



## Abstract

# STARTING WELL: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COVENANT FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Calvin J. Havens, III

This evaluative study in the experimental mode utilized the direct interview process as a means of collecting research data focusing on the establishment of a working relationship between pastors and churches in the early stages of a pastoral move, utilizing a covenant concept as a guide. Twenty United Methodist pastors in the North Alabama Conference participated in a pretest-posttest control group approach. These pastors were interviewed prior to moving to new appointments in June of 1997 and again five months later at their new churches. In the initial interview only the experimental group received the information about the concept of the covenant. In the follow-up interview this experimental group was also surveyed in more detail than the control group to ascertain possible results of developing a covenant with their lay leadership. Also, three chairpersons of Pastor-Parish Relations Committees which were in process of developing a covenant with their pastors (those in the experimental group) were also interviewed to gather their input regarding initial results five months after entering into a covenant-based agreement.

Findings of the study revealed that the process of developing a covenant and the implementation of a covenant did produce measurable benefits in helping pastors and churches in their early months together. Historically, most of these UMC pastors have relied upon pastoral care functions as the primary means for

developing healthy pastor-people relationships, with outcomes being short-term appointments and an inability to work through issues related to the mutual health of both pastors and churches. The mutual process of developing a covenant and the implementation of a covenant aided pastors and churches to communicate about a wide variety of subjects, including expectations, vision, leadership style, management of conflict and change, the predecessor, dealing with difficult people, rewards, and consequences. One recommendation for the use of a covenant in the church centers on the district superintendent managing churches based upon the covenant agreement. Other recommendations and possibilities for further research are found within the study.

## DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
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Burnell D. Dickinson  
Mentor

2/19/98  
Date

Fred C. Van Tatenhove  
Internal Reader

2/19/98  
Date

Leslie A. Andrews  
Director, Doctor of Ministry

2/19/98  
Date



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COVENANT FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP**

**A Dissertation  
presented to  
the faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary**

**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry**

**by  
Calvin J. Havens, III**

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## Clearance Forms

All twenty United Methodist pastors interviewed gave their permission to include their responses in this dissertation, provided their identity remained anonymous. The researcher honored their request.

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## Preface

I had no clue how to begin when I arrived at the first church I served. Seminary offered many tools for helping me “do” ministry, but did not provide guidance on how to get started in a local church. I allowed youthful excitement to carry me initially, but this soon dissolved as I encountered resistance from the established leadership of the church who did not share a like vision. Continued conflict with the matriarch speeded up my decision to move. I did not start well, I did not continue in a healthy manner, and I did not finish strong.

As I reflect upon this painful experience, I believe that my not starting well contributed to many of the problems I met in the subsequent months. I am convinced that not knowing how to start led to my leaving too soon. I remember wishing I had a “how to begin” manual.

I moved three more times. Basically I relied upon what I had done in the past, attempting to improve, but always wishing I could find some kind of instrument to help me. My search for a “how to” guide proved fruitless. I could not find any books or articles related to this specific need.

In consultation with my doctoral mentor, this need surfaced and developed into a motivation for this study. My goal is to help pastors and churches start well together with the assumption that in doing so they will enjoy mutual health and, one day, finish strong together. Building on the model of ancient covenants, especially biblical covenants, led to the development of a self-designed covenant, which serves as a guide for pastors and laity

to draw from as they start together.

My research was a evaluative study in the experimental mode utilizing the pretest-posttest control group approach. I interviewed twenty United Methodist pastors in the North Alabama Conference prior to their moving in June of 1997 and again in November of 1997 at their new churches. The ten pastors in the experimental group received the treatment of the covenant concept and sample with five participating in the process of developing a covenant with their Pastor-Parish Relations Committees.

My research showed that the process of developing a covenant and the implementation of a covenant does help pastors and churches establish a healthy working relationship in the early stages of their time together. My self-designed sample covenant enabled pastors and churches to have frank discussions early in their tenure and thereby clarified a large number of issues instead of making assumptions about how they would work together. The process of developing a covenant guided pastors and churches in a dialogue about a wide variety of subjects, with a major focus on expectations. My assumptions are the pastors and churches who develop a covenant will not only start out well together, but also enjoy a longer relationship, greater mutual health, and will, one day finish strong.

Although I now have a “how to” guide when I begin at the next church I serve, I have developed a new covenant understanding with the church I current serve. This has already resulted in the laity handling difficult people and clarity about what we are to

expect from each other. Also, I have used the covenant concept idea with the staff. This led to one full-time staff person feeling renewed energy about his position and another to look for other employment.

My future plans are to interview annually the five pastors in the experimental group who were in process of developing a covenant for the next four years to gather additional data. I plan to write some articles suitable for pastors beginning their first church, as well articles to help pastors and churches start well together.



## CHAPTER 1

## Overview of the Study

The starter's pistol exploded. The sprinters took off, eyes glued to the finish line. As the Olympic athletes flew down the track it was obvious they were giving the race everything they had within them. Years of sacrifice, preparation, and competition had brought them to this historic moment. In twenty seconds the race was history. Michael Johnson won, setting a world record for the 220 meters. As he carried the American flag around the track for his victory lap, tears flooded down his cheeks. He had won a gold medal in the 1996 Olympics in his home country.

As Johnson finished his victory lap, a sports reporter asked him to describe how he won the race. Without hesitation the record holder explained, "It's all in the starting." The reporter was taken back. Johnson elaborated,

If I don't start well there is no way I will finish well. If I don't run at full speed there is no way I can win. I work harder at starting than anything else. It is important to feel comfortable in the blocks. When I bend over to get into my sprinter position, I want my hands to be positioned just right. I intentionally place my feet in the blocks just so. Then I attempt to relax. I listen for the sound of the starter's gun. When it goes off I, too, am off. To jump the gun means a restart and possible disqualification. If I leave the blocks a split second late, it will affect how I do in the race.

"It is all in the starting." As I reflected upon Johnson's words it hit me that I have never started well in any of the churches to which I have been appointed. The reality is that at each of the four churches I pretty much left things to fate. Seminary did not teach me how to establish myself in my first church. This subject never came up. Maybe this explains why I was scared to death upon my arrival in late 1979 at the

little rural church in east Alabama. No one explained to me the importance of communication with any key leaders or groups within the church to find out how we might start together. I felt all alone and nobody knew where we should go. I did attempt to start ministries but the church matriarch lowered the boom on me. My district superintendent offered no help. Peers in the ministry made no suggestions. This resulted in my not starting well. I know now this was a major reason I had to leave in less than three years. I did not finish well. I now know there is a correlation between the two.

When I was appointed to my second church, I was told to go there and be “the pastor in charge.” This church’s reputation in the community was “the mess on the corner.” I was sent there because nobody else would go. Soon after my arrival I felt like a ping pong ball. I was bounced from one side to the other by the two major factions in the church. After five months I capitalized on the bully approach by loudly letting them know I was pastor in charge. Reflection suggests this was possibly the only thing I could have done at that time. I felt like I had been backed into a corner and I came out swinging by standing on my authority as pastor in charge.

But what if I had started with an approach of establishing a covenantal relationship with the Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) of each church? Would getting to know one another up front and setting up some kind of written or verbal arrangements have made a difference in my effectiveness as their pastoral leader? Hindsight is better than foresight, but I sense the answer would be a resounding “yes.” Again, Michael Johnson’s words echo, “It’s all in the starting.”

When I started at my third church I remember feeling proud of myself for detailing in my first sermon my approach to fulfilling their expectations of me. I did things backwards. I was proclaiming what I assumed their expectations of me would be without even asking them. How presumptuous! Yet I let them know I was there to: 1) “preach the word,” 2) “be their pastor,” and 3) “be their leader.” The only point I elaborated on was the third. I spent half of my sermon telling them how I was going to lead them. A number of weeks passed before I dialogued with the PPRC, Administrative Board, or Council on Ministries about their dreams and visions for the church. Yet when trouble arose after the honeymoon expired I realized I had made key mistakes in how I started. This haunted me because I did not finish well when I departed from this church.

Although I preached the same initial sermon at my fourth church, I did sit down with the Pastor Parish Relations Committee for a long dialogue. This helped us get to know one another. But I wish I had done much more. It would have been beneficial to discuss where they thought the church was in a number of areas, a synopsis of the church’s history, and what they expected of their pastor and why. For me to share my personal history, my leadership style, and my strengths and weaknesses would have helped them know me. From this healthy discussion of mutual expectations, how feedback would be handled, how conflict and change would be managed, and a host of other topics could have been talked over and agreed upon. If I had had more understanding on the front end, it would have been better not only for me but also for the church.

Thus, as I strive to learn from my mistakes, I hope to learn how I can start well whenever I go to my next appointment. Michael Johnson’s common sense statement, “It

is all in the starting,” carries great weight for the health of pastors and the health of churches they lead.

### Context of the Study

Could it be that other ministers also do not know how to start well? When they are appointed or called to a new pastoral situation, do pastors and churches intentionally work through dynamics that help establish a healthy foundation for mutual effectiveness? Hard luck stories abound of ministers who are embittered and disillusioned because of Christians who acted anything but Christian. Could much of this pain and heartache have been prevented if these ministers had been proactive in how they set about starting in their new pastoral situation?

If ministers start well this should help them to continue well. Laying down a foundation built on mutual trust, shared vision, and reciprocal understandings can go a long way in growing healthy churches. It will be advantageous in mid-course negotiations. Then when the time comes for departure, the pastor and church can feel good about finishing their time together.

Much literature is available on covenantal relationships. The concept of covenant in the Bible will serve as a guide in developing the covenant relationship between pastors and churches. Within the body of church related literature little help is found in initiating pastoral ministry, yet this field of study seems to warrant further research and discussion. Therefore this study builds on the available literature as it seeks to help pastors and churches develop a written agreement for mutual expectations and shared ministry.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate pastor-congregation functioning five months subsequent to entering into a covenant-based agreement with respect to mutual expectations and shared ministry. The goal is to enable pastors and churches within the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church to start well by providing a guide for discussion to insure a smooth transition in beginning new appointments as well as a means for long-term ministry. Attention centers on the dynamics of how pastors and churches go about determining expectations, building relationships, and including a written covenant or other agreement. Evaluations showed how these agreements enabled pastors and churches to start their relationship together and how these covenants empowered pastors in establishing themselves as effective leaders.

### Research Questions

The following three research questions guided this study:

Research Question (RQ) #1: What initiatives do United Methodist pastors in the North Alabama Conference employ upon beginning a new appointment in a local congregation to build pastor-people relationships?

RQ #2: What common elements can be identified among covenants established between United Methodist pastors in the North Alabama Conference and local church leadership?

RQ #3: What do subjects identify as the outcomes of a covenant developed between pastors and local church leaders in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church?

## Definitions

Covenant-- an agreement reached between the pastor and lay leadership that establishes mutual expectations, shared visions, stated boundaries, and other dynamics essential in building a healthy relationship between pastor and church. More than a traditional job description, this builds upon the strengths and dreams of both pastor and church for the health and growth of both.

Itinerant system-- “the accepted method of the United Methodist Church by which ordained elders are appointed to fields of labor” (The Book of Discipline 200).

Appointment-- the local church to which a United Methodist pastor is assigned by authority of the bishop, who is granted this authority by virtue of election to the position.

Ordained Elder-- ministers who, by God’s grace, have completed their formal preparation and have been commissioned and served as a probationary member, have been found by the church to be of sound learning, of Christian character, possessing the necessary gifts and evidence of God’s grace, and whose call by God to ordination has been confirmed by the church. (The Book of Discipline 194)

Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (PPRC)-- in United Methodist Churches this is an elected group that relates between the pastor and the congregation.

Effective pastoral leadership-- the skill of mobilizing a church to mutually strive for shared aspirations while adhering to biblical purposes.

Master of Divinity-- (M.Div.) The required educational degree for United Methodist pastors serving as ordained elders.

United Methodist Church-- (UMC)

### Description of the Project

This evaluation study in the experimental mode utilized semi-structured interviews with twenty pastors from the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church.

This criterion-based study focused on the responses of these pastors who moved to new pastoral appointments on June 11, 1997 using a pretest-posttest design. First, the twenty pastors were randomly placed into two groups. Ten formed an experimental group and ten formed the control group. Second, interviews were conducted with the pastors in each group before they transferred to their new appointments. These interviews focused on how these pastors had begun in previous appointments and how they planned to start in their new ministries. At the conclusion of the interviews with the experimental group, the covenant concept was shared and a sample covenant given to these ten pastors asking them to consider utilizing it as a guide when they started at their new appointments.

Third, after five months (November, 1997) follow-up interviews determined the results, if any, of establishing a covenant between the pastor and lay leadership. During this follow-up interview attention focused on the results of the experimental group compared to the results of the control group who were not encouraged to establish a covenant. Great care was given to the process the pastors and churches (those in the experimental group) used in developing their covenants. The warning was given that the sample covenant was just that, a sample. Working through the process of developing a covenant was tough, but an important part of putting together a mutual agreement.

The literature review revealed little work in the area of pastoral covenants. Building on the study of biblical covenants and from personal experience I designed a sample

covenant which focused on the process of developing the covenant as being just as important as implementing the completed covenant. When people and pastor struggle together to develop a mutual agreement long-term relationships come about and everyone can move forward in the same direction.

Three groups emerged after the follow-up interviews. First, there were the ten pastors of the control group who were not encouraged to utilize the sample covenant, as it was not provided to them. Second, five pastors in the experimental group chose for a variety of reasons not to participate in the process of developing a covenant with their new church leadership. Third, five pastors in the experimental group were in process of developing a covenant with their PPRC's. From this third group three PPRC chairpersons were consulted for further evaluations regarding their utilization of the sample covenant and the outcomes of the process of developing a covenant with their pastor.

### Methodology

The goal of this study was to evaluate the functioning of newly appointed pastors and their new congregations five months after entering into a covenant-based agreement with respect to expectations and shared ministry. This evaluative study in the experimental mode utilized the pretest-posttest design.

### Subjects

Twenty interviews were conducted with pastors meeting the following criteria:

M.Div. graduate from a seminary.

Ordained elder within the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church.



Five years minimum in the pastorate after graduation from seminary.

Have moved at least two times to new appointments previous to the move in June of 1997.

Planning to move in June of 1997.

### Variables

The independent variable was the covenant developed between the pastor and lay leadership in the pastor's new appointment.

The dependent variables centered on evaluating whether or not the process of developing a covenant and implementing a covenant enabled the pastor and church to have a healthy pastor-leader relationship.

The intervening variables were the mutual understanding of the dialogue in the interview process, each pastor's understanding of successful covenantal relationships, previous experiences of the pastors relating to agreements, and input by PPRC chairpersons in what determines a successful relationship between pastor and church.

### Instrumentation

The primary method of research used in this study was the semi-structured interview process. I developed the interview questions. They centered around the themes set forth in Chapter 2 "Review of the Literature," plus other questions that pertained to the nature of this study. Interviews were conducted with twenty pastors from the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church who moved to new appointments on June 11, 1997. The interviews utilized the pretest-posttest control group design.

Pre-testing was accomplished with four retired United Methodist ministers of the North Alabama Conference living within the Tennessee Valley area of North Alabama and the Congregational Reflection Group of Friendship United Methodist Church located in Athens, Alabama. This pre-testing was carried out in group settings in April of 1997. Revisions were sent to the faculty mentor for his input and approval.

### Data Collection

Twenty pastors who met the criteria outlined in the population and sample section were contacted by a phone call in early May of 1997 to ascertain their willingness to participate in such a study. Each possible participant was told the interview would take about an hour and would be conducted in the participant's office or a mutually agreed upon location.

Pastors were selected after the bishop released appointments on May 4, 1997. The name of each pastor who was moving and met the selected criteria was written on a slip of paper and placed in a box. The first twenty names drawn at random were contacted and interviews scheduled. For those unwilling to participate, further names were drawn until twenty pastors agree to be interviewed. A synopsis of the findings were sent to each pastor.

Once the data were gathered and categorized, further evaluation was undertaken in a consultative relationship with the chairpersons of three Pastor Parish Relations committees from within the experimental group of pastors who participated in the covenant (also randomly selected). After these consultations were completed, the interpreted data was

synthesized and the research questions answered in light of the findings from the interviews and consultations with the chairs of the PPRC's.

### Delimitation and Generalizability

Pastors and churches not starting well seem to be a problem within the North Alabama Conference and Methodism as a whole. This study suggests the mutual benefits of developing a covenant between pastor and church. It seems to affirm that the process of developing a covenant between newly appointed pastor and church is just as important as the finished agreement.

This study is limited to the responses of the twenty United Methodist pastors selected for the interviews. These twenty pastors serve as representative samples for the study according to the selected criteria. Two hundred and seventeen UMC pastors fit the selected criteria and I generalize that the selected pastor's responses will likely represent the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church with some aberrations.

Findings from this study have implications for pastors of the United Methodist church (as a denomination) at all stages in their ministries, in particular those making transitions to new areas of service or those desiring to make mid-course corrections where they are presently serving. This study offers benefits for pastors of other denominations who are searching for an instrument to help them start well in their new church. Also, findings from this study will be useful for Pastor Parish Relations committees, other denominational personnel committees, and church leadership groups to guide transitions and to set up covenants with their new pastor. However, the research and conclusions are limited to the twenty pastors who participated in the interviews.

### Theological Foundation

When the smoking fire pot passed between the pieces in Genesis 15, God established a covenant relationship between himself and mankind. This unilateral agreement was God's solemn promise that Abraham and his descendants would always be his chosen people.

The root meaning of covenant from the Hebrew is a bond or binding commitment. This kind of covenant is an exception since God initiated the covenant and made it binding only on his behalf, a unilateral covenant. This covenant, though, did become the model for the other covenants found in the Old Testament.

Most covenants are bilateral, meaning that some kind of action or agreement is recognized by two parties, thus creating obligation or expectation. These parity covenants are based upon both parties following through on promises. Covenants played roles of great importance in Old Testament history and religion. Their outcome was shalom, which is knowing God's peace and well-being.

With the advent of Jesus, God established a new covenant of grace for humankind. God's actions in initiating covenants were for the mutual benefit of both parties. Biblical covenants set up expectations, laid down boundaries, defined consequences, and guided both parties into mutual health. Covenants were instruments for communication. Not always kept or followed but when they were, they worked for the mutual benefit of all.

This biblical foundation is the guiding force in setting up a covenant between a pastor and the church which he/she is to lead. Knowing expectations, boundaries, histories, consequences, and talking through a number of other issues should work for the mutual betterment of both parties.

### Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 focuses on current literature. From a review of present literature this chapter specifically examines theology of covenants, wrestles with the grasping of leadership theories or models, provides handles on pastoral expectations, and suggests how the development of a covenant might benefit both pastor and church. A sample covenant will be offered, which will be given to the ten pastors in the experimental group. Chapter 3 lays out the design of the study, utilizing the pretest-posttest control group design. Chapter 4 focuses on the findings of the interviews. Statistical tables and charts will be used to display the findings. Then Chapter 5 draws the net together with a presentation of the findings from the interviews and their interpretations.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the Literature

#### Understanding Covenant

Covenant is a relationship built upon mutual expectations. Two people or two parties (at least) agree on something in advance and covenant together or draw up a contract to carry out what was agreed upon. Both sides are expected to keep their word or promise and in doing so, both benefit. But when one side does not live up to the agreement, then the covenant relationship breaks down and consequences have to be faced.

Covenants and job descriptions are different. A job description spells out in detail the expectations that one is to follow in fulfilling the task. It contains what the worker should and should not do in the particular position. A covenant, on the other hand, flows out of each party's desire to build healthy relationships by agreeing to the desired results. A covenant is broad while a job description is narrow. Those who participate in covenants hold a vested interest in accomplishing the intent of the agreement as it flows out of their life needs. Those who agree to job descriptions are just doing a duty and have no emotional interest in the long-term outcomes. In this study, a covenant builds upon the strengths and dreams of pastor and church for the health and growth of both.

The Bible's two major sections, the Old and New Testaments, have been designated as covenants. In this context, covenant is used as a metaphor to describe the relationship between God and his people, Israel. As such, "covenant is the instrument constituting the rule of God, and therefore it is a valuable lens through which one can recognize and appreciate the biblical ideal of religious community" (Freedman 1179).

Covenants played an important role in ancient social and political life. Covenants became the primary instruments that aided in the creation and regulation of relationships between different social groups.

According to G.E. Freeman covenants were complex enactments which combined the following:

- 1- historical events that create relationships between unequal partners
- 2- customary ways of thinking characteristic of both parties
- 3- descriptions of norms for future behavior
- 4- literary or oral forms in which the agreement is couched
- 5- almost always some ritual act that is regarded as essential to the ratification of the binding promise (Freeman 1180).

Covenants became treaties between parties and created relationships that did not exist before. These ancient covenants contained the following elements:

- 1- identification of the covenant giver
- 2- historical prologue
- 3- the stipulations
- 4- the provision for deposit and periodic public reading
- 5- a list of witnesses to the treaty
- 6- blessings and curses. (Freeman 1182)

The Hebrew word which is translated “covenant” or “testament” is b’rith. In examining its etymology, it originally meant a “sharing of a meal,” and then, a “relation or connection (effected by the sharing of the meal);” and finally it came to mean an “alliance, mutual obligation, or arrangement” (Payne 78- 9). In the Old Testament b’rith usually means a legally binding obligation or mutually binding agreement.

Within the Old Testament four types of covenants are found:

1- Suzerainty--a superior binds an inferior to obligations defined by the superior.

Usually the suzerain was a conquering king who did not care about his vassals as long as they paid their taxes and obeyed his laws. If the vassals lived up to his expectations, then the king would protect them.

2- Parity-- both parties are bound by oath.

3- Patron-- the party in superior position binds them to some obligation for the benefit of the inferior.

4- Promissory-- guarantees future performance (Mendenhall 716-7).

The Sinai Covenant, where God gave Moses and the Israelites the Ten Commandments or Decalogue, is considered to be a “suzerainty treaty” establishing Yahweh as king and Israel as subjects. It follows closely the forms of ancient covenants:

1-- It contains a historical prologue

2-- It has stipulations which in effect are “the principles upon which the one God directs the historical fate of the community” (Freedman 1184).

3-- It has a deposit and public reading, witnesses, blessings and curses.

The tablets were deposited in the ark of the covenant. Periodic reading is implied in ritual customs as found in Exodus 23:17 and Deuteronomy 27: 11- 26. Witnesses of the covenant were members of the Israelite community. Deuteronomy 28 elaborates on the blessings and curses in keeping the covenant. Fourteen verses contain the blessings while it takes sixty-eight verses to detail the curses for not keeping the covenant.



4-- Its ratification ceremony contained two elements; First is the verbal assent to the covenant ("all that the Lord has spoken we will do"). Second a ritual act involved the sacrifice of an animal. The people are identified with the symbolic action of the animal sacrifice. This ceremony was the pledging of their lives as a guarantee of obedience to the divine will of God.

5-- Formal procedures punished violation of the covenant. The books of Exodus and Numbers chronicle violators against the covenant. When the people were punished for their murmurings in the wilderness, this was following through on historical covenant expectations.

In contrasting the elements of an ancient covenant with the Sinai Covenant, it is noteworthy that the Decalogue represented the concerns that the Israelite people expected in normal living. These were the expectations that there would be "no lying," "no killing," "no stealing," "no adultery." Even the admonitions to "have no graven images," and "no other gods" became the value system of the Israelites as they accepted the suzerainty of Yahweh. "Together they could offer one another some measure of protection and security from those whose value systems were still symbolized by the old state idols of pagan imperialism" (Freedman 1187). "The Covenant bound the chosen people to Yahweh in a solemn relationship of obligation and obedience" (Flanders, Crapps, and Smith 157).

God acted in the role of a patron. He had the best interests of his people at heart; thus, the classic covenant to which God is bound is the Abrahamic covenant found in Genesis 15 and Genesis 17: 1- 4. This covenant became the model for later covenant traditions. When God himself passed between the pieces of the sacrificial animals in the

form of a smoking fire pot, he bound himself to Abraham. He would keep his word. If he violated this promise to Abraham, God was in effect saying, “may this cutting happen to me if I don’t keep this covenant.” This would be his fate if he violated this unilateral covenant. In effect, God was covenant maker and covenant keeper.

In the New Testament the Greek word “diatheke” is translated covenant. Diatheke refers to a binding will a person made to ensure proper disposal of goods upon the death of the person making the will. Yet the New Testament followed the Septuagint, the earliest Greek translation, in using diatheke to translate the Hebrew “berith” or covenant. Thus New Testament language is Greek with a strong Hebrew flavoring.

Only the New Testament book of Hebrews makes covenant a central theological theme. The emphasis is on Jesus, the perfect High Priest, providing a new, better, superior covenant. Jesus represented the fulfillment of Jeremiah's new covenant promise. Jesus was the perfect covenant Mediator (Heb. 9:15), providing an eternal inheritance in a way the old covenant could not. Jesus' death on the cross satisfied the requirement that all covenants be established by blood just as was the first covenant. Christ's blood established an everlasting covenant.

Within the New Testament tradition it is important to highlight connections within the type of treaties exhibited in the ancient covenants and the Sinai covenant.

<u>Ancient Covenants</u>	<u>Sinai Covenant</u>	<u>New Covenant</u>
1- Identification of covenant giver Hittite king powerful overlord	Yahweh powerful God	historical Jesus Messiah as servant
2- Historical prologue past deeds  benefit of king to subjects	acts of God	benevolent deeds of Jesus atonement- forgiveness of sins
3- Stipulations- “if...then”	Decalogue	obey the law of God & a new commandment- love defined by example
4- Provisions for deposit in temple under protection of local deity binding periodic public reading upon people under king’s rule	Ark of Covenant  implied in ritual customs	within the believer  unknown
5- Witness to the treaty deities. Third parties enforce the stipulations	members of the community socially enforced laws	transformed people
6- Blessings & curses.  disobedience and obedience rewards and punishments	Deuteronomy 28 blessings for obedience curses for disobedience	realized in world to come heaven/hell final judgment
7- Ratification ceremony sacrifice of an animal enactment of a binding oath	verbal assent sacrifice of an animal bound to promise made rite of circumcision later	Last Supper/Eucharist redeemed by blood Baptism?- dying to self
8- Imposition of curses breach of covenant suzerain proclaim end of covenant	rebellion against Yahweh cursed	

Early Christians regarded themselves as a community bound together by a new covenant. Their re-interpretations flowed out of the older traditions of the Sinai covenant. Vast transformations evolved from the time of the Sinai covenant to the giving of the new

covenant. In John 13: 34, Jesus established a new commandment, “to love one another,” which forms the obligation within the covenant relationship. “The very purpose of a covenant was to bind together the two parties in a firm relationship; this becomes the whole of the covenant in the New Testament, centering on Christ, for there is nothing more strongly emphasized in the New Testament than this relationship between Christ and the New Testament church” (Mendenhall 722). This covenant relationship finds its deepest meaning in the Eucharist or Last Supper.

From this historical and biblical discussion of covenants, an understanding of covenant theology needs to be summarized. God used covenants as instruments to develop relationships with his people. He was a covenant-making God who desired his created beings to live in right relationship with him. He laid down covenant expectations for his people to follow as a patron king would let his subjects know his expectations of them, doing so with their interests at heart. Throughout biblical history God accommodated his rebellious subjects by making a number of covenants with them. Yet the provisions of these covenants were not kept by the people. Finally, in the greatest act of love, God sent his only Son, Jesus, to establish a covenant of love and grace with humankind. This new covenant has components similar to the ancient covenants and the Sinai Covenant, but the major difference is the transformation that comes about within people when they enter into a personal relationship with his Son. Covenant theology centers on developing an intimate relationship with God for the mutual benefit of both the believer and God.

### Expectations

Expectations have been around since the beginning of time. When God initiated the covenant with Abraham it came with expectations. If Abraham and his people did what God expected, God would reward them. If they failed, they would suffer consequences. The giving of the law during the time of Moses was God's further spelling out his expectations for mankind. He was definitive in laying down commands and laws. His intention was to benefit his people, but they did not see these expectations in God's way. The Old Testament is filled with the pain and suffering of people who violated God's covenant expectations.

God gave mankind a new covenant with the coming of his only son, Jesus. This covenant was not based on the keeping of commands and laws. This covenant of grace is unique in that it has as its expectation a personal relationship with his Son. Through the sacrificial death of Jesus, God's Son, forgiveness has become possible for all who call upon the name of the Lord.

This new covenant forms the foundation for the church. The purpose of the church is to tell the world about the transforming power of God through his son, Jesus. As the church has attempted to fulfill God's purposes, additional expectations developed for its leaders. Paul set down clear expectations for his spiritual son, Timothy, by charging him, "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.... But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your

ministry” (2 Timothy 4:2- 5). This charge has become a biblical foundation for pastoral expectations and many more have been added down through the years.

The arena of leader expectations has undergone many changes through the centuries. Along the way the person with the title of pastor became the leader within individual churches. This pastoral position comes with many assumed or traditional expectations that have evolved over time. Unless these expectations are defined, a pastor will not be an effective leader. The discovery of how these pastoral expectations are defined, how they are to be carried out (management), and a process of evaluating effectiveness are key themes in the development of a covenant for effective pastoral leadership. It will also enable the pastor to spend far fewer hours doing ministries the laity can accomplish, freeing up the pastor for the ministry which God has called him/her (Kutz 7).

### Traditional Expectations

Leading a church is different from leading any other organization. While secular organizations have a clarity about their mission and purpose, most people in churches have no clear idea of where they are headed and why. They assume there are some biblical reasons why they exist and that these have divine purposes. Most churches do not follow a defined mission statement but carry a mentality of doing what feels right. “Holy activity” may be justifiable for the Lord’s sake but most members have no clear, unified vision of the church’s purpose.

Although the church has a divine commission, it is still a human organization. Even though its purposes for being center on biblical and divine principles, these are not always well defined. Within this human organization the reality is that churches tend to take on

the personality of their leader (Shawchuck 78). This speaks volumes about why it is critical for churches to find the right person to be their spiritual leader. The effectiveness or lack thereof of pastoral leaders means churches will be healthy or unhealthy. Church growth experts agree that the “spark plug” for growth and health in a church starts with who is the leader. (Galloway, Hunter, Schaller). It starts at the top. (Warren)

Within the system of The United Methodist Church, numerous expectations for pastors appear in The Book of Discipline. When one studies the magnitude and multiplicity of disciplinary expectations, it is obvious why most UMC pastors have no clarity of focus about what they should be doing. There is no human way any one pastor could perform every expectation listed with any degree of proficiency. Pastors are expected to do a little of everything, but not to be accomplished in any one area. This shotgun approach may explain why many UMC pastors focus on the non-essentials of ministry.

In ¶ 331 of The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church the responsibilities and duties for pastors are defined. Three broad categories contain the following expectations:

- I. Ministering within the Congregation and the World
  - a. to preach the Word, oversee the worship life of the congregation, read and teach the Scriptures, and engage the people in study and witness.
  - b. to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper and all other means of grace.
  - c. to encourage reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant and renewal of baptismal vows at different stages in life.
  - d. to give oversight to the total educational program of the church.
  - e. to provide leadership for the funding ministry of the congregation and to encourage giving as a spiritual discipline.
  - f. to lead the congregation by teaching and example in a ministry with people with disabilities.
  - g. to be involved and to lead the congregation in evangelistic outreach in order to win persons on profession of faith.
  - h. to instruct candidates for membership and receive them into the church.

- i. to perform the marriage ceremony after due counsel with the parties involved.
  - j. to counsel those who are under threat of marriage breakdown and explore every possibility for reconciliation.
  - k. to counsel bereaved families and conduct appropriate funeral and memorial services.
  - l. to counsel with members of the church and community concerning military service and its alternatives.
  - m. to counsel persons struggling with personal, ethical, or spiritual issues.
  - n. to visit in the homes of the church and community, esp. the sick, aged, and others in need.
  - o. to participate in community, ecumenical, and inter religious concerns.
  - p. to search out from among the membership and constituency men and women for pastoral ministry and other church-related occupations.
  - q. to give diligent pastoral leadership in ordering the life of the congregation for discipleship in the world
- II. Equipping and Supervising
- a. to give diligent pastoral leadership ordering the life of the congregation for nurture and care.
  - b. to offer counsel and theological reflection in the following areas:
    - 1) the development of goals for fulfilling the missions of the congregation, the annual conference, and the general church.
    - 2) the development of plans for implementing the goals of the congregation and a process for evaluating their effectiveness.
    - 3) the selection, training, and deployment of lay leadership within the congregation and the development of a process for evaluating lay leadership.
  - c. to lead the congregation in experiencing the racial and ethnic inclusiveness of the UMC.
  - d. to participate in denominational and conference programs and training opportunities.
  - e. to be willing to assume supervisory responsibilities within the connection.
  - f. to lead the congregation in the fulfillment of its mission through full and faithful payment of all apportioned ministerial support, administrative, and benevolent funds.
- III. Administration
- a. to be the administrative officer of the local church and to assure that the organizational concerns of the congregation are adequately prepared for.
  - b. to be responsible for the process of goal setting and planning through which the laity take responsibility for ministry in the church and the world.
  - c. to administer the provisions of the *Discipline* and supervise the working program of the local church.
  - d. to give an account of their pastoral ministries to the charge and annual conference according to the prescribed forms (The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 203- 205).

If these expectations formed the basis for a covenant, it would be difficult to determine where one should begin. Any church which evaluates its pastor's effectiveness based on his/her fulfillment of each of these responsibilities must be cold- hearted and cruel. No



pastor can measure up by accomplishing all of these expectations. There must be a better way for pastors and church leadership to define their mutual ministry expectations.

When a change occurs in pastoral leadership, churches must define who they are again and where they are to go under new leadership. During the honeymoon phase the members decide whether or not they will follow their new leader. People determine whether their new pastor is doing what he/she should be doing in “paying the rent” (Shawchuck 11). This means their new leader is following through on traditional expectations that he or she knows about. Often these expectations differ from those listed in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church. Members make judgments about whether or not they like this pastor based on a variety of expectations or traits. Some of these expectations are, “Can he/she preach?,” “What kind of personality does he/she have?,” “Is he/she interested in me?,” “Will he/she agree with my way of viewing things?” The list is endless.

The initial months of a pastor’s tenure sets the tone for the success or failure of the pastor as an effective leader. During these first months a pastor needs to establish his/her vision for the church and his/her philosophies for leadership. This can be accomplished in an autocratic style of leadership or the minister can examine other ways, some quite innovative, in leading the church. How one goes about developing his/her ministerial future within his/her new church setting will determine whether or not he/she will enjoy a fruitful and effective ministry. Yet, “we have no systematic means of assessing the quality of the job we are doing in identifying, training, evaluating, and supporting pastors” (Barna 137). Many pastors are doomed for failure the day they arrive because the congregation’s

expectations could not be achieved by Christ himself. Other times, the new pastoral leader portrays himself/herself as the answer to all the congregations' needs that there is no realistic way expectations can be achieved (Barna 154-5).

It may be that fulfillment in ministry, however, is not even possible. The modern ministry has become a microcosm of the modern workplace, flooded with a proliferation of tasks and expectations.... No one can be everything that is expected of the minister: business manager, president and CEO, entrepreneur, entertainer, communicator, counselor, teacher, arbitrator- and the one who does weddings, funerals, visitations, and is on call for each congregant. There is a level of incompetence in the ministry. (Patterson 9)

For UMC pastors there is truth in the old saying, "a jack of all trades and master of none." This describes many people's assumptions about pastors. Many ministers, running around trying to live up to everyone's expectations, reach the point of burnout or spiritual exhaustion. This leads to suffering in both the pastor and church. There needs to be reciprocal understanding about pastoral expectations. This is an obvious problem as the pastor turnover rate is high within the United Methodist Church and in almost every denomination.

Although pastors must somehow find out about numerous traditional and assumed expectations no printed guide gives the UMC pastor and congregation guidance for the task ahead. Most congregations and pastors have no intentional game plan in place to pilot their new relationship. Nothing appears in The Book of Discipline that gives any guidance or wisdom in pastoral transitions or in setting up covenants. The good news is that due to this initial literature review, historical and biblical covenants provide a foundation upon which to develop intentional covenants. Reflecting upon these

covenants, one can develop a game plan to aid in setting up expectations between pastor and lay leadership.

### Pertinent Organizational Theories or Models

Although a church is a unique organization, it can benefit from the study of organizational theories and models for the development of covenants for effective pastoral leadership. Since the early 1900's there have been many approaches to leadership in organizations. Three basic approaches to organizational leadership are trait, attitudinal, and situational (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 101).

In the early part of the century, researchers attempted to identify common traits with which leaders were born. Although a number of desired traits were identified, none were able to predict success or failure. (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 101) Researchers ascertained that the nature of the situation was a better determinant of effectiveness or failure than the acquisition of some inherent traits (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 101).

The focus next turned to attitudes. It was thought that if a leader expressed an attitude of concern for people then this person would be an effective leader. But there was the tension of "What about results?" These two orientations paralleled the democratic (relationship) and authoritarian (task) concepts of a leader behavior continuum that was popularized by the Tannenbaum-Schmidt model (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 107). Even though a leader's attitudes were important, it became obvious that there was no ideal attitude a leader should possess.

Hersey and company discovered that "successful and effective leaders are able to adapt their style to fit the requirements of the situation" (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 116).

This led to the development of a model called Situational Leadership. This model put to rest the idea that leaders have a magical trait from birth, or that some common attitudes make a leader successful.

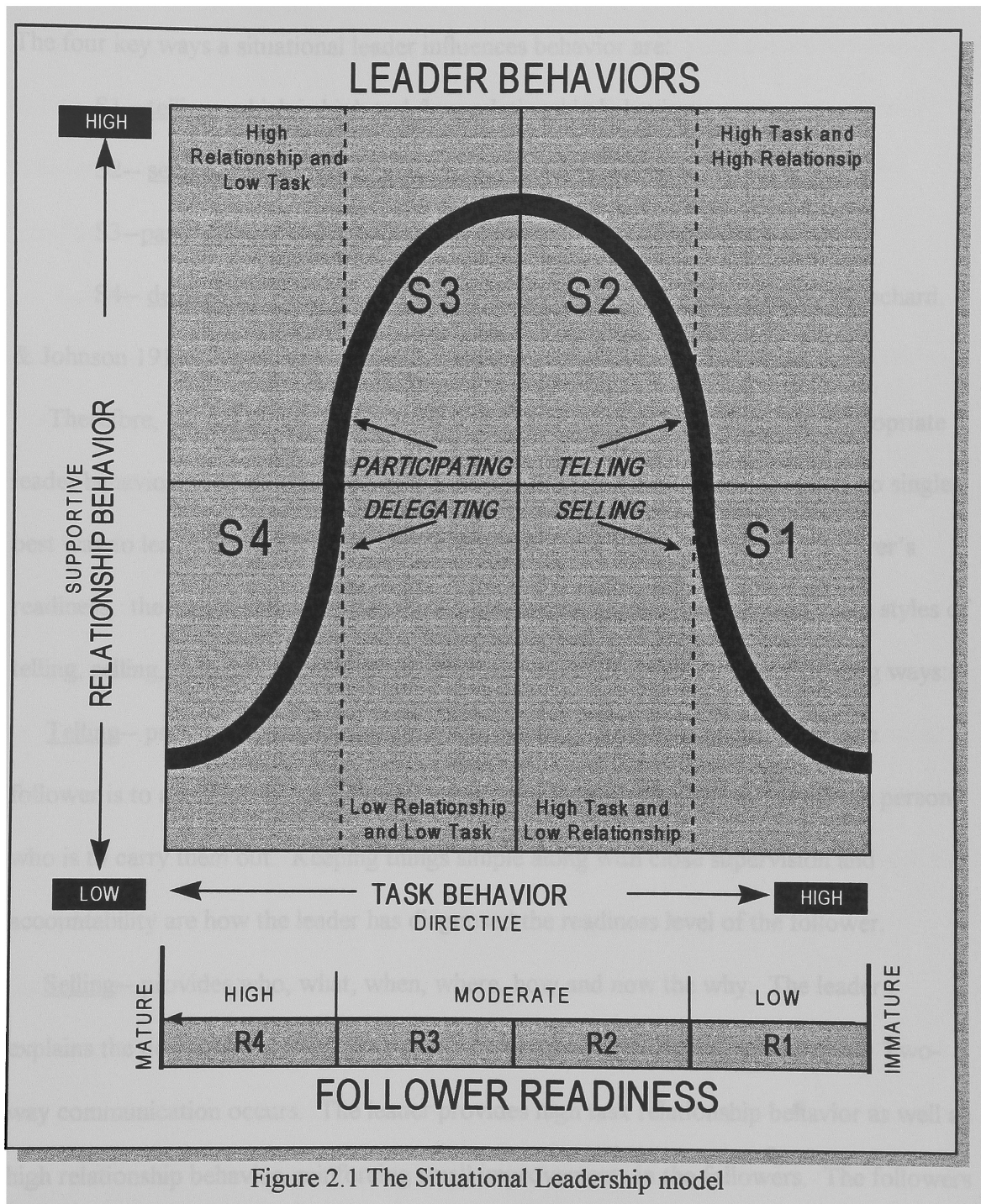
Among the theories and models that sought to represent the situation as the key component in a leader's role, the Hersey-Blanchard Tridimensional Leader Effectiveness Model has emerged as a leading model for its common sense approach to leadership. The essential elements of this model have merit in this quest to develop a plan to help UMC pastors become effective in their roles. This situational leadership model defines two types of behavior as being central to one's leadership style:

Task behavior the extent to which leaders are likely to organize and define the roles of the members of their group (followers) and to explain what activities each is to do and when, where, and how tasks are to be accomplished; characterized by endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and ways of getting jobs accomplished.

Relationship behavior the extent to which leaders are likely to maintain personal relationships between themselves and members of their group (followers) by opening up channels of communication, providing socio-emotional support, active listening, "psychological strokes," and facilitating behaviors. (Hersey 134-5)

Placing this model on a graph, the X axis would represent task behavior, while the Y axis would represent relationship behavior. Leaders evaluate the situations and the readiness of their people to determine an appropriate leadership style. If leaders diagnose their followers' readiness as being high, this means they will lead differently than if they discern their followers' readiness as being low. The scale of follower readiness ranges from immature to mature. This coincides with the degree to which the leader coordinates the activities of the followers.

This model differs from past models in that it did not advocate one leadership style as being appropriate in all situations. The effectiveness of a leader begins with his/her ability to diagnose the situation followed by the ability to adapt leadership style to the situation. Once the leader grasps the situation, his/her ability to influence the behavior of followers forms the capstone of whether he/she is effective or not. A diagram of situational leadership follows:



The four key ways a situational leader influences behavior are:

S1-- telling- which is high task/low relationship behavior

S2-- selling- which is high task/high relationship behavior

S3--participating- which is high relationship/low task behavior

S4-- delegating- which is low relationship/low task behavior (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 191-2).

Therefore, “in situational leadership it is the follower who determines the appropriate leader behavior” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 206). Obviously then, there is no single best way to lead. Every situation will be different. Once he or she grasps a follower’s readiness, the leader will determine the best leadership style. The four leadership styles of telling, selling, participating, and delegating can be further defined in the following ways:

Telling-- provides specifics- the who, what, when, where, and how of what the follower is to accomplish. In essence, the leader makes the decisions and tells the person who is to carry them out. Keeping things simple along with close supervision and accountability are how the leader has diagnosed the readiness level of the follower.

Selling-- provides who, what, when, where, how and now the why. The leader explains the decisions made and gives opportunity for questions and clarification. Two-way communication occurs. The leader provides high task relationship behavior as well as high relationship behavior, reinforcing small improvements in the followers. The followers are invited to “buy into” or “own” the task to increase their ability and their willingness to accomplish the task.

Participating-- the leader's role becomes one of encouraging and communicating to the followers as equals. Decisions about the task to be performed are shared as colleagues. The leader listens, compliments the work, and praises the followers in order to build confidence and further maturity.

Delegating-- the leader's role changed significantly from that of telling. In this mode the follower has matured to the point that tasks can be delegated. When this occurs the leader's supervision of the tasks is minimal. Risk-taking is encouraged and supported. Followers do their jobs with the leader stepping in only when support or other help is needed. (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 199- 200).

To know one's leadership style is important. But for church laity, what is most important is that their pastor leads, no matter what style he/she might utilize. Oftentimes a pastor's leadership style is a blend of a number of different theories developed through experience, observation, and common sense. In developing a covenant, the pastor needs to reflect upon leadership style, -strengths and weaknesses included, -in dialogue with the lay leadership.

### Determining Effectiveness

People hold varied expectations of their pastor and what defines effectiveness. Even the perceptions of denominational officials may differ on how they rate the effectiveness of a specific pastor. A builder can stand back at the conclusion of a work day and look at all he/she accomplished. A pastor does not have this luxury. It is not easy to measure the effectiveness of a minister. So, how does one determine the effectiveness of a pastor?



“Successful leadership is fundamentally determined by leader-follower interaction in the pursuit of goal accomplishment, readiness assessment, leadership intervention, appraisal of the results of the intervention, and effective follow-up” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 5). This lies at the heart of the philosophy of situational leadership. In a secular environment where results or output are the primary method of evaluating effectiveness, this definition has credibility. Yet in the organization of the church, defining results or output can be relative. In some denominations effectiveness is based on the number of people who were saved and baptized the previous year. In another denomination results are measured in how many people were helped, as social action is the key way to judge effectiveness. In other churches decisions are based on how good the pastor is in the pulpit, whether he/she is there during crisis times, how visible they are in the community, and other criteria.

Realizing the wide range of expectations and the numbers of people who rate pastoral effectiveness, it is helpful to have a mutual agreement of expectations in place for the sanity of the pastor and the good of the church. This shared agreement will give the pastor direction about how to use his/her energies and the basis on which evaluations will be made at a later date.

“Effective leaders can communicate with their people. They are able to reach agreements with them about their tasks but also about the amount of direction and support they will need to accomplish their tasks” (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Zigarmi 105). The more mutual understanding extant in the beginning, the more likely harmony and success for both pastor and church. If a pastor is weak in certain areas, this should be communicated up front so that the church can compensate by bringing in other means of support. On the

flip side of the coin, if the pastor holds strengths in key areas, this should be communicated and capitalized upon for the good of all involved. The better one does in this area the more likely things will start well, continue well, and finish well.

Communication is the key to how well a pastor and church do in their ministry together.

“Leaders who understand and know how to use their power are more effective than those who do not or will not use their power” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 230). The true test of leaders is their ability to influence others. This means there is power involved. Pastors need to understand the dynamics of power and how they can use it for mutual effectiveness.

Basically two kinds of power exist; first is position power. This comes by being appointed, assigned, or called to a particular church, power that comes with the job. Such power is not earned but given or taken by virtue of the position. Second is personal power. This power is earned. When people become willing to follow their pastor as leader, he/she has earned a degree of personal power. This power takes time to build and does not normally occur in the first year. “Personal power is the cohesiveness, commitment, and rapport between leaders and followers” (Hersey Blanchard & Johnson 230). When pastors earn personal power and use it for the benefit of the church they will be judged more effective than those who throw their weight around based on the authority that comes with their position.

Once a pastor realizes the importance of power, he/she will want to consider

Benzinger's twelve-step strategy in the use of their power:

- 1- learn and use your organization's language and symbols.
- 2- learn and use your organization's priorities
- 3- learn the power lines
- 4- determine who has power and get to know those people
- 5- develop your professional knowledge
- 6- develop your power skills
- 7- be proactive
- 8- assume authority
- 9- take risks
- 10- beat your own drum
- 11- meet ( your supervisor's) needs
- 12- take care of yourself (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 250).

“According to a report by the American Management Association, an overwhelming majority of the 200 managers who participated in a survey agreed that the most important skill of an executive is effective relationship skill” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 13).

How well a pastor relates to people is a key component in judging effectiveness. This is why a “chaplain” pastoral leader often finds affirmation by many in the congregation, although tangible results may be lacking.

Relational skills are essential for a pastor who works primarily with people. The pastor who avoids people, stays in the study, and appears only to preach, will be judged as cold and aloof. The importance of developing relationships often determines a pastor's perceived effectiveness. When the pastor effectively leads his/her church, new courses will be charted, lives transformed, and the laity inspired to attempt great things for God. Effective pastoral leaders produce tangible and intangible results which have eternal significance. “Researchers can point with joy to a number of United Methodist

congregations in which almost any obstacle has been overcome by the firm, visionary, enthusiastic leadership of a pastor who is a leader” (Willimon 66).

The effectiveness of how a pastor performs his/her pastoral expectations shows in results. Although it may be difficult to measure tangible results of ministry, these should flow from the shared vision, mission statement, or goals set between the pastor and governing board. People in church tend to vote with their feet and pocketbooks. These two indicators, attendance and monetary giving, become the primary measuring rods of determining a minister’s effectiveness. Performance goals need to be agreed upon for both pastor and church. Pastors need to work on their growing edges as they strive for personal improvement. Setting personal and professional goals with the PPRC and receiving feedback can be scary, but helpful.

If worship attendance, Sunday school attendance, ministries to children, youth, older adults, singles, number of professions of faith, baptisms, and other factors are used as indicators of effectiveness, the pastor needs to know these things before hand. If how a pastor preaches, teaches, conducts weddings and funerals, counsels people, and administrates, measures effectiveness, then these expectations need to be spelled out in mutual dialogue. If a pastor’s degree of involvement in denominational work gauges effectiveness, this needs to be shared from the beginning with the pastor. Though many pastors may not wish to be judged by their performances, this seems to be a key component in determining effectiveness.

Interestingly, if the North Alabama Conference were judged on their effectiveness in gaining members for the past three decades, they would fail miserably. Denominational

leadership seems not to know what effectiveness means other than conforming to an archaic system and paying monetary apportionments. This conference is having trouble attracting, keeping, and developing effective leaders. Thus, it seems attention needs to be given to leadership development among pastors.

A leader's effectiveness is primarily a matter of perception. Who does the judging often determines whether a pastor is perceived to be effective more than actual results or abilities. An effective pastor evidences good leader-follower interactions, strong communication skills, knowledge of the extent of his/her power and how to use it, plus ability to relate to a wide range of people. Many factors determine the overall effectiveness of a pastor. A primary factor, especially beginning a new appointment, centers on how the pastor and church leaders begin their time together. There is needed an instrument to help pastors when they start in the ministry, to aid their transitions to new churches, and to gauge their effectiveness. The covenant has the potential to meet some of these needs.

### The Predecessor's Shadow

Even after the predecessor has physically departed, he/she is still present in numerous ways. If the predecessor was highly loved and had a long tenure at the church this creates a wide assortment of challenges. His/her shadow can come into play in starting at the new appointment. Comparisons will be made between the new pastor and the one he/she is following. There can be no denying first impressions, especially the first sermon. People will ask each other within the congregation, "well, how do you like our new preacher?" First impressions can be lasting impressions, either good or bad. Although rarely

verbalized, the effectiveness in how a pastor begins will go a long way in breaking out of the shadow of his/her predecessor.

### Managing the Transition.

The United Methodist system of itineracy prides itself on the fact that every church always has a pastor. The bishop and cabinet make every pastoral appointment. Most of the time each church's PPRC is consulted only through the bishop's request to share a "wish list" of what they would like as a pastoral leader. The salary each church pays drives the process in determining pastoral appointments. Thus, when the pastor arrives at his/her new appointment he/she has had limited time to prepare for and get ready for his/her "new" church. This method of appointment making can be likened to the old world's way of arranging marriages. Often the pastor has little say in making their appointments. Neither do churches.

Unlike the courtship phase in many denominations, UMC pastors and churches are expected to adjust quickly to their new relationship. When family dynamics, such as a spouse's career, are added to the expectations, the pressure increases for everybody. Then the emotions of leaving one church and the very next Sunday starting at the new church adds its measure of complexity. All this could be likened to a divorce. Whether amicable or not, everyone involved experiences pain and the stress of starting again

"The smoothest transitions in ministerial leadership occur when the new pastor is able to fit into that congregational culture easily, comfortably, and with few adjustments required of either congregation or new pastor" (Schaller 143). This holds true unless the church needs to make significant changes.

### A Proactive Approach

A number of factors point to the benefit of taking a proactive approach in developing a covenant. A proactive approach begins by examining the traditional expectations inherent for a pastor. Other factors grow out of the pastor's leadership skills, the defining of effectiveness, dealing with the predecessor's shadow and managing the transition of pastors. "Leaders must be proactive in involving people in the process of creating shared values" (Kouzes and Posner 217). Being proactive means that "human beings take responsibility for their lives- they take the initiative and make things happen" (Covey 71). Being proactive is the opposite of being reactive. It means taking the initiative from the start instead of reacting to things that will happen at some later date. Some kind of agreed-upon plan of action is essential for the pastor who wants to be effective in a new church situation.

Selecting a pastor and discerning the best possible fit for a particular church is important. Whenever a denomination bases its selection of pastors on criteria that do not take into consideration the gifts and graces of the pastor or the perceived needs and dreams of the church, trouble lies ahead. In the North Alabama Conference of the UMC, how much a pastor earns and how much the church pays drives the appointment process. A person's gifts, experience, passions, and track record do not matter when compared to salary. No wonder the attrition rate of pastors increases each year. Often the first time a pastor and church meet each other is when the pastor arrives to move into the parsonage. The conference discourages communication or other means of preparing for the

transition. A courtship stage before the actual move appeals to many pastors. The days of shotgun weddings are history, except in the UMC.

Three qualities essential for the selection of a pastor are: 1) effective preaching; 2) warm and caring skill in crisis situations; and 3) administrative leadership (Miller 14). Yet “no amount of advance preparation can make up for a skill deficiency in one of these three areas” (Miller 14). These three expectations should be the minimum competencies for any pastor. The grasping of these three minimal required skills then going beyond them with a plan of action lead to health for both pastor and church.

The most important qualities of a magnetically attractive pastor are the following: “a positive attitude, enthusiasm, a sense of humor, hopefulness, ability to listen, spiritual and biblical focus, entrepreneurial skills, a positive appearance, a winsome style, and a high energy level” (Miller 120). The total package of the pastor makes a profound impact upon his/her effectiveness within the local church.

For so many pastors and churches once the honeymoon ends, what then? In the majority of transitions the first months finds everyone on their best behavior. Yet, the honeymoon will end one day. Often this nice period terminates when conflict rears its ugly head. For most pastors and churches, this bumpy period reveals the identity of both parties. Often how a pastor handles the conflict determines whether the people will give him/her personal power and begin to look to him/her as their leader. On the other hand, since conflict feels uncomfortable for many pastors and churches, a downward slide begins that gains momentum and often leads to a painful parting of the ways.



Some pastors do not survive long beyond the honeymoon phase. When the newness wears off, affirmations heard less often, and the adrenaline rush over, reality sets in.

“Congregations and pastors may not argue about where to squeeze the toothpaste tube, but after the honeymoon, they have inevitable conflicts that need to be resolved” (Bratcher 117). Too often pastors who have not learned to work through conflict start looking for greener pastures. This, in part, may explain why the pastors in the United Methodist system average fewer than three years and why Southern Baptists in Alabama tend to move every eighteen months. How important it is to have understandings from the beginning to get through the inevitable dispute and bumpy times. “Beginning a new pastorate means first establishing a relationship in which trust can grow. Doing so will benefit each partner for more than the first few months, but for years to come” (Bratcher 79).

Michael Johnson’s words about the importance of starting provide hope for pastors and churches in beginning their relationship together. What does a proactive approach look like? Is it more than a traditional job description? Is it more than a contract? If the answers are “yes,” then what is a proactive way to start in a new church situation? And, how do a pastor and church make proactive adjustments during mid-stream of a pastor’s tenure? Synthesizing the elements in the research and building on the similarities between ancient Covenants, the Sinai Covenant, and the New Covenant, the following theoretical proposal offers a starting point:

<u>Features of Covenants</u>	<u>New Covenant</u>	<u>Pastoral Covenant</u>
1- Identification of covenant giver	historical Jesus	Jesus' commission and great commandment- LOVE Holy Spirit's guidance
2- Historical prologue	acts of Jesus transformation	Church history from Pentecost purpose of church- transformation of lives
3- Stipulations	obedience to laws new commandment Great Commission	Expectations from negotiations between pastor and lay leadership
4- Provisions for deposit Public reading	within the believer unknown	Verbal and written agreement Essence made known to members
5- Witness to the treaty	transformed people	Pastor and lay leadership Members
6- Blessings and curses	realized in world to come heaven/hell	Rewards for effectiveness Consequences for ineffectiveness Means of re-negotiation stated Expectations evaluated
7- Ratification ceremony	Last Supper baptism	Worship service sacred act Appropriate ritual between pastor and members binding relationship of expectations for mutual good

Elaborating on each of the features found within pastoral covenants will guide the process at this juncture of this study.

### The Pastoral Covenant

First, everything flows from the original covenant maker himself. God provided the formula for creating covenants throughout the Bible. Ultimately the glory of God provides the impetus and motivation for developing a covenant between a pastor and his/her church. The pastor's divine calling, the mission of each individual church, and the passion of both parties to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment

contribute to the motivation for formulating a covenant. To identify intentionally whose we are and why we are here points to God, through His Son, Jesus, as the one for whom the creation of a covenant bears witness. The covenant's founding principles are found in who God is and why his people have special purposes.

Second, the priority of forming relationships between pastor and church takes on priority importance. This flows out of the historical prologue found within covenants, but goes a step further. This self-revelation on the part of the pastor and church forms the foundation in relationship building. Developing healthy relationships during the honeymoon glow period cannot be understated. Also, communication channels between both parties need to put in place during this period when all are on their best behavior. Important undertakings during these initial weeks include listening to each other's stories, grappling with a shared vision, the pastor sharing his/her strengths, weaknesses, style of leadership, and setting up avenues for further discussion. The goal of this second step centers on getting to know one another while opening up communication channels for mutual understanding. Hopefully, a secondary goal, the avoidance of assumptions, takes root during these initial times of dialogue.

It takes time to get to know one another. Sharing by the leader needs to include spiritual pilgrimage, call to ministry, family dynamics, educational preparation, significant ministry experiences, strengths and weaknesses, victories and failures, struggles and needs. If pastors have areas they feel strongly about, these need to be mentioned as well. Communicating who one is and the factors that shaped him/her forms the basis in building a relationship based on mutual trust. "If thoughtfully and imaginatively done, the events

of the first year set a tone and approach that a pastor and congregation can enjoy for years to come” (Bratcher 86).

Ministers need to figure out who they really are before they can effectively lead a church, for many pastors lack healthy self-awareness. Self-differentiation is:

- defining yourself and staying in touch with others.
- being responsible for yourself and responsive to others.
- maintaining your integrity and well-being without intruding on that of others.
- allowing the enhancement of the other’s integrity and well-being without feeling abandoned, inferior, or less of a self.
- having an “I” and entering into a relationship with another “I” without losing your self or diminishing the self of the other (Steinke 11)

This advice by Steinke is important for any pastor. Since pastors are so in tune with the feelings and needs of others they have little or no self-awareness. “Know thyself, then, means separating who you are and who you want to be from what the world thinks you are and wants you to be” (Bennis 54). Have pastors allowed the church to force them into a mold that strips them of their true identity? This could explain why a large number of ministers seek other professions long before the years of retirement. To effectively lead a church the importance of self-differentiation on the part of the pastor must be underscored.

For the pastor to learn the congregations’ stories requires listening skills and the ability to ask pertinent questions. “It is important to have a handle on the church’s history, traditions, culture, ethics, and mission” (Hunter 4). Knowing current demographics, community perceptions of the church, past pastors and the reasons why they left, organizational structure, historical expectations, and influential power people enables the pastor to grasp a clearer picture of the church which lies at the heart of situational

leadership. For a pastor to make changes without understanding the church's past might be dangerous, especially if sacred things or beliefs exist within the church. To take down the worn out wall hanging that "aunt Sue" gave fifty-eight years ago might irreparably damage relationships with certain people. One treads on thin ice making changes without awareness of the past and how it impacts the present.

"The quality of our relationships is the key to establishing a positive ethos for change. Long-lived and productive relationships spring up from a soil rich in covenants and trust" (Depree 142). When a pastor and a church work at getting to know one another, this willingness leads to healthy and lasting relationships. Seeking first to understand one another goes a long way toward developing sustaining relationships.

Third, once both parties make progress in knowing one another, the next step in developing a covenant based on historical and biblical dynamics is to focus on mutual expectations. To dialogue about each other's expectations is critical in setting up a covenant. Expectations include the following: accomplishing the shared vision, leadership philosophy and style, conflict management, change management, evaluation procedures, provisions for re-negotiation, rewards for results, consequences for ineffectiveness, and a process to make the church membership aware of the essence of the covenant.

Define a shared vision. What are the goals, expectations, and roles of the church as well as of the pastor? This can be a fruitful and challenging time for both the church and pastor, fruitful in that agreeing on a direction for the church is often something not done before. Churches, like people, need to know where they are headed and why. Putting together a mission statement can be exciting for everyone, but it can be a frustrating time

if pastor and church leaders disagree in setting the course. Churches which experience frequent pastoral turnover can become cynical in working with their new pastor in this process. They know that in a year or two they will be challenged to go in a different direction.

In defining a shared vision, this matter of expectations needs close attention. The church holds expectations for the pastor; the pastor also holds certain expectations for the church. “An important task of the leader is to reset the clock of expectations. This starts by helping the congregation see the ministry in its entirety and the potential of the church” (Barna 159). This underscores why everyone needs to get to know one another as much as possible. Dialoguing about expectations, even those traditionally assumed, cannot be overlooked by either side in reaching a workable vision. How conflicts will be dealt with, change implemented, and feedback received are crucial components. Since the new leader brings a personality, gifts, and directions different from his/her predecessor, the dynamic of change will need to be addressed. A predecessor’s style can still wield powerful influence and will need to be talked through. If a profound difference between the old leader and the new one emerges, this in itself can lead to problems and needs to be addressed.

These critical elements make or break a shared vision. Little things can grow or kill a relationship. This trite saying is true even in the church. Taking care of these foundation issues before moving on to setting goals, stating objectives, and planning for a future determine whether the new relationship finds health or sickness.

A shared vision sets the course, giving people a sense of unity and providing a source of strength in the face of challenges (Covey 219). The process of creating a shared vision or a mission statement enables the pastor and church to know where they are headed. They are together as they seek to address God's purposes for them as a church. To put down on paper a defined statement of purpose can be one of the most important things a pastor can accomplish for the long-term good of the church. "Failure to build a shared vision is the greatest mistake that gifted leaders can make" (Easum 83).

Examine leadership expectations. Once a vision is cast and owned by the majority, the next step is to determine how the pastor will lead. Since the pastor as leader sets the pace and is expected to lead in accomplishing the shared vision, it becomes imperative to have a thorough discussion about how he/she will lead. Taking the initiative by sharing current models of organizational management, in particular that of situational leadership, enables the pastor to help his/her church have an understanding of the manner in which they plan to lead the church. If the church has suffered through a succession of autocratic leaders and then a pastor arrives who adheres to the situational leadership model the changes that are about to take place need to be managed proactively. The lay leadership needs to understand how their new leader plans to lead. The new situational leader operates based on the readiness levels of the people. Taking the time to dialogue about leadership style provides clarity and understanding for the lay leadership.

"In a longitudinal study of ministers those who exhibited outstanding leadership practices had a significant positive effect on organizational performance: Churches with superior performers had repeatedly greater giving, membership growth, and property

development than did other churches” (Kouzes and Posner 321). Nothing is as important for the growth and health of the church as the growth and health of the leader. The laity may dispute this, but an analysis of the church reveals that a church grows or declines based on the effectiveness of the pastor as leader. (Warren).

Discuss how conflict will be managed. When a leader initiates new programs, makes changes from the old order, or fails to live up to assumed expectations, conflict erupts. How a pastor and the leadership manage these uncomfortable times leads to success or failure. Conflict is not always bad; the first lesson many pastors and churches need to learn. “To be effective in the long run, organizations need an open dialogue in which there is a certain amount of conflict, confrontation, and differing points of view to encourage new ideas and patterns of behavior” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 180-1).

Working through conflict encourages growth and prevents individuals from using conflict as a weapon. Yet, “there are times that some people just don’t get it by being nice; they need tough treatment” (Dinkins classnotes).

In dealing with conflict, several things to remember include:

- 1- triangulation where a conflict is fought indirectly through a third party (Cosgrove 117).
- 2- rules discover the rules, especially the unspoken ‘family rules.’”
- 3- affiliation which “is to lessen the distance on either side of a boundary between oneself and another person. It is a strategic way of being responsibly selective” (Cosgrove 131-132).



#### 4- good communication:

- a. speak for yourself, not for someone else.
- b. do not interrupt.
- c. do not assume that others know what you are thinking or feeling if you haven't told them.
- d. avoid unqualified generalizations (never, no one, always, etc.) (Cosgrove 153).

Unmanaged conflict destroys. If individuals begin to choose sides, shared vision and Christian love disappear. Each side views the other as the enemy. Interventions at this point may do more damage than good. When conflict deteriorates to a win-lose outcome, a church fight often ensues and when all is over, nobody really wins although both sides may declare victory. If the pastor and church leadership understand conflict management the outcome will probably be a win for all involved. Thinking through the benefit and the harm of conflicts and how these can be dealt make up a vital part of a covenant.

Even before the pastor arrives, the governing board needs to deal with leftover conflict from past years as much as possible. If this is not done, the new pastor soon finds himself/herself in a no-win situation (Miller 14). The new pastor needs to distant himself/herself from that he/she had no knowledge about. Conflict from previous pastors can ignite into heated emotions that need resolution before the arrival of the new pastor. The new pastor must not take the lead in mediating existing conflict. To do so would make him/her a lightning rod and undermine his/her potential as the leader (Thielen 27).

Dialogue about the dynamics of change. Organizations and people change or they atrophy and die. In today's world it seems the only thing constant is change. "Change itself has changed, thereby changing the rules by which we live" (Easum 19).

The arrival of a new pastor signals changes lie ahead. This can create excitement or anxiety among the people, but if a church is going to grow and maintain health, change will occur. “How well church leaders moderate change and a church adapts to necessary changes is a sure sign of a church’s health” (Croucher 2).

Evaluation procedures The effectiveness of the evaluation requires clarity of expectations, a procedure to enhance the evaluation process, and the intent that both the pastor and church benefit. A written agreement offers a tremendous service for often the gap between the initial negotiation and the time of evaluation can span a period of time. People forget and putting expectations in writing not only refreshes the memory but offers hard evidence of what both parties agreed upon. Having a written agreement offers protection from someone who attempts to hold the pastor accountable for something which the original agreement did not contain. This prevents people with a personal vendetta against the pastor to hold him/her accountable for unexpressed and unwritten expectations. Often impromptu evaluations occur during salary negotiations, which often hinders the pastor receiving a fair offer for compensation. If both parties agree to a written agreement which spells out when and how salary raises come about, the expectations and goals upon which evaluations occur, then everyone wins. Not only does this lead to hurt feelings, anger, and dissatisfaction on part of the pastor, but also the ones empowered with the task of salary negotiations often feel bad or a sense of anger against the pastor. Evaluations serve a helpful benefit for both pastor and church provided both pastor and church agree to the what’s, when’s, and how’s in the written agreement.

Provisions for renegotiating Periodic check-ups provide insight to help both pastor and church stay on course. Not only do pastors and church desire to start well in their new relationship, but also both want their relationship to grow and mature for the good of the kingdom and each other. Providing for course corrections, needed changes, and honest dialogue make up an important part of the covenant. The hope to continue well provides the impetus to re-visit the covenant periodically. Covenants need to change as people, circumstances, and other factors change. At least annually covenants need upgrading, fine tuning, additions, and deletions. This provision needs to be spelled out within the covenant.

Rewards for effective results and consequences for ineffectiveness. The words of Jesus, “for the laborer is worthy of his/her hire,” (Luke 10) give biblical merit to rewards for effective service and punishment for ineffective service. The pastor needs to know the rewards for the accomplishment of effective ministry and the consequences for ineffective ministry. The fulfilling of certain expectations and accomplishing agreed upon goals offers a healthy way to determine an increase in compensation for the pastor. If agreed upon expectations and goals fall short then dialogue can ensue to discover the reasons why or to provide help for the pastor and church to accomplish these in the future.

The subject of money can lead to hard feelings and volatile misunderstandings. Even though a pastor’s motivation for ministry flows from his/her divine call, it takes making a salary to live. When compared to other like professions, pastor’s compensations rate at the bottom. This reality hinders the attraction of potential ministerial candidates and causes spouses to seek outside employment. Pastors need a clear understanding of how

the church rewards monetarily. This helps morale and motivation. Also, pastors need to know the consequences of not fulfilling expectations and goals.

Fourth, after both pastor and church define expectations and set goals, writing them on paper provides the additional value of recall, accountability, and anticipation for mutual ministry. “A performance agreement of some kind is a solution to the problem of conflicting expectations” (Covey 205). This agreement helps both parties stay on course, aids in mutual understanding, sets up expectations, determines how evaluations will be done, defines accountability and boundaries, especially for the pastor. “Effective leaders can communicate with their people. They are able to reach agreements with them not only about their tasks but also about the direction and support they will need to accomplish these tasks” (Blanchard 105).

Covey prefers to call this covenant concept “win-win agreements.” These agreements become contracts between the pastor and church leadership that aid in clear and mutual understanding. As people work together to accomplish any task, sooner or later they must deal with five elements:

- 1--desired results What is it we’re trying to do? What outcomes do we want- both quantitative and qualitative- and by when?
- 2--guidelines What are the parameters within which we’re trying to do it? What are the essential values, policies, legalities, ethics, limits, and levels of initiative to be aware of in going after the desired results?
- 3--resources What do we have to work with? What budgetary, systemic, and human help is available and how do we access it?
- 4--accountability How do we measure what we are doing? What criteria will or indicate the accomplishment of the desired results? Will they be measurable, observable, discernible, or some combination of the three? To whom are we accountable? When will the accountability process begin?

5--consequences Why are we trying to do it? What are the natural and logical consequences of accomplishing or not accomplishing the desired results? (Covey 222- 3)

Making known the essence of the agreement to the church demands creative thinking. Communicating to the congregation the agreed upon expectations, the established goals, personal and professional boundaries of the pastor, and other key components creates a challenge for how to do this. Mailing a synopsis of the covenant to each household could work, provided a forum to answer questions and concerns follows. Having a church-wide meal for the purpose of sharing the covenant has possibilities. Sharing the major parts of the covenant, answering questions, and providing an information sheet lends itself to communicating the intent of the covenant. Since the covenant's intent centers on fulfilling God's purposes for his church through pastor and people having a service where the entire church consecrates the covenant to God contains great promise. Unless the congregation knows the expectations, goals, boundaries, and other factors established within the covenant, this agreement provides limited possibilities.

Fifth, the written agreement needs witnessing. In ancient days third parties were called upon to witness a treaty. Sometimes agreements were supposedly witnessed by some kind of deity in whom the people believed. For the UMC pastor, witnesses might be the district superintendent, the chairperson of the church council, the entire church council, a random group selected from the congregation, or a pastor of another denomination. Witnesses provide objective feedback, a sense of realism, accountability, ownership, and more people to encourage both pastor and lay leadership toward carrying out the agreed upon expectations.

Sixth, the covenant needs ratification. Fortunately, mankind has moved beyond (the sacrifice of animals and) throwing animal blood against the altar as a binding sign of the enactment of the covenant. Still, the intent of these ancient ratification ceremonies give guidance for ratification of the covenant. Ratification ceremony possibilities include:

- a special service of consecration.
- creation of a ritual to be utilized in a morning worship service.
- time of prayer at the altar with pastor and lay leadership.
- invitation to bishop, district superintendent, other UMC pastors, pastors of other denominations, to join in a service of covenant ratification.
- a ceremony within the service where the pastor and the chairperson of the church council sign the covenant.
- a creative service with Holy Communion where the covenant's intent is stated.
- a reworking of "An Order of the Celebration of an Appointment" found in The United Methodist Book of Worship (595- 6).

Other innovative ratification ceremonies to bring before the people the reason for and the value of a covenant are limited only by the creative minds of the people involved. The importance of some kind of ceremony with the entire congregation involved carries with it historical and biblical meaning. The sharing in a celebratory meal has foundations in ancient and biblical history.

The following sample covenant was developed by the researcher utilizing findings from his literature research, his understanding of covenants, his eighteen years of pastoral experience, feedback from the cadre of retired pastors who reviewed and gave input to the

research questions, and important concepts gleaned from work in the doctoral program.

This sample covenant concept can be edited, changed, and adapted by pastors for their specific needs and pastoral situations. In reality, this sample covenant provides a tool for churches and pastors to use in their developing their ministry together.

Therefore, a sample covenant might look like and contain the following possibilities:

### (SAMPLE COVENANT)

#### Covenant of Ministry

between:

Name of Pastor

and

Name of Church

#### Step 1. Purpose of Covenant:

The purpose of this covenant is to establish a plan of ministry that focuses on God's purposes for his church. This is a mutual agreement worked out with prayer, dialogue, and hope for the health of both the pastor and the church.

#### Step 2. Getting to Know One Another:

Pastor shares spiritual pilgrimage, including call to ministry, family dynamics, educational preparation, significant ministry experiences, strengths and weaknesses, victories and failures, struggles and current needs.

Church leaders share their history, traditions, culture, demographics, community perceptions, pastors, organizational structure, historical expectations, and names of influential people.

#### Step 3. Mutual Expectations

(Consult The Book of Discipline in developing a prioritized list of expectations.)

Engage in a dialogue focusing on key expectations. The following suggestions serve as a guide in setting up a written agreement/covenant.

# 1. Church's Expectations of Pastor

- a. We expect our pastor to preach the Word of God and we support him/her in this by . . .
- b. We expect our pastor to lead our church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We will support him/her in leading our church by . . .
- c. We have discussed with our pastor his/her leadership style. We will support him/her in this area by . . .
- d. We will work with our pastor in setting a shared vision for the church. We will support him/her as he/she articulates and works for the accomplishment of this vision. The ways we will support him/her are . . .
- e. We recognize that change will happen and we support our pastor in a joint quest to manage the dynamics of change by . . .
- f. We admit that conflict will take place. We will undergo joint training in conflict management and take time to draw up a procedure on how we will manage conflict together. We will do this by . . .
- g. We expect our pastor to continue improving in all areas of ministry and life. We offer financial support for continuing education as well as evaluation procedures which are mutually agreed upon.
- h. We expect our church to be healthy and grow. Recognizing that this is everyone's calling and ministry we will support our pastor as he/she leads and challenges us in the following ways . . .
- i. We know it takes time to grow a great church. We propose to support our pastor's tenure with us by . . .
- j. We propose to meet with our pastor regularly to assess possible adjustments and additions to this covenant.
- k. We will work with our pastor and have set the following goals that he/she is to give priority attention to: . .
- l. We recognize our pastor needs time for replenishment, for family, and for vacations. We support him/her in this area by . . .
- m. We have discussed boundaries with our pastor and support his/her boundaries by . . .
- n. Monetary raises are important to the morale and well-being of our pastor. We propose to support him/her in this by letting him/her know how we will base our rewards in this area. These are . . .
- o. If our pastor does not accomplish our expectations we will work with him/her in getting assistance. We have discussed the consequences of not meeting our expectations and a plan of action we will follow is. . .
- p. Recognizing the significant number of expectations and demands upon our pastor's time and energy; and having discussed his/her strengths and weaknesses, we propose to prioritize ministry, administration, and leadership expectations as follows:



- q. We will support our pastor with our prayers, words of encouragement, and in other ways build him/her up and help him/her become all that God wants him/her to be.
- 
2. Pastor's expectations of church
    - a. I expect the church to pray for me, support me, encourage me, and help me develop in my role as pastoral leader.
    - b. Building on my strengths, I expect the church to support me in the following ways. . .
    - c. I expect to meet with the PPRC on a consistent basis for honest and helpful feedback. I expect the PPRC to communicate with the congregation what has been established as mutual expectations in the following ways. . .
    - d. I expect my leaders and the PPRC to take leadership roles in managing change, handling conflict, and supporting me in the following ways. . .
    - e. For the church to grow and be healthy I expect support for my leadership in the following ways. . .
    - f. I need boundaries/limitations to protect my personal and family time. We have dialogued about these and have set up the following:
    - g. The reward of work well done is appreciation, monetary raises, and more work to do. I expect the church to support me in this area by. . .
    - h. If I do not accomplish expectations the church has for me, I expect the PPRC to initiate an honest dialogue with me and . . .
    - i. I expect direction by the leadership and/or PPRC regarding the prioritization of my energies and strengths, and to support me with the congregation by . . .
    - j. I expect the lay leadership to set the example of a healthy relationship with me and share in the discipline of persons who create disunity in the church.
    - k. Other areas that I expect to be supported by the church are:

#### Step 4. Written Agreement

After answering the statements in Step 3 and adding other pertinent information and possibly more expectations, then the agreement can be put in writing. The importance of this cannot be overstated. People forget some things. They remember in different ways. When all the mutual expectations are inked on paper, this adds power to the memory and to the expectation that there will be accountability.

#### Step 5. Witnesses to Written Agreement

Names of third party to review and endorse covenant

**Step 6. Ratification Ceremony**

Why?  
When?  
Where?  
How?  
Who?  
What?

**Conclusion**

The review of the literature revealed little attention has been given to helping pastors and churches develop agreements in order to start well together. Therefore, I am proposing the development of a model/process that uses a covenant concept to guide pastors and churches in beginning and in continuing a relationship with one another. This model grows out of elements found within historical and biblical covenants. Thus, covenant theology forms the foundation for a proposed covenant model. Elements within the covenant include traditional expectations, the integration of leadership style, shared vision, change and conflict management, provisions for renegotiating, rewards and consequences, plus other aspects. Though not a perfect instrument, I believe the covenant concept along with the sample covenant provide a healthy guide for pastors and churches as they begin together, continue together, and one day finish together.

Next, the research study design which guides this study will outline a process whereby pastors will be interviewed to discover tangible results for the viability of a covenant. The pretest-posttest control group design formed the guide for this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the process of pastor-congregation functioning five months subsequent to entering into a covenant-based agreement on mutual expectations and shared ministry. Without a plan most pastors fail. There exists a problem among pastors and churches who create no proactive approach to working through the many dynamics involved in the establishment of a successful pastor/ church relationship. Most ministers and churches approach their ministry together with high expectations that are seldom verbalized. A honeymoon period of some duration occurs in every new situation, but after it is over, what then? This study developed an instrument that pastors and churches could use in starting their time together and in making adjustments along the way.

This evaluation study in the experimental mode utilized the direct interview process as the means of collecting research data. The design utilized the pretest-posttest control group approach. Twenty UMC pastors who moved in June of 1997 served as research subjects. During the selection process, the pastors were assigned randomly to two groups, and the pretest-posttest administered to both. The experimental group, made up of 10 or the 20 pastors received additional information, which in this study was the concept of the covenant.

### Statement of Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What initiatives do United Methodist pastors in the North Alabama Conference employ to build pastor-people relationships upon beginning a new appointment in a local congregation?

Three operational questions substantiated this research question. The first was, “What initiatives have UMC pastors employed in previous moves to new appointments to build pastor-people relationships?” The initial two interview questions (Appendix 1) sought the responses of the twenty pastors by asking what things they did well and what things they wish they had done differently in developing healthy pastor-people relationships. The second operational question was, “What initiatives have worked well in building pastor-people relationships in a new church appointment?” The third interview question (Appendix 1) attempted to answer this question by asking the pastors about previous plans they sought to put into place that worked well. The third operational question was, “What initiatives have failed in building pastor-people relationships in a new church situation?” The third interview question (Appendix 1) had a sub-question which asked the pastors to evaluate the acceptance and success of their plans, including those which failed. The responses of the pastors revealed a number of initiatives they employed over the years in building pastor-people relationships.

Research Question 2: What common elements can be identified among covenants established between United Methodist pastors in the North Alabama Conference and local church leadership?

Four operational questions helped answer this second research question. The first operational question asked, “What key expectations can a local church ask of its pastor?” In the interview questions (Appendix 1) the seventh question inquired, “In your opinion, what are primary expectations of your PPRC (or lay leadership)?” Question six (Appendix 3) asked about the mutual expectations or goals the pastors and churches set up with each other. Question five (Appendix 4) focused on finding the key elements of the covenant developed between pastor and the leadership. These responses focused on mutual expectations. Also, three PPRC chairpersons were consulted and question five (Appendix 5) specifically asked, “What are the primary expectations of this church for your pastor in his/her relationship with the church. The second operational question queried, “What key expectations can a pastor ask of his/her church?” The eighth question (Appendix 1) focused on answering this question from the UMC pastors. The third operational question investigated, “How do pastor and church communicate expectations with one another?” Questions four, five, and six (Appendix 1) sought to answer this operational question. The fourth operational question examined, “How does lay leadership communicate to the entire membership the essence of mutually agreed expectations?” The fifth question (Appendix 1) sought to answer this by asking about communication of plans to the congregation. The twenty pastors had a wide range of answers to these four operational questions. Valid information was received to identify common elements established between the pastors and church leadership.

**Research Question 3:** What outcomes do pastors identify in the use of a covenant between themselves and local church leaders in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church?

Two operational questions delved into the outcome of setting up covenants. The first operational question asked, “Are there measurable outcomes in developing a covenant between the UMC pastor and the local church leadership?” Interview question numbers six and seven (Appendix 4) focused on whether or not there were results in setting up a covenant. The second operational question sought to identify the outcomes by asking, “What are possible short term measurable outcomes in the development of a covenant between the UMC pastor and the local church leadership?” Again, questions six and seven (Appendix 4) and question six (Appendix 5) sought to recognize possible results, both positive and negative. A wide range of outcomes were identified by the pastors who developed a covenant and three PPRC chairpersons.

One hypothesis was proposed for this study:

**Hypothesis 1:** The development of a covenant between the United Methodist pastor and lay leadership will show measurable short-term results.

### **Subjects**

Twenty interviews were conducted of UMC pastors utilizing the following criteria:

M.Div. graduate from an accredited seminary.

An ordained elder within the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church appointed to a local church.

Minimum of five years experience as a pastor.

Moved at least two times to new appointments previous to the move in June of 1997.

Scheduled to move in June of 1997.

There are 295 active ordained elders within the North Alabama Conference (The North Alabama Conference Journal, 1997 294). Of the 217 elders who met the established criteria, 57 moved to new appointments beginning June 11, 1997. Overall, in 1997, 26.1 percent of the elders were appointed to new pastoral appointments. Comparatively, in 1996 seventy-seven elders or 22.5 percent were appointed to new pastoral situations. Therefore, in the last two years, 1996 and 1997, nearly half (48.5 percent) of the elders moved to new pastoral appointments.

### Instrumentation

I designed the interview protocol questions building upon reflections of common components contained within ancient covenants, the Sinai covenant, and the New covenant. These questions sought to discover whether or not UMC pastors have a plan to establish themselves in their new appointments, how they go about developing pastor-people relationships, possible strategies for creating one, and if the introduction of the covenant concept shows measurable results for the good of both pastor and church. The questions found in Appendix 1 were mailed to each participating pastor before the initial interview. In early November follow-up questions (found in Appendix 3) were mailed to all twenty pastors for their study before the follow-up interviews. An additional ten questions (Appendix 4) were included for the ten pastors in the experimental group. After

these follow-up interviews a different set of questions (Appendix 5) were mailed to three chairs of PPRC's in churches of the experimental group to ascertain their responses.

### Reliability and Validity

To detect possible interviewer related error, each interview was taped and afterwards the tape evaluated to determine standardization within each of the interviews.

Each interview was carried out in a standardized process:

First, each question was read exactly as worded.

Second, if the respondent's answer was not complete and adequate, then a probe for clarification and elaboration was carried out in a nondirective manner; that is, in a way that did not influence the content of the answers that resulted.

Third, answers were recorded without interviewer bias; the answers recorded reflected what the respondent said, and only what the respondent said.

Fourth, the interviewer communicated a neutral, nonjudgmental stance with respect to the substance of answers. The interviewer did not provide any personal information that might imply any particular values or preferences with respect to topics covered in the interview, nor did the interviewer provide any feedback to respondents, positive or negative, with respect to the specific content of the answers they provided. (Fowler 33).



In probing open-ended questions, three follow-up queries were asked:

How do you mean that?

Tell me more about that.

Anything else?

Responses were written down as accurately as possible and the tape reviewed to insure validity for content.

#### Pre-testing and Refining Instrument

Pre-testing of the research instrument was accomplished with the help of four retired United Methodist ministers of the North Alabama Conference who reside within the Tennessee Valley area of North Alabama. Further pre-testing was done with the Congregational Reflection Group of Friendship United Methodist Church in Athens, Alabama. Taking feedback from these two groups, the instrument underwent more refinement. After this the instrument was sent to the researcher's mentor for further review.

Pre-testing focused on the wording of the questions, the order in which the questions were asked, the questions' pertinent meaning as they related to the purpose of the study, and any possible bias that might show through in the questions. This testing hoped to establish the validity of the interview as the research instrument for this study.

The process of the interview began with introductions and establishment of rapport. The bulk of the interview was devoted to asking the questions related to the study. There was time spent in probing for complete answers. Notes were taken during the interview and impressions from each respondent recorded at the conclusion. Following the

interview, responses to each question were written down, categorized, coded, and later analyzed.

### Data Collection Procedures

Twenty pastors who met the criteria outlined in the population and sample section were contacted via a personal phone call in May of 1997 to ascertain their willingness to participate in such a study. Interview questions were sent to each participating pastor before the interview to allow them time to think through the questions and formulate answers. Each possible participant was told the interview would take about an hour to complete. The interview was conducted in the participant's office or study or an agreed upon location.

Pastors were selected after the bishop released appointments in early May, 1997. A simple random sampling was conducted among those UMC pastors who were moving in the following manner: The name of each pastor who was moving and met the selected criteria was written on a slip of paper and placed in a box. An initial number of twenty names were drawn out at random. These pastors were contacted, the interview process and purpose explained. If the pastor agreed to an interview, an appointment was scheduled. For those unwilling to participate, further names were drawn until twenty pastors agreed to be interviewed. All twenty pastors contacted agreed to participate in the study. They were interviewed before their moves in June of 1997 and again in November of 1997.

Since this evaluation study in the experimental mode utilized the pretest-posttest control group design, the UMC pastors who agreed to participate were assigned numbers

in the order that they agree to participate in this study. Those with odd numbers were then put in the control group and those with even numbers in the experimental group. During the initial interviews pastors in the experimental group were not only evaluated by pertinent questions regarding moving, but also given additional information about the experimental variable of the covenant concept. After five months, in addition to the questions used with both groups, members in the experimental group were evaluated to determine whether or not they used the covenant concept and if so, what were the results. The control group was only evaluated by using the pertinent questions, since they did not receive information about using the covenant concept. After five months, follow-up interviews were conducted with both groups.

The paradigm for the pretest-posttest control group design of each group was as follows:

**Experimental group = R → O → X → O**

**Control group = R → O → -- → O**

In this design, the R represents the randomization process, which was common to both groups. The O's represent the pre and post tests of both groups, before and five months later. The X represents the experimental variable. Both groups were kept separate. Only the experimental group was subjected to the experimental concept of the covenant.

After each UMC pastor agreed to be interviewed, and prior to the first interview, the following was sent to each pastor:

a list of questions that would be asked in the interview.

request for permission to tape the interview.

explanation of confidentiality.

confirmation of the interview date and time.

request for directions to the pastor's study/office.

#### Post-interview

Following the interview a thank you letter was mailed to each pastor.

At a later date a synopsis of the findings of this research will be mailed to each participating pastor.

All pastors were interviewed before moving to their new appointments. The concept of the covenant explained only to the experimental group. Members of the control group were asked questions regarding the dynamics of moving to a new appointment without the introduction of the covenant concept. Both groups of pastors were interviewed again in five months to examine the dynamics of their moving to new churches. The results of the experimental group was compared with the control group and a thorough examination conducted to determine the merits or lack thereof in the development of a covenant.

#### Variables

The independent variable was the covenant worked out between the pastors in the experimental group and the lay leadership after the pastors arrival at their new appointment. The dependent variables centered on evaluating whether or not the process of developing a covenant and then the implementation of a covenant enabled the pastor and church to have a healthy pastor-leader relationship. The intervening variables were the mutual understanding of the dialogue in the interview process, each pastor's

understanding of successful covenantal relationships, previous experiences of the pastors relating to agreements and the input of PPRC leaders in what determines a successful relationship between pastor and church.

### Control Issues

Since there was a five-month period of time between the pretest interviews and the posttest interviews, to control for extraneous variables that might influence the outcome of the independent variable, the posttest interview requested additional data. Question 5 (in Appendix 3) was asked to help insure internal validity. This question probed about significant changes in the respondent's personal life not related to the covenant. As well, the emotional dynamics of moving to a new appointment needed to be determined and the way the pastor responded to the move itself may have impacted his/her motivations in beginning in the new appointment. Also, since this was a pretest- posttest control group design, a control variable question needed to be added to insure that the introduction of the covenant concept to the experimental group was the driving force behind the respondents' developing a covenant and not some other factor. Question 10 (in Appendix 4) asked, "Did you feel any pressure from the researched to utilize the covenant in your new appointment."

For any respondents who dropped out of the research after the pretest interviews, then these results were eliminated from the entire research.

### Data Analysis Procedures

After the data was collected, time was spent sorting answers to each question into possible categories, themes, or patterns which formed the basis for later interpretations.

Those responses which fit into obvious categories were shown with a nominal scale. After the interviews were completed and the responses categorized, there were similar categories/responses, which allowed the use of statistical analysis.

Once the data was gathered and categorized, the five pastors who were in the experimental group and were in process of developing a covenant were contacted to set up a meeting with their chairperson of Pastor Parish Relations Committees. Names were randomly drawn and three PPRC's chairpersons were contacted for their evaluations of the process in setting of a covenant with their pastor. After these consultations were completed, the interpreted data synthesized and the research questions answered in light of the findings from the interviews and consultations with the PPRC's.

#### Interview design methods

The direct interview method formulated the basic research instrument. The open-ended interview method was the primary means of obtaining data. The basic strengths of the interview process were:

- It allowed the researcher to meet face to face with the respondents. This had the added value of establishing rapport, encouraging cooperation, and assessing the respondent's degree of sophistication and knowledge.

- It allowed flexibility. It was possible to correct misunderstandings of any questions by repeating them or rephrasing them.

- It allowed the interviewer to probe certain responses.

- It allowed for completeness. All data can be obtained from each respondent by the

on-site interviewer.

The weaknesses of the interview process were that it was time-consuming, the interviewer may have lacked skills and the outcomes may have been subject to bias. In order to avoid this potential weaknesses the interviews were tape recorded. Another major weakness was that the interview process allowed only a limited number of respondents.

The process of the interview began with introductions and establishing rapport. The main thrust of the interview were questions related to the study. Time was spent in eliciting complete answers. The interview was recorded, with permission of the respondents. Notes were taken during the interview and impressions from each respondent written down at the conclusion. Following the interview, the responses to each question were categorized, coded, and later analyzed.

Within the design of this study, the interview process seemed to be the best method of obtaining data. Each UMC pastor was interviewed by the researcher in the pastor's office or study and a synopsis of the results were mailed to each participating pastor at the conclusion of the dissertation process.

## CHAPTER 4

### Findings of the Study

This study examined the possible results of a covenant developed between UMC pastors and receiving churches. Interviews were conducted with twenty UMC pastors of the North Alabama Conference who were randomly selected from a list of pastors prior to their moving to a new appointment in June of 1997. Follow-up interviews were conducted in November of 1997 to examine the short term results of the use of a covenant developed between pastor and lay leadership. After these follow-up interviews were completed the chairpersons of three Pastor Parish Relations Committee's that utilized the covenant concept were consulted for further interviews. Three research questions and two hypotheses guided this research.

The twenty UMC pastors were interviewed before moving on June 11, 1997. The concept of the covenant was explained only to the ten pastors designated as the experimental group. The control group were asked only questions regarding the dynamics of moving to a new appointment without the introduction of the covenant concept. Both groups of pastors were interviewed again after five months and the dynamics of their moving to new churches explored in this follow-up interview. The results of the experimental group were compared with the control group and a thorough examination conducted to determine the merits of or lack thereof in the development of a covenant to help a UMC pastor start well in his/her new church assignment.



### Initial Interviews

The 20 UMC pastors were contacted by phone in early May of 1997 to explain the purpose for the interviews. All twenty pastors agreed and an interview time and place established. The initial interview questions were mailed to each pastor for their study before the interview. All 20 interviews were conducted between May 20, 1997 and June 3, 1997.

### Demographics

An analysis of the demographics of the interview group (all twenty pastors) revealed the following information:

Table 4.1

Ages of pastors interviewed

'30's	'40's	'50's	'60's
2	7	9	2

Average age was 49.85.

Median age was 52.

Table 4. 2

## Sex of UMC pastors

19	1
Male	Female

Table 4. 3

## Year of Graduation from Seminary

1960's	1970's	1980's	1990's
6	5	8	1

Average year of graduation was 1976

Table 4. 4

## Longest Tenure at an Appointment

3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years	9 years
1	2	3	7	4	1	1

Average of longest tenure- 5.9 years

Table 4. 5

Number of Appointments since Graduation  
 (Top figure equals the number of appointments)  
 (Bottom figure equals the pastors)

2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
2	3	4	2	2	1	1	2	2	1

Average number of appointments since graduation from seminary- 6.15

Table 4. 6

Composite of the Twenty Pastors Interviewed

50 years of age
Male
Graduated from seminary in 1976
Maximum stay at one church- six years
Six appointments since graduation from seminary

### Findings of Initial Interviews

All twenty UMC pastors (both the control and experimental groups) were asked the same ten questions in the same order to obtain answers pertaining specifically to the first research question. The purpose of the questions was to discover initiatives UMC pastors employed as they began in previous “new” appointments to build pastor-people relationships. The answers received were many, varied, surprising at

times, and often difficult to categorize.

These UMC pastors listed the following actions in previous appointments to develop good pastor-people relationships: (more than one answer possible)

Table 4. 7

Previous actions in developing relationships

n	Actions to develop relationships:
18	Pastoral care
7	Listening
7	Accepted people
5	Utilization of Pulpit
3	Real and open
2	Not done well
1	Survey of congregation
1	Built on success of predecessor
1	Shared joy in being their pastor
1	Met with leaders for visioning
1	Shared personal testimony
1	No contact with predecessor

These 20 UMC pastors expressed the following things they wished they had done differently in previous appointments in developing pastor-people relationships:

Table 4. 8

Things Wished had done Differently in Previous Appointments

n	Wished had done differently:
3	Trained laity in responsibilities
2	Taken time to get to know the people
2	Not listened to grapevine talk about church
2	Set up a cooperative ministry effort
2	Initiated specific ministries, i.e. worship, evangelism, etc.
2	Worked from position of strengths
2	Nothing
1	More visitation
1	Worked harder at handling conflicts
1	Not energized congregation so quickly
1	Focused on church instead of conference responsibilities
1	Stayed longer at several churches
1	Listened
1	Trusted the laity
1	Expressed spiritual needs
1	Taken more risks in relationships
1	Met with PPRC regarding pastoral expectations
1	Gotten overview of congregation

These UMC pastors described the plan(s) they sought to put in place at place at former churches as:

Table 4. 9

Previous Plans Put in Place

n	Plans sought to put in place:
9	Implement specific ministries
5	Determine a shared vision
5	Go with the flow
5	No plans
3	Do vision casting
1	Watched backside
1	Public relations
1	Do will of people
1	Pay 100% of apportionments
1	Resolve any anger over predecessor

These UMC pastors evaluated the acceptance of their plans by the lay leadership at their previous appointments as:

Table 4. 10

Acceptance of plans

n	Acceptance of plans:
10	Accepted most of the time
4	Accepted some of the time
3	A toss up
2	Not accepted at all
1	No clue

These UMC pastors rated the success of the plans they sought to put in place in order to develop good pastor-people relationships as:

Table 4. 11

Rating of Plans

n	Rating of Plans
10	Very successful
6	Somewhat successful
2	Not successful
2	No clue

The key plan(s) these UMC pastors have in mind as they begin their next appointment are to:

Table 4. 12

Key plan(s) for new appointment

n	Key Plan(s)
9	Meet with key leadership
5	Do Group and individual visitation
3	Do what always done in past
3	No plan in mind

These UMC pastors plan to communicate their plans in the following manner:

Table 4. 13

How plan to communicate

#	How will communicate:
18	Verbally- assorted means
1	Written format
1	No plans to communicate

These UMC pastors proposed the following key elements in their upcoming plans:

(more than one answer possible)

Table 4. 14

Key Elements of Plan(s)

n	Key elements:
5	Use Communication skills
5	Honesty on their (pastor's) part
5	Use Listening skills
3	Good pastoral care
2	Fellowship Times
2	Cooperate with leaders
1	Make no assumptions
1	Determine needs of church and area
1	Dependence upon God
1	Celebrate good of church
1	Being present
1	Determine the cost factor- money
1	Use Bishop's mandate to grow or else
1	Be patient
1	Willingness to minister
1	No plan



These UMC pastors shared the following as their key pastoral expectations:

(answered in two ways)

A. Responsibilities:

Table 4. 15

Key Pastoral Expectations: Responsibilities of Pastor

n	Expectations:
20	Do Pastoral care duties
3	Do Administration
2	Provide leadership

B. Personality of pastor:

Table 4. 16

Key Pastoral Expectations: Personality of Pastor

n	Expectations:
7	Be a people person
2	Be available
1	Be confident
1	Be Christ-like
1	Be open
1	Be person of character

Self expectations of these 20 UMC pastors for building healthy relationships in new churches consisted of: (more than one answer)

Table 4. 17

Self Expectations for Building Relationships

n	Self-expectations:
7	Provide good pastoral care
2	Provide good preaching
2	Be proactive in developing relationships
2	Lead the congregation
2	Learn the congregation and names of people
2	Be myself
1	Be outgoing
1	Optimistic spirit
1	Establish boundaries
1	Share personal needs
1	Personal time of prayer
1	Create new programs
1	Become involved in community

These 20 UMC pastors shared special services to welcome them upon their arrival as:

Table 4. 18

Special Welcoming Service

n	Special service
17	Reception, Meal, Pounding
3	used service in <u>Book of Worship</u>
1	sign in yard
1	service pastor created

These UMC pastors shared the following factors in their decisions to move this year:

(Most gave more than one answer):

Table 4. 19

Factors in Decision to Move

n	Factors in decision to move:
8	Children's ages & Needs
6	Frustration with church
5	Number of retiring pastors
4	Mandate from Bishop/D.S.
4	Church's Request
3	More Money
3	Knew it was time
2	Conflict in church
2	God's timing

Summary of the Findings of the Pre-test Interviews

Pastoral care functions were these 20 pastors' primary initiatives in building pastor-people relationships. The basis for healthy pastor-people relationships came from historical and assumed expectations. Pastor and laity each have different beliefs about what should be emphasized and expected. Few pastors or PPRC's communicated to one another their expectations for each other. Not a single pastor mentioned drawing up an agreement, verbally or written, with his/her PPRC or leadership. Nine of the ten pastors comprising the experimental group thought they could benefit from the covenant concept as it was explained to them at the conclusion of the initial interviews. One of the older pastors commented, "it is like doing preventive maintenance".

These pastors offered a wide range of responses to what they wished they had done differently as they began in previous appointments. They mentioned training the laity, displaying patience, providing better pastoral care, setting up a cooperative effort with their lay leadership, nothing, and other answers. Yet, in comparing these responses to the plans these pastors had in mind in beginning their new appointment, a lack of overlap

existed. Instead of pastoral care functions being the key plan, nearly half (forty-five percent) answered that meeting with the key leaders (whether PPRC or Board) would be their first step in developing good pastor-people relationships at their new church.

Still all 20 saw the performance of pastoral care as their primary pastoral expectations. “I like helping people in crisis situations.” Only three pastors mentioned administrative duties and just two gave any feedback about providing leadership. At times it seemed pastors played the game “one up-man-ship.” When the new pastor arrived he/she would attempt to outdo the predecessor in providing pastoral care. Instead of spending time talking through expectations and other significant issues, these pastors became busy doing and outdoing their predecessor.

Due to the nature of the record number of retirements within the North Alabama Conference five pastors (25 %) asked to be moved. “This is the year of great opportunity. There never has been another year like this one. I may never have another chance for a large promotion.” The bishop or district superintendent gave mandates to four (20%) pastors, who had no choice about whether they moved or stayed. They moved. Interestingly the largest number (40%) asked to move because of children’s needs. Having no children or youth in their church hindered the spiritual development of their children, so this realization led to their decision to ask to move. Surprisingly spouse’s needs, especially career, did not factor into their decisions to move to new churches. Six (30 %) asked to move because of frustrations with their church. Three (15%) mentioned needing more money as a factor in their decision to move. Three (15%) just knew it was time to move on. Two (10 %) talked about conflict within the church as a key determinant in their conclusion to move. Only two shared they sensed God’s timing in their conclusion to move to a new church.

Churches or PPRC’s asked four pastors (20%) to move. These pastors expressed hurt and embarrassment about this. These four pastors talked about not starting well and not being a good match as they dealt with their grief over being forced to move. Only two pastors expressed sadness at their departure. They were leaving churches after nine and

eight years, respectively. The rest (90 %) could not wait to get started at their new churches. They saw themselves as essentially “lame-ducks” until they moved.

### Sharing the Covenant Concept

After the completion of the initial interviews I gave the ten pastors in the experimental group a draft of the covenant concept (see Appendix 6). I explained the covenant concept and asked each pastor to consider using the covenant when they started in his/her new appointment. The benefits of working through the process of developing a covenant was shared and I warned against utilizing the sample covenant verbatim. With each pastor I explained that this was not a job description with rigid expectations, but a covenant based on trust and God’s grace. Every pastor but one commented that this was needed, liked the idea, and nine agreed to attempt to put into place in some respects in their new appointment.

### Summary of Findings from Follow-up Interviews:

During November, 1997, after five months in their new appointment, I conducted follow-up interviews with the 20 UMC pastors. I asked all 20 the same initial questions in this follow-up interview. Then I asked the ten pastors in the experimental group specific questions regarding the results of utilizing the covenant concept. The results indicated that the development of a covenant showed promise and aided in developing healthy pastor-people relationships.

### The Predecessor

The first question asked of both groups centered on how their predecessor left. Twelve (60 %) of the respondents had positive things to say about the pastor they followed. It seemed that for these twelve pastors who had favorable feelings toward their predecessor, his/her influence helped before, during, and after the transition. “He left great; the best transition I have ever had.”

Although two of the precursors retired and remained in the church and community, the two new pastors said positive things about how each one had paved the way and had been an asset for them. The two biggest complaints centered on pastors leaving parsonages

filthy and those who did not leave well. “The parsonage was in bad shape, not clean at all.” “He left badly, horribly, miserably, the worst I have ever followed.” “We need to teach pastors how to leave gracefully, even if things are not good.”

A general break-down of the pastors’ perspectives of how their forerunners left follows:

Table 4.20

How Predecessors Left

n How predecessor left:

12	Left well
6	Left badly
2	Remained in community

Pastor-People Relationship Occurrences

All the pastors worked diligently in developing positive relationships with people as they began in their new church. The pastors’ answers varied when asked to share positive relationships that had come about since their arrival in June. The answers revealed how the pastors went about forming relationships and whether with groups or with specific individuals. Many of the pastors shared more than one success story:

Table 4. 21

Positive Pastor-People Relationships

n Positive pastor-people relationships:

8	Pastoral care cases, i.e. crisis, death, visitation, divorce
5	Fellowship opportunities developed outside church
4	Receptions at parsonage with different groups
4	Involvement in established programs, i.e. VBS, worship, Sunday School
4	Relationships with specific people, one on one
3	Training of leaders in responsibilities

When asked about negative pastor-people relationship experiences since their arrival five months earlier, ten of the pastors said, “yes, they had experienced conflict.” The other ten, those without a negative encounter, knew one would likely take place in the future as they responded with “not yet;” “I’m still in the honeymoon;” “it’s too early;” or “I’ve picked up some hints.” The key negative experiences centered around dynamics with the PPRC in raising the salary. Other difficulties centered on certain people not liking changes they had instituted in the worship service; not pleasing church bosses or controllers; controversy over lay staff resignations; and blaming the introduction of the covenant in creating troubles with the PPRC.

Pastors who experienced negative encounters mentioned the following reasons:

Table 4. 22

Negative Experiences

n Reasons for negative experiences:

4	Disputes re: salary negotiations
3	Controller angry at pastor
2	Lay staff resignations- upset with pastor
2	Charismatic element upset with pastor
1	Unfair expectations
1	Upset over worship changes
1	Conflict resulting from covenant

Four pastors were upset with their PPRC over disputes related to salary raises. In these and other churches people were upset with their pastor over changes and expectations he/she made. Interestingly, a discussion of salary raises had not occurred with PPRC’s or lay leadership. Not until negative feelings surfaced did the pastor and PPRC have a dialogue about this sensitive topic.

It seemed that many pastors and churches did things backwards. A number of subjects remained off limits and never discussed by pastor or PPRC. The management of change

never surfaced in discussions. “I do not change anything for a year. If I detest the worship service I leave it alone for a full year.” Many pastors seemed handcuffed. They feared upsetting key laity. They remembered bad experiences in previous churches when this happened. Many times these pastors maintained the status quo instead of acting in a proactive manner and dialoguing about potentially explosive issues. Because of “unfair expectations” expressed by a long term member of his church one younger pastor expressed anger and a sense of resignation in dealing with difficult people.

These 20 UMC pastors utilized a variety of approaches in establishing their pastor-people relationships within their new church setting. The different ways in which the pastors went about developing relationships included:

Table 4. 23

Ways Relationships Established

n    How they established relationships:

13	Visitation in people's homes
8	Met with key leadership and/or PPRC
5	Attendance at every meeting/function
5	Hosted receptions for groups
3	Have been myself- real
2	Attempted to define pastoral expectations
2	Utilized special skills, i.e. magic and cooking
1	Survey of church
1	State of church address
1	Importance of first sermon
1	notes to people in church
1	build on preaching
1	administration
1	communication through newsletter



Pastoral care remained the primary means these pastors utilized in developing pastor-people relationships. Sixty-five percent (13) listed some form of pastoral care as the vehicle they utilized in beginning at their new church to develop pastor-people relationships. The most heard comment: "I visit house to house." Eight pastors (40 %) met with their key leadership and/or the PPRC. "Doing ministry," i.e. pastoral care, continued as the more important function to the majority of the ministers. Building relationship foundations by meeting with leadership for the purposes of getting to know the church and discussing expectations, shared vision, and the like remained secondary. Hosting "fire-side chats" or mini-receptions at the parsonage seemed to be a new tool to get to know the people and for the people to get to know the pastor and family. Five pastors (25%) felt a good way to build relationships required their attendance at every meeting and function at the church. The list also included being real, capitalizing on special skills, like magic and cooking, and talking about expectations. Individual pastors did a variety of other things upon arrival at their new appointment. These included conducting a church survey, putting a lot into the first sermon, communication through the newsletter, and giving a "state of the church" address. These pastors seemed to display a maintenance mentality rather than seeking to help the church take risks and grow. This coincides with a conference-wide mentality which rewards conformity and punishes pastors who fail when risks are taken.

#### Significant Changes in Personal Life

Only four pastors (20 %) felt like they had had significant changes in their personal lives which adversely affected their getting on board in their new church. Three of the ministers painfully shared how their children had difficulty making the adjustments to their new communities. This had created much turmoil within their lives. One minister's mother died a week after moving and her death along with other factors caused a theological crisis within his life. This young minister plans to take a leave of absence from the ministry in June of 1998. Further probing revealed that the first three pastors had done a good job helping their children make the necessary adjustments. The start of school

helped significantly in meeting the needs of the children. Also when the church included the spouse and children in welcoming activities this helped the transition immensely.

The remaining sixteen pastors (80 %) stated that no significant changes had taken place in their personal lives which had adversely affected their establishing themselves. Overall, this control question revealed that the findings of this study remain within normal parameters. One pastor taking a leave of absence does not adversely affect this study.

#### Mutual Expectations and Goals

An examination of mutual expectations and goals among the 20 pastors revealed a wide disparity. Nine (45 %) of the pastors had not set any goals or defined expectations with their PPRC. A number of PPRC's made the remark to their new pastor, "preacher, you know what to do, so go do it." This caused a sense of frustration on the part of several who attempted to nail down things with their PPRC, but could not get anywhere with them. It seemed like many churches and pastors have a lot of assumed expectations which never get expressed or defined. These usually surface when the pastor makes changes someone does not like, does not live up to assumed expectations, or encounters difficulty with inherited staff. Interestingly, only two churches mentioned pastoral care responsibilities in setting up expectations.

Table 4. 24

Established expectations

n Expectations established:

9	None established at all
2	“We want our church to grow.”
2	Visitation priorities
2	Mutual sharing, but no definite goals
1	Build a new sanctuary
1	Personal priorities shared
1	Continue in present direction
1	Increase number of young adults and children
1	Reduce church debt
1	Train PPRC in responsibilities
1	Set an attendance goal for worship
1	Start a Wednesday night meal
1	Be the main preacher
1	Supervise staff
1	Continue personal growth
1	Set office hours
1	Hire new staff

Special Service

Only three pastors utilized “An Order for the Celebration of an Appointment,” from The United Methodist Book of Worship in their first worship service. These same three had used this ritual before in previous appointments. Although I made mention of this service in the first interview, none of the other pastors felt like this was a good way to start off in their new church. Except for a few who were welcomed by their lay leader or PPRC chairperson during the first service, most “just got up and started.”

Probing further in this area it seemed some churches do not know how to welcome a new pastor. Even though fifteen (75 percent) had some kind of reception, covered dish supper, or pounding for their new pastoral family, five churches did not do anything to welcome their new pastor. These five pastors expressed hurt and disappointment. One of them said, "Heck, there was not even a reception." One church went the extra mile by sending cards of welcome to the pastor, presenting flowers to his wife upon arrival, taking his son on an outing, and not bothering the family for two days after moving in. "You cannot believe how this helped and made us feel. The best transition ever."

Those who used the welcoming ritual in their first worship service or had some kind of congregational welcoming felt better about their new church than those who felt snubbed or forgotten. As one pastor put it, "churches need to know how to welcome their new pastor and family."

#### Rating first five months

Each pastor rated their first five months using the following scale:

"Excellent; Good; Fair; Poor; and Wish I had never come here." I assigned the following values to each rating:

Excellent- 10

Good- 8

Fair- 6

Poor- 4

Wish I had never come here- 2

Overall the average of all 20 pastors came out to 7.65. Comparing the control group to the experimental group revealed the following rating:

Table 4. 25

#### Comparisons between control group and experimental group

Control group- 7.50	Experimental group- 7.80
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The five pastors in the experimental group in process of developing a covenant with their PPRC averaged 8.0. For those five pastors in the experimental group who did not develop a covenant with their PPRC their rating averaged 7.60. A table highlighting these results follows:

Table 4.26  
Ratings of First Five Months

Rating	Values
Overall rating of 20 pastors	7.65
Control group	7.50
Experimental group	7.80
5 pastors developing a covenant	8.00
5 pastors not developing a covenant	7.60

The pastors offered a variety of suggestions or ideas for making better transitions into a new appointment. The number one response came from pastors in the experimental group who replied in such a way that they thought would please me, “make a covenant with the PPRC.” But, when encouraged to explain further their response, they had taken the covenant concept and saw it a good instrument to help with transitions. Quite a number of suggestions follows:

Table 4. 27

Suggestions for Transitions

n Suggestions for making better transitions:

3	make a covenant with PPRC- from experimental group
2	consider ministry of predecessor
2	focus on God's reasons for being there
2	consider every member of pastor's family
2	make better appointments, basis more than money
2	teach predecessor how to move
1	have complete paperwork about church
1	be able to interview prospective churches
1	gain momentum by having current prospects join
1	a welcoming reception of some kind
1	meet with staff and key leaders before arrival
1	give more flexibility regarding where to live
1	don't make any changes for a year
1	don't make appointment swaps
1	clear picture of church needs
1	clear cut job description needed

A comparison of the findings between the control group and experimental group revealed that the covenant concept does have value in helping UMC pastors start well in new appointments. The pastors in the experimental group rated their initial months higher and seemed further along in defining expectations and building relationships than the pastors in the control group.

Findings of Experimental Group

After completion of the initial interviews I asked the ten pastors in the experimental group to consider utilizing in some manner the covenant concept after their arrival at their

new church. I created the covenant concept instrument because I could not find anything helpful in the review of existing literature. I wanted a tool or guide to help UMC pastors to start well when they arrived at their new place of service. I thought this could be done by developing healthy relationships and working through a variety of issues. When I requested each pastor to consider utilizing the covenant concept, I put no pressure on them. I also knew that some would not honor my request for a variety of reasons. After the follow up interview all ten pastors stated they felt no coercion from me to use the covenant concept.

The results of the ten pastors in the experimental group follows:

Table 4. 28

Experimental Group Results

n Results of experimental group

5	In process of developing a covenant with PPRC
2	Concept discussed with PPRC- will develop later
1	Concept rejected by PPRC
1	Planning to share concept with PPRC at a later date
1	No interest in doing unless mandated by bishop

Of the five pastors in process of developing a covenant with their PPRC, all utilized in some manner the sample provided by the researcher. A veteran pastor of eighteen years commented about the work of his PPRC, "We went right through the entire sample covenant. The concept was new for them. They hung in and we are putting a covenant in place. The writing things down is going to be the hardest part." Another pastor stated that "we are adapting the concept for our needs and situation." Overall, the five pastors using the covenant had not completed their work, but all shared its value already in their new churches. "It forced us to talk about things we normally would not."

Two pastors shared their intentions to develop a covenant at a later date, because "the timing might be better." "There was just too much going on when I got here to take the

time to do this with my PPRC. They (the PPRC) liked the idea and want to do this later.” “I had staff problems to deal with upon my arrival. This has consumed much of my time, but the PPRC is interested in doing sometime in the future. I think that will be better because it will give me more time to get to know the people and they me.”

One pastor rejected the idea from day one. “The only way I will do this is if the bishop orders me too.” He admitted that “being close to retirement I do not want to do anything new.” Yet, “this would be a good thing for young preachers.”

The pastor whose PPRC discarded the covenant concept commented, “After my arrival there was a change in the PPRC chair due to the former chair’s transfer. The new chair misrepresented the covenant to the rest of the committee. They saw it as my way of demanding things and making some sweeping changes. Their attitude was, ‘you know what to do, so go do it.’ I think it has hindered my relationship with the PPRC and my ministry.” This pastor has a history of short-term appointments. Could this be attributed to his inability to develop healthy pastor-people relationships? It could be that this instrument was a threat to him. He gave the lowest rating of all the experimental pastors for his first five months.

The development of covenants with PPRC’s offered “open and mutual dialogue regarding expectations.” One pastor developed a relationship with two “power brokers” on his PPRC before beginning to develop the covenant with his PPRC. “This has helped me get started more than anything else I have ever done. In fact, the chair of my PPRC told me that ‘we have talked about issues we’ve never discussed before, but sure needed too.’ I credit the working through the sample covenant with helping me get things out on the table in ways I’ve never done before. We have been brutally honest, but it sure has helped.”

All five pastors stated that the covenant has helped them in their new appointments. One readily admitted that “just the discussions going through the sample covenant has helped the church understand me and me understand them on deeper levels than anywhere I have served.” A veteran of twenty five years said, “if we make covenant relationships



and don't keep them there is accountability on both ends. For sure this is better than anything we have now. It has helped us work through some ministerial conflicts already." Still another veteran of sixteen years said, "it has clarified expectations, understanding what is important to the congregation and the congregation understanding what is important to me. When a church cares for its pastor it makes for a better pastor who can give better pastoral care."

The pastor who felt the covenant hindered his developing relationships within the church admitted that "I liked the idea from the first. I was hoping to put it in place. I am hurt that they have rejected it outright. I don't see it as 'demanding things and making sweeping changes.' I hope to use it in my next appointment."

### Key Elements of the Covenant

The five pastors in the experimental group who were in process of putting a covenant in place shared a variety of elements they felt were important to their covenants. The responses were varied and range from specific to general.

Table 4. 29

#### Key elements of covenants

n Elements of the covenant

3	to agree on certain expectations and goals
3	honest communication
1	to be accountable to one another
1	to pray for each other daily
1	to make our relationship work
1	a stated day off
1	visitation priorities
1	spiritual health of pastor
1	educate congregation on covenant
1	to love each other even when don't agree
1	confidentiality
1	positive criticism
1	set up pastor's schedule
1	define personal boundaries
1	lay accountability
1	mutual ministry

The five pastors in the experimental group who were in process of developing a covenant stated the following positive results:

Table 4. 30

Positive results of covenants

n Positive results:

3	already a team- working together in ministry
2	honesty with each other
1	developed a plan for trouble-makers

The only negative results encountered so far came as warnings. First, one pastor warned about being realistic in setting up the expectations: “Too many might come back to haunt you.” Another mentioned the timeline of putting together a covenant during the first weeks of being at a church. “People need to understand each other before embarking on such an in depth project.”

Using this covenant concept was a radical departure from the ways these pastors have started previously. This limited the suggestions about making adjustments to the covenant. One pastor wanted to adapt it to use with his staff. Another suggested adding a timeline, while a third said, “it was a helpful guide from which he could draw from, but not be held too.” As time passes more negative comments should surface. These offer the hope to make this covenant even better.

Within the experimental group every pastor, but one, agreed that they plan to use the covenant concept in a new appointment. Even the three who plan to use the covenant where they are at a later date plan to use the covenant when they move to a new church. One of these three cautioned that “there needs to be spelled out what the difference is between a covenant and a contract. You cannot have a contract in our Methodist system.”

Summary of Follow-up Interviews with all Twenty Pastors

The “kind” responses made by sixty percent of the pastors made about their predecessors surprised me. I was expecting more negative and even some hostile

comments. I do question the frankness of the responses as some were being very cautious. Pastors sometimes remark in jest, "I better be on my best behavior; he/she might be my district superintendent one day."

Pastoral care remained the main way in which these pastors went about building healthy pastor-people relationships. It appeared that some enjoyed having funerals and crises within the church whereby they could not only feel needed but also function in such a way that they looked good. They felt these functions enabled them to start developing good relationships.

Setting the pastor's salary produced the most first negative encounters for these new pastors. Since none of the pastors had dialogued about this with their PPRC or key leadership, when it came time to set the salary for Charge Conference purposes, the first conflict and disagreements arose. People upset with the new pastor over changes introduced used the salary issue to retaliate. In particular, controllers bullied the new pastor by showing him/her their displeasure over modifications he/she had begun to put in place and threatening with restricting salary increases.

Visitation "house to house" remained the chief pastoral care function. This was the way most of these UMC pastors (65%) developed relationships with the people of their new pastorate. A priority for eight of the pastors centered on meeting with key leadership and/or with their PPRC. Overall, forty percent of the pastors listed meetings with laity as one manner in which they would go about enacting new relationships within the church.,

Nearly half (45 %) of the pastors had not established any expectations or goals with their PPRC. Historical and assumed expectations on the part of the PPRC seemed to be the norm. Even when two pastors pushed their PPRC's to give them guidance and direction, they received none. "You know what to do, preacher, so go do it." It was obvious from several responses that PPRC's still saw themselves as "a move the preacher group." Although pastors are expected to be good communicators, there existed a lack of clear communication between the PPRC and pastor.

When the pastors rated the first five months at their new appointment, sixty percent (twelve) of the pastors gave this honeymoon time high marks, between excellent and good. The pastors in process of developing a covenant gave the highest ratings of all. This finding provided initial proof that the development of a covenant did enable pastors to start well and continue well in their new churches.

### Findings of the PPRC chairs

The three PPRC chairpersons contacted to answer a series of questions related to the development of the covenant from their perspective offered minimal help. One chairperson offered no help whatsoever. The remaining two gave feedback which coincided closely with that of the pastors. One stated, “I believe the covenant will eventually help pastor-people relationships, but at this time, this has not happened.” In consultation with these three PPRC chairs it seemed the covenant concept challenged their comfort zone in the following ways: 1) “we have never done anything like this before;” 2) “it sure seems like a lot of work;” 3) “do we need to talk about all these items?”

Overall, I was disappointed with the lack of help on behalf of the three PPRC chairpersons (all male). Yet, they did provide some helpful feedback:

- 1- The process needs to be defined in simpler terms.
- 2- Keep the development time of the covenant to weeks, not months.
- 3- Keep the best interests of the church the top priority for the pastor and the people.
- 4- A way out should be available for both pastor and church if there is not a good match.

These chairpersons shared that the primary expectations for their pastor in developing relationships with people in the church include:

- 1- deliver good sermons.
- 2- have lots of energy.
- 3- good communication skills.
- 4- visitation to all people.

5- strong leadership skills.

6- community involvement.

One chairperson shared, “I think this is a great plan. Once all parties have drawn up a written agreement it makes for a better relationship or understanding between the pastor and church. A covenant, if prepared properly, makes all parties accountable.”

The chairpersons wanted to know my findings and how the refinement of the covenant might benefit them. I plan to interview these three chairpersons by phone after conference for further feedback.

### Summary of Overall Findings

The findings answered the three research questions seems to sustain the hypothesis. The twenty UMC pastors of the study utilized pastoral care functions to build relationships when they begin at new churches. The five pastors in the experimental group in process of developing a covenant with their PPRC rated their first five months higher than the five remaining pastors in the experimental group or the ten pastors comprising the control group. This offered tangible proof that the covenant concept has merit. Also, these five pastors offered positive results that they could attribute to the development of a covenant after only five months. Therefore, this covenant concept has promise to help pastors and churches start well, continue well, and one day finish well.

Next these findings undergo analysis and evaluations. Interpreting the possibilities for developing a covenant between pastor and church leadership merits a healthy discussion. Practical implications for the utilization of the covenant and future study demand attention. The next chapter presents the conclusion of this study.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary and Conclusions

#### Summary of Initial Findings

The primary initiative these UMC pastors employed in developing healthy pastor-people relationships centered on getting to know the people through pastoral care functions. Interviewing both the control group and the experimental group (same questions) substantiated this finding. Eighteen (90 %) shared that doing pastoral actions, such as visitation in people's homes, having small group fellowships, being there in crisis times, sending birthday and anniversary cards, and "just being present" served as the key initiative to get to know the people and build relationships.

Seven pastors (35 %) mentioned listening as another key component in "getting to know" the people and the church. The seven pastors who listened did not mention mutual dialogue. It appeared these seven pastors put great emphasis on getting to know the people but not on the people getting to know them.

Seven pastors (35 %) believed "they should accept the people just as they are." I heard a number of times, "I am to begin where the people are and not where I want them to be." Five (25 %) noted they used the power of the pulpit in establishing themselves as they sought to build good pastor-people relationships.

Three pastors shared that they tried to "be real and open," while two admitted they had never done well in beginning at new churches, especially as they attempted to form healthy relationships. Also an assortment of answers centered on building on the "good work of the predecessor," doing a congregational survey, meeting with leaders for visioning, sharing personal testimonies, and having no contact at all with the predecessor.

#### After Phase One

Beyond the initial "getting to know one another" phase the pastors appeared not to have a clear handle on the next step. Most pastors enjoyed the honeymoon period of getting to know the people and the church. They wanted this phase "where everybody is on their best behavior" to last as long as possible. When the honeymoon glow ended it

was as if they were not sure what to do next. In the initial interviews not one pastor mentioned setting up any kind of mutual agreements (or covenants), talking through issues related to conflict and change, handling issues related to the predecessor, or how to manage the time of transition. Not a single pastor mentioned their leadership style and how, or if, they led. It seemed that since the UMC system perpetuates short-term appointments these UMC pastors have a short-term mind-set. Starting well meant to “get to know the people” and where to go from there was uncertain.

A concern centered on the fact that when asked to describe specific plans they sought to put into place at their previous churches, five pastors said that they “just went with the flow” of what had been happening and five more said that they had operated with no plan in mind. I was shocked when three of the younger pastors admitted that they had not given any thought to how they would start in their new church until they received my research questions.

The pastors gave high marks to the plans they sought to put in place in previous appointments. Fifty percent of the pastors thought that they had great success during the “get to know one another” phase. The lay leadership accepted their plans. The other ten pastors rated the success of their plans from somewhat successful, to a toss up, or not at all, to don’t have a clue. Their responses suggested that half of all the pastors did not start well in previous appointments, and after the honeymoon, did not know what to do next.

#### Previous Plans in Developing Relationships

When I asked the 20 pastors to share plans they had put in place at previous appointments, the responses were varied. Several pastors shared more than one plan which they had implemented. An analysis of the 20 pastor’s responses revealed the following “plan” categories:

The niche plan. Nine pastors instituted some specialized ministry that had worked well for them in previous appointments or in their area of giftedness, i.e. evangelism, worship, youth, missions, which helped in building good relationships.



The shared vision plan. Five pastors established some kind of shared vision with their laity in determining the course of their work.

The “go with the flow” plan. Five pastors stated that they would arrive and just continue what was happening without making any changes. They showed an attitude, “if it is not broke, why fix it?” They did not reflect upon their predecessor’s strengths and areas of success or failure. The sentiment expressed seemed, “I hope things are going well; then I want have to do much

No plan. Five pastors admitted that they had no thought out or specific plans they attempted to implement at previous churches.

My plan. Three pastors stated they took time to do vision casting with their new people, setting the direction they felt the church should go. This was not a shared vision.

The institutional plan. “I am to make the church Methodist & pay 100% of its conference apportionments. This pastor saw this as the key thing he had attempted to accomplish in each of his previous churches.

The predecessor plan. One pastor stated he determined the effectiveness of his predecessor and would either build on what he/she had begun or if he discovered anger towards their predecessor he would attempt to resolve it.

The “you tell me what to do” plan. This pastor felt like the church’s leadership should tell him what to do and he would do it. “I am to do the will of the people.” “I am to be an obedient servant.” He displayed no self-initiative.

The “I watch my backside plan.” This pastor expressed a sense of paranoia, thinking people were out to get him, so he always watched “his backside.” He seemed not to trust anybody.

The Public Relations plan. This pastor took time to share his plan through the use of the pulpit and other means to publicize the direction he had for the church.

The measurement of how well these 20 pastors functioned doing pastoral care became the standard on whether or not the lay leadership accepted their plans. There seemed little consideration beyond “doing ministry functions.” Administrative responsibilities and

leadership carried little importance. Some churches accepted the plans better than others. A strong factor in whether the plans were accepted or not centered on the personality of the pastor and how well she or he matched the church. Fifty percent of the pastors felt their plans helped in developing healthy pastor-people relationships. Within the other half a sense of anger and disappointment prevailed. Most pastors did well in the “get to know one another” period, but they did not know how to move to the next step of implementing and following through. Each pastor’s particular strengths for ministry or the areas they emphasized became the standard used as they evaluated the success of their previous plans. The measure of success seemed relative.

In terms of the various plans, an assortment of answers surfaced as these UMC pastors reflected on what they wished they had done differently in previous appointments. Again a number of the responses centered on getting to know the people and providing better pastoral care. Surprisingly the number one reply had to do with training the laity in their responsibilities of leadership within the church. This coincided with their plans for their new appointment as 45 percent said they wanted to meet with their lay leadership for planning and training. It seemed that most of these pastors would like to start well, but often they had difficulty conveying to the church’s leaders a way to do this. Still, it appeared most of the pastors (55 %) who did not meet with the PPRC and/or leadership were not sure how they could proactively begin in a new church to foster healthy pastor-people relationships. The covenant concept could benefit both pastor and church in this area.

#### The Plan(s) for the New Church

Nine pastors (45 %) stated that meeting with the key leadership their number one goal after arriving at their new church. This included the PPRC and/or Administrative Board. “I will meet with the PPRC and listen to them.” “I will meet with the PPRC and give them a list of duties the pastor performs. From this list they are to determine which tasks are most important to them for me to accomplish.”

Five pastors (25 %) answered that they would meet with the members of the new church in small group settings or by visitation in homes. “I plan to have a fire-side chat at the parsonage with four or five couples at a time.”

Three pastors (15 %) plan to continue what they have always done in the past in beginning at new appointments. “I will continue what I have always done. I have no pre-conceived plans. I take with a grain of salt stories about the church and my predecessor.”

Three other pastors (15 %) admitted they had no plan in mind on how they want to begin at their new appointment. “I had not even thought about a plan until I received the questionnaire from you.”

Most of the pastors assumed that their new churches expected them to do “pastoral care functions.” The pastors planned to continue what they consider historical and assumed expectations as they began in their new churches. Doing these things seemed easier than taking risks by making possible needed changes or providing leadership in other areas.

### Communication of Plans

Eighteen of the pastors (90 %) said that they would rely primarily on a verbal means of communicating their intentions in creating good pastor-people relationships. Their means of communication centered on the PPRC, small groups, personal contacts, and through the power of the pulpit. “I will use verbal communication through the pulpit and remind them in the bulletin and newsletter.” Only one pastor (5 %) stated that he intended to put his plan in some kind of written format after consultation with PPRC. One pastor (5 %) had no clue how to communicate a plan to his people.

### Key Elements of Plans

These UMC pastors offered a wide range of responses about the key elements of the plans they hoped to put in place at their new churches:

Five pastors (25 %) relied on frankness. “I plan to be honest and let my new church know about my personal needs and how I perceive things within the church.”

Another five pastors (25 %) said they planned to use their communication skills to let the church know their plans. Interestingly this same number stated they planned to use their listening skills in an attempt to discern their plans for the church.

Three pastors (15 %) relied upon good pastoral care as the primary focus of their plan. Fellowship times and cooperation with leaders were mentioned by ten percent, respectively. Then a variety of answers were given from dependence upon God, to celebrating the good of the church, to determining how much a plan would cost, to being patient, to using the bishop's mandate to grow or else. One pastor had not thought about initiating any kind of plan.

#### Primary Pastoral Expectations

Pastors thought their PPRC expected them to function primarily in pastoral care related functions/ministries. "They expect me to do everything from preaching to being the janitor." It appeared these UMC pastors functioned in roles comfortable and easy for them. "I like doing funerals because I know I am helping people." Only three mentioned administrative duties and just two talked about providing leadership. Preaching, visiting, counseling, and doing "ministry things" seemed important to these pastors. I wonder how many of these "ministry things" could be delegated to the laity to involve them in ministry? Interestingly, the two pastors leaving churches where growth had occurred saw beyond doing primarily pastoral care ministries. The eighteen leaving stagnant or declining churches never mentioned possibilities other than pastoral care.

#### Self-expectations

These UMC pastors expressed a variety of self-expectations in establishing a healthy relationship with people in their new church. Thirty-five percent expected to visit people in homes or with groups. "I hope to visit everybody within the first six months." Ten percent expected to provide good preaching; 10 percent said they expected themselves to be proactive in developing relationships; 10 percent said they planned to lead the congregation; 10 percent expected to be themselves; and another 10 percent said they expected to know everybody's names as quickly as possible. Self-expectations also

included “to foster an optimistic attitude,” “to establish personal boundaries,” “to share personal needs,” “to spend time in prayer,” and “to create new programs.” These pastor’s self-expectations closely mirrored their previous responses about things done in previous appointments to develop healthy relationships.

### Special Service

The reason for asking about a special service was to determine how many pastors started out by emphasizing the spiritual reasons for the joint ministries both pastors and churches were embarking upon. Three pastors used “An Order for the Celebration of an Appointment” found in The United Methodist Book of Worship. Nearly all pastors expressed interest in this special service when I offered it to the pastors at the conclusion of the initial interviews. One pastor had created his own service which he used his first Sunday. 17 of the pastors (85 %) had received an old fashioned pounding, a reception, or a fellowship meal as a way of welcoming them to their new church. A sign welcomed one pastor. All expressed how having some kind of welcome helped make the transition easier.

### Factors in Decision to Move

Eighteen of the pastors (90 %) gave more than one reason in their decision to move. Twelve (60 %) asked to move. Four of the churches (20 %) requested their pastor to move and the bishop and/ or district superintendents gave mandates to the other 20 percent to move. When asked to say more about why the bishop and/or district superintendent gave mandates to move, the primary response centered around the fact that the record number of retirements within the conference opened up unprecedented opportunities for a career move. “The district superintendent told me I would be needed elsewhere.” “There will never be another year like this one and since I am a UM minister, I cannot turn them down.”

The number one factor of the twelve who asked to move centered on “our children’s needs.” Eight pastors expressed this as a major factor in their asking to move. “Our present church has no children or youth programs and we feel (including spouse) our

children need this sense of community.” “Our children are not in a good school system. We are moving to assure they can have a good education.”

The second key reason pastors asked to move hinged on frustration with their present church. “I was disillusioned with my present church. The people have no vision for growth.” One angry pastor responded, “get me away from this place. I have been packed for months.”

Three pastors admitted that the hope of getting a larger church and a bigger salary caused them to put their name on the moving list. “I need more money to make ends meet.”

The four pastors whose churches requested them to move expressed hurt, disappointment, and disillusionment. A pastor nearing retirement commented, “I was very disappointed that the PPRC did not invite me to return, even though there was a strong expression from the people to return.” Another said, “I knew the PPRC did not like my preaching and other things about me. I was not surprised when they asked me to move. But, I do feel hurt.”

The four pastors who received a mandate from the bishop or district superintendent expressed anger at not having a choice. But, they did exhibit happiness with the advancement in size of church and the larger salary.

Three pastors said they “just knew it was time” to move on. “It is hard to explain. I just know it is time.”

Two pastors mentioned God’s timing. One, completing his eighth year, admitted his trouble understanding his upcoming move, “it has to be God’s timing.”

Two pastors mentioned unresolved conflict in the church as a determining factor in their decision to move. I wonder how much unresolved conflict played into the decisions of the four churches which asked their pastors to move and in the six who expressed great frustration with their church.

Overall, a “move mentality” punctuates the mindset of UMC pastors and churches within the North Alabama Conference. A generic way of viewing this phenomenon :

Year one: Honeymoon; Year two: Conflict; Year three: Move. Change creates conflict which creates anxiety which puts pastors and churches in a move mindset. “We’ve got a problem; let’s move the preacher.” An unhealthy “move the preacher” mentality exists in churches, in pastors, and, possibly within the hierarchy of the system. Unexpressed expectations often get the pastor in trouble. If dialogue occurred upon the arrival of the pastor, the anxieties caused by conflict and change have a greater opportunity for successful management. Churches have historically “solved” their problems by getting a new “savior” who quickly experiences the same dynamics as his/her predecessor and quickly finds himself/herself preparing to move.

The above discussion provides answers to my first research question, which was “What initiatives do UMC pastors employ to build pastor-people relationships upon beginning a new appointment in a local congregation?” I have determined that pastoral care initiatives are the primary means these UMC pastors employed to build pastor-people relationships. These functions have worked well in previous appointments, while providing leadership and performing administrative tasks have not been employed by most to develop healthy relationships. It appeared that these pastors need to completely reverse this traditional way of thinking. Two pastors, strong in leadership and administrative abilities, were leaving growing, healthy churches, while the other 18, big on “doing ministry,” were departing churches declining or stagnant. My research showed that just 10 percent of these pastors expect to lead their congregation, the same two leaving the growing, healthy churches. It appeared that most of the pastors did not see themselves as leaders, but as managers of the status quo. Historically the North Alabama Conference has rewarded pastors for “good maintenance ministry.” Leading and growing a healthy church has never been expressed as an expectation by the conference or by the church itself. Pastors have received as rewards larger churches and greater salaries by making sure their church paid their apportionments and it did not lose members. Thus, most pastors do not expect to lead their church as it is not an expectation. Unless the pastor, himself or herself, has

this as a self motivation, leading a church appeared low on the priority of what he/she expected from themselves.

### Evaluation of Follow-up Findings

From my perspective the 20 pastors seemed excited and energized with their new churches. Basically every pastor started in the same ways they had always started. There seemed an urgency to get to know the people and to visit “house to house.” Eight had already met with their key leadership and/or the PPRC for discussions. These meetings created clarity for some pastors and raised the anxiety level of others. A relatively new tactic of hosting groups in the parsonage seemed somewhat successful in developing positive relationships for the five pastors who attempted this. Another tactic used by five pastors in establishing themselves found them looking for opportunities to “be seen” and “to attend every meeting.”

Most of the stated expectations and goals of the laity fell into the categories of administration and leadership. The question then needs asking, “what drives the expectation of pastoral care that pastors state as their first priority?” It appeared most of the churches need leadership, yet most pastors “do” pastoral care. Could it be that “doing pastoral care” keeps pastors in their comfort zone and most know that if they attempt to lead the church forward there is a risk factor? Could it be that most of these pastors have been trained to do pastoral care and consider administration and leadership as outside their area of expertise?

The nine PPRC’s which did not spell out expectations or set goals for their new pastor are likely headed for trouble. Historically the PPRC has been “a move the pastor” committee. If already half of the ministers have experienced negative encounters during the honeymoon glow period, common sense says more difficulty is brewing. Not having stated expectations and goals is not fair to the pastor who is often held accountable for assumed expectations that have never been agreed upon.

From an analysis of the data most churches sought strong leadership. Sadly the pastors saw themselves as providing little leadership. Why? For many, providing leadership is



outside their range of experience and training; for others, their personality did not lend itself to provide leadership; for some, they did not wish to do anything outside their comfort zone, and for a few, only retirement interested them.

Five pastors offered clear expectations and goals defined with their PPRC. The pastor of the largest church interviewed responded, "I am to be the main preacher, supervise the staff, continue my personal growth, and have set office hours." Another, appointed to a church in the doldrums for years, replied, "we set an attendance goal of having 115 in worship by the end of the year; we are to start a Wednesday night program; and we are to place 500 sports bottles with the church's name within our community." Other pastors discussed they were expected to "reduce the debt;" "build a new sanctuary;" "continue in the present direction;" "to grow the church;" and "train the laity in their responsibilities." From my research both pastors and PPRC's need help to define expectations which fulfil the shared vision of the church while building on the strengths of both pastor and church.

A number of subjects which need in depth discussion center on handling the dynamics of change, the pastor's leadership style, how conflict will be managed, and the reward of work well done and the consequences if this does not happen. These items did not surface among any pastors or PPRC's. If these pastors and their PPRC had discussed the criteria for and the determination of salary raises. I believe this would have helped the four pastors who experienced their initial negative pastor-people experiences over this very issue? Is it right for pastors to be evaluated and held accountable when clear expectations are not defined and agreed upon in advance?

Sadly, it seemed that when these pastors arrived at their new church they started off "running" by doing ministry and taking care of all the things their predecessor did not do. In effect, these pastors started over-functioning in doing ministry things. They neglected building a healthy foundation with their PPRC or lay leadership. Like Martha in Luke 10, many UMC pastors' busy-ness hinders their taking the time to build relationships and develop a solid foundation. It seemed that most of these UMC pastors are like the foolish builder at the conclusion of the sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. How? They do not

take the time to build healthy relationships and dialogue about a number of vital issues. Then when storms crop up, they cannot weather these rocky and unsettling times. This may help explain the short tenures of many UMC pastors.

Overall, it appeared that most pastors and churches do not do a good job of communicating expectations, hopes and dreams with one another. “I cannot even get my PPRC to meet with me.” “Pastor, you know what to do, so go do it.” “The PPRC is a preacher moving committee. This is the only time they meet.” A number of pastors expressed frustration with their PPRC’s refusal to develop expectations and goals. This neglects the committee’s major purpose. Few churches defined key expectations for their pastor. They did not do this verbally or in writing.

There surfaced a one-up-man-ship mentality during the follow up interviews, which I characterized as: “Hi! I am your new pastor. Whatever your previous pastor did, I can do better. Whatever he/she did not do, I will do. I will show you how much better I am than he/she.” It seemed a number of pastors busied themselves providing this unrealistic self-expectation of themselves. When the first conflict surfaced they did not know how to handle it. One veteran pastor commented, “I don’t want my people to know that I have any weaknesses for as long as possible. I want them to think that I can do anything that needs doing.” Few churches defined their key expectations for their pastor. They did not do this verbally or in writing.

Administrative and leadership responsibilities were a foreign concept to most of these UMC pastors. Could this explain why membership in the North Alabama Conference continues its thirty year decline? Churches need pastors to proactively help them get beyond traditional and historical pastoral functions to what needs to take place in this culture and time. A 1950’s mindset (Schaller) does not provide churches and pastors the impetus to do what needs to happen now.

Except for one pastor with definite plans to have a service of consecration to share his covenant with the congregation not another PPRC or pastor had any means to communicate the essence of mutually agreed expectations to the congregation. “We

assume too much. How will the rest of the church know unless they are told?" Although the sample covenant provided suggestions for sharing goals, expectations, and other information with the congregation, only one of the five pastors in the experimental group had definite plans to do this. Too many pastors get into trouble with their churches because of assumptions and/or expectations never shared together.

#### Evaluation of Pastoral Ratings

The five pastors in the experimental group in process of developing a covenant rated their first five months somewhat higher (8.0) than the ten pastors in the control group (7.5) and the five pastors in the experimental group (7.6) who did not utilize the covenant concept. The ten pastors in the experimental group (7.8) rated their first five months higher than the ten pastors in the control group (7.5). The deduction is this: the introduction of the covenant concept helped all ten pastors in the experimental group get a better start. They had a higher rating than those in the control group. The five pastors, in the experimental group who did not develop a covenant, rated their time slightly higher (7.6) than the ten pastors in the control group (7.5).

If the one pastor in the experimental group in process of developing a covenant, but experiencing difficulty with his church, were removed the averaging of the four other pastors in process of developing a covenant showed a rating a full point higher (8.5) than the control group (7.5) or the other five in the experimental group who did not develop a covenant (7.6).

These findings offer credence that the introduction of the covenant concept does help UMC pastors start well and continue well in building new pastor-people relationships. This confirms my second hypothesis, "the development of a covenant between the United Methodist pastor and lay leadership will show measurable short-term results." As one pastor commented, "I wish I had known about this instrument earlier. I am further along than I have ever been at any previous church. I have talked about more things than ever before. It has helped me tackle difficult subjects and to be honest with my people and they with me."

### Evaluation of Pastors Developing a Covenant

Five of the ten pastors in the experimental group were in process of developing a covenant with their lay leadership and/or PPRC. None had completed their work on their covenants as of the date of the follow-up interview. Still, all five gave credit to the covenant concept in helping them begin in positive ways in their new appointments. All five pastors shared the positive benefit that occurred “in just working through the covenant concept instrument.” It offered a guide in which to dialogue about a number of things easily neglected or which they feel uncomfortable bringing up so early on.

These five pastors shared definite ideas about the primary elements of their covenants. Honest communication and agreement on certain expectations and goals topped the responses of three of the pastors. It surprised me that open communication tied with honesty as the number one element within the covenant. Their responses showed a critical need for mutual frankness. Pastors and PPRC’s not being candid with each other appeared a stumbling block for the development of healthy relationships with one another. A veteran pastor of 25 years responded, “sometimes we spend too much time being nice that we forget to be frank with each other.” Much of the time PPRC’s do not have a clear understanding of their roles and this can have a detrimental effect on the pastor.

The other key element of a covenant focused on setting expectations and goals. The PPRC exists for this purpose. This group relates as a liaison between pastor and congregation. To accomplish their purposes for the benefit of both pastor and church involves setting down expectations and establishing goals, then communicate these to the congregation.

The five pastors mentioned a number of “common sense” reasons for setting up a covenant: accountability, praying for each other, visitation priorities, confidentiality, positive criticism, setting schedules, establishing boundaries, and educating the congregation on the contents of the covenant. Other hopes in setting up covenants showed the following: “to make our relationship work,” “to love each other even when we

don't agree," "to help with the spiritual health of the pastor," "lay accountability," and "a mutual ministry concept."

It appeared these pastors missed a number of other elements in setting up a covenant. No one mentioned their leadership style, the management of conflict and change, rewards and consequences, and provisions for re-negotiations. Instead of dialoguing about historical and perceived expectations, developing a shared vision, and talking through a host of issues, everyone involved, including conference overseer or supervisor hopes for the best in this appointment. Instead of entering a new church relationship by taking proactive measures, it seemed most pastors reacted to things as they happened. The pastors who utilized this covenant concept made a radical departure from the ways they previously started.

The five pastors in process of developing a covenant shared a number of positive results they attributed to the development of their covenant. Three shared, "we are already a team, working together in ministry." Two mentioned honesty with each other as a contributing component of the covenant. Also, two others shared the resulting dialogue which resulted from "frankness with each other in establishing expectations." "It has made us more business-like," explained one pastor. When I probed further the pastor replied, "the church often gets in trouble because it attempts to do things in an unbusiness-like manner. Working through the covenant has enabled us to have a frank, businesslike discussion." One pastor developed a shared vision with his PPRC; another said it helped them communicate with one another on a variety of issues; and still another said that they had "developed a plan to deal with trouble-makers within the church." This offered proof for my hypothesis which was "The development of a covenant between the UMC pastor and lay leadership will show measurable short-term results."

Overall the initial results were positive. I would like to have had more feedback from the pastors. The five pastors had only five months to draw from. This limited the results, both positive and negative. I was disappointed that none of the pastors had gotten to the

point of putting their covenant on paper. This would add an element of accountability and gives greater credibility to the entire process.

The only negative results came in the form of warnings. One pastor cautioned about setting up too many expectations. Another admonition came from a pastor questioning the timing of such a project, “people need to understand each other before embarking on such an in depth project.”

### Summary of Experimental Group Interviews

Since this covenant concept was a new and radical departure from the way these ten pastors had started in previous appointments, I was not surprised that only five attempted to utilize the covenant concept in their new church. For even five pastors to attempt something different showed their openness to testing the value of the covenant concept. These five pastors rated their first five months higher than any of the others in the study. Plus, they attributed a number of positive results to working through the covenant instrument and honestly discussing a number of sensitive issues. These pastors expressed disappointment about not having their covenants completed before the interview. They did promise to share the completed agreements with me at a later date.

This discussion provided helpful answers to my second research question, which was, “What common elements can be identified among covenants established between UMC pastors and local church leadership?” These common elements consisted of frank communication in setting expectations and setting goals, a sense of mutual accountability, praying for each other, visitation priorities, confidentiality, setting schedules, “positive criticism,” establishing boundaries, and educating the congregation on the contents of the agreement. Additional elements included a discussion of leadership style, the management of change and conflict, shared vision, rewards and consequences, and provisions for re-negotiation. In setting up this shared agreement the pastor and PPRC understand clearly what expectations they have of each other. The essence of these mutual expectations can be shared with the entire congregation utilizing a variety of means, such as a service of consecration, a fellowship meal followed by the sharing of expectations, a letter to the

congregation, a newsletter article, or to utilize the district superintendent's position to help share and confirm the covenant.

Even after five months a number of measurable outcomes resulted from pastors and PPRC's in developing a covenant. The results provided answers to my third research question, which was "what outcomes do pastors identify in the use of a covenant between themselves and their local church leaders?" These included: having forthright discussions in just working through all parts of the covenant instrument such as: already feeling like a team; bonding together quickly in ministry; help in being more business-like; developing shared vision; and developing a plan to deal with trouble-makers within the church. With additional research during the next four years with the pastors of the experimental group, I feel more specific results will surface, both positive and negative.

#### Evaluation of Pastors Who Did not Develop a Covenant

The five pastors in the experimental group who did not develop a covenant rated their first five months only slightly higher than the ten in the control group (7.6 to 7.5). When asked why they chose not to develop a covenant the answers varied. Two had discussed the covenant idea with their PPRC, which responded, "a good idea to develop later." "We have had all kinds of staff problems. There has been no time to do this." One had not bothered to share the covenant idea with his PPRC, stating that he felt like more time needed to elapse before doing so. One pastor emphatically stated, "I will only do this if the bishop orders me too. I am too old to change my ways now."

The PPRC which rejected the entire covenant concept without giving it a close look felt their pastor attempting to use it as "a way of demanding things and making sweeping changes." Upon further probing (and personal knowledge of this pastor) I made the determination that the new PPRC chair had a bias against the pastor based upon word of mouth about his track record. When he presented the covenant idea to his PPRC, the chair and her supporters balked. They feared he would use this instrument to pull something over on them. They knew about him and his questionable track record. "They were waiting on him," as another pastor commented. His PPRC did not reject the

covenant. They rejected him. The “grapevine talk” or gossip had tainted their reception of him.

Upon reflection I asked a lot from these ten pastors in the experimental group to consider utilizing the covenant concept. I requested them to attempt something which had not been done before, which had no validation through prior testing. I appealed to them to try something that could help them in their ministry, but it would contain a risk. I sought to motivate them to be “guinea pigs” in helping me with my research. I felt reassurance in that not a single pastor in the experimental group felt any pressure from me to attempt this experiment. I seek ways to improve myself and my ministry. I realize that not all pastors are like me and many do not like to attempt new things, unless “ordered to by the bishop.” In retrospect, I am thankful that five pastors saw the promise contained within the covenant concept to at least start the process of developing an agreement. Also, I accept the decisions of the four who chose not to utilize the covenant concept. I am concerned for the pastor whose PPRC rejected the concept outright and used it as an excuse for attacking him.

### Recommendations for Use of the Covenant

From the results of this study, I propose that all district superintendents receive training in “how to develop a covenant between newly appointed pastors and receiving churches.” I recommend a shift in thinking towards helping pastors and churches start well, stay healthy, and end strong.

A possible way to develop a covenant would be for the district superintendent to meet with the new pastor and PPRC within the first week after annual conference for general sharing and the introduction of the covenant concept. During this meeting the district superintendent would present the covenant concept and questions, answer questions, and address concerns. Then he/she would set a deadline, possibly the first charge conference, for the PPRC and pastor to complete a written agreement. During the charge conference the district superintendent might lead a consecration time for the covenant and its participants.



With the district superintendent's involvement two problems are overcome. First, the pastor and people will not be afraid or procrastinate in developing a covenant until they know each other better. Together they have a deadline to meet. They are accountable to the district superintendent. Second, the contents of the covenant will be written down. This avoids the problem of forgetting verbal agreements.

The district superintendent will supervise the pastor and church based upon the covenant. When a crisis develops or other issues surface, the district superintendent can refer to the covenant and assist the church to work through issues based upon the mutual agreement. This gets the district superintendent out of the referee role, gives him/her a sense of ownership of what is taking place in the lives of the pastor and local church, plus provides a means to know the effectiveness of the pastor and the pulse of the church.

I believe the time and energy invested in developing a covenant of relationship will actually save time in the long run. This will reduce the number of crisis interventions over conflicts between the pastor and people in the church. It will reduce the number of forced moves. It will increase the effectiveness of pastors and the ministry of the laity and it will reduce the suffering and dropout rate of pastors. A proactive approach is much more effective than reacting to destructive relational dynamics. Beyond this specific study of helping pastors and churches start well together the covenant concept can be adapted for use in a variety of ways.

All paid staff within the church could benefit with a covenant. Their expectations, goals, and other responsibilities could be spelled out and communicated to the church.. This would strengthen accountability as well as keeps the staff focused on what they are to accomplish.

Leaders within the church could profit from a covenant. Often laity remark, "I did not understand that was my responsibility," or "I had no idea how to do it, so I just forgot about it." To spell out responsibilities, training needs, and expectations for the laity has possibilities beyond the scope of this research project.

When anybody joins the UMC they take a vow to “faithfully participate in the ministries (of the church) by prayers, presence, gifts, and service.” In a real sense they make a covenant with God by agreeing to four standards or expectations. Thus, all members of the church already have a covenant relationship with God. Periodically reminders of this covenant relationship need emphasizing.

The covenant concept is just that, a concept. It can be adapted, changed, added to, and adjusted for particular needs and areas of responsibility.

#### Long-term Follow-up Plans

Since the short term results were not as conclusive as I would have liked, I plan to follow up with the pastors who were in process of developing a covenant, as well as those who were looking at forming a covenant at a future date. Each year I plan to call each pastor via the phone and conduct a personal interview. This should help in obtaining more information than a questionnaire, plus I can draw upon present methodology in which I now have experience. I wish to discern the continuing value of developing a covenant, positive and negative results, ways in which the pastors have altered and personalized the covenant, other ways in which they have used the concept and suggestions these pastors might have for refinement. I want to know if the pastors were able to dialogue about their leadership style, strengths and weaknesses, the management of change and conflict, the handling of difficult people, rewards for work well done, and the consequences of work not well done. I want to discern other elements which might be included in a pastor-parish covenant and exclude unnecessary parts. If any significant findings come about I hope to meet personally with the pastors and his/her chairperson of PPRC for further discussion.

For those pastors who encounter negative results from the covenant, or feel it has hindered their ministry in anyway, I want to interview them for their input and suggestions. I plan to address them and make suggestions for building healthy relationships.

### Possibilities for Further Research

Several times during the interviews the comment was made, “I wish I had known about this when I first started out.” I believe this research has a wealth of promise for graduates of seminary as they start in the ministry. A possible long term study would be to take a group of graduating seminarians from different seminaries, share the covenant concept with them, then follow their ministries in light of how the covenant helped or hindered them.

Another area for further research could possibly center on a mentoring relationship with a group of pastors who are accountable to a mentor. In June of 1997 I was appointed senior pastor of The Wesley Circuit in Limestone County, Alabama. This experiment, the first of its kind in the North Alabama Conference, means I have oversight of five additional churches, three white, and two African American. The pastors appointed to the churches are expected to work under my authority and supervision. As their mentor I will develop a covenant with each pastor in consultation with the PPRC of the church to which they are assigned. Each year I plan to dialogue with the pastor in light of the content of the covenant to ascertain personal and professional growth, along with the achievement of certain goals and expectations. As their mentor I will give direction, evaluate, and develop accountability.

### Limitations of the Study

This study's limitations remains the responses of the 20 UMC pastors of the North Alabama Conference who participated in the research. This is a limited sample of the 295 UMC pastors in the North Alabama Conference. 19 of the pastors were male and one was female. Of the 57 who met the established criteria, only one was female and she was selected in the random sampling. The pastor's understanding of my questions, their personal experiences, their personality, and their mood on the day of the interviews impact this study. Generally speaking this study has significance for all pastors and churches within the North Alabama Conference. Further, this study has importance for all pastors

and churches within Methodism who desire to start well and develop healthy pastor/people relationships. In particular, bishops, district superintendents, and conference officials could benefit from this study. Also, this study has an overflow to other denominations who are interested in helping churches and pastors effectively begin their time together, develop healthy relationships, and continue strong together. However, the research and conclusions are limited to the 20 pastors who participated in the study. A longer study over a longer span of time would verify or change the conclusions in this study.

#### Relation of Results to Previous Studies

Since Christians are under the auspices of the New Covenant, this model for relationships within the church forms the standard for those who have expectations of one another, even pastors. Although all 20 pastors had never considered developing a covenant with their lay leadership, yet, when I shared the idea, they liked the possibilities, and understood the theological implications. Just as God bound himself to his people through covenants for their benefit, pastors and laity can develop agreements for the mutual benefit of both, essentially committing themselves to each other. A pastoral covenant, with expectations clarified, enables the community of faith to prosper and enjoy reciprocal health. It makes explicit expectations and heads off the trouble pastors and churches often get into by making unarticulated assumptions.

A pastoral covenant contains the hopes and expectations of both parties. It provides accountability if one party does not follow through on what has been agreed upon in advance. Pastors liked this reciprocal expectation. Many churches often do not think they should have any accountability since they pay the pastor's salary. When a number of pastors encountered the attitude, "you are the preacher; you know what to do, so go do it," the covenant offered a means to clarify the church's expectations of the pastor. When a covenant is put in place it prevents the church from assuming the pastor automatically knows what to do. It offers mutual accountability and ownership.

Ancient and biblical covenants were written down and a ceremony held to ratify the agreement between parties, with witnesses being present. Since not a single pastor and church had gotten to the point of writing down the elements of their covenant or having a ratification ceremony, their work showed a sense of incompleteness. A deadline needs to be imposed upon both parties to have ready an agreement, maybe by the fall charge conference, or within three months after the pastor's arrival. Unless a deadline is enforced, possibly by the district superintendent, procrastination may delay accomplishing this important task.

Theologically, a covenant follows what God instituted from Israel for his people to enjoy a relationship with him, as well as welcome relationships with one another. Without clarity of expectations and getting to know one another, this "loving one another," has an idealistic component. It takes work to develop a covenant. Frank dialogue, for the mutual benefit of both parties, hopefully forms the motivation in building a covenant. The entire community of faith advances in its obligation "to love one another." Instead of pastors feeling alone, a feeling of "it is me against them," means "we are in this together." The covenant binds pastor and people together. Each party is expected to follow through on the agreed upon expectations.

For a UMC pastor, with numerous Disciplinary expectations, the development of a covenant offers the opportunity to focus on the pastor's strengths and gifts, instead of expecting him/her to do everything. To identify and build upon the pastor's strengths and gifts helps the church move forward with the knowledge that the church may need to compensate for the pastor's weaknesses and liabilities. Defining expectations and dialoguing about key issues on the front end of a pastor's tenure offers the hope for a long tenure, instead of reacting to major problems when they surface, with no thoughtful plan of action.

Although every pastor interviewed demonstrated excitement about continuing in the ministry, there appeared a sense of despair. Most of the pastors had suffered abuse at the hands of mean laity. One pastor shared the story, "if I did not move I was told that

scandalous gossip would be told about my wife and my daughter to the point it would ruin my marriage and family.” He knew if he stayed on his PPRC would offer him little support and he was already on the verge of burn-out, this convinced him it best to move on. A covenant offers the means to talk through tough issues, especially about how to deal with difficult and cruel people.

There is no way a pastor can meet all the expectations and demands of a congregation, no matter the size of the church. When a pastor attempts to do so, he/she is just kidding himself/herself. “No one can do everything expected of the minister” (Patterson 9). The demands upon pastors continue to increase, such that if pastors do not measure up to certain people’s expectations, they experience their displeasure. This often leads to a crisis of faith and a questioning of the call to ministry. The formation of a covenant, with goals expressed and expectations clarified, with these communicated to the church, offers a better way to head off pastoral abuse, burn-out and other unrealistic demands upon the pastoral leader.

While working on developing and understanding my leadership style, I was not surprised when most of the pastors interviewed rarely mentioned leadership. The two who did were leaving congregations where growth had occurred and the church appeared healthy. These two pastors had an understanding on how they led. My assumption is that understanding one’s leadership style has the benefit of helping the pastor know how to lead. From this the church likely experiences growth, both spiritual and numerical.

I found it difficult to judge the effectiveness of the 20 pastors I interviewed. My research showed, determining pastoral effectiveness is ambiguous. Although Hersey believed that effectiveness could be decided “by leader-follower interaction in the pursuit of goal accomplishment, readiness assessment, leadership intervention, appraisal of results of the intervention, and effective follow up” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson 5), for the 20 pastors, their pastoral situations, skills, and other factors made it hard to determine their effectiveness. Even with the setting of goals and following through on expectations, as the covenant proposes, judging a pastor’s effectiveness remains difficult, at best.

The literature review showed the importance of relational skills on the part of the pastor, who works closely with people (Miller 120). My research bore this out to the point that I made the assumption that this might be the primary way to determine pastoral effectiveness. A covenant aids in establishing relationships and setting up goals and expectations, but how a pastor relates to his/her people, his/her personality, his/her enthusiasm, determines his/her success and effectiveness. Pastors who possess a warm, outgoing personality have the potential for producing results and being effective, more than the introverted pastor who has difficulty relating to people.

My literature review warned about the predecessor's shadow looming large over the incoming pastor's first months, especially if the predecessor were highly loved (Bratcher). Yet, my research revealed that most of the pastors felt positive toward their predecessor and had kind things to say about him/her. Even with the two predecessors who retired and remained in the community, the new pastors felt like their predecessor had handled the transition well and appeared happy to have their predecessor in the church with them. I find these good feelings toward the predecessors who retired in the community too good to be true for the long run. My assumption is that after the honeymoon period wears off, or at a future crisis point, conflict will surface between the pastor and predecessor. A predecessor can help make the transition a positive experience for both his/her successor and church. Or, he/she can make things tough. The development of a covenant might address the shadow of the predecessor, especially his/her returning for funerals, weddings, and other events.

Moving causes anxiety in everyone involved. In my literature review, Schaller advocated the need for smooth transitions, whereby everybody makes few adjustments (Schaller 143). I discovered in interviewing the 20 pastors this rarely happens. Only one move would I classify as smooth with few adjustments. This pastor moved only 14 miles, his wife continued her job, and his son was entering high school and would have changed schools anyway. I found in my follow-up interviews pastors, families, and churches struggling to make the necessary transitions and adaptations. Although most attempted to

put a positive spin on things, even the pastors who rated their first five months excellent, still appeared not settled in. “We’re doing the best we can under the circumstances” commented a pastor whose daughter started her senior year at a new school.

Pastors who move frequently, every two to four years, appeared to have the most difficulty making the necessary transitions, especially when it came the needs of spouse and children. One pastor lamented after the last interview about his wife’s anger at him having to move so soon again. “She does not like the itinerant system with all its frequent moves. She detests having to find a new job, but she needs to work in order for us to pay our bills.” I found it significant his not mentioning this in the interview when I asked about changes in his personal life adversely affecting his establishing himself in his new appointment. There seemed a mindset among the pastors that the church comes before the needs of their family to the point that the family is expected to make the adjustments without expressing any displeasure. One pastor commented, “I am a Methodist preacher. Where the church sends me, I will go, without question.”

Frequent moves create spiritual crises in families. The North Alabama Conference, during the decade of the 1990’s, has experienced a large number of clergy divorces. As marriages and families disintegrated stories surfaced about spouses feeling their needs, their careers, and their children’s needs are secondary to the needs of the church. As one pastor expressed his ex-wife’s sentiments, “she got tired of moving every few years to some po dunk town.” The church has an ethical obligation to the pastor’s family, although they are not hired, they are still a vital part of the pastor’s life. My assumption is that the creation of a covenant between pastor and church can help address spouse and family needs, as well as set up the means to have a long term tenure together. Beginning in 1999, the North Alabama Conference plans to begin minimal four year appointments. The bishop and district superintendents are seeking ways to address the fall-out that occurs when pastors and families move too frequently as well as churches which have difficulty keeping a pastor more than a few years. My assumption is that making this shift will be painful for many pastors and churches, who have an ingrained move mentality.



But, in the long run churches and pastors have the opportunity to build healthy relationships, provided direction is given, such as utilizing the tool of the pastoral covenant. Yet, changing this policy without subsequent changes in pastor people relationships will end with limited and frustrating results.

It appeared that pastors and churches have developed a cultural mindset of a “move mentality.” If conflict arises, then, “move the pastor.” If controllers do not like the new preacher, move her. If things do not go like they should, move on. If grass starts looking greener, move. Pastors and churches are conditioned to move and to do this often. Everybody seems to think about moving. Whenever two or three UMC pastors come together, conversation about moving surfaces.

I am a product of this cultural system. I have grown up in it. I am now a pastor in it. I find myself periodically thinking about moving, especially when I encounter conflict and resistant people. Every year when I receive the conference journal I read its pages seeing what churches look attractive. Yet, I know moving is often taking the easy way out without considering what is best for the church or me under the present circumstances. I agree with Warren, Galloway, and Hunter that it takes a time to build a great church. Even before knowing Shawchuck’s statement about “churches taking on the personality of their pastor” (Shawchuck 78), I have made similar comments. It takes time and energy for a church and pastor to get to know one another, develop a healthy, mutual relationship, determine expectations, define a vision, set goals, work through many other dynamics in order to grow a vigorous body of Christ.

A “move mentality” hinders the development of long term relationships when a pastor arrives at his/her new church. Since a number of pastors move at the first sign of conflict, they never learned how to work through and creatively manage this uncomfortable time. Churches may request the pastor to move if certain key people do not like him or her or if the pastor introduces change these people do not like. Often the district superintendent bows to pressure from angry lay people and moves pastors when they need to remain and work through the issues that pass from one pastor to another. A covenant could address

this “move mentality” and have provisions or a plan to deal with those who attempt to hold the church hostage.

Another factor in this “move mentality” focuses on pastors who become district superintendents at some point in their ministry. Having a cultural mindset of moving on a regular basis, they enter the role of superintendent thinking this is one of their major responsibilities. Therefore, they set about figuring out which churches pastors can move too. This cultural mindset needs to be changed if the conference leaderships want longer tenured pastorates and more effective churches.

My literature study (Warren, Hunter) underscored the need for long term pastoral tenure if churches are going to grow and experience health. Just as it takes time to build strong marriages, it takes time to build strong churches. The need for an instrument to guide their setting out together takes on a sense of urgency. Pastors and churches need a guide to cover setting up expectations, dialoguing about many issues, some sensitive, and helping develop strong relationships.

### Unexpected Conclusions

First, I did not expect to find that every pastor interviewed used primarily pastoral care functions to develop relationships with people in their new appointments. Visitation in people’s homes was the number one approach pastors utilized to build pastor-people relationships. Only three mentioned administrative responsibilities and just two talked about the importance of leadership. The pastors assumed that fulfilling these historical pastoral functions was the way to start and develop relationships in their new churches. I compare this to building a house without a foundation.

Second, it surprised me in my initial interviews to find a strong desire to “still be in ministry.” Every pastor wanted God to use them. They hoped to make a difference for God in their upcoming church. I had not expected such a strong craving from these pastors. This was refreshing to me. I am cautious when I am around other pastors. They seem to complain a lot and cast blame. Many of these pastors felt abused by mean people in their churches and neglected by the hierarchy of the conference. After the interviews

were completed and I chatted with the ministers it was painful to hear the abuses so many had suffered at the hands of so-called Christians and how the older ones had been mistreated because of their age. “My district superintendent told me that I was too old to go to certain churches.” I heard this comment from every pastor fifty-five and older. Though I was sad to hear this it was reassuring to know that every pastor desired “to be in ministry.”

Third, the pastor’s attitude and personality seemed the most important qualities in developing healthy pastor-people relationships as they began in their new churches. These two qualities are more important than calling, experience, even the development of a covenant. Having a healthy attitude and a winsome personality went a long way toward building relationships and giving the first five months high marks. The pastors who had a healthy attitude and an outgoing personality were serving the larger churches where positive things were happening. The covenant helped these particular pastors discuss touchy issues and develop relationships faster. Pastors with bad attitudes and an introverted personality served smaller churches and had more difficulty building relationships. The covenant offered a tool for pastors to put in the hands of their PPRC and lay leadership for the purpose of developing healthier relationships.

Fourth, the “move mentality” was more prevalent than I had imagined. Pastors expect to move often. Churches expect to have a new pastor every few years. One of the PPRC chairpersons thought “three years should be the norm” for pastoral tenure. For pastors and families moving often is a spiritually deadening experience, always having to say good-bye, sometimes before getting settled into their new place. This “move mentality” reveals a great deal of trouble within the Methodism system of itinerancy.

It surprised me to find no consistency among pastors in following their predecessors. Our diversity as Methodists can hurt churches, when they experience a change of direction after the new pastor arrives. Instead of building on the strengths of the predecessor, the new pastor begins implementing what he/she thinks is important. Instead of having clarity

of purpose, every time a change of pastors occurs, the church finds itself making changes to adjust to the new pastor.

### Personal Reflections

It concerned me to see the number of pastors hurting and bidding their time until retirement. I believe the development of a covenant might help alleviate some of the pain and assumptions that cause so much heartache for pastors. A number of pastors in trouble emotionally and spiritually at the time of the first interviews did not seem better off during the follow-up interviews. Some felt rejected by the church and abandoned by the conference supervisors. They wanted to talk to a neutral party who would listen to their pain. Yet, none of these pastors had plans for dealing with difficult people within their churches. There was no place for them to turn, except to move to a new church and hope for the best. I think that having provisions within the covenant to handle cruel people offers hope and help for pastors. Healthy laity can fight many of the battles which seem to kill or discourage pastors. Also, the district superintendent's knowledge of the pastor's covenant with the church means that support and encouragement can flow from this representative of the conference towards maintaining the covenant developed between the pastor and the PPRC.

My research forced me to examine my leadership style. In reading about situational leadership, I made the discovery I do well with selling and delegating, but fall short when it comes to telling and participating. Selling and delegating do not require much relational activity, while telling and participating demand a high level of commitment on the part of the leader. It occurred to me that this is why I do well selling an idea, but have difficulty moving the idea towards completion. I neglect the middle steps of sharing and participating with my staff or laity on the idea. Instead I delegate with the expectation that they will find a way bring the idea to completion. This surprised me. I thought I had good relational skills. Since this discovery I have worked intentionally in allowing my followers' readiness determine how I lead.

I have put the covenant concept in place with two of my paid staff. With the support of my PPRC chair I met with my associate and dialogued with him about establishing a covenant of expectations. He balked at my “wanting to hold him accountable.” This led to further discussions about his future. He resigned the day before my PPRC chair and I had scheduled a meeting with him about his expectations and attitude. The process of developing a covenant with him helped direct his future in other directions and showed the key leadership that the time had come for the associate to move elsewhere. It also protected me from the associate supporters who “think he can do no wrong.”

With my music director the benefit of developing a covenant has resulted in clarity about his job responsibilities, re-enforcing the idea that “this is a ministry, not just a job.” Spelling out in detail what his expectations are has helped prevent misunderstandings and has helped in my supervision of him. After putting the covenant in place, his level of performance has increased significantly.

### Concluding Reflections

“It is all in the starting.” Michael Johnson’s words ring true even for UMC pastors when they begin new pastoral appointments. I can still hear him proclaiming in his interview after winning the 220 meter race, “If I don’t start well, there is no way I will finish strong.” The kind of foundation UMC pastors and churches put down when they begin their relationship together will either help them continue together in a healthy manner or will produce painful results. I believe my research has shown that the development of a covenant helps pastors and churches start well by putting in place a foundation to build upon. I have an assumption that starting well enables churches and pastors to stay healthy and, one day, finish strong. I will follow-up the pastors over the coming four years to find out if this presupposition in fact is true.

The North Alabama Conference has tried a variety of ways to evaluate its pastors during the past fifteen years. Initially the PPRC completed a laborious form evaluating the pastor in a large number of areas. This procedure had limited success because there was no way pastors could measure up to all the expectations. The next attempt had the PPRC

listing expectations for the pastor without his/her input. This also fell short for pastors resisted being told what they were going to do without any consultation. Following this pastors received evaluation when the PPRC completed forms in January requesting their pastor to move or return. The evaluation consisted of listing things the pastor did well, areas in which he/she needed improvement, and what the PPRC would like in a new pastor, if their present one moved. This evaluation failed because PPRC's focused on what they wanted in a pastor rather than helping the one they had. The past two years district superintendents have attempted to evaluate pastors at the annual consultation, without PPRC input. This procedure has floundered because the district superintendents do not have enough first hand information to assist him/her in this task.

One sided evaluations are limited when the pastor is evaluated, but not the church. Most of the time expectations were not clear or agreed upon in advance and no goals defined. People would make judgments about the pastor's performance based on how they were feeling at the moment, whether or not they liked him/her personally, and a host of other factors. These evaluation procedures have not worked because pastors are evaluated on things not mutually agreed upon in advance. Some on the PPRC, upset with the pastor, would use it as a means to move him/her.

My hope is that the bishop and district superintendents will be open to this covenant idea as a means of helping pastors and churches start well together, stay healthy and on course together, and finish strong together. Instead of evaluating pastors only, PPRC's receive feedback from their pastor. Instead of evaluating a list of historical pastoral duties, the PPRC and pastor dialogue about expectations, goals, and other goals agreed upon at an earlier time.

The sooner pastors and churches communicate with each other regarding expectations, leadership style, change, conflict, rewards, consequences, boundaries, and the like, the greater the possibility of developing a healthy, long-term relationship with one another. The covenant concept offers a guide for openness, frankness, accountability, and other things that need dialogue. The covenant becomes a proactive means to build relationships

and make extinct unspoken, assumed expectations. It is my conclusion that this covenant concept is needed within the United Methodist church.

In early 1996 my PPRC and I agreed to a list of pastoral goals that I was to give attention to for that year. This precursor to the covenant provided both the PPRC and myself clear objectives upon which I was held accountable. The list contained 26 items, ranging from preaching, leadership needs, attendance goals, visitation priorities, continuing education, family needs and taking one day each month just for myself. In the fall we had a frank discussion about how I was doing on the goals. Some I had accomplished, others were in process, and some I re-negotiated. This dialogue showed me the value of having clear expectations. When a person on the PPRC attempted to chastise me for not giving attention to one of his pet projects, the other committee members let him know that this was unfair to me and I would not be held responsible for things not spelled out in advance.

Reflecting upon this experience, and from writing this dissertation, I saw the value of developing a covenant with my PPRC. Taking the sample covenant and in consultation with the chair of my PPRC, we put together a working covenant in the fall of 1997. Gathering further input from the other members of the PPRC we started this covenant at the beginning of 1998. Just putting the covenant together in the middle of my seventh year offered a different perspective than I anticipated. First, I found myself wishing I had begun my time with a covenant. I realized it was more difficult doing this at this juncture in my ministry. I wondered how things would have been different if I had done this when I first began. Second, I pushed for things that I probably would not have done starting out as I did in establishing this covenant. The two things I insisted upon were that my laity share in the discipline of persons who caused disunity within the church. I felt this was just as much their responsibility as mine. I have tired of fighting certain battles and insisted that key laity help me in this. And, I was insistent that the PPRC understand the importance I place upon my family and the boundaries I have to protect them. This was written into the covenant, specifying family days, date night with my wife, and the need for

vacations. Third, I realized the value of re-negotiation. Compromise and mutual understanding became evident, especially when an issue came up that some member or myself felt strongly about. Just working through the sample created needed discussion and led to better understanding for all parties in the covenant.

I feel strongly that I have a right to hold the church accountable for specified expectations, just as they have the right to hold me accountable. I see myself relying more upon the agreed to contents of the document as the year progresses. I believe the PPRC will too.

This pastoral covenant does provide a helpful tool for both pastors and churches at any point in their ministry together. As increasing numbers of pastors and churches utilize this covenant concept more helpful feedback will make this an even more worthwhile tool for the UMC, its pastors and members.

Michael Johnson is right, “the start determines how well we finish.”



Appendix 1

Initial/Pretest

Interview Questions

I. DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_
2. Male\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_\_
3. Year of graduation from seminary \_\_\_\_\_
4. Number of appointments (including current) since seminary \_\_\_\_\_
5. Longest tenure at an appointment? \_\_\_\_\_

II. QUESTIONS

1. As you think back upon how you started in your previous churches, what things do you think you have done well to create good pastor-people relationships?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What do you wish you had done differently?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What plan(s) did you seek to put in place when you began at these appointments?

- a. Were these plans accepted by the lay leadership?
  - b. How successful were these plans?
- 
4. Have you a plan in mind on how you will develop a pastor-people relationship when you begin your new appointment?
  5. If you do have a plan, how will you communicate this plan?
  6. What are the key elements of this plan?

7. In your opinion, what are primary pastor-people expectations of your PPRC (or lay leadership)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What primary expectations do you have for yourself in establishing a healthy relationship with the people in your new church?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Have you ever had a special service to welcome you upon your arrival at a new appointment? If so, what kind?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. What were the determining factors in your decision to move this year?

## Appendix 2

For the control group, the interview would end with the understanding that in five months a follow-up interview would be arranged with each pastor. For the experimental group, after the above questions have been answered, the concept of the covenant will be shared, a working model of the covenant provided, and a request that each pastor consider using the model in their new appointment. The researcher will obtain phone numbers for the pastor's new appointment in order to call and arrange follow up interviews in five months.

As needed the questions will be followed up with probes, such as "Can you give me an example?" or "Would you tell me a bit more about that?"

### Appendix 3

#### Follow-up Interview Questions

##### Control Group and Experimental Group

1. Describe in a sentence how your predecessor left.
2. Please share some positive pastor-people relationships that have occurred since your arrival?
3. Have there been any negative pastor-people relationship experiences since your arrival?
4. Please share how you went about establishing your pastor-people relationship with the church.
5. Have any significant changes in your personal life adversely affected your establishing yourself in your new appointment?

6. Since your arrival what mutual expectations or goals have you established with the PPRC?

7. Was there a worship service to celebrate your arrival in your new church?  
Describe:

8. How would you rate these first five months?

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Wish you had never come here

9. Do you have any suggestions or ideas for making better transitions into a new appointment?

10. Do you have any questions you would like to ask this researcher?

#### Appendix 4

##### Questions for experimental group only:

1. Did you develop some kind of covenant with the lay leadership?
2. Did you utilize in some manner the sample provided by the researcher? Please elaborate:
3. How was this covenant developed between you and your lay leadership?
4. Has the covenant helped or hindered your leadership in your new appointment? Explain.
5. What are the key elements in this covenant?

6. What positive results can you attribute to the development of this covenant?
7. Were there negative results that you can attribute to the development of this covenant?
8. What adjustments were made, if any, in this covenant?
9. Do you recommend the use of this covenant in a new appointment?
10. Did you feel any pressure from the researcher to utilize the covenant in your new appointment? Scale:
  - 0- None
  - 1- Some
  - 2- A good bit
  - 3- Felt highly obligated



## Appendix 5

### Questions for Chairpersons of Pastor Parish Relations Committees

1. Did your pastor explain the concept of a covenant with you? If so, how was the concept of the covenant received?
2. What adjustments did you make for your church?
3. How has the development of a covenant influenced pastor-people relationships?
4. Has the development of a covenant hindered in establishing pastor-people relationships? If so, how?

5. What are the primary expectations of this church for your pastor in his/her relationship with the people of the church?
6. What results can you attribute to the development of a covenant?
7. What guidelines and boundaries have you set down with your pastor?
8. Will you recommend using a covenant concept in the future when there is a change of pastors?
9. What recommendations would you make to the researcher regarding his desire in developing a covenant for healthy pastor-people relationships upon beginning their time together?

## Appendix 6

### (SAMPLE COVENANT CONCEPT)

#### Covenant of Ministry

between:

Name of Pastor

and

Name of Church

#### Step 1. Purpose of Covenant:

The purpose of this covenant is to establish a plan of ministry that focuses on God's purposes for his church. This is a mutual agreement worked out with prayer, dialogue, and hope for the health of both the pastor and the church.

#### Step 2. Getting to Know One Another:

Pastor shares spiritual pilgrimage, including call to ministry, family dynamics, educational preparation, significant ministry experiences, strengths and weaknesses, victories and failures, struggles and current needs.

Church leaders share their history, traditions, culture, demographics, community perceptions, pastors, organizational structure, historical expectations, and names of influential people.

#### Step 3. Mutual Expectations

(Consult The Book of Discipline in developing a prioritized list of expectations.) Engage in a dialogue focusing on key expectations. The following suggestions serve as a guide in setting up a written agreement/covenant.

##### 1. Church's Expectations of Pastor

- a. We expect our pastor to preach the Word of God and we support him/her in this by . . .
- b. We expect our pastor to lead our church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We will support him/her in leading our church by . . .
- c. We have discussed with our pastor his/her leadership style. We will support him/her in this area by . . .
- d. We will work with our pastor in setting a shared vision for the church. We will support him/her as he/she articulates and works for the accomplishment of this vision. The ways we will support him/her are . . .

- e. We recognize that change will happen and we support our pastor in a joint quest to manage the dynamics of change by . . .
  - f. We admit that conflict will take place. We will undergo joint training in conflict management and take time to draw up a procedure on how we will manage conflict together. We will do this by . . .
  - g. We expect our pastor to continue improving in all areas of ministry and life. We offer financial support for continuing education as well as evaluation procedures which are mutually agreed upon.
  - h. We expect our church to be healthy and grow. Recognizing that this is everyone's calling and ministry we will support our pastor as he/she leads and challenges us in the following ways . . .
  - i. We know it takes time to grow a great church. We propose to support our pastor's tenure with us by . . .
  - j. We propose to meet with our pastor regularly to assess possible adjustments and additions to this covenant.
  - k. We will work with our pastor and have set the following goals that he/she is to give priority attention to: . . .
  - l. We recognize our pastor needs time for replenishment, for family, and for vacations. We support him/her in this area by . . .
  - m. We have discussed boundaries with our pastor and support his/her boundaries by . . .
  - n. Monetary raises are important to the morale and well-being of our pastor. We propose to support him/her in this by letting him/her know how we will base our rewards in this area. These are . . .
  - o. If our pastor does not accomplish our expectations we will work with him/her in getting assistance. We have discussed the consequences of not meeting our expectations and a plan of action we will follow is. . .
  - p. Recognizing the significant number of expectations and demands upon our pastor's time and energy; and having discussed his/her strengths and weaknesses, we propose to prioritize ministry, administration, and leadership expectations as follows:
  - q. We will support our pastor with our prayers, words of encouragement, and in other ways build him/her up and help him/her become all that God wants him/her to be.
2. Pastor's expectations of church
- a. I expect the church to pray for me, support me, encourage me, and help me develop in my role as pastoral leader.
  - b. Building on my strengths, I expect the church to support me in the following ways. . .
  - c. I expect to meet with the PPRC on a consistent basis for honest and helpful feedback. I expect the PPRC to communicate with the congregation what has been established as mutual expectations in the following ways. . .

- d. I expect my leaders and the PPRC to take leadership roles in managing change, handling conflict, and supporting me in the following ways. . .
- e. For the church to grow and be healthy I expect support for my leadership in the following ways. . .
- f. I need boundaries/limitations to protect my personal and family time. We have dialogued about these and have set up the following:
- g. The reward of work well done is appreciation, monetary raises, and more work to do. I expect the church to support me in this area by. . .
- h. If I do not accomplish expectations the church has for me, I expect the PPRC to initiate an honest dialogue with me and . . .
- i. I expect direction by the leadership and/or PPRC regarding the prioritization of my energies and strengths, and to support me with the congregation by . . .
- j. I expect the lay leadership to set the example of a healthy relationship with me and share in the discipline of persons who create disunity in the church.
- k. Other areas that I expect to be supported by the church are:

#### Step 4. Written Agreement

After answering the statements in Step 3 and adding other pertinent information and possibly more expectations, then the agreement can be put in writing. The importance of this cannot be overstated. People forget some things. They remember in different ways. When all the mutual expectations are inked on paper, this adds power to the memory and to the expectation that there will be accountability.

#### Step 5. Witnesses to Written Agreement

Names of third party to review and endorse covenant

#### Step 6. Ratification Ceremony

Why?

When?

Where?

How?

Who?

What?

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