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An Interpretivist Case Study Of Leadership Transition In The Context Of A Southern Baptist Church

Ronald Tuck

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

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An Interpretivist Case Study of Leadership
Transition in the Context of a Southern Baptist Church

Ronald Tuck

North Carolina A&T State University

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department: Leadership Studies

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Major Professor: Dr. Comfort Okpala

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2014

The Graduate School
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
This is to certify that the Doctoral Dissertation of

Ronald Tuck

has met the dissertation requirements of
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

Greensboro, North Carolina
2014

Approved by:

Dr. Daniel Miller
Major Professor

Dr. Sylvia Burgess
Committee Member

Dr. Forrest Toms
Committee Member

Dr. David Johnson
Committee Member

Comfort Okpala
Department Chair

Dr. Sanjiv Sarin
Dean, The Graduate School

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Biographical Sketch

Ronald Tuck is a seasoned financial services leader, pastor and scholar. He is originally from Reidsville, North Carolina. Mr. Tuck's professional background includes a career in the financial services and lending industry, business owner and pastor.

Mr. Tuck has participated in startup companies and led initiatives in due diligence efforts for the acquisition of organizations while working for a global financial services industry leader. Mr. Tuck holds undergraduate degrees in Bible and Psychology and earned an MA in Human Services along with an MBA from Liberty University.

Currently Mr. Tuck serves as senior Pastor at Lawsonville Baptist Church, the position he has held for fourteen years. Under his leadership, the church has increased in attendance each year and completed a one million dollar building program, all without taking on any debt.

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Abstract

This ethnographic study examined the experiences of key individuals involved in a senior leadership transition in the context of the church. Leader transition constitutes a significant aspect of organizational leadership theory, yet succession planning is often neglected in the context of churches. This study revealed that leadership transition is not a single event in the history of a church organization, but rather *an evolution of events involving a multiplicity of factors and individuals*. Narratives from five individuals directly involved in the pastoral leadership transition process informed the study: the search committee chair, the outgoing and incoming pastors, and two differently-located church members. The study uncovered core factors that led to a successful leader transition. First, organizational planning within the church's by-laws pre-existed its need for a succession plan. Second, there was buy-in and commitment to the plan from the congregation as well as the committee. Third, the congregation had confidence in the committee. Fourth, the church by-laws provided roles for direct involvement of the congregants and committee members which structured regular fluid communication across both groups. Fifth, the guidance of an older, experienced interim pastor, as stipulated in the church by-laws, provided stability. The interim was not allowed to apply for the position of new pastor, and was in place early in the transition process, within two weeks of the departure of the outgoing pastor, to maintain the vision of the church and provide services to the congregation so that the selection process for the new pastor was not hurried and could proceed as it needed to. The study's findings indicate that the church functions as both a spiritual and corporate organization, and that successful transition planning must give attention to both areas.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This ethnographic study examined leadership transition in one Southern Baptist church. The study relies on interviews with key informants to examine how this church managed its leadership transition process. The study is descriptive and does not make assumptions about how other churches manage leadership transition, however its findings are transferrable to and hold potential to inform multiple other contexts, as well as organizational leadership theory.

1.1 Problem Statement

Within churches, leadership transitions occur often. According to the Barna Group (2009), the average tenure of a pastor is less than five years. This statement means that, “At any given moment as few as one quarter and as high as one third of the congregations are in some stage of the pastoral transition process” (Lohnes, 2008, p. 2). Churches are affected by the changing leadership both spiritually and economically and according to Weese and Crabtree (2004) normal attendance for worship services on average fell around 15% when a pastor left the church. This fall in attendance also results in a corresponding drop in giving. Once a new pastor is installed it can take months for giving to get back to prior levels before the original pastor’s departure. At the end of the day the transition process can cost as high as 15% of the annual operating budget of the church (Weese & Crabtree, 2004).

This study focused on the leadership transition process, because a breakdown in leadership can impact the congregation and the broader communities they serve. In a time when more and more services to needy populations are carried out by faith-based organizations, the failure or demise of a church has serious ramifications for a community’s social safety net.

Leadership transition constitutes a vital function in the life and sustainability of any organization, but particularly within a church. Change is not easy and fear of the unknown can be an impediment to a successful transition. Leader transition holds the power to maintain, uplift, or devastatingly destroy church organizations that provide irreplaceable services to members as well as communities. Leadership transitions that do not occur efficiently or effectively can have long reaching effects within the church itself, as well as serious consequences for the community it serves. Where the failure of leadership succession within a business impacts stockholders, employees, and sometimes communities, the failure of a church organization hurts children, families, neighborhoods, specific underserved populations and, quite often, entire communities. This research examines and documents the experiences of those most directly involved in the pastoral leadership transition process in one church located in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. The site studied is a Southern Baptist Church. The Southern Baptist denomination has churches that are located in both rural and urban areas, have average attendance of 50 to 1500 people on a weekly basis, and have annual budgets in the millions of dollars.

1.2 Theoretical Orientation

This study is grounded in constructivist/interpretive theory (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). According to Williamson (2006), “Constructivism, one of several interpretive paradigms, is concerned with the ways in which people construct their worlds” (p. 85). The constructivist/interpretivist worldview allows the researcher to gain understanding by interpreting subject perceptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Knowledge resides in “individual and collective reconstructions sometimes coalescing around consensus” (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 101). Knowledge accumulation is understood in terms of “more informed and sophisticated

reconstructions [and] vicarious experience” (p. 101). What emerges from research is a contextualized, multi-voiced account of a phenomenon that is co-constructed across the researcher and informants, an account that aims to inform the knowledge base as well as serve as a catalyst for change.

A case study approach utilizing the concept of a semi-structured interview was beneficial for this type of study (Kvale, 1996). The prevalent methodological design for leadership transition research has been the archival study and examination of documents. Archival information relating to transition events is much easier to locate than gaining access to the executives actually involved in transition events. While this study was informed by the documents created by one church within its by-laws and other supportive materials (see Appendices D-J), it did not analyze any archival data from the church’s use of those materials. Kesner and Sebor (1994) verify the significance of archival records but observe that augmented study sample sizes have provided researchers with greater assurance regarding the general reliability of results. Kesner and Sebor’s conclusion is that other methodological approaches may be more effective in responding to certain kinds of research questions. They argue that researchers may even find it helpful to increase their use of case studies and survey research.

A descriptive approach was needed for a study that examines leadership transition, a phenomenon that is essentially about transformation, change, and how an organization goes through the change process. Descriptive researchers ask questions such as, “What is going on?” Sufficient descriptions are essential, contribute significantly to overall knowledge, and ask the “why” questions for explanatory research. Descriptive studies encompass a broad range of research activities. Anita and Marlene (2006) state that descriptive studies often are used when little research has been done in an area, to clarify and define new concepts or phenomena, to

increase understanding of a phenomenon from another experiential perspective, or to obtain a fresh perspective on a well-researched topic.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) sum up the intent of descriptive research as documentation and description of the phenomenon of interest. The common research questions are: “What are the salient actions, events, beliefs, attitudes, and social structures and processes occurring in the phenomenon?” (p. 33).

This descriptive study documented and crafted a situated understanding of the leadership transition process within one Southern Baptist Church. An ethnographic approach was used in which participants narrated their experiences of a transition process. The knowledge of participants is by nature “contextual and partial to their specific involvement in the events as they unfolded before, during and after” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 565) the transition. The narratives set forth in this study are the result of five in-depth face-to-face, recorded interviews with participants who gave informed consent to be involved. The participants identified were individuals who played key roles in the church transition process and therefore had the most intimate knowledge of that transition. The accounts of the predecessor, successor, board member and two church members are shared as documentation of possible multiple situated perspectives. Each individual shares responses to questions from their own perspective. Extensive field notes were taken after every encounter, which were compared to the transcription of the interviews.

This research was not intended to construct a single account of leadership and organizational change. Nor was it intended to create a linear model of the transition process. Leadership succession is not one event, but an unfolding of events over time, in some cases, such as the one under study here, several years. The goal of this research was, instead to

document the individual and situated transition processes in one Southern Baptist church, and to search for meaning within that documentation.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore senior leadership transition in a church context. There is a gap in the literature on organizational leadership transition as it relates to churches. This gap impacts both theory and practice. In order to address this gap, this study focused on leadership transition in the church, and documented the experiences of those involved in pastoral leadership transition.

The selection of an ethnographic design for this research is appropriate because it allowed for examination of the unique experiences and expressions of the participants, and provided the opportunity to bring together similar ideas, themes, patterns and perceptions, as well as to examine any anomalies. These sources of information were then layered and tested against each other (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2011).

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the process identified for selecting the new leader?
2. What voices are present or absent in this process?
3. What are the core elements of a successful transition?

1.5 Definitions of Terms

Church Organization—refers to institutions identified as a church.

Leader—refers to the senior pastor and senior most church leadership, and can refer to senior pastor/minister or executive pastor, male or female.

Transition—defined as “the departure of the key organizational figure within the church organization” (Deitrick & Creager, 2012, p. 2). The key organizational figure may be a senior pastor/minister, or executive pastor.

1.6 Significance of Study

Weese and Crabtree (2004) state that a healthy leadership transition is

. . . one that enables a church to move forward into the next phase of its external and internal development with a new leader appropriate to those developmental tasks, and with a minimum of spiritual, programmatic, material and people losses during the transition. (p. 41)

Leadership transition has the potential to influence individuals throughout the organization either positively or negatively. Price (2005) argues that transition planning is the most important factor in working through an actual succession process. Organizations that have not prepared and planned for transitions are more likely to fail, and an incomplete succession plan increases the probability of failure (Conger, 2004). More and more organizations are learning that they must be deliberate in planning ahead for leadership change. Charan (2005) argues that an operational plan for dealing with leadership succession should be an essential part of how the company is managed.

This research holds potential to make unique and critical contributions to leader transition research within the context of churches, where little scholarship exists to guide practice. The findings of the study provide concrete practical help and talking points to the hundreds of churches that regularly face leadership transition issues in the lifetimes of their church communities. Although leadership transition has been treated in the literature as a feature of the organizational life of businesses, it occurs in all types of organizations: non-profits, charities,

families, athletic teams, governments, as well as churches (George, 2003). Research on leadership transition is important because leaders make a profound difference in organizations, and because having the knowledge to successfully plan for transitions can ease the pain of going through the transition process.

There is little scholarship, however, that looks at leadership succession in the context of churches. Organizational dynamics including generational changes, cultural changes, personnel changes and predecessor/successor struggles have been examined in the context of family firms, which are in many ways similar to church organizations. The study examines leadership succession as a process, examines one church organization's response to both the spiritual and to corporate aspects of leader transition, and identifies core factors in a successful pastoral transition. It views transitional leadership as a vital expression of overall organizational leadership, and examines the transition process from beginning to end, rather than as a series of isolated, specific events. A holistic approach allows for understandings of the transition process to emerge during analysis. This work informs both practice and scholarship on leadership transition in churches undergoing or planning future transitions. Individuals responsible for establishing, implanting and completing leadership transitions in churches are served by the findings of this research. Its results yield clear implications for churches of any size and denomination that go through a leader change.

The topic of leader succession in non-profits, and particularly in churches, represents a huge gap in the organizational leadership literature on leader transition. Giambatista, Rowe and Riaz, (2005) make an appeal for greater diversification in transition research settings: "Studies in distal settings offer the potential to triangulate, which in addition to testing the limits of theory,

can serve as a springboard to new theories” (p. 986). Findings from this study hold potential to answer their call.

1.7 Delimitations

This study is purposely focused on one Southern Baptist Church involved in leadership transition, and is limited to an in depth study in one church location. Future studies would surely benefit from examination of leader transitions within a larger and more diverse sample of churches. Further, it is likely that focusing on one denomination in one single location would provide results that are particular to that context and not necessarily reflective of other Southern Baptist Churches or other denominations.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to the research questions guiding this study of leadership transition. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on leadership transitions in general, its characteristics and the material realities inherent to transitions. The second section focuses on leadership transition within the church as an organization.

2.1 Studies of Leadership Transition

Historically, studies of leadership transition viewed the progression as linear and segmented. However, leadership transition, just as any other organizational process, is messy and complex. Organizations are complex, unique, with their own personalities. Giambatista et al. (2005) conducted a comprehensive review of the literature on leader transition. They contend that naïve notions of leadership transition are no longer useful and should be done away with. Their research demonstrates how leadership transitions can occur as disruptive events that can impact the entire organization. In their view, executive boards and leadership committees need to understand that transitions are inevitable, and that leadership succession should be understood as an ongoing process, not just a single ascendant event. Research on leadership transition in churches is still in an embryonic stage with the majority of it taking place in the past decade. The church at any level, whether a small local work with 100 members, or 2,000 plus, presents a dichotomy relating to how leadership is understood. On one side is the spiritual aspect of the organization, which utilizes a sacred text of authority, the Bible. The spiritual side of the organization deals with the ministry of the church. The pastor provides teaching, exhortation, counseling and other guidance for the growth of the congregation, and stands at the helm of

mission and outreach efforts in both local and sometimes distant locations. On the other side of the church leadership dichotomy is the corporate position of the organization. Many churches, if not most today, operate as businesses. Churches have distinct economic needs that must be fulfilled, from funding operating costs to mission work. Without funding, the work of the church collapses.

Leadership theory presents a multitude of models including business models, spiritual change, or servant leadership, all of which have in common the underlying premise of moving an organization of people from one point to another. Leadership involves creating and communicating the vision of the organization and leading others toward stated purposes. According to I Timothy 3:1 (NEB), “To aspire to leadership is an honorable ambition.” Conceptualizations of leadership and the relationship between leaders and followers can be traced within the Bible. Men like Abraham, Moses, and Joshua, and women such as Esther and Deborah, led the Jewish people as their young nation was formed and developed. These leaders were instrumental in creating a nation from a group of farmers and shepherders. They established monetary systems, courts, and systems of religious worship from nothing. The rewards for successful individuals who can move an organization forward into the global economy are substantial with financial rewards including salaries, stock options and numerous other perks. Managers are those who can implement the vision, but leaders are those who create the vision, and the difference between the two is significant.

Leadership transition is part of every organization and transition planning must be part of the organization culture and vision if it is to survive (Charan, 2005). The transition process can impact the entire organization and without a transition plan in place, organizations are more likely to fail (Conger, 2004). Leadership transitions are fluid processes and can fail for many

different reasons (Friedman & Olk, 1995). Successful transitions contribute to the overall health of the organization and allow it to move forward (Weese & Crabtree, 2004). Leadership transition fundamentally is about change and about how organizations go through the change process. Although scholarship on leadership transitions has largely focused on the for-profit sector, transition events clearly impact non-profits as well. In fact, studies of leadership transition have for the most part focused on manufacturing, family businesses, and sports. This study offers the setting of the church with a view to enriching theoretical explanations of leadership transition.

The literature suggests that churches lack a set of “best practices” for carrying out the selection and placement of new leaders (Weese & Crabtree, 2004). While biblical models for leadership exist, there are no sources outside the Bible that speak to the questions of biblical leadership structures. The Bible does deal with transition in the context of consistency. For example, the New Testament addresses leadership principles including individual qualifications for leadership (Guenther & Heidebrecht, 2010).

A leadership transition process has the potential to influence individuals throughout the organization, and the functioning of the organization, either positively or negatively. Price (2005) argues that transition planning is the most important factor in working through an actual succession process. Organizations that plan poorly or have no leadership transition plans in place are at significant risk for failure (Conger, 2004).

Seven key dimensions of leadership transition research are considered in this section. These include: leadership transition as critical to the overall health of an organization, role of successor and influence on transition, inside/outside dichotomy, transition and socialization,

homegrown leadership and organization stability, transition as a process, and planning for transitions.

2.1.1 Leadership transition and organizational health. Leadership transition forms a key factor in the survival of an organization as transitions can have a powerful impact on organizational stability and health. Grusky (1960) contends that transition is significant within an organization for the following reasons:

- Leadership transition leads to organizational instability.
- Leadership transitions are inevitable for all organizations.
- Leadership transition invariably introduces instability as a result of the changes in relationships that occur, and the order in which things are done. (Grusky, 1960, p. 264)

Transitions can be difficult events for organizational leaders to manage, difficult for organizational members to experience, and as a result can detract from employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. Marks (2007) argues that failure on the part of leaders within the organization to take into account the adjustment process of individuals within the organization can have detrimental effects.

While the literature should not significantly pre-figure any ethnographic research project, the above-cited studies of transitions and organizational health provided sensitizing concepts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009) for analysis in the study:

- What was the church's current organizational health? Has it changed as a result of the leadership transition?
- What organizational changes have taken place as a result of leader change?
- What conflicts have arisen?

- Was the church a high-functioning organization prior to leader transition?
- Has the church continued to be a high-functioning organization post-transition?
- In the course of the transition, what organizational features have been preserved, what results sustained, and what relationships have been kept intact?

Next this review examines the effects of predecessor and successor influence on transitions.

2.1.2 Influence of predecessor and successor. Grusky (1960) examined factors significant to the effectiveness and success of a new leader, and found that the efficacy of a successful transition is shaped by two factors:

- The circumstances surrounding the departure of the predecessor.
- The organizational knowledge or influence that the successor possesses.

Leaders exit organizations for a variety of reasons: resignation for a more advantageous position, age, illness, retirement, death, promotion, demotion or dismissal. The speed of the leader's exit, and the ability or inability of the organization to gain access to the accumulated knowledge of the predecessor, can profoundly impact the transition process.

Absence of predecessor input introduces discontinuity into the organizational system, and from a transition viewpoint tends to result in an accelerated rate of change as well as an increased scope of change. Grusky (1960) argues that the very existence of the predecessor on the scene tends to act as a stabilizing influence in its effects on the successors' orientation toward change. That said, transition by its very nature is change and tends to trigger other organizational changes relating to vision and staffing, as well as unplanned issues. Within church organizations the transitioning leader is at many times the founder. The transitioning founder creates a special situation. The incidence of leadership failure is considerably higher for subsequent leaders when compared to the founder of the organization.

The extensive scholarship on leadership transition addresses multifaceted issues associated with the process. Some of the concepts and themes identified by Dobrev and Barnett (2005) and Grote (2003) include:

- Dealing with organizational culture as change occurs following a long-tenured leader and the way things were done under that regime.
- Differences in management style.
- Generational conflicts with existing leadership
- Difficulties of serving under the predecessor and in turn under the successor.

Brady, Fulmer, and Helmich's (1982) examination of the transition planning process provides insight into some of these challenges. Their study involved 1,500 survey responses from CEOs, and focused on determining whether the fact that the successor came from within the organization had any impact upon the new leader's tenure. Successor profiles were identified (long term employee, family member, professional manager) and the leaders surveyed reported on how long they anticipated being in their positions. Results were cross-tabulated to show the strength of relationship between current promotional origin of the new leader, and the anticipated time in office. The researchers put together a catalog of possible organizational issues in transitional situations, in which there was a change in leadership, results which were cross tabulated with the origin of the successor yielding the following list of issues:

- Interpersonal (predecessor not relinquishing control).
- Opposition from within the company.
- Gaining acceptance for a new management style.
- Issues surrounding knowledge of the organization, culture, relationships, company policy and industry knowledge.

- Insider/outsider dichotomy (Brady et al., 1982, p. 269).

The problems identified by the Brady et al. study, and the context in which they were raised, logically lead to the distinction of successor origin as an insider or an outsider.

Corresponding to Grusky's (1961) observation on successor knowledge or influence, transition literature has usually categorized successors along the variety of insiders or outsiders. These studies of predecessor and successor knowledge and influence suggest the following sensitizing concepts for possible consideration in the research:

- What were the circumstances surrounding the departure of the predecessor?
- What organizational knowledge or influence did/does the successor possess?
- Was the predecessor the founder of the church?
- Was the predecessor long tenured?
- What was the speed of the leader's exit?
- Was the church able to gain access to the accumulated knowledge of the exiting leader?
- Was the predecessor on the scene during the time of the new leader's take-over? If so, what was the effect, if any, on the new leader's orientation to change?
- What was the rate and scope of organizational change under the new leader?
- Was there any relationship between the rate and scope of change, and the church's ability to access predecessor input?
- Did the organization experience discontinuity?
- Were there major differences in predecessor and successor management style?
- Were there any generational conflicts with existing leadership?
- Did the predecessor delay relinquishing control?

- Do the participants report experiencing difficulties serving under the predecessor and/or successor?
- Was there opposition to the new leader within the church leadership or congregation?
- How did the new leader gain acceptance for her/his management style?
- Were there issues involving who possessed, or lacked, key knowledge of the church organization, culture, relationships, policy and collective knowledge?

2.1.3 Insider outsider paradigm. The selection of the leader from within or from outside an organization speaks to another aspect of transition planning. Giambatista et al. (2005), in their extensive review of the literature on transition through 2004, suggest that the insider/outsider dichotomy represents one of too many simplistic dichotomies of concepts that are complex and multidimensional. Dichotomies, though convenient, are reductionist in nature. These researchers observe that the literature would be enriched by studies related to what it is about the “insiderness” that presents particular advantages or disadvantages to a successor. My study drew on the idea of insiderness and the social psychological construct of socialization, which is the construct most often used in transition literature regarding this topic. Sensitizing concepts for my own study from the above discussion include:

- Did the successor come from within the church organization, from a very similar church organization, or from a very different one?
- If an insider, was s/he compensated less? More prone to keep the status quo and less influential as a leader than outsider might have been?
- If an outsider, was s/he compensated more? More prone to initiate change and more influential?

- How good was/is the fit for the new leader? Does there appear to be any relationship between fit and insider/outsider (or similar-context outsider) successors?

2.1.4 Transition and socialization. A significant aspect of leadership transition has to do with socialization. Fondas and Wiersema (1997) suggest that socialization plays a significant role in an individual's life. Socialization is the underlying factor by which individuals obtain values, attitudes, relational abilities and emotional intelligences are impacted, which are organizationally specific.

Organizations have numerous implicit, unspecified rules and ways of functioning that are organizational specific. Fondas and Wiersema (1997) further assert that disagreement and contention can take place as a result of the fact that newcomer may not have not gained an understanding of how the organization functions and the nature of the organization's culture.

Socialization research focuses on areas of conformity or nonconformity to the prescribed ways of thinking and doing. One argument for appointing someone from the outside involves the belief that outsiders can create new ideas and philosophies that help organizations adapt to new business environments. However, Collins and Porras (2004) indicate that just because an insider is hired does not mean that change will not occur. The potential for success in the implementation of new ideas and strategies and the acceptance of leadership change is significantly impacted by ideological congruence between the new leader and the organization.

Sensitizing concepts from this discussion of the relationship between socialization to the leadership position and the new leader's ability to lead and create change in an organization include:

- Was a relay process used to prepare the new church leader?

- Did a version of a horse race—insider candidates vying for the position of leader take place prior to the selection of the new leader?
- In what ways was the new leader nurtured in her/his new role by the organization?

2.1.5 Homegrown leadership and stability. Brady, Fulmer and Helmich (1984)

analyzed the interrelationship of insider transition and argue that the insider who is groomed through successor planning for the leadership position is of significant value to the organization. Collins and Porras (2004) contend that there exists a multiplicity of benefits for homegrown and nurtured leaders compared to leaders who come from outside the organization. In particular, they argue that insider knowledge has practical benefits in terms of knowing the culture, which result in a connection with previous leadership and a continuation of organizational ideology. Kesner and Sebor (1994), in analyzing studies of the leadership transition progression, assert that transition systems are most favorable when they result in transparent transition within the organization. They also argue that the desire of the organization to reduce organizational instability caused by leadership transition counters the need for responsiveness and rapid change in strategies and structures when responding to changes in the business environment. Collins and Porras (2004) identified successful habits of visionary companies. According to Collins and Porras (2004), one of the elements of a successful transition was the preservation of the foundational concepts of the organization as a means to stimulate progress within organizations. Collins and Porras (2004) further state that although foundational ideology is a significant visionary component, by itself this ideology cannot make a visionary organization. However when mixed with a desire for progress, this visionary component stirs change and forward progression, which may not have been part of the core values of the organization prior to the new leader entering the new role.

The core foundational ideology provides a blueprint for organizational operation and the conduct of its business processes. The core ideology provides continuity and stability in the midst of the changing directions, methods and strategies required to fulfill organizational goals. According to Collins and Porras (2004), successful organizations promote and carefully select managerial talent grown from inside the company to a greater degree than the comparison companies: they do this as a key step in preserving their core.

Findings by Zhang and Rajagopalan (2004) support Collins and Porras's points. The authors reported a positive relationship between organizational performance and leadership transition. The literature on leadership transition has posed two models for the transition processes: relay and horse race transition. Relay transition involves the identification of a senior level executive who has been the heir apparent for two or more years and ultimately transitioned into the role of senior leader. Horse race transition creates an environment of competition in which viable contenders are hired and allowed to compete for the position. After the top candidate is selected, the individuals who were vying for the position can present challenges to the new leader or leave, which can create holes in the leadership structure leading to instability.

According to Giambatista et al. (2005), the volatility associated with leadership transition is minimized in relay transition. Giambatista et al. (2005) offer an explanation by suggesting that CEOs chosen through a relay process may be more risk-averse than those chosen through a horse race. The competition, which ensues as a result of the horse race scenario, may lead to more aggressive behaviors by the new CEO.

Grusky (1960) observes that leadership transition is a normal part of every organization and must take place in order for the organization to survive and maintain continuity. For the organization to progress, an important factor is maintaining the core ideology. When new

leaders are educated in the organization's culture and values, those involved in transition decision-making can maintain the core of the company, and create a better opportunity for an effective transition.

Sensitizing concepts for my research from the above discussion on homegrown leaders include:

- Was a relay process used to prepare the new church leader?
- Did a version of a horse race—insider candidates vying for the position of leader take place prior to the selection of the new leader?
- In what ways was the new leader nurtured in her/his new role by the organization?

2.1.6 Leadership transition as a process. Senior leader transition refers to an active transitional progression in which a senior leader known as the predecessor steps down from a primary position of influence and authority and is succeeded by another individual known as the successor. The idea of leadership transition understood as a process formed a significant focus for this research. The review of the literature relating to leadership transition has typically been situated within a view of events and outcomes, rather than unpacked as a process unfolding in time. Leadership transition is a process, not an event. Organizational change in general is a fluid; active process rather than a smooth deliberate one (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Studies have attempted to establish a model or conventional set of stages that follow one another successively in a neat linear process. For example, Gersick, Lansberg, Desjardins, and Dunn (1999) created a model of seven stages. Their set of phases includes: preparation, trigger, disengagement, dream exploration, choice, commitment and implementation. However, the transitional process is not necessarily linear. Phases or stages may be revisited multiple times in

a process that most probably lasts a number of years. This suggests a recursive process may occur in some instances.

2.1.7 Planning for transition. Organizations that have not planned for transitions are likely to fail (Conger, 2004). However despite the acknowledged benefits of transition plans, Zhang and Rajagopalan (2004) report that many firms do not have a formal succession plan. Brady et al. (1982) surveyed 1,484 firms and found that less than 50% engaged in formal succession planning. Chand and Bronner (2008) found that three out of every four (75%) nonprofit organizations have no executive succession plan.

Zhang and Rajagopalan (2004) argue for the following potential benefits of planning ahead for leadership transitions:

- Facilitation of power transition between the incumbent and the successor.
- The heir apparent can receive practical job training while on the job.
- Stakeholder confidence levels are high because the organization has a transition plan in place.
- The potential successor is trained and groomed in stages to ensure that the individual is correct selection. (p. 490)

Practical consideration and study of the implications must be given to the fact that the transition process and planning go together, as both deal with anticipated paths of transition. Significant amounts of research and documentation have been generated on the issue of leadership transition (Caudron, 1999; Cespedes, 2004). In a global survey of organizations conducted by (Korn/Ferry, 2010) of 1,300 corporations, 98% of the companies surveyed responded that a CEO transition plan was an important component to their organization, only 35% currently have one in place, and 49% have not had a transition plan in place for the last

three years. Mehrabani and Mohamad (2011) recognized four different approaches to management transition and development planning: informal, decentralized, centralized, and integrated. Rhodes (1984) also identified six techniques that were used in implementing the programs. These techniques include: “senior management involvement, information requirements, assessment, management review, developmental techniques, educational training” (p. 63).

Transitional planning can be explained as an effort to have a plan for the right number and quality of key position employees, including managers, to cover retirements, promotions, serious illness, death or any new job, which may be created in the future of the organization’s plans (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011).

2.2 Leadership and Transition within the Context of Churches

Churches are organizations and the outcomes of the work of the church have profound impacts on congregants and the communities in which they serve. Leader transitions have significant and unique costs for churches. Weese and Crabtree (2004) reported that attendance for worship services fell around 15% when a pastor leaves, a fall that results in a corresponding drop in giving. Once a new pastor is installed it can take months for giving to get back to the prior levels. Thus a leader transition can cost as much as 15% of the annual operating budget of a church.

Woolever (2012) reports that the decline in the number of clergy is associated with a decline in protestant churches. For those churches that experienced a pastoral transition during a period from 2001 to 2008 a decline in size also occurred:

Mainline Protestant churches that lost their pastor in 2001 pastor lost an average (median) of about 16 people in worship between 2001 and 2008. On the other hand, those mainline

Protestant churches that retained their pastor reported almost no change in worship attendance. About seven out of ten churches with new pastors in 2008 reported a decline in worship attendance. (p. 3)

Churches have many organization aspects in common, one of which is reliance upon and unity created through religious belief. The role of religious belief on church leadership is examined briefly here. Guenther and Heidebrecht (2010) examined church leadership structures or models in terms of their consistency with New Testament leadership principles. Their research yielded several outcomes. First, these scholars concluded that leadership models for the church must include not only biblical support but also contextual elements such as length of senior pastor tenure, perceptions of the staffing ratio, age of the church facility, adequacy of the church facility for ministry, growth rate of community, population size of the community, and denominational affiliation. Second, the authors argue that titles within the church such as leader, pastor, elder and deacon must maintain their biblical congruity, in order to apply biblical concepts to leadership change. As an example the term “pastor” is an expression used only one time in the New Testament, but terms such as “deacon” and “elder” are used more often. The researchers maintain that the use of precise terminology for church leaders is much more than a matter of semantics. Guenther and Heidebrecht argue that in order to understand church leader transition in biblical terms, one must understand the positions of leadership described in the Bible, the qualifications for these positions, and how transitions are to take place. Finally, Guenther and Heidebrecht contend that there is often a significant gap between what are identified as biblical principles, and what actually happens in a church regarding, leadership as well as leadership transition.

A study by Lohnes (2008) titled “Leading While Leaving: The Role of a Departing Pastor in Preparing a Church for a Healthy Pastoral Transition,” looked at the role of the departing pastor in the transition process. The study focused on the reasons for a pastor’s leaving and how the reason for the departure impacted the overall transition process. The study took into account both personal and professional qualities of the departing pastor and her/his effectiveness in serving as the transition process occurred. Lohnes’s research focused primarily on the departing pastor as a key factor in the process, and examined this factor within only one denomination.

A study conducted by Callahan (2008), “Recovering the Pattern of Biblical Leadership,” focused on using the Bible and the patterns for leadership established therein by God, as the only way churches can survive. This researcher’s conclusion was that church leadership (i.e., boards, committees, and the congregants as a group) placed a higher priority on obtaining charismatic leaders who could draw crowds, create programs, and build large sanctuaries, than on locating women and men of faith who give evidence of a strong relationship with God. Callahan argues that leadership is more about the internal qualities of the leader than outward charismatic qualities.

Hanchell’s (2010) research relating to the Davidic Model of Leadership Succession asserts that a five-step example of leadership transition exists in the book of Deuteronomy, which was established by Moses in the transition of his leadership position to that of Joshua. His research utilized a socio-rhetorical analysis of the Davidic Model as a method for churches to use when looking at leadership transition.

Pattet (1972) reported that there are no non-biblical sources to corroborate the biblical accounts of leadership transitions occurring within the nation of Israel, as outlined in books of Kings and Chronicles. As a result it is impossible to verify the details of the transitions

beginning at Moses and ending with Solomon. Lemaire (1988) also adds that a significant difficulty in reconstructing the history of the period is that we are dependent exclusively on the Bible. As a result Lemaire argues that it is not about whether we use the Bible as a guide, but how we use the Bible.

Individuals pursuing Doctorate of Ministry degrees have studied leadership transition in churches. Taylor's (2000) dissertation examined a model for transition after the retirement of a long-tenured pastor. This research offers observations on possible issues faced churches during pastoral transitions. Problems identified include a lack of transition planning, retirement planning, predecessor interference, and a predecessor failing to exit in a timely manner. From an operational perspective Taylor's research included problems resulting from the loss of momentum during an interim period, a vacuum of leadership that results in other leaders in the church seeking to seize power, and lack of organizational knowledge. As a result of this research Taylor developed his own biblical model of how a leader should choose a successor.

Schooling (1999) conducted an examination of the effects of pastoral leadership behaviors on psychological contracts and source credibility when implementing change. His research documents violations of psychological contracts between leadership and congregants in the process of change, such as the failure to communicate the possibility of change. The prevailing question was how a pastor successfully implements change in a local church.

2.3 Summary

Leadership transitions are challenging for both the organization and the new leader. It is no surprise then that an abundance of literature addresses challenges in the succession process. Frequent themes include dealing with imbedded ways of doing things (culture) and expectations following long-tenured leaders (Dobrev & Barnett, 2005; Emerson, 1968; Greenblatt, 1983);

differences in management style (Greiner, 1972); generational conflicts (Grote, 2003); conflicts with existing leadership; and difficulties of serving under the predecessor and in turn under the successor (Dyer, 1986). Brady et al.'s (1982) examination of succession planning process sheds light on succession challenges from an operational perspective. Literature relating to leadership transition stands to be enriched by a study that integrates a multiplicity of approaches and streams of literature in a qualitative study. This review of the literature on leadership transition revealed gaps in the literature relating to transition by taking into account the narratives of first hand participants involved in the transition process. Chapter 3 provides the research methods for this study.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

This ethnographic study of one church's leadership transition is qualitative in nature and it relies on interviews of key informants to examine how one church managed its leadership transition. The study is descriptive of the transition in one church and, therefore, does not make any assumptions about how other churches manage leadership transition. The method of ethnographic case study used for this research allowed for examination of the unique experiences and expressions of the interviewees, and provided the opportunity to bring together similar ideas, themes, patterns and perceptions. Background information regarding the approach of the research investigation is presented, including the researchers credited with its development. The role of the researcher, regarding insider/outsider status, is presented. Finally, participant selection criteria are reviewed, along with information collection and analysis procedures, and the approaches used to address the trustworthiness of the study. The following research questions guided the methodology:

1. What is the process identified for selecting the new leader?
2. What voices are present or absent in this process?
3. What are the core elements of a successful transition?

3.1 Descriptive Methodological Approaches

This research utilized ethnographic methods, a qualitative methodology to gather information in the study. Qualitative approaches can be employed for many purposes, but are particularly suitable for exploratory research. Qualitative methods provide for discovery, documentation, description, and explanation of the events and the individuals involved in the leadership transition process. This methodology presents an opportunity to investigate the

narratives of individual participants. Bryman (2001) argues that qualitative methodology emphasizes “seeing through the eyes of research participants; description and context; process; flexibility and lack of structure; and concepts and theory as outcomes of research process” (p. 277). Anita and Marlene (2006) state that:

Descriptive studies often are used when little research has been done in an area, to clarify and define new concepts or phenomena, to increase understanding of a phenomenon from another experiential perspective, or to obtain a fresh perspective on a well-researched topic. (p. 1)

Pettigrew (1997) notes that, “In holistic explanation causation is neither linear or singular” (p. 345). Ragin (1987) similarly describes qualitative methods as “The search is for multiple interesting conditions which link features of context and process to certain outcomes” (p. 342). The literature indicates that research situated at the intersection of the topics of leadership, transition, and church is still in an exploratory phase (Hawco, 2005).

An ethnographic approach in which participants narrated their experiences of a transition process was employed. The study involved in-depth interviews with participants who had *lived* the transition process. A constructivist/interpretivist framework (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) grounded the work: “This paradigm or worldview allows the researcher to gain understanding by interpreting subject perceptions” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 106). The knowledge of the participants involved in the transition included events before, during and after the transition. The researcher documented the process in the context of each participant’s involvement and perspectives relating to the transition (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

Interviews were informal and conversational, reflecting Kvale’s (1996) concept of a casually structured interview. The Interview Guide (Appendix B) incorporated elements of

conventional/ semi-structured interviews to overcome limits based on time constraints involving access to participants. Interviewing allowed for the unfolding of events in a conversation narrative with each participant. This study used in-depth interviews (Briggs, 1986; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009) and power sensitive conversations (Haraway, 1988) the study documented the experiences of those most directly involved in the pastoral leadership transition process: the church board chairman, who had been a member and leader in the church for many years; deeply involved and less involved church members; and the outgoing and incoming pastors.

3.2 Procedures

The researcher obtained Institution Review Board Approval through North Carolina A&T State University (IRB) in November 2012 to conduct the study. The following procedures were used to collect information and artifacts.

An ethnographic approach allowed the participants voice their experiences of a transition process. The study documented the process in the context of each participant's involvement and perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The knowledge of the participants involved in the transition included events before, during and after the transition.

A Church Leadership Transition Questionnaire (Appendix A) was provided through email or hard copy to each participant one week prior to the face-to-face interviews. The Transition Questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions provided to participants once they agreed to become part of the study. The questions pertained to the transition event and individuals involved in their church site. Responses to the questionnaire provided essential information for understanding the antecedents and consequences of this particular transition process.

Interviews were guided by a series of open-ended questions contained in the Church Leadership Interview Guide (Appendix B). An interview guide focuses conversation around key themes, events and perceptions. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions or prompts. Items were neither all-inclusive nor were all questions used with all participants, to allow for theoretical sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Grounded theory identifies relevant conditions and consequences of actions; it also states that the responsibility of the researcher is to catch the interplay of themes across respondents. For example, a significant topic not included in an interview guide might surface in an interview. Based on discovering a topic with this participant and recognizing its importance as a thematic unit, additional questions were added to probe deeper into that topic. The probing that generated deeper understanding allowed the researcher to follow up with questions about that theme in interviews with other participants, and return to participants previously interviewed to explore this idea. Interviews were informal, reflecting Kvale's (1996) concept of a semi-structured life world interview, although the interview guide used incorporated elements of conventional semi-structured interviews to overcome limits based on time constraints involving access to participants.

Participants were contacted through email or telephone, in advance, to discuss the format of the interview and to answer any questions. Initial face-to-face interviews of 60-90 minutes in length were conducted with each participant. These interviews took place at locations convenient for them. Each participant agreed to follow-up interviews for the purposes of clarification or expansion of topics, and these were scheduled and conducted using multiple formats including telephone or email. During the follow-up interviews the researcher was able to have responses clarified as necessary. Constraints included the amount of time allotted for each interview; the

limits of face-to-face interview contact and minimal follow up with each participant; and specific informational questions that were raised in each interview.

Initial face-to-face interviews of 60-90 minutes in length were conducted with each of the key individuals regarding the transition process. These interviews took place at locations convenient for the participants. Interviews were documented by two means: audio tape recorder and written field notes.

3.3 Sampling Criteria

Three basic sampling criteria bounded the process of selecting the site for this study: a church must have been part of the Southern Baptist Convention; experienced a pastoral transition since January 2000; and have undergone the transition of the senior leader/directional leader as opposed to other types of transition. The rationale for the criterion of having a relatively recent transition is based on the need for information to be within clear memory for participants. Within the focal site, individuals who were or had been directly involved in the leadership transition process were selected as key participants.

Other factors considered in developing an invitational list of potential sites included cost factors, accessibility factors, the level of interest/openness to the study by the senior pastor or executive pastor, along with researcher identified interest, and opportunities for learning. As was research was unfunded, personal cost formed a significant factor. To minimize travel expenses incurred in the research process, the research identified visits in which one automobile trip could yield more than one interview, conversation, or access to written documentation.

Accessibility is a powerful factor that determines the utility of participant responses. Senior pastors of churches have an enormous number of demands on their time. Personal contacts with leaders of churches, in which a transition has taken place, or some other common

factor such as membership in an association, provided an opportunity for the researcher to find people likely to give a positive response to his invitation. The researcher's reputation as a pastor himself assisted in making these needed contacts.

Participant interest formed a critical factor in the usefulness of findings from this study. The level of interest/openness of potential church leadership participants constituted a hidden gatekeeper factor in acquiring needed information. While participants may agree to participate, the level to which they reveal significant information can vary widely. For the research to be successful the researcher needed for participants to become collaborators, who allied with his project in helping him uncover information that can help others in the future.

The opportunity for learning was the ultimate criteria in selecting a site for this research. Stake (1995) suggests the following:

The researcher examines various interests in the phenomenon, selecting a case of some typicality, but leaning toward those cases that seem to offer opportunity to learn. My choice would be take that case from which we feel we can learn the most. That may mean taking the one that we can spend the most time with. Potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness. (p. 101).

For example, an anomalous case holds potential to teach us much that a representative case cannot. A final invitation list was developed with ten alternate churches invited to participate in the study. The researcher chose to investigate the process of leadership transition in a church that was high functioning and represented an important mainstay in the community it served.

3.4 Selection of Informants

The individuals selected for the study were identified as being those most closely involved in the transition. The list of key participants included the following; each has been assigned a pseudonym to protect confidentiality:

- Senior level leader within church involved in the transition process: Participant A
- Active church parishioner: Participant B
- A member of the transition group: Participant C
- Leader Transitioning in: current leader: Participant D
- The former leader: Participant E

Interviews with individuals differently positioned within the church hierarchy, as well as the transition process itself, provided the benefit of multiple perspectives. Access to at-large members can be difficult to obtain if the successor or board leadership are nervous about the opinions and feelings that these individuals may have expressed, however

3.5 Audio Recording and Transcripts

With the agreement of the participants each interview was recorded, and the interviews in their entirety were transcribed for in-depth analysis and illustrative purposes. Recording the interviews provided a check for the natural limits of researcher's memory, allowed for a more thorough examination of the information through repeated listening, and provided the opportunity for transcription of the interviews. Field notes from each interview were crosschecked against transcripts to capture, and if needed, correct any initial misinterpretations or misconceptions on the part of the researcher.

3.6 Field Contacts

The period of fieldwork lasted from December 2012 to November 2013 and my various contacts and conversations with participants are reflected in the narrative interviews. Access to participants involved much more than getting signed consent. Rapport and trust were requirements for more authentic participant accounts of the events documented in the study.

3.7 Analysis Procedures

Methods of analysis were connected to the overall purpose of the research. The study increased the level of knowledge and understanding regarding leadership transition in the church context by drawing on the experiences of those most closely involved in the process (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2007). The narrative approach allowed for examination of the experiences of the participants and provided an opportunity to bring together similar ideas, themes, patterns and perceptions, as well as to examine anomalies. Rubin and Rubin (1995) state that the purpose of data analysis is to “organize the interviews to present a narrative that explains what happened or provide a description of the norms and values that underlie cultural behavior” (p. 229).

Ethnographic case study methods support the researcher in constantly reflecting on responses, impressions, recollections and records collected. Kvale (1996) argues that “interpreting as you go” is not only important to the informational gathering process but also in pushing forward part of the analysis into the interview situation itself (p. 178), as is done with theoretical sampling.

Participant interviews constructed narratives of their church’s transition. The researcher followed an analytical process suggested by Rubin and Rubin (1995): “read and reread the interviews to note core ideas and concepts, recognize emotive stories and find themes,” then,

“group similar ideas together and figure out how the themes relate to each other” (p. 229). Attention was given to concepts, stories and themes through extensive listening and reading. Each interview that was transcribed by the researcher allowed for deeper analysis of the other interview transcripts. Field note jottings (Emerson et al., 2011) were fleshed out as soon as possible after each field encounter into full-fledged accounts of the field experience. Then, during the process of transcription, an index of emergent themes was created (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009). The process of indexing themes was similar in some ways to how Rubin and Rubin (1995) describe their use of coding: “Coding is the process of grouping interviewees’ responses into categories that bring together the similar ideas, concepts or themes you have discovered, or steps or stages in a process,” (p. 238). During the transcription the researcher constantly compared transcription, the emerging index of the transcription, and field notes from that event, to crosscheck and layer these three sources of evidence against each other.

In Chapter 4 results of the information collected in participant interviews is presented. At certain points, sections of dialogue from the interviews are presented in order to allow the reader an accurate understanding of the give and take within certain conversational settings.

3.8 Qualitative Study and Real-Life Experiences

A case study approach (Kvale, 1996) utilizing the concept of a semi-structured interview was beneficial for this type of study. Participants were willing to talk about their experiences regarding this event; they also wanted to make sure that other churches received the benefits of their learning and experiences during the process of transition.

The study was concerned with the point of view of individual participants and their progression through the transition process. Marshall and Rossman (2011) write:

Qualitative researchers are intrigued with the complexity of social interactions as expressed in daily life and with the meanings the participants themselves attribute to these interactions. This interest takes qualitative researchers into natural settings rather than laboratories and fosters pragmatism in using multiple methods for exploring the topic of interest. Thus, qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive and grounded in the lived experiences of people. (p. 2)

Rossmann and Rallis (1998) further assert that “qualitative research is naturalistic, draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of participants in the study, is emergent and evolving, and is interpretive” (p. 54). They note “qualitative researchers view social worlds as holistic or seamless, engage in systematic reflection on their own roles in the research, are sensitive to their personal biographies and how these shape the study, and rely on complex reasoning that moves dialectically between deduction and induction” (p. 54).

3.9 Role of the Researcher as Insider and Outsider

It is likely that the researcher’s insider status as a pastor, himself, may have facilitated the candor and openness of study participants. However as a researcher he endeavored to document events unfolding within his project without asserting undue influence on them. Kvale (1996) describes the interviewing and inquiry involved in qualitative research as a “moral enterprise” (p. 237). When the researcher is interviewing, the formation of relationships with participants is inevitable, intentional or not, and some participants may be acquaintances already. While the researcher was not an acquaintance of any study participants, his status as pastor was known to them. As an interviewer the researcher used personal empathy to help participants feel more at ease in telling their stories. In establishing these relationships the researcher operated as both an insider to the church enterprise, and an outsider attempting to see what was being revealed in this

specific setting. His positioning as a pastor studying a problem that all churches face at one time or another facilitated the deep level of access to participant authenticity that this study required.

The researcher is a pastor with over twelve years of experience dealing with individuals in settings that require deep empathy but also a level of separateness that allows him to serve as a resource to them. In his role as pastor he understands the importance of creating a safe environment in which people feel comfortable as they express themselves. As a researcher, building trust with participants was critical to obtaining richly detailed and authentic narratives of events.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) argue for researchers to view the data they collect “freshly, as if for the first time” (p. 297) of seeing it. This awareness provided the researcher credibility with his participants. While it was inevitable that he carried preconceptions with him into the field, he endeavored not to carry pre-judgments that could leak out to participants in his behaviors to skew what they had to tell him.

On the other hand, he would have been remiss as an insider researcher if he had not purposely drawn on his own background of experiences as “critical personal narrative” (Chase, 2005) as a foil or explanatory frame for the information shared by participants. Chase argues that, particularly in narrative work, the background knowledge and experiences of the researcher provide a powerful analytic tool for understanding what participants share, and also increase the likelihood of participants’ providing authentic information. If participants view the researcher as both knowledgeable *and* eager to learn from them, richer data can be collected (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009).

3.10 Trustworthiness

The criteria appropriate for judging the quality or the trustworthiness of this study as well as what threats exist to trustworthiness, are determined by its location within a paradigm or worldview, in this case, constructivism/interpretivism. Internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity are often advanced as the benchmarks of rigor in positivistic research, but rarely are these hallmarks situated within the paradigm of this study. Guba and Lincoln (2005) explain as follows:

. . . internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. These criteria emerge from a positivist ontological position that strives for discovery of the single, objective reality that is observable and quantifiable and findings that can be replicated because that reality does not change. (p. 105)

Feagan, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991) note that “Quantitative procedures seek to unearth the uniformities of social life and to render such uniformities into precise, numeric forms that lend themselves to formulations, refinement and testing of hypotheses” (p. 17). Every paradigm has its own view of reality, of how that reality might be studied, and of the ethics and aesthetics that pertain. The criteria for judging a study must be those that fit the study’s paradigmatic location. Guba and Lincoln (2005) provide guidelines to ensure the rigor of a study conducted within the assumptions of the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm. They suggest the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

The criterion of credibility sets a goal of accurate identification and description of the phenomenon. Credibility mirrors internal validity and raises the questions: “Are the findings feasible? Would a reasonable person consider the findings credible?” (p. 200). Transferability deals with the relevancy of findings and methods to others in comparable environments with

similar questions and practices. Additionally, transferability speaks to the ability of the research to be defended and explained as a theoretical framework and research design to others. Relating to my study, transferability was supported by the layering and crosschecking of multiple participants and archival review. Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggest that “Designing a study in which multiple cases, multiple participants, or more than one data-gathering method are used can greatly strengthen the study’s usefulness for other settings” (p. 194).

3.11 Summary

This chapter has provided the methods used in gathering and analyzing information from participants, collection and review of artifacts for analysis. The chapters that follow examine themes that emerged in the research, and a final chapter provides significance of the findings, and implications for research and practice. A constructivist/interpretivist framework (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) grounded the research.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter reports narrative dialogue excerpts from the interviews in order to capture the perspectives of the informants. Then reports specific themes that resulted from an analysis of the interviews. Findings from this qualitative research study are presented, which includes rich information from interviews of the five participants along with review of transitional documents provided by the church. Information obtained documented the procedural aspects of the transition including meetings, reports generated by the search committee, and denominational records and written processes relating to the transition process.

The findings provided implications for the following research questions posed:

1. What is the process identified for selecting the new leader?
2. What voices are present or absent in this process?
3. What are the core elements of a successful transition?

4.1 Narratives of Participants

In this section excerpts from interviews are presented. Some of the excerpts include prompts used by the researcher to give more context to the dialogical nature of the discourse. This structure allows for greater understanding of how the researcher is situated within the context of the interviews. Individuals with diverse areas of service within the church were involved as study participants. These factors reflect a degree of diversity that is important to providing a broad view of the experience (Laverty, 2003). To maintain confidentiality, the church represented in this study is referred to as Church X, and participants are referred to as Participants A, B, C, D, and E. The average age of the participants who were members of Church

X was 57, and their average membership at the church was 35 years. The incoming pastor had 13 years of pastoral experience, while the outgoing pastor had 35 years.

4.1.1 Participant A. Participant A had been at Church X for as long as he could remember: “I was born and raised up in the nursery and have been here for seventy-five years. There is no other place for me. Through it all Church X has been home.” Participant A has served on various committees and boards over the years and experienced a number of transitions that he described as some that were good, and others that were not so good:

I have seen the church evolve over the years and with the change our approaches to finding a pastor has changed. No longer are the days when you could make a few calls, visit the candidate get some references and be on your way. Now the church must perform due diligence in finding a pastor.

Participant A had served on the church finance, personnel, and building and grounds committees, as Sunday school superintendent, and had been the church treasurer for thirty-five years. As with many things at the church Participant A had the most experience with pastoral transitions, having served on five of these. Participant A appeared to be a humble individual with a heart for service and a desire for Church X to accomplish what God intended there.

4.1.1.1 Counsel to other churches. Participant A stated that when going through a pastoral transition there were a number of things that were important. First, the search committee must be dedicated to the process of finding the right pastor for the church. The individuals who make up the committee are diverse and are representatives of the church. The committee members are there for one reason and that is to find the best fit for the church. Personal agendas and catering to one group of constituents in the church is counterproductive to finding the best

individual. Participant A was passionate about this point and the researcher could tell that he viewed this as an important aspect of the committee's responsibility:

There is no room on the committee for individuals who are not dedicated to finding the best person for the position. The committee has to be in agreement before the candidate is taken to the church for vote. The church has to have confidence in the cohesiveness of the committee and if we could not agree one hundred percent the individual was not brought up for a vote.

When asked if it was difficult to achieve this goal of getting the right person for the position without allowing personal goals and agendas to impact the selection, he responded:

Yes and no. What I mean is that it's easy to state that the goal is to find the right person and that we will maintain group cohesion but is it easy to apply it? No. I believe the problems, which occur, are a result of allowing the pressures of non-board members to influence the board members decisions. Everyone at [Church X] wanted the same thing, which was to select the right individual for the position. However, defining what is "right" could have been influenced by a number of things. I think our church survey allowed the committee to see firsthand what the membership was looking for. The survey was used to keep the committee accountable to the desires of the church.

As to whether there were specific issues that came up, he explained:

Yes. For instance we had to deal with the issue of whether or not to consider a woman as pastor. Churches are dealing with the issue of female clergy in different ways. Some are flat out saying know and use passages within the Bible to decide the issue. Progressive churches are looking at the issue by deciding what passages are to be taken literally and what passages such as women clergy should be looked at differently based upon

contextual elements along with roles within society and church evolving. We had some that were open to it and others not. As a group we had to decide whether or not to seriously look at women for the position. Ultimately, we did not decide on the issue from a biblical perspective but one of group dynamics and that our church was not ready for it.

The second area of advice Participant A felt strongly about involved “checking the person out.” When asked what he meant he said that, “...background checks are a must. It’s unfortunate that churches and ministries are forced to do these checks but that is just the way it is.”

Background checks both personally and financially will go a long way to ensuring future problems are avoided. A credit check, criminal background and reference release form are necessary to ensure all the bases are covered, according to Participant A:

Admittedly, we as a church and committee understand that there might be some things which are not uncovered by the best efforts but as a committee we need to do all that is possible to ensure the individual is who is claims to be. The church does not have the luxury of trying out people and making multiple changes in a short period of time. The emotional investments individuals make into their pastor are compromised when issues arise and changes have to be made.

The final area that Participant A stated as important to finding the best fit for the church was to get the entire church involved in the process: “Many identify the church as a building or structure of some type. The church is a group of people. The group might be large or small but ultimately it’s a group. With all groups there will be multiple opinions and ideas on what the best way is to do something.”

When asked to elaborate on the meaning of “the church,” the following conversation ensued:

Sure, as I said earlier the church is not a building but a group of people and is made up of all types. Within the church you have all types of groups, which make us different.

Race, economic status and abilities, young and old, married and single, children or no children, the ages of the children, level of education or anything else which makes us different can be a source of contention.

Ron: “So you think the church is unique?”

Participant A: “Absolutely. The church has all these differing groups, ideas and preferences but are able to come together and do what every feels is best for the whole.”

4.1.1.2 The transition. At one point in the conversation Participant A explained that this transition was one that went well for a number of reasons:

A good transition starts with the pastor who is departing. What I mean by that is if a pastor has done his job well the church will typically be strong and not tied to a man but committed to the church. The church is not a building; the church is the people who occupy the building. A good pastor/leader will labor to grow the people and create a strong group that is not man focused but God focused . . . a “man” focused church will lose momentum when the pastor/leader leaves. Although the reasons for leaving are numerous I am talking about normal things such as retirement or taking a new church or in some cases unexpected death. I am not talking about moral failure which we see a lot of today. A “man” focused church is not planning for life without the pastor/leader and is left groping in the dark when the leader is no longer there.

Ron: “So are you saying the current leadership style and structure has an impact on future transitions?”

Participant A:

Yes absolutely. Leaders who are confident in their abilities and who are looking after the overall welfare of the church will create an atmosphere that fosters and accepts change as part of the process of establishing, growing and maintaining a church. I have seen firsthand what happens when the leadership cares too much about their power and legacy without showing much concern for the church. Confident leaders are willing to think about and prepare for what will occur after they have left the church.

4.1.2 Participant B. Participant B had been a member of Church X for 43 years and he, too, participated on numerous church committees. He served in the positions of deacon, and on the nomination committee, youth committee, outreach committee, leadership team and finance committee. In conversation with the researcher he characterized the transition in the following ways:

I have seen a number of transitions down through the years and one thing they all have in common is they have nothing in common. What I mean is they are all different. The reasons a pastor leaves has a direct impact on how the search goes. For example if the situation is bad due to something that is negative like moral failure, church split then there is a time of healing which must take place before you can even begin to think about a new person coming in. . . . [This one] was a positive transition due to the fact our current pastor was retiring. He had been with us for over fifteen years and the time was right. The church I think had gone as far as it could with him and it was time for a change. The pastor let the church know well in advance about his decision, which

provided us with time to plan and implement the transition process as directed in our bylaws.

When asked whether the existence of a plan was positive or negative situation for the church, he replied:

I think it is definitely a positive. The transition plan or how we go about finding a new pastor is lead out clearly in the bylaws of the church. By having a process to go by it takes out personal opinions and agenda from the equation and seeks to do what is best for the church. Even when you may not have the best people implementing the plan you have the plan there to force the process.

Ron: "So overall you think the plan worked effectively?"

Participant B:

Yes as I said the plan forces the process. The plan does not force the time as it relates to how long it takes to implement and find and new pastor but it does outline the process. I have been through multiple transitions in church and believe the success of the process lies in doing the difficult stuff like getting implementing a plan before hand in place.

When asked whether there was anything he thought could have been done differently, however, Participant B indicated that the pace of this transition was too slow, in his view:

Well as I said the place dictates what you do but not how quickly you go about doing it. We had been given a good notice by the pastor who was leaving but I think the committee was slow in starting the process. We ended up with an interim pastor for a number of months and we could have had it done a lot quicker. We were never told why the committee did not start to work on the process sooner rather than later but communication during this was not that good . . . From the beginning the communication

of the process was not that good. The committee basically said when we have something to tell you we will. I don't think that is the best way to handle something as critical to the welfare of the church as finding a new pastor. I think it would be better to have a monthly status report of where the process was. Not specifics just an overall update. Initially when the committee sought input from the church as to what type of leader we wanted everything was on a timeline but once the actual search started and interviews were being conducted we were totally in the dark.

Despite his critique involving the communication and pacing of the transition Participant B stated that the use of an interim pastor had been a good thing in this case:

I think the selection of an interim was a good thing. Especially since it took so long to find a new pastor. If we had not had an interim it would have been a problem. The interim pastor was older and brought a sense of calmness to the process. He was an older guy with no aspirations of becoming the pastor. He had been a pastor before and did not want to get into full-time pastorate. Quite frankly he was too old to be the pastor but just right to be the interim. I know that sounds weird but it was just right.

4.1.2.1 Counsel to other churches. Participant B had clear ideas about the advice he would give to other churches going through a transition process:

Make sure the expectations are reasonable. The transitions, which have not gone well, have been to poor expectations. The costs of poor transitions can have multiple effects on the church as well as the pastor. We have to remember that we are dealing with people not producing cars or something like that. We have only had one transition that did not go well and it was due to expectations from both the leader and the congregation. Two transitions ago we went through a transition where the needs or expectations of the

church were not communicated to the new pastor. The incoming pastor was not aware of what the church expected relating to preaching and teaching in addition to his involvement in with the other groups and committees in the church. The church was not aware of his expectations relating to days off and time away from the church. All of this and more stuff made for a difficult transition, we made it through the transition but it was difficult.

When asked how long he thought an effective transition takes when done right, he replied:

Generally I think it will take at least three years. Within the first year you get a sense of whether or not it's going to work out. No matter how much effort and diligence you put into trying to find the right fit you can have situations where it just does not work out. The first year the pastor can get about seventy-five percent of all the stuff involved in the transition. During the next two years, the issues of trust and confidence between the pastor, other staff members and church membership takes place. I don't think there is anything you can do to speed up the 25%, it's relational. The initial seventy-five is based upon acquisition of knowledge by the pastor of how things work the remainder is application of relational.

4.1.3 Participant C. Participant C had been a member of Church X for over twenty years and by her own admission was not what you would call faithful. Although she kept up with what was going on at the church, she stated that she was not as involved as she once had been. Like Participant B, Participant C had some critique of the transition process at the church:

First let me say I think the transition took too long. We had been given six months' notice that pastor was leaving and nothing really started to shape up until he had been

gone for a month or so. . . . The committee should have been formed earlier and the process finding a new pastor could have been started earlier. We never heard why the process started so late?

When asked her view of how the transition process operated overall she answered similarly to Participant B in regard to timing and use of an interim:

Good, I guess we have a pastor? . . . The committee did a good job in keeping us informed of the process but like I said I think it was too slow. Getting the interim in early was a good thing because we did not have to wonder who would be preaching from Sunday to Sunday. I think having a job description of what the interim was responsible for a good thing. Even though we did not have a pastor the church still needed a pastor to visit and stuff. The interim kept things going in the church and allowed the search committee to work toward finding a new pastor.

Unlike Participant B, Participant C stated that communication was a good aspect of this transition:

They [the committee] worked to keep everyone involved in the process and solicited input from the entire church. I think the commitment of the committee was good and they wanted to do a good job. I also think that transitions, which are drawn out too long, can present problems for the church. People get used to having power and control and the longer it takes the more comfortable they become with it. When a new pastor comes in people don't want to give it up. I have seen people leave the church because their power not position was diminished when the new pastor started.

4.1.3.1 Positive aspects and counsel to other churches. In terms of the positive aspects of the transition process in which she was involved, Participant C stated that:

The positives were the commitment of the committee and the church to find the right person. Another positive, was the interim pastor, he really helped a lot. Finally I think that by bringing one person up for a vote at a time helped the church stay focused on one person at a time. Before you begin the process of looking for a new pastor make sure you know how the entire process will be handled. Our bylaws dictate what has to be done when we begin to look for a pastor and we follow it. Also, have one person who knows the overall process from beginning to end. If you have a group there must be one in the group who knows what is required from them if not, the process will not go well.

4.1.4 Participant D. Participant D, the incoming pastor, explained how he became aware of the position open at the church:

The seminary I attended had a monthly publication for pastoral openings at Southern Baptist churches. I was not looking to get away from my church but I was always open to new opportunities. The church was advertising for a pastor and I thought I should apply but put it off and honestly forgot about it. . . . Well as I said I had forgotten about the opening and about two months later I received a Southern Baptist publication, which had the opening, again so I went ahead and thought I would apply. The only issue was I did not meet the age requirement. The church was looking for someone who had been in the ministry for at least five years and was at least thirty-five years of age. I was a few months short but thought that by the time the interviews would be conducted I would meet the age requirement.

When asked about why, if he had not been looking to leave his own church due issues there, he was looking elsewhere at all, he replied:

I had been at the church for five years and things were going well but it was a small church and I was looking for another challenge. My first church was right out of seminary and we had about sixty people in attendance. It was difficult to think of moving but moving is part of the position. Some stay longer or shorter but in my case it was time. So I began to send out a few resumes for positions that I thought were interesting. The ministry is a funny thing, when people find out you are thinking about leaving the first thing they think is there must be a problem. This was not the case; we just thought it might be time to leave if the right opportunity came about. But I was concerned that if my church found out that I was interviewing it would be a problem, but it never became an issue.

When asked about the positives of the transition process used in this case, Participant D replied:

There a number of things, which I believe, are positives from the approach used by Church X in their pastoral transition process. First, it is a consistent approach. It is consistent because of the bylaws of the church, which clearly state the process to be used by the church, and there cannot be any deviation without the church voting on it. Second, the committee had one contact person, Participant A, who was responsible for all the communication with me. Participant A as the chairperson would contact me to set up meetings and ask follow-up questions. Having a single contact person avoids potential conflicts and misunderstandings. Third, although the committee was made up of individuals who represented different groups in the church there was one person (Participant A) who kept the group focused and on target. Fourth, the confidentiality of

the committee and discussions provided both the committee and myself to discuss the issues in an open honest forum.

Conversation about Participant D' view of the negatives in this particular process went as follows:

The only problem I see in the process is the visits, which are made by the prospective church to get a feel for the candidate. The church with the opening at some point sends out individuals to the church the candidate currently pastors. Regardless of the size of the church but especially with smaller churches like mine this visit can potentially create issues.

Ron: How so?

Participant D:

Well the church that the candidate pastors may feel unwanted or even betrayed when they find out that the pastor is thinking about leaving. I am not sure how to solve it, in my case I sent the church CD's of the services but the committee wanted to attend a service and get a feel for how the church I was pastoring operated. As I said its necessary but problematic for the pastor who is candidate. I know some pastors that a visit by a prospective church created problems for him especially when the church he was considered for did not call him as pastor. If the church must do it I think it should be the lasting thing done before a pastor is called.

Participant D offered the following advice to a church considering a leadership transition:

The transition from pastor to pastor is the most significant thing a church will undertake. Building programs, budgets, missions programs, ministries are all important but the role of the pastor impacts all of these. Selecting a pastor requires a healthy balance. What I

mean is that if the church reacts too quickly and selects an individual to fill a vacancy they might conduct background checks and references to determine the quality of the individual being selected. However, if the church takes too long there can be a leadership void or vacuum, which can create problems with individuals to wanting to give back power when the new pastor is hired.

As to advice specifically for the pastor involved in leadership transition, Participant D had this to offer:

Ask questions and don't take anything for granted. The interview process is a feeling out situation. Research the church you are considering moving to. Above all pray and seek God's peace in the move.

When asked whether he had been involved in any communication with his predecessor prior to accepting the position or after he began, Participant D replied:

No and I believe it was the best thing. . . . The predecessor left on good terms and decided to retire. However, in any situation there are issues between the pastor and members. I did not want to be persuaded in any way and make premature judgments about individuals and circumstances. I also felt that since he had been gone for over a year that it was not beneficial to me.

Participant D also explained that he had done a little research about the church in advance, however:

I had a friend at seminary that had been a youth pastor at Church X under this pastor early in his ministry so I called him and asked some questions. His responses were positive about the church and the pastor who was leaving.

4.1.5 Participant E. In the following conversation with the researcher, Participant E opened his discussion of the Church X transition by explaining how his ministry there had begun in 1998 following a twenty-year career in this kind of work:

Church X was my third church. The other two were periods of ten years each. Before becoming a pastor I served in a campus ministry and volunteer ministry work before college. My ministry at Church X was a good one and ending at Church X was a good place for us to end full time ministry work. The church experienced growth and we were able to continue the work, which was started before I got here. My transition in and out was a good one.

Ron: So you experienced the transition from both perspectives. Being the new guy at Church X and the outgoing guy as well. Any thoughts on Church X's approach?

Participant E:

Yes I did. I think the transition plan that Church X has in place is a good one for a number of reasons. First, the plan is consistent. The plan that was in place when I was the successor is the same one that was in place when I was the predecessor. The plan outlines what the committee is required to do. How the committee is set up and what the power of the committee has relating to finding the new pastor. The plan also reflects what the responsibilities of the church membership are. The transition does give flexibility to the committee relating to the time it takes to find the new pastor. I know of situations where the process was left open and allowed the responsibilities to be vague and ambiguous which created nothing but problems.

Ron: Really, how so?

Participant E:

I have seen situations where multiple candidates are voted on at the same time. I have also seen situations where the leaving pastor just stayed around too long and that became an issue...

Participant E explained his own decision to retire as follows:

I had always figured that my time as a full time minister would be done when I reached my mid-sixties. I decided that I would wait until I reached sixty-six and could take my social security and pension together. The pastorate is a demanding position that requires physical, mental and emotional strength. Although I felt I could maintain the strength to do all these it began to wear on me. It was time.

Ron: How long was it before you notified the board once you decided to retire?

Participant E:

I had decided I would step down about a few months before I notified the chairman of board. Once I was comfortable with the decision and had discussed it with my wife and family I kept it to myself until I felt it was the right time. For me the right time was when I had peace about the decision. I knew that once I notified the board there was no turning back. As pastor you cannot be undecided with something this important.

Ron: Once you decided to put in your notice how did you go about it?

Participant E:

I wrote a letter of resignation and called a meeting with Participant A to notify him of my decision. I put my notice in January 1st and stayed until the end of May.

Ron: How was the decision to resign accepted?

Participant E:

Overall I think it was accepted well. I don't think it was a surprise. I had been talking about retiring for some time but did not think the time was right. I believe the board felt it was time for a new pastor as well. Sometimes you, as pastor's ministries may last a few years or in my case thirteen years or more, but there comes a time when you know its time for a change. I was not looking to leave and take another church so it made leaving a little easier because the church did not think I was leaving for another church.

Ron: Do you think it is easier for a pastor to leave when there is not another church involved?

Participant E:

My experience has been that when a pastor leaves to take another church there can be hurt feelings because the church being left might believe there is something wrong with them because the pastor is leaving.

When asked about whether he had been able to provide any input in recommending or discussing the candidate for his outgoing position he replied:

No. I know there are situations when the individual who is leaving will be asked for input but I was not asked or felt compelled to offer any suggestions or recommendations. Church X has a good process for going about finding a new pastor when needed. Besides there was a two-year span of time between my leaving and Church X calling a new pastor.

In terms of advice to churches going through leadership transition he offered the following:

First, it is the responsibility of the congregation to call a new leader once a vacancy occurs. You cannot put it on an individual or small group. Although Church X has a committee it is up to the congregation to select the committee and ultimately the pastor. You don't have to approve someone that you don't believe is good for the church even if they are recommended. . . . Secondly, I would say that the use of an interim pastor is significant. If a church selects a good interim the day-to-day functions of the church can be met while searching for a new leader. Without an interim the church may feel pressured to call a new leader too quickly. You cannot be too careful.

4.2 Results of Interviews

The findings indicate three profound factors relating to the transition process in Church X: the transition plan contained in the church's by-laws that pre-existed the departure of the outgoing pastor, the important role played by the members of the search committee, and the use of an interim pastor.

4.2.1 Participant A. Participant A pointed out three main factors as significant to a successful transition. The first area had to do with leadership.

A good transition starts with the pastor who is departing, if a pastor has done his job well the church will typically be strong and not tied to a man but committed to the church.

Structure is another area Participant A focused on.

The by-laws provide for a strong committee representing the diversity in the church. The church has to have confidence in the cohesiveness of the committee and if we could not agree one hundred percent the individual was not brought up for a vote.

As stated previously, Participant A had been part of five leader transitions and was confident that the most significant factor in effective pastoral transitions was the use of an interim pastor.

For us the interim is the key, everything hinges on the interim. The church could not maintain the focus and vision without a good interim. The qualities and skill set of an interim are different for that of a pastor. All of our transitions have gone well because we had a good interim.

The bylaws provide for a strong committee representing the diversity in the church. The church has to have confidence in the cohesiveness of the committee and if we could not agree one hundred percent the individual was not brought up for a vote.

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For us the interim is the key, everything hinges on the interim. The church could not maintain the focus and vision without a good interim. The qualities and skill set of an interim are different for that of a pastor. All of our transitions have gone well because we had a good interim.

4.2.2 Participant B. In conversation with the researcher Participant B also spoke about areas of significance to an effective transition. The first relates to the structure of the transition.

The process is outlined in the by-laws of the church and provides a framework for how the church goes about the search for a new pastor. The framework approaches the process as two-fold. One is the search for a new pastor and the second is the installation of the interim pastor.

The second area according to participant B was the use of an interim pastor.

The interim provides stability and allows the church to function during the search process. I think the selection of an interim was a good thing. Especially since it took so long to find a new pastor. If we had not had an interim it would have been a problem. The interim pastor was older and brought a sense of calmness to the process. I think the

selection of an interim was a good thing. Especially since it took so long to find a new pastor. If we had not had an interim it would have been a problem. The interim pastor was older and brought a sense of calmness to the process. He was an older guy with no aspirations of becoming the pastor. He had been a pastor before and did not want to get into full-time pastorate. Quite frankly he was too old to be the pastor but just right to be the interim. I know that sounds weird but it was just right.

The final area according to participant B related to the role of the congregation.

The congregation cannot shift its responsibilities to the search committee. The committee is an extension of the congregation and the committee speaks for them, not in place of them. The selection of a new pastor is only one event in a series of events during the process. The church can go through all the requirements of the by-laws in the selection of a new pastor and the transition itself can fail because the church is not receptive of the new pastor. A successful transition is one that is measured over time, which can take up to a year.

4.2.3 Participant C. Participant C stated that the following three areas were significant to the leader transition process.

It's clear what is spelled out in the bylaws is what is done. It's not difficult to implement as a process but finding the leader that's the tricky part. Allowing the search committee perform its role and function without micro managing of the congregants.

The second area according to participant C was the commitment of the committee to the church.

The committee has to be unbiased and without a private agenda. The committee has the most difficult job in the process. Although there are many individuals speaking to the committee they must be focused and not swayed by other people.

The final area according to participant C was the selection of the right interim pastor.

The interim should have one focus and that is keeping the church moving. The church bylaws do not allow the interim to be recommended for the pastor position. This allows the interim to focus on the church and the church to focus on worship. It provides a great deal of freedom to everyone in the process.

4.2.4 Participant D. Participant D, the incoming pastor, indicated the following issues as being significant in the transition.

A consistent approach as outlined within the bylaws of the church allows for continuity with the transition process. I was impressed with the detail of the bylaws as it details how the process works. The church has the ability to recommend committee members but the committee is obligated to function in a deliberate confident manner.

Secondly, the structure of the committee represented the diversity of the church. There were young and old, women and men, which allowed for multiple opinions and ideas to be considered. The confidentiality of the committee was also impressive as we were able to discuss the issues relating to the transition in an open forum. Every church has issues and the committee shared with me the areas of concern and issues, which I would have to deal with as the pastor. The committee did not sugar coat anything, which allowed me to prepare for possible problems ahead of time.

The final area participant D stated as being significant related to the use of an interim pastor.

Church X had defined roles for the interim, which allowed him to focus on the church and the people. The requirements of the interim pastor outlines in detail the expectations for the interim pastor. The use of an interim takes the pressure off the committee to find a pastor quickly.

4.2.5 Participant E. With over thirty years of ministry experience Participant E had been involved with three transitions over his ministry and stated the following as being significant.

Church X has a solid process for going about finding a new pastor when needed. The bylaws call for a committee and states what the authority of the committee is relating to the change of leadership. The bylaws deal with both sides of the issue of leadership change, one being how to proceed in finding a new pastor and how to call an interim until a new pastor is installed.

Secondly, participant E stated his view that a strong well rounded committee was paramount for success.

When there is a leadership vacuum people tend to attempt to take authority that is not given to them. A strong committee leads and directs but does not strong-arm the congregation. The search committee is not a popularity contest but is a group of men and women that puts their own interests aside for the progress of the church. Although the Church has a committee, it is up to the congregation to select the committee and ultimately the pastor.

Finally, participant E stated the following relating to the interim pastor.

The church continues to move without a pastor, it is either moving forward or backwards. People still need visiting, funerals still occur, counseling must continue. A seasoned interim can keep the church moving and provides stability. The fact that Church X does not allow the interim to be considered for the pastor position is a positive. The congregation knows ahead of time that no matter how good the interim is he cannot be considered for the pastor position.

4.3 Emergent Themes

This study provided narrative accounts of the experiences of five individuals in one church leadership transition. Their leadership during the transition process is summarized in the following eight themes that captured their experiences:

4.3.1 Theme 1: Succession planning. While succession does not tend to be one of the issues that churches and leaders address, Church X had a detailed transition plan which outlined the process of selecting a new leader. The plan stipulated the make-up of the transition committee, and the roles and responsibilities of committee members as well as congregants. The transition plan also provided the position requirements and directions for the installation of the interim pastor.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Predecessor's confidence and vision. The predecessor's confidence in self and vision for the organization also were raised as factors that contributed to the success the transition. Participant E, the outgoing pastor, stated that "it was important to me that a positive transition took place, I had put in too much time at Church X to see it fall apart at my departure". Several study participants stated that it is important for the church to have a vision that reaches past the leader. Although the leader was important, the organization had to keep the vision going when there was no leader. This value was openly communicated across the congregation, leadership and staff.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Timing of transition. Although the church by-laws stated the type of notice the church would like the pastor to give upon resignation, the timing of the transition was significant. Participant A, the board chairman, stated: "if the predecessor stays too long the negative effects can become detrimental to the overall mission of the church". Participant E, the predecessor, echoed this idea "I felt like staying longer would hurt the church, the time was

right”. Being able to quantify the idea of the right amount of time is difficult. Participant B, a longtime member, stated that, “you know when it’s time, you just know.” The views of these participants indicate forethought and a willingness to change before absolutely being forced into a transition because of diminished pastoral skills, passion, capacity or health.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Delayed loss. The idea of delayed loss was portrayed as an important dimension of transition. Participant E, the predecessor, talked about losing friends. According to Participant E, “You cannot be around the people and not become close, if you can you might need to be doing something.” Transition provides relief and excitement, according to Participant D, the new pastor: “when there is a transition there is an immediate sense of relief and excitement.” The new pastor gets to step out of day-to-day operations. However, as the newness of this chapter of life fades and relationships and roles change, the sense of loss of what they have known and experienced before begins to set in.

4.3.5 Theme 5: Responsibility of the new leader. The transition process does not diminish the responsibility of the new leader; in fact at Church X the level of responsibility was increased due to additional roles the pastor was required to fulfill. Rather, transition presents a change in the type of leadership responsibility. It provides an opportunity for all players to contribute as much as possible to bring about positive change to the organization. In fact all of the study’s participants addressed the essential tasks of the predecessor as maintaining some aspects of the church’s existing vision, while also creating a vision for the future life of the organization.

4.3.6 Theme 6: The Church as an organization. This case study provided some insights regarding the successor. Churches are organizations and in some cases major organizations. Churches run the gamut from small churches with a bi-vocational pastor, to ones

with million dollar budgets, facilities, properties, buses, and other assets. Participant D stated, “the successor has hit the ground running and maintain continuity with staff and congregants.” Staffing can include executive pastor, senior pastor, youth pastors, administrative assistants, media personnel and numerous support personnel. These types of organizations require excellent leadership. The kind of leader who can step into a church must have abilities to quickly excite, build and become acquainted with people. Participant D, the successor, stated, “the learning curve is sharp and the honeymoon short.”

4.3.7 Theme 7: Committee responsibility. All of those interviewed understood the importance of selecting the best leader for the church. Although the pastoral committee did not start the movement toward a new leader, it was their responsibility to ensure the process was completed properly. Often mentioned was the importance of the committee to address the concerns of the church while not catering to a single individual or groups within the church. Additionally, those interviewed place a high priority on the skills and abilities of the committee members as reason for success.

4.3.8 Theme 8: The importance of the interim pastor. The selection of an interim pastor was a significant component in the search hiring and transition to a new pastor. According to the Church X’s *Guidelines for Pastor Search Committee*, “The interim between pastors in a church is a time for affirming the church staff and elected leaders.” The committee at Church X agreed that a qualified interim pastor would take the pressure off the church to find a quick fix to their pastor vacancy.

A key component to the interim process was that according to Church X by-laws, once an interim was called, the interim could not apply or be recommended for the permanent position. Interim pastors are often used by protestant denominations. The role is often described as one of

buffer (Peterson, 1990), developer/maintainer (Porcher, 1980), and interim specialist (Oswald, 1992). These individuals are usually experienced pastors trained to handle the needs of churches during transitional periods. Often, an interim is required between permanent pastors, giving the congregation time to recover from the departure of the predecessor and to prepare for the new pastor. An interim period between pastors is not a time for reshaping the church's long-term vision and ministry commitments. Interims are often brought in from outside during a prolonged or complicated transition. An interim position extends for months or even two years, often with a prearranged term negotiated with the board.

The participants in the research all made reference in the study to the significance of the interim pastor in the success of the transition. The research reflects the interim pastor has experience in the ministry and a willingness to serve the spiritual side of the church throughout the search for a new pastor.

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One of the requirements as stated in the by-laws of Church X relating to the interim was that s/he cannot be considered for the position of pastor. The interim agrees not to apply for the position, or in any way encourage anyone to nominate him for the position. Participant A stated that by, "not allowing the interim to apply prevents divisions within the church which can naturally occur due to fact that congregants develop an affinity for the interim."

4.4 The Key Role of Organizational Readiness in Church Transition Success

Churches can take a number of approaches when dealing with leadership transition. Democratic forms of leadership organize some churches with the congregations having control. Other churches have autonomous forms of governing with much of the authority and control vested within a board of deacons/elders and pastor. Other churches operate under the autonomous leadership of a single individual. Positions such as pastor, senior pastor, executive pastor, bishop, deacon board, elders, officers, trustees and executive committees constitute the leadership oversight of churches. Church X falls within the democratic form of leadership and has a clear well-documented proven approach when dealing with leadership transition. Organizational readiness speaks to this issue of having a thorough plan in place, and according to Jones, Jimmieson and Griffiths (2005), “organizational members' shared resolve to implement a change (change commitment) and shared belief in their collective capability to do so (change efficacy)” (p. 370). This readiness is evident in the narratives of my study participants, with individuals who referred to the by-laws and committee responsibilities, as being a significant component of a successful leader transition.

4.5 Summary of Findings

The themes that emerged from the interview data analysis in the study relate to the research questions. Each research question was buttressed by some of the themes. Below is a discussion of each research question and the themes that provide some answers to these questions.

4.5.1 What is the process identified for selecting the new leader? Succession planning was central in this church’s selection of a new leader. The transition plan that emerged in my study participants’ narratives indicated a defined and linear effort, with established goals for each

step of the process. First, organizational planning within the church's by-laws pre-existed its need for a leader succession plan. Second, there was buy-in to the plan from the congregation as well as the committee, who were equally committed to follow the church by-laws that guided the transition process. Third, the congregation had confidence in the committee. Fourth, the by-laws provided roles for direct involvement of the congregants as well as the committee members, and structured regular and fluid communication across these two groups. Fifth, the guidance of an older, experienced interim pastor, as stipulated in the church by-laws, provided stability. The interim, by plan, was not allowed to apply for the position of new pastor. The interim was in place early in the transition process, within two weeks of the departure of the outgoing pastor, and maintained the vision of the church and provided all services to the congregation so that the selection process for the new pastor was not hurried. The church was then able to take the two years it needed to find the new pastor. The vision of the church was preserved throughout this church's transition process through its transition plan, from the foresight of the outgoing pastor, to the continuity provided by the interim, to the new pastor's taking the helm. The church transition plan took account of the church as an organization with both a spiritual and a corporate function.

4.5.2 What voices are present or absent in this process? My findings indicate that this church as a unified group was bound by the by-laws to ensure that the committee, the congregation, the predecessor, the incoming pastor, and the interim played active roles in providing for a successful transition. Each player contributed to a successful transition by accepting their role in the process and allowing for the fluid evolving nature of the transition to occur. The by-laws of the church provided clear-cut roles for congregants as well as committee members. With each role came a voice in the process, so that no one was left out. The

predecessor gave timely notice, six months, to make sure that his vision would guide the church until an interim could be found. When his notice was given, the congregation elected the selection committee members. The members hired an interim. The interim provided continuity of vision and services. The committee vetted and recommended applicants to the congregation, who then voted for their selection. The new pastor signed an agreement with the committee chair that confirmed his agreement with the expectations of the church community for his tenure of leadership. Hidden players include the church members who had previously written the by-laws that guided the current congregants and committee.

4.5.3 What are the core elements of a successful transition? My findings indicate several core elements that can be taken into consideration as evidence of a successful transition. First, the church by-laws provided a written transition plan, which was in place before the need for a search arose. Second, the predecessor was able to give six months' notice and maintain the vision and momentum of the church during his last days there; he provided a hand-off of leadership. Third, the congregation was committed to the plan, and thus was able to vote in a committee. Fourth, the committee members were committed to the plan. Fifth, the committee, guided by the plan, brought in an older, experienced interim within two weeks of the departure of the outgoing pastor. Sixth, committee lived up to its responsibility to address the concerns of the church while not catering to a single individual or group within the church. Seventh, fluid channels of communication were established through the roles for committee members and congregants that were specified in the plan. Eighth, the interim provided stability and continuity of the church's vision and services needed by the congregation, to allow for the time needed for a thoughtful search for a new pastor. Ninth, the plan included written expectations agreed upon by the committee chair and the incoming pastor that closely guided his actions upon taking the helm

of the church. The most important element was the state of organizational readiness that existed at this church. Even the outgoing pastor had a keen sense of when it was the right time for him to depart. Because of this organizational readiness, the church was able to maintain the overall vision and mission of the organization before, during and after the transition occurred. The financial and attendance commitment of the congregation was sustained throughout the process, so that the neither spiritual nor the corporate aspects of the church were neglected.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Implications

The study examined pastoral leadership transition in the context of a church. It did so to address a gap in the literature regarding leadership transition in churches, particularly in terms of qualitative and descriptive methodological approaches that hold potential to reveal the perspectives of participants. The visibility of a senior pastor, as well as the influence that accompanies her/his frequency as the church's primary public communicator, suggest that the departure and transition of this leader has implications for the health and sustainability of a church organization. The literature review in Chapter Two illustrated very few studies of pastoral transitions, and the existing ones explored the role of the leader as opposed to other features of the transition. None focused on the transition as a process involving the entire church community. Additionally, beyond scholarly investigations, there is limited subjective information dealing with the presence or absence of transition planning in churches. This is not to say that transition planning does not exist in churches. However, there is a scarcity of studies that directly inform the transition process. There exists no list of core elements in a successful church leader transition process, to help guide others. It is crucial that future research is accessible to practitioners, who critically need guidance in this area, as well as to scholar/theorists. Church leader transitions differ greatly from the transitions in other organizations because of the dichotomous nature of the church as an organization.

5.1 The Church as a Dichotomous Organization

My findings reflected that Church X, as with all, is a dichotomous organization made up of spiritual and corporate components. There can be an overlap and interdependence of the two components, but generally speaking there exist issues that clearly relate to one or the other.

The spiritual component reflects the commitment to a set of teachings, which in the case of Church X is the Bible as a standard in all matters of conduct and authority. Other areas that, according to Participant A, made up the spiritual component, included exposition of scriptures, music, baptism, communion, prayer and fellowship. The spiritual aspect of the church is a vital and primary focus but alone does not provide an adequate picture of the total organization.

The corporate aspect of the church is no different than that of any other organization and deals with areas such as giving, management and accountability of assets, salaries, community programs, missions support, committees and personnel decisions.

From the spiritual aspect leadership transition requires prayer and a commitment to finding an individual who meets the biblical requirements of a leader. From the corporate side, although the pastor is the spiritual leader of the church, s/he is also an employee. Procedures such as background and reference checks are conducted to ensure a true picture of the individual is obtained. Additionally, issues such as salary, benefits, and in some cases, housing, must be negotiated and paid for. Because of the dichotomous nature of the church as an organization, a succession plan must take into account both the spiritual and the economic and more practical aspects of a leader transition.

Many elements of Church X's plan played an important role in maintaining its spiritual aspects during the transition. Vision guides and unites an organization. Efforts to maintain the church's vision were present in the way the outgoing pastor structured his departure, in the by-laws which required the hiring of an interim who could not compete for the position himself, and in requirements that the incoming pastor sign an agreement involving expectations for his tenure. Another aspect of spirituality involves how people get along with each other during a time of change or crisis. Church X had a plan that provided clear-cut roles for congregants and

committee members and which facilitated mutual involvement and communication involving the transition process. Because of the organizational readiness within this church, the transition of its leader did not at any point become a crisis situation that could divide the members.

The procedures in place that provided for the church as a corporate body during the transition period rested largely on providing for its spiritual continuity. Practical factors included maintaining attendance, giving, and the ability of the church to support its operating expenses, outreach and missions efforts. If the church failed in its ability to provide the expected levels of spiritual continuity during a leadership transition, a crisis in engagement could occur that disrupts attendance and giving. Such a crisis affects not only the congregants per se but also impacts all communities served by the church, and could even start a snowball of discontent that can upset other churches and an entire community of faith.

5.2 Lessons Learned: Best Practice in Leadership Transition

Research on leadership transition in churches is continuing to evolve. Prior studies have tended to focus on what makes a good leader. Charismatic Leadership Theory, Servant Leadership Theory, and similar theories focus upon leadership in general. However, this research examined the leadership transition process, focused on leader transition in a church context, employed the constructivist/interpretivist worldview, and utilized narratives of individuals involved to document a transition process.

Lessons were learned throughout the conduct of the study by all who were involved. Being a part of this study facilitated the research participants' thinking about their own church leader transition. Having the opportunity to talk helped them to think more deeply about the process in place at Church X. Co-construction of meaning took place as the researcher followed up with questions that spurred on the participants' meaning-making. During the interview process of

working through follow-up questions, three participants expressed the need to review existing transition requirements at Church X to ensure that these accurately reflected both the spiritual and corporate aspects of the church. This self-inquiry is unique to the constructivist/interpretivist worldview used, which allowed for self-discovery and served as a catalyst for potential change. The sections that following illuminate the lessons learned by the researcher in terms of best practices that emerged from Church X's leadership transition process.

5.2.1 Craft a plan for transition before a transition takes place. A church community should construct a written transition plan *before the need for such a plan arises*. When a plan is scabbled together in haste at the departure of a pastor, the spiritual and corporate needs of the church can compel members to make hasty and uninformed decisions. Schism in the congregation could occur even in the construction of the plan, when pressure exists to create one quickly. The big picture can get lost when a church must hurry to fill a critical leader role. By establishing a plan in advance of need, and enacting it when it is later needed, the organization allows itself time to find the right individual.

5.2.2 Continuity of plan for the spiritual and corporate life of the church. Congregations and pastors must be willing to accept the fact that transition is a natural part of church leadership. Praying to God to intervene and assisting in the selection process is often common transitions. However, congregations and leaders must have a plan in place for the prayers to be answered. Simply waiting until the need is not a practical approach considering the potential negative result of church failure. This is critical when considering the impact that a failed church can have upon communities and families. The dichotomous nature of the church requires both a spiritual and corporate approach to planning for leadership succession. Organizational readiness for a leader transition allows the church to sustain the financial and

attendance commitment of the congregation throughout the process, so that the neither spiritual nor the corporate aspects of the church are neglected. An effective transition plan states clearly what steps take place in the event of a pastoral vacancy. The plan dictates the how the committee is formed, and its responsibility to search for a new leader. It outlines procedures for the installation of an interim pastor, along with what is required of the interim. Finally, the church members must buy into the plan and the process for its implementation.

5.2.3 Create buy-in across members of the congregation. Planning is easy, compared to implementing the plan. The process of finding the right leader requires commitment and diligence by all involved. Reacting instead of acting can lead to detrimental results for both the church and the new leader. For example, a congregation willing to spend the time to fill out questionnaires with a ninety-five-percent participation rate speaks to the commitment of that church community, and an acceptance of responsibility on the congregants' part. The church cannot place the sole responsibility on the committee alone. Active involvement and participation across the members of the church holds the committee accountable to the planned transition process. To create buy-in, the church transition plan must provide active roles and voices for congregants. It must create the tools or documents needed to facilitate the involvement of the congregation and the fluid and regular exchange of information across the committee and congregation. Ideally, the congregation that is involved in writing the transition plan and regularly re-visiting it to keep it current with church needs, will be ready for active involvement when the time comes for a leader transition.

5.2.4 Maintaining vision throughout the transition process. Loss or interruption of the vision of the church damages its spiritual unity, which then can result in damage to its corporate health. Whenever possible, it is helpful when the outgoing leader can scaffold a hand-

off of leadership of the church vision to the next person to take the helm. The next person may be an interim, and in that case, selection of, and communication with the interim is critical. The transition plan at Church X, for example, provided for the communication of the church's expectations to both the interim, and the new pastor, that drilled down to the signing of a document by the selection committee chair and the new pastor which ensured clear understanding across both parties of the expectations of the church community.

5.2.5 Select an interim pastor to guide the church during the transition process. The use of an interim pastor is critical to de-fusing the powder keg of church leader selection. With the spiritual and corporate needs of the church in experienced hands, the selection committee and congregation can take the time needed to incorporate all voices, and provide fluid and ongoing communication, that keep all parties bought-in as the process unfolds. The church is safe in the hands of a seasoned leader while its needs for choosing a new one can be addressed richly and fully. The choice of the interim pastor is a significant factor in a successful transition. By selecting a qualified interim pastor to meet the spiritual obligations of the church, a committee and congregation is then able to focus its efforts on finding a new pastor. The ideal interim is one with pastoral experience that allows her/him to hit the ground running and begin ministering to the needs of the congregants immediately. A significant requirement of the interim is an agreement that s/he will neither seek nor be allowed to apply for the position of new pastor. With self-interest removed, the interim's role is to provide continuity to life of the church community until the new leader is in place.

5.2.6 Choose an experienced interim pastor who maintains the church vision. The interim must be committed to maintaining the vision of the organization along with meeting the spiritual needs of the congregants. An experienced interim will keep the momentum of the

church moving forward and guide the church during the transition process, which in some cases can take up to two years. Employment standards should be agreed upon prior to the hiring of the interim to avoid potential conflict later on. The interim is to keep the church progressing in the established vision, not to change it.

5.3 Relationship of Findings to Prior Research

Research on leadership transition in churches is still in its infancy with the significant body of scholarship taking place in the past decade. Although leadership transition has been treated in the literature as a feature of the overall health of a church, little scholarship exists relating to the process of leadership transitions in churches (Friedman & Old, 1995). TWeick and Quinn (1999) argue for a view of leadership transition as a process. This research builds on the current literature by presenting and developing theory in the areas of examining leader transition in churches as a process rather than an event, and highlighting the unique perspectives of differently positioned players. The findings of this study indicate that leadership transition is not an event but a process. Each participant referred to the fact that finding a new pastor was a process that unfolded over time as the committee worked through the requirements as outlined in the church by-laws.

Multiple researchers and theorists have argued for transition planning as a key feature in the life of an organization (Conger, 2004; Chand & Bronner, 2008; Caudron, 1999). The findings of the current study confirm the need for succession planning, but go a significant step further to suggest core elements of a successful church leader transition plan.

The vision of the church, and commitment to maintaining momentum during the process, is another area which the participants stated was significant to the effective transition at Church X. The ministries and commitment of the church to its members and the community do not stop

during the transition process, and a vision which is church oriented and not leader manufactured contributes to the overall health of the organization and allows it to move forward (Weese & Crabtree, 2004). Grusky (1960) argued that leader transition is a key factor in organizational health. Findings from this study confirmed this view: attendance and giving at Church X did not drop during their leader transition period, but remained healthy and vital to sustain the church in its work.

Church X is an example of an organization that has a set of practices that over the course of time have been successful. The church has gone through multiple transitions over the last twenty-five years and has navigated the transitions successfully. Weese and Crabtree (2004) state that churches lack a set of best practices for carrying out the selection of new leaders. The by-laws in place at Church X constructed a clear process by which the organization moved forward and maintained momentum while going through a deliberate documented approach to finding a new leader.

Grusky's (1960) research, going back to 1960, states that the absence of predecessor input introduces discontinuity into the organizational system, and from a transition viewpoint tends to result in an accelerated rate of change as well as an increased scope of change. He also argues that the very existence of the predecessor on the scene tends to act as a stabilizing influence in its effects on the successors' orientation toward change. From the perspective of my study, the stabilizing influence rested upon two things: the search committee, and the interim pastor. The committee provided the direction for the church as it sought a new leader and stabilized the church while maintaining momentum. The interim pastor kept the spiritual side of the church moving forward and stabilized the church. Weese and Crabtree (2004) reported that attendance for worship services fell around 15% when a pastor leaves, a fall that resulted in a

corresponding drop in giving. Church X reported that *attendance numbers remained stable, along with giving*. The study participants agreed that the committee keeping the congregants informed, and the interim pastor fulfilling the leader responsibilities, kept the church progressing.

The study viewed transitional leadership as a vital expression of overall organizational leadership, and examined the transition as a process, from beginning to end, rather than as a series of isolated, specific events. A holistic approach allowed for understandings of the transition process to emerge.

Finally, research, which is longitudinally focused, would be of benefit to churches contemplating a leadership change. Longitudinal studies which seek to explain potential relationships between the approaches and processes used by a church and the measurement of a successful transition. Most of the transition literature looks at the process and the outcome as a new pastor installed. Research, which addresses the spiritual and corporate aspects of the church and financial health of the church after three to five years after the transition, would be of benefit to many audiences.

5.4 Limitations

One challenge in conducting this study involved the researcher's possible preconceived notions regarding church leadership. As a leader and student of leadership, as well as a pastor himself, the researcher was absorbed in the literature at the same time as he was directly concerned about future leader transition in his own church setting. The researcher's location within the study held potential to be both an advantage and disadvantage. His background in pastoral leadership provided credibility to the participants and facilitated access to the individuals he wanted as participants. His leadership experiences and knowledge helped guide

the conversational interviews. To work toward authenticity he ensured that findings were grounded in informant narratives, included as much information as was feasible for others to examine for their own judgment, and maintained transparency of process in all parts of the study.

Another challenge was the risk of shallow or insincere responses on the part of interviewees because of impression management issues or concerns regarding confidentiality. The researcher conveyed to participants in advance and during the actual interviews that there were no right or wrong answers, and that information shared would be kept confidential. One limitation of the interview approach relates to trust issues. Will individuals open up and contribute authentic accounts of events, even when these involve sharing personal and sensitive information? Will leaders be open concerning conflicts with other individuals, or will they, out of impression-management or self-protection, give a more positive picture than what actually exists?

A third challenge involved the question of consistency in terms of recording the actual procedures used in the gathering of information. A research journal was carefully maintained which detailed each step of the research process.

Accuracy forms another concern for any researcher. Two different audio recording devices were utilized in case of the failure or poor recording quality of one of the units. Notes were taken during each interview and full field notes written immediately after each experience in the field.

Confidentiality issues can also present obstacles to the research process. In most cases, participants were not familiar with the researcher as a colleague, and it was possible that these individuals would be reluctant to be recorded. The appropriate IRB forms were utilized, and support and explanation were provided to participants regarding limits on accessibility to the

recordings by anyone other than the researcher. Consent forms were signed as a matter of good faith on the part of the researcher, and copies provided to participants. Interviewees had the option of not being recorded during the interview.

Hand-written interview field note jottings were verified against the electronic interview recordings and transcriptions to ensure accuracy. In the event that the participant did not want the interview to be audio-recorded, the researcher took deep notes as much as possible during the interview. To ensure accuracy these notes were reviewed immediately following the interview. The researcher also reserved the option of contacting the interviewee to check the accuracy of any notes taken.

Another concern was the ability of the researcher to carry out the interview process in a way that provided for open dialogue as well as follow-up to questions to responses. The researcher was experienced in interview methodology, not simply through projects completed during the course of his doctoral studies, but also professionally as a minister.

5.5 Implications for Practice

Although denominational practices may differ in some areas of worship and doctrine the fact remains that leadership transition is an important reality for any church. This study has the potential to benefit churches facing the challenges of leadership transition. The information that emerged from this study and lessons learned can aid in the planning process for leadership transition. Specifically, the process that this church had in place included incorporating the transition process into the by-laws of the church. This provided clear direction for the process. The plan, which was embedded into the by-laws covered explicit topics of the roles and function of the stakeholders. It makes clear how the committee was composed, the role of the selection committee, the role and responsibility of the committee to represent the congregation.

Further, this study illuminates key components that inform practice that include: having and plan in place prior to transition; gaining buy-in and agreements by the committee and the congregation; developing commitment from the outgoing pastor to participate in the transition process; selecting an interim pastor that will sustain the mission and vision of the church; and selecting an incoming pastor who embraces the existing vision and mission of the church.

5.6 Implications for Future Research

This research provided a significant amount of information relating to church leadership transition from a descriptive interpretive framework. Its findings highlight next steps for studies that look at leader transition. The idea of leader transition as a process was a powerful focus for the current study, and should form the focus for many studies to come. Studies of leader succession have typically been situated as events and outcomes. From the participants in the current study the researcher observed first-hand that leader succession clearly is a long process experienced differently by the different players.

The current study also brings to light the significance of the knowledge that can be gained from narratives of individuals who have been intimately involved in the process of leadership transition. The study allowed differently positioned players to describe what took place within their own transition process. The candor of the participants was remarkable and their enthusiasm for sharing their experiences was encouraging. The commitment of the participants was significant and the attitude among all those interviewed was that this study – their accounts within it -- would benefit other churches dealing with pastoral transition regardless of the size of the church. Future studies should continue to place the narratives of key individuals in the church leadership transition process front and center as major tools for uncovering and informing on significant aspects of the leader transition in this context.

The current study examined the transition process in a single Southern Baptist Church. Studies that examine the leadership transition approaches of other Southern Baptist Churches would benefit multiple audiences within the church. Denominational lines allow churches to identify themselves with beliefs they hold to be true, and sometimes stipulate aspects of leader transition that did not play a role in the current study.

In light of the findings of the current research, future study that is focused on role of interim pastors would be of particularly significant value. All participants in the current study stated that the interim pastor played a significant role in the success of their church leader transition. The responsibilities of the interim are unique, and research focused upon the interim would provide needed insight for churches undergoing or considering pastoral transition. For example, the current study did not look at the process that was involved in selection of an interim. That focus, alone, could form a study in and of itself.

Gender forms another area that would benefit from studies relating to leadership transition. When the church leadership changes from male to female a specific set of dynamics comes into play. The current study examined a male/male/male transition from outgoing to interim to new pastor; it cannot inform on the dynamics of gender. Today, more denominations now invite women to fill pastoral roles, however, a majority do not.

5.7 Final Thoughts

Prior to conducting this study the researcher's understanding of leadership transition in churches was mostly theoretical. He had read articles relating to churches that had undergone transitions, and was familiar with the biblical concepts of leadership transitions as documented primarily in the Old Testament accounts. This study allowed him to examine an aspect of church operations not seen by many individuals, through gaining access to the key people involved in

the transition process. This study solidified the notion *that leadership transition in churches is not something that can be taken for granted or allowed to unfold by chance*. The study's findings indicate that leading the church requires significant and deliberate preparation for a leadership transition. Additionally, leader transition is not an event, but an evolution of events and involves a multiplicity of factors that must be in place for an effective transition to occur. This study has created a sense of urgency in regards to the researcher's ministry efforts and has confirmed his commitment for creating a transition process for the future of his own church.

The challenge is to communicate the need to churches and leaders who are apprehensive about change. Congregations must come to grips with the practical implications of leader change. Among themselves they must create a mindset of organizational readiness and move forward with diligence to be ready to protect the future of their church. Leaders who are willing to see past their tenure and desirous of seeing the mission and work live beyond their own years in the leader role, will embrace the findings of this study.

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*Appendix A**Church Leader Transition Questionnaire*

The purpose of this document is to gain insight into what took place involving the leadership transition at your church. This document is for informational purposes and will become part of the research data obtained on your organization.

1. What association, if any, is your church part of?
2. Describe any assistance you received from the association.
3. Describe the time frame during which the leadership transition occurred.
4. Describe your role in the transition effort.
5. Were you part of a committee? If yes, can you describe the composition of the committee? Who were the individuals that made up the committee?
6. What position was replaced during this transition process? Senior Pastor/Executive Pastor, etc.?
7. How would you describe the transition process overall?

*Appendix B**Church Leader Transition Interview Guide*

1. When did the first conversations take place regarding transition? Can you describe those conversations? Who initiated those conversations?
2. When the first conversations take place did you have a specific transition time frame in mind? Was there a transition plan in place ten years ago?
3. What was your role in the transition process? Was it primarily your initiative that got the process started? If it was your initiative, what factors led to your decision that it was time for a transition to take place? If it was staff/board, what factors led to the decision to start a succession process?
4. Who led the process? The discussions? Was there a transition plan and then a person? Or did a person come to your attention and then the development of a plan? Describe how the communication process unfolded to staff/key volunteers/congregation regarding a succession plan and in time the selection of a new leader.
5. What would you regard as your key attributes/characteristics/skills/gifts? What might others around you say?
6. What were your most important contributions to the transition process?
7. What would your leaders say were your most important contributions to the church? To the transition process?
8. As you look back over your years at _____ (church) what are two or three defining events/time periods formative to the church/formative to your leadership.
9. What are your beliefs about leadership that shaped the profile of your successor?

10. What attributes/characteristics/skills did you believe were most essential for your successor to possess? What was going on at _____ that shaped the profile? (The antecedents).
11. What kind of leader did _____ need for the next season of life?
12. Who developed the profile of your successor? How did it get developed? As you got into the process did anything change in the profile? Why? How did you go about finding that successor? Any false starts? Individuals on staff or outside staff that you thought might be the person and then it became apparent that it wasn't going to be a good match?

Appendix C

General Research Questions

1. What is the Pastoral leadership transition process in Southern Baptist churches? Southern Baptist churches are part of the Southern Baptist Association. Being part of the association offers access to member churches to individuals seeking employment as pastor.
2. What factors influence the presence of a leadership transition plan or the lack of a plan?
3. If there is a plan, does the actual process differ from the process?

Supplemental questions

1. What were the circumstances surrounding the departure of the predecessor? The predecessor decided to retire from full time ministry. He had been at the church for 15 years. In deciding to retire and providing the church with 6 months' notice the church had the benefit of proactively searching for a successor without the pressure of needing to find one quickly.
2. What organizational knowledge or influence did/does the successor possess? The successor had seminary training, and pastoral experience. He had been a pastor for two years. The successor knew the nuances of the Southern Baptist Denomination, as well as the expectations a pastor within the Baptist denomination. The fact that the successor had pastoral experience was important to the church. However, the church wanted someone younger than 50 because they believed that in order to relate and grow the church with the younger generations some younger would be more beneficial.
3. Was the predecessor the founder of the church? No the predecessor was the not the founding pastor.

4. Was the predecessor long tenured? Yes the predecessor had 15 years with the church, which is considered lengthy due to the fact that the average tenure for a Southern Baptist Pastor is less than five years.
5. What was the speed of the leader's exit? The fact that the pastor was retiring allowed the church to proceed at a speed they were comfortable with in transitioning. With the exiting leader providing six months' notice of his departure it allowed the church to vote in an interim pastor and then focus upon finding the right leader for the organization.
6. Was the church able to gain access to the accumulated knowledge of the exiting leader? Yes the exiting leader had a leadership style that was open and he was willing to bring others along as he led. The church is a highly structured and functional organization with covenants and bylaws, which guide the leader but also allow the leader to fit his leadership style into the organization. It is not cookie cutter leadership from one individual to the next. The knowledge of the exiting leader was valued and utilized in the pastoral search.
7. Was the predecessor on the scene during the time of the new leader's take-over? No the predecessor left in May of 2011 and the new leader was not installed until June of 2012. This was not intentional according to the committee it just worked out that way.
8. If so, what was the effect, if any, on the new leader's orientation to change?
9. What was the rate and scope of organizational change under the new leader? The new leader began to cast his vision early in his tenure. With the five year planning document agreed to by the new leader he began to move the organization in the

direction of attaining the goals set out. The new leader has the flexibility to prioritize and approach the five-year plan in the fashion he deems best.

10. Was there any relationship between the rate and scope of change, and the church's ability to access predecessor input? Once the predecessor left the organization the church has not called upon or utilized him in any way. Although there is a familial relationship maintained the predecessor has not been involved in the transitional elements of the succession.
11. Did the organization experience discontinuity? According to the participants there was little discontinuity in the overall functioning of the church on a daily basis. The interim pastor provided the emotional and spiritual stability while the pulpit committee maintained the focus of finding a new leader. The participants did agree that although there was not any noticeable discontinuity there was a falloff in momentum of growth. This is attributed to new individuals wanting to see who the new leaders were before making a commitment to joining the church.
12. Were there major differences in predecessor and successor management style? There were no major theological issues however it remains to be seen if the youthful outreach of the new pastor will create a disconnect with the older group.
13. Were there any generational conflicts with existing leadership? The organization made it clear that a younger leader was desired. The predecessor was near retirement age and the successor was thirty years his junior. According to participants the successor will have to ensure he promotes inclusion of all ages and not appear to be concerned only with the younger groups.

14. Did the predecessor delay relinquishing control? No, once he turned in his resignation there was no turning back according to the predecessor.
15. Do my informants report-experiencing difficulties serving under the predecessor and/or successor? All but one of the participants indicated it was time for the predecessor to retire and move on but the church was willing to wait it out because of his time and dedication in the position. One of the participants said “it was time for a new leader” another said “we needed younger blood in leadership.”
16. Was there opposition to the new leader within the church leadership or congregation? Although the vote to call the successor was not 100%, the committee and the successor believed it was strong enough to indicate the support for the new leader was in place. Once the vote was announced there has not been any open opposition to the new leadership.
17. How did the new leader gain acceptance for her/his management style? According to the participants the new leader has worked to promote inclusiveness and reach out to current members in addition to those who have not been attending but have remained members of the church. The new leader has immersed himself in getting to know and minister to the needs of the church.
18. Were there issues involving who possessed, or lacked, key knowledge of the church organization, culture, relationships, policy and collective knowledge? What was lacking in the successor according to participants was being unfamiliar with the people and the interworking and interrelationships of individuals within the organization, which according to the majority of the participants is normal with any pastoral transition.

Appendix D
Pastor Survey

Dear Church Family,

We would like to have your input as we begin the search for a new pastor. Please fill out the attached survey and return it in the enclosed self-addressed envelope within the next ten days.

Prayerfully consider this survey and offer any comments you have. Your input is very important to us.

We also have the following request:

1. Pray without ceasing for the Pastor Search Committee as we seek God's man to lead our church.
2. Remember confidentiality is very important as we consider pastoral candidates. We cannot share candidate names or status until we are ready to present the candidate for congregational approval.
3. Please be patient as we are committed to finding the very best candidate for your approval.

We are grateful for your confidence in us and will diligently do our best to accomplish our role.

Sincerely,

Your Pastor Search Committee

Pastor Activities

Check One (1) as to Magnitude of Importance

	Very Important	Important	Fairly Important	Not Important
Administrative Ability	_____	_____	_____	_____
Associational Leadership	_____	_____	_____	_____
Bible Teacher	_____	_____	_____	_____
Church Org. Leadership	_____	_____	_____	_____
Community Involvement	_____	_____	_____	_____
Counseling Ability	_____	_____	_____	_____
Denominational Leadership	_____	_____	_____	_____
Evangelistic Ability	_____	_____	_____	_____
Family Ministry	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mission Oriented	_____	_____	_____	_____
Motivational Abilities	_____	_____	_____	_____
Musical Skills	_____	_____	_____	_____
Visitation	_____	_____	_____	_____
Preaching Ability	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sociable	_____	_____	_____	_____

Check Your Favorite Type of Sermon and Favorite Type of Worship Service

Type of Sermons

 Contemporary Issues Evangelistic "How To" "In Depth" "Issues Oriented"

Type of Service

 Blended (Traditional/Contemporary) Contemporary Traditional

Check Age Preference for Pastor

 30-40 40-50 45-55 55-Up Does Not
MatterComments: _____

Appendix E

Interim Pastor Requirements

Pastoral Duties

Sunday Morning and Evening Worship
 Wednesday Prayer Service
 Seasonal Services (Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas)
 Funeral Services
 Weddings
 Visit members who are homebound and in nursing homes
 Be available to counsel church members
 Work with deacon board in planning Homecoming and Revivals
 Meet with deacon board
 When requested be with committees and provide counsel
 Be available to consult with church staff
 Administrative Duties

General Office Hours – 3 Days per week (visitation to members will be done during these hours except for emergencies).

Work with Church Secretary in preparing weekly newsletter and bulletin.

The most important duties of the Interim Pastor are to encourage the congregation and its pastor search committee in their effort to find and call the minister of God's choosing and to seek to prepare the church to receive him well. He should impress upon the church that it is the role of the future pastor to be the shepherd and visionary leader of the church.

The tenure of the Interim Pastor will end when a new pastor is called and scheduled to begin his ministry.

Salary - \$2,300 per month plus mileage reimbursement at the IRS mileage rate
 Vacation - 2 weeks per year

*Appendix F**5-Year Goals for Our Church and the New Pastor*

To have a God loving pastor and good preacher.

Christian Pastor steeped in Biblical truths/knowledge with at least a Divinity Degree, Master's Degree or better. Christian by definition is one who possesses integrity confidentiality, humbleness, and servant minded. A pastor who will help lead us into being a central location for people in the county to turn to in times of great joy and trouble. A Christian Pastor between 29-50 years of age who feels God's calling to come to _____ Church to help us grow. A

Christian Pastor who loves and appreciates our country, church people and who can love us.

Update church membership roll making necessary deletions. We have many members listed on our membership roll that never come. I know we have visited and tried other ways to get these members in church. There are also members that may be members of other churches or who may have died.

Nurture our membership both active and inactive by providing programs and activities that will encourage and enhance Christian growth and spirituality.

Organized visitation programs for prospects. Increase church membership; focus on youth and young adult ministry.

Increase Sunday school attendance.

Deacon Ministry program training and placed in effect. Have the new pastor lead a class for deacons.

Emphasis on missions at home and abroad; missions organizations for children and youth (G. A. and R. A.).

Full-time youth minister to help our youth grow in their Christian service and help encourage other youth to be involved. Focus on youth and children's ministry. Fully staff our leadership positions with the addition of personnel who are integral to growth and maintenance of our church goals.

Expand our facilities to include a larger fellowship area, kitchen and remodeled sanctuary. If this is to happen more money will be needed. Tithing needs to be encouraged.

*Appendix G**Prospective Pastor Rating Sheet*

Resume Name: _____

_____ Very Interested

_____ Interested

_____ Slightly Interested

_____ Not Interested

Positives: _____

Negatives: _____

*Appendix H**Prospective Minister Questionnaire*

Part One: Personal History

Date: _____

1. Name: _____
2. Address: _____

3. Phone: _____
4. Email: _____
5. Date of Birth: _____ Age _____ Sex _____
6. Married _____ Single _____ Divorced _____ Remarried _____
7. What causes you stress and how do you tend to deal with it?
8. Why did you choose the institutions you did for your theological education?
9. Share (briefly) your testimony of how you became a Christian.

Part Two: Vocational History

10. Please list, starting with the earliest and proceeding to the present your post high-school non-church related employment experiences.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Employer</u>	<u>Type of Work</u>
11. Briefly detail your reason for searching for a new position at the present time.
12. Have you ever been terminated by an employer or church?
13. Describe (briefly) your call to ministry?

14. How have your hope regarding ministry been fulfilled and/or frustrated?
15. What difficulties have you encountered in your ministry?
16. Who have been your role models in ministry? What characteristics do you admire in them?
17. From your prospective of role as pastor, please rank the following in order of importance to you?

Part Three: Relational History

18. Explain your view of the pastor's role in working with church committees. Teams. Church council, and deacons. Your philosophy of pastoral leadership.
19. In what ways do you cooperate with the association in which you currently serve?
20. Which Baptist Faith and Message statement would you most align yourself with and why?
21. Describe your ideal first year on a new church field.
22. What do you feel to be the role for women in the church (i.e. Teaching, etc.)?
23. What is your position concerning deacons with divorce in their background?

*Appendix I**Questions for Final Candidate***Ministry Experience**

1. Describe your strengths and the gifts you sense god has given you for ministry. Describe your weaknesses.
2. Outside of normal vacation time. How many weeks per year do you like to be away from church doing ministry (revivals, conferences, etc. and study)?
3. For what three things will you be remembered where you now serve?
4. What three things do you enjoy most about being a minister? What three things do you enjoy least about being a minister?

Philosophy of Ministry

5. What attracts you to _____ church? How long would you like to stay at this church?
6. Describe your leadership style. To what extent are you self-directed in your ministry?

Worship Leader

7. Describe a typical worship service for which you plan to lead. Do you have a preferred order of service?
8. How do you balance worship so it addresses the needs of all difference age groups?
9. What special services do you like to conduct throughout the year?
10. What traditions of ministry would you introduce throughout the year?
11. Describe the style of music you prefer and share its role in the service.

Pastoral Care and Counseling

12. Recently, sexual misconduct and Internet pornography within the church has become a more visible issue. What safe guards have you initiated to protect yourself and the church from such misconduct?
13. How do you view your role in visiting members and church visitors?
14. Do you have any restrictions on the performance of marriages?
15. What is your counseling philosophy?
16. Give us an example of a typical work of pastoral care activities.

Missions and Evangelism

17. Do you view some activities or services being more focused on evangelism than others?
Which ones?
18. Some people believe a church can become too big. Others feel that every church should become as large as possible. What's your view?
19. What is your heart with regards to missions?
20. What is your opinion of WMU? Baptist Men?

Staff Relationships:

21. What accountability would be expected among staff members?
22. How comfortable are you in providing direction to staff members?
23. How would you respond to other staff members who in your opinion are doing a poor job?
24. When it comes to support staff, what is your policy with regards to church membership?
25. How do you relate to committees in your church?

Education

26. What are your intentions as far as continuing your education?

Congregational Life

27. Describe your operational strategy during the first six months at a church? How do you set goals, prioritize plans, define and evaluate success?

28. How have you approached the issues of finance and stewardship with your present congregation?

Preaching

29. How do you select sermon topics? Would you consider yourself a topical or exegetical preacher? From what version of the Bible do you preach?

Christian Education

30. What is your role in Christian education?

31. What Bible study curriculum do you currently use for the different age groups within your church? How do you determine which to use?

32. What educational programs, other than Sunday School, do you emphasize?

Administration

33. In what capacity do you work with committees, deacons, or church leadership and what role will they play in overall church decisions like personnel, vision, finances and outreach?

Family Life

34. What things would you like the church to do to provide support to your family?

35. How does your wife and children feel about being part of a minister's family?

Personal

36. What motivates you as a pastor?
37. How do you cope with stress?
38. What spiritual disciplines guide your faith?
39. Have you ever had a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it? What was learned?

Theological Questions

1. Describe the importance of scripture.
2. What are your views on baptism by water?
3. What is the purpose of the Lord's Supper? Do you believe it should be open or closed? How often should it be practiced?
4. What is the relationship of the Old Testament to the new Testament
5. How would you explain the Trinity?
6. What is your view of end-time issues?
7. Do you believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin? What is the significance of your belief?
8. What is your interpretation of the biblical teaching on hell?
9. What does the Bible teach concerning spiritual gifts? Please delineate your views about prophecy and speaking in tongues?
10. What is your view of divorce and remarriage? How strictly will you follow this view in practice?

11. Many children who appear to be converted at an early age show no evidence of knowing Christ later. How do you handle children when they come to you for counsel concerning conversion?
12. What is your advice to parents?
13. What are your views regarding raising money for various projects within the church?
14. What are your convictions about the local church and debt?
15. What does the Bible teach about how churches should make decisions?
16. How should a pastor and his church relate to other churches locally and to the larger Southern Baptist body? Do you feel comfortable cooperating with other denominations? Do you draw and lines?
17. Describe several ethical principles that guide your work.
18. Do you believe there should still be revival meetings? How often?

Questions About Our Church

1. What do you see that you like about _____ church?
2. Are there any concerns about which we have not asked which might be of a sensitive nature for you or our church?
3. Do you have questions about his pastoral position that have not been answered?

*Appendix J**Covenant for Ministry Agreement***The Pastors Responsibility to the Church**

1. To proclaim the gospel with the goal of reaching persons for Christ and fostering academic, emotional, social, and spiritual growth.
2. To love and affirm persons and families within the fellowship without bias or prejudice.
3. To provide counseling to members and nonmembers, making referrals when appropriate, and keep confidential such communications.
4. To serve as administrator of church programs and ministries by facilitating communications and recommending appropriate ministries/programs to the appropriate persons. To comply with the church Constitution and By-Laws in making decisions.
5. To work with committees, organizations, and boards in the development and implementation of programs of ministry and mission. Chairpersons of committees, organizations, and boards are to have the responsibility of their offices with the counsel of the pastor as desired or needed. All committees, organizations, and boards are ultimately responsible to the church from which their authority is derived and responsibilities are defined.
6. To be ex officio member of all committees including the personnel committee and the deacon board. The pastor shall, as a member of said committees, offer expertise and advice but shall not be entitled to vote.

7. To give primary oversight and direct the church office, supervising other paid church staff, overseeing that the church calendar is maintained, preparing a weekly article for the church newsletter, representing the church to visitors and other persons who might come in contact with the church, advising other church members of information they need to carry out their duties as church offices, and serving in other reasonable activities relative to the church office.
8. To establish and announce the pastor's church office hours. Generally seek to maintain those office hours for the benefit of all church members and the related business of the church; in times of absence, the church secretary should be informed as to how that contact the pastor.
9. To visit the sick, the elderly, and the bereaved and to maintain contact with the membership as a whole.
10. To be an encourager to persons, programs, and ministries of the church family.
11. To be actively involved in the local community and supportive of the local Baptist association, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the denomination in its work and ministries.

The Church's Responsibility to the Pastor

1. To show sensitivity to the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of the pastor and his family.
2. To pray for the pastor's ministry, affirm efforts, and work with the pastor toward the end of accomplishing God's will in the church and the community.

3. To allow the pastor full responsibility for the preaching program of the church with the privilege of call on others for participation.
4. To allow the pastor full responsibility for the administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper as shared in the fellowship and to receive new members and assist in their orientation.
5. To support the pastor in the church's preaching ministry and to cooperate with the pastor by suggesting programs and providing groups such as the deacons, to act as ministry providers.
6. To acknowledge that we are all imperfect human beings seeking to server a perfect Lord.
7. To be willing to inform the pastor of misunderstandings so that wrongs my be righted.

Working Guidelines

1. A call to serve as pastor will also include a signed covenant agreement that has been furnished to every church member and signed by the deacon chairman.
2. The church shall be responsible for insurance on contents of the pastor's study at the church and malpractice insurance as appropriate.
3. The church will provide the pastor with appropriate technological resources to facilitate his ministry.
4. The pastor selection committee will meet with the pastor quarterly for evaluation and feedback during the first year of service.
5. This covenant agreement shall be reviewed annually with the church personnel committee and renegotiated as necessary. The pastor and congregation must concur on any changes.

Employment Guidelines

1. The pastor is directly responsible to the congregation in the performance of ministry. The pastor shall meet annually with the personnel committee of the church for review and evaluation of ministry. The pastor, with the deacons, oversee the pastoral care and nurture of the church members and provide for a continuing, diversified program of ministries among the members.
2. The pastor is asked as a courtesy to always assure that a church leader or the secretary can reach the pastor in case of an emergency.
3. The pastor is expected to give the church forty hours of his time during the week and to be on call for emergencies 24 hours per day seven days a week.

If the pastor is to be away for more than twenty-four hours, church leaders should be told how to reach the pastor, or the pastor should provide a plan for qualified person to serve during absence.