

**THE (UN) SUCCESSFUL PASTOR: AN INVESTIGATION OF PASTORAL
LEADERSHIP SELECTION WITHIN CHURCHES IN ONTARIO**

by

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THESIS SUMMARY

This thesis contends that the pastoral role is significant to the effective functioning and well-being of the church. Therefore, the initial selection of a pastor is a vital component and contributes to those desirable outcomes. The question being considered within this thesis is:

What are the factors within a church hiring process which may play a role in successful or unsuccessful pastoral ministry? As there are many variables even within this process, the scope of this thesis is limited to the identification and selection of pastoral leadership from the perspective of the pastoral participants. This perspective is drawn from one denominational association in Ontario —the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists (FEB hereafter) within the Central region of Canada.

In examining this question, an empirical, mixed-methodology is used. The triangulation of a literature review, surveys, personal interviews and a biblical, theological treatment allowed for the most comprehensive perspective and treatment of the research question (Leedy, 2010, p. 99). There is a significant amount of inductive reasoning included, based upon personal interactions within cultural contexts and experiences. This is due to the inadequacy or lack of current theories and available literature relative to the question being studied. This motivates me towards the inclusion of a grounded theory methodology as a component of this study (Leedy, 2010, p. 142).

Hiring the right pastor is a challenge at the best of times. As the church struggles to respond to a rapidly changing and diverse culture it presents greater challenges. Rates of pastoral turnover are high and the general duration of pastoral ministry is low. This, in turn, impacts ministry effectiveness. This study of hiring practices and pastoral experiences begins to identify elements as to why some pastors are successful and others are not. It allows for the reflection and consideration of whether the church is, what I have termed, “Equipping the Called, or Calling the Equipped”.

There is cause for hope, as there always is within God's church. This thesis identifies concerns, as well as some positive practices and experiences that can be helpful to inform practice and potential change. As Osmer acknowledges, "observing good practice in other congregations is a powerful source of normative guidance" (Osmer, 2008, p. 152).

Key Terms.

Pastoral leadership; pastoral ministry; fit for ministry; effectiveness; fruitfulness (or success in pastoral leadership and an indication of how it is measured); unsuccessful pastoral leadership; unity; calling; and pastoral calling

Declaration

Student number: 4635-238- 4

I declare that THE (UN) SUCCESSFUL PASTOR: AN INVESTIGATION OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP SELECTION WITHIN CHURCHES IN ONTARIO is my own, original work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



June 5, 2015

SIGNATURE

DATE

(Mr. Chris R. Bonis)

Acknowledgements

This research project relates directly to the experience of pastors within the Evangelical Church in Canada, specifically in the area of pastoral leadership selection, and looks at one Evangelical denomination active in the Ontario region of Canada namely the “Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists” — Central region (FEB Central). Particular acknowledgement and thanks to the Regional Director of FEB Central — Bob Flemming, for his support of this research and facilitating my initial communication with the FEB pastors of this region. Thank you too, to the pastors from the FEB Central region that were willing to participate in this investigative research and the associated interviews. Other anecdotal information was gathered through conversations with pastors with whom I have had contact over the past few years. While they were not serving with the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists and did not participate in a formal interview process, it was these initial conversations which stirred within me a desire to explore this aspect of pastoral leadership. They planted a seed of the thought that something in this area might produce a meaningful study and be of benefit to current and future pastors and the Church.

Special thanks to Drs. Stan Fowler, Gordon Oeste, William Webb, Kelvin Mutter and David Barker, who have served as mentors, educators, inspiration and sounding boards for ideas and thoughts in my educational journey thus far. Thank you too, to Professor Jacques Theron, who assisted me greatly and helped give shape to my thinking as I began to embark on my studies at UNISA and to Professor Gordon Dames who assisted me in the completion of this thesis and helped shape the final outcome.

Thank you to my children, Jared and Kara who encourage me to question and examine more closely the things that I perceived within the church. Finally, thank you to my wife, Philomena, who has provided countless hours of support and encouragement through what has been a lengthy process.

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Chapter 1: Selecting Pastors for Success

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. (Titus 1:5-9)

1.1 Introduction

This first chapter identifies the necessary background and the impetus for this study. It highlights the problem and aims of the study; identifies the reality of challenging times in pastoral leadership and the methodology of the study. The key terms utilized within this study are also defined within this chapter.

The following observation highlights a problem within pastoral ministry today and is a central consideration of this study. "Some men should not have been ministers initially. Neither they nor their counselors (sometimes local churches which licensed and ordained them) could have known this in advance" (Bomberger, 1967, p. 4).

Right at the outset, we may each know of someone whom, we might say, probably should not have been a minister, or perhaps, should not have been hired to pastor a particular church. Bomberger's quote may resonate with us and our response might be to agree and say, "We could not have known that in advance" as we reflect on one pastor or another who may have resigned unexpectedly or had been dismissed from their role at a church. We are, perhaps, very familiar with the passages of scripture that give definition to the qualities of an *elder*, or *overseer*

(πρεσβυτέρους and ἐπίσκοπον)¹ and the priority for having such leadership recognized and appointed within the church to function in a specific capacity for the church. With all of the books available on pastoral leadership and of the studies completed there are a lot of resources (and many very good ones) on developing leadership skills, building a church, evangelism, discipleship and successful small-group ministries.² There is very little material however, dedicated to the process of recognition, identification and appointment of qualified people to serve in a pastoral leadership capacity within the church. Much time and effort has been expended to identify how we might do church “better”, or how we might more effectively mobilize the volunteers within a church.

Very little research and study has apparently been done with regard to the hiring process of full time, human resources (pastors specifically) identified and “called” to lead in a church context, and the impact of that process upon their success. One of the challenges that Reimer identifies within the Canadian context related to the health of ministers in light of a growing need to retain ministers and attract new ones, is that “fewer studies have focused on evangelical denominations, and one is hard-pressed to find published Canadian data for any of these groups” (Reimer, 2010, p. 1) , Any data, but specifically Canadian data, is difficult to find and it is therefore even more difficult to draw conclusions (general or otherwise) about the concerns within pastoral leadership until such data is available . This makes the acquired data very unique within the context of Canadian evangelicalism and thereby also necessitates the need to draw more heavily upon personal experience within this study.

¹ Titus 1:5, 7 --- depending upon which translation is used, various leadership names may appear, but each is a descriptive name for the role expressed. πρεσβυτέρους an adjective pronoun, whose form occurs seven times within the New Testament, while ἐπίσκοπον is a noun, whose form occurs three times in the New Testament.(From a search on form within BibleWorks software – software for Biblical Exegesis and Research).

² Books like: *Making Small Groups Work* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, Zondervan, 2003; *Building a Church of Small Groups* by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson of the Willow Creek Association, Zondervan, 2001; *Transforming Leadership* by Leighton Ford, Intervarsity Press, 1991; *Spiritual Leadership* by Henry and Richard Blackaby, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001; *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren, Zondervan, 1995; *The Complete Book of Discipleship* by Bill Hull, Navpress, 2006; *Lifestyle Discipleship* by Jim Peterson, Christian Business Men’s Committee, 1993; *Evangelism Outside the Box* by Rick Richardson, InterVarsity Press, 2000.

This thesis provides a unique and timely look at the church in Canada. It should begin to fill a significant gap and encourage future attention and effort in addressing this vital human resource aspect of church ministry.

1.2 Background and contextual factors

Within my brief time as a pastor (16 years), I have met with more than eight pastors who have resigned; several who were dismissed by their congregation; and at least four more who have resigned from “fruitful ministry” and left any form of pastoral ministry in favour of secular work. I have been aware of four church splits and dozens of people and church leaders, who, while still maintaining a personal faith have grown cynical and tired of the church and what they perceive as the politics within church leadership. Over the course of six years in one particular church, three pastors resigned due to a variety of factors, the most common one being related to a founding pastors’ continued influence within the church and his inability to recognize or share leadership based upon different gifting, styles and ministry focus. This same church eventually hired another pastor, with an eye towards the founding pastor retiring, but within three years he too was dismissed and the founding pastor is once again overseeing the church and fulfilling the majority of the preaching and leadership role. I am also aware of more than four instances that when a Senior Pastor resigned it was expected that other pastoral staff would also tender their resignations, since they were considered “his” hired ministry staff, even if they had only been serving for a short time (in one instance, less than one year). In the brief time since I began this study, two of the interview participants have ceased to be pastors at the churches where I interviewed them. I have been made aware of at least two other instances where Senior Pastors have resigned or been dismissed and the remaining pastoral staff have also been expected to tender their resignations also.

Concurrently with these pastoral ministry turnovers there has been a general sense and an expressed concern that we are suffering from a shortage of qualified pastors to serve within local churches. The prevailing expectation is that this shortage may only get worse in the future. Holm acknowledges that within his denomination (North American Mennonite Brethren), even with active involvement by churches and their seminary, there are not enough pastoral leaders presently nor anticipated to meet future needs (Holm, 2003, p. 203). There is a perception in

many circles that pastoral ministry in any given church is a short-term commitment and a pastor can expect to serve multiple churches within the span of his (or her) ministry. Through some recent surveys (specifically, *EFC Biblical Leadership Survey, 2005*; *Schonwetter: Canadian MB Conference Pastor Study, 2006*; *Weise: The Samuel Project, 1999*; and *The Samuel II Project, 2000*), several issues and concerns have been raised with regard to what is missing in Christian leadership today from a variety of Christian contexts. Questions are being raised and there is a general concern expressed that the evangelical church in Canada is in decline. There is a perception that the numbers of churches that are stagnating or are in decline outweigh those who may be experiencing salvific growth. From my attendance at various denominational conferences, observing church advertisements seeking to hire pastors, conversations with a variety of church leaders and from my work and interactions at a theological seminary in Ontario, there is a perception that there is a lack of pastoral candidates to fill vacant positions within churches. Yet many pastors have resumes posted on online jobsites.

While there seems to be a relatively high degree of turnover in pastoral ministry within churches, there are also reports of frustration, discouragement and stress within these roles. Within one region of Canada (although this may not be exclusive to this particular region) an individual associated with a multi-denominational, ministerial fellowship indicated that they had 10 pastors away on stress leave over the past 24 months. The life cycle of a pastor within any given church is often much less than might be expected. It is not often a planned succession, but rather a sudden change and upheaval. With this short life cycle the inevitable change and turmoil that occurs can seriously hinder any effective witness and ministry of the church within their community.

There have been an increasing number of concerns expressed by church leaders and writers regarding the effectiveness of the church and the availability of quantity and quality pastoral candidates for now and the future in Canada. Several examples exist of high pastoral turnover, unsuccessful ministries and pastoral burnout. There are also the challenges of two diverse church paradigms struggling to address needs and be relevant in a constantly changing cultural context. These differing paradigms are characterized by what Alan Roxburgh identifies as *Liminals* and *Emergents* (Roxburgh, 2005, pp. 20-21, 34-36).

Questions and issues surrounding why a pastor may not last, would resign or is dismissed would more than fill the pages of this thesis. There are, admittedly, responsibilities on the part of the congregation and the various boards (depending upon the denomination and their overall structures). Many factors are involved when one considers a church's well-being and pastoral leadership – too many to be addressed within the scope of one thesis. It seems prudent therefore to select one to focus on. I have therefore selected to consider the start of a pastor's journey towards ministry within the context of a church. This thesis examines the actual process by which pastors are selected, hired or "called" to serve within a church and the implications of that process for ministry success.

When a pastor is deemed to be successful in ministry, few questions are asked and people are typically content and satisfied. When a pastor is unsuccessful, possibly resigning or being dismissed, the church, her board and often neighbours and other churches within a community can clearly identify that there was a problem. The two premises that I am working from are:

- 1) the pastoral role is significant, even critical, to the functioning and well-being of the church, and therefore,
- 2) the process of the selecting pastoral leadership, as a starting point, is a significant and important element to the success of a pastor, and therefore too, of the church.

When churches select poorly, God is still able to overcome the challenges that may be produced, but the issues that arise as a result of a poor leadership selection may negatively affect the success of pastors and the health of the churches they are called to serve.

1.3 Investigating the Pastoral Leadership Selection Process

The main assumption or hypothesis upon which this study is based, is that the initial hiring process for a pastor will impact and influence their success within the church setting they are hired to. There may be some elements within this process which are common to successful or unsuccessful pastoral outcomes, and these elements may be indicators of the potential outcomes which are ultimately experienced. This hypothesis was arrived at through initial observations of

pastoral ministry, a literature review and the support of the quantitative data obtained through a survey as an inductive process was employed to focus the topic of this study.

Within the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's 2005 survey on biblical leadership, it was noted by one respondent that "the pendulum in Christian leadership development began to swing a few years ago from more purely theological education to equipping Christian leaders with the technical aspects of leadership. In the process, the personal passion for leading as Jesus led under the authority of God and through an intimate relationship with God has diminished and needs to be restored" (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2005, p. 4). Peter Raedts, in his opening address to the British-Dutch colloquium, mused that clergy misconduct and a crisis of confidence in the church may be an indication of "what happens to a Christian community that has lost a clear view of the functions of the ministry, and hence, neglects to set standards for recruitment and training in line with the times" (Raedts, 2002, p. 9).

All of this leads me to consider that we are indeed facing a crisis of leadership within the evangelical church in Canada, today and for the future. What is wrong within our evangelical churches today that causes there to be struggles and turnover in pastoral leadership and does it start with the selection and hiring process? Is there any correlation between or factors within the process of a pastor's initial hiring and their "success" within ministry? To examine the church board, hiring committee or conditions after a pastor resigns or is dismissed, (perhaps being "unsuccessful"), would primarily be a reflection and possible speculation looking backwards. This does not necessarily obtain a perspective from primary participant - the pastor who resigned or was dismissed.

This leads to the question under investigation: What are the factors within a church hiring process which may play a role in successful or unsuccessful pastoral ministry? Are there any common elements or similarities in the processes and experiences of pastors to be discovered which might be factors of the potential success or failure of a pastor in a given church? If such factors exist and might be encapsulated into a clearer understanding, then perhaps we might begin to reduce the potential for pastors to be unsuccessful within their ministry context through

informed change to such processes. This is why the focus of this study is upon the initial identification, selection and hiring process of the pastoral candidate.

The purpose of this study is to consider pastoral leadership selection within one denomination in Ontario and to look for common factors which might be indicators of the potential success or failure of a pastor in a given church.

1.4 Problem Being Considered in This Study

The previous discussion leads us to the problem being considered within this study: **What are the factors within a church hiring process which may play a role in successful or unsuccessful pastoral ministry?**

How pastors are recognized, identified and appointed, and then released to lead the church may be positively or negatively influenced at the very outset of their ministry. When pastors are deemed to be “successful”, seldom are questions asked to consider why. Even with such a condition, what is it to be “successful”? Does any apparent success negate the need to ask questions or to learn from their “success”? How do we assign objective measurements or assess the reason(s) behind such positive outcomes? When pastors are not “successful” they are directed towards a myriad of courses and books, curriculum or online resources (sermons maybe?), given “pep” talks and offered “mentoring” or perhaps (and sometimes more often) they are dismissed and replaced. There are very few resources dedicated to aiding a church board or hiring committee as to how they might select and approve a pastoral candidate. When a pastor collapses under the weight of ministry, resigns, or is dismissed, any resulting observations by a board or church council often point to a flaw in the leadership model or with the pastor that was hired. There is seldom an acknowledgement that the board or hiring process may have somehow been a contributing factor. If such an acknowledgement does occur, it often is too late to restore the pastor and their ministry within that church, so they move on. What can we learn from these types of situations? Why is there such an apparent turnover within pastoral ministry and can it be anticipated and minimized early on? Ultimately, is there any correlation between the initial process of the pastor’s selection and their “success” within ministry? Are there factors within the

hiring process of pastors which play a role in their successful (or unsuccessful) ministry outcomes — this is the key question that will be considered within this study.

1.5 Aims of the Study

While considering the landscape of Canadian Evangelical churches, it appears that something is not as it should be. **The aim of this study is to investigate the identification, selection and hiring process of pastoral leadership more closely to determine if there is any apparent correlation between the process and the “success” of a pastor within ministry.** I will also consider **the implications of elements of the selection process for successful ministry outcomes for pastors and the churches they serve.** I will then use the observations to present an understanding that may warrant further investigation into the selection process for pastoral leadership. Perhaps we might know better, in advance, whom God is calling to be ministers within specific churches and thereby anticipate greater success and growth for the pastor, and the church in Canada.

1.6 Importance of this Study

This is a Practical Theological study within the context of pastoral leadership that specifically engages the biblical text with the life and experience of the pastor. There are many variables that influence the hiring process of a pastor. This study assumes that the congregation and her leadership, prior to commencing a pastoral hiring process have completed an evaluation and theological review of their practice and needs. The determination of success within this study is limited to the experiences of pastors. In part, this is reflected in their ministry within churches and the transitions and changes they experience. Pastors remain fairly consistent within the church model and its hiring process, while the persons serving on church boards and councils serve for a limited time. The central figure, and the one best able to share context and experiences, especially within multiple church settings, would be the pastor. This in part, is why I have not chosen to study persons other than pastors. Within the framing of the research question, the emphasis is upon those elements and factors from a pastoral perspective of the experience. I contend that this is a limitation to this study that requires greater attention in future research.

As Osmer points to Gerkin's "new model of pastoral leadership" (Osmer, 2008, p. 18), some of the significant social trends have influenced leadership within the church, with the greatest impact being felt by, and influencing the role of, pastors. This and Osmer's emphasis upon *attending* (Osmer, 2008, pp. 37-41) identifies the priority for entering into the real circumstances and experiences of those circumstances being studied. Context is therefore critical (Neuman, 2000, pp. 146-147).

Thus, the importance of this thesis is grounded in the real experience of pastors having undergone the process of pastoral selection by a church, and in the biblical texts that give direction to and inform such practice. Osmer highlights the importance of direct access to the setting being observed (Osmer, 2008, pp. 60-62). The pastors who participated in this study were directly involved in the interview process, so it is through their observations and experiences expressed through the survey and interviews that provided much of the data. Lartey, in his presentation of his own "pastoral cycle" model for theological reflection, affirms that the process begins with some form of concrete experience and moves through four stages, including theological analysis and Christian thought (Lartey, 2000, pp. 131-133). The experience of the pastors in this study forms the starting point and a vital component to the theological reflection and evaluation of the question being considered.

The anticipated outcome of this thesis will be to contribute to an improved process for pastoral selection and thereby avoid (or at least, reduce) some of the turnover that appears to be prevalent in many churches today. Ultimately, this should lead to increased success within pastoral ministry and to the health and vitality of the church. Very little research has been done within the area of the pastoral selection process and the success of pastoral ministry (and even less in Canada). One of the challenges that Reimer identifies within the Canadian context related to the health of ministers in light of a growing need to retain ministers and attract new ones, is that "fewer studies have focused on evangelical denominations, and one is hard-pressed to find published Canadian data for any of these groups" (Reimer, 2010, p. 1). Any data, but specifically Canadian data, is difficult to find and it is therefore even more difficult to draw conclusions (general or otherwise) about the concerns within pastoral leadership until such data is available.

This work should begin to fill a significant gap and encourage future attention and effort in addressing this vital human resource aspect of church ministry.

1.7 The Methodology of the Study

The fact that I am a pastor (but not within FEB), a former church board member and a participant in God's church allowed me to more easily engage with the perspectives of both the pastor and the church. This also allowed for me to maintain an academic impartiality and practical partiality through this study, while engendering trust with the study participants. Typically, Nipkow notes, this neutrality is not common and requires particular competencies to overcome (Nipkow, 1999, p. 352). My present role and position was ideally suited to engage in this particular study.

One of the challenges that Reimer identifies within the Canadian context related to the health of ministers in light of a growing need to retain ministers and attract new ones, is that "fewer studies have focused on evangelical denominations, and one is hard-pressed to find published Canadian data for any of these groups" (Reimer, 2010, p. 1). As referred to above, any data, but specifically Canadian data, is difficult to find and it is therefore even more difficult to draw conclusions (general or otherwise) about the concerns within pastoral leadership selection until such data is available. This lack of data and literature requires that I utilize personal experience and the finding of this study to begin to ground future discussions. This is one of the reasons why this study is particularly relevant and timely as it represents a fresh and very unique look at a crucial element of the church in Canada. Several books and papers were consulted that were used to ground this study. Osmer (2008), Browning (1983), Heitink (1999), Fowler (1983) and Nipkow (1999) were particularly informative and helpful in giving shape to the thoughts and methodology used.

As Osmer stated "practical theological interpretation, thus, is deeply contextual. It thinks in terms of interconnections, relationships and systems" (Osmer, 2008, p. 17). This study strives to look at those contextual elements within the pastoral hiring process from a variety of perspectives in order to gain the greatest insight into the question being examined. This motivates me towards the use of a "mixed method" (Osmer, 2008, p. 50), or "blended" (Leedy, 2010, p. 97) design in the methodology of this study. This blended methodology allowed for the

clarification and focus of the research question and subsequent collection and analysis of data. Neuman refers to this as a “triangulation of method” (Neuman, 2000, p. 125), where the complementary strengths of each methodology may be utilized within a study. This will produce a study that “is both fuller and more comprehensive (Neuman, 2000, p. 125). There is a movement back and forth from the various sources of data and the ongoing analysis, which directed elements of later data collection and questions as I progressed. Theoretical and empirical data collection and analysis will serve as components of this blended method study. This blended, empirical study will consist of surveys, interactions and interviews with a sample of pastors within the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist churches in Ontario.

The best way to begin to explore factors that may contribute to what I had observed as challenges within pastoral ministry was to conduct a literature review. This literature review about the hiring process of pastors and the challenging aspects of pastoral ministry helped to reveal key issues that became the focus of attention for the quantitative and qualitative elements of this empirical study. The literature review also helped to provide data pertaining to the current issues and context that pastors within ministry must face (Neuman, 2000, p. 146), which helps frame this study. This literature review also confirmed that there was very little data or information specific to the hiring process of pastors.

The next step was to explore and test some of the key issues that were revealed in the literature review, through the use of a survey to a control group of pastors within FEB. This quantitative element provided some measureable statistics, information and generalizations that helped to test and focus the developing hypothesis (Neuman, 2000, pp. 148-149) of this study. The survey and the literature review were both elements within the broader, qualitative, empirical study. The surveys should offer a broad look at the experiences of these pastors relative to their hiring process and resulting ministry experiences. I will be selective of the survey data used in order to focus upon the key themes that appear and contribute to the subsequent interviews. Through considering the input of the pastors’ experiences from the sample group with other available information, I hope to identify any common issues or factors that exist and therefore focus my investigation further.

As Neuman points out, “much of the narrowing occurs after a researcher has begun to collect data. The qualitative researcher begins data gathering with a general topic and notions of what will be relevant. Focusing and refining continues after he or she has gathered some of the data and started preliminary analysis” (Neuman, 2000, p. 149). The research question or hypothesis of this study has therefore been developed through the utilization of this blended methodology and the contributions of the literature review and quantitative research at the outset.

This empirical study continues with a qualitative, grounded theory methodology. Leedy comments that in such a methodology, the resulting theory or understanding comes from and is rooted in the data from the field (Leedy, 2010, p. 142). Leedy, citing Creswell, comments that this is particularly helpful when current theories about a phenomenon are either inadequate or nonexistent” (Leedy, 2010, p. 142). Leedy comments that interviews play a major role, but anything of potential relevance to the research question may be utilized in a grounded theory methodology (Leedy, 2010, p. 142). Citing Charmaz (2002, 2006), Corbin and Strauss (2008), Leedy notes that the primary restriction is “the data collection must include the perspectives and the voices of the people being studied” (Leedy, 2010, p. 142).

There is a movement back and forth from the various sources of data and the ongoing analysis, which directed elements of later data collection and questions as I progressed. Leedy refers to this as the constant comparative method within a grounded theory study (Leedy, 2010, p. 143).

In order to further explore factors of a hiring process that may influence the success of pastors, a qualitative, grounded theory study was employed to explore the perceptions and experiences of pastors themselves – to hear their voices through personal interviews. The experiences in the selection and hiring processes should give insight into the realities and experiences of these pastors. The questions and emphasis arising from the literature review and survey will help to give shape to and inform the interview process of this study. These personal interviews should help in understanding the issues and challenges that pastors are experiencing within the church. They should also give greater insight into the hiring processes of churches as each pastor shares their personal experiences. As mentioned in the previous section, there is a significant amount of inductive reasoning included within this study, based upon interactions within cultural contexts

and personal experience. In part, this is necessary due to the inadequacy or lack of current theories and available literature relative to the question being studied.

As the data emerges from the qualitative and quantitative elements of this empirical research, we will move towards some conclusions about the impact of the hiring process upon success in pastoral ministry. Leedy comments that, within qualitative research processes, “categories (variables) emerge from the data, leading to “context-bound” information, patterns, and/or theories that help explain the phenomenon under study” (Leedy, 2010, p. 95). This study attempts to link the current context of pastoral experiences in church hiring practices with relevant literature and Scripture in order to address the main question in view.

The most simplified expression of the methodology used in the process of this study may be found in Emmanuel Lartey’s “pastoral cycle” (Lartey, 2000, pp. 131-133), consisting of five phases. Those phases consist of:

- 1) Experience - an encounter with people in the reality of life’s experiences. In this study, it began with interactions and encounters with pastors. It was through a variety of personal experiences and interactions, prompting questions in my mind as I observed the challenges of pastoral ministry and turnover that provided the initial impetus for this study.
- 2) Situational Analysis – this is multi-perspectival rather than inter-disciplinary and it brings perspectives from relevant disciplines to bear on the situation, in the hope of gaining a clearer understanding of what is going on. This includes the literature review and the survey data within this study.
- 3) Theological Analysis - this is the point at which faith perspectives are allowed to question the encounter as well as the situational analysis. The engagement here is both personal and with the traditions of the Christian faith. This will be reflected in the biblical perspectives brought to bear on the subject material within this study.
- 4) Experience and situational analysis interact with and question faith perspectives. This involves the interaction with the combined data and perspectives.
- 5) Decisions about response options in light of data and process followed. This culminates in the summary, conclusions and implications within this study.

This pattern of five phases is similar to the empirical cycle that van der Ven presents (van der Ven, 1994, pp. 38-42).

Some recommendations will be made as this study seeks to move from the theoretical aspects of this practical theological research to practical application. The resulting outcomes of this study should be to:

- 1) gain insight into factors within the pastoral selection process of churches and their impact upon pastoral success and,
- 2) provide the basis for potential change in the pastoral selection process and further investigation into this vital aspect of practical theology and ministry praxis.

These outcomes should be a basis for hope. The developing understanding of the pastoral hiring process and its impact upon ministry success should positively influence the future well-being and success for all evangelical pastors and churches in Ontario. It is hoped that this research might also inform churches within larger evangelical circles.

1.8 Key Terms within this Study

In order to maintain clarity with respect to the data, its analysis, reflections and observational development, it will be necessary to define several key terms used within this paper. In order to accurately represent the context from which the data and analysis flow I will initially define these terms and through the course of the research reflect a level of understanding of these terms from several perspectives: from the denomination's perspective; from a historical and current church perspective; from a practical theological perspective; and from an appeal towards a biblical perspective.

Those terms include: pastoral leadership; pastoral ministry; fit for ministry; effectiveness, fruitfulness and success in pastoral leadership and an indication of how it is measured; unsuccessful pastoral leadership; unity; and pastoral calling. At the outset, I would define these terms as follows:

1.8.1 Pastoral Leadership.

Pastoral leadership refers to being identified as an individual recognized for their spiritual maturity and a growing, authentic relationship with God, and set apart specifically by a body of believers as a leader or overseer to instruct, nurture, guide and direct the church and individuals in pursuit of God and in paths of ministry particularly suited to that group of believers. Such

paths of ministry are confirmed by evidence of the effectiveness of the church as they submit themselves to God and to their pastoral leadership. “Wise is the pastor who realizes he is called to lead and yet who works to gain the trust of his people and works hard to engage others in participating in an imparted vision” (Johnson, 1995, p. 199). “Pastors are not to exercise control in the church. They are instead, its servants” (Guffin, 1955, p. 6). McKechnie, quoting from the Didache, affirms these qualities for pastoral leadership: “You must choose for yourselves bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord: men who are humble and not eager for money, but sincere and approved: for they are carrying out the ministry of the prophets and teachers for you” (McKechnie, 2001, p. 70). Brandon affirms that regardless of changing circumstances and contexts in the world today, there are still certain aspects of the church’s relationship to the world which remain constant. He points to the pastor’s role as servant as one of those constants (Brandon, 1972, p. 2).

1.8.2 Effectiveness.

Used in the context of church life and pastoral ministry, I use “effectiveness” to describe evident spiritual growth or positive personal impact, especially in a corporate sense (church and individuals within the church) resulting from God’s grace at work through the efforts and skills of those persons involved. There is a sense of clarity and purposefulness about the activities engaged in and the ordering of one’s life. It is intentional and measureable, whether qualitatively, or quantitatively. All too often today, as Anderson points out, “many pastors have no clear picture of what they are to do, how to manage time, what their priorities should be or constitutes success. If a pastor has no established measures of success, it is difficult for him to know if he is doing what is right and is meeting goals” (Anderson, 1994a, p. 262). Such confusion and wandering does not lead to effectiveness.

1.8.3 Fruitfulness or Success.

This is used in connection with Pastoral ministry or leadership to identify the evident outworking of God’s grace in the life and ministry of the church and its people (and pastor), which results in personal, corporate and spiritual growth and maturity, and godly transformation of character. There is a desire for deepening spiritual growth and discipleship, having counted the cost (Tidball, 2008a, pp. 75-76). It is not about an emphasis on numerical growth, but such could be

one indicator of God's graciousness at work as the pastor exercises stewardship over all of the resources God places at their disposal. McSwain affirms the importance of pastoral leadership as a necessary component for accomplishing any priority of the church, and especially for church growth (McSwain, 1990, p. 533). A successful pastor therefore, is one who has a clear sense of vision and purpose, with a unity within the congregation and leadership, and evident personal and corporate growth, both spiritual and evangelistic.

1.8.4 Unsuccessful Pastoral Leadership.

This is used in connection with pastoral ministry that is characterized by a Pastor who is isolated or not united in their leadership, with a divided congregation or team and more possible evidence of a struggling church than of any growth. Very little spiritual or evangelistic growth in evidence, corporately or individually, and a sense of discontent and a growing desire to look elsewhere for ministry opportunities. As a church board may be unaware of the pastor's struggles or desire for another ministry opportunity, this concept will be rooted within the pastor's perspective and the outward evidence of their ministry. An unsuccessful pastor may also be characterized possibly by consistent or multiple congregational changes and turnovers in either congregants, or pastors that they serve with. An "unsuccessful" pastor is not one that is necessarily dismissed or resigns from a congregation, although this frequently occurs. They may stay within one church, but continue to struggle in ministry, with very little evidence of fruitfulness available. Longevity may also be an indicator of pastor being successful or not (Tidball, 2008a, p. 241).

1.8.5 Unity.

It is important to note that the concept of unity does not refer to unanimity or sameness. Unity refers to the functioning of various personalities, spiritual gifts and temperaments in a manner which is rightly submitted to God and His Word in an effort to humbly seek God and serve others. It is unity in the midst of diversity that honors and values those differences and one another within the church as they seek to follow God and engage the church in meaningful ministry. As Clemons puts it, fruitful unity is the encouragement, celebration of, and blending of the unique body parts into a creative whole. When such differences are not recognized or utilized in favour of an expectation of uniformity, the beauty and purpose of God's intended unity is lost

(Clemons, 1981, p. 52). Whether in the context of a church congregation or a team of pastoral staff, the same principles apply. “Complete harmony between pastor and congregation is essential if the work of God is to prosper” (Kent Sr., 1967, p. 335).

1.8.6 Pastoral Ministry.

Similar to pastoral leadership, pastoral ministry refers to the specific role within a group of believers that an appropriately gifted and identified person is called to fulfill or apply him or herself to by that body of believers. Often this involves the financial support of the individual by the church, thereby releasing them from the necessity of pursuing secular employment to meet their needs in order that they might be devoted to the particular ministry that they have been identified for and asked to fulfill. There is a tension here, as people often debate the function or gifting indicated by the term “pastor” with that of the office generally established within churches (Stevens, 2000, pp. 146-149). Within the context of this study, I am assuming that the vocational role in view is aligned with the appropriate gifting and confirmation of such gifting. Within many Baptist church circles, pastoral ministry is understood as something to which a man is gifted and called by God for, and is publicly recognized through ordination (Fowler, 1992, p. 33).

1.8.7 Calling.

This conveys the idea of a clear identification of one’s specific purpose within the body of Christ, with strong conviction and affirmation from several objective persons who have been able to confirm, through various means, the reality and validity of such a role and conviction. Initially this sense of calling is something granted by God and His Spirit at work in an individual, and confirmed, often within a group of believers as they see evidence of such an identification and purpose demonstrated within the life of a person who feels “called”. McKenzie (2013, p. 2) and Price (2013, pp. 89-91) both affirm the notion that there is a significant aspect to the affirmation of calling that comes from the context of community recognition and affirmation. Often any sense of divine calling is acted upon and demonstrated over a period of time before it is ever recognized and affirmed by others in a public setting (Leonard, 1981, p. 549). As Stevens aptly puts it – “the Christian doctrine of vocation – so central to the theology of the whole purpose of God – starts with being called to Someone before we are called to do something. And

it is not something we choose, like a career. We are chosen” (Stevens, 2000, p. 72). Chilstrom (1981, p. 333) and Root (1985, p. 159) both agree with the sentiment that the idea of calling is a God initiative. Thomas agrees and notes that many pastoral candidates often are without any idea on the subject of calling. He states, “all true ministry must commence from here. The call must come from God and not from man... This call will not be primarily through the Church or a particular denomination, but is the internal work of the Holy Spirit” (Thomas, 1995, p. 93).

1.8.8 Pastoral Calling.

“A minister’s call to his work should acknowledge the recognition by the church of Christ of his gifts for ministry and their particular suitability for the tasks required to meet the needs of a particular congregation” (Adams, 1980, p. 59). This contains the idea of being gifted by God and set apart specifically for service to and caring for a group of believers. They are given as spiritual gifts to the church, for empowering the whole people of God for the building up of the body (the church) and expansion of God’s kingdom (Stevens, 2000, pp. 147-149). This is done in a manner that instructs in the Word, encourages, cares for, exhorts and builds them up as active, growing participants within the body of Christ and in vibrant relationship with God. It is not simply a job or an office that one is employed to. It contains an element of recognized spiritual authority, or evidence of God’s blessing as a steward under God for such a role. Oden, quoting the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, states, “either to feel inwardly called without being sent by the whole church, or to be ecclesiastically approved and sent without experiencing God’s inward call, is inadequate” (Oden, 2000, p. 21). It is also often accompanied by a strong sense of purpose and conviction by the person desiring such a role. They act in such a capacity; often long before such a gifting or calling is recognized. Johnson affirms this concept of pastoral calling throughout his paper, and especially as he identifies first Jesus calling Peter to be a shepherd to His sheep, and then suggests that Peter transfers this shepherding model to those “called” to be pastors (Johnson, 1995, p. 191). Oden, citing Calvin’s Draft Ecclesiastical ordinances affirms that “in order that nothing happen confusedly in the church, no one is to enter this office without a calling” (Oden, 2000, p. 21).

1.8.9 Fit.

This is intended to describe the feelings of each pastor towards the sense of being properly oriented — spiritually, practically and emotionally for the ministry role and context they are identified, selected and expected to perform within. This is usually confirmed by the impact of the pastor in the role and is also often evidenced by the response of the people within the church towards the pastor and his/her leadership. Both the pastor's feelings and the practical reality of their pastoral experience should be in agreement and properly aligned in order to confirm "fit".

It is possible too, that through participation in a particular role or function, that a person may discover that they are not suited to that role. There may not be a "fit" and therefore they discover that God may have something else in mind for them (Price, 2013, pp. 91-93). Johnson, in quoting Edward T. Oakes, comments that there have been challenges to the potential for a pastor to fit within a church context as a preoccupation with self and elevation of humanity to the highest level within the universe in today's evangelical churches runs counter to a God-centered ministry (Johnson, 1995, p. 183).

Tidball sums it up nicely when he comments that two areas are necessary for fit. The first is personal, related to a sense of personal calling, giftedness and ministry model. The second is contextual, related to the needs of a particular church, the opportunities and challenges within that particular church context. He then suggests that a pastor brings those answers together and asks if he, with his particular gifts and sense of calling, fits the church and their situation at this time (Tidball, 2008a, p. 241).

1.9 Outline of the Study

Chapter one identifies the necessary background, key terms and the impetus for this study and highlights its importance. It presents the investigative question and aims of the study; identifies the reality of challenging times in pastoral leadership and defines the key terms utilized within this study. Chapter one also presents an overview of the methodology used within this study.

Chapter two sets the stage for the remainder of this study by outlining the practical theology framework utilized. Drawing primarily from works by Osmer, Browning, Fowler and Farley, this chapter identifies links with the church and church leadership in theology, practice and context.

Chapter three presents the findings from available literature relative to the issues and concerns for pastoral leadership, the pastoral office and ministry. As was noted by Reimer, one of the difficulties within the Canadian context is that “fewer studies have focused on evangelical denominations, and one is hard-pressed to find published Canadian data for any of these groups” (Reimer, 2010, p. 1). Much of the available literature therefore deals with the pastoral office and ministry, with very little available about the selection process for pastoral leadership. This chapter also includes a section on scriptural considerations, which focus attention on several areas of scripture that are intended to help inform the study and provide a biblical means of evaluating the pastoral hiring processes in light of the data obtained.

Chapter four deals with the research methodology of this study in greater detail, including the research plan, background information and rationale for the selected survey and interview sample and data analysis process. It also presents considerations relevant to the validity of the study.

Chapter five presents the data from the surveys and interviews. It represents the successful completion of the investigative portion of this study relative to the experiences of the pastoral participants within their unique hiring processes and ministry outcomes. The intent of this chapter, along with the presentation of these findings, is to begin to create a picture of what appears to be happening within the pastoral hiring process. It also begins to more clearly reveal those factors which seem to play a role in successful or unsuccessful pastoral ministry.

Chapter six deals with the interpretation and analysis of the findings and provides a summation of the research data. In it, an emerging understanding of current church practice is presented relative to the original research question, appealing to these findings and accumulated data. This understanding is grounded in the data obtained through this study of current pastoral hiring practices and its contributing impact upon successful or unsuccessful pastoral ministry.

Chapter six concludes this study with some recommendations and an appeal for a reorientation of our pastoral selection processes for the benefit of pastors, churches, and ultimately our witness to the kingdom of God.

Chapter 2: A Practical Theological and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Just as there is a strong link between theology and the ongoing praxis of the church in its ongoing mission in the world, so too is there a strong application within a church's efforts to select the person of God's calling to lead and serve as their pastor. Within this chapter I seek to establish the practical theological framework for this study, which undergirds the methodology that has been used.

2.2 A Practical Theology Perspective

James Fowler, citing his 1987 book *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, writes, "Practical theology is theological reflection and construction arising out of and giving guidance to a community of faith in the praxis of its mission. Practical theology is critical and constructive reflection leading to ongoing modification and development of the ways the church shapes its life to be in partnership with God's work in the world" (Fowler, 1999, p. 292). Practical theology wrestles to provide a theological and hermeneutical consideration of the Biblical text with the practical considerations and context of the church's ongoing mission in the world. The outcome of this is to aid and enhance the ongoing growth, development and practice of the church as a demonstration of the reality of God's kingdom, here on earth.

One of the challenges that present itself to the practical theologian, especially from an academic perspective, as Van Wyk wrote in 1995, "up to the present time, no real agreement has been reached on what practical theology actually is. The arena is almost a battlefield of opposing models that utilize, or are based upon, different philosophical and theological presuppositions" (Van Wyk, 1995, pp. 88-89). This presents a challenge when one seeks to implement or work within a particular model. Models and philosophies aside, when the focus returns to understanding the church in her context and to the Bible as a source of understanding God's purposes and values, positive outcomes can result. Practical theology is a dynamic process or reflective, critical inquiry into the praxis of the church in the world and God's purposes for humanity, carried out in light of Christian Scripture and tradition, and in critical dialogue with

other sources of knowledge” (Anderson, 2001, p. 22). There are many definitions and even more models from which to consider, some of which are included within this perspective. There are several that share some common and beneficial elements for the purposes of this study. They include elements of models and contributions put forward by Osmer (2008), Heitink (1999), Browning (1983) and Fowler (1983).

Osmer, identifies the model he is espousing as one that may fit within a new discussion taking place, which moves beyond mere theology or being concerned solely with the tasks of clergy or the life of congregations (Osmer, 2008, p. x). In this, he does not expressly state or identify what model he is following, however he does acknowledge that some may perceive a return to “the older clerical paradigm of practical theology”, which he dismisses as his understanding (Osmer, 2008, p. x).

Within his book, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, Richard Osmer identifies the four tasks of practical theology and emphasizes that “they may be brought to bear on any issue worth considering” (Osmer, 2008, p. x). The four tasks of practical theology he identifies are: descriptive empirical; interpretive; normative and pragmatic (Osmer, 2008, pp. 10-11). Within his aforementioned framework he clarifies his use of the term ‘practical theology’ to identify three corollaries of his main argument about the nature of practical theology (Osmer, 2008, p. 12). In his corollaries Osmer (2008, p. 12) suggests that:

1. Practical theological interpretation takes place in all the specialized sub disciplines of practical theology.
2. The same structure of practical theological interpretation in academic practical theology characterizes the interpretive tasks of congregational leaders as well.
3. Acknowledging the common structure of practical theological interpretation in both the academy and ministry can help congregational leaders recognize the interconnectedness of ministry.

Osmer suggests that practical theology creates an important bridge between the various sub-disciplines of academia, practical theology and between the academy and the church, drawing attention to the life and ministry of the congregation and congregational leaders (Osmer, 2008, pp. 17-18). His work is very helpful as it reinforces the linkages between the various

elements of theology, practice and context: “Practical theological interpretation, thus, is deeply contextual. It thinks in terms of interconnections, relationships and systems” (Osmer, 2008, p. 17). If Osmer’s specific corollary may be logically extended, then there are links between the spiritual maturity of a congregation, Christian and biblical education and teaching, and the ability of a congregation and potential congregation leaders to apply those principles to the practice of the identification and selection of a vocational minister. Osmer points to Gerkin’s (1997, p.113-114) “new model of pastoral leadership: the pastor as interpretive guide” (Osmer, 2008, p. 18) and acknowledges some of the social trends that influenced this new model.

The trends that were emphasized were:

- “issues of education (or lessor education) on the part of pastors;
- increased accountability through the spread of democratic values and governments;
- greater pluralism and diversity with people having greater freedom to choose their affiliations and levels of participation. The pastor must therefore “earn” their authority;
- secularization of modern institutions, pressuring religion to remain in the private sphere and a perception that pastors have neither the right nor the competence to address practical areas of life” (Osmer, 2008, pp. 18-19).

Those same trends point to a shift within the culture and context of the church that must be considered, especially when considering the selection and hiring of a vocational church leader. Such an analysis of church culture becomes an important task for any congregational leadership or participants on a pastoral search committee. It represents an application of practical theology for the elements that should be employed and considered in any pastoral hiring process.

As I am working specifically with those pastors who have participated in a search process as a means of data collection, I must make a general assumption as to the initial preparation of the congregation and the search committee as they embark on their task. Osmer also further expands the concept of interpretive guide to include congregational leadership, and not merely the pastor. This would include individuals who exercise influence through various means within the congregation to build up the people and achieve shared goals (Osmer, 2008, pp. 25-26). This is helpful to keep in focus as there are many factors that contribute to the decisions and life of a congregation, many of which are influenced by various individuals who are viewed as leaders.

However influenced, the response of those involved in congregational decisions and practices will reflect their shared or personal goals. It should involve an integration and reflection of theology within their considerations. There is a difference between a congregation simply choosing to act and then consciously, critically and theologically reflecting upon the elements involved prior to their action. This, as Browning articulates, is the difference between practice and praxis (Browning, 1983, p. 13). This concept of the difference between practice and praxis and Osmer's suggested practice of *interpretive guide* as attending (Osmer, 2008, pp. 37-41) are helpful. In "interpretive guide as attending", Osmer extends Gerkin's focus on pastoral guides to include congregational leaders as influencers and as ones who facilitate a dialogue between activity, Scripture and tradition (Osmer, 2008, pp. 24-25). This also encompasses dialogue when people's lives have unraveled. In it, theological perspective and other, cross-disciplinary resources (ethics, for example) are brought to bear. Attending refers to various levels and activities of listening, reflecting on events, activities and stories, and investigating particular situations and contexts through empirical research (Osmer, 2008, pp. 18-20, 24-25, 37-39). These were both kept in mind through the interactions with pastoral candidates as they recounted their experiences during their hiring process. This raised a question during my reflections: at what point should we expect such leadership to exist and be demonstrated, by either a pastoral candidate or a hiring committee within a hiring process?

I appreciate the acknowledgement of the four primary tasks of practical theology taking place within the ministerial practices of preaching, pastoral care, evangelism, spirituality, Christian education and others (Osmer, 2008, p. 13). Ministerial practices as sub-disciplines of practical theology can be limited by perceptions of being primarily related to the efforts of the pastor and congregational leaders in the praxis of the church. While it is true that these practices are related to those leaders, they are not exclusively in their domain. The context in which: sermons are prepared, Sunday school is structured, spirituality, and discipleship are nurtured all happen within the context of interplay between several parties. We can tend to view church practice and its theology primarily from the lens of those we view as the primary practitioners and neglect to consider the contextual aspects of culture and those we are ministering to. To avoid this, I consider ecclesial practices as the framework around which our theological interpretation is centered. This interpretation includes elements of context, culture and scripture as we look at the

church practice and process of the hiring of pastoral staff. As Fowler suggests, “practical theology investigates Scripture and the tradition, on the one hand, and the shape of the present situation of ecclesial ministry, on the other, for the sake of constructive and critical guidance of the church’s praxis” (Fowler, 1983, p. 155).

Farley cautions that as we allow the functions of ministry paradigms to govern the disciplines of practical theology, we perpetuate maintenance roles of clergy in the culture (Farley, 1983, pp. 31-34). In an effort to avoid perpetuating any sort of maintenance role for clergy, I will focus solely on the pastoral selection and hiring process and the elements surrounding this specific endeavor. The hiring process is typically initiated by a congregation. It is assumed to be a reflection of a congregation’s understanding of their needs, context and theological understanding, being demonstrated and applied in identifying and selecting a suitable vocational pastor. I am specifically focusing attention on the experience of pastoral candidates. I am therefore assuming that the congregation has engaged in a re-evaluation of their ministry and self-assessment as a church prior to engaging in a hiring process. FEB recommends this sort of activity takes place (Johnson, n.d., p. 2).

Osmer’s presentation of Gadamer’s model of the interpretive aspects of scholarship, composed of five moments, is particularly helpful in orienting the methodology of this study (Osmer, 2008, pp. 22-23).

- “Preunderstanding: Comprised of interpretive judgements and understandings with which we begin interpretation; they come to us from the past” (Osmer, 2008, p. 23). The preunderstanding, in the case of this study, comes from personal experience and learning, primarily through: conferences, conversations with pastors, thirty plus years within the evangelical church, seminary training and classroom experience. The preunderstanding was rooted in a naïve perception that the church was healthy and whole, and only did what was morally and theologically good, to the benefit of those within the walls, and those outside of them. Not perfect, but clearly focused and theologically rooted in faith and praxis.
- “The experience of being brought up short. This is the experience of running up against something in our investigation that calls into question some facet of our preunderstanding” (Osmer, 2008, p. 23). As this study began, it was through: fourteen years of pastoral ministry;

further conversations with pastors and insights into difficulties they faced; watching churches divide and pastors being fired or quitting ministry; and issues raised through the literature review that this notion of “being brought up short” became all too real.

- “Dialogical interplay. To allow the text, person, or object to reveal itself to us anew, we listen for its “voice” and open ourselves to the “horizon” it projects... It is a back and forth interplay between the horizon of the interpreter and the horizon of the text, person or object being interpreted” (Osmer, 2008, p. 23). It is here that I specifically combine quantitative and qualitative strategies in a mixed methodology (Osmer, 2008, p. 50). On the one end is research that is more extensive, broad-based and includes surveys, thus condensing aspects of the data. The other aspect to this is more intensive research, giving greater clarity to the data through interviewing a selected group of participants. There is a significant amount of inductive reasoning, based upon interactions within cultural contexts and personal experience. In part, this is due to the inadequacy or total lack of current theories or available literature relative to the question being studied. This motivates me towards the inclusion of a grounded theory methodology as a component of this study (Leedy, 2010, p. 142). In this way, both styles complement one another in the context of this study and add a greater depth to it (Neuman, 2000, p. 17). This allows for the interaction between practice and texts, interviews and surveys — the gathering of data to clarify a point of view and test the possible boundaries of a developing understanding. There are so many possibilities within the social and theological perspectives and praxis of the church, that it is important to be able to limit the interplay and focus of this study. I chose to limit the focus at this time to the hiring process of pastors from the perspective of pastors. Their experiences as persons having experienced the hiring process and what was communicated throughout the interactions offer insights into the theological and social/cultural perspectives of those involved.

- “Fusion of Horizons. Like a conversation, interpretation yields new insights when the horizons of the interpreter and the interpreted join together. Both contribute something” (Osmer, 2008, p. 23). As the surveys were returned, the data reviewed, further investigation and the interviews took place, patterns emerged and things became clearer, at least within the context I was in within one denomination.

- “Application. New insights give rise to new ways of thinking and acting in the world” (Osmer, 2008, p. 23). The application within the context of this study integrates a theology with

the context and practice of pastoral selection and hiring as the culmination of the focus of this study. It gives rise to even more questions and thoughts of expanding the research to consider a more in-depth look at each congregation and hiring committee involved.

A similar empirical method, the Zerfass model (Van Wyk, 1995, p. 97) identifies four stages that also fit within the framework of this study and closely mirror those of Gadamer's model. As VanWyk describes it, the Zerfass model functions as follows: "(1) Starting out from a particular praxis, (2) it makes a situational analysis; then (3) in integration with tradition and with Scripture, it forms a new theory; and (4) this process leads, in turn, to a new praxis. It is thus a model that moves full circle, and it does so repeatedly in an ongoing and ever-relevant progression" (Van Wyk, 1995, p. 97). This study follows a similar methodology.

Heitink, for his part, concludes that "deductive approaches, which start from the text, and inductive approaches, which start from the actual cultural context, are complementary to each other. In practical theology we have to work with a correlation in which text and context permanently evoke each other. The structure of practical theology is a bipolar one" (Heitink, 1999, p. 266). Within the framework of this study we see this complementary relationship as the biblical text and those of the literature survey seem to integrate themselves within elements of the context as it is revealed through the interviews. The connections between the text and the context become very apparent as the study progresses.

In Browning's book, *Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and World*, contributing author James Fowler comments that "practical theology worries with the points of engagement between the disclosures and imperatives released in the sources of faith, and the particular present shape of the calling of the faithful" (Fowler, 1983, p. 151). He reminds us that practical theology engages with other disciplines in order to ascertain the present "shape" of the church and gain a further hermeneutical perspective on the experiences and culture of the church and her present calling, or course of action and praxis. The charts he includes highlight the potential, valuable, interdisciplinary contribution that practical theology can make when it engages with other social disciplines and couples that with ecclesial praxis (Fowler, 1983, pp. 152-154). This study particularly focuses upon practical theology, present experiences and

situations within the church and church leadership specifically, and couples that with aspects of the administrative praxis of the church. “Practical theology aims at a kind of knowing that guides being and doing” (Fowler, 1983, pp. 154-155). It is the kind of knowing that Fowler describes, a cooperation between skill, understanding, experience and critical reflection that work in concert to provide a guide towards being and the activity within the church (Fowler, 1983, pp. 154-155). Within this study specifically, the selection process of vocational pastors is in view. As stated above, “practical theology investigates Scripture and the tradition, on the one hand, and the shape of the present situation of ecclesial ministry, on the other, for the sake of constructive and critical guidance of the church’s praxis” (Fowler, 1983, p. 155). This is the emphasis of this study in that it attempts to narrow the particular focus — the process of leadership selection and to think through the goals, methods and theological foundations of that praxis in light of the perceived challenges that exist in pastoral leadership in Canada today.

Depending upon the vantage point or perception of these elements that each reader will have, they may interpret the findings differently, raise further questions or struggle with the conclusions. I do not intend to contextualize or interpret these results outside of the parameters in which they are based — in one denominational association within the Evangelical Church in Canada. Some generalizations may be made.

As Fowler aptly puts it,

“formation occurs in the context of relationships...A praxis approach to method and strategy in Christian formation stresses that faith is something we do. It is something we are... Christian community has at the heart of its concern the discernment and calling forth of each person’s gifts. By discerning and calling forth gifts we help each other to find the present shape of our vocation, the life structure, for now, through which to realize full humanity by offering it in league with some aspect of God’s work” (Fowler, 1983, p. 162).

Audinet acknowledges “the starting point of the process of knowledge is praxis, meaning that the starting point of knowledge is action and situation, or human beings talking to other human beings, thinking, acting, behaving and transforming the world and themselves” (Audinet, 1999,

p. 214). Interactions, relationships and ongoing spiritual formation are key elements within this study. Particularly, those relationships in view are: between a prospective vocational pastor and those he is called to serve; within a congregation; between people of faith, God and His Word as demonstrated throughout the process in praxis. How is that faith communicated by those parties involved within the hiring process? I hope that the contributions made through this study will provide the basis for a way forward that will contribute to ongoing learning, spiritual growth, the development of relationships and the practice of faith within the Christian community.

2.3 Summary

Practical theology wrestles to provide a theological and hermeneutical consideration of the biblical text with the practical considerations and context of the church's ongoing mission in the world. The outcome of this is to aid and enhance the ongoing growth, development and practice of the church as a demonstration of the reality of God's kingdom, here on earth. This chapter emphasizes the key influences and paradigms for the methodology of this study, linking the theoretical rationale with the theological and practical. Even with this in view, we are reminded of the priority and importance of the contextual aspect of our practical theology being rooted in the lives and experiences of the human beings engaged in ministry. This is the emphasis of this study in that it attempts to narrow the particular focus to the process of leadership selection and to think through the goals, methods and theological foundations of that praxis in light of the experiences of pastoral leadership in Canada today.

Chapter 3: Literature Review of the Pastoral Office, Leadership and Ministry

3.1 Introduction

Concern for pastors has increased over the years — so too has a concern for the church and its philosophies and practices for recruiting, identifying, supporting and hiring of vocational ministers. Many people are seemingly quick to point out what are perceived as flaws and errors, but even in writing about such things, it is difficult for church leaders to comment on such affairs due to the perception that any indictment of one would reflect negatively upon the larger whole of the body of Christ. This chapter includes a literature review and scriptural considerations for church leadership. The literature review focuses upon areas of: pastoral selection from theological and practical considerations; perceptions or data regarding church leadership itself including any crises, turnover, development of leaders and the role of pastor itself; and any appeals for change or identifying needs that seem relevant to the identification, selection and equipping of pastoral leaders for church ministry. Therefore the literature review will focus on the following aspects in pastoral ministry: the crisis; expectations; professionalization; secular influences; change elements; theology and growth; and the role and influence of the community of faith.

The scriptural considerations look at common biblical passages that have some relevance to the identification and selection of leaders. Within this section, I give an overview of some basic, scriptural considerations for pastoral selection and a theological response to the question of the hiring process of a pastor and expectations for successful ministry. It seems extremely relevant, that in the consideration of the identification, selection and hiring process for a vocational pastor within God's church, that we also consider what He might have to say on the matter of leadership, especially for those in leadership. Within their recent article, in the section entitled, *Practical Theology: More than just praxis*, Steyn and Masango note, "Unless practical theology is building upon actual theology, it will become a fragmented theology, because it would not be able to motivate theologically that which it is asking its practitioners to do" (Steyn & Masango, 2011). It is important therefore, to root the practical theology of this study, with a theological and biblical foundation. It is not intended to be an exhaustive theological treatment or discussion of the scriptural passages beyond what is the commonly accepted meaning of these passages.

These scripture passages are intended however, to raise some significant elements from a biblical perspective for consideration in the selection and hiring process.

3.2 Literature Review

3.2.1 Crisis in Pastoral Leadership.

Issues of the pastor's role, selection, support, equipping, the need for change, theological issues pertaining to the pastoral office, crises in pastoral leadership, renewal in ministry and even a re-evaluation of the modern pastoral office have all found their way into literature and journals in recent years. Many of these concerns have come to the forefront, primarily due to the shortage of available professionals to function in clergy roles. Reimer (2010, p. 1) identifies this occurring initially within the Catholic denomination, but such concerns spread to other denominations as well since there was an increasing need for retention and the identification and development of more vocational ministers. Oden comments that the pastoral office is "ailing, badly shaken and bruised" and he suggests a "major cause of burnout in ministry is the blurring of pastoral identity, or the confusion concerning what ministry is" (Oden, 1983, p. 5).

Mayhue, in quoting John Seel's 1992 survey of twenty-five prominent evangelical leaders, noted one of the dominant themes that emerged was a general lament and pessimism over the insufficient number of leaders for the church (1995, p. 40). Mayhue also describes the gloomy perception of many evangelicals over the state of pastoral ministry with words like: "Crossroads; Transition; Crisis; Uncertainty; and Restlessness (1995, p. 39)." On Christian Careers Canada website on October 23, 2013, there were thirty-nine pastoral ministry positions listed, and forty-nine pastoral resumes available, yet a shortage of available pastors to fill them. The numbers don't reflect the same need, but perhaps qualified candidates or the process that is followed in looking to hire a pastor is more of the issue that is reflected on this particular website.

Brister suggests that a type of mid-life crisis exists within pastoral ministry for many today, where ministers are uncertain about their identity and unhappy with what they are doing vocationally (Brister, 1973, p. 15). In speaking recently with a pastor, I was reminded of many similar conversations and comments that the perceived life cycle of a pastor within a church is

often five to six years (or less in many cases). Whether due to conflicts of personality, church practice, unrealized or poorly communicated expectations, or frustrations and disillusionment with the realities of the church-pastor relationship, the rate of turnover, dropout and inability to adequately fill the pastoral roles presently available within churches points to a crisis in pastoral leadership. Rather than taking the time to ask the questions and clearly identify the problems, the church often rushes to resolve what they perceive to be the most critical situation — the need to find a pastor to fill the role and meet the church's need.

Brister (Brister, 1973, p. 22) relates in one account from one city, six pastors who were close friends all found themselves to no longer be serving as pastors within five years of their initial service. "According to Albert McClellan, Convention Program Coordinating, Southern Baptists now lose two percent of their ordained clergy from the active pastorate each year. These are not retirements, but resignations, involving hundreds of highly trained professional ministers who change careers" (Brister, 1973, p. 22). Mayhue cites several United States statistics from John H. Redman's article, "The Statistics are Shocking", as he points to an escalation of crisis within the church and pastoral ministry. He cites: 1,500 pastors leaving their assignments every month; 23 percent of all U.S. pastors have been fired or forced to resign; and other startling statistics (Mayhue, 2011, pp. 214-215). Perhaps we are seeing more and more crises like this because in our efforts to resolve the need to identify and distribute the available pastors we have not taken the time necessary to clearly identify the contributing factors and source of this pastoral crisis. Something to consider too, would be a questions as to what is the overall impact upon the church as a result of this apparent crisis in pastoral leadership?

3.2.2 Expectations within Pastoral Ministry.

"Where do expectations start? According to one overworked pastor, the answer is 'everywhere and with everyone'" (London & Wiseman, 2003, p. 68). "Whether real or assumed, expectations choke the vitality out of a pastor's spirit" (London & Wiseman, 2003, p. 72).

Turnover in pastoral ministry is not new. Decades earlier Charles Ball lamented the understaffing of churches, while at the same time, expressed concern that those responsible for hiring appropriate ministry leadership, were looking to find "superman" (Ball, 1949, p. 470). With

those potential expectations placed upon a ministry leadership candidate, who would be able to realistically determine that they were both capable and willing to seek to fulfill such a role. The other challenge with this type of expectation on the part of a church hiring committee is that a church may not clearly articulate these expectations, either in the job posting or during the interview process with pastoral candidates.

Johnson (1995, pp. 182-183) relates the changing expectations with the present culture. He comments that in the past, a pastor's role was primarily seen as theologian, preacher and shepherd while today the expectation is that a pastor's time should be spent differently and that a pastor should be a therapist, a chief executive and a church growth specialist as a part of their skills and contributions. Johnson and other author's comments reflect a changing ecclesiology within the church, or at least, a confusion that exists on the part of the church and a prospective pastoral candidate, which leads to unrealistic, or unexpressed expectations for the individual leader and the roles of both the leader and the congregation. It may be that the ecclesiology hasn't changed within the church, but in its efforts to find a replacement pastor, a church may overemphasize specific characteristics in a prospective new pastor as a reaction against a former pastor and their practices. Or, a church may embrace some very specific practices and theology, none of which may be rooted in matters of salvation, but nonetheless very relevant to the church's culture and practices. Wells, in his article suggests that alternative models for ministry include: "entertainer-promoter; marketer; entrepreneur; bureaucrat; corporate executive, or psychotherapist models" (Wells, 1989, pp. 39-40). Such expectations seem to differ greatly from what many pastors would typically expect, especially while they are in Seminary.

From some conversations, these appear to be issues and expectation that have been very contentious once a new pastor has been hired and begun their ministry, yet they were never mentioned or raised during an interview or congregational meeting when a candidate has "preached for a call". Often it may be that such expectations, ultimately unfulfilled, lead to persons leaving the ministry or being dismissed from their congregations. A failed hire is a great disappointment for both the pastor and a church, something I have observed through peers and graduates from our Seminary, the incidences of which seem to be on the rise. Sandulak also refers to this in his book and notes that while there are several factors that might produce such a

result, one particular denomination in Canada identified that over 50% of its recent pastoral hires have fallen into this category of failed hires (2006, p. 97). Unfortunately, Sandulak does not specify from which denomination he obtained this statistic, so further investigation and understanding of these results is not readily available. Often it may take several months, or perhaps a year or more, to determine that the hire was not the best one. I do not intend to determine through this research, which decisions to hire may be “good” and which ones might be “poor”. Sometimes such evaluations may seem apparent. I will however, consider perceived ministry effectiveness and satisfaction on the part of the pastors as a part of the considerations of the evaluation of the hiring process and decision.

Schmidt (1979, p. 8) questions what is being communicated of their understanding of shared giftedness, cooperation in building ministry and team leadership, upon reflecting on the short tenure of associate and youth pastors in Mennonite Brethren churches. As one who had been involved in youth ministry for a number of years, during various youth leader conferences and training events, it was very apparent that short tenures in these two roles was not exclusive to any one denomination. Schmidt’s point is a good one if we were to consider more closely what is it to be “called” to a church and appointed to a specific pastoral role. Is it a call to be released to be a functioning part of a body due to apparent giftedness and preparation by God for a role and task, or is it something else that can be changed frequently according to some other criteria?

Peter Raedts, in his opening address at the British-Dutch Colloquium at Utrecht identified a crisis of confidence in the Catholic Church as a result of the misbehavior of many of its priests that was even worse than the time in the 1960’s when many priests left the ministry and the church. He acknowledges that this is indicative of what happens when a “Christian community loses a clear view of the functions of the ministry and neglects to set standards for recruitment and training in tune with the times” (Raedts, 2002, pp. 8-9). Might this be a warning or an indication of the potential outcome that could result for any Christian church? How are our expectations established, or even checked against the needs of the church and the ever encroaching culture? More than two thousand years after Christ walked on the earth and gave His life for us, what is it today to be “in the world, but not of it”?

Tucker notes that due to congregational expectations, many pastors “experience great frustration and even burnout, trying to meet all the expectations” (Tucker, 2011, p. 5). Tidball suggests that pastors often struggle to live up to the unrealistic expectations and images that their congregations have of them, which they can never reach (Tidball, 2008b, pp. 315-316). This may be a possible cause of the isolation, frustrations, and burnout that many pastors experience.

Anderson (1994b, pp. 389-390) notes that often pastors find themselves serving within dysfunctional churches and that more often than not, those pastors become discouraged and eventually resign in order to escape from the dysfunctional environment that they may feel trapped within. Some churches seem to habitually change their pastors, each time asserting that it was the wrong person, or due to some problem with the pastor’s ministry. No church that I have ever seen is perfect, and it is still God’s instrument of grace and hope for the world. There are definitely churches that have some challenges to overcome, what group of sinners doesn’t? But what then is the role of the pastor if not to care for and shepherd the sheep? Pastors too may have expectations for their life, ministry and the church that they serve, which may be unrealistic and present further challenges for the success or fruitfulness of any ministry.

3.2.3 Professionalization of Pastoral Ministry.

A common adjective used to describe ministers within a church context is “professional.” This term is often used in connection with some of the struggles that affect vocational ministers and the seeming worldly philosophies and practices utilized in their identification, selection and hiring to serve in a local church context. Wells quotes J. Lapsley’s declaration that “the modern pastoral ministry faces a serious crisis of professional identity” (Wells, 1989, p. 39).

Schmidt points to this increased professionalization as he comments on the observances of a shift within his denomination, the Mennonite Brethren Church, towards a “professional, pastoral-dominated system” (Schmidt, 1979, p. 3). He goes on to comment on his observations over six years, during which time he has noted that “church leadership now parallels business and secular models” and that “cultural conditioning is more determinative than scriptural directives” (Schmidt, 1979, p. 4).

Stott (1989, p. 3) acknowledges that one of the features that characterize the contemporary church is its uncertainty about the role of its professional minister. In such a context, how can clear practices and philosophies for hiring exist? I have interacted with several people within different churches who assert that various forms of ministry have not been their responsibility because “that’s what we hired pastor _____ for”. The role of pastor has become increasingly one of an office, rather than a gifting or calling. Certainly there is a need for various forms of structure within a church, but it is difficult to see within the biblical text a strong correlation between a pastoral gift and the pastoral job descriptions that exist today. This may also fit within the framework of expectations in ministry, but I felt it more appropriately placed in a section dealing with the professionalization of pastoral ministry. There have been several observations where a pastor is becoming more of a hired, professional role, rather than a gift given to the body of Christ for a specific purpose — one to be celebrated and released to function.

Sandulak (2006, pp. 97-98) identifies within his chapter entitled, “Hiring the Right Pastor” that there are traditional roles that are critical to the success of a professional pastor, and three strategies predominantly used by churches when selecting a new pastor. These strategies are rooted in the feelings, perceptions and role expectations of the church. He points to the church’s response to a former pastor and the desire to find someone who is either like their former pastor, or their opposite, depending upon the experience that they had. How the church perceives their context, culture and community may cause them to seek a particular type of person. The final piece is that of the overall professional skills, competencies and abilities of a candidate. Sandulak goes on to affirm that a “lack of professional skills can contribute to failure of a pastoral ministry — but even an abundance of professional skills is no guarantee of success” (Sandulak, 2006, p. 98). Mayhue, in a recent paper goes even further as he advocates the “purging of strong, natural leadership from the church and the pursuit of strong, spiritual leadership” (Mayhue, 2011, p. 213).

Anderson (1994a, pp. 261-263) identifies the struggle that pastors often have in distinguishing between who they are as Christians and what they do as pastors when they are faced with expectations and strong pressures to fulfill a particular role or to achieve at levels far above any expectations for people within the congregation. This often leads to isolation as the pastor feels

they cannot share their struggles because the church is counting on them, and if they can't deal with an issue, the church will suffer as a result. There are several issues within this type of environment as there is not often an opportunity for the pastor to find adequate support within their congregation as they struggle through such situations. So much for body life and the various parts each fulfilling their role — are we looking for, or expecting, Superman again?

Mavis points out, in reference to Matthew 9:36, that the “spiritual confusion of the people was not due to a lack of ministrants... Every town and hamlet had its rabbis. The people were confused because the religious leaders were not shepherd-hearted” (Mavis, 1947, pp. 358-359). Even during Jesus' time, there were issues of professionalism creeping in.

Eugene Peterson, when asked about the existence of a crisis in ministry in his interview with David Wood (2002, p. 19) responded that his perception is that many pastors are looking for rewards outside of the realm of their ministry calling —things that are more market-driven and secular. He also comments on a sense he has that people are quick to take on the role of a pastor without really learning or knowing it from the inside out. As I have spoken with pastors generally over the years, I have been hard pressed to find many, if even one pastor, who felt called to leave their church to serve in a smaller or more remote church. I am sure that such pastors exist, but I have not yet had the opportunity to meet them. Usually they move to larger churches, more urban centers with multi-staff, large budgets and possibly greater professional recognition.

Switzer notes that it is within a pastor's particular congregation where “their greatest energies are expended, the worshipping community toward which most of our thought is directed...within which our energies as persons and professionals must primarily be renewed, else we will become frustrated, exhausted and ineffective” (Switzer, 1979, p. 8). This tendency towards distractions that take us away from the focus of our ministry in pursuit of professional enticements may be a source of the crisis being experienced in pastoral ministry. The work of a shepherd isn't particularly attractive, but it is, in essence what a pastor is called to – feeding and caring for ‘sheep and lambs’.

3.2.4 Secular Influences within Pastoral Ministry.

Closely related to the issues of professionalism in the ministry are the concerns of changing leadership, its needs and a growing secularity within church leadership. This is not something new, as we could refer to the identified groups within the New Testament (Pharisees, Priestly Aristocracy (Sadducees), Essenes and Zealots) as the response of God's people to the encroaching Hellenistic influences (W.J. Webb, personal communication, lecture notes, August 17, 2001). Cultural and secular pressures have been strong influencers upon the church and have created tensions for denomination, churches and pastors seeking to navigate their course. Mayhue (1995, p. 47) comments on the challenges to what he identifies as pastoral roles defined by scripture and the biblically-oriented ministry training as cultural and secular pressures exert greater influence upon the church. MacArthur agrees with this notion. "As the church succumbs to cultural and secular pressures, it is not surprising that biblically defined pastoral roles and the scripturally oriented content of ministerial training have experienced a serious challenge also" (MacArthur Jr., et al., 1995, p. 10).

Schmidt concurs (1979, p. 4), as he marvels at the parallels between business and secular models and church leadership. His observation is that the influence of culture has a greater impact upon leadership than do the instructions and directives from scripture. He comments specifically too on the Mennonite Brethren when he states "they have experienced the shift from multiple-lay-oriented ministry to a professional, pastoral-dominated system. The incongruity is beginning to show, and the question of leadership is becoming critical again. Questions which are being raised deal not only with the character and direction of leadership, but with the selection, training and style of leaders" (Schmidt, 1979, pp. 3-4).

Shaw (2006, p. 121) identifies a tension between autocratic and democratic leadership patterns, pointing to the reality that democracy is human-centered in its orientation and often resistant to embrace such words or practices as obedience and submission. He also suggests that there is a

strong cultural influence in our western culture which invites such democratic leadership patterns, and a possible fear of the abusive practices in autocratic leadership as an equally significant reason for our current leadership paradigm.³

Johnson (2000, p. 79) laments the preference for pastors who guard cherished traditions within a church and function solely to meet the congregation's expectations and confirm their illusions about their faith. We can observe how many of these concerns are intertwined. Even in the selection process by a congregation for a new pastor, they can seek to guard their traditions and potentially isolate themselves from the cultural pressures, and opportunities that exist.

Even in early church history, examples of secular influence were evident within church leadership and its selection. Herrin (1987, p. 63) points out that since the time of Constantine significant authority was exercised by emperors and secular authorities in the selection and appointment of church leaders, especially for the position of the Bishop of Constantinople. Ambrose as a candidate was not even a baptized Christian at the time. Herrin (1987, p. 64) also points out that Christian communities sometimes determined their new leader by personal qualities, regardless of any qualifications. She suggests that this reflects a blending of concerns from both the Christian and Imperial influences within society. This has been proven to be true in some circumstances as I have interacted with a variety of pastors. Some have, during their years of ministry, both benefitted from personal relationships and observed others benefiting from personal relationships, where qualifications have not been a factor or consideration in any formal process.

³ I came across a church covenant from a church within FEB Central that identified a strong majority rule position, which seemed to be a response to what had been perceived as an autocratic style of leadership by a former pastoral situation. It went so far as to covenant and expect that any individual who did not agree or could not work in harmony with the will of the majority, was expected to withdraw from fellowship from the church. Due to the nature of the material and the clear identification of the church, I have not included it within my bibliography for the safety and security of the church and her congregation.

Johnson, quoting Edward T. Oakes, suggests that if a pastor genuinely sought to pursue a God-centered ministry, it will “collide head-on with the self-absorption and anthropocentric focus that has become common place in many evangelical churches” (Johnson, 1995, p. 183). I will not be able to examine this premise in detail, but it does seem to suggest some significant cultural challenges and issues to be addressed within our churches and by our pastoral leadership today. As I had mentioned earlier, the church is not perfect, but it is still God’s plan to usher His kingdom to the earth. He will build His church.

3.2.5 Change Elements in Pastoral Ministry.

Church leadership and an ever changing culture require adaptation and change within aspects of leadership. Some would suggest that every aspect of leadership be examined, while others focus more upon the outworking and practical applications of pastoral leadership as avenues for change. Roxburgh identifies the diverse responses of those he calls *liminals*, and *emergents* to the significant factors of change within the framework of the church today. These, coupled with what Roxburgh acknowledges as a state of discontinuous change and transition in our unpredictable world makes pastoral leadership a challenge, at best (Roxburgh, 2005, pp. 50-51).

Schillebeeckx notes that “changes in forms of ministry never seem to come first, but are the result of social changes in the church and world: a newly developed spirituality, changed visions of the church, society, and world” (Schillebeeckx, 1983-1984, p. 435).

Anderson (1994c, p. 137) appeals for a fresh understanding of the philosophies and practices of a call to ministry, ordination and the particular roles of vocational minister and the laity. He acknowledges too, that any leadership that is restricted to any specific methodology will not survive in a period characterized by rapid change (Anderson, 1994c, pp. 136-137). With the advances in technology, the rapid growth of global communities, so much available instantly through the internet and many other examples of rapid change in our world today, the responsiveness of the church today becomes even more important as we seek to be biblical, yet relevant in the midst of all of the growth and change.

Dietterich (2005, pp. 94-95) touches on this idea of the need for change as she appeals to the imagery of old and new wineskins and the reality that the Gospel of Jesus Christ transforms, disrupts and changes everything, from the congregation, to traditions, structures, patterns of church life and ministry itself. While changes in the face of changing culture are necessary in order for continued relevance and effective communication of the Gospel, one aspect of change that Eugene Peterson points to in his interview with Wood is that in the midst of cultural change, longevity of service within one congregation, for the vocational pastor, actually serves to enhance ministry and congregational effectiveness (Wood, 2002, pp. 22-23).

So, not all change is good change, and change for the sake of change is not a healthy philosophy to embrace. There was a time when what was old, tested and validated was valued. In today's culture it almost appears as though we embrace what is new, without necessarily having any credible process for validation. We could all probably identify at least one idea or website that embraces and promotes the latest new concept or thought, only to later discover that it was false, misleading, inaccurate or perhaps damaging to the simple truths we embrace.

Several pastors that I spoke with identified that it took quite some time to become established within a congregation, to the point where they felt like they were the pastor and shepherd for the people and able to move forward productively and fruitfully in ministry. I heard several illustrations too, of the damaging effects of shortened ministries and the upheaval that a process of regular pastoral change brings to a church. Change is something to be managed with wise counsel and rightly submitted to God. It is necessary in many instances, but not all elements within the church benefit from regular change.

3.2.6 Pastoral Ministry: Theology, Training and Growth.

Change and responding to cultural issues, even congregation ones require ongoing growth and development for a vocational church leader. Life-long learning and being a student of people and culture is something that is an ongoing need, both inside and outside of a congregation —when and how that learning occurs can be significant to the life and ministerial success of a pastor. So too, the expectations that accompany such education can also impact the resulting effectiveness

in ministry. Education, training, leadership development and theological issues also touch the realm of pastoral identification, selection and hiring.

A good example of priorities and perspective on training and learning was brought forward by St. John (1998, pp. 95-96) as he observed aspects of Augustine's life. In commenting on a particular time away from ministry, Augustine's desire to study and equip himself as a priest was not for the purpose of becoming more proficient and knowledgeable of theology and scripture. Augustine had already excelled in these areas more than most. His purpose rather, was to examine and know himself better in light of the Scriptures and theology. From my experiences and interactions with students from several theological schools, what appeared to be foremost on their minds was the gaining of skills and knowledge that could be applied to a professional ministerial context. It is a delicate balance to maintain diligence in studies and subject materials, which require various forms of testing and evaluation (often papers written or exams), while at the same time maintaining a fervency and consistency in our personal relationship with God. Studying the synoptic gospels or Paul's letters to the churches for a paper is not the same as one's personal devotional time with the Lord.

Thompson, in his book on pastoral ministry comments that "Although the seminary degree requires both theory and praxis, the two areas are insufficiently related to each other to provide a theological foundation for ministry. Without a theological foundation, the minister too easily becomes the one who ensures the church's competitive edge in the marketplace of consumer religions" (Thompson, 2006, pp. 10-11).

Shaw affirms that "Christian leaders must continually place their organizations under scrutiny — and this through lenses more impacted by God's purposes than by the cultural patterns of the world around" (Shaw, 2006, p. 130). Again we see the integration of several themes as the issue of cultural impact is again raised as one measure by which a Christian leader examines their church and that only when properly subjected to God's purposes and priorities. Who is it that the Bible identifies as the one who ultimately leads the church – collectively and individually?

Anderson (1994c, p. 136) commented that although there are more books and more seminars produced on leadership, they are producing fewer leaders and there seems to be very little consensus on any theology of church leadership. Often, any theology that is developed is done so within the confines of individual denominations, and unfortunately is either not widely shared or developed in the broader context of the church, or it remains within the halls of academia and has not translated well into the practical development of leaders.

Johnson (1995, pp. 182-183) in referencing a noted pastor, attributes much of the confusion and crisis in pastoral identity to a theological failure. He suggests that much of our pastoral training now is focused on practical aspects of ministry — areas such as administration, preaching, leadership skills, small group dynamics and other related duties. Pastoral training is lacking in areas related to theology of ministry and understanding how God defines it and what He calls His ministers to be. I examined the course requirements for pastoral training at three seminaries in Ontario⁴ with significant influence upon the future church leaders being developed. Upon initial review, it appears that much of the emphasis is upon the practical aspects of ministry, as Johnson indicated, although several pastors noted the shortcomings of their academic preparation as it related to the administrative tasks necessary. With the costs associated with such education and the priorities and factors weighed by each institution in structuring their programs and planned outcomes, this may be an area worth examining. Perhaps a reasonable response to Johnson's comments is available and a possible solution might be easily integrated into the training that takes place.

Anderson (1994a, p. 264) suggests that a person considering vocational ministry would benefit more from growth and maturing in ministry contexts prior to or during formal academic education would be more beneficial to a successful ministry experience than would entering ministry directly from a classroom without adequate ministry training and nurture. In each of the three schools examined in appendix two, each program contains some element of practical

⁴ See Appendix 1 for the course outlines for the Master of Divinity – Pastoral program at each of the three schools examined.

ministry development or internship. The ministry training is, in part being addressed, although the scope and nurture with each experience would possibly be subject to the qualifications and abilities of the supervisor or mentor to effectively work with each student. Even in this, questions may be raised as to the selection and pairing process of mentors and interns.

Root (1985, pp. 159,164) brings further perspective to the theological question of pastoral leadership as he appeals to a New Testament basis for affirmation and identification based upon not only a community of believers, but upon something rooted in an identification by Christ, His Spirit and God. He further points out that no one can arbitrarily establish themselves as a genuine representative of Christ in His word. That is a work that occurs outside of man's influence. Several times I witnessed graduates from Seminary, eager to begin ministry now that they had completed their ministry degree, waiting and growing more discouraged as no ministry opportunities opened for them. A completed degree was no confirmation of a preparation by God for the specific ministry of pastoral leadership. I also witnessed doors opening quickly for some bright Seminary graduates in a church, only to have those doors quickly closed after less than two years of ministry as it became apparent that it was either not the right time, place, or calling for the individual. Unfortunately, the impact of those decisions was felt by both the individual and the congregation for months, if not years afterwards.

Each of Shaw, Anderson, Johnson and Root, raise questions and concerns about: theological grounding for a new generation of church leaders, balanced with practical ministry experience; elements of life-long learning and pastoral development; and the overall influence and role of God in the process of man's pastoral selection, influence and growth. Significant ministry has occurred over the years by people who were perceived as untrained. Jesus' disciples were probably the first that received comments about their lack of training in Acts 4:13, yet they were recognized as having been with Jesus. We can easily observe and acknowledge that theirs was a more direct means of instruction and mentoring. Today, we are more physically removed from Jesus' mentoring, but we have a clear source of instruction and a reminder of our need for grace and help every day. As such, it serves as a strong reminder that our theology and attempts to control our influence and impact within the church would be better served by our own efforts to

grow and draw closer to the One who influences and transforms lives and to encourage others by walking with them and pointing them in the same direction.

3.2.7 The Role and Influence of the Community of Faith.

A final piece to be considered is the role of the contemporary and historical community of faith within the sphere of identifying, selecting and appointing or hiring pastoral leadership and the role each potential minister plays in the consideration of a pastoral appointment.

Batson (2002, pp. 148-149) recognized that within early Baptist circles, as more and more hierarchal and associational structures developed, congregations lost their local autonomy and matters like ordination moved beyond each individual community of faith. He comments on ordination to indicate that “it was linked (at least until the fifth century) to the duty of the community of faith to call out its own members for specific ministry tasks” (Batson, 2002, p. 148). Batson also notes that a part of the confusion that may exist within Baptist circles regarding the extent of authority and limits of authority to a particular congregation may be due to the fact that historically, many early Baptist congregations expected lifetime pastorates. There was not the same movement by clergy as there is today.

Even with the notion of pastoral movement between churches, there is significant responsibility on the part of the church congregation in the selection process for a new pastor. Schmidt (1979, p. 8) raises the question about whether a church has seriously assessed and understood its needs and the style of leadership required before engaging in a search process, or the extending of an invitation, or call to a potential new pastor. He also asks the same question of the prospective pastor as to how well they understand the actual needs of a congregation and whether there is in fact, a fit. When a pastor is seeking to provide financially for their family, as just one of the possible pressures, and a congregation may feel a need to fill their pastoral need, it may influence objectivity and a willingness to sincerely wait on God and pursue the best fit for both. Even in choosing a potential candidate or church, with the limited amount of time often involved in a selection process, it would be difficult to clearly determine the compatibility of character, personality, giftedness and other qualities needed to ensure a strong relationship and fit for ministry.

I liken it in some ways to the process of dating. No one would intentionally do what they could to damage a first meeting or potential relationship. First impressions are important. But how long does it take to actually begin to get to know someone, especially someone who initially was a stranger to us? How well do we actually know what we are or are not looking for as we begin to consider potential partnerships? How willing are we to let down our guard and expose the blemishes or difficulties we struggle with in our attempts to gain the trust and confidence of those we are seeking to build a relationship with. It is true that those things are in time, revealed, but as human beings we don't often lead with that, so who are we actually getting to know and how would we accurately determine our compatibility and fit with an individual or within a particular ministry environment?

Stitzinger, quoting Jonathan Edwards, refers to his strong convictions toward the uniting of a pastor and a congregation. He likens such a unity, when done in a proper manner to a young man marrying a virgin. "There is a joyful service and delight on the part of both parties to their mutual benefit and blessing" (Stitzinger, 1995, p. 174). Kent (1967, p. 335) affirms this idea of fit as he suggests that a symbiotic relationship between pastor and congregation is critical to the fruitful work of God through that church. With a good fit within a congregation, productive and fruitful ministry can still be a challenge, but how much more difficult if there is not a unity and synergy within the church towards ministry? Much effort can be expended simply to keep the church together and with an illusion of fruitfulness, never mind the damaging impact of conflict and strife within a church or the impact of a sudden dismissal of a pastor from the church. More energy is expended with matters inside the church than could possibly be directed towards effective and fruitful ministry in a world that delights in pointing out the flaws of the church and her claims of something better in Jesus Christ.

In one way or another, each of these authors emphasize the role of the local churches and their expectations, while also stressing the fact that pastors should also be aware of their own long-term plans and expectations, and the critical need for a symbiotic relationship between pastor and congregation that is vital to the fruitful work of God through that church.

Herrin (1987, pp. 57-58) acknowledges that in early Christian history, groups of believers chose their own elders, or welcomed those recommended to them from other groups of believers while Holm (2003, pp. 203-204) points out that in the context of the Mennonite Brethren denomination's former practices, the local congregation was primarily involved in both the calling and affirmation of persons for pastoral leadership, while today the church is only involved in the affirmation. Also within the context of the Mennonite Brethren denomination, Holm (2003, pp. 207-208) points out 4 key principles to consider which involve: the corporate, local church involvement in an pastoral selection; the local pastor's role in encouraging individuals to consider a ministry vocation; practical ministry experience as necessary for those who are considering a ministry vocation; and the necessity of personal spiritual mentoring for growth and development for each ministry leader. These principles are not worked out within the context of an academic setting, but are rooted in practices based in relationship and intentionality within the local church.

Bomberger (1967, p. 12), in a critique of the church and its process for selecting and appointing pastoral leadership, suggests that each person considering vocational ministry must first settle some very basic questions internally regarding God's call and being certain of His choosing. Bomberger goes on to comment that within our contemporary church we have become too sophisticated or too worldly to even talk about someone's call. In assessing a person's call, it is important firstly, that that individual has wrestled through the matter and has a sense within them that God indeed may be directing them towards some type of vocational ministry. Following that it falls to the church to be able to openly discuss this aspect of ministry and be able to speak to the reality of such a calling. This is something that one would usually be unable to distinguish after one or two interviews. Instead, it would be observed and proven in the person's character and actions through their ministry and service, both inside and possibly outside of the church.

Stott (1989, pp. 8-9) presents a challenge that should profoundly impact any pastoral ministry and selection processes, that is that the true pastoral oversight of the church belongs to God (Father, Son & Holy Spirit). Similarly, Claypool (1973, p. 9) comments on a pastor's motivation for ministry — service before God, or ostentatiously before mankind, and he emphasizes the need for a pastor to truly know God and His priorities for ministry. There is a very common

notion within evangelical, and most other church circles, that a person is hired to the office or role of pastor. While it may be necessary for the sake of structures or other pragmatic reasons to establish such a title or function within the church, we must not lose sight of the fact that God has established this role within the church already and it would serve us well to remember this, and to seek to ensure that appropriate persons with adequate spiritual gifting and inclination for pastoral ministry are identified and released to these roles. Taylor affirms that “the place of ministry should provide the opportunity for a pastor to exercise his gifts and abilities” (Taylor, 2013, p. 109). The church, in seeking the right individual, should take note of this as a priority component to their hiring process.

Practices of leadership selection and appointment (often through “ordination”) regularly vary, but Fowler gives us some insights into the current practice within the Fellowship Baptist denomination in Ontario and seems to appeal to a larger collection of wisdom at the outset for such a task.

“When the members of a church vote to appoint a man as pastor, they have “ordained” him. Perhaps an awareness of this would create a more serious attitude toward such a vote. Perhaps this would even suggest the wisdom of calling an “ordination council” of sorts before appointment to solicit the wisdom of leaders from other churches, in the same way that such advice is now sought at a later date” (Fowler, 1992, p. 35)

Fowler also points out that within his circles, ordination is a public recognition of a person’s calling and gifting by God for pastoral ministry and that this ordination normally occurs a few years after pastoral service has begun and not at its inception (Fowler, 1992, p. 33). Such an admission raises questions as to the practice of the selection and appointment of pastoral leaders if they are not publicly recognized until sometime later. Fowler himself admits some of the difficulties in current Fellowship Baptist practice in a general plea for change, or at least, calls for a review of the practices and philosophies surrounding the assessment and appointment of pastoral leaders for the future of the God’s church. “The assessment and appointment of the leaders who will shape the faith and practice of the Church is too important to be trivialized by assuming that the way we now do it is obviously the best way to do it” (Fowler, 1992, p. 36).

The church has a significant responsibility to identify and recognize the unique gifting and preparation by God to establish people for pastoral ministry prior to their selection and appointment. Within these communities of faith, the diverse generational representation would bring with it a mix of history, understanding and expectation, which could create the tension and confusion in pastoral identification and authority. Fowler identifies that “in a covenant community, for the sake of shared loyalty to the cause for which the community came into being, they work at relations of mutual trust and loyalty with their companions in community, and with the cause that animates its purpose” (Fowler, 1987, p. 35). The community of faith therefore, has a vital role, not only in the selection process of a pastor, but in the corporate life of the community and their respective effectiveness and success in ministry.

3.3 Literature Review Summary

Several concerns over the modern pastoral office and the selection and appointment of pastoral leaders have taken shape and provided many opportunities for a literature study. Of the literature reviewed, 49.3% was published since 2000, and 64% was since 1994⁵. Throughout the more than four decades represented within this literature review, similar concerns and cautions have been raised and now, in 2014, they are still being discussed and experienced within pastoral ministry according to the pastors I interviewed in this study. Similar comments have been made as I have interacted with pastors at various conferences and meetings. That such concerns are just as valid today as they were 10, 20 or 40+ years ago may be a reflection of the constancy of mankind and the biblical truth found in Ecclesiastes 1:9 that there really is nothing new under the sun. Yet, as Longman notes in his commentary on Ecclesiastes 1:9, God does act “in new ways, even on the earth” (Longman III, 1998, p. 73). Circumstances and their dynamics may change, as Roxburgh affirms (Roxburgh, 2005, pp. 11-14), but at the core, relationships and the struggles of those who work within churches with people will probably find a cycle of similarities. Roxburgh, dealing with issues of church leaders lost in transition, affirms the need to “return the God we encounter in Christ back to the center of what being a Christian is all about”

⁵ These percentages do not include those works cited that were a part of the practical theology and theoretical basis for the methodology of this thesis

(Roxburgh, 2005, p. 13). Mayhue noted similar patterns and concerns about church leadership in his article as he cited Os Guinness' work "Church Growth – Success at What Price?" He noted that what marked the 19th and 20th century churches with regard to distortions in pastoral leadership also seems to define the 21st century (Mayhue, 2011, p. 214). Roxburgh published in 2005. The Os Guinness article that Mayhue quotes was published in 1886.

Unfortunately, much of the material available (Reimer, 2010, p. 1) through this literature study is anecdotal (Mayhue, 1995, p. 39), (Schmidt, 1979, pp. 3-4), (Blackaby, 2001, pp. x-xi) with very little in the way of studies or evidence to support a clear determination of what is wrong. Tidball, in quoting several sources points to the notion that traditional ministry is dying and that a "number of ministers confirm its terminal state" (Tidball, 2008b, pp. 314-315).

Even within the context of much of the available materials reviewed, there are only passing references (Sandulak, 2006, pp. 97-98), (Anderson, 1994c, p. 136), (Brister, 1973, p. 22) to issues related to the selection and appointment of pastors or to evaluating pastoral success or failure. Much more emphasis is placed upon what the pastor does within the pastoral office, and how he/she should do it, and commentary when they are not successful. Opinion and conjecture concerning the state of pastoral candidates and pastoral ministry, while many people will nod their agreement, have little force when faced with a sound, competing argument. The notion that traditional practices or "that is the way we do it" is authoritative for pastoral leadership selection and appointment lends very little comfort or conviction as the church plans for the future. In speaking with several pastors, denominational leaders and even the laity, there are concerns expressed about: the lack of pastoral leadership available; the failures of some in pastoral ministry; and the challenges to find suitable candidates for any particular church context. As recently as April 2015, a comment was made to me by a human resources consultant that churches need help because they do not know how to select and hire pastors. As was mentioned above, one of the challenges that Reimer identifies within the Canadian context related to the health of ministers in light of a growing need to retain ministers and attract new ones, is that "fewer studies have focused on evangelical denominations, and one is hard-pressed to find published Canadian data for any of these groups" (Reimer, 2010, p. 1).

Any data, but specifically Canadian data, is difficult to find and it is therefore even more difficult to draw conclusions (general or otherwise) about the concerns within pastoral leadership selection until such data is available. This is one of the reasons why this study is particularly relevant at this time. There continue to be many discussions about the nature, role, function and challenges of the pastoral office. There is very little conversation or literature however, about the selection of individuals to the pastoral role and the importance and impact of those selections. The challenges and issues of the pastoral office may change over time, but the identification and selection of a pastor to oversee and lead each church body will continue to be a vital element in the health and growth of the Body of Christ. It is hoped that the results of this research process will begin to generate some of the necessary data to help inform churches and denominations within Canada of matters to be addressed in the identification, selection and appointment of vocational pastors. This may lead to a re-orientation of hiring practices and to greater well-being and success for our pastors and the churches they serve within.

3.4 Scriptural Considerations for Pastoral Selection

Within the early church, at first, there was “no sharp clergy-laity distinction because ministry operated significantly in terms of giftedness and function. At the end of the first century there arose an increasing sense of major ministries being permanent offices, to be exercised for a lifetime on the basis of proper appointment (Guy, 2004, p. 93). That proper appointment was rooted within the early Christian texts (Guy, 2004, pp. 93-96). Such an appointment “meant that each church had a leading figure responsible for the doctrine as well as the discipline of the community, since he would judge between claims to interpret the Bible correctly” (Hall, 2003, p. 35). Before we draw too many conclusions or formulate a response to the experiences of the pastors and churches contained within the literature review, we would be well served by reflecting upon some scriptural considerations that may help inform a pastoral selection process.

1 Samuel 16:7 seems like an appropriate place to start as we consider what God has to say about the identification and selection of leaders: “But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” As in the case of Samuel in seeking to find, identify and anoint Israel’s next king, we too are often limited in

our perspective and prone to only look at outward appearances, credentials, skills or whatever other criteria we might observe using our physical senses in our search for a new pastor. Johnson deals with this in greater detail as he affirms the anointing of David by Samuel as an indication of the priority that God has for the hearts of mankind and that He is more concerned about this than any outward characteristics in His leaders (Johnson, 2012, pp. 462-464). This serves as a reminder that there are other criteria by which God determines His leaders, specifically inward qualities and characteristics. These inward qualities need to be strong considerations for a church as they seek to identify the person whom God has identified for the specific time and place for their church. If God would speak audibly to us, our search would be easier, but we still need to invest the time to get to know a candidate to be able to observe and discern those qualities that God prioritizes and affirm a candidate's calling to a specific church context.

The whole nature of leadership within the church and the emphasis that Jesus has for those who lead is often contrary to what we often see in the world. "Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all." Contrary to what the world's definition of a leader is Jesus seems to emphasize the priority for an attitude of service for a leader, rather than an exercising of and emphasis on authority within the kingdom of God. As Edwards states, "The implications of diakonos and doulos for the Twelve, as well as for ministers and leaders in the church of every generation, are inexhaustible. The Christian fellowship does not exist for their sake, but they for it... The congregation does not belong to him, rather, he belongs to it" (Edwards, 2002, p. 326). Several times in the context of the interviews, comments were made by pastors who desired their own congregation, as the senior or lead pastor, so that they could effect change and shape things the way they believed they should be within the church. This may indicate issues or attitudes of authority in the pastoral leadership role, rather than that of the desired servant that Jesus intends.

We are all quite familiar I would expect, with the passages of scripture outlining the various qualifications of elders and church leaders, found in 1 Timothy 3:1-10 and Titus 1:5-11. These are primarily character qualifications, with practical application and evidence within home and

personal life. Knight, in his commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, comments that the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 are fairly clear, or else Paul adequately explains them. He also comments that these qualifications are a call for the church to be able to evaluate a potential leader and provide the basis by which the congregation would select the person that God would intend to lead them, “since such qualifications are the outworking of God’s grace” (Knight III, 1992, pp. 152-166). Knight continues in his commentary as he remarks about the seven qualifications listed in Titus 1, reinforcing similar qualities, as well as the warnings against five vices, which would hinder and disqualify someone for a pastoral role until such time as God, by His grace might overcome these (Knight III, 1992, pp. 287-294). “Paul means, and Timothy understands, that leaders of sound reputation, who bear the marks of the Spirit, are to be chosen. Leaders of this caliber give no grounds for accusations against them” (Towner, 2006, pp. 690-691). They are all matters of character and conduct. These qualities also reflect a requirement for faithfulness and commitment, as a husband with his one wife. The implications of this could move well beyond the text to much more of what the marital relationship entails, including weathering storms and challenges over the long term, recognizing the covenant nature of the relationship, as well as celebrating and rejoicing over many other times. There is also an element of managing the personal household and one’s children (assuming they have them). Managing and growing relationships, finances, frustrations, tasks that are routine or mundane but necessary (like cutting the grass, doing dishes, taking out the garbage, or changing a diaper), and aspects of sharing the gospel with one’s children and nurturing the whole family in their faith.

We may all recognize and agree, I would expect, that these biblical characteristics from Timothy and Titus are necessary, and I saw them listed as requirements in a number of job postings for vocational pastors. How many times though do we ask questions about these things, or observe them in the life of a candidate? How do we determine if a candidate, especially one that we are meeting for the first time, is self-controlled, sensible and hospitable? How do we determine if they have a good reputation outside of the church, within their larger community, their workplace (if they are transitioning from secular employment), or with their neighbours, other parents at their school or from a sports team?

How seriously do we ask questions and examine a potential candidate and how well do we know them? I liken it to a date, and John also referenced this during his interview. How many people, when they are going out on their first date with their prospective lifelong partner, ignore first impressions and pay very little attention to the small details about their appearance, plans for the evening and even dental hygiene? No one! How many people, when first being interviewed won't want to impress, be prepared with their answers, and even when preaching, won't bring their best forward? This may easily be sustainable over the first few dates, even a few months, but once married, has anyone ever been surprised by slight, subtle changes or things they had not expected (like snoring, other aspects of appearance or details of character and personality, or am I the only one)?

This is why I included the portion of 1 Timothy 3:8-10, because in it there is an aspect, after the character pieces appear to be in place, where a prospective deacon is first tested (δοκιμαζέσθωσαν) and found to be above reproach BEFORE they might serve. Tested, approved, examined, analyzed, discerned and proven, these verbs indicated a refining process and a period of time where the evidence of the qualities being sought is obvious to those who are watching. It isn't a one-time occurrence, where something may be marked off on a checklist of character qualities or indicated that it was there. It needs to be proven and recognizable for others to see and affirm much like the whole congregation was able to do when the first deacons were identified and appointed in Acts 6. There was a unity and evidence of God at work through the confirmation of those first, selected church leaders, and the work of God continued, dramatically. If such testing and proving is a necessary step in the recognition and appointment of deacons, would it not then follow that some similar manner of being tested and proven should be in place prior to the appointment of someone to an overseer or pastoral position within the church? Paul also speaks to that in 1 Timothy 5, especially in verses 22 through 25 when he cautions against hastily laying hands on someone to appoint them to leadership. Knight points this out and suggests the need for an intentional and careful evaluation, and taking the time to consider both the positive and negative evidences of a person's life (Knight III, 1992, pp. 169-170).

How is this worked out when a pastor leaves a church to move to another because of struggles, a desire for a change or due to something character related? For just one consideration, how then is

their reputation with those outside of the church proven, especially when they move to a new city and do not have the relationships established to see this tested? Or perhaps, circumstances were challenging at a former church, so they moved to a new church. How will this new church fare with this pastor when they are faced with challenges and difficulties – will the pastor move on again and they will need to hire someone who can shepherd them through the challenges they face? The role of overseer or shepherd to the church is not to be taken lightly. Acts 20:28 and 1Peter 5:1-3, while being directed specifically to people at the time, also has application for us I believe. Shepherds are to safeguard the flock and themselves, according to the will of God and proving to be examples to their church. What examples are we being to the church? What are they learning from their pastors? Jesus, in Luke 6:40 reminds us that everyone after they have been trained will be like their teacher, because the teacher is the model and example they have to follow. Pastors are also a model that others will follow. Hopefully, as they follow Christ, others will also follow Christ and become more like Him, and pastors will multiply other leaders and pastors after that image.

In 1Peter 5:1-3, Peter talks about the priority of shepherding the people you are responsible for, voluntarily, eagerly and according to God's intentions, all the while being an example to them of what it looks like to follow God, submitted and obedient to His will and intentions and with an attitude of humility. This is to be done freely, willingly and with an attitude of service to your congregation. The responsibility and position of a pastor is not to be viewed as a means to financial gain or merely as a job. Michaels suggests that what Peter has in view here is that financial support should never become an inducement for pastors to serve (Michaels, 1988, p. 285). While there are costs associated with living expenses and food, the financial support from serving as a pastor should be adequate, but not the primary consideration when considering pastoral ministry, or changing pastoral positions. The attitudes displayed by a vocational pastor in their ministry and service will be an example to others, pastors and congregants alike. Whether a positive example, or a poor one, there will be an example set and being able to know the character and attitudes of a potential candidate would be an important factor in the selection of a pastor.

One final consideration is this: once a pastor is ordained or appointed as a pastor does it necessarily follow that they can skip past key elements of selection and serve at any other church, because, once a pastor, always a pastor? Would the identification, selection and affirmation of the calling of a pastor to a particular church, suddenly be an affirmation of that same person to any other church? Does God's calling and positioning of an individual to serve in a local body of believers transfer to any other body, because all of the parts are interchangeable? Or, when we see this occur, is it evidence of an attitude or practice that the skills, experience and reputation are the most favorable, transferable and sought after? Is this a situation where our primary consideration and practice is the calling those who possess these qualities, education, skills and experience, those whom we view as being properly equipped to fulfill the tasks and role, and meet the needs of the church? If this is the case, then what really is the calling to? Stan Fowler raises an interesting point in suggesting that the practice of ordination today may be simply the "granting of denominational credentials" for pragmatic reasons and may not reflect what the New Testament means by the term (Fowler, 1992, p. 35).

3.5 Scriptural Considerations Summary

It seems as though there has developed a disconnect between much of what the Bible says about leadership, and church leadership in particular, and our current practices in the identification, selection and hiring processes of pastors. Significant emphasis appears to be on qualities and standards that may be intended to augment the biblical qualities and principles and focus on the specifics of ministry and role expectations. Documents or job descriptions make mention of required character qualities that mirror 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, but, other than making it an expressed requirement, more emphasis in the hiring process is placed upon the necessary skills and particulars of the role. Little time is invested in determining whether a candidate and hiring considerations and practices are aligned with a biblical perspective and emphasis. Within FEB, any new pastors often serve for a lengthy period of time before they are thoroughly examined by their peers as to their biblical and theological competence, prior to being "ordained" (Fowler, 1992, p. 35). Merkle, in his article, concludes that the lists of qualifications for elders and overseers in the Pastoral Epistles are; general character and behavioral qualities required; specifically written for leaders of the church and are necessary for the position; not

comprehensive as the lists vary; universal – in that they are non-negotiable and should be upheld for leaders today (Merkle, 2014, pp. 186-188) .

Towner sums it well as he quotes L.T. Johnson’s assertion, “today, candidates for leadership in the church are often measured by the sort of criteria applied in the corporate setting, where education, innovation, and a youthful, energetic image...govern the ‘professional’ profile...is drastically superficial and at odds with the kind of values that frame leadership in these texts” (Towner, 2006, p. 269).

3.6 Chapter Summary

Regardless of the time in which it was written, literature about the ministry of the church expresses concerns and challenges pastors must face. Circumstances and contexts may change, but at the core we must acknowledge that the work of ministry is not one that is easy. Jesus said that those who follow Him will suffer and be persecuted (John15:18-21). 2 Timothy 3:12 reminds us that those who desire to follow Christ and live godly lives will be persecuted. Challenges, persecution and the resulting concerns expressed are not new. This reinforces the priorities that we find within scripture to recognize the kind of leadership that God promotes. This proven character and calling – biblical characteristics and criteria are necessary for the work of the ministry as man cannot accomplish this work on his own. It is God’s plan at work.

With the literature review and scriptural considerations in view, we move towards the acquisition of further data through quantitative and qualitative methods. The next chapter provides further methodology and background for that data collection.

CHAPTER 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Within this chapter, I build upon the outline of the methodology from section 1.7 and specific strategies utilized in the research, including:

- the rationale for selecting FEB Central as the initial pool for data collection
- the process of identification and selection of the sample for the interviews
- the analysis of the data obtained

I will also give some background into the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists and FEB Central, obtained from their websites, in order to provide greater context for the data being presented.

This will allow the reader to understand why only male pastors were interviewed in this study. It will also help the reader to understand, or at least more easily identify any differences between the expressed philosophy of the FEB leadership and the experience or practice at the church level as the study progresses.

4.2 Research Plan

There are several factors which lead to the perceptions and concerns found within the literature review for church leadership in Canada. It is the intent of this study to explore the identification, selection and hiring experiences as the starting point for pastoral ministry within one denomination, the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists — Central region of Ontario. In order to come to an understanding of the factors of the hiring process and its influence and possible affect upon successful pastoral functioning and well-being, I sought to engage several pastors within the denomination.

As mentioned in section 1.7, this study reflects a blended approach consisting of empirical, qualitative and quantitative elements. Using a blended approach was relevant for this study as the quantitative portion aided in revealing broad patterns and apparent relational connections to factors related to the research question. These, coupled with the qualitative benefit of more in-depth, personal interviews with a select number of participants gave greater insights and a more comprehensive scope to this study (Osmer, 2008, pp. 49-50). With so little available data to draw

from, it was necessary to engage in elements of extensive and intensive research in order to attempt to give proper treatment to the question in view through several perspectives. Osmer acknowledges the benefit of such mixed methodology in research as he describes such blended strategies of quantitative and qualitative research along a continuum between the two (Osmer, 2008, pp. 49-50). Van der Ven concurs with the concept of a continuum between qualitative and quantitative research, and the complementary benefits of utilizing both in an appropriate research setting (van der Ven, 1988, p. 24).

Data was generated through the use of a literature review, an examination of scriptural considerations, an online survey and in-depth, personal interviews with a sampling of pastors about their experiences within their selection and hiring process. The result of this study may be a predictor of potential success for new pastoral hires. It may also present a challenge for the church and her leadership to re-examine its practices and processes for pastoral selection with the goal of enhancing future success and ultimately the advancement of God's kingdom.

This study began with an observation that pastors were struggling and burning out. Through asking questions and performing a literature review, the central question of this thesis came into greater focus. This made it necessary to move towards a greater investigation into a larger denominational group in order to further focus the central question and begin to obtain data to validate the factors and concerns that were being raised about the success of pastors and the influence or impact of the hiring process upon that success.

4.3 Background to Sample Selection

I chose the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists – Central Region as the sample group because of greater ease of access for interview candidates. This access is due to relationships I have with several FEB pastors as a result of participation at various Fellowship events, my studies and employment at Heritage College & Seminary (the Seminary affiliated with FEB Central) in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada. I also chose FEB because it represents a fairly homogeneous group. The homogeneity of this group reduces some other variables that may influence the results, other than the ones that are most relevant to the investigation and interviews at this time. Several quotation and excerpts are included within this section from the websites of regional and

national FEB offices to give greater context for the sample group. Also included are materials and quotations relevant to their philosophy and practice of pastoral selection.

The interview pool will consist only of male participants as FEB Central (and the Fellowship Baptists generally) predominantly hire male pastors as a general position within the association. In a position statement on this issue, as voted on at National Convention, November 4, 1997, the practical implications of the statement were: “1. In Fellowship Baptist Churches the biblical office of Pastor/Elder/Overseer is for qualified men appointed by the local church to a teaching, governing ministry, thus shaping the doctrine and practice of the church. 2. Churches are expected to call staff members “pastors” only when they qualify for the biblical office of pastor/elder/overseer.”⁶

This position statement came as a result of a broad consultation across regions and in local churches and represented the majority of interests expressed during those meetings and as voted on at the national convention. Please note that in the following quotations and excerpts, the bolded emphasis is mine.

From an ecclesiological perspective, “The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists is a voluntary association of churches. Membership in The Fellowship requires that each church be in agreement with The Fellowship's Statement of Faith. Other than this basic requirement, Fellowship churches enjoy a great measure of independence. Ties are formed through relationships, rather than lines of authority. The Fellowship has ministry arms that work in partnership with our local churches...Fellowship Ministries also provides encouragement and resources to our Regions to assist them as they work with our churches to fulfill Christ’s commission in their communities, Regions, across Canada and around the world.”⁷

⁶ http://www.febcentral.ca/pdf/for_churches/Gender_In_Leadership_Position_Statement.pdf, accessed January 3, 2014

⁷ <http://www.fellowship.ca/WhatWeDo>, accessed January 2, 2014

FEB Central, as a regional office of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists in Canada, makes available resources and support for churches, and through their voluntary association, churches engage with FEB Central and financially support the association. Churches are aligned with the statement of faith, but **are independent with regards to their specific ministry focus, their selection of leadership** and the specific, practical dynamics and structures of the church governance.⁸ FEB Central affirms the independent autonomy of the local church, thus leaving the identification, selection and hiring of pastoral staff to each local body. FEB Central does not appoint pastors to serve in certain churches out of a pool of denominational candidates.

“We believe that a church is a company of immersed believers, called out from the world, separated unto the Lord Jesus, voluntarily associated for the ministry of the Word, the mutual edification of its members, the propagation of the faith and the observance of the ordinances. **We believe it is a sovereign, independent body, exercising its own divinely awarded gifts, precepts and privileges under the Lordship of Christ, the Great Head of the church.** We believe that its officers are pastors and deacons.”⁹

Within the FEB Central region they have identified the need for a new position on staff within their region: “A Leadership Development Director who will be expected to network with pastors/leaders for the purpose of coaching them to influence other pastors/leaders towards innovation, accountability and excellence. Efforts must be made to create a mentoring/coaching culture by promoting the internship model. Consultant George Bullard advised: “To ensure a better time for all contestants, the front runners need to set the pace.” Hence, the experienced pastors/leaders need to be coached in order to influence the field of ‘runners.’ **The Leadership Development Director will also be responsible to create a system for processing new ministry applicants,** assisting churches in pastoral transitions, and supervising the establishment of functioning Associations.”¹⁰

⁸ You can refer to FEB Central’s website for the particulars surrounding their philosophy of ministry, activities and support of churches: <http://www.febcentral.ca/index.php>. (Bolded emphasis is mine.)

⁹ http://www.febcentral.ca/pages.php?_ID=47, accessed January 2, 2014

¹⁰ http://www.febcentral.ca/pdf/Ministry_Plan_2010_Presentation.pdf, accessed January 2, 2014 (pages 1). (Bolded emphasis throughout is mine)

FEB Central also stipulates on their website a priority for raising up and equipping effective leaders. Within a newly established framework of leadership development, FEB Central has established several priorities, including¹¹:

- Guided ministry experience through intentional internships in our local churches (2 years full time concurrent with theological education at Heritage College and Seminary).
- Coaching of new pastors by seasoned pastors.
- **Assisting churches looking a Senior Pastor or staff person.**(bolded emphasis mine)
- **Assisting pastors in transition.** (bolded emphasis mine)
- Ongoing leadership training and coaching for our youth pastors.
- Local church leadership development through: deacon/elder training; seminars and resources; disciple-making.

FEB Central also makes available to churches, through their website, a booklet entitled FEB CENTRAL Pastoral Search Committee Presentation¹², which is intended to be a resource to assist churches in their pastoral search process, specifically their search for a Senior Pastor. This resource outlines things to consider and provides templates for: a job description; a Senior Pastor selection guide; a suggested order of service for a new pastor's induction; and a sample for the desired qualification of a pastor; and four pages containing seven steps for a pastoral search committee to take in calling a new Senior Pastor. In recent years, FEB Central has attempted to make changes and engage in an intentional manner to support the local church, especially in areas of leadership development, growth and recognition. The impact of these changes has yet to be fully realized and it appears that those interviewed during this study were not directly or intentionally impacted by the new priorities identified by the Regional Leadership. In the section of FEB Central's 2010 Ministry Plan entitled, Ministry Strategy, they state: "the revised ministry priorities are to plant new churches, coach healthy pastors/leaders, and mentor motivated

¹¹ <http://www.febcentral.ca/pages.php? ID=28&subsection=1>, The full priority list was accessed on January 2, 2014. Only priorities relevant to this study were listed

¹² http://www.febcentral.ca/usrfiles/PastoralSearch_PresRedraftOct2011.pdf, accessed on January 2, 2014. Some sections of this resource can be viewed in appendix five

pastors/leaders. This revision calls for a commitment of all Directors and specialized ministry staff to network more proactively with pastors/leaders, Associations, clusters of Associations and congregations. Directors and specialized ministry staff need to function like sales managers who recruit sales representatives (motivated pastors/leaders) who present the product (the Region's vision and objectives) to their territory (Association) of potential buyers (local church pastors/leaders.)”¹³

I can understand and relate to the manner with which these new priorities are being conveyed. It is unfortunate, in my opinion, that the various roles and responsibilities within the Body of Christ are expressed in a manner that mirrors an obvious worldly perspective and management processes. I expect that with such a strategy, an attempt will be made to be aligned with the expressed intention by the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists for relationship and partnership to characterize their association. The concern is that the inclusion of more business language and strategy in their described emphasis might potentially filter to the churches on a practical level. This in turn, could steer the church and her leadership further from embracing the basic aspects of faith, obedience, discipleship and stewardship that we are called to and a more professional perspective and attitude may ensue. As there is very little authority for FEB Central to actively immerse themselves into a church's independent hiring process, they serve primarily as advisors, facilitators or resources for a church. A church therefore would not need to follow the intentions or principles that are espoused by the association leadership, or follow the advice that might be offered.

4.4 The Survey

Within the central region of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists there are 270 churches with 536 pastors (senior, associate and youth). I chose this denomination due to their position within the evangelical spectrum (fairly conservative theologically and with a strong emphasis on the Bible and outreach) and their size, in order to cover a potentially broader range of possibilities

¹³ http://www.febcentral.ca/pdf/Ministry_Plan_2010_Presentation.pdf, accessed January 2, 2014 (pages 1&2)

and perspective on the research question through the sample data generated. From their own survey, completed through Arrow Leadership in the fall of 2008, this region consists of younger pastors. Of the fifty-seven percent (57%) response rate, forty-two percent (42%) were under forty five years of age, and seventy-five percent (75%) were under fifty-five years of age (FEB Central, n.d.).

I recognized that I could not interview 536 pastors, so I created a survey¹⁴ that went to them from their denominational office. The survey allowed me to identify the different experiences, length of service, educational qualifications, number of pastorates, etcetera. Each survey participant was given clear instructions concerning the survey and its use. They had the option to participate in the survey or not, completing the entire survey or simply a portion, and could choose to cease their participation at any time. Each survey participant, prior to beginning the survey had to indicate their understanding and acceptance of the survey parameters and use, and indicate their willingness for their answers to be used in this research. This helped me to gain statistical data which gave me a broad perspective of the pastor's context. It also allowed for a profile and patterns to begin emerging and the development of a more general understanding of the current culture and praxis from which inferences were drawn (Leedy, 2010, pp. 187-188).

The survey was distributed to the pastors through FEB Central from their leadership on my behalf. This survey asked questions related to a pastor's years of experience, number of churches served at, duration of ministry time at each church, their experiences in the hiring process and ministry service, their sense of calling and personal giftedness, and whether they would be willing to participate in a personal interview process as well. This allowed for a broad perspective and a profile of the context in a particular denomination. It also provided a broad overview and general themes and patterns from the pastor's experiences with the hiring process that required more in-depth exploration through an intensive interview process. The survey included both open and closed questions. The more closed-ended, numeric questions (ratings)

¹⁴ Refer to Appendix 2 for a copy of the survey and survey consent form distributed on my behalf by FEB Central's leadership.

gave the respondent fixed responses to choose from. This allowed for easier response by the participant, and aided in the comparison and analysis of the results that were obtained (Neuman, 2000, pp. 260-261). These results then allowed for some basic patterns and statistics to be revealed within the sample group, which could be confirmed or clarified through data that was received from the more intensive interviews.

Moving through the accumulation of data, further questions and similarities were revealed, which guided the investigative process. Specific and unique in-depth personal experiences, feelings, realities, understandings and perceptions of the pastors and the emerging patterns were explored further by employing a qualitative study, using semi-structured interviews (Leedy, 2010, p. 148) (Osmer, 2008, pp. 62-63). As I progressed, I used triangulation (Leedy, 2010, p. 99) (Neuman, 2000, pp. 124-125) in the mixed methodology to compare the data develop a fuller and more comprehensive study. This allowed for different perspectives in looking at the thesis question and allowed for the discovery and focus of similarities (and differences) which were then integrated with a scriptural analysis of the data and resultant themes. This triangulation also aided in the internal validity of this study.

4.5 Interviews

From the survey, pastors who expressed a willingness to participate in follow-up interviews and who provided a reasonable variety of experiences were contacted for interviews. Some of those participating were youth pastors; some were associate pastors; and some were Senior Pastors. These positions all reflect the idea of calling, ministry and a pastoral role, and often follow a very similar process for hiring. This qualitative approach provided me with a deeper, personal understanding of the contexts of the pastors. These are factors which cannot be revealed by quantitative data or literature reviews.

Interview participants were selected in order to provide a range of pastoral ministry experience, from one year to multiple years. They were selected from the target group based upon a diverse variety of experiences, number of pastorates, and length of service in pastoral ministry. This allowed for the most meaningful comparisons possible within the sample size and allow for a

better triangulation of the results and outcomes. The selected interview participants had served in one, two, or up to three churches, thus allowing a broadening of the experiences available.

Of the thirty-seven survey respondents, there were two, who declined to be interviewed, that had served in four different churches. There were two respondents who had served at five or more churches, but they also declined to be interviewed. The interview respondents selected were varied in age so that a good cross-section could be had in the interviews, reflective of varying degrees of experience and duration of ministry service. The majority of respondents did not serve within their home church, but some did and were willing to be interviewed. This allowed me to obtain both the perspectives of someone raised up within their home church and someone who was hired without the same relational connections, through the interview process. In total, thirteen individuals were interviewed, and these thirteen pastors have collectively served at twenty-five distinct churches, thereby representing the hiring process experienced twenty-five times and bringing that collective experience to the interview process.

In determining the number of interviews necessary, I used a sequential sampling model (Neuman, 2000, p. 200), where adding new information to the data acquired after the thirteen interviews seemed unlikely given the common themes that had become evident through the first ten. It appeared unlikely as I reached thirteen pastoral interviews and continuously evaluated all of the interview data from their collective of twenty-five church hiring experiences that any new data would be gained by adding to the interview pool size from within the selected denomination.

The interviews were arranged at locations convenient to each pastor, which saw me travelling around Ontario for each personal meeting. I met with each individual in a context that was comfortable and appropriately private, yet public, which offered confidentiality and a setting most conducive to develop rapport and engage in the level of conversation necessary to obtain meaningful data and responses to the questions. Conversations flowed freely and I am very appreciative of the interest shown by each interview participant and the level of trust demonstrated by the candid nature of our conversation. Upon meeting with each pastor, they were required to review the parameters of the interview, including its confidentiality and its use

in this study and then to sign a consent document indicating their understanding and willingness to participate and allow their input to be used in this thesis.¹⁵ Each interview participant was also allowed to end the interview at any time and have their input removed from the investigation. Leedy's guidelines for conducting productive interview, including: limiting your list of questions to five to seven; making sure your interviewees are representative of the group; finding a suitable location; establish and maintain rapport; and other tips were particularly helpful in preparing for the interviews (Leedy, 2010, pp. 148-152). Neuman's section on interviewing and managing the stages of the interview were also helpful as he identifies types of questions and probing, and then gives examples to support (Neuman, 2000, pp. 274-278).

Each pastor's personal survey results were used to identify common ground and establish rapport in developing the interview questions to clarify and expand the information and feedback obtained. Questions followed similar themes, often in an open-ended context to invite conversation and clarification, with closed-ended questions or reframing used to clarify responses and validate the information received (Neuman, 2000, pp. 260-261).¹⁶ In each instance, after a period of time, trust was gained and the interview took on a more conversational approach, where pastors became very open to discuss their own particular circumstances, which gave clearer insights into the hiring practice they underwent and their current (and former in some cases) ministry experience. Questions related to their descriptions and elements of the hiring processes they had undergone; their concepts of success within ministry; the factors which influenced their decision to "accept a call" to pastor and aspects of their hesitancy to recommend pastoral ministry as a vocation to someone were probed in the interviews.¹⁷

The information was kept initially in a written format, with each pastor identified under an agreed upon pseudonym for purposes of maintaining confidentiality. My notes were then transferred to Word documents on an encrypted memory stick for further security. The

¹⁵ Refer to Appendix 3 for a copy of the interview consent form that was used for participants of the interview process

¹⁶ Additional sample questions used may be found in Appendix 4

¹⁷ Specifically, from the survey, questions: 3,7,8,10,11, 13,15,18-21,30,32 & 44

information obtained through the interviews was uploaded into qualitative data analysis software (*atlas.ti*) and coded in order to observe common themes, variations and differences to better analyze, reflect upon and interpret the results. I kept notes about observations and thoughts after the interviews in order to better review and reflect upon each experience. All of the guidelines provided in Unisa's Policy on Research Ethics were followed.

One of the things we can count on the most in life and ministry, is change. Things do not stay the same. What historically may have been the norm in pastoral ministry and selection might not necessarily be the reality today, especially where people and processes are involved and as noted from the literature reviews and the time spans of ministry from the various survey respondents. I sought to capture a more complete picture of recent history and current realities through the interview process by selecting participants with a range of years of experience as pastors, from just a few years and one pastorate to many years and potentially several pastorates. If there has been a general shift in how pastoral selection has occurred over the span of years of the interview participants, then I expected it would become evident as each of the interviews progressed. Indeed, there was a change in the hiring process that became evident, for some pastors over the years but not necessarily in the manner that I would have expected.

4.6 Additional Information Being Considered

Additional data was obtained through sourcing existing books or papers (Blackaby, 2001), (Armstrong, 2001) and (Thomas, 1995) with materials on church leadership and from my own observations and interactions with faculty and staff at a Seminary that I worked at. Also being considered was other data obtained through personal observations and interactions with other pastors and available texts (written ads placed by churches or the denomination, posted to the FEB Central website to solicit pastoral leadership candidates and job descriptions)¹⁸.

¹⁸ For some examples of the Pastoral Postings accessed through the Feb Central website, please refer to Appendix 6.

Further background information was obtained from some pre-existing surveys or their summaries to provide additional perspective. One such survey was co-sponsored by the leadership offices of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries in cooperation with the Mennonite Board of Education (separate entities from the Mennonite Brethren). There were two reports submitted by Dr. Michael D. Wiese in July 1999 and in December 2000 (Wiese, 1999) (Wiese, 2000). A second source of information is from the executive summary of the *2006 Canadian MB Conference Pastor Study* (Schonwetter, 2006). A third Survey reviewed was the *EFC Biblical Leadership Survey from 2005* (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2005).

4.7 Data Analysis

In analyzing the generated data even within the context of the ministries and variables involved, I discovered some common elements that could lead to a viable understanding as to why some pastors are successful, and others are not, based upon the initial selection and hiring process. With the quantitative data obtained through the surveys, the task of analysis was made much easier through the online software used to create, distribute and collect the data. Fluid Surveys (www.fluidsurveys.com/) made the tasks of collection, sorting and reporting of the data obtained very easy.

I made use of *atlas.ti* qualitative analysis software¹⁹ to aid in and ease the coding and analysis of the various themes that became evident through the interviews. I utilized open coding initially to identify and map key themes that arose during the interview processes. As I worked through an analysis of the data obtained, further patterns developed between the broader themes, the experiences shared by the pastors during the interviews and several of the issues raised during the literature review. This reflects both open coding and constant comparison, which allowed for the generation of the categories to be focused upon that ultimately, produced the study results and a growing understanding of pastoral hiring processes (Pearse, 2011, pp. 1-2). Again, this

¹⁹ <http://www.atlasti.com/index.html>, version 6.2.28. 1993-2014 by Atlas.ti GmbH, Berlin

study primarily reflects a blended approach, utilizing an online, quantitative survey and a grounded approach based on the qualitative information derived from interviews, other information collected and the analysis and the further coding of that data. Categories for classifying and coding the data obtained in the interviews were identified from the literature review and the survey data collected and further refined through the analysis of the interviews. There is a significant amount of inductive reasoning, based upon my interactions within cultural contexts and personal experience due to the inadequacy or total lack of current theories or available data and literature relative to the central aim of this thesis. This made it necessary for me to rely upon personal and experiential data, even as I sought to objectively analyze and work with the acquired data. The data analysis and coding process followed was modeled after the example given for Grounded Theory Study in *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (Leedy, 2010, p. 143). It moves from the broad collection of data from the survey and literature review to a more focused emphasis through the intensive interviews.

4.8 Validity of Research Findings

A potential threat to the validity of the study may have come as a result of a recent change in leadership within the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists (FEB) central region. Change tends to bring with it varying levels of discontent or mistrust, so some pastoral responses may be skewed and may affect the data. As such, I anticipated having to work harder to earn sufficient trust to allow for the fullest and least guarded expression of their experiences. Such a concern was not evident in the interactions that I had with the interview participants, but it may have played a role in some pastors choosing not to participate at all. That, I will not know. That there were surveys and subsequent interviews conducted with a variety of pastors and experiences, allowed for a better triangulation (Leedy, 2010, p. 99) of data and strengthened the internal validity of the study. The interviews also offered a real-life setting with the potential for broader, more applicable results. This has been a challenge to date within Canadian Evangelicalism as there is limited data available from which to draw conclusions. Therefore we have lived in an area more speculative in nature.

Throughout the sampling process, I sought to include as complete a range of cases as possible (positive and negative), documenting the rationale for each interview participant and assessing

their data in light of the intended research questions being investigated. This represents an aspect of negative case analysis (Leedy, 2010, p. 100) (Neuman, 2000, pp. 435-437), which allows for a critique and greater opportunity to weigh the evidence for the conclusions reached. A further potential threat to the validity of this study could be the size of the initial survey and the limited responses obtained from the large pool of potential respondents. Due to the lack of available data or theories relative to the central aim of this thesis, it was necessary for me to rely upon personal and experiential data throughout. This may be a potential threat to the validity of this study; however, acknowledging this as I proceeded made me more objectively aware of this threat.

Other issues of validity were addressed through the thoughtful and deliberate development of the research and interview questions and the anticipation of challenges during the interview process itself. Initially, a semi-structured approach (Leedy, 2010, p. 188) (Osmer, 2008, pp. 62-63), rather than an *ad hoc* one was utilized to establish a grid or interview card to keep the research questions and resultant data on track. The data should be as trustworthy as the sample population is truthful in their responses, and it should be accurate in reflecting the attitudes, concerns and experiences of those pastors who participated. It was important, during the interview and in the data analysis stages, to clearly keep the research questions in focus to identify issues related to culture, personalities, behaviours or biases. One other limitation to this study, which I acknowledged in section 1.6, was that I have chosen to specifically focus this study on the experiences of pastors. I have not chosen to study persons other than pastors. There are others involved within a hiring process that could provide input into the larger picture. These people would include any other church leadership involved in a hiring decision, the church board, the hiring or pastoral search committee, and the congregation itself. Within the framing of the research question, the emphasis is upon those elements and factors of the hiring process from a pastoral perspective of the experience. I contend that this is a limitation to this study that requires greater attention in future research.

The feedback I have received thus far has indicated a strong resonance with the participants of the interviews. There has also been a growing interest and feedback from other evangelical pastors, leaders and human resource consultants as I have progressed and interacted with them about ideas and developing concepts throughout the study. Many of them have expressed

agreement with the key concepts and learning, based upon their own experiences and observations. The concepts and considerations for both internal and external validity were derived from readings in *Practical Research* (Leedy, 2010, pp. 97-101).

Chapter 5: Empirical research data

5.1 Introduction and Acknowledgement

This chapter will deal with both the quantitative and qualitative research data collected.

I must acknowledge at the outset of this section, my appreciation for the availability and candid nature of the input from these men, brothers in Christ, who have made time in their busy schedules to participate in this study, through the survey respondents and subsequent interviewees. Without their assistance, it would have been very difficult to attempt to make any inroads into understanding the impact of the pastoral selection process upon the pastoral ministry itself. Before a newly called pastor has even begun to serve in any given church, what does this process communicate or demonstrate? What can we learn? There were several times during the interviews, that while I may not have outwardly displayed a raised eyebrow, internally I was registering some surprise.

These interviews took place within six months of the survey that was distributed with the assistance of the FEB Central leadership and was used to help identify willing interview participants. Since the written responses were still fresh in the minds of these pastors and their thoughts of their respective selection and hiring practices were more in the forefront of their minds, the conversation flowed easily. Perhaps the fact that I have a shared pastoral experience and theological training may have positively contributed to the ease by which initial rapport was established. Comments by the interviewees seemed to reflect a desire to have their stories and experiences heard, as well as to help identify, address and possibly contribute to aiding future pastors and congregations who themselves will be a part of selection and hiring practices.

Very little has been written on the selection and hiring process from the perspective of those who have been called and serve in pastoral ministry. I hope that what is captured within this section appropriately conveys the realities of what was experienced by them during this process, at least from the perspective of these pastors. Using a blended methodology, I built an understanding about the current nature of the selection and hiring processes of pastors as an

indicator of the potentially successful or unsuccessful nature of their ministry. Initially, the relevant data from the surveys will be presented. The surveys captured data from thirty seven pastors who completed it. The survey results contained information about: duration of ministry experience; length of total ministry service and longest and shortest tenures at various churches. Also collected was information about education, motivations for accepting a pastoral position, priorities these pastors considered when they were hiring staff, and other data relevant to this study.

From the surveys I used a sequential model to determine the number of interviews necessary (Neuman, 2000, p. 200). The thirteen (13) interviewees have collectively served at twenty-five (25) churches and possess more than one hundred and ten (110) years of vocational pastoral experience. In order to more easily identify each participant in this study, and to maintain the privacy of each person involved, a random identification was used, with either a number or name created. To make it easier to follow each person throughout the materials presented, I have changed each identity to a unique name that is not their own. The names used are: Matt, Lawrie, Peter, Luke, Mike, Jim, Mark, Ted, Rooney, John, Ray, Bob and Joe. It has been a privilege to get to know them, hear their stories and experiences through various hiring processes, and to hear their hearts, both for the Lord, His church and the people they have the opportunity to lead and serve.

5.2 Quantitative Research Data

There were forty-one pastors who began the survey, and thirty-seven who completed it. Due to the broad nature of the survey, I will only be utilizing the portion of the data relevant to this study. Of the thirty-seven who completed the survey, twenty-five expressed that they definitely felt “called into ministry while seven indicated the “probably” felt called, and three were not sure. Of these thirty-five who responded to the idea of “calling”, twenty-nine indicated that their home churches affirmed their calling, but only seven indicated that they had served in any pastoral capacity within that church. Twenty-eight individuals, after their home churches affirmed their sense of calling for pastoral ministry and who were witnesses to that calling being evidenced in the character and life of these future pastors, were not engaged as pastors within

those same churches that affirmed their calling. Of those survey respondents serving as pastors within FEB, twenty-five individuals, or 68% were not raised within a FEB central church.

The top five reasons that the survey respondents identified as motivators for their accepting a call to serve at their church were:

1. Family consensus (23 responses – 65.7%)
2. Strong affirmation by the congregation (23 responses – 65.7%)
3. God demonstrably at work (23 responses – 65.7% but no additional examples or detail given as to what that looked like aside from positive results in their hiring process)
4. Geographic location (15 responses – 42.9%)
5. Counsel from a spiritual mentor (15 responses – 42.9%)

Of the thirty-seven who became pastors at their recent churches, nine pastors had either developed or had some form of previous relationship with the church, whether through attending, interning or acting as an interim pastor.

Thirty-four of the thirty-seven pastors felt that it was important or very important to be serving and ministering in areas where they felt “called”, yet only twenty-four of these pastors were asked about this or discussed this during their selection process. Twenty-five of the pastors have been involved in the hiring of other pastors, and the top five factors in making their hiring decisions were:

1. The Interview (21 responses – 84%)
2. Consensus of the hiring committee (17 responses – 68%)
3. Candidate’s previous experience (16 responses – 64%)
4. References (16 responses – 64 %)
5. Candidate’s educational background and training (14 responses – 56%)

Of the thirty-five respondents to the question related to whether a completed theological degree was a requirement, nineteen respondents, or 54.3% indicated that it was not a requirement and sixteen respondents, or 45.7% indicated that it was necessary. Slightly more chose to consider a candidate’s educational training when the roles were reversed and they were responsible for hiring a pastoral staff member.

Of the thirty-seven pastors who completed the survey, nine (24%) were serving within their first pastorate. The cumulative years of service represented by this group averaged between four and six years, although four of them are relatively new, with between one and three years of pastoral ministry experience. Of the remaining twenty-eight pastors, they represent service at eighty-six different churches, with fifty-four percent of pastors who completed the survey serving in three or more churches during their ministry to date. Four respondents (11%) indicated that they had served at five or more churches since first becoming a pastor.

When asked how they define or measure success, it was difficult for some to articulate, and the answers given were varied. Some saw it as more personal success, with a sense of peace in key relationships. Others saw it as a numeric measurement within the church and still others described it in intangible ways related to spiritual and numeric growth and changed hearts. Some described their success goal in ministry as being faithful and obedient in proclaiming the Word, growing relationships and making disciples.

The shortest tenure reported at a church was nine months (not involving an internship) and the longest to date is thirty-three years. The shortest average tenure for the pastors surveyed was four years and two months, while the longest average was thirteen years and three months. These were based upon the twenty-eight pastors who responded to this question. Of those twenty-eight pastors, ten (or 35.7%) indicated that they had left their previous church due to issues of “fit”. Those ten pastors represent more than thirty-one churches and one hundred and twenty-one cumulative years of experience. For there to still be issues of “fit” after having served at an average of two churches previously (some of those pastors had served at three or four churches previously) points to several possibilities. Those possibilities may be either: real issues, challenges or change occurred within those churches; these pastors potentially should not be pastors; there was something within the hiring process which was overlooked, ignored or possibly misunderstood; or the expectations and/or role were misrepresented or not adequately clarified during the process. One other possibility is that God determined that it was time for the change.

I would assume that some change will occur within churches and, since these men had been ordained early in their ministry, I also assume that they indeed have been gifted and called by God to be pastors. For such men, with their experience to still run into challenges of “fit” within the context of their ministry leads me to examine more closely the hiring process by which such men are “called” to serve within a particular church.

Nineteen survey respondents (52%) indicated that they believed that there were probably or definitely not enough pastors available for pastoral positions within FEB, and eighteen (50%) believe that there probably or definitely won’t be an adequate number of pastors for the future within FEB. Fifteen (43%) of the respondents became vocational pastors after a career in another area.

One other piece of information that came from the survey that caught my attention, was that of the thirty-four respondents to the question about whether there was anything in their experience which would make a pastor hesitant to encourage someone else to become a vocational pastor, sixteen people, or 47.1% indicated that yes, there were things that would make them hesitate to encourage others to become pastors.

This data and other responses from the survey necessitated the semi-structured interviews and a closer exploration of the personal hiring experiences of thirteen of these pastors. This semi-structured approach allowed for more personal rapport to develop and the opportunity to probe an area or response more closely (Leedy, 2010, p. 188) (Osmer, 2008, pp. 62-64). Of those pastors interviewed, six of the thirteen, or 46.1% would be hesitant to encourage others to become vocational pastors. This was very similar to the overall survey results.

5.3 Interview Questions

The questions used within the interviews were derived from the surveys as a starting point, to examine the responses of the interviewees in more detail. The interviews also took on a more conversational approach, with the input and the feedback of the interviewees leading towards further questions. The guidelines for conducting a productive interview and suggestions for the development of questions within Leedy’s work were very helpful in this regard (Leedy, 2010,

pp. 148-152) as well as Osmer's material (Osmer, 2008, pp. 62-64). For a more detailed list of the questions, please refer to the survey (appendix 2) and to the additional questions found in appendix 4. The questions found in appendix 4 took on more of a form of probing to achieve greater clarity. The forms of these questions paralleled Osmer's identification in his section on interviewing (Osmer, 2008, pp. 61-64). The purposes of these probing questions were: clarification; justification; relevance; examples; filling out the narrative; ordering the events and detail.

5.4 Qualitative Data. Personal Hiring Experiences Explored

As I interacted with each of the pastors during the interviews, there were some common elements that became very evident from each of the hiring processes. The elements were similar in nature but the specific forms of those elements within each process often varied dramatically. Once a candidate applied for a position or was contacted by a church, they supplied their resume and any other materials requested. Once they were successful in being selected through the initial screening process by the search committee, there was an interview process that took place. The interviews again varied. Some were very involved and detailed, while some were very limited in the depth and scope of the questions. Within this section I will share material from each interview, giving perspective on each process and what it entailed, as well as considering what each candidate felt was omitted from the process and learnings and reflections from each candidate as they were available. We will also briefly consider the outcomes of each pastoral position hiring and any additional perspectives of these pastors.

5.4.1 Mark. (Three vocational church roles – 5 months, 10 years and 4 + years)

Mark's first church was an intern position. Aside from his education and the fact that it was his home church, there was no stringent hiring process followed. For Mark, at his second church, there was no formal process as he indicated he was known as he had served there as an intern as well, his father was the former pastor of the church, and his siblings attended the church. As there was very little discussion or a formal selection process, many aspects of Mark's role or expectations may have been assumed. The fact that it was a part-time, youth position may have also factored into the minimal process. The position did eventually become a full time one.

After a period of time, Mark felt that since he had primarily ministered in his home church, he should “spread his wings”. This coincided with a period of upheaval in the church as the Senior Pastor resigned, along with one of the associates. Mark was “tired” and “beat up” but he didn’t want to shop around until leadership knew where he was at, and he wanted to support the transition. He knew it was time for a change, both personally and for the church. At Mark’s second church, because he knew the denominational leadership and the Senior Pastor at this church, the process began with a phone call one afternoon. After an initial phone call, Mark and his wife spent three hours on a Friday night as a couple with the deacons and their wives, sharing testimonies and having a general sharing time. There was an interview on Saturday morning. That afternoon there was another time of interviewing and then they were taken on a tour of the area. In Mark’s words, “Much of the interview process focused on experience and character questions. Things like team setting and practical questions, and “can you do this”? There was a time of “chemistry seeking” and trying to determine if they would fit well together and questions like “can you preach?” Theological training and experience were both required and necessary and questions were asked related to experience and scenarios. Mark indicated that there was a clear covenant with the board, and a job description that was given. Three and a half months later, there was a formal candidating weekend from Friday to Sunday. On the Saturday morning, Mark spoke at a men’s breakfast. There was an interview afterwards with the deacons. They had lunch with the youth pastor and his wife. Mark’s wife spoke at a ladies tea. That Saturday evening, they attended a young adult event, where Mark shared his testimony and there was a Q& A time with the young adults. Sunday morning Mark did the teaching at the service and then they had lunch with a church family. The afternoon was free for them to rest. Sunday night was another service and Mark preached the sermon, then they attended a time of fellowship afterwards with another Q&A time with the whole congregation this time. Three weeks later was the formal vote by the congregation, where Mark was asked to come and serve at the church.

In his move from his first church to his existing ministry, Mark described how he came to pastor at his present church as a “transfer from within FEB Central”. There was a weekend of interviews and meetings, preaching and then being interviewed by the church. From there, the church membership voted to “extend a call”. The process took six to eight months to fit in the scheduled activities and for decisions and conversations to take place. The job description Mark

was given was more spiritual than pragmatic but the job was based on reality and clear priorities and expectations changed. He was “called” to be an associate Pastor, for young adults and young families. Initially, the role did not have an emphasis on children, but within his first week, he was put in charge of a specific children’s program, and after 6 months, he was in charge of the children’s ministry. His thought was “Ok, I guess I’m doing kids”. It was more of an administrative function. Mark’s administrative role was a key piece and expectation, though it was not discussed during the selection or hiring process. He felt aspects of fulfilling ministry and at other times, simply “surviving”. Mark’s second church was dramatically different in ethos, demographics etc. from his first church. Strengths he enjoyed in the one church were weaknesses in the other.

He found that there was good chemistry at his new church, but that it took six months to one year for him to “clue in” to how the church operates, and he commented that has taken three years to come to a point where he feels, connected, trusted and respected. Mark discovered that there were two main families within the church, with significant history, intermarriage and influence. There is a “this is our church” mentality that has done a lot of good, and also a lot of damage. Their DNA is saturated within the church, but in general, the congregation is good. This was also something Mark was not aware of during the process but had to learn as he began to serve.

These types of influences and candid information about a church would be helpful during a hiring process as it would minimize “surprises” and allow for a clear opportunity to prayerfully gauge the broader scope of the position and the church. These are also things which some within a church or on hiring committee may or may not be aware of. It is difficult to know a church and her culture, especially coming in as a candidate in a hiring process. Mark indicated that the two primary factors for him that influenced his decision to accept the call to pastor at his current church were family consensus and geographical location. This indicates a level of agreement with his family, comfort and convenience was necessary for accepting his new role. I appreciated his honesty in response to the question. I wondered what spiritual elements might be necessary or desirable in accepting a position that places an individual in a position of authority in a church, where people may assume that this person acts as a steward of God’s church. I did not follow up

this question for greater specifics or probe what may have been underlying assumptions in order to not lead the response beyond what was given.

As Mark noted, it has taken considerable time to “clue in” and even more time before he felt he was connected, trusted and respected. That raises the question as to the overall effectiveness and success in Mark’s ministry during those formative years and the overall impact upon the church and their expectations as Mark got to be known. Mark views effectiveness by numbers, and “the reception one receives by the congregation and those people the pastor is working most closely with”. That Mark was able to accomplish tasks and see some measure of “success” might be indicative of the duration of his time at this church to date, but what potential was not realized during this same time? As much as it took time for Mark to get to know the church and feel more connected and trusted in his ministry by the church, how can a church vote and affirm a calling of someone that they don’t know either?

Mark has also been involved in the hiring of other staff, and he indicated that in their search for potential hires, “schooling was a significant part of any requirement and they also looked at character, passion (evidence of a clear calling); and experience. They didn’t just want schooling; they wanted experience — real life experience and people committed to people, not just academics”. Primarily he has worked to develop job descriptions, scouting potential candidates and acquiring information about potential staff. Significant factors in making a decision about hiring have been candidate’s previous experience, references, the interview, consensus of hiring committee, the resume, candidate’s skill set, input from the FEB Central leadership and the candidate’s evident spiritual gifts (how this is objectively determined, assessed or validated is unclear, especially when the number of interactions or time spent getting to know a candidate is low).

Mark expressed a desire to “spread his wings” after serving for a period of time within his home church, and he noted four years is a long time to serve as an associate and very few associate pastors stay around that long. There was often a desire for more that was expressed, and to be that person, the pastor in charge. Other pastors I have spoken to have also echoed this sentiment. They want to be in charge, with a feeling of authority and control, better able to influence, direct the path of a ministry and to get things done. Considered with humility, this could serve as a

warning and balance for ministry and these tensions and related desire could indicate a need for change or that God is preparing someone for something. Outside of a humble framework though, this could lead to increased tensions, frustrations and a wrong attitude which could hinder or damage a pastor's and church's ministry.

Mark's final comments were that "people are being put into roles, but there is a lack of pastors. Churches are getting comfortable and don't want dramatic change. Expectations for pastors are too high — they want a CEO or academic. It is a very foreign concept within his church to disciple and develop leaders and interns. The church views pastors as too professional". Mark also made the comment, from his observations, that "a church often hires a new pastor based upon the former pastor's weaknesses, and dismisses a pastor for his strengths".

As a result of Mark's experiences, he would have some hesitation to encourage someone to become a vocational pastor, especially those who do not understand all that would be expected of them or the cost of ministry.

5.4.2 Joe. (3 Vocational church roles – 3 ½ years, 3 years and 5+)

Joe first became aware of the opportunity at his first, full time pastorate from his Senior Pastor and some friends. The Pastor at the church he was attending had connected with another church in the region, was aware of a need for a pastor and suggested Joe "checks it out". He had submitted his profile to the denomination and had been looking at churches when it was suggested to him to check out this church. He informally connected with them and was invited by the search committee to speak with them. In Joe's words, "he helped the search committee through the process and a variety of questions, including budget were discussed." There was not a formal process or much structure to the interviews, and neither Joe nor the search committee really knew what to ask or consider. The search or pulpit committee had a few expectations around a particular theological perspective, a Calvinistic theology being one of them, and a formal theological education was not a requirement for the position. Other than that the conversation and interview was fairly general and a kind of "getting to know you" experience. Joe spent four weeks at the church preaching and visiting with different families. At the end of the fourth Sunday the church voted to "extend a call" to Joe to come and be their pastor. Joe and the pulpit committee felt it would "probably work" as they got to know one another. There was

no clear job description or formal procedures followed. The church was very close and a family oriented church, although somewhat disorganized from Joe's perspective. Joe came to this role through the recommendation of his former church and a former senior leader. In his words, "both the church and his family 'backed into this'".

It appeared that during this process, there were some definite gaps in several areas. For a candidate to have to help a search committee through a process, including questions to be asked, would be challenging, especially when Joe indicated that "neither one really knew what to ask". To come to a role, primarily through a referral process makes many assumptions, both about a candidate and about the church setting, culture and expectations that one is coming into. Joe acknowledged that it wasn't a good fit and that after three and a half years he recognized his need to move on, having not been very effective or successful ministering here. "Backing into a role", whether due to someone's recommendation, a referral or because there aren't very many options available is not a strong indication of God's obvious leading or calling to serve in a particular area. As Joe got to know more of the culture and environment, he became much more aware that it was not a good fit for him. It is unfortunate for both Joe and the church that more than three years were invested in this discovery process and that it was a period of time for both parties that was not as fruitful or beneficial in the scope of God's kingdom.

At Joe's second, paid pastoral role, he was asked to come on staff part-time by the Senior Pastor after Joe had returned here, his "home church". It was through his relationship with the Senior Pastor that this came about. The pastor encouraged the congregation to consider this new role and they supported it. There was no formal interview process as Joe was known to much of the church and the Senior Pastor. This was a safe and welcoming environment and a chance that Joe described as a time to refocus, concentrate on some studies and recover from his first pastorate. Joe knew the church and was known, so expectations were manageable and realistic and there were no surprises. It appeared as though this role was created in part to serve some church needs, and perhaps even more to support Joe during a period of transition after his Senior Pastor had referred him to the pastoral role at first church initially.

When Joe moved from his second church to a pastoral role at what became his third church, he was made aware of the opportunity through a friend, who was leaving the church, that an opening was available. He put his name forward to the church and to the interim pastor who was serving there. He heard nothing for some time until he was asked to come and meet with the church search committee (after other candidates had declined to come to serve at this church). The search committee was headed by the deacon's board and consisted of about seven members. He was asked for doctrinal statements and about specific matters related to: Calvinism; eschatology; denominational convictions; issues of emergent church; worship; growing; denominational groups; church affiliations and other matters that seemed rooted in fears and previous experiences of the congregation. Joe commented that several other matters were not raised that He has since noted are important to people within the church.

The church had previously lost a pastor to another denomination and were concerned about Joe's standing within the denomination and questioned whether he would keep the church aligned with their denomination. The church was also concerned that Joe could affirm their denominational statement of faith from hundreds of years ago. This was something that the church felt must be upheld by their leadership.

Joe preached a couple of times on his first Sunday visit there, gave his testimony and was part of a "town hall" meeting, where the congregation was present and asked questions. They were very different from the pulpit committee and the questions included concerns about incorporation. Much of the questions and interactions seemed to be more about allaying the congregation's fears and concerns as a result of their previous experience. The church was not as prepared with questions or even an understanding of their own identity and culture in the hiring of a new pastor as the process seemed to indicate a greater focus on dealing with the perceived deficiencies or concerns raised from their previous pastoral experience. The comment has been made that a church often hires a new pastor based upon the former pastor's weaknesses, and dismisses a pastor for his strengths. Often, what a pastor may be hired to do is often NOT what followers need them to do. Without having a clear understanding of their needs, beyond a reaction to their former pastor, it would be a challenging environment for both the church and the pastoral

candidate to be able to affirm a sense of calling, because there is not a clear sense of what one is being called to.

During his second Sunday visiting, he met with the pulpit committee after the town hall meeting, and was asked about more matters of doctrine. People at the church had to sign on to membership to vote and have input and several people left the church during this time Joe noted. On his third Sunday visiting, Joe preached again and stayed for a few days, visiting people and touring the town. The fourth Sunday, the congregation voted and the vote was a unanimous decision to hire Joe. The vote was unanimous, except for the people who chose to leave the church. Unanimity in a vote of this nature may mean that everyone is in agreement, or it may mean that people are willing to accept this individual and don't want to be seen as a dissenting voice or not united with the rest of the church. Certain, unexpressed issues related to social or peer pressures may be involved, but that moves beyond the scope of this study. Joe accepted the "call" and notified his church, where he had been serving part time. Knowledge and education were assumed as being present and were requirements for the role. What seemed to carry more weight was Joe's discipline and experience in a "real job" prior to moving into pastoral ministry. Pastoring was not viewed as a "real job" Joe noted, and his formal, seminary education was not a requirement in the process.

As Joe reflected upon his decision to accept the call to pastor this church, he identified that it was based upon a sense that "it was time for him to take on a pastoral charge himself again, and that the church needed his ministry". Another influencing factor was that the particular theology of the church fit with his beliefs. Since he began serving here, Joe came to understand that the church had "a lot of negative history and seemed to want to 'keep it together' until the pulpit was filled and they could get someone here", especially since other candidates had said no to coming. Joe became aware that there were a lot of hurting people in the church and that there was not as much concern for their area as for healing their own hurts and meeting internal needs. The whole hiring process took about three months for Joe, and he feels that it took between six months to a year before he began to feel comfortable and effective in his role. It has taken about five years for people to begin to be able to move ahead slowly. Joe measures effectiveness and success by "numerical growth, financial stability, new baptized believers and by the development in the

appreciation of Christ and of their society by those touched by the church's ministry and pointing to his life and teaching as a true reflection of Christ and worth emulating". He perceives FEB Central defines success by "purely quantitative measures, given the data they request: numbers in attendance, baptisms and financial health".

Joe does not see much denominational involvement within his church or experience and views FEB Central as quite remote to anything they did. Anything related to pastoral ministry and leadership has been, in his experience, driven much more by the local church. From his experiences, Joe would be hesitant to encourage someone to become a vocational pastor. In his words, "the role is fantastically difficult at times and can open a man and his family to great hurt. What we present the pastor as being and how he is actually perceived and expected to act are two vastly different things. The world seems more and more to define how we think: this makes being a proper pastor quite odious to our own people, at times. The more faithful a pastor is to our Christ, the larger his own personal cross looms — and this cross is often put on us by our own people. While this is what every Christian is called to, it often makes me hesitant to wish it on anyone, however wrong-headed such a sentiment might be".

5.4.3 Ted. (2 Vocational church roles – 7+years & 4 + years)

Ted became aware of the first pastoral position he would serve at through a phone call from the Senior Pastor, who had been given his name through a close relationship with someone on staff at the Bible College Ted was attending. The initial step in the process was an interview with the Senior Pastor. This was followed by a meeting with the board chair and the search committee. During the course of the interview and meeting, it was expressed that having secular work experience was helpful in keeping Ted from being "in a bubble". Most of the questions were related to practical scenarios, Ted's philosophy of ministry and some doctrinal emphasis. The search committee also expressed that Ted's completed educational credentials were both favorable and necessary. There was no formal job description given to Ted at this first church.

Following this was a candidating weekend from Friday to Sunday, where Ted and his wife were given accommodations at a local hotel. The Friday evening they attended a youth event and on the Saturday they met with the youth leaders. Everything was directed more towards relationships, chemistry and "getting to know you". Sunday morning they were introduced to the

congregation and on Sunday evening Ted had the opportunity to share his testimony and participate in a Q&A session with the church. There was no call or expectation to preach during the candidating weekend, primarily since his role was to be primarily youth focused. On the Monday evening the congregation had a business meeting and voted to “extend the call” to Ted. He was the only person being considered for the position at the time. There was overwhelming support and only one dissenting vote expressed at the business meeting, Ted was informed later.

Ted expressed that significant factors for him in accepting the role were that he had been working three jobs at the time to pay bills, and here now was a full time job, his training was completed and he would get paid to do what he desired to do. As Ted served at this church, he and the Senior Pastor had a strong relationship and Ted had the freedom to develop his ministry, its expression and the various components during his time. There was mentoring, but he did not view or experience it as “top down” or micro managing, even when the church underwent growth and some significant transition during his time there. Success was viewed by the duplication of ministry by Ted and of him “working himself out of a job” as he raised others up.

A little over seven years into his ministry, Ted was struggling after some leadership changes and the Senior Pastor was struggling and wrestling with things as well. Ted was feeling the effects of additional responsibilities and early stages of burnout and fatigue. Ted considered a move to another church after he received a phone call asking him to consider joining another church staff in an associate role from someone he felt he could learn from and respected. Ted met with the Senior Pastor for about three hours to talk and share his philosophy of ministry with the Senior Pastor. He went away from the meeting feeling very excited about the ministry, but his wife did not share his excitement at all.

Two weeks later Ted and his wife met with the board initially, and then Ted continued with them later in the day. Their talk primarily focused around vision, desire and philosophy of ministry. Very little formal questioning took place as the interview and process seemed to be driven by the Senior Pastor. The process and invitation to Ted to consider the role at his second church was initiated and driven by the Senior Pastor based upon Ted’s skills, reputation and the numbers of students that were being drawn at his current church. In some ways, Ted was a “known” entity

and the process and interactions he experienced during the process reflected that. That evening Ted and his wife went to dinner with pastors and wives. Ted recalled that a red flag should have gone off when, during the tour of the church, an offhand, negative comment was made about the pastor by someone close to him, but during the process Ted did not respond or react to the comment.

The next step in the process saw Ted and his wife invited to come to a candidating weekend. He had his wife's support by this time to continue to pursue this opportunity. He met with the youth leaders and shared his testimony at a youth event. Ted and his wife were introduced on the Sunday morning and on the Sunday night were asked to share their vision for ministry and participate in a Q&A with the congregation. The congregation voted on the Monday night at a congregational meeting. Ted received a phone call informing him of the results and was asked to come to the church. In his words "right people, right place, right ministry". Ted felt that there was a good connection for him with the church's vision, desire and philosophy. These factors and the opportunity for a new start and the affirmation of the congregation influenced his decision to accept the new position, but what he saw; was told and what he experienced was dramatically different. His job description indicated one thing, but the reality of the role and church culture once he arrived was very different.

He found that success for the Senior Pastor at his new church was defined by numbers. It affected how Ted did ministry as he felt pushed more for numbers than for building the relationships and discipleship. Certain aspects of this, as Ted reflected upon the process, were implied, but never discussed during the interviews. Within weeks of Ted arriving at his new church, he was faced with some concerns being raised through a formal letter that he discovered had not been addressed before his time in an appropriate manner. The culture of the church and Senior Pastor seemed to be more of "peace-keeping, not peace-making" and the particular issue was further clouded by the fact that it involved influential and long-standing members. Typical issues that might arise within a ministry context were treated similarly and were not dealt with or resolved. Issues that were dealt with were done so in a very business-like manner and there was very little relationship or unity between the pastoral staff. Ted's perception was that there was very little denominational involvement. It had taken Ted about twelve months to feel like he was

connecting well with the congregation, but it was very different with the Senior Pastor. His earlier expectations from the initial phone call, based upon the pastor's reputation, perceptions and the position offered, were very distant from the reality of his experience. Ted indicated that he had no regrets, but it was a challenging learning and growing experience.

The process Ted experienced in going to his second church reflects a very dominant leader, a CEO-type perhaps. That Ted would apparently be recruited due to his numbers and reputation in such a direct fashion seems to indicate a model that shows little concern for calling or recognition that it is God's church. Several of the issues discussed reflected the appearance of process, but, as Ted indicated, it was very driven by the Senior Pastor. The idea of a pastor, in a setting where there are multiple pastoral staff, selecting his own staff for various roles seems to be counter to anything resembling a calling of God, the recognition and utilization of spiritual gifts, from God for the building up of the body. Such a strong personality directing the hiring, and one where the board of the church did not seem able to instill any balance to the process is disconcerting. This and the emphasis on skills, reputation and numbers for hiring and defining success seems to mirror the more worldly, corporate perspective that both Mark and Joe alluded to. It should not come as a surprise therefore that neither Ted, nor the Senior Pastor involved in this process are still serving at this church.

Ted ultimately resigned. The fact that he was aware of and able to give me the specific details and events of the duration of his time at this church (down to the number of days served there) are in part, indicative of the negative impact of his time there. It is unfortunate that neither Ted nor God's church were safeguarded through this particular hiring process. This experience had a significant, negative impact. Not only did it impact the pastoral leadership but the congregation as well, as their experience through the upheaval did not positively contribute to the outworking of God's kingdom and their witness to the community.

5.4.4 Mike. (1 Vocational church role – 4+ years)

As a result of Mike's search for a pastoral position across more than three regions and his applications to more than thirty positions, he had several varying experiences that required travel, interviews, meetings, and did not result in a position being offered to him, with one

exception. A church that, in his words, “was quite small and had been without a pastor for some time, so they were very “desperate” to have someone come” had a welcome sign up when he came to visit. Mike declined that position as he did not feel God was leading him there.

Mike did finally hear from one church. He was contacted by a church, pastoral search committee member and a phone interview was arranged. Much of the phone interview centered on his application, philosophy of ministry and general questions that sought to get to know Mike better. A couple of months later he and his wife were asked to come to meet the search committee. After this, he took some time to speak to a regional pastor to understand the situation at the particular church. Even though it wasn't all positive, he felt that he was getting a clear picture and that the search committee wasn't hiding anything about the history, problems and perceived needs, but he didn't know the right questions to ask. It is a difficult thing for both a hiring committee and a candidating pastor to know what questions to ask, especially if they are not familiar with the process or expectations, other than the need for a pastor.

Mike commented that “he did not know how much self-examination the church as a whole or the search committee specifically engaged in”. The church needs to be aware of their culture and identity, as well as their needs and what they believe to be their ministry focus as they embark on a search, unless they intend to allow a vision to develop after they hire a pastor. Unfortunately, this would leave a huge burden and expectation for a newly hired pastor, who doesn't even know the congregation, their history, skills, gifts or passions. It would be, based upon preliminary data collected, a strong recipe for problems. It would also set up a potential pastor to struggle and not be successful in the ministry they are called to. This again raises the questions of what should a pastor be and what are they being called to?

About two weeks later he was invited to come to the church and preach with a view to a call. Mike had a meeting with the search committee and deacons, with similar questions as the previous phone conversation on deliberate matters of doctrine, experience and practice. His wife participated in those discussions. They also asked some ‘scenario – type’ questions. Four couples from the church comprised the search committee and they had been guided in setting up their process by an interim pastor and a regional leader, who were not in attendance. Mike's education and appropriate training were important to the selection process, as was the conservative stance

of the seminary he attended. The whole interview took approximately two and a half hours. During the visit, time was made available for individuals to set appointments to meet with Mike and his wife and about twelve people participated. Much of the conversation centered on “previous problems” at the church. There was a potluck meal and a general fellowship time on the Sunday afternoon. That evening the congregation took a vote and one week later the results were given. There was an “overwhelming majority” that voted to have Mike come.

Mike indicated that “the factors that influenced him to accept the call to pastor this church were: the selection process for the position; family consensus; geographical location; strong affirmation from the congregation and that the needs of the church seemed to be a match for his perceived gifting”. Mike feels that it is very important to be serving and ministering in areas where one feels called and spiritually gifted. There was no formal job description, and Mike was allowed to set his own agenda. He is a very different pastor than they formally had in many respects. From initial posting of his profile to the time of his installment as pastor, nine months passed. We see again a glimpse of the possibility that a church hires a new pastor based upon a former pastor’s weaknesses as we consider Mike’s comment that he is very different from their former pastor. A church may not know what it needs or wants, but it may be very aware of what it does not want or reacts to in a pastor. This might logically raise questions around who would know what the church needs if its members struggle with understanding or articulating this.

Mike has had some experience on pastoral search committees as he has been involved in more than six churches across four denominations. He has used questionnaires, screened resumes, and listened to sermons, interviewed candidates and reference. He has made decisions based upon similar criteria used here, including: candidating weekend, previous experience, references, interview, consensus of search committee, congregational vote and input, resume, personal calling, candidate’s skill set, spiritual gifts and educational background and training. He was not able to identify how items such as spiritual gifts, skill set and congregational input could be validated or quantified, only that it was taken into account and accepted for what was presented on the resume and in conversations. While Mike’s pastoral calling was recognized and affirmed by his home church, he did not serve in a vocational way within his church, though he does acknowledge that each “was used by God to move me along in considering becoming a pastor”.

Mike measures and defines success and effectiveness rather subjectively in terms of spiritual growth, maturity and fruit being born in the lives of individuals and in the church as a whole. He acknowledges that this is much more difficult to measure and anticipates that it can only be seen over a number of years. Mike acknowledged that the church has changed since he was hired and that after almost three years he is now feeling comfortable and known by his congregation and able to more effectively lead them and minister to them. He feels this is a good fit, but too soon to truly know. He indicated that he was told (he feels that it was during his time at seminary) that this point often comes after five to eight years of ministry. If this amount of time is a reality, or even simply his perspective, then it may speak to the necessity of considering a long term ministry philosophy and a case for fewer pastoral changes or moves by a pastor during their ministry time. As of the time of our interview, there was nothing in Mike's experience that would cause him to hesitate to encourage someone to consider vocational ministry.

Note: Within one year of this interview, Mike experienced significant turmoil in his role as pastor at this church, and an attempt to remove him. Strong affirmation and what may be a reasonably good interview process are not necessarily indicators of a successful pastoral ministry, a proper fit or an easy path.

5.4.5 Matt. (3 Vocational church roles – 12 years, 10 years and 4+)

Matt has served within three different churches. His first hiring experience was after putting his name in the “pot” for consideration for a position within the denomination, and through a connection with an influential person within the denomination, who forwarded his name to a church. He was contacted and met with the deacons and search committee for an interview and he and his wife shared a picnic with them and their wives. The interview process was fairly casual and general in scope. Two months later he was invited back to the church for an interview with the congregation on the Sunday morning and an opportunity to share his testimony. He preached on the Sunday evening, even though preaching was not a key role he was to fulfill. That Sunday evening they also shared a dinner with the congregation, followed by a time of Q & A with the church. One week later the church voted and Matt received .1% more votes than the minimum necessary. The hiring process took two meetings over two months.

After the Senior Pastor chose to move on from the church, Matt once more put his name into the denomination for consideration of other pastoral roles when he realized that he would not be considered for the Senior Pastor's role at his church. He had served twelve years at this church and had been mentored and discipled in every area of ministry by the Senior Pastor, but the church leadership was wrestling with what to do and felt they wanted someone more educationally qualified for the role. He was told at the time by a denominational leader that switching roles from an Associate to a Senior Pastor role within the same church doesn't usually work. After twelve years serving, being mentored and equipped by the Senior Pastor and through his ongoing ministry, Matt was considered "not ready" by the search committee, influenced by the denomination. Matt was known and may have been considered by the congregation, but an outside hire was brought in instead. Not only did the new hire not work out, it caused significant division within the church. What were they looking for? Someone with more education, certain skills, experience and someone other than Matt, but the new person was not known and there were some character issues. How can a search committee or congregation discern character when a potential candidate is not known to them?

After some time, Matt received a phone call from a deacon at a church to come for an interview. The interview was with the search committee and some deacons and lasted a couple of hours. One month later, he interviewed with all of the deacons and the search committee. In each case the questions were general in nature, focusing on Matt's philosophy of ministry, his experience and some scenario-based questions. Matt was asked about his pursuit of further education. He had completed an undergraduate degree and Bible College, and was working towards a Master of Theological Studies. Education was considered important, especially seminary education for a Senior Pastor. There was a concern expressed, since he wasn't currently a Senior Pastor, whether he could "handle it" — especially the preaching load. Two months after his initial contact, he "preached for a call" at two services. On the Saturday night before, there was a time for him to share his testimony and to participate in a Q & A time with the church. After Matt's visit, the church held a business meeting and a formal vote took place. He received an overwhelming vote of support to extend the 'call' to have him come and serve as the Senior Pastor. Matt began his new role at his second church five months after the process began.

During his time at this church they hired a youth pastor, but Matt recognized in hindsight that it had been a poor choice. The youth pastor had potential, but eventually clashed with the church leadership. He did not respond to mentoring, accountability or authority. After three years the youth pastor was asked for his resignation and so he left to go to a position at a larger church (his former church was not even consulted in the process). Matt recognized that the process of hiring the youth pastor (who had been an intern) was based on friendship and relationships more than his abilities or discernment. The board acted to hire this new youth pastor, without any input from the pastor.

Matt's comment about the process at his second church was "there is more to a church than a good parking lot". Matt acknowledged that the process was more superficial and that he did not really know or understand the expectations or the reality of the situation at this church. There were many issues and expectations that were not addressed during the interview and many details were omitted or overlooked, and these matters were not rectified by the church when they came to light. In Matt's words, "so began ten years of gut-wrenching disappointments". Matt learned much through those ten years and understood more fully the need to know a congregation and be known. The eventual toll of various challenges at his second church prompted Matt to forward his resume once more for consideration for a move to a different church and ministry setting. After ten years of struggling, Matt felt that the church needed a new leader with different strengths to take the church to their next level.

For a pastor to endure the ten years of challenges that Matt has characterized in such a vivid manner, speaks to qualities of perseverance and growth through trials yes, but it also raised questions concerning how long should a pastor seek to faithfully serve (or possibly a church endure) when it seems that the hiring decision was not a good one, or when it seems evident that there is not a good fit? We know and are familiar with several passages of scripture (James 1:2-12 and Romans 5:1-5 come to mind), so we might draw some parallels to trials, refining and endurance as good things and part of God's plan for us as pastors in the church and comment that having an attitude of determination and sticking with something might be commendable. But if viewed in light of persecution, and especially from within the church, then how successful or fruitful can a pastor or a church be under these conditions, and how should a pastor respond

when a primary element of hope has become a hope that the agony will end? There are times when a pastor should persevere, but there are other times I would suggest that a pastor and a church need to recognize that there is not a good fit as a result of the hiring process, and be willing to graciously allow for change and a renewed search for a pastor.

As Matt looked at other opportunities, he did interview with another church on the same night as they interviewed one other candidate, and the other candidate was chosen. The interview consisted primarily about questions regarding his experience and situational applications. It was a brief process.

A little over one month later Matt was interviewed at what became his third church. The initial interview was a two hour interview with the search committee. They had a copy of his resume and a CD of a sermon to listen to. One month later, he met with the elders of the church and they gave him an envelope with a salary proposal. There was no interview with them. Being surprised at no interview, Matt asked them to “talk”, and he shared some situations from the past, talked about introducing some contemporary music and other issues. The church at this point had been more than two years without a pastor. Matt felt that it was a “good talk”. Once the elders were assured that he was interested, they moved to congregational involvement. Another month passed before there was a pot luck supper, testimonies given, discussion about philosophy of ministry and a Q&A session, where they interacted on issues like “altar calls”, “moral failure - what if?” and other topics. The next day (Sunday), Matt preached and after the service the congregation held a vote to extend a call to him. The vote was 97% in favour. A completed theological degree was not discussed, nor was it an expressed requirement for the role, but his theological education to that point was helpful. The factors that most influenced Matt to accept the offered position were: the selection process; family consensus; strong affirmation from the congregation; and the emphasis by the search committee and elders on team ministry, which fit well with his view on leadership.

The denominational profile that is filled out for pastors covers a lot of material. The church was looking for a “shepherd”, and Matt’s greatest strengths were pastoral care/shepherding, his evangelistic interest and a team approach to leadership. These were articulated through the

profile that Matt had submitted to the denominational office and that had been forwarded to the church. This profile may be a good place to start, but in Matt's experience, especially at his second church, trying to match a person to a ministry solely on the basis of a completed document and minimal interactions between a search committee and a candidate does not lend itself to fully capturing the personality or dynamics of that person. It is also difficult to discern using a profile and by the nature of a candidate's expressed interest, the full alignment and compatibility with, or affirmation of God's calling to, the church.

Matt has been involved in the hiring of other pastoral staff. The primary factors considered were:

- Previous experience
- References
- Interview
- Educational background and training
- Consensus of hiring committee
- Personal calling of candidate (demonstrably shown or affirmed)
- Resume
- Congregational vote
- Skill set
- Candidate's evident spiritual gifts

Many of the elements Matt listed reflect common elements within many processes described. One of the challenges I perceive with this list is the inability to affirm spiritual gifts and personal calling specific to a new church setting when neither the candidate nor the church is known to each other. Otherwise, this list of criteria appears to be similar in many ways to the processes used when hiring someone to any secular job. The inclusion of spiritual language or categories does not objectively allow for it to be demonstrated or measured, but it does at least raise the matter and the potential for it to be explored and discerned. When any candidate is voted upon by a congregation, they are usually even less engaged and therefore less able to know the qualifications of a candidate as measured against such criteria. Criteria aside, a congregation voting on a pastoral candidate would not even know the individual, his character, personality,

spiritual gifting or other aspects that might be necessary for a congregation to choose to submit to and support the pastor's leadership.

Matt defines and measures success and effectiveness by his faithfulness to God's Word and to his wife, by God's approval and involvement whether the numerical results are many or few, and by the response of his wife, family and fellow leaders to his ministry. He feels that there was some emphasis by the denomination on numerical growth as the sole measure of success at one point, but that this position has changed and been softened. Matt's home church affirmed his pastoral calling and he was able to serve in various capacities voluntarily. He did not serve there in a vocational capacity, but was given a positive letter of recommendation by his pastor.

Matt views his transitions to other pastoral positions as transferring from within the denomination. It took between six months to one year before Matt began to feel comfortable and effective in his ministry at his third church, and he acknowledges that this is still an ongoing process, even after four years.

Matt would definitely encourage someone to consider vocational ministry. Due to his own experience he would hesitate until he discerned that the person was definitely called by God first because the pain in ministry can be too great to bear. He would be glad to encourage a person that God has prompted first, in any way he could. Matt could not clearly articulate how one might confirm a definite call by God prior to engagement on his part to encourage.

5.4.6 Ray. (1 Vocational church role – 2+ years)

After hearing about a church's need for a pastor from the pastor of his church, Ray decided to visit the church. As he and his family participated in the service, there were certain elements that Ray decided wasn't for them. During the service, his wife commented that they really needed someone to preach God's Word, and Ray submitted a resume to the leadership right after a potluck luncheon that day. Ray heard nothing for about one year until he received a phone call asking him to do pulpit supply. The call came after a referral on his behalf by someone Ray knew who had just turned down the church's offer for a part-time position. Ray did preach there about four times, and then was asked to be involved in an interview with the pulpit committee. Ray attributes his hiring due to one elder who was making all the spiritual decisions. During his

interview, Ray was asked a “ton of questions” and had interactions about theology for about two hours. There was a cross-section of the congregation in attendance. There were also practical questions asked related to scenarios, philosophy of ministry and leadership practice. The denomination helped the church set up a process.

One of the elders had theology training and Ray and he were in agreement on theological matters through the course of the interview process. His theological training was important with this one elder, but not a concern or apparent requirement by the congregation. The congregation knew very little about the theological aspects and the rest of the committee deferred to the one elder. Ray was interviewed three times and preached five times. There were about ten people in total on the interview team. Ray indicated that he had a clear job description and that the job description and expectations were clearly identified during the hiring process. Ray had one other interview with the directors (or deacons - legal and financial) from the church. During the interview Ray had a mild row with one person over a former church split. After the next church service, the church held a meeting and voted to hire Ray and a one-year contract was drawn up. His theological training and the fact that he was a white-Anglo pastor were significant reasons for his hire he was told by the “head elder”. Up until that point, the church had been about four years without a permanent pastor. Ray acknowledged that it was “not the perfect fit, but he and his wife believed that God was in it. Ray was influenced to accept the call to pastor the church by: family consensus; strong affirmation from the congregation; and God demonstrably at work.

After Ray’s first year, a contract was drawn up for a second year. During this time, Ray decided to primarily focus on preaching and teaching the word of God. After two years serving there, Ray received a 100 % vote from the congregation to continue his ministry. During Ray’s time here, he indicated he felt comfortable in his ministry within six months, but that he never felt respected by his congregation. Ray commented that as this was his first pastorate and hiring process, in many ways “he didn’t know any better”. There was an external friendliness by the congregation, but it did not seem to translate any deeper, at least not towards Ray.

Faced with the same circumstances, Ray would definitely choose to become a vocational Pastor and he is confident that he is where God wants him to be. Ray indicated that it took 2 years from his application to his appointment as pastor. He commented that it was a good process.

Ray measures and defines success by making and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ and seeing people change to become more like Christ. Ray's home church affirmed and recognized his calling and encouraged him to attend seminary, although Ray never served in a vocational capacity at his home church.

Throughout this brief interaction, several thoughts crossed my mind. Ray indicated that "he didn't know any better" and it has become somewhat apparent that often candidates who are new and looking for their first vocational role, may not know any better and would benefit from some personal support and coaching as they work through any hiring process. Whether this would be a function of the church's hiring process itself, something the denomination might assist with or someone else, there have often been comments about not knowing what to ask or do in the process. If the search committee is faced with similar struggles, then the process probably will not result in the best outcomes, either for the church or any pastoral candidate. There appeared to be some obvious needs within this church context, and a hiring process is not a good venue to try to resolve such matters. However, if someone feels called by God to serve, what safeguards are there for people who are new, especially if a church seems to be managing their process or affairs poorly? As an autonomous entity within an association of churches, this may be unrealistic to expect an intervention in their process, but if a church lacks the necessary supports to manage a hiring, perhaps there are other avenues to providing pastoral care or leadership. For a single elder to dominate the process and for the church to not be very engaged or take much ownership in the selection of a new pastor is problematic. Perhaps the fact that it had been four years since they had had a pastor would be indicative of greater needs and cause for other action. Some people may be called to pastor in such circumstances, but the validity of their calling and hiring to a church that may not have the spiritual maturity or personnel to properly assess pastoral candidates creates a veritable minefield of potential problems and pitfalls. Ray indicated that the denomination helped the church set up a process. It may have been helpful if, in the process, they had been able to better assess the condition of the church prior to encouraging them

to hire a pastor, or to have helped the church to better or more realistically refine their church assessment and parameters for such a hire.

Note: Within 2 months of participating in the survey and a week before our scheduled interview, Ray was abruptly dismissed from his role as pastor at his church. Cited were several things, but also an incident Ray had referred to that he had believed had been resolved earlier. Ray graciously allowed himself to still be interviewed.

5.4.7 Peter. (3 Vocational church roles – 9 months, 5 years and 4+ years)

In the spring at Bible College, Peter connected with the pastor of a small church at a job fair, and deferred their offer to become a part time youth pastor until that fall. He had a ten to fifteen minute conversation with the Senior Pastor at the job fair, after which he was offered the position. In June, during a formal candidating weekend, he met on the Saturday with the Senior Pastor and elders to discuss theology and philosophy of ministry. On that Saturday evening he met the youth group and participated in their evening activities. The Sunday morning was an introduction of Peter at church, followed by a luncheon, where he could meet and interact with youth, parents, leaders and the rest of the congregation. The congregation voted two days later and Peter was invited to come and serve as their part time youth pastor. There seems to be a similar pattern that is followed, whether for a youth pastor or a Senior Pastor. The only noticeable difference appears to be whether a candidate is expected to preach on a Sunday to the whole congregation, or prepare something to be shared with young people.

Through a connection at his home church, Peter was connected with another church about eight months after he had resigned from his first church. (The resignation was not a surprise or wanted by the church. It was a necessary response due to significantly changing life circumstances for Peter at the time.) Initially he had phone conversations with the Associate Pastor at the church, who liaised with the board and Senior Pastor. He met with the Senior Pastor and Associate over dinner. He then met with the board for further conversation and interviews. There were more questions around programming, scenarios and style of ministry than significant theological interaction. The board had looked at others previously, preferring more experience, but the

recommendation on Peter's behalf was significant and during their time together, he was able to articulate his passion and interest.

During the candidating weekend, he had dinner with the youth leaders (about twenty) on the Friday night. On the Saturday he participated in two or three meetings with parents and the board. Saturday evening he spent time with the students. Sunday he attended two services, where he was introduced to the congregation. Sunday afternoon was a lunch with the volunteer youth leaders and on Sunday evening he participated in a fellowship time with the congregation and a chance to meet and interact. That Wednesday the church held a business meeting, where they voted to call Peter to be their youth pastor. The vote was 100% in favour. I have made comment earlier about a vote that is 100% in favour of a candidate. This is not something to be necessarily viewed as a good thing.

It was a challenging time at his second church. His job description and the expectations of his role were never clearly established or communicated and he found himself to be in conflict with the Senior Pastor. About one and a half years after Peter began his ministry, the Senior Pastor left and a period of transition continued at the church. Evaluations, Peter noted, were based upon mostly business criteria and there was very little mentoring that took place. When Peter planned to start a new discipleship initiative he was not encouraged or supported, but rather told "if it fails, you lose your job". It didn't fail. After about four years at this church Peter was approached by a church about a position opening. He turned it down due to a significant emphasis on an area of ministry he did not feel called, nor competent in. Peter had been recommended for this position by the person previously in this position.

About three months later Peter was asked to resign from his second church, because there was a new Senior Pastor and he wanted to create space for his own staff. At this time, the same church that had contacted him three months before contacted him again, with changed expectations. He was in contact with the Senior Pastor and the Board Chair. The day after he was asked to resign, Peter had a dinner meeting with the Senior Pastor of another church. What is it about a Senior Pastor that they would want to bring in "their own staff"? If the whole premise about pastoral leadership is that it is a calling and people are "calling" someone they feel God has prepared and

equipped to help lead their church, why would the departure of one such leader require the resignations of others? Whose church is it and who do we attribute any such calling to? If we believe it to be God's church and His work, then we should be more concerned about what God has to say about the matter. It is interesting that to this point, there has been very little comment by any of the pastoral candidates throughout these interviews, of time spent in prayer over the opportunities, or prayer with the various aspects of leadership throughout the processes.

The next meeting Peter had was with the Senior Pastor and his wife, and then he attended a youth event to speak. After that meeting, Peter participated in a candidating weekend, where he met with the youth leaders, elders, church staff, students and the congregation. The process and questions were, from Peter's perspective, general, practical and relationally based. The recommendation by the previous person in the role on Peter's behalf was significant. The need for theological training was hugely necessary in the screening and hiring process. He felt the process was fairly thorough and would have been quicker if he had not said no to their initial inquiry. A completed theological degree was a requirement in the application or hiring process. The whole process took for Peter at this church took six months. Expectations and job description were clear and discussed during the hiring process. Peter believes it is very important to serve and minister in areas where you feel called and spiritually gifted.

In his first church role, Peter acknowledged he wasn't around long enough, but recognized that he had a supportive and helpful Senior Pastor. At the second church, Peter did not have a feeling of unity in either the leadership or the ministry emphasis of the church. At his third church, Peter felt like there was a better fit, with clearer expectations, mentoring and support and freedom in developing his ministry based upon his personality, gifts and ministry calling, yet still with accountability, help and support. Peter commented that he had learned from his previous experiences. Peter was influenced to accept the position at his current church by: family consensus; the church building and facilities; counsel from a spiritual mentor; congregation demographic; strong affirmation from the congregation; and things that Peter viewed as God demonstrably at work.

Peter views success and effectiveness by several factors:

- Decisions being made to follow Christ and be baptized
- Seeing acknowledgment and effect in working with parents in the nurturing and maturing of the youth
- Students engaged in the work of the gospel and using their gifts
- Students participating in and meaningfully contributing to the life and ministry of the whole church

His perception regarding FEB Central's view of success or effectiveness would be that they would be happy if the pastor and church say they are. Peter's home church affirmed and recognized his calling, giving him opportunities to preach, and hired him to run day camps and summer programs. He did not serve in a full time capacity.

Peter indicated that it has taken between one and two years for him to begin to feel comfortable and known and able to be effective in leading, yet after four years he acknowledged that there is still lots to learn about the people. Peter thinks he would probably encourage someone to consider becoming a vocational pastor with FEB Central, although he acknowledges there were some aspects of his experience that would make him hesitate. "It was hell at times. Unfortunately that story isn't uncommon". Peter knows other pastors and some of their stories. If challenges such as he described are not uncommon, then perhaps there are aspects within the hiring process or attitudes of the church that we could learn from, and perhaps they could be changed, or improved upon — or should be.

5.4.8 Lawrie. (1 Vocational church role – 7+ years)

During a drive to a conference, Lawrie was encouraged by his small group pastor to consider ministry. Through his small group pastor, he became aware of the position at his current church. One year after his conversation in the car, Lawrie was contacted by his current church. There had been a number of conversations between the small group pastor at his church, and the lead pastor at his new church. During that year, it appeared that a position might become available for him to candidate for a position, but that door closed, at least temporarily.

One day the lead pastor from his present church stopped by to meet and talk and asked Lawrie to do pulpit supply while he was away. Later, Lawrie filled in a pastoral profile and he and his wife were invited to interview with the pastoral search committee (seven to eight people, including the pastor, an elder and church members). He felt good about the interview. It involved walking Lawrie through the process, the job criteria, areas of emphasis and several questions. The questions had some theological considerations, but were more driven by practical scenarios and philosophy of ministry. Lawrie was invited back to preach again and was told of the job emphasis on small groups and youth. He was the only candidate based upon his small group pastor's recommendation at their association meeting. During this visit there was also a fellowship time in a church member's home with an opportunity for Q&A. In the summer he participated in a youth camping trip with some of the youth and youth leaders. That fall during a business meeting, the congregation voted to extend a "call" and Lawrie received a 97% vote of support.

The primary influence of the selection and hiring process was, from Lawrie's perspective, word of mouth and his referral. Some theological training was important to being considered for the role and was necessary, but completion of such training was recognized as an ongoing part of Lawrie's development and potential. The expectation was that Lawrie would finish his studies after he was hired. It was six to nine months from the beginning of the selection process, until Lawrie was hired. There was a lot of networking that took place before and during the process that Lawrie experienced. A theological degree was a requirement in the application process, but the fact that his wasn't completed but in progress was acceptable. The factors that influenced Lawrie to accept the role at this church were: family consensus; counsel from a spiritual mentor; and strong affirmation from the congregation.

Even with such strong affirmation and a 97% favorable vote, Lawrie feels it took between one to two years before he felt comfortable and effective in leading in his role. The role Lawrie assumed once he was hired was very similar to the job description and expectations shared during the hiring process, but some of the emphasis shifted in proportion, which caught him somewhat by surprise.

The areas where Lawrie felt most called and gifted for were not discussed during the interview process, something Lawrie feels is very important as it relates to where and how you serve. If the role of a pastor is one to which a church votes to “call” a pastor and engage him in ministry, then would not their gifts or personal sense of calling somehow factor in, to either the interview process or the decision making one? As Lawrie reflected upon when began to feel God had some plans for him, he acknowledged that his home church allowed him to serve in various roles but did not formally affirm his calling or have him serve in any vocational manner. Lawrie therefore did not have a strong point of reference during the hiring process to articulate his sense of calling or gifting in the manner he was able to during our interview.

There is nothing in Lawrie’s experience that would make him hesitate to encourage someone to become a vocational minister, but he acknowledges that “it’s a lot harder than what it might appear to be, but if I saw God’s hand upon them then I would still encourage them towards vocational ministry”. Given that the interview processes seem quite protracted, but very few interactions actually take place, what would it take to see God’s hand on someone? Without spending much time with someone, to see evidence of something that significant in only one to three interactions (interviews no less) would be unusual. Perhaps such evidence is more easily viewed over a greater period of association and time spent together, as it was in Lawrie’s case with his small group pastor.

Lawrie is questioning right now where God may have him. He commented that more than seven years is a long time for a pastor to be at a church. He seemed uncomfortable though, even as he expressed this thought. What is it about our church culture or the pastoral role that often seems to cause a restlessness or desire for change? Certainly, if the church is benefitting from stability in its leadership and growing, moving forward or at least responding in some way, then is there a benefit to such a dramatic change as losing a pastor and embarking on a process of hiring a new one? Is there a limit to the amount of time a pastor should be serving in a church, especially if the church is responsive to their leadership and showing signs of growth and maturing? Is there a thought that change and “shaking things up” will produce more or faster growth? If that is an underlying sentiment behind the turnover and changing of pastors, then perhaps the view of

success is tied more directly to numbers than we might readily acknowledge or admit. This raises other questions that might be worth considering.

5.4.9 Bob. (3 Vocational church roles – 2 years, 7 years and 17+)

Bob became aware of the first church he served at while he was at Seminary. There had been a church split and a recruiting effort took place at the school he attended. He was hired right from school at his first church and served there just over two years in a youth pastor capacity. The process was very casual and the influence of the school and Bob's qualifications streamlined the process. The process focused more on his qualifications, his schooling and age to meet the needs of the church – it was what he was trained for.

He moved to his second pastorate in an interim capacity as a Senior Pastor. It was intended to be a six month position, but after three months Bob was asked to consider serving in a full time capacity. There were three other candidates for the position, so Bob left town during the interviews so as not to unduly influence the process. The congregation decided not to “call” any of the three candidates through the process. Since Bob had been there already in an interim capacity, there were no major theological questions or philosophy of ministry questions during his interview process, which took place over one weekend. A formal theological degree was not a requirement, but it did serve Bob well. The whole process was very casual during the interviews and then the matter went to the congregation to vote. The vote by the congregation was unanimous to hire Bob as their pastor. He served there for seven years. After several years of ministry at his second church, and due to some rising financial problems, Bob determined to leave. Seven years is a significant amount of time to serve, but leaving due to financial problems and not wanting to leave the church in debt, might have meant leaving the problems for someone else to inherit the debt, depending upon how the church responded to their financial problems after Bob's departure.

During his role at his second church, Bob attended a funeral at what is now the church he pastors. The church was in need of a pastor, although at the time Bob did not know that this was as a result of a “mild split”. Four months after the funeral, Bob sent his resume and pastoral profile to the church for consideration. The Bible College where he obtained his theological

training was considered the “wrong school”, but Bob enjoyed the region he was serving in and wanted to remain in the area.

Two weeks after he had sent his resume, Bob was invited to come and preach so that the congregation might get to know him. The church was being very cautious after being “burned” by the previous pastor. About one month later, he spoke again over the course of three weekends, several times each weekend. He then met with the board and responded to questions, many of which surrounded matters of family, children and style of ministry, due in part to the previous experience with the former pastor and his wife. Bob acknowledged that there were some differences in theology that he became aware of, but during the hiring process there was not much consideration of theology and his schooling was not really discussed. They had three meetings with the deacon’s board. During their visits, they were hosted by different families and shared meals with them.

Three months later he was invited again to “preach for a call”. After the weekend, the congregation held a business meeting, where they voted to hire Bob as their pastor. The whole process took about four months. Bob did not have a clear job description for his present role, nor were job description and expectations clearly identified during the hiring process, but Bob feels that his present role recognizes and allows him to make the best use of his strengths and spiritual gifts and that it was and still is a good fit. Areas where Bob felt personally called to or aspects of ministry he finds most fulfilling were not discussed as part of the selection process, yet he feels it is important to be ministering in areas where one feels called and gifted. At his church, his role and the church’s expectations saw him primarily engaged in those areas where he does feel most fulfilled. It took less than three months for Bob to feel comfortable and known by this congregation so that he could effectively minister to them and lead. The factors that influenced Bob the most to accept this new pastorate were family consensus, geographical location, and God demonstrably at work.

Bob has also been involved in the hiring of pastoral staff. Some significant factors in his hiring decisions have been: references, interview, resume and candidate’s evident spiritual gifts. His first hire involved a student who had connections with the church. The student was asked to be a summer intern during which time he was given certain responsibilities, coached and

observed. The summer went really well and the student was asked to return when his schooling was done. Finances were not all there, so they offered the graduate a short term, full time contract with a review. God provided more than was needed during that time, so the new staff person was offered a permanent, full time role upon his review. This person stayed at the church in this role for more than six years before stepping into another role at the church. Bob intentionally gets young men to preach and exposes them to ministry. They have a whole process in place to work with young men to prepare a message, with critiques and help, to encourage them and help them grow. Some of their current staff has come through this process. This has at times begun with students in High School, doing a co-op at the church. Bob and his church are very intentional about mentoring, encouraging and providing opportunities throughout the church ministries to build leadership. This has factored into their plans for transitioning the Senior Pastor from his role when he would retire (or for the benefit of the church). There has been consistency at their board level and Bob has been pastoring at this church for more than 17 years. Bob defines and measures success and effectiveness in ministry through “developing people for and in ministry”, “seeing men serve God is a greater way today than they did before”, and “through the number of people they have in active ministry both within the church and outside of it”.

Bob feels that there will probably not be enough persons available for pastoral ministry in the future within FEB Central and that people within the churches generally do not view the role of pastor as a respected and desirable vocation. Bob’s sense of calling to pastoral ministry was affirmed by his home church, who gave him opportunities to preach and encouraged him to attend Seminary. He did not serve in a vocational capacity within his home church. After Bob had begun his ministry he recognized that his theological training did not adequately prepare him for the ministry role he had, especially being caught off guard by the administration required in the role. Still, Bob encourages young men to attend to formal theological training and there is nothing in his experience which would make him hesitate to encourage someone to become a vocational minister.

5.4.10 Jim. (2 Vocational church roles – 3 years and 3+ years)

Jim's home church had recognized and affirmed his calling towards vocational ministry, but he did not serve in a vocational capacity in this church. He first became aware of his first vocational ministry opportunity when he was approached by a board member/elder from the church. At his first church, Jim served as an associate. He knew the previous associate and had a school connection with the Senior Pastor. In his words, Jim knew what he was getting in to at this first church. He was asked for a doctrinal statement prior to their first meeting, where the conversation revolved around more practical issues and how Jim would respond given different scenarios. He met with the Senior Pastor and his wife and the deacon's board. They toured the city and had a Q&A time. The process continued through an email correspondence with the Senior Pastor. A formal theological education was not a requirement for the position.

About four months later, Jim was invited to a candidating weekend. They met with the teenagers in the church, had meals in people's homes and were shown hospitality. He spoke at the Sunday morning service and led the music. He also led the music at the Sunday evening service, where he shared his testimony and participated in a Q&A session with the church. Later that month, the congregation held a vote and decided to "call" Jim to become their associate pastor. This was Jim's first church and he was very excited to get a job doing what he enjoyed and felt God had called him to. Once at the church, Jim discovered that the job description he had been given only covered about one third of the expectations. About two years into his ministry at the church, the Senior Pastor resigned and more transitions took place within the church. There were challenges and several latent issues that came to light that Jim had previously been unaware of. Jim regretted some of the complications within the church at the time, including allowing himself to be considered for the Senior Pastors role. About a year after the Senior Pastor had left, Jim also resigned. In Jim's words, it had been a "big learning curve".

Through a relational connection, Jim had been asked for a copy of his resume by another church. The timing worked well as it was during the time that Jim's role at his first church was in uncertain times and he was considering leaving. This new church had decided they wanted a younger pastor as their existing pastor was retiring. Jim did a pulpit supply for them. Before

going in to the process, Jim admitted to being rather skeptical, so he was seeking some form of confirmation prior to committing. In his words, Jim had spent three years rowing uphill, so he was cautious. He indicated that God provided in some specific ways and answers to prayer along the way.

Jim was contacted by the head of the search committee and asked to come for an informal meeting, to get to know him and his family. He met with the search committee, consisting of one deacon, one elder and two church members. After the initial meeting, he was invited back for a second time, this time for a more intensive interview. The interview itself consisted of more practical questions than theological, and included practical issues, philosophy of ministry and scenario-type questions. From there, there was a brief meeting to clarify a couple of things that were said during the interview process, and then he and his wife were asked to meet with the search committee and the deacon's board and their wives for more general questions, ministry practice and philosophy and generally "getting to know you". Following this was a formal candidating weekend, where he had been invited to "preach for a call".

During his candidating weekend, Jim preached Sunday morning and on the Sunday evening he shared his testimony, led some music, and then participated in a Q&A time while they enjoyed desserts. Some theological training was expected and Jim was asked some specific questions about his doctrinal statement. Jim had two former pastors available as a sounding board, so they encouraged him to be intentional about asking questions and accountability within the church. After the Sunday Q& A time, Jim and his wife left and the congregation held a business meeting for a congregational vote whether to extend a call to Jim and his family. The entire process took about 4 months. Upon reflection, Jim thought it was a healthy process, with lots of interaction to get to know one another and to determine if this was God's leading. It also allowed for time for prayer and reflection to seek God's direction and confirmation, both for himself and the congregation, Jim noted. He was influenced in his decision to accept the pastoral role by the selection process for the position, family consensus and strong affirmation from the congregation and what he describes as God demonstrably at work. Aspects of ministry that Jim feels personally called to and fulfilling were discussed as part of the selection process, and Jim feels serving and ministering in areas where one feels called and gifted is very important.

Since beginning to serve here, Jim indicated that it took between one and two years to become known and comfortable in being able to effectively lead the church and minister. He recognizes that after more than three years, they are still getting to know one another and to build a level of trust. Jim was not given a clear job description, nor were the expectations clearly identified during the hiring process, yet Jim feels that his present role recognizes and allows him to make the best use of his strengths and spiritual gifts. Jim defines success by remaining faithful and obedient to God and what he calls him to in scripture. He commented that “I don’t really believe it is my place to measure effectiveness, but rather, to maintain faithfulness. Effectiveness is just a measurement that men create to justify themselves and their position... A steward must be found faithful, not effective.” He perceives though that FEB Central, “views success, largely by empirical stats”.

Jim made use of some mature leaders in helping to guide him through his second selection process, and he values such discipleship and mentoring for his own growth and development. He was more cautious about moving forward and took more time to seek counsel and prayerfully consider his steps. As a result of his experience, Jim would definitely again choose to be a vocational pastor, but would be hesitant to encourage others towards that role unless there is a clear confirmation of that calling. In his words, “I think it needs to be a clear calling on someone’s life, not just a career pursuit.”

Fairly fresh out of school, Jim began his first ministry. In part, it was ministry, and in other ways, it was a job, doing what he was trained and called to do. The challenge in believing oneself to be called to ministry, does not always translate into a clear sense of where one is called to minister. Knowing people or having some relational connection with the people that are hiring does not ensure or confirm that is where one is being called, but it would make the process of being considered and selected easier. Those who make the hiring decisions based upon these types of criteria are perhaps focusing too much on the outward aspects, the obvious education, skills, reputation or the fact that they might know the person or want to help them get into ministry. As we have seen in a few instances now, the relationship hire, apart from other elements takes some things for granted and makes assumptions about whether there is actually a fit, one established

by God for His work, not a comfortable relationship fit, borne solely from knowing or being friends with a candidate.

5.4.11 Rooney. (1 Vocational church role – 2+ years)

During his last year of studies, Rooney began an internship at a church, where his sense of calling to pastoral ministry increased. Rooney had lots of other interviews with churches while still in school and he wondered if he needed to sacrifice a sense of calling or use “stepping stones” as interim steps. He realized he could “do the job well, but should he short-circuit his sense of calling?” During his time as an intern, he had experience serving and helping at a satellite church, which became independent. The board of deacons at the time asked him to serve in an interim capacity, which he did for a period of six months, when he was asked to submit his resume and an application for the pastoral position.

A search committee had been formed two months prior to Rooney beginning to serve in an interim capacity. It interviewed other candidates over the months and narrowed the selection to two (including Rooney). The other candidate was presented to the deacons by the search committee, who rejected him as the appropriate candidate. Rooney’s young age was a concern to the church and academic priority and credentials were lower in the search priority. The church’s initial priority was for a middle-aged man with a family. When they didn’t receive any suitable candidates and they considered what was happening with Rooney in the interim position, the congregation and deacons modified the criteria as they realized the ongoing ministry impact and the reality that a younger pastor would require a smaller financial package - something that was important with a building purchase looming. They pursued a clarification of church vision and wanted to focus on young families, and they were seeing some young families coming out more. They had recommended a Master of Divinity degree as a basic criterion for a lead or Senior Pastor. The deacons and the search committee were unaware of the educational jargon and different schools and degrees, so they agreed to re-evaluate this criteria based upon their needs and the vision for the church.

During the interview, the deacon’s questions focused on vision, with very few doctrinal or theological questions. During their conversations, they asked Rooney about his goals as a pastor,

who he wanted to “reach”, his philosophy of ministry and other, similar topics. They talked about the need to train leaders and plant churches, and as they examined this idea, the church became less apprehensive about considering Rooney. Job description and expectations were not clearly identified during the hiring process although a theological degree was a requirement for the application process. The search committee did ask Rooney about which aspects of ministry he personally felt called to and found personally fulfilling, something he feels is very important for anyone who is called to vocational ministry. The church also determined that they should have a discipleship and evangelism focus.

Rooney felt that the eight months that he had spent with this church in an internship capacity, allowed him to be known and for he and the congregation to share the same vision. Rooney wondered if he had an unfair advantage in the selection process due to his interim position and the growing relationship he had with the church. He also noted that throughout the process there was some conflict, which he attributed to a tension between a “God-thrust” versus a “human thrust”. Rooney felt that through the interview process, several assumptions were made by those interviewing him, especially with regard to gifting and calling and other areas he felt were significant, so he initiated questions that he felt should be asked. He felt that the process was “a little unorthodox” and not very formal.

Rooney was presented to the deacons who approved him and sent his nomination to the church, where he received a 100% vote of affirmation (1 family left the church prior to the vote, and 1 family abstained). Also, 1 search committee member left the church as well. The church where Rooney now serves hadn’t experienced a pastor devoted to them, so he became a part of the church family during his internship and interim positions there. The factors that influenced Rooney to accept the position were: family consensus; counsel from a spiritual mentor; strong affirmation from the congregation; God demonstrably at work; and the financial package. Of those interviewed, Rooney was probably the only one who mentioned this aspect, which to be truthful, is an important one to be considered in the reality of living in our culture and context.

Rooney’s home church affirmed and recognized his calling towards pastoral ministry by gradually placing him in positions of leadership and made teaching and preaching opportunities

available to him. He interned at his church and was mentored by the Senior Pastor for a year. He did not serve in a vocational capacity within his home church. Rooney measures and defines success and effectiveness in both qualitative and quantitative means. He observes numbers in attendance and at prayer meetings, as well as by new disciples. He also views it in terms of biblical and spiritual growth in people and in the church as a whole, demonstrated in the church and community. There was nothing in Rooney's experience that would make him hesitate to encourage someone to consider becoming a vocational minister, but, he does not believe that it is for everyone. He would not simply encourage just anyone to become a minister.

I found it interesting that Rooney struggled while in school at the idea of potentially sacrificing a sense of calling in order to accept a role as an interim step, a "stepping stone" towards some future goal or ministry. He realized he could "do the job well, but questioned whether he should short-circuit his sense of calling?" Rooney, I believe, rightly identified a significant tension that exists for many pastors. Many seminary educated people could probably "do the job well"; after all, they have been trained and prepared to do just that. But, does such a step take matters of ones calling by God for a purpose, into our own hands, to accomplish and work towards what only God actually can give? Moses (killing the Egyptian to rescue his people) and Abraham (producing a son through his servant) immediately come to mind as they faced similar choices at points in their lives. Whether through our experience, skills obtained or reputation, can we say that God is in something, if we pre-empt Him and act or strive towards a goal or opportunity on our own? Thankfully, Rooney found enough grace and faith to wait and overlook some opportunities while waiting and he had wise counsellors and people around him to answer questions and provide input and prayer as he waited.

5.4.12 John. (1 Vocational church role – 2+ years)

John was a regular attendee at his church for about ten years and taught Sunday school. He was a deacon and well known within the church when they began to search for a new Senior Pastor. There was no advertisement for the pastoral position. The church "went looking" and contacted the Fellowship for their contacts and possible candidates and the existing Senior Pastor gave input. John reflected that "through their process of searching, they became aware of what they

were searching for.” The search committee created a profile of the candidate they were looking for.

John was not aware of any other candidates being considered. There was no formal interview since the search committee knew him. There were 2 concerns raised: 1/ does this guy have a pastor’s heart? Since he had been involved for some time within the corporate world is he a shepherd? And 2/ is he theologically sound? John was interviewed by a “Shepherd’s council” made up of retired pastors from the congregation to investigate if he was a shepherd. He then met with a theological council with the theologian in residence (and a teacher at a Seminary) to check John’s theology, where he was at, whether he was sound and had a sufficient depth.

After these interactions, John was announced as a candidate at a town hall meeting on a Wednesday evening. That Sunday he preached and there was another town hall meeting that evening and a social time. John took the week off work to be available for questions, meetings and possible one-on-one meetings with people from the congregation. The following Wednesday evening there was another town hall meeting and the next Sunday, John preached again. There was a congregational vote after the service.

John indicated that there were five key elements being considered in his profile. Four of them were: shepherding; teaching; leading and vision. John was told that the church believed in him and that he needed theological training. The church wouldn’t consider him without a theological degree. So, that fall he began working towards a seminary degree, with the church helping him and paying for his training.

This model for transitioning an internal candidate has been previously used at this church. The first Senior Pastor brought in an associate who later became the Senior Pastor. Both of these men were still on staff at the time of the interview with John. John acknowledged that such a model required people who could do “transition”. John indicated that he didn’t need a “job”. His life circumstances were such that it was not necessary. He also recognized that as a pastor, doing a good job doesn’t mean more pay. There is no guarantee that a positive yearly evaluation means a raise. John feels that he has been called to serve and the church graciously meets his needs. It is

not a job and John feels that there is trust on both sides. He won't be "punted" and He won't leave. The main question that the church and leadership raised was "do we think John is being called to be our pastor"? Not, "are we calling John to hire him as our Senior Pastor?" John was initially encouraged to consider pastoral ministry a couple of years before when the Senior Pastor identified within John some gifts that might be well suited to such a ministry.

As John reflected upon the whole process, he saw it as a people issue. He likened it to "marriage between the pastor and congregation. It is a relationship, and one not intended to help either party feel "good" about themselves. If that is the case, then more "dating" is required. It's like dating with "rose coloured" glasses and being married with magnifying glasses - this is the wrong order. Take time to date and be known, with careful, sober thought".

John was one of the first pastors that I interviewed that had been raised up from within his home church. That they affirmed his calling was attested to by their process and ultimately calling John to become their next Senior Pastor. Specific aspects of John's calling, gifting and areas of ministry fulfillment were discussed during the process. The whole process, while the committee sought to be diligent stewards of their responsibility and consider other potential candidates, became more of a process of examining and considering what God was already doing in their midst as He was raising up someone, in His time and in His way for the needs of the church. John had been identified as a potential pastor, based upon gifts, character and his service within the church to that point. With some encouragement and intentional discipleship and input, he was already being shaped. The evidence of his calling was more easily affirmed through seeing God at work in John and through him over a period of time. Throughout the interview with John, I noticed that there was an attitude of humility and gracious servanthood about him that demonstrated a calmness and faith. As I observed the extent of activities in the church as I entered the large building, I could not easily attribute this to John having a slow day and not much to do.

John has been a part of a hiring process within the church, and the process looked very similar. The primary factors John identified that were considered for the hire were: consensus of hiring committee; congregational vote; candidate's skill set; candidate's evident spiritual gifts and the

fact that the candidate had been a part of the congregation for ten years and was very well known. He came through the process and was shaped, for ministry through years within that same context. John had some input and helped advise the committee and was able to give them some feedback, but they were entrusted with the task and adequately prepared and supported as they formed a job profile, conducted the search, and ultimately, made their recommendation.

In trying to ask questions in an interview and determine such factors as calling, spiritual gifts, skills and character, it becomes a challenging task when a candidate is not known. When the candidate is known, the process seems to take on a very different perspective – one more of discernment, raising up someone God appears to be calling and timing of when, where and how to release that person to ministry. There was nothing in John’s experience that would make him hesitate to encourage someone towards vocational ministry, but he would be wary of anyone who may have character weaknesses or other “baggage” that would hinder that ministry.

5.4.13 Luke. (1 Vocational church role – 4+ years)

Luke felt encouraged and influenced to become a pastor through the input and example of his Senior Pastor. After feeling a clear sense of purpose or “calling” towards a pastoral vocation, that calling was affirmed by Luke’s home church through a willingness to involve him in ministry and to offer him a part time internship position within the church that has since become a full-time associate pastoral role.

Theological training was a required part of the screening process for the pastoral position. During Luke’s schooling, he was given this opportunity to intern at his current church over a twelve month period and the ability to “wade” into ministry. As this was his home church, Luke experienced several people encouraging his involvement and inviting participation. He received input from a variety of sources and served on committees, at meetings, and was invited to participate as an observer at other, more formal meetings. He was partnered with and mentored by the Senior Pastor during visitation and other ministry activities. Very clear goals and expectations were set out for Luke to work towards. The mentoring was intentional, intense and ongoing. Luke indicated that the mentoring took place for three to four years as he was growing within his church.

Originally the church had intended to hire someone to oversee their youth ministry, and an advertisement went out. The church focused on one candidate at a time, but through the process, decided to change from a hiring position to an intern position within the church. The intern position and Luke's Bible College training were on parallel tracks. Luke was involved in committees, meetings (involved as an observer), visitation and he wrote several papers during the time. As Luke was concluding both his internship and schooling, he was approached by the church elders to consider a full-time associate position. They interviewed him briefly with regard to doctrine. From there, an intergenerational group was formed to be part of the interview process, which included an individual with skills and experience in human resources. Interviews with this group took place on two evenings over a two-week period. After the interviews, this group made a recommendation that went to the congregation for their vote of approval. In the transition from an internship role to an associate role, the focus was upon Luke only.

Luke was hired in this context into a new role; one that arose based upon the growth and needs of the congregation. He also appreciated the model of the church, hiring a young man from within. The factors which influenced Luke the most in accepting the position were: family consensus; counsel from a spiritual mentor; strong affirmation from the congregation and God demonstrably at work. Luke sees great benefit from being hired from within the local church he attended. In his words, "he was known and knew the church." "He was fully aware of every step in the process from beginning to end and felt entirely comfortable with how everything happened." The process allowed him to "wade" into ministry. This practice was consistent with the Senior Pastor's practice at other churches he had served in.

Even though they were not discussed in detail during the interview process, Luke felt that the expectations, job description and role were very clearly identified during the hiring process (and due to his mentoring and internship at the church), and knowing the church and its leadership aided in his ability to "know" or have the greatest awareness of the context and situation into which he was coming. He feels that his present role recognizes and allows him to make the best use of his strengths and spiritual gifts. In Luke's words, "being interned allows for identification

of strengths and addressing areas of weakness or need in order to find either ways to compensate or grow, or build relationships to help and support in known areas of weakness”.

Areas that Luke felt personally called to were not discussed as a part of the selection process, but he felt some measure of comfort and confidence owing to the fact that this was his home church and he was being closely mentored, seeing evident growth and was in a close enough relationship with leaders and others in the congregation that they could observe his life. He sees it as very important to serve and minister in areas where one is called and spiritually gifted and his relationship with the church and ongoing mentoring allowed for a process of discovery and confirmation of these areas in Luke’s life.

Luke would definitely encourage others to consider vocational ministry. His only hesitation would be (with regards to any potential pastor) “that they ensure God has called them to vocational ministry and that this has been confirmed by a local church”. The challenge with trying to ensure such a calling and its affirmation within one’s local church is that such affirmation usually occurs within the context of that church and her ministry. If such an affirmation were to be made, then perhaps that should be viewed primarily within that same context, given that God may be raising up leadership and releasing gifts for the benefit of that local body. It does not necessarily follow that it is a general calling for a transplanted service in another church. The fact that the interview process was general and did not address many specific details appears to be a reflection of the fact that Luke was part of the church, known and being intentionally disciple and mentored towards potential leadership. Many of the issues that might otherwise be raised during a formal interview process were not as necessary given that those questions were primarily answered through the ongoing relationships; ministry and mentoring that were an integrated part of Luke’s development.

Chapter 6: Summary, Implications and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

As I first began to consider the data obtained through the surveys and interview process, I was struck with the number of similarities and parallels between the experiences of the pastors and the challenges and concerns raised through the literature study. These parallels are also evident in a Canadian context within the EFC Biblical Leadership Survey (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2005) and in Dieter Schonwetter's 2006 Canadian MB Conference Pastor Study Executive Summary (Schonwetter, 2006), Comments related to poor communications, changed or differing expectations about their role from what was expressed during the hiring process to the realities of the actual position were just some of what was shared. Pastors also shared comments about a hiring process based upon personal qualities or relationships, one that reflected a market-driven process, and comments about restlessness and resignations. Each of these comments underscored the need for a closer look and for change within the identification and selection process for vocational, pastoral ministry.

If successful, effective pastoral ministry is simply measured in terms of fruitfulness and growth (individual and corporate), with elements of faithfulness, multiplication and perhaps longevity, then of the twenty-five churches represented by the thirteen pastors I interviewed, it would be a reasonable determination that some of the pastor's ministries at churches were not successful.

Within this chapter I will review and summarize the findings of the data obtained and consider their implications upon the success (or lack thereof) of various pastors within their ministry context. This chapter looks at the similarities and themes that arose from the interviews and surveys and begins to critically examine those experiences. These themes formed the framework for the observations, summary and conclusions of this thesis. This chapter will conclude by outlining the nature of what appears to be an emerging praxis in light of the analysis of the data received in this study.

6.2 Church Hiring Practices and Identification of Needs

While it should go without saying, churches usually hire pastors, (assuming they have the funds available) either because:

1. they have a perceived need due to ministry growth
2. they have a perceived need based upon a new area of emphasis or focus within the church
3. they have a need based upon a void in a pastoral ministry position due to a resignation, termination or retirement.

Before a new pastor is hired or assumes a role in a church, the church usually determines its need based upon one (or more) of these factors. In some churches, the amount of time invested in identifying specific needs prior to any hiring decision is considerable. In other cases there is a quick response to the loss of a pastor and very little time directed towards identifying the needs, culture and expectations of the church. In the case of some of the interviewees, it appears that even after a significant amount of time had elapsed since the church was without a pastor, the church still did not have a clear idea about their identity and specific needs in selecting a new pastor. Sometimes, even the knowledge of the needs, culture and expectations of a church may be overlooked during the hiring process as it becomes more defined by a response towards a new pastor who is “not like” their former pastor. More than one of the pastors I interacted with since the start of this study has commented that “you are hired for their weaknesses (referring to a former pastor) and fired for your strengths.”

How well a church identifies these needs at the outset of their search and hiring process is a critical part of the process because it establishes many of the parameters around which a hiring decision might be made. It helps to more clearly articulate the job description or role, and any associated expectations that a new pastor might face. From the interactions with the pastors interviewed, it seems apparent that while the needs for a pastor based upon one of the factors above might be obvious, often the needs are left at that level or just below it in some form of job description based upon perceived needs or tasks to be completed by a pastoral hire. Often, the deeper needs of the congregation, especially recognizing a period of transition or the character and culture of the church are not carefully weighed and considered.

The needs of a potential new pastor are also often overlooked and not explored, partly because the focus is upon finding a role, a pastoral ministry, a paid position that will help to pay the bills and allow someone to be involved in full time ministry. A candidating pastor seems reluctant to raise issues or needs for fear of potentially losing the opportunity to be hired to a needed or desired position. In this, the process may be skewed due to the real possibility that any interactions and considerations are more one-sided and focused solely upon the needs, desires, job description and expectations of a church that has entered into a season of selecting and hiring a new pastor. In each of the interviews I conducted, with the exception of four pastors, it appeared that each experience was driven more by the immediately perceived needs, desires or expectations of the church. A challenge in this aspect of a hiring process would be that as needs change, so too would job descriptions and expectations, often before too long in a new pastor's season of ministry. This could lead to dramatic shifts in ministry life and be very unsettling, for both the pastor and the church.

One other factor, or need that was raised more than twice during the interviews, was the sense of a growing need by the church to hire a pastor because they have been without anyone fulfilling that role in a formal, permanent sense for an extended period of time. There were instances raised during interviews, where churches had been one, two and even up to four years without a permanent, full time pastor after the departure of their previous one. This can create a greater sense of need and urgency for a hiring committee (and the whole church) as a search process is drawn out.

There is also the factor of the pastoral search or hiring committee of the church. Typically these men and women are brought together to represent various aspects of the church. They are tasked with sifting through resumes and cover letters, designing and implementing the process of the search, interviewing and finally submitting their recommendations to the church and/or the leadership for a final decision. I mentioned an earlier conversation with a Christian human resources consultant. She indicated that churches need help in selecting and hiring a pastor, because they “don't know what they are doing” and it is causing problems. It is a difficult task and one that would benefit from closer attention. I do not delve into that aspect of the process,

but want to recognize and acknowledge that there are two parties sitting at the table throughout a pastoral search process and both are necessary and vital to an overall, successful outcome.

6.3 Further Elements of the Process

Throughout the interviews with the pastors involved, it became apparent that there were multiple elements to consider when examining the respective hiring practices that were experienced.

While there were some common elements, very few of them were experienced in a consistent manner. In each case, the amount of detail or focus of questions during an interview varied and the emphasis brought to candidates and roles in each hiring process was different. It is understandable that each church would have its own unique culture and focus for the diverse roles that they are seeking to fill, but it was surprising to see just how varied the processes and their respective elements were as I progressed through the interviews. I have further subdivided this section into three unique aspects of the processes experienced in order to establish a greater ease to comment and reflect upon each aspect. Each of these areas is common I expect to any pastoral selection process. What makes them of particular interest are the component parts of each, which reveal some insights into the hiring process.

6.3.1 Initial Contact and Awareness of the Position.

With each of the pastors interviewed there were some common elements within each process. There was some form of awareness to the opportunity or position available. There was an initial contact, whether by the pastor himself reaching out to the church or hiring committee indicating his interest or by someone at the church reaching out to connect with a potential candidate to inform them of the opportunity and to encourage them to consider applying or submitting their name for consideration. In three instances, pastors had submitted a general profile through their fellowship that could be viewed by churches that were searching for a pastor. These pastors appeared to be known or had a variety of connections within the denomination and so they were contacted through the denominational profile. In the remaining twenty-three hiring processes experienced, the contacts were made through referral, word of mouth, or resumes being forwarded to churches that were looking for pastoral candidates.

In my own experience in submitting a profile and paying the required fee, after more than ten years I have yet to be contacted by a church that has been looking for a pastoral candidate. I am not a member of this denomination, but I am a M.Div. graduate from their affiliated seminary. The use of a denominational profile can be limited if there develops any particular, personal loyalties or preferences in the process as to which profiles (or people) may receive preferential treatment. In cases like this, many potential candidates may be overlooked or screened out for reasons that may reduce the ability of a church to find the right candidate, and not just an adequate (or more than adequate) one. A pastor from another denomination pointed this out to me as he was aware of a similar difficulty (that has been addressed) within his particular association.

The vast majority of initial contacts from the pastors I interviewed came through means other than the process established by the denomination to support such efforts. Usually such contacts came through the pastors taking initiative and submitting resumes to a search committee, a referral by a friend or associate in leadership, or by a search committee or individual within a church taking the initiative to contact a prospective candidate for the role. When a church took the initiative to contact an individual, it was usually a person whose name came up as a favorable candidate based upon their proven effectiveness in ministry or research that had been done. This research was to determine who in the area was well regarded and had success, or at least potential for the ministry role the church was seeking to fill. In three instances with those I interviewed, they were approached while they were still serving at another church. In Ted's case, he had experienced several years of success within his ministry and was in a period of time where he was facing struggles. The initial contact for him was in the form of a phone call from someone he respected and felt that he could continue to learn from, grow and was respected within the denomination. Previously, Ted had been contacted by others in a similar manner, but he had turned them down. This phone call got Ted's attention and interest at a vulnerable time and he began to engage in the remainder of the process that was established.

Mike indicated that he had applied to about thirty online opportunities, posted by a variety of denominations and in different geographic locations, submitted a profile to a denominational office, and talked to other denominations near his school. Mike's description of his search for a

pastoral position is very reflective of any job search process. He heard back from 8 different churches in response to his applications and queries. He visited other churches that had pastoral positions posted and sent church packages to leaders or search committees, usually in advance of his visits. Ray and Bob also became aware of a church need or made initial contact (in at least one instance) through a visit to a church.

For Luke, Bob, John, Rooney and Mark, they shared a similar experience. In at least one instance they were made aware of a pastoral opportunity and invited to consider a permanent, vocational role as they were already serving within that specific church, either as members, interns, or in some interim capacity.

When a church posted a pastoral position online there were again similarities and differences. Some postings were very generic and the requirements or qualifications being sought for the role were a mix of character requirements, general responsibilities, expectations, strengths, skills and spiritual gifts. The postings sometimes included a brief description of the church, its history and the city or area that the church is situated in. Other postings were much more detailed in nature, with a position summary, specific requirements and responsibilities listed, along with additional responsibilities detailed. Even with such detail, the position required evidence of character, experience, certain strengths and abilities. It also provided a clear outline of what the position might look like, without the specifics of what the church's expectation of how the role and its associated tasks might be fulfilled. In most cases, potential candidates were asked to respond by sending a resume. In some instances they were also asked to send their philosophy of ministry and perhaps references.²⁰

In the majority of experiences of those interviewed there was significant effort on the part of the pastoral candidates and the use of relationships and networking in order to gain the attention of a church that was seeking to hire a vocational pastor. Churches too, made significant efforts in

²⁰ Refer to Appendix 6 for some examples of FEB Job Postings

order to post positions and request resumes in an effort to attract the attention of a pool of potential pastors to consider in their hiring process. When a church took the initiative to contact an individual, it was usually a person whose name came up as a favorable candidate based upon their proven effectiveness in ministry. The assumptions that flow from that would expect any successful ministry or personnel to be transferable. A further assumption would be that successful ministry is rooted in and the result of one individual, regardless of context or the intentions that God may have for that particular setting. As research is done in trying to identify who might be a suitable candidate from another church, it seems that the focus is on the person and required skills and experience, with very little focus on identifying what God may want to do in and through a process for any church.

6.3.2 Duration of Hiring Process.

Depending upon which factor and need the church is responding to, the timelines will vary. Timelines will also vary based upon a church's ability to come to agreement about their needs and the manner by which they will meet those needs through hiring someone to fulfill a pastoral role. The processes within a church to determine their needs and come to agreement on any hiring initiative are often not clearly defined, so sometimes, outside assistance is required and sought out. Sometimes such assistance is not sought, and so it falls to a faithful group of people to wade through the process to understand how they might move forward and take steps to fulfill their role in the hiring of a vocational pastor. The church personnel who would make up any group or committee that is formed to craft a description of the role to be filled and who may then undertake the search for and screening of potential candidates also impact the timelines. It is reasonable to expect this to impact the timelines since many of those serving usually do so in a volunteer capacity and must balance this new role in the midst of their other life responsibilities. It is also reasonable to expect such a volunteer committee to impact hiring timelines because they may be very new to the experience of hiring a vocational pastor and they have to invest time getting answers to questions, understanding and establishing necessary criteria and desired outcomes, developing their process and then actually doing the work of searching, advertising or networking to find suitable candidates.

From the input I received from the conversations with the pastors I interviewed, their experiences as to the duration of the hiring process specific to their identification, interviewing and ultimate hiring, the process took from between two months and one year, with the bulk of the experiences ranging in the area of between four and six months. This was simply a comment on their experience once they became involved in the process that the church had established. It did not account for the time invested by any hiring or search committee since they began their process, or time invested in consideration of other potential candidates. In one instance, a pastor acknowledged that the church had been without anyone fulfilling a Senior Pastor role for a period of about four years!

It is important to note that although some processes took several months, that was not necessarily an indication of thoroughness or of exhausting detail. It was often a reflection of the challenges of getting the necessary people together for the interviews and hiring process. It is hoped that, on the part of the hiring and selection committee, it was also an intentional time for reflection and prayer throughout the process. In the case of Lawrie, the process took between six and nine months, during which he had three separate interactions: He had one formal interview; he preached one Sunday and participated in a time of fellowship with a Question and Answer session; and he participated in one event during the time, designed to get to know people and for them to get to know him and observe his interactions with others.

Peter, in each of the three churches he has served, has been involved in processes that have taken between four and eight months. During each of those hiring processes, his experiences have been similar. He had an initial contact by the church and leadership, followed by an interview, a candidating weekend, which involved meeting people within the church and spheres of ministry where he would serve, and a time to interact with the general congregation during a question and answer time. Following those times, the congregation would vote, each time within a week of his visit.

For Bob, each of the three positions he has served in were different hiring processes and timelines. They varied from two months, to several months and from an interview at his Bible College to an extended period of getting to be known, interviews and preaching.

John indicated that the process he was a part of took about one year in its entirety. John had the benefit of observing the process as an internal candidate, so he brought some perspective to the whole process. From the moment it was announced that a new Senior Pastor would be needed due to a retirement, John was able to observe, to some degree, the creation of a search committee to create a profile of the desired candidate and to perform the process of searching. He participated in about six different interactions: with the search committee; the congregation; and separate committees responsible for examining his life, theology and pastoral calling. He discovered later that there were eight candidates initially participating in interviews and interactions until he was finally affirmed by the congregation as the next Senior Pastor.

Each of the three hiring processes that Matt participated in, that each resulted in him being hired, took between three and four months. In each case, the process involved an initial interview on one day, and a more formal interview followed by congregational activities. There were three or at most four interactions prior to a decision to invite Matt to serve in a pastoral capacity. In a fourth instance, Matt went to a church to preach in a church that had an interim pastor. He was then asked to come back to “preach for a call” after that first engagement. The process was very short and Matt chose to decline the invitation. Jim had similar experiences to Matt in both of the churches where he has served where the process took between three and four months. In each of the three experiences Joe had with the hiring process, the duration was usually two months in each instance.

For Mike, a period of nine months was spent participating in one telephone interview and two direct interactions with a search committee and congregation before he was asked to become their pastor. In one instance, as Mike was looking for a position, he and his wife arrived at a church that he had been invited to visit after an initial conversation, only to find a “Welcome Pastor” sign erected and an expectation that he was coming to be their pastor. That process was very brief, but did not result in Mike accepting the role at the church.

Mark has experienced three varying hiring processes, each with a different duration. In a church where he was previously known, the process was very short, and at a different church, the process took six months and involved one phone conversation and two weekend interactions.

Aside from the formal search and hiring processes experienced by most of the pastors I interviewed, there were three pastors (Ray, Luke and John) who spoke of a process that spanned a much longer period of time (up to four years), which they each indicated was a part of an intentional and beneficial process that saw them ultimately hired to a vocational pastoral role. A fourth pastor (Bob) indicated that he has initiated a similar process of hiring by intentionally looking to identify potential pastoral candidates and providing mentoring and discipleship for them as they grow and develop. Some of the elements of the process are similar, but on the whole there is a very different dynamic and focus throughout the process, which is more fluid, adaptive and relational. These processes go far beyond the mere search and hiring of a pastor.

I cannot speak for the people who establish and direct the search process for a new pastor as those interactions are beyond the scope of this study, but I acknowledge their efforts and contribution as they navigate the process in their respective manners in an attempt to serve the church in this way, often under challenging, confusing or perhaps trying circumstances.

Whether a lengthy process is used or a brief one there are differing factors that contribute to the length of time involved and how that time is utilized during the identification, selection and hiring process. In the experiences of those I interviewed, there was some consistency with the actual number of interactions that took place for each of them (three to five) regardless of the length of time involved in the total process. Considering duration of the identification, selection and hiring process of pastors solely by itself therefore does not appear to be a strong or clear indicator of whether a pastor will be successful or unsuccessful within their ministry at a particular church.

6.3.3 Expectations.

One final element to any hiring process, and one that is experienced by both the hiring committee and the candidate, is expectations. Regardless of how objective or open to the process

either one might be, there will always be expectations. For a hiring committee, this might look like certain expectations that they have as a result of the kind of education or experience that a candidate may have. This could result in questions not being asked, because assumptions are made about what the significance of those might look like in practical terms or in a presumed sense of common understanding. Based upon the type of needs the church is seeking to address or fill, they may assume that their job description is clear to any candidate applying. If similar language is used during an interview, there may be assumptions or expectations that everyone has the same understanding. Communication can be a complicated process, and in an effort to seem agreeable, either the hiring committee or the candidate may overlook certain elements or one party may expect that there is full understanding or even agreement. This may not necessarily be so. I experience this often when having conversations with my wife (and others). A hiring situation does not eliminate the potential for miscommunication, but it does heighten the importance of understanding and trying to clarify points and expectations so that, as much as it is possible, there are no surprises for either party.

A hiring committee must also deal with the expectations of a position on the part of a congregation so that they might advocate for any new hire and try to mitigate any potential misunderstandings or unrealistic or unexpressed expectations that could hamper the hiring process or cause harm to a newly hired pastor. The candidate must be aware of their expectations as well. For the position, job requirements, expectations of time, accountabilities, development or mentoring in the role – each is important and can impact the success of not only the hiring process, but the ministry as well. Often, expectations are tied to the goals each party has. For the hiring committee, their goal is usually very simple – to hire a pastor. For the pastoral candidate, their goal too is often simple – be hired to a full time ministry position. With these goals in view, it can be very easy to overlook certain aspects of the role, or omit certain details in pursuit of the respective goals, usually for fear of not succeeding.

For both the candidate and the committee, some expectations may be reasonable, and some may not be, but if they are not discussed then they become potential landmines that can cause damage and harm to either (or both) parties later. One healthy expectation for any hiring process is that there may be things that each party can learn and benefit from in the process, and so ask

questions. If questions and open dialogue are not a strong characteristic of the process, then it becomes easy to assume that there is understanding and an expectation is created. Such an expectation is unrealistic in most circumstances, so slow down if necessary, taking the time to ask and invite questions. This can be challenging to do, so creating an environment which facilitates this type of dialogue in a non-threatening or accepting and open manner can lead to an even greater depth of engagement for both. Ultimately, this leads to relationship building so it is a useful skill to develop and use, for this and many other aspects of pastoral life.

6.4 What the Data Revealed

I do not think that we can attribute a hiring process solely to the people directly involved, although they may be the face of it in each specific situation. Due to many of the common elements, it may be that the attitudes and processes that many of the pastors I interviewed had experienced were something that has developed over time. Perhaps it has become what it has through the influences of our encroaching culture and changing times, and a slow degradation with slight variation that has left it where we find it now. The influence of secular management and hiring practices, the “professionalization” of ministry and perhaps the effort of ourselves wanting to conform and be confirmed within what we understand ministry to be — perhaps these things have also played a part in what was observed.

Within the survey respondents, the thirty-seven completed responses from pastors represented a minimum of four hundred and three years of combined ministry and at least ninety-five different churches served. Fifty-four percent of the pastors surveyed reported serving at more than three churches. Of those twenty pastors, four (25%) reported serving at five or more churches. These twenty pastors combined, have served at seventy or more churches. With such a significant and frequent turnover in pastoral leadership in churches, certainly the ministry of the church has been impacted. This also points to the need to re-evaluate or examine the hiring process more closely. Taylor acknowledges that very few pastors actually remain at one church for the duration of their ministry. He indicates that “most in our culture move on average every four years” (Taylor, 2013, p. xviii).

When thirty-two (86%) of the survey participants affirm a sense of calling, the inevitable question now might be – called to what, or where? Within the hiring processes described by the participants, there is no real means by which that can be examined or confirmed. What has apparently been the source of affirmation for them has been the fact that they were hired to a pastoral role. Yet, with such turnover and change of churches by the respondents, how can such a call be verified?

Several interviewees expressed that they felt there was a good fit within a congregation. Such feelings did not always represent reality as one of those pastors was soon dismissed by their congregations and a second one surviving an attempt to dismiss him. Other pastors, who initially felt there was a good fit indicated high degrees of dissatisfaction experienced, and there were instances of pastoral turnover. There were struggles over job descriptions, unclear expectations and not even knowing what to ask during the interview process.

Several pastors expressed a strong desire for the position, a role, and the security, albeit brief at times, of a vocational, ministry position — a job perhaps. I say a job here because of the needs expressed to pay bills, the levels of frustrations over job descriptions, poor communications, financial issues, changing roles and expectations. I emphasize a job concept because of performance reviews based upon reports submitted, personal hygiene, punctuality, staff relations, and numbers. It may be considered a job because one person can drive the process to hire who they want. It may be a job because when one leaves, others are expected to resign and leave so that the new person can hire his own team – whose team is it? Who is it that actually established someone as a representative, a steward of Christ and His Word for the church? The pastoral role has developed the strong appearance of a job, because: one can be hired, resign or be dismissed; thirteen pastors can serve in twenty-five churches and establish one hundred and ten years of ministry experience, with less than an average of four and a half years at each church. It has the appearance of a job because in the last thirteen churches represented by the interviewees, more than fifteen years of effort has been expended, just getting to be known and connected with the church in order to effectively minister and lead there.

These sound like the characteristics of a job to me. Is that what vocational, pastoral ministry is becoming in the minds and attitudes of congregations, and even pastors? Mayhue cites an example of a pastor, who, when asked to define “spiritual leadership”, focused exclusively on “leadership” and ignored any aspect of “spiritual” (Mayhue, 2011, p. 215).

Most of the experiences of the pastors I interviewed sounded like a strong effort was expended to hire the right person or to call the right person to serve the needs and ministry of the church. The emphasis of the hiring though was primarily on calling the equipped — with efforts, questions and processes apparently intended to hire the right person, with the right skills, education and experience to lead the church. At times, there was very little process, as in the case of Ted, Peter and Bob — hired right out of school to a new church based upon completed schooling and a personal reference or referral. Ted’s second experience gave some impressions of process, but one he identified as being driven by the Senior Pastor, which did not lead to successful ministry.

Ted’s specific comments that the process and invitation to Ted to consider the role at his second church was initiated and driven by the Senior Pastor based upon Ted’s skills, reputation and the numbers of students that were being drawn at his current church. In some ways, Ted was a ‘known’ entity and the process and interactions he experienced during the process reflected that. This seems to indicate a process that was mostly concerned with hiring the right person, one with the necessary skills, success indicators (in this case, numbers reportedly) and reputation. This was apparent since Ted was evidently known in the area enough to warrant the attention and initial phone call inviting him to the role. It is unfortunate that Ted ignored the warning indicators that he mentioned as he began and went through the process, those that seem more apparent now as he reflected back at the time. We often have what we perceive to be 20/20 hindsight, but even in that we do not fully know what God might be doing. There may be purpose in the struggles described, but we do know that God can work to redeem even difficult, challenging and poor circumstances when we make poor choices.

Several interviewees commented on learning, especially from the negative experiences they went through, both within the hiring process and the vocational roles they were part of. This caused them to become more cautious, seek more counsel and input from those outside of the

circumstances that they considered wise and godly as they went through the process. Such caution and counsel changed the process, even though the direct interactions and questions may have been similar. In these, there appeared to be more time taken for intentional reflection, prayer and input from people outside of the process. Strong influences upon the interviewees consistently showed family consensus and a strong, affirming vote by the congregation. For many of the interviewees, family consensus was the only indicator that any sort of counsel was being sought, and even then it was possibly limited to their immediate family. If family raised concerns though, it appears (as in Ted's experience at least) that those concerns were not as well received and seriously considered as they might have prevented the acceptance of the position. Wise, objective, godly counsel and prayer seem to be qualities that when valued and sought out, contribute to a hiring process that has indicators of success in fit and ministry for the pastoral candidate. Fowler suggests the benefits of such wisdom and advice prior to the ordination of a pastor from a denominational perspective (Fowler, 1992, pp. 35-36).

The consistent mention of a formal, congregational voting process seemed to reveal a few flaws, especially when the pastoral candidate received strong affirmation or a high percentage vote most times. In several instances the ones most strongly voted for:

- required significant amounts of time before the congregation responded well to their leadership
- were caught by surprise by the reality of the church situation of expectations
- were voted for the next year again with 100% affirmation (as in Ray's case)
- were dismissed by the church, once before the year was over or within a short period of time within their ministry
- were asked to resign from their position.
- struggled or had significant challenges within their ministry and chose to leave, often to the surprise of the congregation

A strong vote, in some cases was more of a surprise (or a relief) than an affirmation. At the time it was assumed to be a strong vote of affirmation and approval, yet that approval was either lost quickly or never was. Perhaps in those instances it was more of an obligatory show of hands to say, 'he seems okay and we need the position filled, so if everyone else says yes, I will too.' In

some instances for others, a strong vote was not a surprise as the congregation knew them and had been a part of the process in a much more involved and personal way. The fact that a vote was required in each hiring process experienced, thereby including the whole congregation in some way in the process, seems more like a formality and a requirement of a business process than a clear affirmation of calling. Interestingly, Shaw notes that “nowhere in the New Testament do we find leaders being voted in. Rather, the pattern was of leaders who appointed leaders who appointed leader” (Shaw, 2006, p. 121). Foakes-Jackson notes that within the early church, a “bishop had to be appointed by the flock that he was called to preside – as a rule the officials had to be formally accepted by the people. Whether he was elected by the members of his church, or nominated by neighbouring bishops though is uncertain. (Foakes-Jackson, 1924, p. 159)”

Perhaps a vote is viewed today as some form of unity within the church. However, if after such a vote there can be such discord, disunity and discouragement as was shared by several interviewees, then our perception and practices of unity may need to be re-evaluated. If a vote is to be an integral part of the process of carefully selecting a pastoral candidate and then publicly affirming God’s unique calling and gifting of that person for pastoral ministry within a specific church, then I would suggest that the following be considered. The congregation should be either very much more involved in any selection process, or any candidate should be much more an integral part of a congregation in order to be known, such that a congregation might clearly recognize their calling and gifting and be able to affirm that. Otherwise, they are more likely being asked to affirm the selection of a person to a role that they are told meets the church’s needs and thereby signal the end of the process. They are asked to affirm a candidate for a position, a job perhaps, not necessarily God’s man for ministry. Is the congregation fully aware of the responsibility that they are being asked to engage in? Or, are they really being given any real responsibility in the church in being asked for a show of hands to make a hiring decision? Perhaps an arbitrary percentage as an indicator of success in such a vote should also be examined if it puts pressure on having the right number of yes responses. There may be other opportunities for growth and learning occurring within the congregation that are ignored as we stoically turn our face toward dealing with the hiring of a pastor, so that the church might move forward and resolve other issues later. What is the impact of that and what is going through the minds of a congregation as they are asked to engage in such a vote? Do the process and the vote involve,

encourage and excite the congregation, or does it actually work against the person being voted for in the end? This raises questions from the other side of the selection and hiring process that may be worth considering in the future.

Another element to consider, although I did not explore this aspect of pastoral ministry, is the impact of the overall leadership of the church and the practices and structures inherent within the church itself. Several times, it appeared as though a pastor was having a successful or effective ministry, influencing lives for Jesus Christ and seeing people respond. There were a couple of interviewees that noted that at times, the congregation related more to them than to another pastor and this caused some tensions. If a congregation is truly surprised by the sudden dismissal or resignation of a pastor, it may be that the pastor was successful, but that there were other aspects that were involved. Possibly it was a small, but influential portion of the congregation, or other persons on the leadership team that ultimately made decisions resulting in the pastoral change or dismissal. Caleb and Joshua were on the right track, but were unable to proceed with God's plan due to the impact, influence and decisions of others (Numbers 13:25-14:38).

Other elements that influenced the acceptance of a new position were related to: "a favorable geographic location; a need to move on; the only offer after candidating at several places; it was a new start/opportunity; and felt it would probably work". There were other factors expressed as well, but each of these is not a strong factor that necessarily confirms that God is evidently calling someone to vocational ministry at a particular church. These factors appear to be more like personal motivators based on personal preference, hope for a desired outcome or even an expression of relief at an actual position being offered. These are characteristic more of a job than a ministry. There is not a sense of "here I am God, send me", but rather a sense that these circumstances are acceptable to my preferences, they will be sufficient for the time being, or maybe this will work out okay. The majority of these should raise a red flag if we stopped to consider the strength of these factors in light of what we say about affirming God's call for someone's life as a pastor within His church. These are not the expected sentiments of ministry, or at least, they shouldn't be in most cases. Of these, geography may be the only one that might reflect a confirmation of God's calling, because He may direct our desires or work in conjunction with those desires, as He moves and directs us. If geography alone though is a factor that would

determine whether a pastor would accept a role after everything else seems to point towards a clear sense of call, then it may only be a preference.

God demonstrably at work was an influencing factor to accept a position mentioned by at least seven of the vocational ministers. Here I must again comment that it is very difficult to affirm God at work when the process and any interactions throughout it are truncated and there is very little time for reflection and prayer, or at least, very little time attributed to it. Neither of these items was mentioned very much throughout the interviews as part of any process. Some of those candidates hired to vocational positions indicated that God demonstrably at work was an influencing factor for their decision to accept a position, yet within a short time, they ceased to be serving as the pastor of the church. If that was part of God's plan to build His church and to affirm and raise up His leaders through being demonstrably at work, then I must confess a certain amount of confusion over the circumstances that were shared. When people indicated that they saw God demonstrably at work, it was in conjunction with a favorable outcome for them, or circumstances that were perceived to be in their favour. I did not hear any affirmations of God demonstrably at work when there were negative circumstances shared.

This also relates to comments made by several pastors regarding their willingness to encourage and influence others to consider vocational pastoral ministry. Comments were made relating to a willingness to encourage someone if they saw: evidence of "God's hand on them"; "qualities of a minister"; "evidence of spiritual gifts"; and "a clear confirmation of one's calling". What would it take to see God's hand on someone? Perhaps such evidence is more easily viewed over a greater period of association and time spent together. As each pastor acknowledged, to be able to discern such indications required time spent together, in ministry, in serving together and observing someone's life. Even after the time spent, they would only then encourage someone to pursue pastoral ministry, recognizing that perhaps God's process often takes longer than ours. So, looking once again to the interview processes, to see evidence of something as significant as evidence of God's calling and someone's gifting for ministry within a specific church, where they are not known, through only one to three interactions (interviews no less) would be, unusual.

There were some interviewees that did indicate that God seemed demonstrably at work, and they have seen a certain stability and affirmation since they began their ministry. In three of these cases, each person was a part of a longer process of engaging with the congregation, being known, mentored and discipled within the particular church context. Each also indicated that they had sought out and benefitted from wise and godly counsel through the process. John, Rooney and Luke each attested to a similar process of development and growth that took place over time as they were nurtured and raised up from within the church they now serve. Three other pastors expressed that there was a significant amount of interaction during one of their hiring processes and that each had elements of caution after previous experiences (one by the pastor and two by the churches). There was more prayer and counsel sought in each of these instances and the objective seemed to be more aligned with finding the right person, with the right character – affirming or proving the man of God’s choosing, rather than rushing to hire for a need, or a job.

Aside from these interviews, one church leader, commenting on a church’s hiring history, a new hiring decision and the selection of a particular pastor, said that the church had viewed its need to have a pastor who was a strong preacher with high academic credentials, a PhD preferably. In their pursuit of such men, they overlooked several candidates and had difficulty finding “the right one”. They had seen some turnover in their Senior Pastor role as various, highly credentialed men came, and went. It wasn’t until they more reasonably and completely evaluated some of their needs and were encouraged to look more at the character and heart of a potential candidate that they made an entirely different selection, one that took time and has proven to be a good “fit” for both the church and the pastor.

It appears that too often a church seeks to hire the right person, with the right skills, education, gifts and abilities for the needs of their church, while making assumptions about the actual character, calling and gifting of that individual for a specific ministry within their church. Processes, however well-intentioned, often appear to default to a hiring exercise, driven more by needs, time pressures, professional criteria or required skills. Sometimes too, they are a reaction against a former pastor, than they seem to be about a process of discovery and discernment for what God is doing and who He has prepared for the role. Churches seem to focus more on

calling the equipped — those who seem to possess the necessary skills and abilities to meet their needs right now, rather than seeking to find the person God has actually prepared and called for His ministry in His church (which you just happen to attend). Matt's comments about the youth pastor they hired seem to support elements of this and point towards this type of practice. Initially, they hired someone based upon relationships and some time spent at their church, but it didn't work out for a number of reasons — it went poorly. That person then left to go to a larger church, where his resume must have spoken of his experience and skills. His character and the circumstances surrounding him leaving his former church were not questioned, or at least corroborated as Matt did not receive any calls from the new church to inquire or verify any elements of the person's character or time spent serving there. How would character and calling be evidenced and affirmed in such a context?

Bob's experience in the hiring process of his third church had been relatively short, limited in the scope of the questions asked, with some admitted differences and challenges for Bob due to the nature of the change that this move represented. That being said, what might be considered Bob's success within this church was not evidently apparent through specifics of a process, which seemed to lack the form and structure of other examples. The process that was followed wasn't as neat, clear or objectively laid out as it might be, but what seems to set it apart in some ways was the emphasis on: the needs of the church, who were cautious and careful in their approach; intentional opportunities to get to know Bob and observe him in a ministry capacity; and the times of fellowship and meals together with people in the congregation over a period of time in a relational capacity. They shared, even for a brief time, ministry and life together.

One other element that has perhaps impacted Bob's apparent overall success at his third church might be attributed to his longevity there. As each pastor interviewed noted, it can take a long time to get to be known by a congregation, and to know them. There are no shortcuts to relationships. This may be another question worth pursuing sometime, but is there a correlation between longevity of ministry at one church and the overall impact and success of one's pastoral ministry? Through the interviews there were acknowledgements, comments and even some regrets about: the short durations spent at some churches; four years being a long time for an associate to serve at a church; and the expectation that seeing significant fruit in a ministry

comes after five to eight years. The comments about frequent turnover of pastors within ministry either points to: a flawed or failed process for hiring and selection; the reality that perhaps some men ought not to have been pastors in the first place; or that the perspectives on duration of ministry need to be adjusted and aligned with something other than the experiences and opinions of most pastors (and possibly congregations and denominational leaders).

When a church took the initiative to contact an individual, it was usually a person whose name came up as a favorable candidate based upon their proven effectiveness in ministry or research that had been done to determine who in the area was well regarded and had success, or at least potential for the ministry role the church was seeking to fill. When this occurs it raises some questions and challenges. How would a pastor, called to minister, and ministering in a particular church be able to then discern that his calling has either ended, or perhaps wasn't valid in the first place if he in fact now feels "called" to serve at another church when the opportunity arises? This is just a general observation, but I have noticed on several occasions that pastors seldom, if ever, feel called to a smaller church.

I am thankful for the reminder and strong statement that Jesus makes in Matthew 16:15ff that the things that will last, that are foundational and that He will use to build His church, will not be overcome and are not rooted in us. So there is always hope, help and grace available as pastors seek to shepherd the church of God that they are actually called to.

6.4.1 Observations from the Data

Based upon the interviews and comments made by the pastors and their circumstances at various churches, then as many as thirteen of those vocational ministry experiences were evidently not successful. Struggles in ministry did not come as a surprise after hearing of the various hiring processes, where:

- expectations were not clearly communicated, by the hiring committee or candidate
- indications of leadership challenges or conflicts were evident during the hiring process
- significant assumptions were made by both parties in the process
- neither the pastoral candidate or the hiring committee knew what to ask or discuss during the process

- the hiring process concluded with a one year contract
- aspects that the pastoral candidate felt called to and gifted in were not discussed or considered as part of the process
- significant time and effort was spent looking for a church, with many resumes and packages sent to potential churches

These and other factors individually would be cause for some concern, but when multiple indicators are in evidence through a pastoral selection and hiring process, it would point to some potential problems. This would point to the probability that the particular pastor and hiring committee should slow the process down and work to change or at least evaluate some of these factors. Perhaps they could either: invest more time to know and be known, working through a longer period of true discovery, relationship building, communication and testing; re-evaluate their respective needs and expectations; consider the possibility that the candidate or the church context was not a good fit.

Three of those interviewed, even as they serve as relatively new pastors, have strong indicators for successful ministry (Luke, Rooney and John). Due to the short duration of their ministries at present, any proclamation of their current or future success would have to be qualified with that caveat, although the results and analysis of the information gathered seems to point strongly in the direction of their success. Each of these three, even before they participated in a formal interview and selection process, were recognized, encouraged, intentionally mentored by church leadership, and known by the congregation. In the cases of Luke and John, they were recognized and affirmed by their church, and Rooney had spent a significant amount of time with the congregation so that he had become known to the congregation prior to engaging in the process of pastoral identification and selection.

Bob, in his third church seems to be effective and successful, based upon the above indicators and considering his longevity and ongoing multiplication of leaders. There were indications that more time, careful consideration and prayer went into this process. There was also a more intensive period of time devoted by the church to get to know Bob and carefully examining him, especially in light of the congregation's previous experience. One other aspect that Bob has

demonstrated was being intentional around investing time and himself to get to know the congregation, their needs and how they respond to leadership. A further action was to intentionally integrate himself and be known by the church. This allowed him to assume a leadership style that might be considered more situational, but allows time for relationships to further develop and deepen. It also allows for the opportunity for more of your personal leadership style to become appropriately integrated within a church as you grow. This reflects the heart of a shepherd.

That leaves eight vocational ministry experiences that we cannot clearly comment on one way or the other in terms of the expectation of long term success. Within the context of these particular experiences the hiring processes mirrored the elements of many others, but the impacts of those processes, combined with the realities of church practices did not result in a clear declaration of success. That the processes in these eight experiences combined several of the warning elements mentioned above and, considering the turnover and change to a different church, this would indicate that from the perspective of the vocational minister and perhaps the congregation too, the ministry time was not successful, regardless of any potential victories that might have occurred at the church. Struggles and challenges are to be expected, beyond what Jesus warned about for those who follow Him and may be assumed within a pastoral role. Some of the pastors within these roles may have viewed it as a job, and when the weekly routines become mundane or not challenging, then additional struggles or tensions may arise. That leaves open the possibilities that either the pastor or the congregation may tire of the struggles, or may not have the maturity or resources to deal with them well and the pastor will either leave, or be asked to leave as change will be viewed as something better than maintaining the status quo and any vision for a different, positive future is tainted and beyond their ability to hope or expect. Several of the survey respondents, particularly those having served at more than four churches so far, declined to be interviewed. It may be that they were too busy, as pastor's schedules can be. It may also be, in part, that within some of those church experiences there were challenging times and feelings of not being successful and pain. Perhaps these were too close to the surface to be discussed in any greater detail at this time.

Within each of these experiences, and probably in some of the thirteen deemed to not be successful, from the interviews, I would expect that we could find elements of hope, of positive impact, transformation and of God at work. Describing ten years of “gut-wrenching disappointments” is a vivid picture, but within those ten years, we do not know of the seeds that were planted, the encouragement that took place, or the impact of God’s word faithfully proclaimed during that time. What we can observe is the experience and others like it, negatively affecting the perceptions and ministry of pastors, such that they often feel broken, discouraged and beaten up, and they would hesitate to encourage others to pastoral ministry. How will this impact the future development, identification and calling of pastors for the future? How have such experiences impacted the Canadian evangelical church to date? Thankfully, we serve a God who can redeem even the most difficult circumstances and use them for His good, but I suspect that this will have negatively impacted the Canadian evangelical church and will continue to do so as more Pastors and churches experience struggles and brokenness, and respond with division, distrust and alienation.

Whether we try to rationalize the positive impact of a ministry that was five months, or ten years long, when a pastor is broken and wounded, especially by circumstances within his church, the ministry is affected. When a pastor leaves and a congregation is left to face uncertainties, anger, hurts or confusion, by themselves, neither one of them benefits as they both have struggles, and God’s church and witness is again affected. Jesus, in Matthew 9:36, commenting on the multitudes (primarily unbelievers in this context), indicates that He feels compassion for them because they were distressed and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd. It is an interesting comment and an example if we were to consider how a church would feel without a shepherd or after losing one that they cared about? How would Jesus feel about it? Perhaps there is a parallel here. There are struggles in the moment, and in the future, as the church must seek a new pastor. The church perhaps carries with it issues of mistrust, fear, resentment, anger or determination for change. The pastor will also carry issues from the situation perhaps into a new context. The pastor may also feel certain real pressures — to find a new position to meet practical, daily needs for him and his family. The congregation too has needs. Rather than taking the time to ask the questions, clearly identify the problems and seek to address them, often there is a rush to resolve the most obvious matter seen — find a pastor to fill the role and meet the need.

When these circumstances are aligned with what appears to be a growing, worldly perspective and practice for the hiring of pastors, it is not surprising to read all of the comments and concerns found within the literature review, or in the materials from the interviews. There is a challenge to the identification, hiring and selection of pastors and it is, in part, affecting the success of pastoral ministries. Leonard comments on a challenge, specifically within Baptist circles in the United States, that they tend “toward what seems to be the ‘quickie ordination’, in which they are all too eager to lay hands on any who testify to a call, while giving limited attention to the candidate’s readiness for Christian ministry” (Leonard, 1981, p. 551). In Mark’s final comments, he stated that “people are being put into roles, but there is a lack of pastors. Churches are getting comfortable and don’t want dramatic change”. Perhaps it is due to a desire for comfort and a resistance to change and growth on the part of the church (and perhaps at times, on the part of the pastor) that we observe a pattern of hiring processes imitating more worldly priorities. When I first read Sandulak and his mention of one denomination in Canada identifying that over 50% of its recent pastoral hires have fallen into a category of failed hires, it was shocking. When I consider the results of the interviews, and see at least thirteen of twenty-five hires represented that would be considered unsuccessful, it raised a very real sense of alarm.

Within the church, elements of:

- a lack of pastoral candidates to fill vacant positions
- a relatively high degree of turnover in pastoral ministry and a short life-cycle for pastors generally
- reports of frustration and discouragement by pastors
- what is perceived to be a growing attitude of professionalism with the pastoral role, by both pastors and congregations

All seem to indicate that there is a problem within pastoral ministry today. The inevitable change and turmoil that these elements bring, when considered individually can seriously hinder any effective witness and ministry of the church within their community. When more than one of these elements is evidenced within a church something is wrong and it may point to something more systemic, something beyond the mere selection process of an individual church, although that is where it is becoming more manifested.

Rooney's comments about the tension of considering one vocational role as a potential stepping stone, is one that I have heard often in conversations with pastors. It seems to reflect an attitude of professionalism and advancement within one's career, rather than a humble submission to a calling and a desire to serve. This is not to imply that any pastor who feels called to move on or advance in their ministry is in any way out of God's will or demonstrating less than a humble, shepherding character, but it may emphasize the reality of the changing nature of pastoral ministry and the possible impact of an encroaching society upon the sacred role of pastor.

The main assumption or hunch, upon which this study was based, was that the initial hiring process for pastors has impact and influence upon the pastors being successful, or unsuccessful in the ministry that they are expected to have within the church setting they are hired to. As the data and ensuing interviews revealed, there are many similarities to hiring processes within the church, elements of which seem to be consistent indicators of, or contributors to the success or lack of success by a pastor. Elements of the hiring process have influenced not only the success or lack of success by a pastor, but they have contributed to what appears to be a subtle change in attitudes towards the church. When that attitude is positive, it can contribute meaningfully to the Pastor's ministry and the church's well-being. When the attitude is negative, then it too contributes to the pastor's ministry and the congregation, though not in a healthy way.

The key findings seem to raise some issues and emphasize the need for some changes to the process. This study has focused primarily upon the pastors and their experiences, but it is important to realize that both the church and the pastoral candidate are involved within the hiring process, and that there are at least two perspectives to each process. Both parties have responsibilities to safeguard the process and its integrity, and inevitably, the ministry to which they have been entrusted. The results of these key findings also point towards an emerging understanding, one that has been alluded to in the opinions and concerns expressed within the literature review. It becomes more evident through the data obtained through the interviews conducted.

6.6 Summary of Key Findings

As I began this study, I acknowledged that there was very little data related to the actual hiring practices and experiences of pastors available. Even within the materials of the literature review, I noted that there were many comments being made and opinions shared, but with very little in the way of empirical research displayed to substantiate the concerns expressed.

Mayhue, in quoting John Seel's 1992 survey of twenty-five prominent evangelical leaders, noted one of the dominant themes that emerged was a general lament and pessimism over the insufficient number of leaders for the church (1995, p. 40). Mayhue also describes the gloomy perception of many evangelicals over the state of pastoral ministry with words like: "Crossroads; Transition; Crisis: Uncertainty: and Restlessness (1995, p. 39)."

Johnson (1995, pp. 182-183) relates the changing expectations with the present culture. He comments that in the past, a pastor's role was primarily seen as theologian, preacher and shepherd while today the expectation is that a pastor's time should be spent differently and that a pastor should be a therapist, a chief executive and a church growth specialist as a part of their skills and contributions.

Sandulak refers to one particular denomination in Canada that acknowledged over 50% of its recent pastoral hires have fallen into the category of failed hires (2006, p. 97). Unfortunately, Sandulak does not specify from which denomination he obtained this statistic, so further investigation and understanding of these results is not readily available. Peter Raedts, in his opening address at the British-Dutch Colloquium at Utrecht identified a crisis of confidence in the Catholic Church as a result of the misbehavior of many of its priests that was even worse than the time in the 1960's when many priests left the ministry and the church. He acknowledged that this is indicative of what happens when a "Christian community loses a clear view of the functions of the ministry and neglects to set standards for recruitment and training in tune with the times" (Raedts, 2002, pp. 8-9).

Schmidt comments on the observances of a shift within his denomination, the Mennonite Brethren Church, towards a "professional, pastoral-dominated system" (Schmidt, 1979, p. 3). He

goes on to comment on his observations over six years, during which time he has noted that “church leadership now parallels business and secular models” and that “cultural conditioning is more determinative than scriptural directives” (Schmidt, 1979, p. 4).

Eugene Peterson, when asked about the existence of a crisis in ministry in his interview with David Wood (2002, p. 19) responded that his perception is that many pastors are looking for rewards outside of the realm of their ministry calling —things that are more market-driven and secular.

Johnson (1995, pp. 182-183) in referencing a noted pastor, attributes much of the confusion and crisis in pastoral identity to a theological failure. He suggests that much of our pastoral training now is focused on practical aspects of ministry — areas such as administration, preaching, leadership skills, small group dynamics and other related duties. Pastoral training is lacking in areas related to theology of ministry and understanding how God defines it and what He calls His ministers to be.

Brown notes within his work, that a general problem within church staff relationships is that a major barrier to healthy relationships is “real communication” (Brown, 1966, p. 117). If this is a problem and a barrier within existing church and staff relationships, then it is not surprising that this may be in evidence within any hiring process.

Each of these examples does point to a crisis and suggests matters of concern for the church. While these concerns may be true and resonate with many pastors and leaders today, it was difficult to substantiate all of these comments empirically with current literature itself. In light of the data obtained through this study, we now have a greater reason to accept the concerns raised within the literature as we see confirmation of several of the concerns for pastoral ministry that were raised.

Concerns within pastoral ministry that have been experienced over decades, found in the literature review and raised during this study were related to:

- Expectations

- Professionalization
- Secular influences
- Change elements
- Encroaching secularization
- Matters of theology, training and growth
- The impact and influence of a changing dynamic within the community of faith

Each concern seemed to find some validation within the experiences shared and data obtained through the surveys and interviews conducted. Hiring processes all took place, but there were very few that could be characterized as a journey of discovery to determine what God was doing and who He was preparing, or calling, to serve as the Pastor, Leader or Shepherd for His church. The majority of processes could be characterized as simply, a hiring process, and one that was more concerned with finding the right mix of skills, talents and experience to fulfill the required tasks. The key themes that became apparent during the surveys and interviews, and that influenced the success of ministry for pastors were:

- A lack of a clear understanding by the church as to who they are, their identity and what they truly need in their pastoral position
- Expectations were not clear for either the church or the pastoral candidate. There was evidence of poor disclosure, a lack of transparency or things that were not discussed. This may have been due to a fear of not being successful in being hired, or due to an ignorance of what a process should look like
- A primary emphasis on skills and experience
- An expectation of consistent turnover and change in pastoral leadership
- The degree to which both the candidate and the church were known by each other to affirm calling, gifting or character of the candidate, or the circumstances, realities and expectations of the congregation seemed to impact success
- A formal vote taking place by the church, but the church not well engaged or informed through the process and having very little knowledge of the candidate to be able to affirm his calling to the role specified

- No clear priority for, identity of, or emphasis upon: spiritual gifts; calling; or strengths of the candidate as God's man for the role. Rather evidence of a priority for congregational needs to be met.
- Minimal time spent either jointly (with hiring committee and others) or on the part of many candidates for prayer and seeking God in the process and decision to accept an offered position.

Many of the experiences described within the interviews shared common elements, whether in the processes themselves, or in the underlying attitudes and assumptions that seem to be present within the hiring practices, either on the part of the pastoral candidate, or the hiring committee (and by extension possibly, the church). Many interviewees expressed a sense of "call", but through the various experiences described it appears that while a pastoral candidate may have a such a sense, it is something that is best worked out and confirmed by means outside of the will or intention of the candidate. All of the selection and hiring processes included some form of formal interview portion, as well as a candidating time before the church and a formal, congregational vote. While these were a significant part of the hiring processes described, they did not appear to be a strong or viable means of determining or confirming the character, fit or calling of an individual to serve in a pastoral capacity within the church. Elements that raised caution or concern seem to be evident in the processes that resulted in poor hiring decisions, but they appear to be more obvious to an objective outside observer than to those directly involved or impacted by the process.

One other key finding was the apparent attitude in many cases that the pastoral role may be likened to a job in the sense that regular turnover, change or advancement was an expectation. Similarly, it was noted that a candidate must follow the same processes and present similar levels of achievement, skills and qualifications to compete for a position that could be expected within any job search conditions. There was very little (if anything, in some cases) that distinguished a spiritual, pastoral role selection and hiring process from any other hiring process within a secular job environment.

One final, positive, key finding was that in instances where the candidate and church are more known to each other, including character qualities, giftedness and sense of calling confirmed, there appears to be a greater likelihood of success in the hiring, for the pastor and for the church.

6.7 An Emerging Praxis

As the literature review, the survey and interview data suggests, there is cause for concern for the state of pastoral ministry now and into the future. It is not enough to educate potential pastors and expect that the church will embrace them, grow and thrive. Looking at the data from the survey and the subsequent interviews, an emerging praxis is becoming more evident. Farley, in his article, notes that there appears to be a gulf opening up between “churchly and praxis approaches”. He notes that one approach focuses theology on church and clerical life, but praxis is not in view. The other, he suggests, focuses theology on praxis, but a theology of church ministry and situation appears to be absent (Farley, 2000, p. 124).

The tensions between these two approaches may be a plausible explanation for the differing hiring processes and experiences contained within this study. I would suggest that a possible explanation of the success, or lack of it by a pastor, is found within the hiring process. There appears to be a growing gulf between the “churchly and praxis approaches” (Farley, 2000, p. 124). What may be observed from the hiring practices examined is that the church appears to be much more concerned with the practice of ministry. The theological foundations of church ministry and pastoral leadership are not strongly considered or used to inform the process when a church is seeking to hire a pastor.

Many of the practical details of the hiring process were commonly shared by most of those interviewed. The details were similar but often the time invested was insufficient to be able to adequately get to know a candidate, and discern if this was the person God was calling to serve in a particular church. It was difficult for either participant in the process to be able to uncover the less tangible attitudes, expectations and perspectives that are brought into and give shape to the details and process. Due to the skills and proficiencies that a candidate may bring, whether through education or experience, they will be able to do the job. But, they will only be sufficient to a point. The call to pastor a church is much more than a mere job or management

responsibility. It requires much more than what we can offer if we truly want it to be successful. We cannot overlook God's vital role in everything related to life, godliness and His church. The letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three provide a relevant caution and reminder for us that even the best leadership may still fall short of what God intends.

It appears that the church today is primarily more concerned with practically filling an office, meeting a need, with a skilled and experienced person (we call them a pastor), than rightly understanding and applying theological principles and practices to identify and release the person God is particularly calling to serve their congregation. Perhaps this stems from a shaping of theology and praxis from a primary perspective of church growth? Another possible explanation is an expectation by the church that the hiring committee is adequately equipped to incorporate a theology of church leadership and ministry within their task of identifying and hiring a pastor. Within the context of the interviews there were some who did not fit this pattern and appeared to demonstrate a strong balance of both. Their stories and experiences are much more reflective of, and show potential and hope for, consistent, successful ministry.

From the data obtained, it appears that the church today spends more of its time and efforts when selecting and hiring a pastor with what I identify as Calling the Equipped. That is, the church is more focused in its selection efforts in obtaining the right skills (often through education), experience, reputation and perhaps personality as they search for their new pastor. This also appears evident within the key themes identified within the summary of key findings in the previous section. This focus upon Calling the Equipped also appears to be evident within the emphasis placed on these elements in the many job postings that I viewed as well.²¹ Testing and proving character qualities and God's calling are things that are largely assumed. They are usually based upon references, previous church experiences or the expectation that to be an ordained pastor those things must already and forever be in place and are transferable. Such an emphasis will result most often in an unsuccessful hiring and pastoral ministry experience.

²¹ Some samples of these are included in Appendix 6

Within the data from the survey respondents revealing four pastors have served at five or more churches each, and twenty pastors combined have served at seventy or more churches, there appears to be some evidence of poor pastoral selection, at least. With such a significant and frequent turnover in pastoral leadership in churches, certainly the ministry of the church has been impacted. Of those twenty pastors, some of their previous fifty churches (or more) served, may view the ministry experience and unsuccessful. This data points to the need for a better, and different process for the selection of pastors for a church, and perhaps to a different perspective on the benefits of longevity of service within one church. The apparent emphasis upon skills, experience and ministry history when hiring a pastor should be viewed as somewhat problematic. Even the term “hiring” might be worth removing from our vocabulary when discussing the identification and selection of a pastor. What is it for the church to be “in the world, but not of it” as it pertains to the selection of a vocational pastor?

It appears that from the results of the data collected (surveys, interviews, literature and scriptural reviews) that we have deviated from some of the biblical concerns for the identification and selection of church leaders. This has had an impact upon the hiring processes employed for this purpose. The hiring processes examined through this study show a more secular emphasis and a priority for finding the “right person” as defined by skills, experience and training. The results of this deviation seem to point to a much greater potential for pastors to move between churches more frequently, greater instances of frustration and ultimately, a lack of success for both the pastor and the church. We can’t simply leave it here though, because ultimately, it is God’s church, so we are potentially hindering God’s work as we pursue our roles, jobs and priorities for the church according to criteria and a pattern that may only be our own.

What I would suggest appears to be a healthier and more successful focus for a pastoral hiring praxis would be to emphasize and focus on Equipping the Called. This does not mean discounting those whose training, skills and possible experience could serve the church, because as Sandulak had affirmed, a lack in those areas could be contributors to a failure in pastoral ministry as well (Sandulak, 2006, p. 98). What Equipping the Called does mean is a priority for testing and proving a candidate in an effort to discern a pastoral calling in line with what God is

doing and what may be needed for your church. It would mean intentionally identifying the church's needs, culture, character and weaknesses initially through engaging the whole congregation in the effort. The church would need to also identify the type of leadership they are most responsive to, especially within the broader leadership culture and ecclesiology of the church. It would also mean taking the time to wrestle with the scriptural passages and theology related to the church and leadership and then responding in faith and practice. It would then involve a process of identifying leaders who demonstrate evidence of God's calling to a church's own context and then mentoring, discipling and resourcing them as necessary to encourage and support their growth. The motivation for this and what would keep a congregation committed and on track throughout, would be a conviction, rooted in the belief that indeed, God has called this person to serve in a particular vocational capacity in our midst, and we will support it. This support is not to be one of blind submission, but one reflective of a healthy accountability, theology and praxis of the church. The benefits of such a unity and culture seem to present evidences of growth and success for God's church under these conditions. This has been reflective of the experiences of Rooney, Luke and John particularly, and the contrasts and differences in the interviews with them were apparent throughout.

It was interesting to note that in two instances, with Luke and Rooney, the search committee learned through their time and made changes to elements of their process and expectations in conjunction with the church. They did this in order to pursue what they believed God wanted to accomplish in their church and through them, in the selection of a pastoral leader. We may not get it right the first time or as we begin a search process, but a willingness to learn, lean on God and grow through it on the part of a search committee is an encouraging and hopeful sign, and one worth drawing attention to.

When the church hiring process reflects more of a Calling of the Equipped, then the likelihood of the pastor not succeeding, and not serving longer term, is increased. Conversely, when a church is more concerned with Equipping the Called, that is, seeking to affirm what God is doing and identifying the person whom God is calling to pastor in a specific church, rightly prioritizing what God intends for His Church in leadership, then the likelihood of success and even longevity of service by the pastor, is increased.

6.8 Conclusion

What would be the potential ministry impact if the significant amount of time for a Pastor to be known in a congregation so that he might minister effectively from the outset, was not necessary or was dramatically reduced? What is the nature of a pastoral call, and how might it be validated and affirmed? Is it necessary to reaffirm this at any other church should a move be made in ministry? If “fit” and “call” are things that are usually confirmed after a candidate is hired, would there be a benefit to seek to know a potential, new pastor more before a firm hiring decision is made?

How a pastor feels about his position at a church, is not necessarily indicative of reality. I have heard it said, on numerous occasions, that “perception is reality”. Unfortunately for those who hold to such sentiments, they neglect to consider that everyone else has a perception too, and it may be different than the one they hold to, so how does that work itself out? If one’s perception is that they are a great fit for a pastoral role and for a particular church, and this is not shared by the church in general, then that reality is not the truth. We should be more concerned with whatever **is true**, not with what we perceive to be true, otherwise we might evaluate one another and the circumstances incorrectly.

There are several more perceptions or questions that may arise from the reader, just by the examination of the survey data and experiences shared by the interviewees relative to the hiring processes experienced. Van der Ven, quoting Gadamer (van der Ven, 1994, p. 37), notes that within an empirical approach, it is necessary for researchers to be aware of any prejudices they may have regarding the topic being studied. He also comments that one becomes aware of prejudices in and through the meeting of one’s research topic. Through this meeting and subsequent “confrontation between prejudices, human actions or the data under investigation, real hermeneutic understanding takes place” (van der Ven, 1994, p. 37). Each reader may also experience an awareness of their own prejudices in this regard. Before we would draw too many conclusions or formulate a response to the experiences of the interviewees, we would be well served by reflecting again upon some scriptural considerations that may help inform a pastoral selection process.

Ephesians 4:1-13 indicates that the Lord gave gifts to His body, the church. Of those, some are given as pastors (ποιμένας) for the purpose of equipping believers for service and building up the church towards maturity and Christ-likeness. It appears that in our efforts to call a pastor to serve a church we are often engaging in a process that seeks to call the equipped. That is, we are seeking someone who possesses education, experience and certain skills. We are often considering someone who has not been known, tested or proven within the context of that particular church. They may be known to be a pastor in other contexts, but their gifting and effectiveness have not been confirmed for a different church.

Instead, there seems to be wisdom in seeking to recognize and have revealed to us the person that God has gifted or called to be that gift to His church, in that particular church context. We then should be prepared to function as a body and work as necessary to help equip the called, partnered with God in the process. In this, both the pastor and the church body might function more as God intended. Through it all, He says He will work to equip the body for service and growth in maturity towards Christ-likeness, and He will build His church. Rooney noted in his interview that the process was not without some conflict, which he attributed to a tension between a “God-thrust” versus a “human thrust”. It seems like an appropriate reminder to us that in all we do here on earth as believers, especially things related to the growth and expansion of God’s kingdom through His church, there will be opposition. There is one who is opposed to such growth, so our strength and wisdom for the task can only be found in one place.

The identification, selection and hiring of a vocational pastor therefore, is a significant initiative and an indicator of a pastor’s potential success or lack of success within ministry in a particular church. It requires a process and personal character reflective of the priorities God has for His church. Our primary emphasis should therefore be upon seeking to identify and recognize those whose character and gifting God has prepared and called to serve in a particular church, with an attitude that is willing to invest in and encourage them as they are further shaped and skilled to work in that unique context — Equipping the Called. We should allow for a time of discovery or testing, for clear affirmation and expectations on the part of the church and any candidate to be understood and expressed. We should avoid the temptation to hurriedly (a relative term based upon how long some churches are looking) fill a position. Often such efforts result in Calling the

Equipped — looking primarily at skills, experience, references and reputation, while neglecting to invest the time to test, know and affirm the character and calling of someone to a role within a specific and unique church. John encapsulated it well during our interview when he said, “the main question that the church and leadership raised was ‘do we think John is being called to be our pastor?’ Not, ‘are we calling John to hire him as our Senior Pastor?’”

Equipping the Called, or Calling the Equipped? The attitudes and processes reflected in these two perspectives call us to examine ourselves and our churches as we consider the impact of our hiring practices towards the outcomes and success of our pastors, church, and ministry through the identification, selection and hiring of pastoral leadership.

How have we arrived at this point in our history? How have such experiences, especially when potentially multiplied across denominations, impacted the Canadian evangelical church to date? How will this continue to impact the future development, identification and calling of pastors for the future? I suspect that this has negatively impacted the Canadian evangelical church and contributed in part to its decline, and will continue to do so. There is growing evidence of this as more pastoral turnover occurs, church splits take place and as people within congregations grow more cynical and tired of the church and what they perceive as the politics within church leadership. What might God, by His Spirit, be saying to our churches today in this regard? Is our lampstand in place?

Oden suggests that the neglected remedy to salvage and mend the “ailing pastoral office is a solid rerooting in classical pastoral wisdom, which has carefully held together Christ’s ministry and ours, God’s gift and the church’s task, grace and responsiveness” (Oden, 1983, p. 5).

From the data obtained, it appears that the selection and hiring process of pastors does contribute to their success or lack of success in ministry. Since this is foundational to the beginning of one’s pastoral ministry it is a vital component to consider. This, in turn, does impact the success and health of the church. Regardless of how we have arrived at this challenging place in our church and church leadership history, if there was ever an issue for the church to lay hold of and

address, I would suggest the matter of pastoral identification, selection and hiring be strongly considered as we move forward.

***Note:** This study has been developed through the participation of pastors within one region of one denominational association in Ontario. Aside from the available data, a further challenge may be found within the context of the reader and their own church environment. It may be so different from the one that I am immersed in and studying, that it may be difficult for them to contextualize or relate to the experiences being shared. This may be challenging, especially as I am speaking from the perspective of one geographic segment of one denomination and region in Canada. It may also be challenging for those readers who are considering these findings about the realities of our Canadian church context from a different cultural or ecclesiastical background. In order to further develop, test, validate and draw more general conclusions that may reflect and benefit the evangelical church within North America (and perhaps beyond our borders), I hope to expand upon the base of information and data through additional interviews across multiple denominations and geographic regions in Canada in pursuit of a Doctorate in Practical Theology.*

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Appendix 1: Master of Divinity – Pastoral Program Course Outlines

Master of Divinity – Pastoral Track (Heritage College & Seminary)

This degree is designed to prepare students for professional pastoral ministry. The curriculum prepares leaders by developing their leadership skills and spiritual gifts to care for and instruct God's people.

Specific Goals of the Program

- Individuals use the biblical languages responsibly in the process of interpreting and communicating the Bible.
- Individuals possess a competent understanding of the many roles of the pastor, recognizing the opportunities and challenges of congregational ministry, and linking theories, principles, and concepts to the practice of ministry.
- Individuals engage in and maintain pastoral relationships in church and parachurch organizations, demonstrating skill in: spiritual care, discipleship, leadership, administration, and preaching/teaching.

Curriculum – M.Div.– Pastoral

Language Studies

LAN550. Hermeneutics
LAN501. Greek Elements I
LAN502. Greek Elements II
LAN511. Hebrew Elements I
LAN512. Hebrew Elements II
LAN601. Greek Exegesis
LAN611. Hebrew Exegesis

Biblical Studies

BIB500. Biblical Introduction
BOT520. Pentateuch
BOT. Old Testament Elective
BNT520. Synoptic Gospels
BNT. New Testament Elective

Theological and Historical Studies

THS501. Theological Foundations I
THS502. Theological Foundations II
THS522. Theology of Church & Ministry
THS530. Moral Theology
THH520. Church History I
THH530. Church History II
THH. Denominational History or Elective₃

Preaching and Leadership Studies

MIN500. Ministry Formation (2 cr. hrs.)
MIN700. Ministry Preparation (1 cr. hr.)
PAS502. Pastoral Leadership Foundations

PAS601. Church Dynamics or Leadership Elective
 HOM501. Communicating Biblical Truth
 HOM502. Essentials of Expository Preaching
 PCS530. Spiritual Care & Counselling
 PCS641. Marital & Premarital Counselling
 SME611. Pastoral Internship I
 SME612. Pastoral Internship II

Intercultural Studies

ICS. Missions Elective₂ *Spiritual Formation Studies* SPF.
 Spirituality Elective

1. Prerequisite to all Biblical Studies courses.
2. Includes evangelism and intercultural courses.
3. Elective is for students not connected to a denomination for whom we have a denominational history course.

Heritage Theological Seminary Course catalogue 2013-2014 (page 24) accessed on internet October 16, 2013 at:

http://discoverheritage.ca/images/downloads/forms/semcat.pdf?page_mode=seminary&p_menu=51

Master of Divinity (McMaster Divinity College)

Abbreviation: M.Div.

Program Type: Professional Degree

The M.Div. degree has traditionally served as the primary avenue of preparation for professional Christian ministry. It is still the optimal degree for those serving in local church ministry and remains a necessity for those who sense a call to chaplaincy. It provides for spiritual, intellectual, and practical formation in terms of biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral competencies, equipping students to be effective leaders in the church and contemporary society. A significant component of this program is Ministry Formation; we have integrated this feature throughout three years of the program.

Program Duration: Designed to be completed in 3 years

Requirements:

- Agreement with the McMaster Divinity College Statement of Faith
- Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with a minimum B- average

Concentrations:

Pastoral Studies
 Christian Worldview
 Church and Culture
 Pastoral Care and Counselling
 Biblical Studies: General, OT, or NT
 Christian Thought and History
 Interdisciplinary Studies

Program Description:

Biblical Studies

Foundations in Biblical Studies I	3 Units
Foundations in Biblical Studies II	3 Units
Biblical Languages:	12 Units
Option One – Practical Languages	
Option Two – Pastoral Languages	
Option Three – Advanced Languages	
Total Required:	18 Units

Theological Studies

Foundations in Theology and History I	3 Units
Foundations in Theology and History II	3 Units
Total Required:	6 Units

Ministry Studies

Foundations for Effective Ministry I <u>and</u> Ministry Formation Seminar	9 Units
Foundations for Effective Ministry II <u>and</u> Ministry Formation Seminar	9 Units
Foundations for Effective Ministry III <u>and</u> Ministry Formation Seminar	9 Units
Spiritual Formation Retreat	P/F
Total Required:	27 Units

Specializations (6 courses)

Pastoral Studies	18 Units
Christian Worldview	
Church and Culture	
Pastoral Care and Counseling	
Biblical Studies: General, OT, or NT	
Christian Thought and History	
Interdisciplinary Studies	

Electives

Free Electives	12 Units
Free electives (2) or Thesis Option (25,000 words)	6 Units

Program Total:**81 Units***Thesis Option*

There is also the option of doing a thesis as part of this degree. Students who demonstrate sufficient academic success (at least a B+ or higher in the subject area and a GPA of at least B+) are encouraged to consider the thesis option. The thesis allows students to pursue their own research, while working with an academic mentor on the faculty. *Those who intend to go on for further academic training are strongly encouraged to pursue the thesis option.* (6 units)

Ministry Formation

The goal of Ministry Formation is to offer McMaster Divinity College students an opportunity for ministry experience, integration of class room learning with ministry practice, and reflection on personal and theological issues as they pertain to their own development as ministering persons. The program seeks to be highly intentional in its process and outcomes so as to maximize the student's development for future ministry. By emphasizing the central development tenets of "Knowing, Being, Doing," the Ministry Formation program seeks to be integrated with the rest of the College's curriculum, and is intentional in its desire to be an effective program for the formation of current and future ministers in the Church. Ministry Formation is a required course in all three years of the M.Div. program.

McMaster Divinity College Program outline accessed online on October 16, 2013 at:

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/master-divinity>

Master of Divinity (Tyndale Theological Seminary)

The Master of Divinity is a three-year professional ministry degree that provides you with knowledge and skills to be an effective and holistic ministry leader. The M.Div. blends academic study, mentored learning and practical experience in a comprehensive program that will prepare you for ordained ministry or for Christian leadership in its various forms.

M.Div. students will acquire foundational preparation for ordained ministry and for Christian leadership in congregations and other settings. Students will:

1. develop breadth of knowledge and critical understanding of the theological disciplines;
2. acquire capacities for understanding and engaging the cultural, social, and global context of God's mission in the world;
3. experience personal and professional growth through a process of intellectual, spiritual and ministry formation;
4. develop and hone skills for theologically reflective ministry practice in its various forms.

Program Requirements

Biblical Studies (5 Courses)

- [BIBL 0501] Biblical Interpretation: Interpreting and Applying the Biblical Text
- [OLDT 0511] Old Testament Theology and History
- [NEWT 0522] New Testament Theology and History
- One Old Testament Elective
- One New Testament Elective
-

Biblical Languages (3 Courses)

- [NEWT 0321] Elementary Greek I or [OLDT 0611] Hebrew Grammar I
- [NEWT 0322] Elementary Greek II or [OLDT 0612] Hebrew Grammar II
- [NEWT 0523] Greek Exegesis I or [OLDT 0711] Hebrew Exegesis I
-

Theology (3 Courses)

- [THEO 0531] Systematic Theology I
- [THEO 0532] Systematic Theology II
- One Theology Elective
-

Christian History (2 Courses)

- [HIST 0561] History of Christianity I
- [HIST 0562] History of Christianity II

Ministry Formation (6 Courses)

- [PAST 0701] Pastoral Ministries Internship
- [LEAD 0510] Leadership Development
- [MISS 0782] Gospel, Church, and Culture
- [SPIR 0700] Spiritual Formation
- One Christian Education and Formation Elective
- One Pastoral Ministries Elective
-

Major in Pastoral Ministry (4 Courses)

- [PAST 0541] The Theology and Practice of Ministry
- [PAST 0546] Introduction to Worship and Liturgy
- [PAST 0641] Introduction to Preaching
- One Preaching Elective
-

Electives (4 Courses)

Total M.Div. Courses: 27

Tyndale Theological Seminary Program Description accessed October 16, 2013 at:

<http://www.tyndale.ca/seminary/study/pastoral-ministry>

Appendix 2: Pastoral Leadership Survey *FEB Central Region*

This is a sample of the survey referred to in Chapter 4 that was used to initially identify participants for this study.

Page #1

A Study of Leadership Selection within Churches in Ontario - Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a study investigating the various ways in which pastoral leadership is recognized and appointed within churches in Ontario as a part of a Master's Thesis through the University of South Africa. I am interested in learning from the unique stories and experiences of each survey respondent, your journey of selection and service within the church or churches where you have had the opportunity to minister in a paid, vocational capacity. As one who is presently serving, I would like to learn from your unique experience and perspective so that you might help in the selection of future church leaders to serve in a successful and fruitful ministry experience.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete the following survey. At the completion of the survey, you will be asked if you would be willing to participate in a further phone interaction about matters raised within the survey. Should you wish to participate in the telephone interaction, your phone number will be requested at the end of the survey. To ensure anonymity, your completed survey will be assigned an identification number and the collected data will be maintained on an encrypted USB drive in a secure location under the control of the researcher. Your name will only appear on this consent form. Only group results and anonymous data from the survey will be reported.

The survey is expected to take between 20 and 30 minutes, depending upon your answers. Some questions require simple numerical or one word answers, while others ask that you write a short, descriptive answer related to your own experience. If you have to give additional thought in answering a question, you may save your survey and continue it later if that is convenient for you.

There are two groups being surveyed. You will not incur any costs as a result of your participation in this study. Some questions and their answers may cause some discomfort as you reflect upon some of the occurrences of your time in ministry.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. If at any time during this survey you wish to withdraw your participation, you are free to do so without prejudice. If you have any questions prior to your participation or at any time during the study, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at Leadershipsurvey@execulink.com.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this survey. If you wish to participate and consent to your survey results being used as a part of this study, please begin by entering your name and your birth date (to ensure securing your identity from potential false survey inputting) on the consent at the bottom of this page.

Authorization: I have read the above and understand the nature of this study and agree to the stated terms and conditions. I agree to participate in this study and give permission for the researcher to use the data obtained in the manner described. I also understand that I may contact the researcher at any time (Chris Bonis at Leadershipsurvey@execulink.com). I understand that I may refuse to participate in this study or I may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice at any time.

I Agree to the Above Terms and Conditions

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Page #2

Question 1. For how many years (in total) have you served as a vocational Pastor?

- This is my first year as a vocational Pastor
- 1-3 years.
- 4-6 years.
- 7-10 years
- 11-15 years
- more than 15 years

Question 2. Were you raised in a FEB Central church?

Yes

No

Comment:

Question 3. How many churches have you served in since first becoming a pastor?

This is my first church two three four five or more

Question 4. If you have served at more than one church:

How long did you serve at your shortest pastorate? _____

How long did you serve at your longest pastorate? _____

Why did you leave your former church to serve in the one you presently do?

Page #3

Question 5. How many church associations/denominations have you served in as a pastor?

• Only within FEB Central

• Two

• Three or more

Question 6. Please answer the following as it pertains to your current perceptions within FEB Central.

Definitely Not; Probably Not; Not Sure; Probably; Definitely

Do you perceive that there are adequate numbers of persons currently available for the pastorate within FEB Central?

Do you anticipate that there will be adequate numbers of persons available for the pastorate within FEB Central for the future?

Do you believe that people in FEB Central churches view the role of a pastor as a respected and desirable vocation?

Question 7.

More Difficult About the Same Less Difficult

Do you think it is more or less difficult to become a pastor now than when you first did?

Comment:

Page #4

Question 8. Please answer the following about your current pastoral ministry.

Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree

I feel satisfied with the scope of my current pastoral ministry.

I feel I am effective within my pastoral role.

I feel I am successful within my pastoral role.

Question 9. Briefly describe how you measure effectiveness in your ministry.

Question 10. Briefly describe how you define success for your ministry.

Question 11. Briefly describe how you measure success in your ministry.

Page #5

Question 12. Briefly describe how you perceive that FEB Central defines success for you in your pastoral capacity.

Question 13. Who influenced you the most towards pastoral ministry?

Friends at Church

Pastor

Parents

Youth Leader

Youth Pastor

Grandparents

Other Family Members

Other, please specify: _____

Question 14. Has anyone in your immediate family (other than yourself) ever been a pastor?

Yes

No

Page #6

Question 15. Did you enter the pastorate after a career in another area?

Yes

No

Comment:

Question 16. How did you first become aware of the pastoral position available at the church where you now serve?

Through a friend

Through an online job bank

Through the FEB Central office or website

Through a posting by the church

I attended this church

Other, please specify: _____

Question 17. How did you come to pastor at your present church?

Responded through a separate online job profile

Responded to a job profile posted by the church

Responded to a job profile posted by FEB Central

Transferred from within FEB Central

I have attended this church for a number of years

Other, please specify: _____

Page #7

Question 18. Please briefly describe the selection process through which you were appointed or "called" to pastor at your present church.

Question 19. From the time you first applied, to you being selected as pastor, how long was the hiring process?

Question 20. If this IS NOT your first church pastorate within the denomination, how would you compare this selection and hiring process to your previous experience?

Much Better; Somewhat Better; About the Same; Somewhat Worse; Much Worse; Don't Know

If these experiences WERE NOT about the same, what made this experience better, or worse for you?

Question 21. Which factors influenced your decision to accept the call to pastor at your current church?

(Please select all that apply)

selection process for the position

family consensus

building and facilities

geographical location

counsel from spiritual mentor

congregation demographic

strong affirmation from the congregation

size of congregation

God demonstrably at work

financial package

Other, please specify: _____

Page #8

Question 22. What was your relationship with your congregation as you first began your pastorate?

I didn't know them at all

I got to know them through the candidating period

I got to know the hiring committee only
This has been my home church
I knew a couple of people here
Other, please specify: _____

Question 23. If you were not previously attending the church where you now serve as pastor, how long was the period of time before you felt "comfortable" and "known" by your congregation?

- too soon to know
- less than 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- I still don't feel known by my congregation

Comment:

Question 24. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree

I have a clear job description for my present role
The job description and expectations were clearly identified during the hiring process
I feel that my present pastoral role recognizes and allows me to make the best use of my strengths and spiritual gifts
My church offers me time and resources for my ongoing study, learning and growth as a pastor
FEB Central offers me resources, support and time for my ongoing study, learning and growth as a pastor

Page #9

Question 25. How many courses have you taken for your ongoing study and growth as a pastor since being hired?

Question 26. How many pastoral staff (paid) are serving at your present church?

one
two
three
four or more

Question 27. What is your current pastoral role?

Senior Pastor
Associate Pastor
Children's Pastor
Worship pastor
Youth Pastor
Other, please specify: _____

Question 28. What aspects of your role consume the most of your time?

Question 29. Before you ever considered becoming a pastor, did you ever feel called by God to a pastoral vocation?

Definitely Probably Not Sure Probably Not Definitely Not

Page #10

Question 31. Which aspects of ministry do find personally fulfilling?

Question 30. Which aspects of ministry do you feel personally called to?

Was this discussed as part of your selection process?

Yes

No

Please indicate the level of importance you feel for each of the following questions.

Not at all Important; Somewhat Important; Neutral; Important; Very Important

How important do you feel it is to be serving and ministering in areas where you feel called?

How important do you feel it is to be serving and ministering in areas where you feel spiritually gifted?

Page #11

Question 31. Have you been involved in the hiring decision of other pastoral staff?

Yes

No

Page #12

Question 32. What have been your primary factors in making a final decision when involved in hiring a pastoral staff member?

Check as many as apply.

Candidating weekend

Candidate's previous experience

References

Interview

Candidate's educational background and training

Teaching Sample

Congregational input

Consensus of hiring committee

Candidate's personal calling

Resume

Congregational vote

FEB Central leadership input

Candidate's skill set

Candidate's evident spiritual gifts

Other, please specify: _____

Page #13

Question 33. Over the duration of your ministry, have you served in different pastoral roles prior to your current one?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify - youth, worship, associate etc.

34. Since becoming a pastor, please identify 4 primary resources that have served in your pastoral training and equipping.

Bible College

Mentoring through FEB Central

Online resources

FEB Central conferences

Self-study (books, audio, audio-visual materials)

Seminary

Mentoring with other local pastors and leaders

Other, please specify

Question 35. Did you take any theological training prior to becoming a pastor?

Yes

No

Question 36. Did you complete a theological degree prior to becoming a pastor?

Yes

No

Page #14

Question 37. Where did you complete your theological training?

Bible College

Seminary

Both

Other, please specify: _____

Question 38. After I began my pastoral ministry, I felt my theological training adequately prepared me for the role I had assumed.

Strongly Agree; Agree; Neutral; Disagree; Strongly Disagree

Did anything surprise you or catch you "off-guard"? Please comment.

Page #15

Question 39. Was a completed theological degree a requirement in the application or screening process?

Yes

No

Question 40. Are there aspects of your pastoral ministry for which you would like to receive additional training or skill development?

Yes

No

Page #16

Which ones?

Page #17

Question 41. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree

FEB Central is effective at encouraging persons towards vocational, pastoral ministry.

Some people within my congregation are encouraged to consider becoming vocational ministers.

It should be an expectation that pastors encourage people towards a vocational, pastoral ministry.

Comment

(Please add any comments you may have)

Question 42. As a result of your encouragement, is someone either a pastor or training to become a pastor?

Yes

No

Question 43. Would you encourage a person considering pastoral ministry to become a pastor within FEB Central?

Definitely Not; Probably Not; Not Sure; Probably; Definitely

Comment

(Please add any comments)

Page #18

Question 44. Is there anything in your experience that would make you hesitant to encourage someone to becoming a vocational minister?

Yes

No

Comment

Question 45. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement.

Definitely Not; Probably Not; Not Sure; Probably; Definitely

If given the choice, I would again make the decision to become a vocational pastor.

Page #19

Question 46. Would you be willing to be contacted directly by the researcher to follow up with some further questions or discussion related to the selection and equipping of pastors?

Yes

No

Page #20

Please give your contact information here. (Specifically your phone number and an email address that can be used to contact you)

This information will only be used by the researcher to contact you directly.

Page #21

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey and assisting in my research of the selection and equipping of pastors within FEB Central. The results, once compiled will be made available to you through FEB Central's leadership.

Please add any additional comments or thoughts you may have about the selection and equipping of pastors. Your input, perspective and experiences are valuable resources in my research. Thank you.

Appendix 3: A Study of Leadership Selection within Churches in Ontario - Interview Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project investigating the various ways in which pastoral leadership is recognized and appointed within churches in Ontario as a part of a Master's Thesis through the University of South Africa. Part of these results may also be incorporated in a future doctoral thesis. I am interested in learning from the unique stories and experiences of your journey of selection and service within the church or churches where you have had the opportunity to minister in a paid, vocational capacity. I would like to learn from your unique experience and perspective so that you might help in the selection of future church leaders to serve in a successful and fruitful ministry experience.

To ensure anonymity, the collected interview data will be maintained on an encrypted USB drive in a secure location under the control of the researcher. Your name will only appear on the consent form. Only group results and data from the interviews will be reported, either anonymously or under a pseudonym. You will not incur any costs as a result of your participation in this research project. Some questions and their answers may cause some discomfort as you reflect upon some of the occurrences of your time in ministry.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. If at any time during this interview you wish to withdraw your participation, you are free to do so without prejudice. If you have any questions prior to your participation or at any time during the study, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this interview. If you consent to the interview and your results being used as a part of this study, please sign your name at the bottom of this page.

Authorization: I have read the above and understand the nature of this research project and agree to the stated terms and conditions. I agree to participate in the interview process and give permission for the researcher to use the data obtained in the manner described. I also understand that I may contact the researcher at any time (Chris Bonis at Leadershipsurvey@execulink.com). I understand that I may refuse to participate in this interview or that I may withdraw from it at any time without prejudice.

Name (printed)

Signature

Date

Appendix 4: Sample Questions from Interviews

The primary questions flowed from each participant's survey (see appendix 2). The sequence typically followed the survey and both closed-ended and open ended questions were used, based upon the flow of the conversation after the initial rapport was developed.

In each interview, as different issues or perspectives were raised, open ended questions were asked to encourage the interviewees to express themselves more fully about their experiences.

Questions like the following were used:

- What do you mean by...? (This question was used to clarify comments, word definitions or statements made by the interviewees.
- Could you explain _____ for me?
- Could you walk me through _____ process (or experience, or details) relative to each hiring process experienced?
- Could you give me an example of that?
- How did you feel about... (hiring process; ministry experience; success of ministry)?
- What have you learned from your experience?
- Would you do anything differently if you were faced with another opportunity in the future?
- What other factors do you think that it is important to consider?
- What could the church be doing differently, or better in your opinion (depending upon context and response)?
- If an interviewee participated in the process of hiring another pastoral staff member at his church, then they were asked to describe the process. Also, What were the key factors you considered when choosing to hire a particular candidate?
- Final: Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Appendix 5: FEB Central Excerpt from Pastoral Search Committee Booklet

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the ‘exciting world’ of seeking a Senior Pastor!

1. Prayer

a. This is essential! Exercise your faith! Make prayer for God’s leading in the process a central focus for the team, the board and the entire church family.

2. Partnership

- a. Autonomy: It’s your ministry to do!
- b. Interdependence: FEB CENTRAL is here to help!

3. Patience

- a. See —Rationale for Interim Pastorates|| (p.7)
- b. See —Draft Letter of Agreement|| (p.8)

4. Process

- a. There are necessary and natural steps to take.

SEVEN STEPS FOR A PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE TO TAKE IN CALLING A NEW SENIOR PASTOR

(1) Ministering to the Congregation

(a) Confidentiality

There is information (e.g. names of potential candidates, etc.) which needs to be kept within the confines of the committee. Maintain confidentiality for the sake of the process your church is going through and for the sake of the candidate and the candidate’s current church.

(b) Communications

There needs to be effective communication with the congregation at least monthly. Who will do this? (weekly prayer is important)

Avoid the propensity to use inside language that alienates newcomers who are trying to get to know your church.

Don't overpromise. Don't underestimate the impact of your communications.

(c) Context

There needs to be general vision and direction.

Organizations need to ask three questions as follows:

(1) What are we?

(2) Where are we going?

(3) How can we get there?

To be proactive is a sign of life and faith. If you are not proactive, you'll be reactive.

3

(2) Considering Candidates

(a) Develop a Profile of the New Pastor

See the sample: —The Desired Qualifications for our Pastor||. (p.9)

Write one that fits your context (ask church for input).

See the sample: —Job Description: Senior Pastor||. (p.10) This should be written by the leadership: elders/deacons.

Fill in the —FEB CENTRAL Senior Pastor Selection Guide|| (pg.11-12) and send to the FEB CENTRAL Ministry Centre for profiles of suggested candidates through —The Profile System||.

(b) Develop a List of Names

(i) Names from the Congregation

Receive all suggestions made by your church family regarding possible candidates but make no promises you will report back to individuals or that you will contact all leads.

Handle internal candidates with care and clarity.

(ii) —The Profile System||

See the PDF Profile Form (pg.13-22).

Use the FEB CENTRAL form for candidates who have not submitted a profile to the FEB CENTRAL Ministry Centre.

(iii) Other Sources

Area Pastors

Letters of Reference

Unsolicited Profiles and/or Resumes

Advertisements.

(3) Determining a Short List

(a) Isolate the top three

Give yourselves two weeks.

(b) Prioritize the top three (helpful to listen to sermons online or on CD as a team)

Give yourselves another two weeks.

Note: Provide a point of closure for any pastor you have contacted but will not be considering as soon as you have made that decision.

4. Dealing with the Preferred Man (Give thought as to when the church board is involved.)

(a) Contact him to verify his openness to a move and your ministry

(b) Give him information on your church and community

This needs careful and creative attention

(c) Go and observe on location if possible

Avoid using your own pulpit to evaluate potential candidates.

(d) Report back to the whole committee

(e) Check out his references

Check references early in the process when you are still listening to comments with objectivity and go beyond the reference list given by a candidate.

- the —top five list|| of concerns

(i) his attitude

(ii) his philosophy of ministry

(iii) his philosophy of leadership

(iv) his track record

(v) his wife

(f) Conduct at least one interview

Make sure that the search team is well aware of the thoughts of the church board and that it accurately reflects them.

Touch all the bases

Don't leave financial compensation discussion to the end

(g) Communicate regularly with the candidate

Communicate clearly and frequently (i.e. weekly) with any pastor with whom you are having conversation.

Once you are in the final decision phase, move the process to resolution as quickly as possible.

Set the deadlines for decisions to be made by candidates.

Don't leave things open-ended no matter how much you like the candidate.

5 (h) Make a decision

Who decides if the man will be invited to preach for a call?

- Search Committee?

- Elders and/or Deacons' Boards?

- Both?

(i) Resolve and clarify outstanding matters.

- e.g. financial compensation

- moving arrangements including cost

Appendix 6: Church Posting Examples

Church Posting #1

XYZ Church

Month Year

JOB TITLE: Senior Pastor

PURPOSE

The pastor is responsible for the providing spiritual and administrative leadership for the church and its members; equipping church members to develop a closer and more intimate relationship with God; and to equip, support and facilitate members as they run programs within and outside of the church walls. He is to use his skills in proclamation and pastoral care to meet the needs of persons in the church and community.

QUALIFICATIONS

Preferable Bible college/seminary training, or equivalent experience

Meet the requirements listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9

Deep commitment to Christ and the Word of God.

Demonstrated love toward others

Faithful, courageous, decisive and wise.

Not lacking in initiative nor persistence

Showing good judgment in personal, family and pastoral concerns

Significant depth of Christian & personal maturity.

Must be flexible and adaptable in a variety of situations, possessing strong interpersonal, relational & communication skills, as we are a small but growing church in an isolated community.

RESPONSIBILITIES

To provide Spiritual Leadership & Direction by:

- * Preaching the Gospel, leading worship services, ordinances, funerals and weddings (2 Timothy 4:2)
- * Leading members to trust and love God so that they desire to serve Him (Ephesians 4:12)
- * Leading the members to love one another and their neighbors
- * Providing discipline as necessary

Provide Pastoral Care

- * Visit church members
- * Counsel members as needed & provide pastoral care (1 Peter 5:2-3)

Provide Vision & Direction

Run and/or Oversee Programming:

- * Work with the worship team leader in the preparation of Sunday services.

* Weekly preaching and/or teach on Sunday services, and oversee weekly prayer meetings.

* Oversee/facilitate all small groups, Christian education & ministries.

* Willingness to help with other ministry duties as needed.

Work closely with the Elders, Deacons and other church leaders.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability to the Elders & church membership.

DURATION/PROBATIONARY PERIOD

6-12 months, after which position may be extended as agreed upon by both parties.

REMUNERATION

XYZ believes in compensating Senior Pastor based on qualifications, training, experience and other applicable aptitudes. XYZ agrees to help candidate locate suitable living arrangements.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Clear CPIC (criminal record check)

References

Accessed at: http://www.febcentral.ca/pages.php?_ID=38 on December 18, 2013

Church Posting #2

Seeking a Senior Pastor

JKL, a member of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada, is prayerfully seeking a Senior Pastor to lead the church to its next stage of ministry and growth. After fifteen years at JKL, our current Senior Pastor is retiring in Month, Year.

Founded in 19xx, JKL park exists to *“glorify God and celebrate His greatness, by bringing people to Christ, and into the fellowship of God’s family, in order to build them up in Christ and to equip them to serve Christ.”* JKL is a suburban church of ### in a growing community of #####. The city is located, here. Our congregation is multi-generational, and our two Sunday services offer contemporary and traditional worship. Evangelism and missions continue to be a strong focus of our ministry. We are delighted to have experienced significant growth over the last ten years, and to accommodate this growth we have recently added a new wing to our facilities. Our building also houses an important service to our community through our Daycare Centre. JKL has a variety of ministries for children, youth and adults to encourage spiritual growth and fellowship.

We sense that the Senior Pastor that God is choosing for JKL will be a man who:

- Models a life that is passionate for Jesus Christ and His Kingdom, and meets the requirements of a spiritual leader as listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
- Is able to communicate effectively and provide clear, unifying and strategic overall leadership, spiritual guidance, and encouragement to the congregation.
- Seeks God's leading and vision for JKL and, along with the elders, develops and communicates this vision to the church body.
- Takes a primary role in delivering sermons and faithfully preaching the Word of God to inspire, challenge, and equip listeners to apply the Word to their individual lives.
- Will supervise, guide and support other members of staff which currently include: a Pastor of Discipleship, a Pastor of Youth & family Ministries, and a Church Administrator
- Has a heart committed to sharing the good news of Jesus and His love with a lost world.
- Carries out the role of shepherd of the flock by ensuring that congregant needs are met.
- Is a Seminary graduate with at least ten years of experience as a pastor.

If you are interested in learning more about JKL and feel that God is leading you in a new direction, please send your resume and/or inquiries to the Chair of the Search Committee. Go to <http://www.JKL.ca> and <http://www.AboutCity.html> for additional information about JKL and the City Community.

By Letter: JKL Baptist Church By Phone: XXX-XXX-xxxx
 123 Avenue By E-mail: searchcommittee@JKL.ca
 City, ON, Canada
 VVV VVV

Accessed at: http://www.febcentral.ca/pages.php?_ID=38 on January 9, 2012

Note: A job description from EFG Baptist Church in __, ON, also seeking a Senior Pastor was accessed at the same web address on the same date. Other than some obvious changes to the wording of the city and church description, a different staff compliment, subtle wording changes in the list of qualifications and allowing for a Bible College or Seminary graduate, the job description was the same.

One other Job description was accessed at this site on January 12, 2012. It had a similar job description in the longer form, but the short version read like this:

Church Posting #3 (short version)

ABC Baptist Church / Lead Pastor

ABC Baptist Church in ***, ON is seeking a lead pastor who has proven experience in preaching and leadership. ABC's weekly attendance is typically 150 adults. For more information on ABC see here. Interested candidates may send a resume and a personal philosophy of ministry to ABC.search@gmail.com.

Requirements:

- Minimum of 5-7 years experience
- Seminary Graduate
- Proven administrative and organizational skills

That was the extent of their shortened ad.

Church Posting #4

Pastor

Company: STU Baptist Church

Contact Person: XXXX

Location/Address: ABC Street

Manitoba

Phone: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Position Description:

Position: Full-time Pastor

Denomination: Baptist

Bylaws Description of Pastor:

The Pastor is responsible for providing spiritual instruction and strategic leadership to the members, staff and ministries of the church. The Pastor serves as the advisor to Pastoral and church committees. The Pastor is not responsible for doing all the work, but for seeing that it is done and done properly. (I Corinthians 14:40).

Service Title: Pastor

Ministry Purpose: To proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, to teach the biblical revelation, to engage in pastoral care, co-ordinate with leadership in all areas of church life and function, conduct the ordinances and functions of worship.

Primary Functions:

- Plan and conduct worship services, developing sermons, planning with music leadership and leads in the observance of ordinances.
- The Pastor shall be accountable to the congregation through the Board of Deacons and will present reports concerns and request through the Deacons.
- Leads the congregation in effective programs to fulfill the Great Commission with vision, purpose and priority.
- Leads and demonstrates effective ways to witness and win the lost to salvation through Jesus Christ.
- Visits and ministers to members and prospective members in homes, nursing care facilities and hospitals.
- Conducts pre-baptismal and membership classes.
- Conducts counseling sessions, performs wedding ceremonies and conducts funeral services, baptisms, baby dedications and instruct baptismal and membership classes.
- Works with Church Officers, Deacons and other key leadership to carry out the mission and purpose of the church.
- Cooperates with denominational leaders and other Churches in matters of mutual interest and concern.
- Serves as Advisor of church staff supervising and evaluating the tasks assigned to each.
- Serves to recommend and advise committees and teams as an ex-officio member.
- Oversees, along with Deacons, all church discipline matters and the management of conflict issues in the church.
- Communicates with the congregation through articles or announcements, written and spoken using church newsletter, bulletins and worship services.
- Gives full support biblically to the Outreach Ministries of the church.
- Adheres to the Church Bylaws and Policies and Procedures adopted by the church.
- Maintains a vital and wholesome personal relationship with the Lord through daily Bible study and prayer.
- The Pastor should be a mature Christian (1Timothy 4:9-16 and Titus 1:5-9) who demonstrates a genuine love for Jesus Christ and dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Ordained Baptist Minister

- Masters in Divinity from an accredited seminary or school of theology
- Excellent oral and written communication skills

Compensation for the position will be commensurate with the experience, education, and background of the candidate.

Interested candidates must submit a cover letter, resume, credentials package (license and ordination certificates) a video link of a recent sermon and 3 letters of reference (one from a clergy person, one from a layperson and a personal reference).

Accessed at: <http://www.christiancareerscanada.com/careers/1389> on February 15, 2015