone who is “a multi hundred-thousand-dollar consultant, which is what the church will tend to do.” John suggested instead that the conference “hire an expert” among “our laypeople,” investigating “who’s in these roles” that could “talk to us about this,” since “they’re already church members.” John concluded that simply hiring a human resources “consultant” was “easy,” but a “church member is different,” because they were “people who’ve already been in the system” and are “affected by the system.” John added, “We have a resource base” and we should “use them.” With respect to the project, John indicated “It’s been wonderful.”

Concerning the three churches involved in the project, John stated, “if the conference or the leaders” have the attitude that “we need to go after this church” or that person, then they were “missing the point.” John said “The thing that I liked about the project” was the practical application designed to “help the health” and “the

life of the church.” John added, “I like that we’re doing this” and “taking that chance.” John went on to say “an outcome should be the church should take a look at other doctoral projects,” and “in order for them to be considered” mandate there was not just “academic” value, but that it was “practical” as well.

John talked about how people struggle to relate to the system of the United Methodist Church, saying “people I know feel more identified to the local church” than “the Conference,” even though “there are a “group of fringe people” who have been “life-long Conference” people. John explained, “when we’ve talked about” the “next lay delegate to conference,” the “people my age or younger” simply “have no desire,” noting “I’m in my forties.” John went on to say, their rationale was not that they “don’t support the Methodists,” but that they would say “I identify with who I’m with.” John added, “I think that speaks to the itinerant system,” because “When I hire somebody,” the individual has “to fit” my company “and my culture, not the (Conference) culture, not the (franchise) culture,” regardless of “whether it’s in one (location) or in the corporate office.” John stated, “I don’t think it’s a factor we even look at, other than seniority” and “capacity” and “salary.” John concluded, noting that it was “a difficult system” akin to “the old traditional corporate system of up or out,” where “in order for me to move up, I have to leave,” which he said was “horrible.”

District Superintendent

While the initial interview was at the Conference office, the follow up interview was at a coffee shop. Jeff was concise, articulate, and candid in his remarks.

What Happened

Jeff talked about the beginning of Larry's ministry at the church, and the point at which difficulty began to surface. Initially, Jeff said, "Larry seemed to be off to a very good start," and "attendance had taken another step forward at the church, and there was a lot of positive feedback." Jeff went on to say, "it was probably within that first year or so, or just maybe a year and a half after that, that a series of issues began to emerge." Jeff continued, "I began to receive calls from" some "people on the Staff Parish Committee," with "primary areas of concern" related "to administrative issues and administrative style," because their perception was that he "was too much hands-off in terms of administrative style." Specifically, Jeff noted that although "in the church as a whole, there was a great deal of satisfaction within his ministry" and "preaching," within the "inner circle of leadership, there was a growing discontent" related to "the leadership and administration of the church."

Jeff talked about the progression of the conflict, adding "there were several attempts to have a conversation with myself, and with Larry, and with Staff Parish members, and/or the whole committee...to identify those issues, and seek to take or make some corrective action, and that was not successful." Jeff went on to say, "There continued to be people pressing the concerns around Larry, although I still felt that things could be worked through." However, Jeff indicated that in the end, "Larry also came to a decision that it was time for him to leave."

Jeff recalled that "there were also some family issues involved," because Larry's wife felt like she was floundering a bit, not really able to find her place in her

ministry in that congregation.” Jeff said, “Up until that time (they) had almost been like a team in ministry” and “she basically handled the Christian education, and really functioned like a staff person.” However, Jeff said, “There was already in place staff to deal with...those particular areas, including the ones around which she had passion.”

Jeff talked about the reaction of the church to the transition, commenting, that when “things all began to unfold, and it was learned that Larry was going to be moving, there was a great deal of anger in the congregation.” Jeff went on to say that this anger included “a feeling on the part of some that the Staff Parish Chair and some other leaders of the church and I had betrayed the church.” Jeff added, “Now, that wasn’t real deep,” but that it “was intense feeling at the moment.” Jeff explained that “a lot of that was simply people wanting to understand,” even though there was “some clear choosing of sides.” He went on to say, since the arrival of the new pastor, “it’s been a very productive period.” Jeff continued, in “a very brief time” he has been able “to bring the congregation back together,” in spite of the fact that “a small number of people...left the congregation ultimately.”

Jeff described one of the factors in leading to the change in clergy, “in retrospect,” as “an imbalance of emphasis on theology and preaching and too little or a lack of balance in terms of considering leadership styles and readiness,” or the “experience and readiness of the pastor.” Jeff said that the Staff Parish Relations Committee had expressed a desire for “a very good preacher,” and someone who was “very evangelical, or more conservative in theology.” He explained that the

“appointment had been made” by the time that he had started working with the Cabinet, but that based on what he had heard, “maybe there was some level of error that was made right there.” Jeff added that “Now maybe that doesn't say it was the wrong person necessarily, but maybe there were some preparatory things that could've been done if issues had been more clearly identified,” even though Larry “was certainly coming from a church that the demonstrated very strong growth, and had other characteristics of the appointment.”

Noting the number of factors involved, Jeff said “I don't think it's a lack of careful consideration, but particularly at that time and even today there's a wide latitude in how profiles are written for pastors and churches.” Noting the discretionary latitude of the District Superintendents, Jeff said, “Frankly...the specific Superintendent who preceded me, by the end of his tenure was significantly different, was experiencing some illness, and was significantly disconnected from the process.” Jeff was quick to add that “on the human side...there may or may not have been adequate representation.” Jeff also noted that Larry came from an area where “a District Superintendent was serving on an interim basis.” Jeff then added, “I'm not sure that there still is any kind of systematic way that you necessarily ask all of those questions.” Jeff continued, wondering “if it was a gap in the way that profiles were written” or “in human communication,” but said “those are certainly areas to look.” Jeff commented, “We need to keep pushing forward to try to find the best possible ways to profile,” including perhaps “a foundation” or “a more standardized set of criteria or questions which both Superintendents and Pastors and those who work most

directly with pastors in congregations answer.” He added, “Part of the struggle with that is not getting so deluged with information and paperwork that it begins to be disregarded, or simply becomes humanly possible to sort-of manage it.” Jeff concluded that the Cabinet does “value the local church and the ministry of the local church, and we value putting the most effective leadership we’re able to do in each local church given all of the different constraints.”

Explaining another factor, Jeff talked about a gap between expectations and reality, where there was a need for the Senior Pastor to adjust more to the culture of the church. Specifically, Jeff described “a struggle of the pastor to adapt to administrative styles and expectations of congregational leaders.” He said that the leaders in the church “came significantly from corporate America...not the upper echelons of corporate America, but they were in professional and responsible positions.” As a result, Jeff indicated that “they expected a relatively engaged and active style of administering the church.” Jeff went on to say that part of the problem was that the new Senior Pastor “didn’t see himself functioning in that corporate style,” and that they had discussed that very issue. Jeff indicated that he had told Larry that “missionaries” who are “working in another culture...would make an effort to adapt our style to the culture in which we were working,” even though “it might not be his natural place where he is comfortable but that might be something he would want to” consider. Jeff said, he also noted in his conversations with Larry that “administrative styles and leadership styles vary in size of congregations” in terms of “the oversight that’s given.” Jeff added that he told Larry that the larger churches tend to become

more complex, and...it takes a more complex approach, it takes a more detailed approach,” necessitating “delegating more” and “in the right kind of way.”

Jeff also said that another perhaps more minor factor was “the inability of the congregation” or “congregational leadership to adapt.” But, Jeff said, “this could have been overcome if the congregation leaders had maybe found a way to fill the gaps in some respects.” He went on to explain the underlying conviction that “congregations need to realize” that “every leader comes with a unique set of strengths and weaknesses,” and that it was “really unfair to expect to omni-competence out of any leader.” But, Jeff also said “there does come a point at which either there’s a sufficient lack of competence, or there is lack of effective leadership in a particular area that’s deep enough that changes have to be made.” Jeff concluded, “I think the value is also that congregations need to build staff and team around the gifts of their key leaders.”

Jeff also talked about a potential personality clash, explaining “I’ve often wondered if on some level there was not a...personality conflict between the pastor and Staff Parish,” although he added “I’m not sure...a personality conflict is the right description.” Jeff went on to say that “it may be more accurate to say that they got locked in conflict, and it was hard to get out of it.” He continued, “There was a certain amount of determination on both sides” and that there are times “we do not have adequate tools to deal with conflict personally in our lives...or systemically within a congregation.” Ultimately, Jeff said, “It points to a value of the itinerant system having adequate tools in place, resources in place to help congregations and pastors

deal with conflict.” Jeff emphasized the need “for Superintendents and others in the system...to keep working ways that we identify conflict at its earliest stages and develop the skills to not let it get” out of control, and doing what is necessary “to avoid that locking into conflict occurring.”

Jeff talked about his own involvement in the situation, commenting “I’ve often felt or sensed that there was a strain that developed between myself...and the pastor,” since “I had personal relationships with people in the congregation,” having “been there” for a number of years. Jeff continued, “I think the pastor wondered whether I was listening to him as well as other people,” adding “I was, and ultimately I think that we could have kept him there.” But, Jeff went on to say, “I think there was that sense of strain” and “maybe even my comment to him about the missionary setting” and “other kinds of comments may have conveyed to him the impression that I wasn’t on his side, or I wasn’t supporting him.” Jeff noted, “my goal was always to keep him there until he got to the point when he was saying that I want out, that this is too hurtful to me and my family.” However, Jeff said, “I think that he felt that I was too close to the PPR chair” and “the chair of the...administrative board...or their equivalent body.” Jeff specifically described the corporate culture in the area, and of “superb administrators” who are “careful” in their “planning...evaluation,” and in their “administrative work.” Jeff noted that although Larry “was trying to move the church into a new style, “some keys leaders” felt “the church was suffering because basic fundamental core functions of the church were not being well managed.”

Jeff went on to say that “if I were making those assignments, particularly in retrospect, I would have continued the arrangement where another District Superintendent was managing or supervising that pastor, because of the “innate real or perceived conflicts of interest.” Jeff added that the previous “arrangement that had been worked out” was not “ideal” because “you have a church and pastor disconnected from their colleagues and supervised in a different way” when reporting to a more remote District Superintendent. Jeff acknowledged, “it’s not a perfect situation, and I don’t know that there’s a way that you can ultimately avoid having to face one of those circumstances unless you just simply say that you are never going to make appointments that create that dynamic.” But, Jeff noted, that was “pretty hard to say that when you begin to bring into the picture all of the dynamics that are involved in moving pastors to various places.”

Jeff talked about the number of long pastorates in this particular church setting that had been followed by short pastorates, adding that “the cycle repeated three times,” because “the basic response...has just been please don’t ever move our pastor.” Jeff went on to say, “That is an interesting pattern that seems to have developed with that particular church, but not just that particular church,” because “other churches...have or are wrestling with those same issues.” Jeff added “that the question systemically would be...is there something in the itinerancy that we ought to do after X number of years...some sort of transition seminar, workshop, some preparation we make for the changes?”

Seminary Preparation

Concerning potential gaps in seminary preparation programs, Jeff said “I don’t think that seminary by in large even addresses...most of the tools needed to be a Senior Pastor with multiple staff,” qualifying his comments as from the perspective of someone who had been out of seminary for a number of years. Commenting, “I do know that there is more done today then there used to be,” Jeff said that “most people that come out of seminary are either going to be in solo appointments in relatively small settings, or on a staff where they’re not in charge.” Jeff went on to say that “seminary tends to focus you more toward the basic skills of preaching and pastoral ministry, and the basic tools that are the foundation for ministry.” Jeff continued, “The things that I’ve learned about personally have been basically from continuing education or other mentoring settings,” including “how do you manage the staff, how do you do administration in a larger church, how do you vision, how do you lead” people, “to whatever extent that I’ve learned them.” Jeff agreed that although seminaries may be doing much more now then they did before, there still is a gap between the skill set that would be needed for the Senior Pastor of a large United Methodist Church and those of a graduating seminarian. However, Jeff noted that “the proviso on that would be” the “people going into the ministry as a second career,” some of whom “bring those skill sets and training at least in terms of broad principles from a previous career.” Jeff went on to say that, in those cases, the second career pastors “have to learn, politically and otherwise, how to do it in a local church, but some of those folks have those skills.”

Jeff said that the gap between seminary preparation and the requirements of a large church role as a Senior Pastor were real and systemic with the exception of a second career pastor with previous management experience, but that even then they needed to adapt to the unique culture and size of the church. Jeff noted, “I don’t want administration only to be a management issue, it’s also a leadership and visioning issue.” Jeff went on to say that it may not be possible, because at best “you might plant seeds in the first, in a normal Master of Divinity program,” acknowledging “that seminaries could be a part of the next level of that, and seminaries are working at that.” Jeff specifically cited “the Beeson program on church leadership at Asbury Seminary” as one example. Jeff also agreed that it would perhaps be premature to address some of the issues in seminary preparation programs, like how to deal with a large staff, when most graduates typically have a smaller church, or no staff at all, necessitating that they even “type their own bulletins.”

Professional Identity

Jeff explained there were “several seminars” and “workshops that have been developed in various places across the church and country for people leading multiple staffs, and first-time Senior Pastors.” Jeff said that although those seminars and workshops “certainly can help to put issues on the radar screen for a pastor,” it was also true that “most of us don’t master everything out of a four-day workshop.” Jeff expressed the “value” of “progressive development and preparation of clergy across their careers” to equip them to them for the particular “settings in which they find themselves.” Concerning “larger churches in general,” Jeff described “one of the

areas of need is for pastors to be able to transition in their perception of themselves from what some authors called shepherd to rancher.” Specifically, Jeff indicated that this understanding “has to do with recognizing span of care, and what span of care can you give,” and “learning to delegate” or recognize “how fast you can move on things, taking the temperature on the culture and the congregation and then making the right response based on that temperature.” Jeff went on to say, “Churches do need to transition, but you can be so slow at it that it never gets done” and “you can also move so quickly because you’re unwilling to live” with any “ambiguity.” With respect to “Bishops and Cabinets,” Jeff said that in terms of “pastoral development,” it is important “to be able to understand that accurately, and help pastors develop in ways that are appropriate” and connected “to who they are.”

Jeff explained that one of the criticisms of this particular Mid-Western Conference is that with the focus on church growth, “you don’t value the little churches or the pastors that aren’t in big churches.” Jeff went on to say that “most churches are not going to get large, and we need a lot of really competent pastors who may never” serve as “ranchers of big spreads, but are very effective shepherds” and “we need to value that.” Jeff also talked about how “Smaller churches and larger churches approach money in different ways.” Specifically, Jeff noted that “in a smaller church, they don’t want to know what a great leader you are until they know how much you love them,” in contrast to “a larger church,” where “they want to be loved, but you’d better be a leader” because they “look for more forward moving leadership from the pastor.” Jeff added that “one of the growth and development

pieces” of a large church pastor “is discovering” exactly “where the church is” and “stepping into the role.”

Itinerancy

With respect to the itinerant system, Jeff indicated, “I think it’s pretty clear that the itinerant system is under enormous strain in our time,” since “we have more and more working spouses.” Jeff added, “It becomes not just a sacrifice for the pastor but for the entire pastoral family, sometimes to pull up and move when it means the loss of employment or the potential loss of employment for a spouse and all that means for lifestyle.” Jeff went on to say, “I think we live in a culture that is more accustomed to negotiating and people in their professional life being able to say Yes I will do that, and No I won’t do that as far as where I go.” Jeff continued, “And there’s some sense in which being under the authority of the Bishop and going where the Bishop says is almost countercultural in that respect.” Jeff observed that “younger clergy and those coming in out of second careers in the corporate world tend to be more willing to march to the tune their own drummer.” Jeff summarized the issues by commenting that “a large number of our clergy are regionally itinerant rather than fully itinerant.” But, Jeff added that a desire to be a certain number of miles from a large city because of the employment of a spouse “puts strain in two ways on the system,” because “it means that a Bishop and Cabinets have more limited ability to put that Pastor” where s/he is “best suited, because the universe of possibilities is reduced.” Jeff added that “it also means that pastors who are fully itinerant in some cases can be hampered because they don’t get as full of an opportunity at some appointments because there’s

this group of people that have to be there.” Jeff concluded, “A congregational system deals with those restraints but they’re new to us” or “they’re emerging more and more for us.”

In short, Jeff described the itinerant system, as it currently operates, being counter-culture, and increasingly difficult in a world that is increasingly different. Jeff added, “I think the conviction would be that on one hand itinerancy is historically and theologically pretty central to our United Methodist self understanding, but it's increasingly challenging to live it out in the culture of our day for these variety of reasons.” Jeff went on to enumerate additional factors impacting the appointment of clergy in addition to working spouses, including “ages of children” and “where they are in school,” along with the “children or family members that have medical needs that can only be met in certain areas” and “personal preferences.” Jeff cited additional factors impacting appointments including, “is this a pastor that can serve in just about any kind of setting or is this a pastor who’s gifts, grace, preferences are more suited to rural or urban.” Jeff concluded, “one of our big challenges is that a very small number of our pastors really feel called or equipped to serve in a truly core urban area, because ministry brings its own peculiar, particular issues there.”

Jeff acknowledged, “One of the challenges for this particular Mid-Western Conference in our new system of reduced Superintendents” is “for the Superintendent to have adequate knowledge of the pastor.” Jeff added, “I think the more tools that can be in place that help Superintendents as they communicate” not just “in a common language” but also “in a common understanding around some common sense of

evaluation” ultimately “will just help that to happen.” Jeff agreed that this was true not just with respect to an evaluation of the pastor, but also an evaluation or a summary of the church too. He noted that both pastors and churches needed to be aware of their gifts and graces and preferences, because the Cabinet works with both “pastoral profiles and Congregational profiles.” Jeff also explained that “sometimes you have effective pastors and dysfunctional congregations,” and that “part of leadership is being able” to “figure out” ways “to address the dysfunction of that congregation.” But, Jeff went on to say, “There are some congregations that probably the very best pastor, the most skilled pastor would struggle if not fail in terms of dealing with the dysfunction,” and “more in-depth tools” and “mediations are needed.” Jeff added that the “sheer size of the supervisory responsibility becomes an issue in the itinerant system.” Jeff commented, “It’s wonderful to think of all the things that could be done to be a solution, but then you multiply the things that arise out of 1300 churches” and “you have to choose those situations that seem most urgent.”

When asked if he wanted to add anything else, Jeff expressed a concern related to confidentiality, because “it’s a pretty recognizable circumstance.” Jeff went on to say, “I would encourage you to do all you can to camouflage” the particular case. I agreed that the challenge was going to be in representing situations as best as possible without making them too overly identifiable. And, although I had not yet navigated that terrain that I understood that the information was both politically and personally sensitive for people, adding that I would be mindful and prayerful about those dynamics. In response, Jeff said, “Very Good.”

Person - Environment Fit

Jeff indicated that “theologically the appointment was a very good match,” and that Larry was “an outstanding preacher.” Jeff talked about how a new female Associate Pastor started at the same time as Larry, saying “There was not a good relationship between them,” and they just didn’t see eye to eye,” explaining that “their styles were very different.” Jeff went on to say that Larry “had not worked with a woman before,” and there were perhaps “some theological struggles with that” or that he “was not very comfortable working with a woman as his Associate.” In the end, Jeff acknowledged that he was not certain to what extent that was a theological issue for Larry in terms of women in ministry, or to what degree it was more related to personality and style, commenting “I don’t know how to sort that out.” Jeff summarized the issues of Larry’s fit at the church, saying “that was a good match,” especially “theologically,” in terms of “preaching,” and regarding the “deep interest in missions.” But, Jeff also noted, “I think there was too much emphasis in some areas” and “that it was a carelessly made appointment.”

Jeff talked about the challenges in the system, saying “Part of our dilemma...in the itinerancy...is that given the decline we’ve been experiencing, there is not the breadth of mobility in salary or in church size that there once was.” Jeff continued “this may be a professional growth issue as well, but, if you take pastors and they spend most of their lives” and career “in a small church” it is difficult at best for them to “learn the models.” Jeff went on to say that “even if” some Pastors “might have capabilities to move in other places” in the Conference, “when a larger church is

available, in the cabinet we would, we talk about all these other issues but we would also look at and try to judge” the “basic levels of leadership.” According to Jeff, this discussion would include “how far can this person go and do well and what has prepared them to take this next step, and what do we need to do to help them to make the next step.” Jeff also indicated, “I think that there are pastors all across the theological spectrum that can bridge theologies and theological understanding.” Jeff explained that “theology is frequently a piece of the conversation, and how much” of a “connect or disconnect there is going to be” with a church. Jeff pointed out that “typically to take one of those churches and try to put the opposite in there is to invite conflict.” Jeff added, “if that were done, there would have to be some very well thought out and specific reasons for doing it.” Jeff described how the Cabinet tries to make the best fit possible given the needs of churches and abilities of clergy, recognizing that some gaps can be addressed by training and encourage advancing pastors accordingly. Jeff noted, “It was pretty standard encouragement, I think, for pastors becoming Senior Pastors to go to one of those Senior Pastor type trainings.”

Jeff talked about how some pastors are clear about their identity and what might be a best fit. Specifically, he said, “in terms of church size” that “there are some pastors that are very clear in their own minds I don't want to serve a big church,” or “I am a small church pastor, that's who I am. I feel good about that, I do it well.” Jeff went on to say, “There are other pastors who are certainly willing” and who “continue to grow and are able to assume congregations that require more complex levels of responsibility.” But, Jeff added, there are “others that can't.”

Follow Up Interview

At the outset, Jeff said, “Frankly, as I, as I worked back through it, I didn’t identify any real significant changes.” However, Jeff did point out that there were a couple of misspelled names in the transcript “which I don’t know are of consequence” because they related more to the historical perspective of the church. Jeff expressed “I wish I could have spoken more concise sentences,” even though he agreed with me that reflection is, by definition, based on history, and he did not have the questions up front, which would have made that challenging. Specifically, Jeff stated, “that’s right,” because it was “sort of stream of consciousness thinking.” Jeff concluded “there were not a lot of additional thoughts that came to my mind.”

Jeff expressed an honest concern about the lag time between the first and second interview, explaining that he had moved on to other things. I explained the need to wait for the Institutional Review Board to approve the Schedule for the follow-up interviews prior to continuing the study. Jeff went on to say, “I don’t think I did a great deal of reflection,” adding that it “probably means that once I left the first interview with you, I didn’t go away thinking” that “there was a lot that I wish I would have said or wouldn’t have said.”

Related to new insights, Jeff talked about “the human portion of the appointment process,” and just “how significant a factor that is, and how hard it is in making decisions that involve human relationships to, to obtain and manage the kind of hard data that in theory one might hope for.” Jeff went on to say that it was not his intention to imply that there was not an effort to make the best match, but that “it

really is hard to ask all of the right questions.” Jeff noted that “sometimes you think you’ve asked all the right questions, and there’s some you missed,” describing a need to have “an appreciation for the complexity” of a human system.

Jeff expressed that although he “was not intimately involved in that profiling process,” having just left the church in question. Jeff said, “In retrospect, I wonder if the questions that were asked were not theological and functional questions” and if “in an effort to capture all of the other things that the church wanted to capture in their profile, if there was sufficient attention given to administrative style.” Jeff acknowledged that he was more involved in the following appointment, which given his history and understanding of the church seemed to have helped. Specifically, Jeff said, “I did have” an “intimate knowledge of the church, having served as pastor.” Jeff explained that “the persona of the pastor that followed probably suited who the congregation was being more deeply” and that he seemed to be a better fit for the perceived identity of the church. Jeff went on to say that although he knew the church well, that “I didn’t know (him) all that well in the process of appointment.” Jeff explained, with respect to working with the Cabinet, “that’s where there are times you simply have to trust your colleagues” and “the input they’re giving you” about people.” Summarizing the new appointment, Jeff and that the new Senior Pastor “brought a level of ability and characteristics that would bridge” potential questions related to fit.

Jeff talked about the impact of his participation in this research project. Specifically, he said, “It’s been enjoyable in the midst of the interviews to think about

the issues.” Jeff added, “It’s helped me to think about” the “relative strengths” and “relative weakness in the itinerant system.” In discussing the strengths of the system based on his reflection, Jeff said, “Well, some of the strengths would include the fact that you have a team of people” who are “identifying the assets of particular pastors and congregations.” Jeff added, “there are layers” in the “profiling done by the Superintendent” working “with both pastors and congregations,” going “through the Cabinet” for “a reflective process” before “it comes back for an introduction.” Jeff continued, explaining that “a church” has an “opportunity” to “say” that “we have some real questions about this” and “certainly can raise concerns if they think that a wrong decision is being made,” even though “they don’t have veto power.” Jeff concluded, “The many eyes” and “the collaborative nature of the process” is “helpful, I think.”

Jeff went on to say that, with respect to the work of the Cabinet, “there is value in a pastor or a church being known,” but acknowledged that “if a pastor or a church is unknown by most superintendents then it can become a little more difficult.” Jeff described a “strength of the system is that we have the ability both to support Pastors, and to make changes with placement of new Pastors relatively quickly.” Jeff added that compared to the congregational system, the itinerant system may not remove a Pastor as quickly, except in rare or extreme situations. Jeff explained that “most often, we work with church to complete a year, or move to a, move to a reasonable transition point, unless there are just some issues that are so forceful that we have to act more quickly.” Jeff went on to say that “unless there is an intentional interim arrangement,

churches are rarely more than a few months without a pastor,” which “is a real strength of our system, versus a more congregational system where sometimes churches go for one, two, or more years doing that search process.”

Jeff indicated “a place our system can improve is in the profiling questions, in the profiling process, if perhaps there’s a more standardized set of data that’s looked for, so that, so that’s there’s more consistency across profiles.” Jeff explained two different layers of the profiling process, including a written profile, and “the verbal, or the verbal comments that a member of the cabinet may make.” Jeff added that the written profiles varied from “one or two sentences in each of three or four areas, and more general,” and “pretty specific and fairly lengthy.” In summary, Jeff said, “the better known a pastor is in general, probably the less that has to be written, because there’s more general perception and understanding” of the “strengths, weaknesses, style,” and “the kind of persona we project.”

In terms of weaknesses or areas to improve the system, Jeff said, “Well, some of us have wondered if United Methodism ought not to be able to move beyond the guaranteed annual appointment.” Jeff continued, noting “there are some really frightening things about that for clergy” and “it would have to be done very carefully.” Jeff added, “But it would seem to me that taking away the guaranteed annual appointment would, would give Cabinets and Bishops a more direct way, and perhaps a more helpful way to deal with pastors who probably ought not to be in ministry.” Jeff was quick to explain that “I don’t think that’s true of any of the people we’ve been discussing,” but I was “thinking more broadly about the system.” Jeff went on to say,

“At the same time, I think we have to be careful how we do that, because it seems to me to have some level of unfairness” for the Cabinet “to not guarantee an appointment, and then on the other hand not give a pastor the ability to seek appointment,” because that is “problematic in some ways.” Jeff continued, “I don’t think that we could simply put pastors in permanent limbo,” so “there would have to be some points at which it became clear to the Bishop and Cabinet and the pastors that there was an ending point.” Jeff added, “we just need to continue to work very hard in terms of the on-going preparation of pastors, and training of pastors, and providing ways for those of us who are pastors to” learn “the best practices.” Jeff expressed optimism that “our cluster system, here in (this Mid-Western Conference) provides a really hopeful sign in that way.”

Case 3 Summary

The results of case 3 are compared, analyzed, and summarized below. The stories of the four participants are summarized based on the issues, common themes, and patterns that resulted, along with discrepant data.

Issues, Common Themes, and Patterns in What Happened and Discrepancies

There were several themes that emerged from the issues raised by these four different perspectives. Similar to the other cases, these included difficulties in transition, a conflict in style of worship, a conflict in direction or focus of ministry, a conflict in personal style and strength of leadership, and a conflict in ownership.

Difficulties in Transition

Although there was not a history of conflict at the church, per se, the two clergy who were appointed to the church at the same time both had made difficult moves and were having a hard time adjusting to the new setting. Larry noted that the Associate Pastor had been in a difficult situation in her former church, and seemed to be struggling to find her place in the new church, just as his wife was struggling to find her place. Larry also commented on the multiple transitional challenges for him and his family, as well as for the Associate Pastor and her family.

A Conflict in Style of Worship

Larry noted that he had initially made a mistake in reading the church as evangelical. But, Larry indicated that he quickly realized that the church was conservative, and that they began to respond well to his leadership. John said that Larry had walked into a church that was divided between the traditional and contemporary factions. Consistent with the “worship war” that Larry said was taking place between the contemporary and traditional camps when he arrived at the church. Larry noted that the battle between these two factions never went away but that he thought that he managed it well, adding that there was significant numerical growth in both the traditional and contemporary services. In reflecting on the issue of tradition in a church, John said that it has value, but some churches are dying because of an adherence to tradition, and an unwillingness to accommodate different worship styles.

Clarence said that Larry was different than Jeff had been, especially in making changes to the traditional service, like not saying the Lord’s prayer every week, or not

recognizing Veteran's Day. Clarence noted that many felt that Larry's priorities did not match those of the history of the church. Clarence also indicated that the church was divided between those who supported Larry and appreciated the different things he brought to the church, and those who did not like the changes especially in worship style.

A Conflict in Direction or Focus of Ministry

There was an apparent conflict between the Senior Pastor and the Associate Pastor, even though Larry felt that they had a good working relationship and had openly shared his vision of where things needed to go at the church with her. Clarence noted the conflict between Larry and his Associate, explaining that she did not get a chance to preach very often, which bothered her. She seemed to want the same generalist roles as the Senior Pastor and resisted Larry's attempts to persuade her to take a more specialized role at the church. Larry felt that the church was rather arrogant, and although he tried to help the church see where things were headed financially and programmatically, they did not want to have any part in what they considered to be downsizing.

John talked about how Larry was more mission-minded and challenged them to be more outreach oriented than Jeff had been during his tenure. Jeff focused primarily on supporting missions financially. John went on to say that there was a split in the church related to the direction and vision of the church. John added that it made some people comfortable when Larry challenged them to actually be the church, instead of simply going to church.

A Conflict in Style and Strength of Leadership

In contrast to the former Senior Pastor, Larry was not an outstanding administrator, but he did bring an added depth through his focus on spiritual growth. Although things went well for the first couple of years as the church grew, the church was over-extended financially because of the decisions of the former Senior Pastor. Larry pointed out that the former Senior Pastor became a District Superintendent and some members seemed to be looking for a continuation of his ministry at the church, even though the differences in style had been acknowledged from the beginning.

Larry indicated that he was willing to stay at the church and work through the conflict with them; however, allegations concerning a less than positive working relationship with the Associate Pastor led Larry to conclude that staying would be a losing battle. Jeff also mentioned the possible personality clash between Larry and the Staff Parish Relations Committee, noting the need for tools related to helping District Superintendents identify and address conflict.

Larry added that it would have been a good match, but it was not allowed to be a good match, adding that he understood the culture of the church more than they gave him credit for. Jeff discussed his perceptions of the conflict between Larry's administrative style and the leadership of the church from the corporate sector who expected a more actively engaged approach. He thought Larry's challenge was like a missionary needing to adapt to a different culture because the situation demanded a more complex and detailed approach. Jeff further indicated that Larry's style was not consistent with the corporate culture of the church leadership, who felt that the core

functions of the church were not being well managed. John said that it was unfair to expect competence in every area of any leader, pointing out that churches need to build a staff team around the gifts of their key leadership. Jeff added that the church might have been able to adapt if they had found ways to fill in the missing gaps.

In the midst of attempting to move from an administrative to a growth model, Larry said that the supporters of the status quo, who were also good friends of Jeff's, kept running to him as the District Superintendent and drew him into what they perceived to be a conflict in the administration of the church. Larry felt that his leadership was being undermined by Jeff and his ties to the church, adding that the church was full of frustrated middle managers from the corporate sector. Larry ultimately asked to be moved to a new appointment because of the strain the situation was causing on his health and his family.

John indicated that the church was not a good fit for the Associate Pastor either. He emphasized that it was neither fair nor a good fit to appoint the two new clergy to the same church. John said that Larry was the only male on staff, but that Larry handled the situation well and tried to work through obstacles.

Clarence noted that their former Senior Pastor had been "an institution" at the church, making it challenging for anyone to live up to a very high standard in terms of the expectations of the congregation. Jeff also indicated that he had received complaints regarding Larry's administrative style, in spite of the satisfaction related to his ministry and preaching. For Jeff, this meant that Larry had not been successful in resolving the issues they had discussed. Jeff said that Larry ultimately decided that it

was time to leave, in part because of family issues. Jeff indicated that Larry's decision to leave caused some intense anger in the church because they felt betrayed by the Staff Parish Relations Committee and by Jeff, their former Senior Pastor and current District Superintendent.

Clarence indicated that Jeff was contacted by people in the congregation because of his relationship with them, drawing him into the situation on more than one occasion. John agreed, and, like Larry said that it was a mistake to have Larry report to a District Superintendent who had just been the Senior Pastor of the church. John noted that although Jeff handled the situation appropriately, others did not. John went on to say that it was difficult for both the clergy to see Jeff as an advocate and resource because of his continued close ties to the church. Jeff commented that he had sensed that a strain developed between himself and Larry, noting that Larry may not have felt supported by him, even though he felt he was supportive. Jeff added that in retrospect they probably should have continued the arrangement where Jeff was reporting to another District Superintendent because of the real and/or perceived conflict of interest. However, Jeff noted that this arrangement also would be less than ideal because Larry would have also been disconnected from his colleagues in the District.

Clarence said that Larry was not as attentive to detail or as proficient in the business side of ministry as Jeff had been. He also indicated that although Larry was really strong in ministering to the needs of the people, their pastor needed to be good at both the business and personal facets of ministry. Most of the programs that Larry

started during his tenure are still functioning well at the church, and his recommendations for the change in church staffing structure have since been implemented. However, the church is now under the leadership of more of an administrative style pastor. In short, it seems that the business aspect of ministry is more highly valued at this church, and both administrative and personal facets of ministry appear not to be equally important.

A Conflict in Ownership

Part of the conflict in ownership related to staffing at the church. The Cabinet had appointed both a new Senior Pastor and a new Associate Pastor to begin at the same time, without consulting the Senior Pastor concerning his vision for the needs of the church. Larry indicated that he had to work hard to keep the Associate Pastor busy, because she too had been trained as a generalist. Larry added that for a church that size they had critical needs in children's ministry and Christian education so he had tried to get the Associate Pastor to specialize in one of those two areas. She declined. However, in talking about Larry's wife typically serving as more of a partner in his ministry, Jeff indicated that there were already people in place at the church to deal with Christian education.

John said that there was a strong commitment among members to maintain the status quo of the church, and that the rumors and gossip from the staff and leadership evolved into false rumors about Larry and his family because he was so different in style than Jeff. Although Larry's approach made people uncomfortable, the difference was never discussed. John went on to say that during the transition when Larry was

preparing to leave, a lot of inappropriate things were brought up at a church conference, which further escalated the conflicts. Although he did not specify concerning the nature of the discussion, John went on to say that it was ugly, and divisive. So, regardless of whether or not anything was true, John felt that it was unfortunate and simply too late for any Senior Pastor to recover.

Clarence said there was also some resistance to change because some people in the congregation did not feel like they had any say in the appointment process. He added that their former Senior Pastor chose to leave, not because he was asked, but to pursue a career opportunity as a District Superintendent. However, it is commonly understood that the District Superintendents are appointed by the Bishop, and do not simply decide on their own to pursue that position as an option. John noted that the congregation was not even asked for any expectations in a Senior Pastor when Jeff left the church and Larry was appointed.

Summary

The Senior Pastor was appointed to serve in a church, along with a new Associate Pastor, following a long term pastor who was promoted to District Superintendent. Initially, things seemed to be going well in the church, but when the former Senior Pastor turned District Superintendent began supervising the Senior Pastor, complaints about Larry's style being different began to surface. In the end, Larry requested a move because he did not feel supported by Jeff, who unexpectedly attended some meetings and tried to get Larry to adopt his administrative style.

Areas of Focus

The intent of the study was to explore the three cases from, examining more closely potential gaps in the seminary preparation and professional identity of the Senior Pastors, the itinerant system in general and the fit between the Senior Pastor and the particular large church setting. Below, the stories of each of the four perspectives are summarized below as they relate to what was shared relative to these four major areas of focus in the study.

Seminary Preparation

Larry was extremely angry about the huge gap between his seminary preparation and his experience in the ministry. His areas of concern included leadership education, church dynamics, conflict management, church growth, and navigating change. He talked about the value of a course in assessing and understanding the culture of a church, complaining that he never learned any of that information in his United Methodist seminary. Larry also indicated that it would have been helpful to have had more training in seminary related to understanding the dynamics of marriage and family in the ministry. Although Larry did indicate that there had been small groups and some input from professors who would invite him and his wife to their homes, Larry said it would have been nice to have experienced something more intentional to help him and his wife better understand their individual and collective strengths and weaknesses. He suggested accountability groups, working with other married couples or participating in regular retreats.

Clarence indicated that he was not certain about the content of seminary preparation programs, but said he guessed they spent a lot of time on theology. Clarence was quick to add that he was hopeful that church business would be a part of the curriculum, although he was not certain if that was true. Clarence made it clear that it was an expectation that clergy know how to handle the business side of the church when they are appointed.

John suggested that seminary preparation programs balance classroom learning with practical information. Specifically, he recommended including additional coursework in assessing the culture of a church, in team building, group dynamics, communication, and human resource based courses, such as a course on the Myers Briggs Type Indicator and the application of that learning to organizational life. John also suggested courses on dealing with difficult people, the role of the pastor, and the foundation of the United Methodist church, including an explanation of the discipline based committees.

Jeff indicated that more was addressed now than in prior years, but acknowledged that seminaries do not really address issues pertinent to serving as a Senior Pastor of a large church, aside from providing the foundational tools for preaching and pastoral ministry applicable to all churches. Jeff suggested that seminary preparation programs initially plant seeds with respect to management, leadership and visioning, designing additional programs to help Pastors further develop their leadership skills. Jeff noted that it seemed premature to offer seminary courses on how to deal with a large staff when most graduates have little to no staff in

their initial appointments. Jeff indicated that although some Pastors bring these skills with them to the ministry from prior work experience, they still need to learn how to apply their skills sets to a new context, adding that most Pastors learn these things from continuing education or mentoring settings.

Professional Identity

Larry indicated that he had benefited from his relationships with other pastors, especially with accountability and in developing ministry plans. He has personally enjoyed coaching pastors of smaller churches. However, Larry indicated that he has gained the most benefit from being involved with a group of diverse clergy from other denominations. In his non United Methodist clergy group, he perceived that there is not potential conflict of interest, and indicated that he has received some helpful advice. Larry added that the mentoring he has received in this group was more beneficial than the supervised years during his seminary education. He expressed concern that the Conference would over-structure their cluster program, which in his opinion would kill it.

Clarence had the distinct impression that Larry had experience related to being a Senior Pastor. However, he was not certain if the church or specific type of setting had been the same, or if he had ever worked with an Associate Pastor in his prior appointments. Similarly, John felt that Larry had some transferable skills because of prior mission work that gave him insight into finance, budgeting, planning and the ability to do without some things. John did not see Larry as strong administratively,

but added that it was unfair to expect a Senior Pastor to be able to do everything with excellence.

Jeff talked more generally about the seminars and workshops available to new Senior Pastors, but added that it was difficult to master the topics in a short span of time. Jeff indicated he was an advocate for the progressive development of pastors throughout their careers, including a necessary transition from shepherd to rancher as they move to a large church setting, providing an appropriate span of care. Jeff noted that the Bishop and Cabinet needed to facilitate the development of clergy. Expressing a concern of the focus on church growth in the Conference, Jeff indicated that there was a need to value smaller churches and the many clergy who would probably never serve in a large church setting.

Itinerancy

Larry emphasized the importance of some freedom of movement for churches and clergy to express a desire to continue to work together, pointing out that although it was not the case with his former District Superintendent, he felt supported in his current appointment. Even though some of the pastors in the system are problems, Larry went on to say that there needs to be a certain level of confidence and trust in the clergy, instead of a focus on politics and keeping everyone happy. Larry indicated that even though the system was full of mistakes that his theology needed to be congruent with his lived experience in order for him to function within the itinerant system. Larry also expressed some frustration in hearing language that was more political from the Bishop related to the appointment process. Larry believed that God

had sent him to serve in that church and that God could work through him in spite of the human mistakes, noting that he could not function in the system without that perspective.

Larry talked about a former District Superintendent saying that he could not protect Larry any more as he was retiring, since Larry's name kept coming up at Cabinet meetings as a potential candidate for a move. Larry did talk about how much of the conflict at the church was caused by the fact that he did not have a say in building his staff team. He felt the church was staffed inappropriately but was forced to maintain the pattern that had existed previously. Larry also noted that it was by the grace of God that the itinerant system had worked this long, but that the system was in need of something even though he was not certain what the needed changes would look like.

Jeff described a multitude of ways that the current operation of the itinerant system was counter-cultural and difficult in a world that is increasingly different, including the lack of breadth in salary and church size that previously was the case. Clarence indicated that this was the first time in his life that he had been involved in a pastoral change, in spite of having grown up in the United Methodist Church, and expressed ambivalence as to whether one denominational system of clergy is better than any other. He emphasized the need to trust in the Bishop to know the needs of the church, even though the Superintendent is also involved.

Larry also talked about the strain he experienced in the midst of the appointment, indicating that he suffered from severe back pain for the last few months

of his appointment. But, in spite of trying everything he did not experience any relief until shortly before he moved to another church. Larry concluded that he carried the strain of the situation in his back.

Larry expressed concern for pastors who may be in a similar situation, saying that it can be lonely in ministry when trying to sort through difficulties. He added that there used to be a conference psychologist or counselor on staff, but that he was not certain if anyone ever took advantage of that available resource. Here again, an insider – outsider issue could potentially come into play. Even if the Conference would provide some counseling resources, it is not likely that the clergy would take advantage of those resources if there is a perception that doing so could have a negative impact on their current or future appointments.

Larry expressed some concern over what may be written in his file related to the allegation by a District Superintendent who was brought in near the end of the conflict. This District Superintendent expressed a question as to whether Larry had difficulty in working with a female Associate Pastor or with women in general. Larry resented the implication because he had tried really hard to make things work and indicated that he could not have picked a better Associate Pastor.

Both laypersons, John and Clarence, felt that people in the church really struggled to relate to the system of the United Methodist Church. John emphasized that most people identify more with the local church than the conference, including those in their forties and younger being resistant to serve as a lay delegate to annual conference. Clarence focused on the lack of understanding of the processes

related to personnel issues, noting that the system was clearly different from the business world. Clarence further indicated that he was not certain how things worked even though he was a part of the Staff Parish Relations Committee. More specifically, Clarence noted that it was one sided communication from the church to the District and Conference and that the church did not usually receive any response. From his perspective, this resulted in frustration on the part of the lay leadership and rumors within a church, which can be destructive. Like Clarence, John also reflected on the issues of confidentiality, stressing its importance. John added that the churches and Staff Parish Relations Committees need to be trained on what should be confidential and why.

John expressed some frustration with the itinerant system. He believed that the current system does not match the mission of the United Methodist Church. More specifically, John noted that there are exceptions to the system; there are challenges getting people into and out of the system; laypersons struggle to relate to an antiquated system; and, there is an inadequate knowledge of the gifts or skill sets of the clergy. John went on to say that the leadership needed to be more intentional in helping pastors to develop, and addressing the issues within ministries instead of just moving people around and using forgiveness and grace as excuses for neglecting responsibilities. John also saw the emphasis on larger churches and their finances as problematic especially for clergy who feel called to minister in smaller churches. John added that the system was dated and reactive, and that there was too much responsibility on the Staff Parish Relations Committees in local churches, because

they were not equipped to handle confidential issues or address matters directly. John believed the clergy had relatively little say in an unhealthy system, and that the system was run by the top to fill holes.

John also said that it was unfair and unreasonable to expect that a church would change by placing a particular Senior Pastor at the helm, because the appointment system is, by definition, reactive. He thought that appointments need to be more intentionally matched to the churches, and simply encouraging churches to trust the Bishop or the Cabinet was not a good practice. John added that pastors should utilize the human resources in the church more fully and that there should be a strong human resources presence in the Conference, rather than hiring expensive consultants. John expressed frustration that churches and/or pastors do not always know that an appointment change has been requested until a new appointment has been announced. John noted that perhaps an employment contract system should be explored, suggesting that the information given to churches include a spiritual gifts inventory of a prospective Senior Pastor. John said that there were misplaced priorities in his Conference of the United Methodist Church. Specifically, he said that there was more discussion about when they should hold the annual Missions Fair, than conversations about critical issues, like the operation of the itinerant system. John emphasized that the itinerancy really deserves time and attention.

John pointed out that clergy needed to fit the specific culture of the church, rather than seniority, capacity and salary as the criteria for filling the holes. John suggested a potential orientation or trial period for the pastor and the church to get to

know each other. John wrestled with what a District Superintendent said to him recently about focusing on the churches that are healthy, allowing the others to just drift. John asked what happens to that pastor or church when they are not known or represented in Cabinet meetings, and lamented the failure of this practice to bring life, health and growth to struggling churches. John added that the transition protocol was not clear for either the church or the Senior Pastor. He noted that the church was not prepared for a long term pastor to leave, and that there was no debriefing time either before or after Larry's tenure as the Senior Pastor.

John pointed out that a fundamental flaw in executing the intentions of the itinerant system was that the larger Districts do not allow the assessment of clergy or churches. John believed that the churches and clergy would benefit more from smaller Districts, and a more conscious process in assessing the needs of the churches and the talents of the clergy. Jeff agreed that the increased scope of supervision for District Superintendents was a challenge. He indicated that the District Superintendents needed to focus on the most urgent situations, and on further developing and using tools like profiles and mediation. Jeff believed that the current appointment process was difficult to manage. He advocates eliminating the guaranteed appointment. However, he added that the Cabinet does attempt to make the best fit possible, weighing the needs of the church and the available clergy.

Jeff pointed out that the itinerant system was counter-culture, under tremendous strain, and increasingly difficult to manage. He indicated that the United Methodist Church needed to move beyond the guaranteed annual appointment, even

though it would have to be done carefully because it was frightening for clergy. Jeff said that doing so would provide the Bishops and Cabinets the means of dealing with pastors who perhaps should not be in the ministry. Jeff went on to say that it was somewhat unfair to not guarantee an appointment and also not allow a pastor to seek appointment. But, Jeff indicated there was a need for an ending point so clergy could not be put into some kind of permanent limbo. Jeff added that they needed to be diligent in working with the preparation and training of pastors, providing ways to learn the best practices.

Jeff went on to say that the former District Superintendent did not adequately represent the church in the appointment process. He felt that it was difficult to always know and ask all of the right questions up front in a complex human system. Jeff felt these dynamics led to an emphasis on theology and preaching at the expense of leadership style and readiness. In this case, he felt there could have been a better match, but also made it clear that Larry was not necessarily the wrong person, but that the issues could have been more clearly identified. Jeff suggested a more uniform profile and process across the Conference. Jeff went on to state that the Cabinet did “value the local church and the ministry of the local church,” as well as appointing “the most effective leadership” in each charge “given all of the different constraints.”

Jeff said that the Cabinet does attempt to make the best fit possible, weighing a variety of factors, given the relative needs of the churches, and the abilities of the available clergy, recognizing that some gaps can be addressed by training and encouraging the clergy accordingly. Jeff described a strength of the system was the

collaborative process used by the Cabinet. But, Jeff also acknowledged that the needs of churches and the strengths of clergy are sometimes not known, making assignments more difficult. The members worked together to reflect on the profiles completed by the District Superintendents based on information provided by pastors and churches, prior to an introduction interview, where a church cannot veto the decision but can raise concerns. Jeff noted that the additional strengths of the itinerant system was found in an ability to support pastors, to make relatively quick changes when necessary. He went on to say that a church was rarely without a pastor for an extended period of time except in the rare case of an intentional interim appointment. Jeff also noted that the more a pastor is known in the conference, the less that needs to be written about strengths, weakness and style in a profile.

Person-Environment Fit

Larry felt that he had been a good fit, even though it had been a difficult move, noting that the interference had been surprising and that things should have been different. But, in spite of the unfortunate way that everything unfolded, he walked away from the situation with increased confidence. Larry also indicated that his family learned and grew during that difficult time, and his work at the church made it easier for the pastor who followed him.

Clarence indicated that the church was divided as to whether Larry was a good fit, noting that the answer to the question would depend on who was asked. Clarence went on to say that a great deal depended on who put together the church profile,

adding that he could not recall how broadly information was gathered from the church. Others indicated that no profile information was gathered.

John indicated that the fit was not considered before Larry was appointed, because ultimately the church realized they needed someone with a different administrative skill set. John said that the focus was on superficial characteristics, which made it seem like a fit initially because he was like them demographically. John further said that he thought it was a good fit initially, but that Larry was at a disadvantage from the start because of Jeff's long tenure at the church. He noted that the church did not look beyond their comfort zone, nor did they reflect on their expectations of a Senior Pastor in the appointment process. In the end, John talked about the disparity between Larry's skill set and what the church ultimately realized it wanted administratively. John said that he was an advocate of having some kind of an orientation or trial period for new Pastors, where they either come and preach or get a feel for each other in terms of the leadership of the church.

Like John, Jeff felt that the appointment was a good match in some ways, especially theologically, with Larry's missional focus, and in terms of Larry's preaching. Jeff went on to say, however, that in the end he thought it had been a carelessly made appointment. He thought that Larry and the female Associate Pastor had very different styles, and that there was not a good relationship between them. Jeff indicated that Larry had not worked with a woman before, and speculated that Larry might have had some theological issues with a female clergyperson or was not comfortable working with a woman as his Associate. However, Jeff acknowledged

that he was not certain to what extent that was a theological issue for Larry in terms of women in ministry, or to what degree it was more related to personality and style.

Larry noted that he could not have picked a better Associate Pastor, but that they simply disagreed on the ideal staffing pattern in the church and her desire to serve as a generalist.

Summary

In short, there seems to have been no formal assessment of the perceptions of the church concerning its needs in this case, in spite of the fact that a profile system was generally in place in the Conference. The leadership of the church ultimately realized that Jeff, their former pastor who had been promoted to the role of a District Superintendent, epitomized the corporate style that they preferred and desired for their Senior Pastor. It is not clear whether the Cabinet did know the perceived need for a corporate style leader and acted otherwise, or if the unforeseen conflict that followed was caused by a lack of assessment and consultation. At the very least, consultation seems critical, and could potentially prevent future appointment problems.

Larry, the new Senior Pastor, had real strengths in preaching, outreach, and pastoral care. However, he did not have an administrative emphasis, as had been the case with their former Senior Pastor. He changed the worship style in the traditional service and these changes were unacceptable to some members of the church. It seems that a number of people in the church wanted nothing to change from the habits and style of the previous minister, who had been appointed as the District Superintendent over his old church, raising some ethical issues. When the District

Superintendent was persuaded by members of the church where he formerly served as a Senior Pastor to intervene, attempting to convince Larry to change his administrative style, the potential ethical issues became real. Larry's authority in the church was undercut, and the conflicts in the church may have increased as a result.

There was also a challenge in that the new Senior Pastor had no say in whether he wanted or felt that the church needed an Associate Pastor. Once again, this raises the issue of consultation before action by the Bishop, and Cabinet. Aside from serving as preventative maintenance, consultation may also head off any unnecessary problems and conflicts. For example, if Larry had been consulted about his desired staffing needs, he may have ultimately recommended that the position would be defined as a specialty role or that it would not be filled until he was able to assess the needs and financial situation of the church. This may have averted some important issues and conflicts in this case.

Chapter 6 included the results of Case 3, along with an overview of the salient themes and patterns, including comparisons and discrepant data. Chapter 7 includes a comparison between the three cases, the relationship between the results and the literature, including recommendations and implications for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Purpose of the Study

As previously indicated, the purpose of this study was two-fold:

1. To learn the perceived reasons for the failure of these executive leaders from large churches in a particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church from a variety of perspectives. This study focuses on self constructed reasons and perceptions on why the appointment did not work out, the potential gaps in the development of the professional identity of the Senior Pastor, the potential gaps in the seminary preparation of the Senior Pastor, possible mismatches in the person-environment fit, and an evaluation of the itinerant appointment process by the participants.
2. To identify any transformations in self construction or focused perceptions that results from Kegan and Lahey's (2001) cognitive developmental reflection process over a period of one month.

The purpose of this study then is to gain a better understanding of the reasons for the failure of executive leadership at large United Methodist Churches, where the

Senior Pastors lasted three years or less before a move had to be initiated. The study also extends the use of the reflective process created by Kegan and Lahey (2001) to the ministerial context and a qualitative research project to see whether it results in any transformation in self perceptions. In the end, it is hoped that this study will provide useful information to the leadership of the United Methodist Church, clergy and laity alike, concerning the dynamics and reasons for failed Senior Pastor appointments in large church appointments, gaps in the seminary preparation and development of the professional identity of Senior Pastors, the reasons for failed appointments based on the fit between the Senior Pastors and the churches, and the itinerant system in general, including recommendations for the future.

Overview

This chapter will provide an analysis across the three cases related to the nature of the conflicts, and the focus areas of the study. Following the presentation of this summary information, the results of the study will be discussed in light of the literature, followed by recommendations for the future.

Issues, Common Themes, and Patterns in What Happened and Discrepancies

These stories are summarized below based on the common themes and patterns related to conflict, noting discrepant data as well. The conflict related themes and patterns that emerged in the three cases included a history of conflict, difficulties in transition, a conflict in style of worship, a conflict in direction or focus of ministry, a conflict in style and strength of leadership, and a conflict in ownership.

A History of Conflict

In all three situations, there was a history of conflict. In the first church, there was a clear lack of trust because of the long standing tension between the church and the District and Conference fueled at least in part by the former Senior Pastor, leading to posturing before the introduction even began. One of the pastors felt ambushed at the introduction when he was asked if he would be able to handle a layperson that had been a controlling influence in the church. Both the pastor and the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee noted that the District Superintendent had not informed this new Senior Pastor of the history of the church prior to this meeting. In another church, the drastic and immediate changes related to outreach intensified the already heightened suspicions of the church that the cabinet was trying to insert a pastor to change them, and this appeared to be the case.

In two of the churches, there had already been a history of mediation, where the Conference provided a mediator to help the church resolve internal difficulties. However, this critical information was not shared with at least one of new the Senior Pastors prior to a conflict that emerged in his tenure. One of the Senior Pastors described the ensuing conflict as inevitable. He indicated that he would have known that it would not have been a good fit had he been made aware of the depth and scope of the dynamics in a sharply divided church from the beginning. He noted that the Bishop and cabinet had known but had chosen not to share the information.

Difficulties in Transition

In two of the churches, the incoming clergy brought with them their own history that probably had an impact on the situation. One Senior Pastor carried a history of conflict related to former appointments. Most notably, this Senior Pastor clearly felt resentment because he was forced to wait for two months to find out where he would be assigned after his replacement had been named. From his perspective, this showed a lack of care for himself as a Senior Pastor with seniority. This Senior Pastor was unaware that his previous church had asked for him to be moved. However, some members of the new church found out that there had been some complaints about their incoming Senior Pastor from his former church before the introduction meeting ever took place. This news of a problem pastor set a conflict in motion before the appointment was ever finalized.

In another situation, two clergy were appointed to the church at the same time without first consulting with the new Senior Pastor. Both clergy experienced difficult moves and were having a hard time adjusting to the new setting. Although they seemed to be theologically compatible, they both wanted to serve as generalists, with particular responsibilities for preaching, and general leadership of the church. The church needed only one generalist, and the Associate Pastor was unwilling to accept the role of a specialist. The laypersons interviewed both confirmed that the two clergy had conflicting priorities. The Associate Pastor had also been in a difficult situation in her former church. The Senior Pastor was not only stylistically very different than the

former Senior Pastor, but was admittedly wrestling with the transitional challenges for him and his family. The Associate Pastor had similar personal and family challenges.

A Conflict in Style of Worship

In two of the three cases, there was a conflict between contemporary and traditional styles of worship. Although the “worship war” was already taking place in one of the two churches before the new Senior Pastor arrived, in both situations the clergy were accused of not having worship style priorities that matched the traditional church. Both were highly criticized for any newer variations from what had been the norm at their churches. In addition, in both cases the church was sharply divided among generations, where the older traditionalists would occasionally claim that the contemporary service was not worship at all. In reflecting on the issue of tradition in a church, John said that it has value, but some churches are dying because of an adherence to tradition.

A Conflict in Direction or Focus of Ministry

In all three cases, there was a conflict in direction or focus of ministry, and in every case, the primary source of tension was related to a new outreach agenda. In one church, there was a long history of tension between taking care of their own people and reaching out to the community, and they had long since stopped paying apportionments so they could use their money on themselves. Here again the conflict was between older and younger generations that had different ideas about what it meant to be the church, all crystallized against a Senior Pastor for emphasizing outreach and failing to control the youth minister, who also focused on outreach. The

District Superintendent appropriately noted that the churches that have not been able to adjust to a changing culture have died. In another church, the Senior Pastor was trying to get them to look beyond themselves and minister to the community, and they seemed to be more concerned about protecting their beautiful building, controlling the physical facilities, and keeping a building that the District Superintendent described as an icon in pristine condition. One controlling member did not like the direction of the new ministry and actually attended another church for roughly six months. In another church, there was a split related to the direction and vision of the church. The new Senior Pastor was more mission minded than his predecessor, and challenged the church to be more outreach oriented, instead of just supporting missions with their money. This made some people in this church uncomfortable because they wanted more of an internal, self care focus.

In addition, as previously indicated, in one church there was a conflict between the two clergy that spilled over into the church. The Senior Pastor was convinced that it would be best to change the staffing configuration at the church, and tried to get the Associate Pastor to specialize, before eventually recommending downsizing to only one Ordained Elder. Although the Senior Pastor openly shared his vision with the Associate Pastor and others, the Associate Pastor shared her frustrations with others, but not with the Senior Pastor. The laypersons interviewed both confirmed that the two clergy had different visions and priorities for the church and the Associate Pastor role. Although the church was initially resistant to this staffing recommendation

because it did not fit the image they had of themselves as deserving two ordained Elders, the changes have since been implemented and seem to be functioning well.

A Conflict in Style & Strength of Leadership

In all three cases, there was a conflict in style and strength between the previous and new Senior Pastors. All three new Senior Pastors immediately followed a popular long-term pastor in the church. In one case, Frank followed a strong, forceful, dynamic and directive fighter. In contrast, Frank saw himself a fun loving and creative visionary who worked with the elected leaders and focused on loving the people. Since Frank was not directive or forceful, some felt he was unable to supervise and control a maverick youth director and he did not have strong management skills. These members believed that their church needed a leader who was strong and forceful, one who would take a directive approach like their former Senior Pastor. There were also complaints that Frank was not able to read the direction and style of the church and their desired ministry, making adjustments accordingly. They also thought that Frank was unable to accurately read the political landscape of the church and access the centers of power.

It is not clear in what situations the Bishop and Cabinet appoint clergy with a style similar to that desired by the church, or when intentional efforts are made to change the church by appointing leadership of a different style. In either case, the Bishop and Cabinet need to know if churches have strong preferences and use the information in making appointments.

In another case, Gary followed a strong and dynamic preacher, who was also a forceful administrative leader. In contrast, Gary struggled to provide order. He was highly criticized for his administration of the church. He seemed to have difficulties in remembering things. He had a speech problem that made it difficult for him to deliver an inspiring sermon. He was unable to lead a successful financial stewardship campaign to generate the needed income for the church. Gary was also described as cold. His self perceptions were almost the opposite of how he was perceived by others. He saw himself as an able administrator. He saw no problems with his Biblically based sermons. He saw himself as friendly and personable. Gary saw himself as competent, but simply opposed and undercut by one influential lay leader. His struggles, lack of competence, inability to deal with complexity, and apparent self-deception may make his assignment in any church questionable.

Larry followed an outstanding manager with a detailed administrative approach. The previous Senior Pastor was proficient in the business and personal sides of the ministry, using a style consistent with the corporate culture of the lay leadership. Those corporate oriented lay leaders complained that Larry's administrative style was not as actively engaged or detail oriented as they expected. Personality conflicts developed between Larry and the Associate Pastor and the Staff Parish Relations Committee. The Staff Parish Relations Committee perceived that some of the core functions of the church were not well managed, in spite of the satisfaction with his ministry and preaching. Previously, Larry and his wife had served as a "team" and there was additional conflict because the Staff Parish Relations

Committee expected that the spouse of the minister “has their own career” and would not be part of the ministry team.

All three clergy eventually seemed to be “in over their heads” in their appointments. Frank described himself as being unable to function in the church or to continue in the appointment with integrity by being himself. He realized that the church needed a different kind of leader in order to move forward. Gary did not seem to be aware that he did not have the ability to deal with the complex situation. Larry had stylistic differences that made it seem that he did not know as much about the culture of the church as he did actually did understand, but he was undercut when Jeff, the District Superintendent, intervened.

Potentially, it seems that two of the pastors could have stayed at the churches and worked through the conflicts, except for specific extenuating circumstances. When the Bishop stepped in with Frank’s situation, and when the District Superintendent intervened in Larry’s situation, the abilities of these Senior Pastors to successfully navigate through the challenges were undercut. With respect to Gary’s situation, except for Scott’s persistent campaign to get rid of him, Gary might still be at the church, even though the District Superintendent indicated that Gary was never a good fit for the church from the beginning. In the end, the Staff Parish Relations Committee voted for Frank to be moved, and both Gary and Larry requested a transfer, in part because of the strain of the situation on their families.

In all three cases, a previous Senior Pastor was very popular because of the style, direction or emphasis of his ministry. This naturally raises the question of what

should be the style, direction, or emphasis of his successor. Should the Bishop and Cabinet appoint a Senior Pastor of similar style, direction, and emphasis? Should the Bishop and Cabinet intentionally appoint a Senior Pastor of a different style, direction, or emphasis? Clearly, according to the lay persons interviewed, many of the members in these three churches desired for the style, direction, and emphasis to remain the same. Yet, the Bishop and Cabinet seem to have done otherwise, consciously or unconsciously, with all three Senior Pastors. As a result, there was conflict and resistance to the new leadership. It appears that the Bishop and Cabinet need to know that a church has these strong desires, and use the information to make a conscious choice to either support the church in their desires or to try to change the church with the new appointment. In either case, the Bishop and Cabinet need to do an assessment and share the information about the church's desires prior to consciously deciding a strategy to fill a vacancy. This information should also be shared with the clergy candidates prior to an appointment being finalized. Otherwise, newly appointed Senior Pastors are unnecessarily surprised by resistance to them and their ministries.

A Conflict in Ownership

In all three situations, there was a conflict in ownership of the church that was evident in a number of dimensions of church life, including who decides the current and future ministry of the church. Does the local church call the shots, or is the Bishop and Cabinet in charge? And, in all three cases, the rumors in the church were increasing as the conflict escalated. In Case 1, Frank felt that there was overwhelming support for the new vision. He had worked with the younger formal leadership of the

church to develop the vision and presented it to the members, receiving an overwhelming vote of support. However, there was an underlying movement of resistance from long time members of the church which was not evident until the congregation was asked for an investment of their money and time in reaching the new vision. Led by a highly influential member of the church, this controlling group, who were not in formal positions of leadership at this time, complained that Frank was usurping their power and that he did not care for their opinions or treat them with the favor they deserved. Based on their long history at the church, they believed that they were the church, and the Senior Pastor, staff and younger members should follow their desires. Some big financial supporters left the church, and others organized to assert their will to ask Frank to join them or leave. The church had opposed the Conference and District before and would do so again in this situation.

In Case 2, there was a conflict between the Gary and Scott related to who runs the church. Gary felt that power should be shared in a community of faith. He had been told, however, that Scott and a few others believed that the church was theirs and that they were unwilling to share power with a Senior Pastor unless s/he did things their way. Gary felt that Scott wanted him to do things Scott's way or that Scott would assert his control and force Gary to leave. Gary believed things were running well in Scott's absence for a period of six months. Others disagreed and felt that they had to step up and address the things that Gary was neglecting. Gary indicated that he wanted to work with Scott, but it was difficult to work with anyone who did not agree to work with him. Scott indicated that he concluded fairly early in Gary's ministry

that Gary's leadership was not what the church wanted. Scott set out deliberately to persuade others to ask or force Gary to leave. Del indicated that the church, led by Scott, had a history of getting rid of pastors because they believed that they were the owners of the church. Scott felt that he had tried to work through the proper hierarchical procedures in protecting his church and sharing his concerns with the appropriate authorities. Scott had even been physically assaulted by a church member for not supporting the Senior Pastor, but challenging his decisions instead. Part of the conflict between Scott and Gary was related to a disagreement about how to use a designated gift to the church. Gary wanted to use the money to pay apportionments because the church was behind and Gary thought it would make him look good in the eyes of the Bishop and Cabinet. Scott indicated that this gift was designated for the sole purpose of maintaining the facilities, and as a Trustee he would not allow it to be used for operations.

In Case 3, Larry had a conflict with both the church and the Associate Pastor about the appropriate staffing pattern at the church, and even with the Cabinet as he was appointed to lead a staff team without the time to consider his vision and the needs of this new setting. John indicated that there was a strong commitment among members of the congregation to maintain what had been the status quo of the church that had been established by the previous Senior Pastor.

At the same time, there were also indications in each case of a conflict related to who owned the church in a larger sense. Was the control of the church ultimately in the hands of the congregation, or was it controlled by the Cabinet and Bishop. In case

1, the District Superintendent noted that there was conflict between the Bishop's authority and the autonomy of the local church to determine its ministry as they saw fit. Specifically, the District Superintendent indicated that the situation became unsolvable when the Bishop intervened at the level of the local church. Members of the Staff Parish Relations Committee had values and priorities consistent with a business model and an inward focus to ministry. The hierarchy of the Conference did not. The Cabinet has a different vision for the church than the members, resulting in a collision of reaching out to the community versus reaching in to the church respectively. The Cabinet tried to use an appointment to change a local church, and in this case it failed because the Cabinet had not accurately identified the centers of power in the church.

In Case 2, after a conflict emerged prior to the introduction of the new Senior Pastor due to a breach of confidentiality from the conference office, the District Superintendent made it clear that the itinerancy was about clergy being placed in churches, leaving Del, as the chairperson of the committee, to try to manage the conflict. Del pointed out that this church really wanted to elect their own pastor, noting that the church did not understand and/or accept the relationship between the local church and the conference. Del added that there was a belief that the building and finances belonged to the Trustees. The Senior Pastor was not in charge because he was accountable to the Bishop and not to the local church.

In Case 3, there was resistance to change because some members of the church did not feel like they had any say or adequate input into the appointment process. The

frustration with the process included their long-term Senior Pastor leaving to become a District Superintendent, and Larry being appointed in his place. The District Superintendent at the time did not ask for their expectations, consistent with the consultation process. There was a strong, negative reaction as a result.

Summary

In short, the results of these three cases highlight a number of situations where it appears to be essential to gather assessment information and inform the relevant clergy and churches of the results. Specifically, prospective clergy need to be informed if there is any history of conflict in a church or between the church and the District and/or the Conference. Prospective clergy need to be informed if the previous minister had served a long time and/or was popular with the congregation. Prospective clergy need to be informed if the church holds absolute views about the direction or style of ministry, patterned after those of the former Senior Pastor. In each of these situations, potentially appointed clergy need to be informed in advance of the introduction of the specific dynamics in the church, and given an opportunity to weigh the factors in the situation against the particular strengths that s/he would bring to the situation before making a decision. In order to be successful in a situation involving any (or all) of the above dynamics, clergy need to be competent, have strong egos, and have family members able to cope with the inevitable stresses that will surface. However, in order for the clergy to be informed of these potential dynamics, where applicable, in advance, the District Superintendent and Cabinet need to know the church well enough to be aware of the dynamics in the first place. Similarly, the

churches may need to know the strength and style of clergy candidates for their position openings in order to provide informed input into decisions. But, one question remains: should a church know if and when the Bishop and Cabinet is deliberately trying to change their church?

Areas of Focus

Part of the intent of the study was to explore potential gaps in the seminary preparation or professional identity of the Senior Pastors, the itinerant system in general and the fit between the Senior Pastor and the particular large church setting. What follows is an integration and analysis across cases relative to these four major areas of focus in the study.

Seminary Preparation

The ministers themselves perceived a need for seminaries to address the administration of a large church, leadership, organizational development, team building, and dealing with conflict. These potential areas of study appear to come from their difficult experiences with the large church conflicts, and their perceptions that additional preparation in these areas would have been helpful. Specifically, Frank felt that his seminary preparation was generally good, especially theologically and in terms of the counseling courses. He acknowledged, however, that his education was not exhaustive, and that there was a “huge gap” and lack of “really good preparation in a lot of areas,” including how to deal with the situation in which he found himself. Initially, Gary felt he was prepared in his seminary education for an appointment as a Senior Pastor in a large church setting. However, he later changed his mind and

indicated that he was not certain that he learned anything in seminary that helped him to be a Senior Pastor in a large church. He had learned Biblical scholarship, mission work and outreach, and people skills in psychology courses, which were applicable to the dynamics of leading a large church. However, Gary indicated that he had learned most of his administrative skills on his own. Larry was angry about the huge gap between his seminary preparation and experience in the ministry, especially in the area of leadership education, church dynamics, conflict management, church growth, and navigating change. He talked about the value of a course in understanding the culture of a church, complaining that he never learned any of that information in seminary. Larry also indicated that it would have been helpful to have had more training in seminary related to understanding the dynamics of marriage and family in ministry, suggesting accountability groups, working with other married couples or participating in regular retreats.

The laypersons generally did not think that they were very informed about seminary education. For the most part, they were cautious about making suggestions, except for John. John was insightful and made a number of suggestions. He saw a need for courses focused on assessing culture, team building, group dynamics, communication, personality types applied to organizations, dealing with difficult people, the role of the pastor, and the structure and practices of the United Methodist Church. These suggestions also seem to be aligned with his experience as a Lay Leader in his church. They assume that additional education could have solved or helped ministers to deal with the dynamics in a large church setting.

The suggestions by other lay persons included management and interpersonal skills. Sermon delivery was also suggested by one lay person. However, all of the clergy felt prepared in that respect, and it was only mentioned related to a pastor with a speech problem. So, it seems reasonable to assume that sermon preparation and delivery are already satisfactorily addressed in seminary. Similar to John, Del suggested a seminary course related to the itinerancy that would address working with congregations and navigating the transitional mindset that accompanies the itinerancy, including managing or negotiating.

The District Superintendents all identified gaps in seminary education programs, but seemed less certain if changing the educational program could provide the skills and knowledge necessary to equip these ministers for the particular large church settings where they experienced conflict. While Todd stressed a need for seminaries to provide leadership and the organizational tools necessary to navigate change, Mike said there was a need for relational, conflict management, and basic administration skills. Similarly, Jeff noted the need for seminaries to plant seeds with respect to management, leadership and visioning. Aside from providing the foundational tools for preaching and pastoral ministry, Jeff also noted that it was premature for seminaries to offer courses on how to deal with a large staff when most graduates have little to no staff in their initial appointments. In short, courses related to administration, management, organizational development, leadership, change and conflict seem more relevant later in the career of a pastor. According to Jeff, since most pastors learn these kinds of things from continuing education settings, it may be

more appropriate for seminaries to offer in depth courses on these topics through a continuing education program.

Professional Identity

Generally speaking, most of the laypersons were unable to respond to the question about potential gaps in the professional identity of their Senior Pastor beyond expressing superficial concerns. In case 1, both Jim and Mickey focused on Frank's relative lack of experience, especially in a large church setting as the basis of why he was unable to deal with the youth minister, and recognize and respond appropriately to the conflict. In Case 2, both Scott and Del stuck with their mantras about Gary's lack of common sense and common courtesy, and his inability to succeed in a church where he was not wanted, respectively. In Case 3 Clarence was not certain if Larry's previous experience included a large church in a more urban or suburban setting or if he had ever worked with an Associate Pastor before being appointed to this role. John emphasized that Larry had some transferable skills, even though he was not as strong as Jeff had been administratively. John noted that it was unfair to expect a Senior Pastor to be able to do everything.

The Senior Pastors all expressed that conflict management skills would have been helpful to them in navigating the situations in their churches, although Frank felt that the situations ultimately warranted someone with a different leadership style and Larry attributed the gap in conflict management skills to his seminary education program. While Gary indicated that seminars on church management and church growth by size also might have been useful earlier in his career, Larry said that earlier

information related to leadership education, church dynamics, church growth, and navigating change would have been beneficial, but again attributed it to gaps in his seminary education program.

Larry went on to add that he had gained much over the years in mentoring relationships with other clergy, especially with accountability and in developing ministry plans. He indicated that mentoring relationships were more beneficial than his supervised years experience during his seminary education. Larry also noted that the cluster program was a good idea, but expressed concern that the Conference would kill the new initiative by overly structuring it.

From a District Superintendent perspective, Todd agreed with Frank that the situation became irresolvable. Although Frank indicated this was because of lack of trust that the church had in the conference, Todd said it was because Frank was destined for a showdown with a group in the church that was not willing to work through the conflict, adding that he did not feel there were any gaps in Frank's professional identity. Both Mike and Jeff seemed to be advocates of the progressive development of clergy. But, Mike emphasized that Gary was from an era where there was a "low commitment to development," making it less likely that he would pursue additional learning opportunities. Jeff also indicated that it was difficult to master the topics in a workshop, adding that the Bishop and Cabinet need to facilitate the development of clergy.

Itinerancy

All three Senior Pastors talked about having an incomplete understanding of the history of their new church. Frank learned of the long history of division in the church only after the conflict occurred. Gary learned of the history of challenges created by one controlling influence in the church at the introduction. Larry was unaware of the split between the traditional and contemporary factions of the church prior to his arrival.

Frank talked about his positive experience with the introduction, adding that the turn of events when he was asked to leave the church was shocking. Although he said he was committed to the itinerant system, he expressed a need for more support and sensitivity on the part of the Cabinet and Bishop. When clergy go through a difficult appointment and are already discouraged, they need support.

Discouragement continues if the pastor is sent to a smaller church, often with a lower salary, and feels demoted as a result. Frank also talked about how essential it is to appoint appropriate people to the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Frank also explained that he assumes he will be staying at a church forever, and that every appointment is good and a blessing. For Frank, these assumptions take the pressure off of the transitory nature of the itinerant system.

Gary talked about his expectation of succession and being cared for based on his tenure in the ministry. He also emphasized the need to find out where he will be appointed before the church he was serving was told informed of the identity of their new Senior Pastor. Gary's perspective was that honoring seniority and using early

notification related to assignments were ways to communicate care for the clergy. He described the pressures he faced in not knowing where he was going to be appointed up until two weeks prior to conference, especially after his replacement had already been named. Gary felt there was no justification for the abuses and embarrassment that he had faced in being forced to wait two months after his successor was named to find out where he would be appointed. His seniority in the system, for Gary, meant that he would always be moving up the proverbial ladder of success. After being told by the District Superintendent that the appointment could make or break his ministry, Gary indicated that he experienced added pressure of not knowing whether to accept the appointment that he was offered. In the end, he felt that he really had no choice but to take the appointment because of the threats from the District Superintendent. He felt abused by the Cabinet in the appointment succession process, and he seemed to be hinting that he could have used some additional support from the District Superintendent or Bishop.

Gary felt that God had sent him to the church for a particular purpose, but that he was still trying to understand the meaning in his experience, adding that God has since moved him to another church. Gary also felt the Cabinet does not always consider the specific needs of a family when making appointments, although he noted that this was not true of his particular situation. Gary was encouraged that the Cabinet had confidence in his ability to navigate the difficult situation in this church. However, according to the District Superintendent, the appointment was made not because it was a perceived fit but because the Cabinet had to put Gary somewhere.

Gary did not seem to be aware that he had been moved from his former appointment at the request of his church, although everyone else, including the District Superintendent, seemed to understand this to be the case.

Larry emphasized the importance of some freedom of movement for churches and clergy, pointing out that he did not feel supported by his former District Superintendent. Even though some of the pastors in the system are problems, Larry believed that there needs to be a certain level of confidence and trust in the clergy, instead of a focus on politics and keeping everyone happy. Similar to Frank, Larry indicated that even though the system was full of mistakes, his theology was congruent with his ability to function within the itinerant system. Larry expressed some frustration in hearing language that was more political than religious coming from the Bishop related to the appointment process. Larry believed that God had sent him to serve in that church and that God could work through him in spite of any human mistakes. Larry noted that he would not be able to function in the system without that perspective.

Larry talked about a former District Superintendent who had reportedly protected him from being moved in the past. Since Larry's name kept coming up at Cabinet meetings as a potential candidate for a move upward, without his former protection, he could now be moved. Larry felt the new church was staffed inappropriately, but he was forced to maintain the existing structure. Larry noted that it was by the grace of God that the itinerant system had worked this long, and that

there needed to be radical changes. For example, Larry felt that it was critical for the Senior Pastor to have a say in who is added to their staff team.

Larry also talked about the strain he experienced in the midst of the appointment, indicating that he suffered from severe back pain for the last few months of his appointment, but in spite of trying everything he did not experience any relief until shortly before he moved to another church. Larry expressed concern for pastors who may be in a similar situation, saying that it can be lonely in ministry when trying to sort through difficulties, adding that there used to be a conference psychologist or counselor on staff, but that he was not certain if anyone ever took advantage of that available resource. Larry also expressed some concern over what may be written in his file related to the allegation by a District Superintendent who was brought in near the end of the conflict, who expressed a question as to whether Larry had difficulty in working with a female Associate Pastor or with women in general. Larry indicated that he resented the implication because he had really hard to make things work, noting that the conflict was not about gender at all, but that they had appointed two generalists to the church.

Like Larry, Jeff described a multitude of ways that the current operation of the itinerant system was counter-cultural and difficult to maintain in a world that is increasingly different. Jeff cited problems with the lack of breadth in salary and church size as there was in the particular Mid-Western Conference at one time. Clarence indicated that this was the first time in his life that he had been involved in a pastoral change, in spite of having grown up in the United Methodist Church, and

expressed ambivalence as to whether one denominational scheme of selecting clergy is better than any other system. Clarence emphasized the need to trust in the Bishop to know the needs of the church even though the Superintendent is also involved.

Both laypersons, John and Clarence, felt that people in the church really struggled to relate to the appointment system of the United Methodist Church. John emphasized that most people identify with the local church rather than the Conference, with members in their forties and younger being resistant to serve as a lay delegate to Annual Conference. Clarence focused on the lack of understanding of the processes related to personnel issues, noting that the system was clearly different from the business world. Clarence indicated that he was not certain how the system worked even though he was a part of the Staff Parish Relations Committee. More specifically, Clarence noted that the one sided communication from the church to the District and Conference and their lack of responsiveness. According to Clarence, this resulted in frustration on the part of the lay leadership and rumors within the church, both of which can be destructive. Similarly, John reflected on the issues of confidentiality, stressing its importance and adding that the churches and Staff Parish Relations Committees need to be trained on what should be confidential and why.

Mickey talked about the scarcity mentality related to competent clergy, and the perception that appointments are made to reward or punish churches so that it does not really matter what the church wants, describing the itinerant system as “a congregational crapshoot.” This view highlights the clash of values that permeates the situation in his church. Although a few members of the Staff Parish Relations

Committee had faith in the process, most members opposed the hierarchical appointments in the itinerant system and did not trust the Bishop or the Cabinet. Ultimately, Mickey reiterated that his church was a tough crowd. Mickey felt that Frank was not aware of the history of the church, or ready for the appointment, even though the Bishop and Cabinet seemed to think that he would be smart enough to figure things out as he began working at the church. If the Bishop and Cabinet already knew the history and views of the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the church, why did they leave Frank on his own to discover this information for himself?

Jim explained how his church was suspicious of the motivation for the drastic change in philosophy related to reaching out to the community that Frank brought to the church. Jim assumed that the agenda for the future of the church was being imposed by the Cabinet through Frank, and he did not like it. Jim noted a history of a divisive relationship between the church and the District, believing that a seasoned veteran pastor should be appointed to his church. Jim cited the major problem was not the itinerant system but the translation of the system into practice. He cited leadership problems at every level, emphasizing his belief that Frank was appointed to the church and then abandoned by the District and Conference.

There were also attempts to situate their understanding of the itinerant system theologically. Although Mickey felt there was a clear parallel to the way the church treated Frank and to the Biblical narrative of the life of Jesus, not surprisingly, it was the clergy who focused more on the concepts of God in this situation. At the outset of our initial conversation, Frank expressed confidence in the sovereignty of God. But,

he also expressed tentative trust in redemptive suffering, where God can use bad things that happen in our lives, noting that we have a limited amount of control over what happens in our lives, especially where the people involved have destructive tendencies. Todd noted that there is a human tendency to attribute things to God and His will for our lives and the life of a church that are both inappropriate and that ultimately result in conflict.

Del expressed support for the itinerant system, even though it was challenging to be fully present in a community knowing that your stay is only temporary and for an undetermined amount of time. He was also disheartened by the way that some churches dealt with clergy. Del compared the itinerant system to those of other denominations, and concluded that with other systems there was a great deal of instability. Del indicated that he was already thinking a great deal about transition because of a family connection to the itinerancy, describing the challenges of living in the constant tension of preparing to leave, and saying that participating in the project was risky because it connected with emotions related to memories and served as another reminder of living in a transitory system.

Del also took a hard line about Gary's skill set, making an assumption based on his sermons and general abilities that he would not be able to successfully navigate the ordination process today. Del also indicated that training would not make a difference if a church did not want a Senior Pastor in the first place.

Del was the only participant to discuss clergy housing in the itinerant system, recommending that churches sell their parsonages to benefit financially and to not

have to deal with deferred maintenance in clergy transitions. Del added that it was good to provide housing for ordained elders, but expressed a strong preference for clergy owning their own homes for tax advantages and equity purposes, not to mention just to get away from what is often housing adjacent to the church.

Scott believed that the itinerant system was full of favoritism and political motivation, expressing a deep personal desire for longevity in the pastoral leadership of his church. He wrestled with losing hope in this system of appointments. Scott was angry that guaranteeing an appointment simply perpetuated the problem pastors. Scott suggested that the Cabinet talk with people or look at records instead of just appointing clergy to churches. He expressed little hope that this research will make any difference in how the system operates. Scott had expectations of the Cabinet. Specifically, Scott felt the Cabinet needed to do a better job of doing their homework to find the right fit. He talked about generational differences in expectations of involvement in the itinerant system, with younger people desiring more of a say in the appointed clergy. He also believed that it was not appropriate to expect the church to develop the Senior Pastor.

As a previous District Superintendent, Todd discussed the increasing complexity of the appointment process, acknowledging the challenges of enacting the itinerant system in contemporary American culture. Todd added that the two biggest problems in the itinerant system were the guaranteed appointment and the belief that every church gets a pastor. In making appointments, Todd did stress that it was critical for the Cabinet to accurately “access the centers of power” in a given church

and noted that getting to know a church will be even more difficult in the larger districts. Todd likened the work of the Cabinet with local churches to “being a parent from a distance,” and said that “the Cabinet often has more of a vision for a congregation than the congregation has for itself.” In short, the strategy developed by the Cabinet “may not be the congregation’s vision,” and “in order for that pastoral appointment to be a good fit, then that vision really needs to be communicated” to the church. He also emphasized that it was important “to keep the Episcopal authority” central in order to “effect change in congregations,” and the need to do away with the guaranteed appointment.

Todd talked about how the conference is saturated with clergy and about the conflict of values between the authority of the conference and the autonomy of the local church. He emphasized that the conflict is amplified by the increasingly diverse individuals serving on Staff Parish Relations Committees. These individuals are not familiar with the organization and operation of the United Methodist Church.

Mike talked about the changes in clergy reward systems, explaining that what had been rewarded in the past was no longer adequate given the changing culture and increasingly complex itinerant system. Mike went on to state that the guaranteed appointment no longer worked, and that Ordained Elders are “a multi-million-dollar unfunded liability” that need to help churches move forward, not backward. Mike noted it was important to provide the laity, especially the Staff Parish Relations Committees, with information on the itinerant system so they can do their jobs. Mike also said the increasing number of smaller churches in the Conference all express a

desire for the kind of a leader like you would find for a large church. He stated that he hears almost the exact same profile described from one church to the next regardless of size.

John expressed frustration with the itinerant system. He believed that the current system does not match the mission of the United Methodist Church, and that many laypersons struggled to relate to an antiquated system. He felt that there were exceptions to the system, and there were challenges getting people into and out of the system. John noted that the Bishop and Cabinet appear to have an inadequate knowledge of the gifts or skill sets of the clergy in the system. John went on to say that the leadership in the United Methodist Church needed to be more intentional in helping clergy to develop new skills and knowledge throughout their careers. He thought the leadership also needed to address ineffective clergy instead of just moving people around and using forgiveness and grace as excuses for neglecting responsibilities. He also viewed the emphasis on larger churches and finances as problematic especially for clergy who feel called to minister in smaller churches. John added that he thought the system was dated and reactive, and there was too much responsibility on the Staff Parish Relations Committees in local churches. He felt that these committees are not equipped to handle confidential issues or address conflicts directly. He also believed that the clergy had relatively little say concerning their placement in an unhealthy system that is run by the top to fill holes.

John said that it would be ideal for a District Superintendent to have adequately assessed and evaluated the pastors and churches in order to understand and

communicate their intentions with potential appointments. But, John noted that this comprehensive assessment work is not built into their schedules because they are responsible for so many other things, especially since the districts are now larger than before. This need to know both the clergy and the churches probably could not be adequately addressed unless the Districts become smaller, or until there is additional staff support.

Jeff agreed that Districts were larger and this increased scope of supervision for the District Superintendents was a challenge. However, he indicated that the District Superintendents needed to focus on developing and using tools like profiles and mediation so they could spend time on the most urgent situations.

John said that it was unfair and unreasonable to expect that a church would change by placing a particular Senior Pastor at the helm. John noted that appointments need to be more intentionally matched to the church, and that simply encouraging the church to trust the Bishop or the Cabinet's appointment was not good practice. John added that, when conflicts do occur, the Conference should not hire expensive consultants or mediators. Instead, John advocated a strong human resources presence in the Conference, and relying on lay professionals who are members of the United Methodist Church to facilitate the necessary processes. John felt that this increased reliance on individuals who can help them succeed, would serve to make the system truly connectional instead of in name only.

John expressed frustration that churches and/or pastors do not always know that an appointment change has been requested until a new appointment has been

announced, and that perhaps an employment contract system should be explored.

John also suggested that if a new Senior Pastor is appointed to the church, then information on the spiritual gifts and administrative style be provided to the church prior to the introduction. John believed that there were misplaced priorities in the particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church, because there was more discussion about when they should hold the annual Missions Fair, than conversations about critical issues, such as the operation of the itinerant system.

John pointed out that clergy needed to fit the specific culture of the church. However, he felt that seniority and salary were the criteria used in filling the holes. He suggested a potential orientation or trial period for the pastor and the church to get to know each other. John also wrestled with what a District Superintendent said to him recently about focusing on the churches that are healthy, allowing the others to “just happen.” John asked about what happens to that pastor or church when they are not known or represented in Cabinet meetings? He lamented the failure to bring life, health and growth to struggling churches. John added that the transition protocol was not clear either for the church or the Senior Pastor, noting that his church was not prepared for their long term pastor to leave. John also noted that there was no debriefing or adjustment time, either before or after Larry’s tenure as the Senior Pastor.

Jeff pointed out that in order to improve an itinerant system the United Methodist Church needed to move beyond the guaranteed annual appointment, even though it would have to be done carefully because it was frightening for clergy. Jeff

said that doing so would provide the Bishops and Cabinets the means of dealing with pastors who perhaps should not be in the ministry, emphasizing that it was not true of any of the people we had been discussing related to Case 3. Jeff went on to say that it was somewhat unfair to not guarantee an appointment and also not allow a pastor to seek appointment, but that there would have to be an ending point so clergy could not be put into some kind of permanent limbo. Jeff added that they needed to be diligent in working with the preparation and training of pastors, providing ways to learn the best practices. Jeff said that he thought the Cabinet attempts to make the best fit possible, weighing a variety of factors, given the needs of the churches and the abilities of the available clergy, recognizing that some gaps can be addressed by training and encouraging the clergy.

Jeff went on to say that the former District Superintendent did not adequately represent the church in the appointment process, and that there may have been the way the church profile had been written, but that it was difficult to always know and ask all of the right questions up front in a complex human system. Jeff felt these dynamics led to an emphasis on theology and preaching at the expense of leadership style, administrative ability, and readiness, noting that there could have been a better match. Jeff made it clear that it was not necessarily the wrong person, but that the issues could have been more clearly identified, and suggested a more uniform profile and assessment process across the Conference. Jeff went on to state that the Cabinet did “value the local church and the ministry of the local church,” and attempted to appoint “the most effective leadership...given all of the different constraints.”

Jeff described a strength of the system as the collaborative process in a team of Cabinet members working together to reflect on the profiles completed by the District Superintendents based on information provided by pastors and churches, prior to an introduction where a church cannot veto the decision but can raise concerns. Jeff noted additional strengths of the itinerant system as the ability to support pastors, to make relatively quick changes when necessary, and that a church is rarely without a pastor for an extended period of time except in the rare case of an intentional interim appointment. Jeff also talked about the more a pastor is known in the conference, the less that needs to be written about strengths, weakness and style in a profile, adding that it is more difficult if a pastor or church is not known by most of the District Superintendents.

Person - Environment Fit

The Senior Pastors in the three cases all felt that it had been a good fit, at least initially. Frank said that if he had known of the history and depth of the conflict in the church, he would have questioned whether it really was a good fit, pointing out that the Bishop and Cabinet did know of the dynamics in the church but had not shared that information with him up front. Gary felt that it was a perfect fit because his strong suits were his accessibility, administration, preaching Biblical sermons, being musically gifted, and his ability to handle visitation, but also expressed frustration that the Bishop and District Superintendent had not shared with him essential information prior to the introduction. He emphasized the need to provide more complete information about the churches to which ministers are being assigned. Gary was

probably not aware and certainly did not mention any issues that the church may have had with his performance or skill set, and simply indicated that Scott had caused all of the problems, destroyed what he perceived to be progress, leading to his eventual move. Larry also felt that it had been a good fit, even though it had been a difficult move, noting that the interference by the District Superintendent had been surprising and that things should have been handled differently by the District Superintendent.

Those from the Staff Parish Relations Committees expressed mixed judgments related to issues of fit. In Case 1, Mickey indicated that although everything fell into place initially, it later became clear that Frank was not the right fit to address the conflicts in the church. He also emphasized the need to share the history of the church with prospective Senior Pastors. In Case 2, Del indicated that Gary did not fit what the church wanted because he was not a dynamic leader or preacher. However, he indicated that the salary level was not high enough to get the kind of pastor that they wanted or felt that they deserved. Del talked at length about the consultation process, and how completing the form should be more of a community process on the part of the church. He also expressed his concern regarding the way that people treated clergy, adding that churches should just do their best to work with appointed pastors. In Case 3, Clarence indicated that the church was divided as to whether Larry was a good fit, noting that the answer to the question would depend on with whom you talked and who controlled putting together the church profile.

The lay leaders expressed strong feelings related to issues to fit. In Case 1, Jim felt that Frank was a good fit and things would have worked out if he had been given

better leadership from the District and the church. In Case 2, Scott expressed frustration at the short tenure of clergy in his church, and was adamant about it being a terrible fit. Scott noted that more should be done to ensure a good fit prior to finalizing appointments, suggesting having laity talk with the church someone is leaving or going to hear a sermon before an appointment is made. In Case 3, John said that the fit was not really considered before Larry was appointed because the church did not realize until later that they wanted someone with strong administrative skills. John went on to describe how the focus had been on superficial characteristics and how Larry was at a disadvantage from the start because of Jeff's long tenure and popularity at the church. John advocated an orientation or trial period for new clergy, where there could be an emphasis on preaching and leadership style.

From a District Superintendent perspective, Todd felt that Frank's appointment was a good fit, aside from the conflict in the church, noting the church expected a pastor with a different personality. Mike talked about the complexity of the itinerant system, noting that Gary did not fit but that it did not matter because they had to put Gary somewhere. Mike added that because Gary was a nice person, the Cabinet was hopeful that the church would be gracious and accept him, even though they knew that the appointment was not a good match. Jeff felt that there had been a good fit between Larry and the church in terms of theology and outreach, but that it was a carelessly made appointment because Larry did not fit the corporate persona of the church. Jeff added that he was uncertain about the nature of the conflict between Larry and the female Associate Pastor.

In terms of cognitive-structural meaning making capacities and possible personality type preferences, the three cases appear to differ. In Case 1, there seemed to be an attitude of entitlement which caused some people to vote with their feet and leave the church. This behavior could be consistent with meaning making of the situation at Kegan (1994) stage 2, 3 or 4, depending upon the rationale, and this reasoning was not cited. The prevailing attitude of the powerful group in the church who chose to stay was one of dualism; we are right and the church hierarchy is wrong. The traditionalists wanted everything to stay the same, and for the focus of ministry to be upon the current members and their families, possibly a stage 4 ideology that they would not compromise. The Senior Pastor may have been making meaning at stage 3 because he was unable to see or understand some of the things that were happening at the church. In terms of personality the Senior Pastor seemed to have Extraversion-Intuition-Feeling-Judgment preferences, with feeling oriented care as a focus in contrast to the possible personality type orientation of the former leader of the church. The mediation in the situation was not effective because in order for the mediation to work, all of the parties have to be willing to make some concessions. This requires an openness to reconsider one's position and not hold a closed point of view. In this church, the traditionalists were not open to reconsider their point of view. Todd, the District Superintendent, may make meaning from stage 5 because of his ability to engage in critical reflection and find partial truths in most positions.

In Case 2, both Gary and Scott were operating from a closed perspective. Scott may have made meaning from a stage 4 ideology. Gary seemed unable to see

the perspective of another or admit any mistakes during his tenure, as confirmed by Mike's explanation that he was unable to handle complexity. Gary also seemed to create conflicts, but he was simply unable to mediate them. Perhaps Gary made meaning of his experience from stage 3. Some members of the congregation took their money and ran when things did not go their way. This behavior is not interpretable in itself, and it would be important to ask them "why" they left since stages 2, 3, or 4 would have different justifications for this behavior. Scott made an early judgment that Gary did not fit the style of the church, their need for care, or their emphases. He initiated and persisted in a campaign to get rid of Gary. Although Scott's assessment of Gary's behavior was accurate according to the District Superintendent, whether these behaviors justify the campaign to get rid of Gary is a different matter.

Kegan (1994) asserts that most adults in our culture make meaning at stage 3. In Case 3, many of the people in the church may have made meaning of their experiences at stage 3, identifying with the groups that preferred either traditional or contemporary worship. John seemed to be operating from a stage 4 perspective, and had a wealth of comments to share related to the adjustments that need to be made in "the system" and denominational structure, as well as in the perspectives of the people in his church. The Senior Pastor seemed to be operating at least at stage 4, because he was able to articulate an understanding of the complex system of his church and the denomination, and wanted to work through his situation, if possible.

It is important to note that there are some common characteristics in all three cases. More specifically, each of the three churches had a long tenure of an immediate former Senior Pastor, who had a directive style and was a strong administrator. Structurally and otherwise, the churches were all very traditional, resulting in some polarization between the younger and older generations, especially related to worship style and in focus of ministry. While the younger generation often preferred contemporary worship and more of a focus on reaching out to the community, the older generation often preferred traditional worship and an internal focus of serving the church. In all three of the churches there was tension between an “old guard” who felt that they owned the church and the younger members who felt that they should all work together. And, while the long time members tended not to want anything in their church to change, the younger members seemed to feel that some change was okay and even good. In addition, in all three cases the Staff Parish Relations Committee representatives were relatively unclear on their roles, responsibilities, and on the process related to clergy transition. These similarities are summarized in table 7.1 below.

Common Characteristics within the Church
Long tenure of immediate former Senior Pastor
Prior Senior Pastor a strong administrator
Directive style of former Senior Pastor
Traditional church
Polarized generations
Staff Parish Relations Committees unclear on process
Struggle to balance reaching out to the community with ministering internally within the church
The “old guard” feel that they own the church vs. the entire congregation owning the church together
No change in the church vs. some change is okay and even good
Struggle between traditional and contemporary worship

Table 7.1

Within the ranks of the leadership, the Bishop and Cabinet also shared some common characteristics across the three cases. In all three cases, there seemed to be no systematic assessment of the needs of the church, or of the skills and gifts of the incoming clergy, except for unknown opinions of the members of the Cabinet. Because the new leadership was so different than the long terms and popularity of the previous Senior Pastors, there was a perception on the part of the church that the Bishop and Cabinet were intentionally trying to change them and their church. Further, in all three cases, there was some interference in the leadership of the church.

Specifically, in Case 1, the Bishop reportedly stepped in and this stopped any progress in resolving the issues, rendering the leadership of the District Superintendent ineffective in addressing the problems. In case 2, the District Superintendent dismissed the concerns voiced at the outset in the introduction with a heavy handed approach. And, in Case 3, the former Senior Pastor turned District Superintendent was drawn into the situation by individuals from his previous church, including some members of the Staff Parish Relations Committee. This limited the authority of the new Senior Pastor to work through the conflict. These similarities are summarized in Table 7.2 below.

Common Characteristics with the Bishop and Cabinet
Did not do systematic assessment of church
Did not do systematic assessment of clergy
Church perceives a deliberate attempt to change the church with new leadership
Interference in leadership of new Senior Pastor

Table 7.2

Another area where there was common ground in the three cases related to the tension between the Senior Pastor and the prevailing attitudes in the church. While the Senior Pastors emphasized outreach, they all struggled some administratively. This was in contrast to the expectations of the churches for an inward focus and the perceived need for an excellent administrator. Both quality sermons and pastoral care of members were emphasized by both the Senior Pastors and the lay leadership in the

study. In at least two of the three cases, there was conflict with the Senior Pastor's emphasis on both traditional and contemporary worship, but in all three cases, there was a strong expectation that there would be no change to the traditional worship service. The Senior Pastors all tried to implement new ideas, but in each base there was resistance to changes in direction and style. Even though all of the Senior Pastors seemed to have a preference for Feeling, the churches seemed to want a leader who had a preference for Thinking – Judging. And, in one case, the wife of the Senior Pastor had typically been a part of his ministry team as an unpaid servant, but the expectation of the church was that she would have her own career. The comparisons of the interaction of the Senior Pastor and the church environment are found below.

Interactions of the Senior Pastor with the Large Church Environment	
Senior Pastor	Large Church Environment
Emphasis on reaching out	Desire an internal focus
Okay administrator	Need an excellent administrator
Quality sermon	Quality sermons
Value pastoral care of members	Care focused only within the church
Traditional and contemporary worship	Traditional worship valued, without changes
Want to make some changes	No changes in direction or style
Preference for Feeling	Want Thinking – Judging preference
Desires wife to be part of the team	Expects wife to have her own career

Table 7.3

Finally, it is important to note that there were consistent differences between the expectations of the church and those of the Bishop and Cabinet related to the itinerant system. Specifically, while the current operation of the itinerant system assumes that the Conference owns the church and the Bishop and Cabinet appoint the clergy, the churches in the study all expressed ownership over their churches and a desire to select their own Senior Pastor. As a result of these situations they had encountered, members of all three churches advocated various changes in how appointments are being made. Yet, the Districts appear to be too large for the District Superintendents to have the time for systematic assessments. In all three churches, there was a perception that the Bishop and Cabinet were trying to change their churches, and there was strong sentiment that their church would not be changed. In each of the churches, the lay persons desired the very best leadership possible, in contrast to the Cabinet moving a pastor to a church because they have to appoint all of the clergy somewhere. The only issue on which there seems to be complete agreement is that the guaranteed appointment should be abolished. The comparison between these large local churches and the leadership of the United Methodist Church is summarized in Table 7.4 below.

Expectations Related to the Itinerant System	
Local Church	Bishop & Cabinet
We own the church	The Conference owns the church
We want to select our Senior Pastor	The Senior Pastor is appointed
Assess our needs/wants carefully and follow what we say	No time or structure for assessment
We want and deserve the very best	We have to put everybody somewhere
We do not want anything to change	Desire to change the focus of the church
Guaranteed appointment should go	Guaranteed appointment should go

Table 7.4

It is important to note that in any social system, even in churches, the dominant group may resist if asked to change, especially if a change is requested too soon after a very popular leader leaves the organization. In terms of effective leadership, a complex organization such as a large church may require a cognitively complex Senior Pastor. Less complex cognitive structural levels of development necessarily limits what a leader perceives, evaluates, and is able to learn, and the complexity of the church and staff that they can lead. In short, by the time a minister reaches the possibility of an appointment to a large church with a large staff, they need to be complex themselves. Reflecting on experience, training that is well timed and tough challenges facilitate the development of more complex ways of making meaning. This denomination probably needs to appoint Senior Pastors who are operating at least at stage 4 in order to provide leadership in a large church setting.

Relationship to the Literature

Based on the results of this study, it is portent to note the intersections of the data with the existing literature. The relationship of the literature to the results of the three case studies are summarized in the pages to follow, based on the common themes and patterns, noting discrepant data as well. For purposes of clarity, this information is organized around the four areas of focus in the study, including seminary preparation, professional identity, the itinerant system in general and the fit between the Senior Pastor and the particular large church setting.

Seminary Preparation

Clearly, all three Senior Pastors were well beyond the anticipatory socialization prior to their seminary education, or even their transition to their first appointment following seminary. Perhaps some of the chapters from Killinger's (2006) work would have been helpful to the three Senior Pastors, especially concerning the church as an institution, all of the things that a pastor has to do, the inability of the laity to adequately represent the church, and that some church members can be mean. Thankfully, all three Senior Pastors seem to be fairly clear about their calling, perhaps having already been well versed on the final chapter in Killinger's work, enabling them to weather the storms in their former churches and beyond.

On the surface, it may seem that Wheeler (1993, p. 87) assertion that seminary graduates are "unprepared for the complex demands and stresses of ministry practice," or that Giles and Morgan's (1994) proposing that there is a lack of integration

knowing and doing was true of all three of the clergy in this situation. Their beliefs were consistent with the work of Hiserote (1999, p. 194) who asserted that “most seminaries are not teaching what today’s pastors need to know and practice,” and Denison (1985, p. 9), who noted that clergy often “lament that the skills learned in theological training are not always applicable in the local situation.” However, upon closer inspection, that does not seem to be the case. While there were clearly gaps in their learning, the results of this study indicate that these gaps could not have been adequately addressed through seminary education. Although seminary students do have a fundamental need to know basic knowledge, skills and values which are necessary to function as a Pastor, the complex demands of a Senior Pastor in a large United Methodist Church will be acquired through the development of the individual’s professional identity as a clergyperson beyond graduation from a seminary program. To be sure, some of the professional development needs could be addressed in continuing education programs, but on the whole the scope of the large church Senior Pastor role is well beyond the skill set needed by most seminary graduates.

The three Senior Pastors in the study did talk some about being watched, feeling inadequate, isolated, rejected, and overpowered, consistent with the threats to identity formation identified by McFayden (1994). However, they did not talk about some of the other threats to identity formation noted by McFayden (1994), including depersonalization, being viewed as a know-it-all, losing themselves, orthodoxy, and change occurring as religious traditions are challenged. It is important to note that when the Senior Pastors attempted to change the worship style and the focus of

ministry in churches with similar “traditional” histories, it resulted in a kind of identity crisis in the churches, conflicts among members and ultimately opposition to the clergy. The churches tended to react in orthodoxy, making their “traditional” status quo an absolute, and resisting any changes in a defensive posturing because they were determined to get what they wanted.

A District Superintendents indicated that seminary programs can plant seeds with respect to basic skills in relationships, management, conflict management, preaching, pastoral ministry, administration, leadership and visioning, but that they do not prepare anyone with the organizational tools to navigate change or for the complexity of a large church appointment. They noted that it seemed premature to offer seminary courses on how to deal with a large staff when most graduates have little to no staff in their initial appointments, adding that most Pastors learn these things from continuing education or mentoring settings. Another District Superintendent noted that not every Senior Pastor can be trained to deal with complexity. Essentially, the District Superintendents expressed agreement with Harkness (2001), noting that the learning goals should be a reflection of the context of the learning. This is also consistent with the work of Kegan (1994) and Torbert (1991) that what a leader can learn and the kind of leadership that is possible is a function of one’s own level of cognitive development.

All three clergy indicated that they thought there were huge gaps in their seminary preparation, leaving them unprepared for an appointment as a Senior Pastor of a large church. This was especially true in the areas of conflict management,

church management, church growth, leadership education and development, church dynamics, and navigating change. Larry also indicated that it would have been helpful to have had more training in seminary related to understanding the dynamics of marriage and family in ministry, suggesting accountability groups, working with other married couples or participating in regular retreats.

The laity in the study talked about the importance of seminary preparation in basic communication and interpersonal skills, management, negotiation skills, church administration, team building, and group dynamics. The laity also had a couple of ideas for seminary courses related to the itinerancy. These ideas included a course on working with congregations and navigating transitions, and a similar class on the role of the pastor and the foundations of the United Methodist Church, including an explanation of the discipline based committees.

Professional Identity

At the very heart of the conflicts in the three churches, all of the Senior Pastors were accused of failing to build a community (Johnston, 1995). And, in two of the three cases, the Senior Pastors reportedly failed to learn and join the culture of the church. The new approaches to reaching out and contemporary worship were seen by some church members as barriers to community (Gerholm, 1990). The conflicts in ministry focus exemplified the differences in the thinking and discourse between the pastor and the church (Baird, 1992). These difficulties related to values and what it means to be the church in contemporary society. Consistent with the work of Schaller (1993), there was evidence of a shift in the perception of the authority of a pastor, as

the focus was on the perceived competence of the Senior Pastor instead of the authority inherent to the role. Ultimately, the deep and multiple conflicts in all three churches led to isolation, and a sense of uncertainty on the part of the Senior Pastors (Johnston, 1995), resulting in two of the clergy requesting a move and the other clergyperson questioning his abilities.

The work of Foose (1994), identifying several core issues for a church in a search process for a minister was not consistent with the results of this study, with the exception of leadership. More specifically, Foose (1994) identified integrity and authenticity, self awareness, history, theology, money, the nature of the community, leadership style, and work schedule as essential components. But, the churches in this study focused more on administration, management and leadership, along with an inward focus on the care of current members, inspirational preaching, and a prophetic style and gifting of the Senior Pastor. Consistent with the work of Runion (1998), the Senior Pastors were all confident in their administrative abilities, although the churches did not share their assessment for reasons of different stylistic preferences. The current Senior Pastors were not as strong in administration as their predecessors, and did not make administration and control their top priorities. Consistent with the work of Kegin (1990), there was a lack of skills related to leadership and management. Also, consistent with the work of Runion (1998), staff relationships were a source of conflict in all three situations, either centered in the youth minister, organist, or Associate Pastor.

There was a general agreement that there was more of an emphasis on administration in larger churches, and although preaching was cited as important, there was less of an emphasis on the role of shepherd in the results of this study (Thomas, 1968). As Manwaring (2004) and Turner (2001) noted, all three clergy felt adequately prepared for preaching and worship, but not in leadership, management and conflict management skills. It is also possible that the perceived gaps related to leadership, administration, and conflict management were not just due to preparation, but also to personality type preferences. So, even if additional training was provided, it is entirely possible that these Senior Pastors would naturally prefer other roles, and have less desire for administrative functions or Thinking-Judging preferences.

As Osmann (1996) indicated, although direct care was necessary, the most important or priority roles for the clergy in these large churches were organizational and programming functions. However, these functions are preferred by clergy with a Thinking–Judging preference, and not those with a Intuition–Feeling preference, which are the preferences of most clergy (Tieger and Barron-Tieger, 1992; Macdaid, McCaulley, and Kainz, 1986). There was mixed support for the continuing education needs cited by Burtnett (1981), including time management, church growth, evangelism, involving the church in ministry, group leadership and pastoral counseling. These Senior Pastors identified conflict management, church management, church growth, leadership education, church dynamics, and navigating change as their greatest continuing education needs. However, they were also quick to point out that knowledge alone was not sufficient to enable them to use the

information they gained from training, as were the District Superintendents, consistent with the work of Stein (1992) and the literature on personality type preferences and leadership functions (Macdaid, McCaulley, and Kantz, 1986).

This study provided partial support for Klubnik's (1984) assertion that clergy failures were because of relational and administrative inadequacies, instead of preaching and teaching. Although all three Senior Pastors struggled to some degree relationally, one of the clergy also struggled with his preaching, at least in the opinions of the laity and the District Superintendent. Consistent with the work of Quirk (1990), the deficiencies in the skill sets of the three Senior Pastors were amplified by embarrassment. More specifically, Gary used a wrong name in a funeral service, Frank was insecure about his capabilities to lead a conflicted church, and Larry struggled to lead in the style of a corporate culture. The results of this study were not consistent with the work of Mathis (1995), who ranked perceptions of basic ministerial competencies of personal communication, pastoral ministry and communication, behind attitudes. In the end, it was clear that making assumptions about the development of the professional identity of all three clergy based on the length of tenure in the ministry was not possible, consistent with the work of Shostrom (1985). However, as Belsheim (1988) noted, there were some areas of short and long-term training needs that were identified as a result of this study

A few of the participants talked about the potential value of the relatively new cluster system, noting that it should not be highly structured or controlled. Frank shared that it was important for him to be involved in mentoring others. Larry talked a

great deal about how he had gained much over the years in mentoring relationships with other clergy, especially with accountability and in developing ministry plans. Consistent with Runkel's (1982) assertion that mentors can help to provide a supportive environment, Larry talked a great deal about the intimacy and strong sense of community he experienced in small groups with clergy from other denominations. Larry also noted that he had to work to find his own mentors and that he was also involved in mentoring others, consistent with the work of Naicker (2004).

And, it is important to note that all three Senior Pastors were at a distinct disadvantage without a significant mentor relationship to guide them through their respective conflicted situations, although Frank perhaps had that kind of relationship with Todd, his District Superintendent, until the Bishop intervened and the progress in resolving the situation was halted. None of the three clergy reported being mentored by a Senior Pastor of a Large United Methodist Church.

Itinerant System

Consistent with the work of Oswald (1983), because all three cases involved issues related to both ownership and the style and strength of the leader, it is reasonable to state that a potential liability of long-term pastorates is indeed the inclination for the church to have been made in the image of the former Senior Pastor. However, with an established consultation process, coupled with training of the laity and transition workshops for the congregation to prepare them for new leadership, the benefits of a long-term pastorate still far outweigh the liabilities. In fact, in each of the

three cases, the laity spoke about the growth, stability and relationships related to their former long-term pastor, consistent with the work of Oswald (1983).

While all three Senior Pastors in the study, struggled with conflict, it is important to note that the training and experience of the clergy, coupled with the supervision, assessment, and selection process, as well as “the traumatic impact of a pastoral transition” were all inadequate and underestimated in each situation, contrary to the encouragement of Buck (2003). Similarly, Danielson (2001) encouraged self awareness and ego strength of leadership as some of the keys to following a long term pastor. But, although these characteristics were present in two of the situations, these keys were still inadequate to succeed over the long term in either case. Other factors need to be considered, including clear advice for clergy to attend to issues related to grief in the congregation, especially when following a long-term pastor (Danielson, 2001; Kerr, 1988; Clark, 1981). Here too, the District Superintendent and Senior Pastors either were not aware of or simply ignored this important dynamic, just as they failed to heed the advice of not making any major changes in the first year of an appointment (Danielson, 2001).

Not only is it important to note that there were no clergy couples represented among the Senior Pastors in this study, but there were also no women or minorities represented, as all twelve of the participants in the study were white men. Women were not included among the participants randomly selected for this study. Not only that, but all three immediate former Senior Pastors who had served in these three churches were white men. And, all three new Senior Pastors who have since been

appointed to these three churches are white men. Although there are increasing numbers of women clergy, it is not clear whether the conspicuous absence of women in this randomly selected group is due to some form of bias or whether the women in the conference aspire to other types of ministries or church settings (McDuff and Mueller, 2002; Pearl and Chang, 2000; Stevens, 1989; Carroll, Hargrove, and Loomis, 1983; Lehman, 1980). Since there were no women or minorities represented in the study, it does raise the question concerning the degree to which the itinerant system is really an open system (Robinson, 2005; Morrison and Caldwell, 1991; Messer, 1991; Oden, 1991; Sadio, 1984; Schreckengost, 1984). In any case, efforts to become increasingly inclusive of women and minorities among the leadership of the United Methodist Church need to continue (McDuff and Mueller, 2002; Geis, 1991).

All of the clergy in the study made at least a passing reference to the stress of the situation on their family members. The Senior Pastor in Case 3 in particular faced enormous challenges in the timing of the appointment as it related to the move of his family (Watson, 1984). Consistent with the work of Darling, Hill and McWey (2004), the Senior Pastor from Case 3 suggested additional support for himself and his family in the form of marriage retreats, and possible counseling resources. In addition to the stress of a move, both of the clergy from Case 3 could have likely benefited from some additional resources in this regard. The role of the Senior Pastor's wife was "ignored" by the new church, because it did not fit their expectation of the wife of their minister. This contributed to what was already a difficult transition (Cooper (1996), adding another layer of loss to her move (Frame, 1993).

It seems that there were ultimately incongruent matches in at least Cases 1 and 2, although the Senior Pastor from Case 2 and the District Superintendent and Lay Leader from Case 1 would disagree. It is difficult to say whether the Senior Pastor in Case 3 might have had a better chance at success if there had not been the interference of the former Senior Pastor turned District Superintendent (Danielson, 2001). There was a personality style and role conflict between the Senior Pastor and the Staff Parish Relations Committee, and perhaps these could have been resolved or managed. But, there was widespread agreement on the importance of the matching process. It is possible that both cases 1 and 3 might have been successful if, during the first year, there had been no changes except for efforts to meet the needs of the church as they defined them, and there had been intentional focus on facilitating the grief process that accompanied the transition of losing their long-term Senior Pastor.

In all three cases, the incoming Senior Pastor had an incomplete understanding of the history of the church, in spite of the fact that Danielson (2001) and Watson (1984) and Best-Boss (1999) cite the critical nature of understanding congregational dynamics, knowing the history of the church respectively. This lack of knowledge was caused by the Bishop and Cabinet either having the information and choosing not to share it with the clergy, or not knowing the information due to a lack of systematic, in-depth assessment. All three Senior Pastors at best found themselves in an unintentional interim arrangement (Gebhart, 1999), and at worst were set up to fail, either by perceived interference from a District Superintendent in Case 3 or the Bishop who seemed less than objective in Case 1 (Messer, 1991), and by inadequate

supervision in Cases 2 and 3. The District Superintendents in these cases did impact the effectiveness of the pastor in a local church, consistent with the work of Isaman (2005) and Jones (1987). In addition, the apparent lack of systematic, in-depth assessment of both the church and the clergy, along with not sharing critical information that is available with both the church and the clergy prior to finalizing appointments appears to have made the transitions of these Senior Pastors more difficult than they could have been.

Because of the notable lack of connection to the profile and information gathering process, both the laity and the Senior Pastors felt anything but connected to the United Methodist Church except in name only. Several participants wrestled with the conflicting values of the authority of the Bishop and Cabinet to make appointments and feeling that the local church should be autonomous, consistent with Schaller's (1991) assertion that it is a challenge to identify the client in the current operation of the itinerant system. The matching process without accompanying accurate profile information related to the churches and/or clergy in question truly lacked the discernment that Millard (1991) emphasized. John's comments were in agreement with others that the itinerant system as it currently exists may be a hindrance to attracting new clergy candidates (Hoyle, 2005; Nixon, 2001).

There seems to be mixed support for Danielson's (2001, p. 6) assertion that an unsuccessful transition is one where the Senior Pastor is unable to claim to have gained respect as a leader and where "destructive conflict is present in the congregation." Although there was certainly conflict in all three churches, along with

issues related to a lack of respect on the part of some, in all three cases the Senior Pastors had gained a following of some members of the church, and did so while making changes in their first year. Also, consistent with the literature related to the itinerancy, the results of this study seem to support assertions that the effectiveness of both the compensation system and the guaranteed appointment need to be evaluated (Carder, 2005; Pearl, 2005; Warner, 2005; Schaller, 2004; Frank, 2002; Oden, 1991; Treese, 1991).

All three pastors expressed a commitment to their covenant of the itinerant in spite of what had been a difficult and painful experience (Messer, 1991). But contrary to their expressions of personal commitment, all three clergy also struggled. Specifically, Gary struggled to understand the meaning in the experience, while Larry struggled to understand the theology of the Bishop regarding appointments, and Frank struggled to understand the sequence of events that transpired. All three clergy also talked about the lack of care in the process of being appointed to the church and/or being reassigned to another church. They expressed disappointment, confusion and even hurt. Consistent with Willimon's (1983) assertion that a call to ministry is discerned individually but affirmed corporately, all three Senior Pastors felt anything but affirmed by the Conference in their individual call to ministry, and how their situations were handled.

Most of the participants noted at least some of the multitude of variables that are important to the appointment process, consistent with the work of Geis (1991) and Oden (1991). And, many of the participants emphasized the need to get rid of the

guaranteed appointment, consistent with the work of Hillman (1999), Oden (1991) and Treese (1991), because it seems to encourage a level of mediocrity on the part of some clergy, and creates difficulties in identifying the struggling clergy in order to counsel them out of the system.

Hoyle (2005) suggested that consultants or interim ministers should be hired to facilitate the process of change in churches. But, in this study, the hiring of a mediator in one of the cases appears to have backfired, adding yet another layer to the necessary healing process. There appeared to be no initial assessment of the factors that need to be present for mediation to have a chance at success. And, there appeared to be no agreement on the role of the mediator or the purpose of the mediation, as well as the necessary willingness of both parties to be open to work through the conflict.

Person – Environment Interaction

The results of this study provide partial support for the assertions of Mueller and McDuff (2004), who assert that conservative clergy do not seem to be as dissatisfied with being matched with a liberal congregation as the liberal clergy are to being matched with a conservative congregation. There was clearly more conversation related to theology related to Case 1, where Frank seemed to have a more theologically liberal point of view than the prevailing attitudes in the congregation. However, Frank was just as dissatisfied with his experience as the rest of the clergy.

Consistent with the work of Spannaus (2005), the lack of fit in two of the three cases was because the promotion was based on prior success in a smaller church setting, and the new churches all had very high expectations of the incoming Senior

Pastor. In addition, there was an absence of leadership coaching. All of the Senior Pastors in the study received little help in their transition to the new appointment from the District Superintendents, consistent with the work of Nadler (2004) and The Globe and Mail (2004). Further, marked differences in their styles as compared to their predecessors contributed to their lack of fit with the church's expectations, consistent with the work of Nadler (2004).

It does seem that spiritual disciplines did make a difference for Larry, the Senior Pastor in case 3, as he actually became stronger through the ordeal (Hiserote, 1999). However, Larry's ability to handle the adversity may also be due to other factors as well, like his apparent cognitive complexity. The results also support Schooling's (1998) assertion that a psychological contract between the people and their church play a factor in the short tenure of clergy.

The results of this study seem to be consistent with the need for leadership coaching and cultivating leadership skills during the process of executive succession, found in the work of Dobzinski and Hatton (1999), Horn and Font (2004), Dearlove and Crainer (2004), and George (2005). The results of this study also support the need for the progressive development of clergy, consistent with the work of Tunnickliff (2005).

Kegan (1994) and Torbert (1991) document the limitations and boundaries of leaders who deal with or initiate organizational change. The cognitive complexity of these leaders appears to limit the kind of change and the complexity of the organization that they can lead. Torbert (1991) would say that in order to transform

the basic mission of an organization, and cope successfully with complex opposition, leaders must be cognitively complex.

In these three cases, Gary seems to be the least complex of the three Senior Pastors. Frank seems to be more complex than Gary, and Larry seems to be the most complex. Even if Gary took the courses suggested for Senior Pastors of large churches, having the necessary experiences in ministry, he still might not “get it” because he may be less cognitively complex. Frank perhaps, and Larry probably have both the necessary experiences and the cognitive complexity to adequately internalize the new learning. In short, cognitive levels can limit perceptions, judgments, and the ability to learn complex skills. Leaders need to be complex already or be developmentally ready to move toward a more complex level of consciousness in order to effectively lead a complex organization.

In terms of personality type preferences, like Frank and Larry, most clergy prefer Intuition and Feeling (Tieger and Barron-Tieger, 1992; Macdaid, McCaulley, and, Kainz, 1986). Gary’s personality preferences seem less clear, and he could be either prefer Sensing and Feeling or Intuition and Feeling. Those who prefer Sensing are more concrete, and those who prefer Intuition are more abstract in their perceptions. In the development of type, it is recommended that individuals focus their efforts on the development of their personality preferences during the first half of life, and not on their non-preferences. However, after mid-life, non-preferences need to be developed in order to become more whole and able to deal with more of what life brings. Ideally, one would seek to become passably good at both preferences and

non-preferences during the second half of life. This balance brings an increased ability to recognize the need of the moment and respond in ways that are appropriate to the situation. During seminary and for a number of years following seminary, type theory and research would indicate that these three clergy should focus on developing their personality preferences. All three clergy are now old enough and have probably developed their preferences enough to focus on developing their non-preferences, likely including the Thinking function.

It is important to note that conflict, administration, management, and dealing with change are content that require Thinking capacities (Barger and Kirby, 1995; Kroeger and Thuesen, 1992). If courses on these topics are offered early in their careers, they will learn something, but the timing for mastery is less than ideal unless they prefer Thinking. At this point in their careers and given the desire for administrative leadership in each of the churches, these clergy could now focus on the development of the Thinking function. Taking courses now in conflict management, administration, and management would probably not only further develop the Thinking preference in these clergy, but also enable them to better minister in large churches.

It appears that the Bishop, and District Superintendents need to be more conscious of the roles and capacities needed to be a Senior Pastor in a large church setting, and assess prospective clergy accordingly. Based on the results of this study, it seems that the roles of a chief executive officer, pastor and prophet are essential in order to navigate the demands of ministry in a large church setting successfully. The

focus of the Bishop and District Superintendents on helping clergy over 40 years old develop the non-preferred dimensions of their personality may help them to be able to navigate the roles that are not natural to them. This development could potentially enhance the likelihood that they can navigate a transition to a large church setting successfully.

In a world where people are experiencing rapid change, it is possible that the contemporary culture puts almost everyone “in over their heads.” This may explain the strong sentiment expressed in all three settings for self care before pursuing a ministry of outreach. The members of these and other churches may indeed experience an internal focus of ministry as a kind of anchor in a rapidly changing society.

Nadler and Tushman (1980) describe the “four major components” of an organization as the task, the individuals, the formal organizational arrangements, and the informal organization (Nadler and Tushman, 1980, p. 43). Specifically, while the task is the essential work of the organization, the individuals are the employees of the organization, the formal organizational arrangements are the explicit means of enabling employees to do their work, and the informal organization is the implicit mode of operation. Essentially, Nadler and Tushman (1980) believe that an integrated approach maximizing the fit between each pair of organizational components will enhance organizational effectiveness. The six pairs identified by Nadler and Tushman (1980) include: the individual/formal organization; the individual/task; the individual/informal organization; the task/formal organization; the task/informal

organization; and the formal organization/informal organization. Specifically, the results of this study indicate there were problems of fit between: the individual pastor and formal structure of the United Methodist Church; the individual pastor and CEO aspect of the pastor's role; the task of the ministry as seen by the individual pastor and the local church; and the formal structure of the United Methodist Church and the informal structure of the local church.

Implications for Research and Practice

Schaller (2004, p. 23) states, "It is easier to identify the symptoms of a failing institution than it is to win agreements for the complete diagnosis. Far more difficult, however, is gaining agreement for the appropriate prescription or therapy." When values are added to the results of this study, a number of recommendations have surfaced (Lincoln, 1982). Specifically, with respect to practice, these recommendations are related to: relocation support, longer terms, District Superintendents, smaller districts, salary, confidentiality, de-briefing, profiles, the introduction, training churches and clergy, the guaranteed appointment, guidelines, mediation, interim appointments, recommendations for new pastors, supervision, the cluster system, and mentoring relationships.

Relocation Support

It seems curious to me that although the itinerant system functions as the corporate policy of the United Methodist Church, there are few resources available to clergy and their families aside from the churches paying the moving expenses. Adding some sort of relocation support could go a long way in making the particular

Mid-Western Conference operation more family friendly (Cooper, 1996; Lewis and Lewis, 1996).

Longer Terms

Schaller (2005, p. 38, 40) suggests that the United Methodist Church needs to focus on “long-tenured pastorates of at least twenty years,” emphasizing that the existing system “discouraged long range planning by congregations, pastors, superintendents, annual conferences, and bishops. Considering the complexities of the system, it would be reasonable to consider extending the term of both the Bishops and the District Superintendents, consistent with the work of Schaller (2004) and Green (2007). However, it also seems unfair to do so without a corresponding commitment to better matches and longer pastorates for the clergy. It seems inconsistent to say that Bishops and District Superintendents need more time to navigate the complexities of the system in the current cultural context without affording the same general consideration to the clergy. In short, in order to facilitate church growth, it seems important for the Bishop and Cabinet to consider better matches and longer pastorates.

District Superintendents

Although it is difficult to discern perception from reality, some of the conduct by the District Superintendents seemed inappropriate, and perhaps even unethical. Two out of the three pastors talked about feeling pressured, even coerced or threatened to take particular appointments. And, by the admission of the District Superintendent, one of those pastors should have never gone to the church where he was appointed. The only pastor who did not talk about feeling coerced or threatened to take an

appointment did discuss the challenges of reporting to a District Superintendent who had been the immediate previous Senior Pastor at the church where he now served as the Senior Pastor. Regardless of who the District Superintendent is or how gifted they may be, this is a conflict of interest. Just as clergy are expected to cut their ties to former churches and no longer be involved in the life of the people in that church in order to minimize the potential for boundary ambiguity (Danielson, 2001), a District Superintendent should not have an immediate former church among those for whom s/he is responsible.

Smaller Districts

The sheer size of supervisory responsibilities makes it virtually impossible for the District Superintendents to know the clergy and churches in their care. This need to know clergy and churches is contrary to a decision implemented by this particular Mid-Western Conference to make the districts even larger. Smaller Districts and more connection with the clergy and churches would make it possible for the District Superintendents to do the necessary assessment work to better prepare clergy for future appointments (Schaller, 2004). Consistent with the work of Conger (1992) on coaching, training without the accompanying structural support is simply not sufficient to facilitate growth. Smaller districts would make it easier to assess the needs of churches and the skills and gifts of clergy, potentially leading to better matches. Smaller districts would potentially make it possible for the District Superintendents to know the kinds of professional development education or mentoring needed by the clergy. Smaller Districts would also potentially enable District Superintendents to

address issues that were factors in the three cases in this study. Specifically, smaller Districts would facilitate the accurate tracking of membership and attendance, identifying financial problems in a church, the appropriate functioning of discipline based committees, unique salary and vacation time agreements, and knowledge of significant decisions made by a Senior Pastor during his/her tenure.

Salary

The itinerant system is complex enough without having salary issues drive appointments. It would potentially be interesting to explore providing equivalent salaries to clergy based on experience, regardless of the size of the church to which they are appointed. This leveling of the playing field would communicate value for all of the churches and clergy. In addition, this approach could potentially make it easier for clergy to decline appointments that lead to more lucrative salaries in favor of staying in smaller churches that might be a better fit for their gifts and passions.

Confidentiality

The breaches in confidentiality from the Staff Parish Relations Committees in all three churches to a leak of information from the Conference Office in one of the cases, confidentiality appears to be a problem. Not only does confidentiality need to be modeled from the leadership of the system, starting with the Bishop and the Cabinet (Oden, 1991), but it also needs to be stressed as critical to the work of the lay leadership in churches, especially among those serving on a Staff Parish Relations Committee. Training Staff Parish Relations Committees related to confidentiality begins with exercising care in selecting people for the committee, and includes

explaining what information is confidential and why that is the case. Case studies of possible situations that could arise could be used for training purposes.

De-Briefing

In all three of these cases, there was no de-briefing of the clergy or laity. All three of the Senior Pastors talked openly about the strain they experienced in their respective situations, and most of the laity expressed a similar range of emotions. If the particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church values reflection and healing, an intentional de-briefing process probably needs to occur. This process could release the grief that has been perpetuated in an itinerant system precisely because it has been largely ignored. For the clergy involved, especially those from failed appointments, this could even take place in a retreat setting focused on inner healing prayer, potentially bringing new vitality to the entire system.

Profiles

Annual profiles for both clergy and churches need to be more uniform and required, providing the necessary tools to equip the District Superintendents and thereby facilitate the intentional matching process. Church profiles need to include background information related to the history, traditions, and even divisions within the church, along with specific information related to the former Senior Pastor. Specifically, the information related to the former Senior Pastor should include the direction and style of his/her ministry, along with their personal style of relating to others. This information needs to be shared with clergy prior to the introduction. These profiles of a church should be circulated more widely among the Discipline

Based Committees, including but not limited to the Staff Parish Relations Committee, before being approved by the Administrative Board, the executive committee of the local United Methodist Church. This will increase the likelihood of finding a better fit for the perceived identity of the church, but also force the church to wrestle with what kind of leadership they need as a community of faith. Clergy profiles should include information about their spiritual gifts, strengths and weakness, as well as information related to their family, their personality type, and their ministry experience or history.

The District Superintendents or someone representing the District or Conference should teach clergy and churches how to complete the forms. Regardless of how information is gathered, and in spite of the extreme complexity of the appointment process, the District Superintendents have a responsibility for on-going assessment of churches and clergy. But, consistent with the work of Messer (1991), to emphasize the missional strategy of the itinerant system and the authority of the Bishop and Cabinet at the expense of a relationship with clergy and churches seems little more than an excuse for poor appointments and violating the covenant agreement.

Introduction

There needs to be a clear and consistent process for the introduction interview. This information needs to be covered with the Staff Parish Relations Committees in training annually. And, in the event of a pending clergy transition, this information should be reviewed with the committee prior to or at the outset of the introduction meeting. In order to improve the relationship between the local church and the

District and Conference, it is essential that appointments are literally not perceived as a “done deal” or presented by a District Superintendent as “sticking” the church with a pastor regardless of the nature or extent of the concerns. Here again, clear guidelines, coupled with a more intentional system of gathering information through church and clergy profiles may go a long way to improve the relationship between the local church and the District and Conference.

Training Churches & Clergy

Although the United Methodist Church is now in the process of training people to serve as clergy coaches, what is not being addressed which may be an even greater need is training or coaching the laity. The Conference, not the local churches, needs to clarify the issue of apportionments, including specifically where the money is distributed, in an effort to address the concerns of the laity related to a feeling that they are paying for services that they are not receiving at the District and Conference level.

Training could also include transition seminars for clergy and churches, better equipping them to navigate the turbulent waters of change. This is especially true because in all three situations, these unintentional interim appointments followed a popular, long-term Senior Pastor. And, instead of lamenting about the lack of commitment on the part of the laity to the United Methodist Church, perhaps there could be more of an emphasis to provide additional training at the local church and District levels. This training could enhance the understanding of the laity of the covenantal nature of the itinerant system, engender loyalty and commitment, and help a diverse contemporary culture with their denominational moorings.

The widespread confusion about how the itinerant system does or should operate necessitates that training should be specifically targeted to the Staff Parish Relations Committees in local churches. The committee should be trained annually in each local church. But it would perhaps be a more efficient use of time and energy to conduct this training on the District level, or involve several churches in a cluster training model. Senior Pastors should be encouraged not to assume that every strong leader in the church would be a good fit for this critical work area, because the Chairperson and members need to be able to handle sensitive information in what is sometimes an emotionally charged political situation. In addition to covering the expectations and responsibilities of the group, this training should also address issues related to confidentiality. In addition, there needs to be training on how to respond effectively to congregational concerns, like complaints concerning the pastor or staff. And, if members of the Staff Parish Relations Committee were close to and/or advocates of the former pastor, they need to be trained to be more intentional about helping with the transition of the new leadership rather than finding problems with the style of the new Senior Pastor. There also needs to be some additional training for the District Superintendents. This training could provide an overview related to human resource issues, addressing what seem to be inappropriate practices within the system.

Generally speaking, laypersons who are professionals in human resources, leadership development, and/or conflict management could be involved in the training at all levels, without necessarily hiring any additional staff. Here again, involving the laity could serve to strengthen the connection of professionals to the denomination.

Clearly the results of this study seem to highlight the important of clergy training, both in terms of seminary preparation, and beyond seminary through professional development. There are still issues, however, related to the appropriate timing of the training. The dynamics of education readiness may well relate to professional experience and promotions, as indicated by the District Superintendents, as well as the development of complex thinking by the pastors and understanding the point in the life span when strengthening weaknesses in non-preferences is more appropriate.

In some cases, the relevance of content is directly related to experience on the job. In higher education, for example, Ph.D. students who have had between two and ten years of full-time professional prior to their doctoral studies are more motivated to learn the literature related to the importance of organizational behavior in their classes (Rodgers, 1997). Similarly, Master's level students with little or no full-time experience in a university setting do not see the relevance of the content in some of these classes (Rodgers, 1997). So, as clergy gain experience in smaller churches upon completion of a seminary education, progressing to somewhat larger churches over time, they begin to see the relevance of the topics such as conflict mediation, administrative style, and management. Their felt needs to learn more lead naturally to educational readiness.

It seems clear that there needs to be more intentional efforts at the District and Conference level to provide training for Senior Pastors of large United Methodist Churches. In addition to being more intentional in preparing clergy before, and not

after appointments are made, the District Superintendents need to take more responsibility in encouraging clergy professional development. Potential Senior Pastors of large United Methodist Churches may need training and practice related to conflict management, church management, church growth, leadership education, church dynamics, and navigating change. Perhaps Conferences could develop such training opportunities, utilizing lay professionals in these areas.

Consistent with the vocational model proposed by Hough and Cobb (1985), efforts to facilitate the development of a professional identity of the clergy need to focus on the development of practical theologians, along with an assessment component (Coulter, 2003). The delivery system should be one combining seminars and retreats over an extended period of time, like perhaps encompassing the three-year probationary period beyond seminary before one can be ordained as a full elder. There could also be some value in utilizing Senior Pastors of large churches outside the United Methodist denomination as mentors.

Where some of the early training could focus on personality, leadership education and development, the role of the pastor and the foundations of the United Methodist Church, including an explanation of the discipline based committees. Required by the Book of Discipline (2004), these standard committees in a local United Methodist Church include Finance, Trustees, Lay Leadership, and the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Ultimately, all of the committees with a local United Methodist Church report to the Administrative Board, or executive committee.

Later training could emphasize human resources, church management, church growth, church dynamics, and navigating change. In addition, interpretive skills could be enhanced (Foster, Dahil, Golemon and Toletino, 2005), like assessing the culture of the church. All clergy could be taught how to do qualitative interviews and analyze the resulting data. This would provide them with the skills to gather useful assessment data, enabling them to learn about the specific church context as they build relationships.

Guaranteed Appointment

The guaranteed appointment should be eliminated, and the Cabinet should explore employment contracts or voluntary mutual agreements. The implications of appointments need to be more closely explored from all levels in a “connectional” system that is currently not connected. This is consistent with Green’s (2007) report that the Council of Bishops will ask the General Conference to modify the “guaranteed appointment” so the Bishops will have the discretionary latitude to address issues with clergy who may be struggling.

Guidelines

In all three cases, there was uncertainty and confusion about the appointment process from both clergy and laity. One Senior Pastor also expressed some concern related to what may be in his personnel file. It seems that it would be helpful to develop and share guidelines related to the appointment process. These guidelines should address the exceptions to the itinerant system, such as churches in the United Methodist denomination that seem to never have clergy transitions. The guidelines

should also include the theological position of the Bishop and Cabinet related to their beliefs about the involvement of God in the appointment process. Also included should be the procedures for clergy to review their own personnel files. Consistent with the honest admission of Whitfield (2005), it might be helpful to acknowledge at the outset that sometimes bad matches are made and need to be corrected. It is important to have a clear and consistent process for making appointments, and to communicate that information throughout the particular Mid-Western conference, including the discretionary latitude of the Bishop and Cabinet. Because trust is central in a covenant relationship, it is important that neither the Bishop nor District Superintendents undermine the authority of a District Superintendent or Senior Pastor, respectively, unless the reasons for doing so are established within the guidelines.

The system needs to allow for clergy to express an appointment preference based on a call within a call, like a desire to stay in a small, rural church instead of moving to an urban area. Also, the perceived threat to the itinerant system of a pastor being successful in helping a church to grow seems to be inconsistent with the goals expressed by the Conference related to church growth. In short, the Cabinet needs to work together to develop a more unified statement of philosophy related to the ideal intended tenure, direction, and goals for clergy and churches. Expectations specific to the particular Mid-Western Conference, similar to the booklet published by the Illinois Great Rivers Conference (2004), should be published and distributed to clergy and the Staff Parish Relations Committees. Clarify the appointment process used in the

particular Mid-Western Conference and make it available to clergy and laity, similar to the information available on the web site for the Iowa Conference.

Mediation

Conventional wisdom teaches us that a mediator is only useful if both parties in a conflict not only agree on the role and purpose of the mediation, and they are willing to work together to resolve the conflict. If this is not the case, as was true in two of the three churches, mediation should not be attempted until after some other intervention is utilized. When mediation is appropriate and used, the mediation agreement needs to guard against a mediator issuing a report to a church, District Superintendent or Bishop prior to talking with all of the relevant constituencies, including those in critical areas of lay leadership within the church, like those on the Staff Parish Relations Committee in Case 2.

Interim Appointments

With respect to interim appointments, unless there is an extreme situation, this does not seem to be in the best interest of churches that are struggling to find their way, in spite of Hoyle's (2005) encouragement otherwise. One way to avoid the unintentional interim arrangement is to have newly appointed clergy not make any major changes in the first year, focusing solely on building relationships as a Pastor, and caregiver who is present with the people. This first year is an important time of adjustment and grieving prior to setting the course for a new direction. I believe that interim appointments could be effective only if there are individuals specifically called to serve churches on an interim basis, like some retired clergy who are stable,

qualified and enjoy serving as this kind of short-term missionary. However, because the United Methodist Church does not typically use interim clergy, coupled with the fact that training provided for most retired clergy was from a different era that emphasized leading in a familial and not a complex setting, this could be difficult to pull off effectively without adding more grief to the system. In general, using interim clergy for churches that are in transition seems to be an easy out for the Cabinet to sacrifice a clergy person on the altar of convenience, instead of doing the more intentional and difficult work of finding a suitable fit. Perhaps there should be less focus on interim ministers and more discussion about the kinds of situations where a suitable fit might be a match between the desires of the church and the skills of a pastor. Or, in the event of an intentional decision on the part of the Cabinet to change the direction of the church in the appointment process, it should only be done following a period of adjustment with no major changes.

Recommendations for New Pastors

The results of this study have highlighted some important pointers for clergy in transitioning to a new church. First, it is important for District Superintendents to advise Senior Pastors to not promote major changes during the first year, especially in the context of a traditional church. Second, in the event that the former pastor was popular or had served on the staff for a long period of time, it is critical to attend to the grief work in the congregation, helping to facilitate the healing process before changes are proposed.

Supervision

District Superintendents may need to be more involved with developing clergy, and preparing them for appointments instead of focusing so much on salary levels and seniority in the system. Performance issues need to be addressed directly, instead of simply moving problem pastors around or emphasizing grace and forgiveness at the expense of honest feedback. Senior Pastors may need to be appointed first and given more freedom in building their staff team at their current or new churches, especially when other appointed clergy are involved.

Cluster System & Mentoring Relationships

There was guarded, but hopeful support for the relatively new cluster system by one of the clergy in the study. It seems important to two individuals in the study that such groups be voluntary and not overly structured so as not to diminish the potential effectiveness of the cluster system. This allows the clergy to choose clusters based on theological compatibility, personality, or even being a part of groups that include non-United Methodist clergy.

It would also be helpful to provide mentoring experiences prior to appointing clergy to serve as a Senior Pastor in a large United Methodist Church, even continuing the mentoring relationship after the appointment was made if the appointee desires to continue the arrangement. It seems important to make mentor relationships voluntary between people who feel personally and theologically compatible, and not to attempt to mentor clergy with their immediate supervisors. Mentors must be the very best pastors of large churches, instead of just a pastor who serves on staff in a large church

setting, regardless of their effectiveness. Mentoring by a successful large church pastor and/or initially serving as an Associate Pastor in a large church setting could be helpful, especially if Anderson (2002, p. 3) is correct in stating that the size of a church “is the most significant factor in understanding the dynamics and potential of a congregation.”

“Open Doors, Open Hearts & Open Minds”

Contrary to the assertions of the District Superintendents in the study, the primary problem in the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church may not be ineffective pastors or dysfunctional churches. Instead, it is possible that the primary problem in the itinerant system is one of disconnection. In describing “actions that inhibit organizational learning,” Argyris (1993, p. 15), states, “Organizational defensive routines are anti-learning and overprotective.” Argyris (1993, p. 15) defines a defensive routine as “any policy or action that inhibits, individuals, groups, intergroups, and organizations from experiencing embarrassment or threat and, at the same time, prevents the actors from identifying and reducing the causes of the embarrassment or threat.” Argyris (1993, p. 29) explains that “defensive routines violated formal policies and practices; yet the routines appeared to survive, indeed to become more robust.” The focus of the Cabinet in attempting to serve as a “parent” for the “clergy” and “churches” in the conference in order to curb the decline seems to miss the mark. Argyris (1993, p. 31) asserts that “recommendations for overcoming the typical problem bypass the causes.” For District Superintendents, being a ‘parent’

may be a defensive routine that serves to bypass the cause of decline in the United Methodist Church.

In recent years, advertising has included billboards, radio spots, and television commercials articulating the welcoming nature or intention of the United Methodist Church, proclaiming “Open Minds, Open Hearts, Open Doors.” There is little doubt that the heritage of the United Methodist church seems to have clearly “...supported theological openness and inquiry” (Howell, 2003, p. 76). The challenge is for the United Methodist Church to refine the practice of the itinerancy so that it truly reflects the openness it so actively promotes. This attitude of openness begins with the leadership of the church being willing to engage in conversations with people within their church to explore ways of working together to collectively improve the system.

Implications for Future Research

In addition to the recommendations related to practice, a number of suggestions related to future research have been identified based on the results of this study. Although there was one study related to failure in non-profit organizations, the focus was on the demise of the organization and the needed social services unaddressed as a result. It would be interesting to explore clergy mismatches in churches from the perspective of the literature related to executive succession and leadership coaching.

A seminary class could be developed related to leadership, navigating conflict, and change. Such a course might help ministers of the future better navigate difficult times, especially given the increasing nature of non-traditional seminary students

beginning in ministry as a second career. On the other hand, younger, new ministers may not be ready to hear or see the relevancy of the content in these courses. The outcome of a class could also be differentially studied.

A professional development program could be designed in United Methodist and other seminaries to continue to foster clergy learning beyond a seminary degree. Here again, this program could focus on those areas previously discussed that could facilitate clergy transitions to large United Methodist churches. Here again, it would be important to study the outcomes of such a training program.

It would be potentially fruitful to conduct a nationwide survey of United Methodist clergy to identify the best practices in the itinerant system. These ideas and innovations could be shared widely so that churches, Districts and Conferences can learn from what is happening in the General Conference outside of their meetings once every four years.

The exit of former Senior Pastors, whether very successful, somewhat successful, or not successful could be studied. The focus could be a comparison of the perceived needs of the churches and/or the transition of the clergy. In both cases, differential best practices in clergy transitions might result.

This study is a beginning attempt to develop a theory related to failed appointments. However, more work needs to be done. In many respects, precisely because qualitative inquiry is time consuming, one could easily make it a career of exploring additional cases and listening to heart-wrenching stories before a theory of failed large church appointments could be constructed.

Reflections Related to the Study

As the dust of history begins to settle on this study, my reflection has centered on a number of areas. These include the weaknesses and unique contributions of the study, my role as the researcher, the personal impact of the project, and the transformations resulting from reflection.

Weaknesses of the Study

There was more than one month of time between interviews, primarily because of the delay in gaining the appropriate approval for the follow-up interview protocol through the Institutional Review Board. While it was the right thing to do to wait until the questions for the follow-up interview had been approved through the proper University channels, in retrospect, it would have been even better if I had submitted the follow-up interview protocol in the original request for review. However, because what is asked in the follow up interviews depends on what is learned in the initial interviews, it is important to note that the questions cannot be totally defined in advance. Although three of the participants expressed some question or concern about this lag time, they seemed to understand the explanation and apology related to following the necessary procedures.

The participants in the study were those involved in various proscribed roles at the time of the transition or move of the Senior Pastor from the appointment at the large church. There were two additional District Superintendents that I did not interview, because they did not meet the criteria for the study. The District Superintendent that was involved at the very beginning of Gary's tenure as a large

church Senior Pastor had retired and was no longer a District Superintendent when Gary was moved from the large church. And, because Larry was moved to serve as a Senior Pastor in a large church as Jeff was transitioning to the District Superintendent role, a different District Superintendent was assigned to supervise Larry. However, Jeff was officially supervising Larry at the time of the appointment change, so he was included in the study whereas his District Superintendent colleague was not.

In the second case, there was some disagreement concerning the size of the church. While the District Superintendent did not consider it a large church, others seemed to disagree. In the course of the interviews, it became clear that the published numbers related to membership were suspect. Specifically, Del indicated that Scott had the church secretary add names to the membership roll of the church when people in the community donated money and/or attended a dinner at the church. It was not clear whether the Senior Pastor knew about the practice or if he did not object to this manner of perceived church growth. Although the criterion for inclusion in the study was based on average attendance rather than membership, it is possible that the published numbers in this area were equally questionable.

Another potential weakness of the study was that I did not interview all of the members of the Staff Parish Relations Committees from the time of the transition. And, because there are changes in the composition of these committees on an annual basis, I may not have interviewed the individual with the most tenure on the committee at the time of the clergy transition. I also did not interview the Bishop and

entire Cabinet, or ask any questions related to the specific process used in making appointments.

In the interviews, I occasionally had to explain or define what I meant by professional identity. While that seemed to work out fine, it would have been better to have a written definition as a part of the interview protocol. And, while some of the participants expressed that they liked the analogy related to the car to help them understand the process of the interview, it was a little distracting to others, as they initially tried to draw some exact parallels to their situations.

Although I did ask if there was anything more that they wanted to add, I wish now I had asked what additional question(s) they might have wanted to answer but that I did not ask. This is especially true because a few of the participants expressed surprise that the process was over as quickly as it was, and one individual was certain that I would ask about how appointments were made, but I did not ask that question. It would have also been interesting to develop a collection of the various kinds of images or descriptions that both laity and clergy have about the process of making appointments. This too might have been telling.

Although it did not at all seem to impact the results of the study, it was short-sighted to emphasize the use of journaling as a means of reflection. Journaling is an introverted activity, but many of the participants either shared their reflections verbally, consistent with more of an extraverted mode, or tried to write some notes, before expanding on their notes in the follow up interview. In retrospect, it would have perhaps been better to provide both an introverted and extraverted option related

to reflection, because many of the participants were apologetic about not doing it right because they had not completed everything specifically according to the instructions. But, I did reassure individuals as this surfaced. And, they seemed both relieved and ready to talk about their reflections.

During the course of the study, Jeff, indicated that the situation he described was “a potentially recognizable circumstances for the Cabinet.” In another interview, while talking about being a representative of one of the three churches involved in the project, John stated “if the conference or the leaders” have the attitude that “we need to go after this church” or that person, then they were “missing the point.” John continued, “The thing that I liked about the project” was the practical application designed to “help the health” and “the life of the church,” adding “I like that we’re doing this” and “taking that chance.” John stated that “an outcome should be the church should take a look at other doctoral projects,” and “in order for them to be considered,” they should make sure there was not just “academic” value, but that it was “practical” as well.

Unique Contributions

This study is a first attempt to create a theory about failed ministries in large United Methodist Churches that operate based on an itinerant system in assigning or appointing clergy to churches. It also used some current theory from education and the social sciences to interpret and speculate about the results of the study. In addition, this study is unique in that it explores gaps in both the seminary preparation

programs and the development of professional identity for the Senior Pastors of large United Methodist Churches in this particular Mid-Western Conference.

This study is also unique in that it explored the reflection of participants as a means of growth (Kegan and Lahey, 2001). With the exception of two District Superintendents, all of the participants in the study indicated something specific that they gained from their participation in this process.

This study also introduced a new method of transcribing tapes using voice activated software, making the rather mundane aspect of the research much more bearable and even engaging for the visual learner I have been created to be. In many respects, the process of transcribing tapes, often described as a tedious and time-consuming task, was not only completed in a more timely fashion, but also included some interesting discoveries of its own.

In order to begin to use the voice activated software, I had to read a scripted paragraph of text so the program could correspondingly read my particular accent and pattern of speech. Then, as I began using this tool to transcribe tapes by reading interviews into the microphone connected to my computer, I would have to manually note corrections in particular nuances of speech and the specific language of the denomination. As a result, the software develops over time a personalized vocabulary of your particular language. So, in some respects, in order to operate at maximum efficiency in working with the software, I had to first develop a relationship with the software. But, it did not take long before I realized that the software was very sensitive too, so sensitive that it translated every word and much more. Somehow, the

software translated every ambient sound, sigh, scratch of my head or touch of my forehead, sneeze, and pondering echo. In short, everything that could possibly be translated in to words, and even things that did not possibly seem related to words were somehow translated into something. In some respects, it has made the editing work interesting, to say the least. The Bible teaches that the Spirit of God helps us to know how to pray and even intercedes for us. Stated another way, the Spirit of God translates our prayers before God. And, it's not just our spoken words either. Every tear, every sigh, every groan, and every cry of the heart...everything is somehow translated before the throne of God. In the midst of listening to the frustrations and pain of others related to the itinerant system of the United Methodist church, this was encouraging to me beyond words, reminding me again that in spite of what is said or not said, God knows.

Role of the Researcher

I was perceived as an insider in this study, in part because I serve on the staff of a United Methodist Church, but also because my father is well-known in denominational circles (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Swisher, 1998). These perceptions appeared to help in setting up the interviews. Participants also seemed to feel more comfortable sharing their personal stories related to their experiences without having to explain the denominational structure and processes.

My ability to understand and empathize with them seemed to encourage them to continue on the challenging journey of sharing the story of what had been a difficult experience. Participants said that they felt that they could be themselves in the

interviews, that the transcript they read later felt and sounded like them, and that they spoke from the heart.

However, in spite of my formal affiliation with this denomination, I also still feel very much like an outsider. I grew up with more of an eclectic denominational background, and I find myself wrestling with a system that appears to be so disconnected from the people and culture, including the clergy which they employ.

Personal Impact of the Project

As a researcher, this project has had an enormous impact on me personally. In spite of the fact that I have weathered multiple clergy transitions at the church where I serve on staff, and have personally worked with seven clergy persons in just over seven years, I was not aware of the degree of pain and grief in the system. And, short of the relative strength of an individual's support system and his/her personal spiritual formation practices, there are no formal outlets for the expression of this systemic grief and pain. There is also a great deal of misunderstanding about the polity of this church and how the system works. Perhaps the District Superintendents believe that the current challenges could be resolved by training. However, if the assumption is that training will make the people in local churches do what they say, then this may not be the case. In a sense, there needs to be a process that emphasizes participation among equals, one that will result in both groups changing. Organizational learning will only happen if the leadership makes this a priority, investing the time, energy, and resources necessary for it to take place (Senge, 1990).

This surprising personal journey comes full circle for me. This was not the dissertation that I wanted to write, yet it was the one I most needed to write. As is often the case with a call, we are frequently led to places where we would not choose to go. For me, the journey of doing this research has been intense, and I am honored to have heard the stories of the twelve men at these three churches. I feel compelled to share the information out of a deep respect for their courage. As painful as it was to watch them struggle in sharing their perspectives, I believe that new seeds of hope will spring from these stories.

Transformations Resulting From Reflection

In spite of the initial reluctance of a few, all of the participants except for one of the District Superintendents indicated that the time of reflection and participating in the project had either been beneficial, redemptive, valuable, helpful or healing for them personally, and/or had provided some closure to what had been a challenging situation. Some participants indicated that the project was wonderful, that it had been enjoyable to think about the issues and reflect on the conversation, and to read the transcripts, that it had led them to deeper thinking, or that it had helped them to distance themselves from former roles. One individual indicated that participating in the project was therapeutic, because it cleansed his soul and helped him to be more comfortable with everything that had happened. Two individuals indicated that their participation had been cathartic, and a number of participants expressed appreciation and thankfulness for being a part of the study. Only one individual, a District Superintendent, indicated that he was not certain that the project had any impact on

him personally because he was very busy and because he thinks about these issues all of the time.

Participants also noted that the project had helped them to reflect on their leadership skills or to understand more of the issues or dynamics involved, gain new insights and apply their learning to the present challenges in the church, and reminded them of their personal responsibility in making certain the next pastor is brought in the right way. Others were challenged to reflect on the dynamics of what happened as it related to church leadership, reflected on their own leadership and the characteristics of effective leaders, or indicated that the project gave them increased confidence in their leadership abilities. Still others cited an increased knowledge and understanding of the itinerant system in the United Methodist Church, along with knowing more about resources at the District level for obtaining assistance, and learning some useful tools that would help the church move forward. One participant noted that it was smart to look at the situation again, and that we do not take enough time for reflection (Argyris and Schon, 1992; Schon, 1983).

Most of the participants indicated that the process was emotional, often citing anger, disappointment, frustration, and sadness. Sometimes the emotions that surfaced were challenging for the participants, forcing them to explore more deeply all that they were feeling or to take time to gain some perspective. Occasionally, the participants would admittedly choose to not go there, stopping the reflection process because of the associated emotions. Many of the participants freely expressed their emotions during the course of the interviews. The three Senior Pastors seemed to express the

most intense emotions related to the situation. One participant talked about feeling a range of emotions, including powerlessness because of the illusion of self control, while another expressed the agony he felt in the situation, and still another indicated that the project helped him to situate, understand and process the emotions he had buried related to the situation.

Several individuals expressed some skepticism as to whether the project would make any difference, including two District Superintendents. One participant though indicated some optimism that the project might make a difference, expressing respect for a willingness to look at a sensitive subject that some would consider a sacred cow. This same participant added that he hoped this project would not just end up in a paper, but that the United Methodist Church would address these vital issues, because it would be a mistake to not discuss the itinerancy, what is considered one of the linchpins of the system.

Conclusion

In order to wrap up this study, it seems appropriate to return to the beginning. Specifically, I want to close with a discussion of the story I shared with the participants in the initial interview related to a situation I encountered while driving my car. Then, I would like to return to the discussion of chaos theory.

Accidents on the Road of Life

In the initial interviews, I shared pieces of a story related to a situation I had experienced while driving my car to illustrate answers to the sequence of the interview questions. Simply stated, God can use the disruptions in our lives, big and small,

though seemingly a hassle in the moment, for a greater purpose. In fact, in many ways the process that God uses to bring inner healing to our lives is similar to what I encountered in the course of this situation. When we take the time to explore the effects of difficult experiences in our lives, reflecting on our challenges, God is willing and able to work in such a way as to bring healing, and to teach us new things.

But, reflection is hard work, and necessarily takes time (Senge, 1990; Argyris and Schon, 1993; Schon, 1983). Frequently, individuals and organizations have a response to the challenges of reflection, similar to the responses of the participants in the study. Individually or collectively we can try to avoid the difficult emotions that accompany reflection, or we can simply stay busy to avoid reflection. To the extent that we are willing and able to be intentional in our reflection, it can yield surprising, and even healing results. Perhaps, what I have come to understand, is that we are all much like these twelve men, and probably not much different than the twelve men that walked with Jesus, all struggling to make meaning of the journey.

I am hopeful that the healing work of God will continue in the lives of the twelve men involved in the study. And, I am equally hopeful that God will work to renew the complex living organism that is the United Methodist Church. Perhaps the historical perspective of Bishop William Cannon would be helpful here, as he notes (cited in Harnish, 2000, p. 13)

Ministry in the Methodist tradition is perhaps as difficult a subject to delineate with precision and confidence as any in the entire area of ecclesiology. The reason for this is that ministry in Methodist history has not been defined almost entirely by circumstance. Practical necessity in this instance has dictated theology as well as determined polity and devised the strategy for mission. The ministry as much as any other element or entity in Methodism is

the result of improvisation. It has always been functional and pragmatic.

Once again, practical necessity demands the attention of the United Methodist Church.

After lamenting that some of the vision has been lost in appointing clergy, perhaps

McCulloh (1960, p. 62) states it best:

It matters not what happens to the itineracy. It matters not what happens to the time limit. These are all man-made inventions. What really matters is that Methodist ministers of our day recover the vision that has been ours from the beginning, accept the special call to a world parish without looking back, and understand as Wesley wrote to John Benson, 'We are debtors to all the world.'

In the end, what is needed is for the United Methodist Church to find new ways to reach out to a world in need. In order for that to be a reality, the best matches need to be made in the itinerant system, putting the right clergy in the right places. Education programs need to be improved, and gaps in training need to be addressed. And, the relationships between churches and the District and Cabinet need to be strengthened.

As the recommendations indicate, the way of doing business in this particular Mid-Western Conference of the United Methodist Church may need to change significantly. Whether clergy stay in the ministry, new candidates choose to join the ranks of the itinerant clergy, or churches grow may be directly related to changes in the attitudes and behavior of the leadership in the United Methodist Church.

Chaos Theory Revisited

In Chapter 1, I talked about how I stumbled upon a particular connection to chaos theory branch of physics in the midst of my research. From this perspective, all of life involves interplay between organization and chaos, even life in churches. Similarly, the work of clergy is all about helping people navigate chaos in their lives,

helping them to discern the new order and meaning inherent in changes and transitions. Purnell explains, “In so many pastoral settings, the pastor enters a space of chaos,” and “will need to be equipped to listen for the images that bring order to the chaos” (2001, p. 217).

Studying the dynamics in churches and working with churches also brings chaos as well. Mercer (2006, p. 154) notes that “the method of engaging congregational studies as a pedagogical framework” is a “labor intensive” venture that “may not mesh with the saturation of demands on faculty time.” The author goes on to note that studying churches has “logistical and conceptual complexities, and invites chaos with its introduction of many features that exist virtually beyond the control of participants in the course” (Messer, 2006, p. 154).

So, this concept called the itinerancy that we often use to describe the system of appointments for the Ordained Elders in the United Methodist Church in fact describes all of life. The Bible even talks about all creation groans and suffers, and that it is important to be renewed daily. And, if we’re honest, being itinerant is about making constant choices about what we will do, where we will go, who we will spend time with, the words we speak, our attitudes, and a host of other variables. Going and making disciples of Jesus Christ is all about being itinerant or moving wherever God is calling us to go at that moment in time.

But, for as much as chaos is a constant part of life, it seems that the additional chaos brought on by a seemingly ineffective system of appointments and an absence of training and supervision is almost more than the clergy and laity in this study were

able to bear. Parenting from a distance is difficult. Parenting from a distance without relationship is not parenting, and may be experienced as disconnected manipulation and control. It may be questionable as to whether the church is a child. Schnier (1993, p. 135) reminds us that the essence of parenting is “a relationship of oversight which goes beyond contractual responsibility.” And, Harkness (2001) adds, “Parenting is not an individualistic affair,” but is carried out in the context of a community.

In this study, imposing an agenda from a distance does not work, perhaps because the people in a local church may need concrete relationships with a distant Bishop and Cabinet in order for trust and mutual goal setting to occur. Kegan (1994) asserts that most adults in contemporary American culture are developmentally at his stage three or below. And, if he is correct, then the best way to relate to most adults is through concrete relationships rather than requesting or demanding trust in an abstract system. For individuals who are developmentally at stage three, it is concrete relationships that matter, and not systems. If the Bishop and the District Superintendents would engage in training and serving as a resource to both the clergy and lay leadership, then trust and mutually determined goals owned and embraced by the local church can result. If someone with whom there is no relationship and no personal connection tries to impose their agenda onto adults in a mostly stage three church, then “buy-in” is unlikely, and even resistance can be expected.

Webster defines itinerant as a “journey,” a “way,” “to go,” or traveling from place to place,” like in “covering a circuit;” and defines itinerancy as not just “a system of rotating ministers who itinerate,” but also as “the act of itinerating” and “the

state of being itinerant” (Mish, 2003, p. 666). In physics and in the United Methodist Church, itinerancy involves a kind of death, and is an indication of self surrender or dependence, where we live in daily dependence upon God, knowing that wherever he may lead us in mission on our way, there will be opportunities for deepened relationships (Costa, 2005). Reminding Christians of the Old Testament practice of needing to go “outside the camp” to meet with God, Costa (2005, p. 21) states:

Itinerancy demands going outside the institution, outside culturally conditioned perceptions and beliefs, because it is ‘outside the camp’ that we meet a God who cannot be controlled. It is ‘outside the camp’ that we meet the Other who is different and discover who we are and what we are to do.

Contrary to the individualistic cultural idea that to be itinerant is to be displaced, perhaps the words of a Dominican Priest that remind us of the missional nature of the itinerancy to take the steps to go to the place of another. It is for this very reason that the leadership of the United Methodist Church must intentionally step outside the confines of their Cabinet and involve the laity and clergy in the conversation to transform not the structure of the itinerancy, but the practices of enacting the itinerancy. This would not only enlarge the conversation to add new perspectives, but it also would model the kind of relationship that local churches need to have with people outside the walls of their churches within their communities. In a sense, the way to save the itinerant ministry in the current cultural matrix is for the Bishop and Cabinet of this particular Mid-Western Conference to become more itinerant in their approach. Consistent with the work of Messer (1998, p. 7), this approach could reinvent the church by providing a more unified “case for action” and “a statement of vision” that would “serve as a wedge to help people ‘get unstuck’ from

where they are, and as a magnet to attract them to a new idea for the future.” Messer (1991, p. 161) points out, “In re-imagining itinerant ministry, the vital roles and responsibilities of laity also need highlighting.” This is especially true since, “The future vitality of United Methodism depends upon laity, who are theologically astute, spiritually committed, and who understand the vocation of the priesthood of all believers” (Messer, 1991, p. 161). Purnell (2001) describes how the best pastoral care is related to entering into those times of chaos in the lives of those within your span of care. Schaller (2004) identifies the common ground within the United Methodist Church and asserts that passion and the ability to organize are two of the gifts of the denomination. The Bishop and District Superintendents need to work together with clergy and laity alike to enter into the space of chaos created by the current operation of the itinerant system. A collaborative approach to creating a preferred future could capitalize on the gifts of United Methodism, resulting in the discovery of a potentially even more powerful connection.

APPENDIX A

SCHEDULE FOR INITIAL INTERVIEW: SENIOR PASTORS

1. I would like to hear more about your most recent experience with the itinerant system, where you were in a particular church for a period of three years or less and why things did not work out with that particular appointment. Before you tell your story, please make a list of words and phrases that will remind you of all of the factors, complaints, and concerns that you have as to why things did not work out with that particular appointment. Please be thorough and take as much time as you need.

I would like to share with you a personal example that illustrates the process that we will be using as a framework to talk about your situation, helping you to understand the potential connections from your own experience. I was recently involved in a minor car accident. I was waiting at a stop light at a busy intersection, when my car was hit from behind. The man who ran into my car with his car was reaching for something on the floor of his car and inadvertently had taken his foot off of the brake pedal of his car.

Naturally, one of my complaints or concerns was that this accident, although minor, still left its proverbial mark on my car. The driver of the vehicle that hit my car was distracted, resulting in unsafe behavior, like taking his foot off of the brake pedal.

2. As you reflect on your experience, what is one of the factors, complaints or concerns that you have as to why the appointment did not work out?

As I mentioned earlier, one of my complaints or concerns about this relatively minor car accident was that there was some damage to my car. My underlying or unconscious conviction was that my car should be rightfully restored to its new condition, and at no cost to me, simply because the accident was no fault of my own.

3. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by your complaint or concern?

In my situation, not only was there damage to my car that I felt should be repaired at no cost to me, but the more deeply held value or commitment on which my conviction was based was that because my car was in effect a representation of me. And, because I believe in taking care of myself and all that is an extension of me, it would be exercising poor stewardship not to take care of this damage to my car.

4. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions two through four until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to potential gaps in your seminary preparation program, where you were less than prepared for this particular appointment. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to potential gaps in

your seminary preparation program, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

5. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to potential gaps in your seminary preparation program?
6. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to potential gaps in your seminary preparation program?
7. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions five through seven until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to potential gaps in the development of your professional identity as a Senior Pastor, where you were less than prepared for this particular appointment in a large church setting. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to potential gaps in the development of your professional identity, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

8. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the development of your professional identity as a Senior Pastor of a large church?

9. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?
10. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions eight through ten until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to the itinerant system in general. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to the itinerant system in general, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

11. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the itinerant system in general?
12. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the itinerant system in general?
13. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions eleven through thirteen until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns you feel relate to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

14. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

15. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the fit between you as a Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

16. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions fourteen through sixteen until the list is exhausted.)

17. What else, if anything, would you like to add about any of these four particular areas of focus...your seminary preparation, the development of your professional identity, the itinerant system in general, or the fit

between yourself as a pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

Once a week for the next month, please read the transcript of our conversation and write any new insights related to your comments. In the journal that has been provided, please write down anything new that surfaces in your thinking and feeling about your experience with your seminary preparation for this position, the itinerant system in general, or the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the environment of the church, especially as it relates to your insights regarding factors, complaints or concerns, underlying or unconscious convictions, or deeply held values or commitments. Please do not write your name in the journal, but include the date of your entry and any insights you may have

At the end of a month, I will collect your journal, and use your insights along with information you have shared in your interviews to help provide a better understanding of the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church. For purposes of clarity, I have reprinted the interview questions and these directions on a piece of paper and have attached it to the inside cover of the journal, along with my contact information.

If you have any questions, or if I can be of assistance during the course of the next month as you are reflecting and journaling about your experience, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by cell phone or e-mail.

APPENDIX B

SCHEDULE FOR INITIAL INTERVIEW: DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS

1. I would like to hear more about your most recent experience with the itinerant system, where this particular church in your district had a Senior Pastor for a period of three years or less and why things did not work out with that particular appointment. Before you tell your story, please make a list of words and phrases that will remind you of all of the factors, complaints, and concerns that you have as to why things did not work out with that particular appointment. Please be thorough and take as much time as you need.

I would like to share with you a personal example that illustrates the process that we will be using as a framework to talk about your situation, helping you to understand the potential connections from your own experience. I was recently involved in a minor car accident. I was waiting at a stop light at a busy intersection, when my car was hit from behind. The man who ran into my car with his car was reaching for something on the floor of his car and inadvertently had taken his foot off of the brake pedal of his car.

Naturally, one of my complaints or concerns was that this accident, although minor, still left its proverbial mark on my car. The driver of the vehicle that hit my car was distracted, resulting in unsafe behavior, like taking his foot off of the brake pedal.

2. As you reflect on your experience, what is one of the factors, complaints or concerns that you have as to why the appointment did not work out?

As I mentioned earlier, one of my complaints or concerns about this relatively minor car accident was that there was some damage to my car. My underlying or unconscious conviction was that my car should be rightfully restored to its new condition, and at no cost to me, simply because the accident was no fault of my own.

3. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by your complaint or concern?

In my situation, not only was there damage to my car that I felt should be repaired at no cost to me, but the more deeply held value or commitment on which my conviction was based was that because my car was in effect a representation of me. And, because I believe in taking care of myself and all that is an extension of me, it would be exercising poor stewardship not to take care of this damage to my car.

4. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions two through four until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to

potential gaps in this Senior Pastor's seminary preparation program, where s/he was less than prepared for this particular appointment than s/he could have been. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to potential gaps in this senior pastor's seminary preparation program, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

5. Which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel could possibly relate to potential gaps in this senior pastor's seminary preparation program?
6. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to potential gaps in this senior pastor's seminary preparation program?
7. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions five through seven until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to potential gaps in the development of this individual's professional identity as a Senior Pastor, where s/he was less than prepared for this particular appointment in a large church setting. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to potential gaps in the development of your

professional identity, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

8. What is one complaint, or concern that could possibly be related to the development of this individual's professional identity as a Senior Pastor of a large church?
9. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the development of this individual's professional identity as a Senior Pastor of a large church?
10. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions eight through ten until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to the itinerant system in general. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to the itinerant system in general, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

11. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the itinerant system in general?

12. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the itinerant system in general?

13. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions eleven through thirteen until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to the fit between this Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns you feel relate to the fit between this Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

14. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the fit between this Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

15. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the fit between this Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

16. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions fourteen through sixteen until the list is exhausted.)

17. What else, if anything, would you like to add about any of these four particular areas of focus...this Senior Pastor's seminary preparation, the development of this individual's professional identity as a Senior Pastor in a large church, the itinerant system in general, or the fit between this Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

Once a week for the next month, please read the transcript of our conversation and write any new insights related to your comments. In the journal that has been provided, please write down anything new that surfaces in your thinking and feeling about your experience with your seminary preparation for this position, the itinerant system in general, or the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the environment of the church, especially as it relates to your insights regarding factors, complaints or concerns, underlying or unconscious convictions, or deeply held values or commitments. Please do not write your name in the journal, but include the date of your entry and any insights you may have

At the end of a month, I will collect your journal, and use your insights along with information you have shared in your interviews to help provide a better understanding of the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church. For purposes of clarity, I have reprinted the interview questions and these directions on a piece of

paper and have attached it to the inside cover of the journal, along with my contact information. If you have any questions, or if I can be of assistance during the course of the next month as you are reflecting and journaling about your experience, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by cell phone or e-mail.

APPENDIX C

SCHEDULE FOR INITIAL INTERVIEW: STAFF PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND LAY LEADERS

1. Please share the story of your most recent experience with a senior pastor named _____ where s/he was in a particular church for a period of three years or less and why things did not work out with that particular appointment. Now that you have shared your story, please make a list of words and phrases that will remind you of all of the reasons, factors, complaints, and concerns that you have as to why things did not work out with that particular appointment. Please be thorough and take as much time as you need. Once your list is complete, I would like to ask you about each reason, factor, complaint, and concern a little later.

I would like to share with you a personal example that illustrates the process that we will be using as a framework to talk about your situation, helping you to understand the potential connections from your own experience. I was recently involved in a minor car accident. I was waiting at a stop light at a busy intersection, when my car was hit from behind. The man who ran into my car with his car was

reaching for something on the floor of his car and inadvertently had taken his foot off of the brake pedal of his car.

Naturally, one of my complaints or concerns was that this accident, although minor, still left its proverbial mark on my car. The driver of the vehicle that hit my car was distracted, resulting in unsafe behavior, like taking his foot off of the brake pedal.

2. As you reflect on your experience, what is one of the factors, complaints or concerns that you have as to why the appointment did not work out?

As I mentioned earlier, one of my complaints or concerns about this relatively minor car accident was that there was some damage to my car. My underlying or unconscious conviction was that my car should be rightfully restored to its new condition, and at no cost to me, simply because the accident was no fault of my own.

3. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by your complaint or concerns?

In my situation, not only was there damage to my car that I felt should be repaired at no cost to me, but the more deeply held value or commitment on which my conviction was based was that because my car was in effect a representation of me. And, because I believe in taking care of myself and all that is an extension of me, it would be exercising poor stewardship not to take care of this damage to my car.

4. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions two through four until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to potential gaps in this Senior Pastor's seminary preparation program, where s/he was less than prepared for this particular appointment than s/he could have been. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to potential gaps in this senior pastor's seminary preparation program, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

5. Which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel could possibly relate to potential gaps in this senior pastor's seminary preparation program?
6. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to potential gaps in this senior pastor's seminary preparation program?
7. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions five through seven until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to potential gaps in the development of this individual's professional identity as a Senior Pastor, where s/he was less than prepared for this particular appointment in a large church setting. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors,

complaints or concerns do you feel relate to potential gaps in the development of your professional identity, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

8. What is one complaint, or concern that could possibly be related to the development of this individual's professional identity as a Senior Pastor of a large church?
9. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the development of this individual's professional identity as a Senior Pastor of a large church?
10. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions eight through ten until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to the itinerant system in general. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns do you feel relate to the itinerant system in general, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

11. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the itinerant system in general?

12. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the itinerant system in general?

13. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions eleven through thirteen until the list is exhausted.)

I'd like to hear more about this particular experience, and want to take a few minutes to focus on a particular factor that you have/have not mentioned. I am particularly interested in factors, complaints or concerns that you may have related to the fit between this Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church. Please review your previous list, and mark which of the factors, complaints or concerns you feel relate to the fit between this Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church, making a list of any additional factors, complaints or concerns that may come to mind.

14. What is one complaint or concern you have that could possibly be related to the fit between this Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

15. What might be the underlying or even unconscious conviction that is implied by this new factor, complaint or concerns as it relates to the fit between this Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

16. What might be the deeply held value or commitment on which your implied conviction is based?

(Repeat above process of questions fourteen through sixteen until the list is exhausted.)

17. What else, if anything, would you like to add about any of these four particular areas of focus...this Senior Pastor's seminary preparation, the development of this individual's professional identity as a Senior Pastor in a large church, the itinerant system in general, or the fit between this Senior Pastor and the specific environment of this particular church?

Once a week for the next month, please read the transcript of our conversation and write any new insights related to your comments. In the journal that has been provided, please write down anything new that surfaces in your thinking and feeling about your experience with your seminary preparation for this position, the itinerant system in general, or the fit between yourself as a Senior Pastor and the environment of the church, especially as it relates to your insights regarding factors, complaints or concerns, underlying or unconscious convictions, or deeply held values or commitments. Please do not write your name in the journal, but include the date of your entry and any insights you may have

At the end of a month, I will collect your journal, and use your insights along with information you have shared in your interviews to help provide a better understanding of the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church. For purposes of clarity, I have reprinted the interview questions and these directions on a piece of

paper and have attached it to the inside cover of the journal, along with my contact information. If you have any questions, or if I can be of assistance during the course of the next month as you are reflecting and journaling about your experience, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by cell phone or e-mail.

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Failed Senior Pastor Appointments in Three Large United Methodist Churches and Seminary Preparation, Professional Identity and Environmental Fit Using Cognitive Development Reflection

Researcher: Dr. Robert F. Rodgers and Mary Lutz

Sponsor: None

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand the failure of executive leadership at large United Methodist Churches, where senior pastors were in an appointment for a period of three years or less before a move was initiated. This study explores more deeply the perceived reasons for these failures in the appointive system. Results of the study could potentially point to ways to improve the itinerant system in the (particular Mid-Western) Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Procedures/Tasks:

In an initial interview, you will be asked to respond to a series of questions based on the particular situation you had personally encountered involving a failed appointment of a senior pastor in the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church. Following the initial interview, you will be provided with a transcript of your interview, along with a blank journal. In addition to being asked to make changes in your interview

transcript to communicate your intended meaning, you will be asked to read through the interview transcript at least once a week for a period of four weeks. And, for anything new that surfaces in your thinking or feeling related to the interview, you are asked to write the date and your specific insight in the journal that has been provided. At the end of one month, your journal will be collected, along with your corrected interview transcript, and a second interview will be conducted related to your month of reflection and journaling. Both the initial and the follow-up interviews will be audio taped, so that the interviews can be transcribed.

Duration:

An initial interview will take one to two hours. You will then be asked to read your own interview transcript, reflect on what was said and write any new insights in a journal that will be provided at least once a week for one month, journaling at least fifteen minutes a week. A second interview will then be conducted, lasting about an hour, following up on the time of reflection. In short, the total estimated time commitment is estimated to be four to five hours.

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks and Benefits:

This study is designed to take what has already been a difficult situation, and explore the perceived reasons for the failure of the senior pastor appointment in order to potentially improve the itinerant system. This study can also provide an opportunity for you to process your perspective related to the situation that has already taken place, potentially bringing a measure of growth, healing, and perhaps change. And, information you provide may shed new light on the complex process of senior pastor appointments to large United Methodist Churches, potentially improving the existing system.

Confidentiality:

You will not be identified by name, and will be asked to select your own pseudonym. And, although you will not be personally identified in the results of the study, the information that you share could be used to illustrate a point. All other identifying characteristics will be removed when the interview tapes are transcribed, the interview tapes will be erased and destroyed, and the material related to the study will be kept in a secure location.

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if

required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;

The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;

The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:

You will not be paid to participate in this study. However, you will have an opportunity to reflect on your experience and share your story. And, in addition to perhaps gaining a new perspective on your situation, the information that you share could potentially bring positive change to the itinerant system in the (particular Mid-Western) Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Dr. Robert Rodgers at 614-638-8788 or Mary Lutz at 740-814-2559.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If you are injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact Dr. Robert Rodgers at (614) 638-8788.

Signing the consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

Date and time AM/PM

**Printed name of person
authorized to consent for
subject (when applicable)**

**Signature of person authorized to
consent for subject
(when applicable)**

Relationship to the subject

Date and time AM/PM

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

**Printed name of person obtaining
consent**

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date and time AM/PM

APPENDIX E

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

July 5, 2006

Name of Prospective Participant
Address
City, State and Zip Code

Dear

My name is Mary Lutz and I am both a staff member at First United Methodist Church in Newark, Ohio, and a doctoral student at The Ohio State University. Having completed all of the necessary coursework and internships through the Ph.D. program in Higher Education and Student Affairs, I am now beginning the process of conducting my dissertation research under the supervision of Dr. Robert Rodgers.

I grew up in the United Methodist Church, and have recently returned to my denominational roots. I have been employed by a local church in the (particular Mid-Western) Conference for over six years, first as a Minister of Youth, then as Minister of Youth and Adult Discipleship, and currently as a Director of Spiritual Formation and Lay Ministry Development.

In part because of my personal experience as a lay staff member, I have become interested in and a student of the itinerant system of the United Methodist Church. The purpose of this study is two-fold: First, I hope to learn the reasons why people believe that the itinerant system sometimes doesn't work. Second, I am looking to explore any potential changes in perceptions that occur over a period of time, including new insights gained as a result of reflection.

The purpose of this letter then is to request your participation in this study. More specifically, I would ask you to consider:

Participating in a one to two hour interview. This initial interview would be audio-taped for ease of transcription at a place and time of your choosing.

Writing in a journal at least once a week for fifteen minutes, and for a total of four weeks after reviewing the transcript of your initial interview. This reflection can take as much time as you would like to spend.

Participating in a one hour follow-up interview one month after your initial interview. This will enable me to gather your feedback both on the interview transcripts, and on your process of reflection.

Please note that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary in nature, and all participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time by simply notifying me at (740) 814-2559. In addition, the information collected in this study will be anonymous, and you will have an opportunity to select your own pseudonym. And, although every possible effort will be made to protect your identity, and no participants will be identified by their real names, quotes from your interviews or journal could potentially used to illustrate a point in my dissertation, an article or a presentation.

It is important to note that the (particular Mid-Western) Conference Office has expressed support for and an interest in this research, all because of a genuine desire to improve the itinerant system. Your participation, though anonymous, could have a tremendous impact on the future of the itinerant system.

If you are willing to participate in this study, or if you have any questions, please contact me at (740) 814-2559 at your earliest convenience. If I do not hear from you by July 15th, I will be contacting you by telephone to follow up on this letter.

I appreciate your taking the time to read this letter, and consider your potential participation in this study. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mary Lutz
Doctoral Candidate
mary_lutz@hotmail.com
(740) 814-2559

Robert Rodgers
Associate Professor
rodgers.2@osu.edu
(614) 638-8788

APPENDIX F

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What, if any, specific feedback would you like to provide relative to the transcript you have reviewed from your initial interview?
2. How was the built in time of reflection and journaling for you in the midst of this research project?
3. What, if any, new insights did you have during this time of reflection?
4. What, if any, impact has your participation in this research project had on you personally?
5. Do you have a particular request for a pseudonym or name that will be used for you in this research work?
6. What else, if anything, would you like to say or add for purposes of clarification?

REFERENCES

- Aldridge, J.M. (1991). *A connected laity for an empowered church: Maximizing the role of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Publication Number 9402738.
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