

## **ABSTRACT**

# **CULTURES OF INTENTIONAL CONNECTION: EFFECTIVE MINISTRY PRACTICES OF CONGREGATIONS WITH THEIR DAYCARES AND SCHOOLS**

by

Mark C. Caldwell

Congregations create daycare, preschool and weekday school ministries as an outreach to their community with the hope of introducing families to Jesus. These families receive a service in an environment that introduces them to other facets of the congregation's ministries including worship, mission, fellowship and discipleship. As some daycare and school programs mature, they drift from the congregation's mission.

Certain congregations are able to maintain the missional harmony of their church with its daycare or school. These programs value characteristics such as shared leadership, alignment of mission and perpetuation of values. This study examines congregations that have either maintained a focused mission or restored a fresh, unified vision of how the daycare or school can assist the congregation in its efforts to create disciples of Jesus Christ. By observing these examples, we can learn how to maintain effective, unified ministry through cultures of intentional connection.

The purpose of this project was to identify effective practices of congregations in the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church where cultures of intentional connection fostered a unified ministry between churches and their daycare or school. This study investigated four sites that utilized practices that intentionally and

effectively integrated participants from the daycare or school ministry into the life of the congregation.

This study revealed that these cultures resulted from the involvement of the pastor with the school, an unwavering focus on quality and the involvement of the director or head of school in the worship life of the congregation. Analysis of the data led to the conclusions that cultures of intentional connection who succeed at attracting families from their schools value evangelism and quality, possess leaders who collaborate with a unified purpose and have functional systems in place to sustain the mission.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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DAYCARES AND SCHOOLS**

presented by

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DAYCARES AND SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

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by

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Overview of the Chapter**

Understanding the intricate dynamics in any system can confound even the most seasoned in ministry. Complications between a church and its school or daycare can arise when values shift apart from each other, thus creating unanticipated separation. This chapter will begin with a narrative from one such church and its preschool ministry. After the introductory narrative, an overview of this project will describe the nature of the problem and the rationale for this work. Next, the literature will address the body of materials sampled to support this project's research. The chapter will then highlight the methods for gathering and analyzing data. The conclusion of the chapter will address the major findings, implications, generalizability and limitations of this study.

### **Personal Introduction**

A United Methodist church in southeast Florida had a problem that is common in many churches. They were a struggling inner city church whose congregation longed for the days when the heart of the city was a place of vibrancy and prominence. Like many established churches, it had a substantial facility that included a full-day program offering childcare and a preschool with a capacity of up to one hundred and fifty children. Parents who worked downtown in the government centers and financial district that surrounded the church utilized the daycare and preschool. In 2006, this program had an enrollment of one hundred and twenty-five children. The congregation of five hundred and fifty members had an average Sunday worship of around one hundred and fifty in two services in a sanctuary that seated seven hundred and fifty. There were typically between two and

five children in services on a Sunday. This church had a preschool filled to capacity; however, aged members populated its Sunday morning worship services. These older members nostalgically recollected their past where Sunday morning worship services and Sunday school classes were filled with persons of all ages. Through the years and after several congregational scandals involving moral failures, the Sunday morning worship and Sunday school attendance waned. The congregation found itself with a Sunday group populated mostly by aged, long-time members and few parents and their young children. By contrast, the church's weekday programs were bustling with young adults and children who utilized the daycare and preschool. A clear chasm existed between these school families and the congregants.

This awareness of two distant but connected entities sparked a series of questions. How did the weekday offerings to families begin? How did it evolve? Was there ever an intentional mission between the congregation and its weekday preschool? Were the congregational assets rightly allocated to serve the mission of the congregation and its ministries? How were families in the weekday program introduced to Jesus? What systems of accountability were created to maintain a connection between the two? How can the congregation minister to these individuals and incorporate them into the life of the church?

To many in the congregation, the church and school appeared as a single entity. The church's ministry structure included the school as part of its program. Its finances were kept through the church's accounts. The Church Administrator managed the church and its preschool. These two bodies not only shared the same financial accounts, but they also shared the same spaces.

In an effort to reinforce this idea of a unified entity, the church hired one of its members to run the preschool. Over time, the director became increasingly distant from the church's goals and its ministry as their loyalties aligned them with the preschool that was out of harmony with its congregation.

Even with these significant collaborations of finances and space, there was little accountability of the preschool to the congregation's Church Council. Likewise, there was little financial oversight to determine the level of financial burden incurred by the church for the preschool. The church staff included positions such as receptionists and custodians that were considered employees of the church. However, these staff members provided weekday coverage in their respective areas within the preschool for eleven hours a day. Services such as every-other-day garbage collection fulfilled the needs of the school yet were financial obligations paid by the church. The congregation believed that the church survived because of the significant financial impact of its school.

Ideas emerged from the preschool's leadership to prohibit the usage of children's classrooms on Sundays. The rationale behind this idea rested in the fact that the preschool was enrolled to capacity and that the inconvenience of sharing space with the much smaller Sunday School classes warranted prioritizing programs. The Church Council believed that the church was still open because of the tuition generated from the preschool. Because of this belief, many church leaders hesitated to resist this proposal. They felt that nothing should impede the preschool's classroom space or programming. The preschool prevailed in its request and children's classrooms were locked and unused on Sunday mornings. Additionally, a number of staff and leadership resisted the pastor's desire to minister in the preschool through weekly chapel and parental interactions.

The pastor became increasingly concerned with the behavior of the preschool's director and staff. He sought to bring alignment with the church and preschool's leadership. When addressing the topic of once again utilizing the children's classroom space for Sunday morning programs, the preschool staff converted a storage room on the third floor into a meeting space for Sunday children's activities. When told that this arrangement was unacceptable, rebellion by some of the preschool staff led to their dismissal. Many were confounded as to how these events unfolded.

### **Statement of the Problem**

On occasion, congregations and their schools drift apart because of missional misalignment. Many churches that build Christian education classrooms seek to maximize the space's potential throughout the week. This typically leads to the opening of daycares or schools to meet the community's need for weekday childcare or education. Separate cultures can emerge between the school and the congregation that can often put them at odds with each other. How do congregations remain connected in mission with their school ministries?

In our current culture, families with children have both parents working full-time jobs. In essence, congregations are meeting a need by providing daycare and education in a loving, nurturing environment for these children. Many times, the classrooms used during the week by the daycare or school also function as Sunday Schools on the weekend. This is a rational idea and efficient use of space. The school can use the classrooms for a substantial portion of the week while the church uses the same space for a few hours each weekend. Because of the grossly disproportionate number of hours of

classroom utilization by each entity, it is easy to understand how the congregation can lose control of its space for Sunday School.

Tension creates distance between the school and the church staff. Like the repelling poles of a magnet, unseen forces can repel each other. With a slight adjustment, the very forces that cause the two magnets to repel can cause them to draw together. What practices can a church and their school ministries establish to create forces that draw these two entities together for a common purpose? What congregations have employed best practices with their daycares or schools to share space, create a unified mission and foster cooperation between the various parties?

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project was to identify effective practices of congregations in the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church where cultures of intentional connection fostered a unified ministry between the local church and its daycare and/or school.

### **Research Questions**

In order to evaluate a congregation's ministry within its daycare or school, it is helpful to have an analysis of specific practices and an investigation into cultures of connection. Refining this data should produce common factors demonstrative of a congregation and its effectiveness to minister within its school. As this topic could cover a spectrum from newborn nursery ministry to a school-sponsored high school, the variables based on developmental educational theory will be minimized while the

effectiveness of a congregation's engagement of families will prevail as the study's main focus.

**Research Question #1:** What are some common elements exhibited by congregations that are effective at integrating families from their preschool into their congregation's worship and discipleship formation process?

**Research Question #2:** What leadership qualities are present in the clergy, church staff, school administration and school staff that foster a collaborative ministry throughout the various entities?

**Research Question #3:** What systems are in place to ensure the common goal of introducing children and families to Jesus through its church school?

### **Rationale for the Project**

An effective and intentional connection requires constant attention. This is evident in everything from a marriage to the interdependent units within a corporation that operate to serve the whole organization. Congregations develop different programs that serve the church's overall goal, which is to create disciples of Jesus. Many church leaders assume that these programs will remain harmoniously focused on the mission of the church. Some of these common programs include youth groups, music groups and mission teams. Often, congregations operate schools in an effort to fulfill their mission to introduce people to Jesus as well as to effectively utilize space in buildings during the week. Preschools or childcare offerings are the manifestations of a congregation's desire to effectively utilize its classroom space and ultimately introduce families of these programs to the life-changing presence of Jesus.

An individual who has ever driven a car whose wheels are not in alignment knows that the vehicle will deviate from its course. The tires, if not balanced, will also create an unpleasant ride for the occupants of the vehicle. The relationship between a church and its school can exhibit these same tendencies. A congregation that is disconnected from its school can suffer from the frustrations of two substantial entities that have drifted apart in their collaboration and mission. Jesus said in Mark 3:24 that “If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand”. Although this reference was made regarding the Kingdom of God, it is a reminder that congregations and their schools are working towards that same end goal. This project will seek to fill a gap that is easily opened and increasingly difficult to mend as it widens.

The following paragraphs will help address the reason for undertaking this endeavor. The reasons below will address issues of the congregation’s identity, staff satisfaction and Christian formation opportunities.

#### Reason #1: Congregational Identity

A congregation’s identity within the community can rest on several pillars, including dynamic worship, a vibrant youth group, its outreach or engaging missions. One of the most common identifiers to a community is the congregation’s school or childcare. It provides a greatly needed service to the community, and parents are grateful for the nurture that their children receive. This contributes to the church’s reputation within the community.

What happens when a school becomes increasingly distant from the congregation’s mission? This question becomes more pronounced as the school grows to its maximum

capacity and increasingly utilizes building space. Does the school provide more than just childcare or the fundamentals to education? Churches that experience a distancing of their programs from their mission can suffer from a loss of identity. A school or daycare may be a significant community offering, but its relationship to the congregation is minimal. The result is that the church's reputation, to some degree is tarnished or minimized by the separation of identity and function.

#### Reason #2: Harmony

A church and its school will develop two significant cultures. The church culture will create staff positions that utilize volunteer, lay participation to serve in various roles. The pastor serves as the spiritual and administrative leader and as the guide of the church's mission, which is to create and facilitate followers of Jesus. A school's culture develops similarly with a director responsible for shaping the staff. The director leads teachers and assistants to fulfill the school's mission. A school's primary objective is to educate, which shapes the school and its staff.

The misalignment of these fundamentals can lead to frustration within different groups. At its worst, it can pit clergy against preschool directors, and church volunteers against school staff. Even in its tempered state, the various challenges of running a school in a church's education space can create frustrations among the staff and laity, which can erode morale. One of the fundamental practices that preschools encourage is sharing. Similarly, churches teach that we should do unto others as we would have done to ourselves. It is ironic that these basic principles are taught to children by adults through their preschool, daycare, Sunday Schools and worship, yet are so difficult for the same

adults to embody. They may exhibit a low tolerance for others who have worked in a certain space or left equipment in an altered state. Territories are claimed when there is a lack of alignment, and this can lead to an adversarial relationship. Intentional connections create environments in which the members of a church and its school or daycare can aspire to fulfill God's hopes for the harmonious and constructive utilization of the church's resources.

### Reason #3 Christian Formation Opportunities

The most significant factor in this project pertains to the maximizing of opportunities to include persons in the Christian formation process. Multiple points of personal engagement exist through a congregation's programs. One of the most significant spheres of influence is through a church's childcare and preschool. Parents who bring their children to a Sunday School program on Sundays entrust their child for approximately an hour each week. Families involved in a church's daycare or school entrust their children to the church for fifteen to forty hours a week. What a congregation can do with that time could be life changing for not only that child but also for that child's family.

A well-aligned school and congregation can create maximum potential for forming followers of Jesus. Healthy and collaborative ministry can happen when a large, reputable school in the community works in harmony with its congregation. The result is not frustration and division but satisfaction and opportunity to serve God on a greater scale.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

Annual Conference - An organizational body within the United Methodist denomination defined by a regional boundary that hosts numerous congregations within organized districts. It is the body responsible for launching churches, ordaining pastors and ensuring that the congregations are effectively engaged in mission. Its leader is a bishop who appoints clergy to congregations through consultation with district superintendents.

Average Worship Attendance - The calculation over the course of a year that averages a congregation's attendance in principal worship services. These services are any regularly scheduled weekly gatherings focused on the act of proclamation and response.

Head of School - The person who serves as the primary leader of a school program that goes beyond preschool. In some cases, this person serves as the principal of the school. In others, there are principals of the lower school or middle school that report to the Head of School. It is the senior-most position in the academic setting within a church school.

Discipleship- The process of discipleship generally incorporates an individual into a class or small group setting where instruction happens. This can take place through lectures or discussions—but always in a setting where there is focused attention on deepening one's life in the Christian faith through a classroom setting. Many times, these opportunities are realized in Sunday School classes, small groups, youth groups, children's activities or retreats.

Large Church - In the United Methodist Church, a large church is considered any congregation that averages between 301-2000 in weekly worship (usachurches.com).

Mission- The mission of the church is to create disciples for Jesus Christ. However, for this study, mission speaks of activity orchestrated by a congregation with the intention of alleviating suffering, offering off-site programming or evangelizing in the name of Jesus.

### **Delimitations**

The range of study is limited to congregations with schools in the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. This is the ecclesial entity that ordained me twenty years ago. This became the focus group because of my familiarity with many colleagues and congregations in this Conference. Although this work could scale to different regions, denominations and to churches of smaller sizes, I will focus on my exposure to ministry sites and colleagues in large United Methodist churches in Florida.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

A variety of literature includes and reveals the nature of the Church and its methods to engage a society. The Church has witnessed conflict since its beginning, whether on the micro level of individual differences of the early apostles or on the macro level of emerging tensions with regard to expanding evangelization beyond the Jews as Gentiles experienced conversion. Paul addresses conflicts within congregations like the church in Corinth that was living with division. Today's ministry environment is similar

to the first-century Church because of the continuing manifestation of conflict. Sin and division will always threaten the mission of the Church.

A significant effort will focus on the literature demonstrating models of collaboration and coupling that are tremendously effective in accomplishing God's will. The biblical themes of separation and holy connection will serve as the foundation of the literature review. From this point, theories of education and the emergence of formal education will further the base of understanding of the religious roots associated with early childhood education. With the evolution of this movement, secular elements displaced the religious. Church-based schools have emerged to meet the needs of certain families. Our modern congregations are balancing the mission of their own schools with the demands of high quality education in this environment. Contemporary leadership theories complete the picture of the roles of scholastic and religious leadership in these congregations and their schools. This work concludes by addressing missional alignment as it is implemented through these various leadership practices.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Type of Research**

This project utilized a simple survey to identify potential sites for investigation. Once appropriate sites became apparent, the study coalesced utilizing more qualitative techniques of research involving semi-structured interviews. This study was a qualitative, pre-intervention project in the descriptive mode that involved multiple sites. It began with a confidential survey sent to every United Methodist congregation in the Florida Annual Conference that hosted a daycare or preschool.

After selecting four sites, key leaders agreed to further investigation through semi-structured interviews. These respondents shared leadership practices that revealed ministerial models of congregations in harmonious relationship with their schools. As the interviews progressed, questions focused on the behaviors, leadership and governance that exist in a congregation's school culture.

The objective of Stage One involved discovering congregations whose schools fulfilled the church's goal of introducing families to a Christian formation process. This stage utilized a confidential survey that was emailed to every United Methodist Church in the Florida Annual Conference that hosted a daycare, preschool or grade school. The recipients of these emails came from the Annual Conference's Office of Risk Management, which provides mandatory coverage for every one of its congregations. The completed surveys revealed which congregations had significant numbers of families involved in both the congregation and the school. Additionally, these surveys brought focus to the core role of the daycare or preschool. Certain ministry sites emerged through this data that demonstrated that some sites were more effective in reaching greater numbers of families than others. Eight locations emerged as possible interview sites and four sites had leaders who were agreeable to interviews.

Stage Two was a pre-intervention semi-structured interview with key leaders that investigated which principles were already at work to create a fertile environment for familial involvement. It was not intended to implement new measures or test prevailing theories or hypotheses. This effort discovered a variety of practices revealed through multiple narratives that demonstrated intentionality between these congregations and their schools.

## **Participants**

This project had two stages of investigation. The first stage was a survey and the second stage involved semi-structured interviews with key leaders from the congregation and school. Specifically, it involved leaders working in the administration of each respective entity such as the pastor of the congregation or the director of the school. Stage One involved individuals who answered confidential surveys to determine which sites warranted further investigation because of their cultures of connection between the church and school. There were two hundred and two locations invited to participate in the confidential survey.

Certain churches possessed markers of effective engagement with their daycares or schools as evidenced in their survey responses, which indicated their elevated numbers of families that participated in worship. The survey revealed eight sites and I contacted them about participating further with the study. Four ultimately agreed to participate further with the study. Stage Two commenced with church and school leaders from these four sites whom I interviewed in semi-structured interviews to discuss cultures and strategies that attracted school families to the life of their congregation. For the sake of maintaining confidentiality, those congregations and participants in the interview process were assigned pseudonyms.

After the interviews, I coded and analyzed the transcripts to observe patterns of behavior that denoted effective engagement. Their habits, strategies, behaviors and ideals emerged to create unique cultures, albeit similar to one another in certain aspects. The alignment of mission and effectiveness of leadership revealed the practices that encouraged congregational participation of families that enrolled in the school.

## **Instrumentation**

This study required a two-stage process to identify appropriate sites for investigation. Stage One involved a survey consisting of eight questions. (Appendix A) Data collection happened through the confidential answers by a church or school administrator who was qualified to answer the questions. Stage Two of this study invited key participants (Appendix B) from qualified churches to conduct one-on-one confidential interviews. Transcribed and coded data created from these from semi-structured interviews (Appendix C) supplied the information used to weave the narratives that would serve this project.

## **Data Collection**

Before commencing with any data collection, field-testing of the confidential survey resulted in helpful suggestions to improve its clarity and function. After making suggested changes, Stage One commenced by emailing an explanation and invitation to participate in an eight-question survey to all two hundred and two congregations of the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church that hosted a daycare, preschool or grade school. This survey addressed basic elements of their program and its relation to the congregation. Additional questions from the survey asked about the level of involvement of families from the school in the church. The final questions pertained to the school's function, the role of clergy leadership, the role of the school's teacher participation and the role of the school's director or head of school.

Stage Two refined the answers from the fifty-eight completed surveys to a narrowed field of congregations that could potentially serve as on-site interviews. The two primary questions of interest pertained to the level of involvement and the nature of the school.

Eight sites emerged as viable candidates for participation in Stage Two. Out of eight emailed invitations, four sites responded and the key leaders in their respective areas agreed to in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted at their site in a location of their choosing. These recorded conversations were conducted confidentially with the understanding that these interviews would be secured until transcribed and then deleted from the devices. After the in-depth interviews were completed and transcribed, elements and themes of effective and intentional connection emerged.

### **Data Analysis**

The initial surveys provided quantitative data that identified potential interview sites. In the effort to identify effective churches that attracted families from their daycare or school, interpretation of data from these surveys revealed certain congregations with higher levels of involvement than others. The question that sought to identify these programs pertained to the number of family units from the school that worshipped with the congregation. This survey had an intentional limitation because the study did not seek to establish a point of origin of the families in question. They may have been families that were active church members that are now utilizing their church's preschool. Families with no church connection may have enrolled their child in the daycare or school because of its community reputation or convenience to their home. Through their

involvement, they may have received an invitation to participate in another event with the congregation. Quantitative measures were utilized only to identify those congregations that had an elevated level of participation in the church and its daycare or school. Certain questions within the survey sought to understand the evangelical nature of the school, as the respondent was able to select an option that best described the relationship of the school with the church. These congregations with significant levels of involvement coupled with a focus on the school or daycare as a mission field were the sites selected to conduct interviews with key leaders.

The next level of analysis relied on interpreting in-depth interviews with clergy, school administrators, and other leaders who were involved in perpetuating the mission of the church and school. Transcripts from these interviews were coded to major themes. These interviews revealed core values and healthy habits of congregations and their schools. They also revealed certain qualities of leadership possessed by key persons in the congregation and the school. These interviews allowed for an emerging narrative to describe the ways in which the churches and their schools created and maintained their culture of connection. This is why the qualitative approach was the most effective means to complete this project.

### **Generalizability**

This project could scale well beyond the denominational and regional limitations placed upon it. The scope could expand by including non-United Methodist congregations in the study's geography. Going outside the boundaries of the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church into other United Methodist

Conferences could widen it denominationally. As this is a study revealing a regional subset of congregations doing similar ministry, its scope and range is limited. It could easily be replicated in another region, in another culture and even in another faith context. The results of this project could create an understanding of how one denomination in a particular region is seeking to do effective ministry in this manner.

For this particular study, the congregations studied had an average worship of over one thousand per week. There may be principles identified from this study that might be of use to congregations of all sizes.

### **Project Overview**

Chapter 2 reviews pertinent literature in the areas that address cultures of intentional connection. These sources include biblical foundations, theology, early childhood education and collaborative leadership. Chapter 3 addresses the methodologies utilized to gather data for the project. Chapter 4 presents findings garnered from the data gathered and analyzed for the project. Chapter 5 presents observations that address the problem as focused through theological and biblical lenses. Additionally, the chapter seeks to answer the research questions with the data and information from the literature review. This material will detail conclusions that could benefit different congregations that host a daycare or school.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The purpose of this project was to identify effective practices of congregations in the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church where cultures of intentional connection fostered a unified ministry between their church and its daycare and/or school. The literature review will begin with biblical and theological foundations relating to education. Next, the focus will shift to the historical and missional aspects of Christian education. Historical sources tell the story of the emergence of systematic, organized education within the church. Different veins have emerged that will allow us to look at the evolution of the Sunday School movement, the emergence of day care centers and weekday primary education offered through congregations. The review will conclude with an engagement of literature related to institutional alignment, and these sources will include both secular and religious materials.

#### **Biblical Foundations**

Proper instruction is paramount to systems of faith. Without it, perversions—even miniscule deviations, shift some of the core beliefs or teachings. The early stories of the Old Testament reveal proper teaching for the Israelites. The New Testament highlights the extent to which the early Church relied on proper instruction to lead the faithful. Even our modern systems rely on effective methods to accomplish the goal of quality education. This orthodoxy is foundational for faith systems and it relies heavily on proper instruction.

The Old Testament contains stories about God's revelation to humanity. The Israelites were the faithful tribes who identified God as the only deity and he showed his faithfulness to them through incredible acts. These miracles and interventions were recorded in scripture with the imperative for God's people to remember and teach these stories to successive generations. One of the core tenants of faith for the Jews centered around the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4 which states, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone." This central statement of faith defines religions beyond Judaism. Deuteronomy 6:5-9 continues, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." God explicitly gave the instruction for children to learn this valued teaching. Deuteronomy 11:18-21 repeats the commandment:

You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the Lord swore to your ancestors to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

Instilling these values to the children was important enough to prescribe certain measures:

[The scriptures] repeated directives that [had] already been made earlier. Israel must learn to keep the words of the commandments consistently in mind—to bind them as a sign to the hand, to teach them to the children, and to think upon them wherever and whenever it is practically possible. (*New Interpreter's Vol. II 373*)

Lessons through instruction in the home also pertained to commandments such as the Ten Commandments. One commentator makes this observation:

A further important aspect of the Deuteronomic teaching is evident in the injunction to teach ‘these words’, which must refer to the Ten Commandments, to children. The inference is clear that those who are addressed are regarded as lay citizens of Israel who will carry out such instruction in their homes. Such a practice reflects an important similarity between the teaching of Deuteronomy and the biblical wisdom tradition. (*New Interpreter's Vol. II 343*)

The importance of sustaining the Shema and Ten Commandments to successive generations of Israelites was paramount and taught by the parents. Jewish pedagogy began in childhood, but education continued beyond family through the form of rabbinical instruction. Historically, a Rabbi was, “One learned in the Mosaic law; hence a teacher of the law. In modern Judaism the rabbinate is an ordained office. Formerly, however, it was simply a title of respect, addressed to learned laymen, sometimes indicating a master as contrasted with servants, but more often a teacher as contrasted with his pupils” (*Interpreter's Dictionary, Vol. IV 3*). As the Jews relied on religious practice through the priestly class, they additionally relied on education in their faith through the Rabbis and scribes. These learned persons understood their role as educators.

The Rabbinical traditions are important for adherents to the Christian faith because they served as foundations for the models and behaviors of the first-century disciples. Since that time, Christians have utilized various instructional techniques to further the message and mission of Jesus. The Christian movement has its roots in the Jewish Rabbinical tradition as Jesus called apostles to follow Him. They referred to him as “Rabbi,” which noted their place as students under a teacher. They continued this tradition after the resurrection of Jesus and so established a continuance of teaching about the message and mission of Jesus.

Leaders can lead only when people are willing to follow them. Prophets had adherents. Rabbis had students. This is noted throughout scripture in that, “we read of disciples of Moses (John 9:28); of the Pharisees (Matthew 22:16; Mark 2:18); and perhaps of Paul (Acts 9:25)” (Richardson 845). The propagation of any movement happens when a new generation successfully receives the core of its particular message. Jesus instructed his disciples with the expectation that they, and all other Christians after them, would transmit the gospel so as to fulfill the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. It is here that he commanded them to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” Not only did Jesus model this way of teaching, but he commanded the disciples to continue with this work and gave them authority as well. Clarity can come to the Christian imperative to teach as we look more closely at words used to describe adherents of Jesus: Apostles and Disciples.

Many trace the office of the apostle back to the Jewish Shaliah tradition. This institution was more of a legal ambassador for an individual. Therefore, this office holds certain duties and obligations. Not all were convinced of the Christian roots to this type of servant but, “While earlier scholars had suggested association between the Christian apostle and the Shaliah institution of Judaism, the idea has recently received widespread acceptance” (Richardson 33). Sometimes the connotation of an apostle relates to an official messenger. When looking at this office through the lens of Christian practice, however, one can argue that, “for Jesus, apostleship, whether of himself or of his disciples, is a purely religious commission to carry out the purpose of God for man’s salvation, and it is a lifelong authorization, given once for all” (Richardson 171). Whether looking at this office through the lens of the Shaliah tradition or noting the work of an apostle as a messenger, it is evident that the role of the apostle is one of an evangelist—in its primitive sense. Through their calling, equipping and deployment, their message attempted to reach a new generation of believers. As scripture reveals through the book of Acts, the apostles were ultimately effective in their task.

Jesus intended the Twelve to be adherents that would one day become official teachers and messengers of his movement. Clearly, Jesus treated them as any other Rabbi would treat his followers:

Jesus disciplined his followers in the fashion of a typical first-century itinerant teacher of Judaism. Not in synagogue classrooms but on hillsides, in fields, and in remote locations this Galilean carpenter’s son clustered many pupils about

him. Jesus was articulate, and he drew much of his rich material from the

Hebrew Scriptures and from rabbinic traditions familiar in his day. (Wilson 40)

Noting his love, nurture and instruction of the Twelve, one of the significant developments rests on Jesus' instruction that would lead the disciples not to just model the life that he desired of them, but to send them forth to bring the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus deviated from the traditional rabbinical courtship in an effort to establish the expansion of His mission through evangelism. Typically, a student desiring instruction would approach a rabbi and communicate an interest in following him. The rabbi would then agree to the request or decline such offer. "If a rabbi ultimately agreed to a would-be-disciple's request, and allowed him to become a disciple, the disciple-to-be agreed to totally submit to the rabbi's authority in all areas of interpreting the Scriptures for his life" ("Being a First Century Disciple" Greenwold). Jesus altered the protocol as he gathered His disciples. He did not wait for others to find him. He approached those that would ultimately be part of the Twelve. For example, in John 15:16 he said, "You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." Jesus called twelve men to teach them and shape them. As pupils, they received instruction and then fulfilled their charge to take a message to the world so that it would bear good fruits. This work happened with John the Baptist humbly allowing some of his own disciples to become Jesus' disciples, allowing the Holy Spirit to continue empowering the apostles and ultimately ushering the advent of the Kingdom of God. There are other instances of Jesus being approached in texts such as Matthew 8:18-22:

Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. A scribe then approached and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Another of his disciples said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.

Some turned away from the offer—even if they initiated this traditional Rabbinical courtship. Jesus was interested in instructing those that demonstrated a persevering faith. This came primarily through instruction that would remain as one of the Church’s primary acts to continue its formation of Christian disciples. The early church prioritized teaching along with evangelism and service. Acts 2:42 tells us that the first Christians, “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” These first century Christians would come to model the Christian faith where adherents of Jesus engaged in instruction. Jesus effectively modeled this pedagogical method through Rabbinical instruction as evidenced in Acts 4:13: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus.” This act of education persists as the work of the church continues in this tradition.

### **Theological Foundations**

Jewish and Christian scriptures set precedents and theological connotations that speak of the necessity of instruction within a religious community. What can we make of entities such as churches and their various programmatic attempts to proclaim the

message of Jesus in new and relevant ways? Many congregations have created programs and mission projects to sustain the message of Christ. In addition, they have created schools for the same purpose. Daycare and school ministries are operated by congregations with the anticipation that people may be introduced to the grace of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they share the message of Jesus and shape Christian behavior in its participants.

Occasionally, a school that was established by a local congregation may experience a missional separation after its creation. Distancing could occur through the secularization of a school, tension between the church and school leadership, conflict regarding usage and utilization of space, or simply evil at work in a church or its school. An analysis of the biblical account of the Creation, Fall and restoration through atonement may enlighten us as to how an entity like a church school can find restoration through the work of reconciliation and a unified mission.

### The Fall

Creation brought order out of chaos. Out of this order came heavenly realms and varied terrain. It provided the beauty and majesty to the depths of the sea. It also gave the variety and abundance of life—all of which was perfectly ordered. Chaos was not contained for long. Disobedience through temptation resulted from an encounter with one of God's creations—the serpent. The serpent's craftily shaped questions distorted the dictates of God. "The serpent's question contains, it is true, a complete distortion, for God never said man should eat from no tree in the garden; but in just this way the serpent drew the woman into conversation" (von Rad 88). This conversation led to both the

partaking of the forbidden fruit and the gaining of knowledge as well as ejection from the Garden of Eden. As noted in Genesis 3, the man and woman disobeyed God by eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. After eating it, Genesis 3:22-24 tells us:

Then the Lord God said, “See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

Humanity was part of the ordering in creation, but then through a series of missteps, found themselves ejected from the Garden of Eden. The Christian tradition has referred to these narratives as the Creation and Fall. These in turn set the stage for the introduction of redemption, which Christians understand as coming from Jesus, the Christ from Nazareth.

Is there a pattern between this biblical account of the fall of humanity and the persistent repetitions of problems in the church? History and theology would allow for the understanding that there is a parallel between the Fall of humanity with the dysfunctions of the institutional church. Whether looking at the spiritual fall of humanity or the institutional failings of the church, these things go contrary to the hopes and will of God. “In God’s garden, as God wills it, there is mutuality and equity. In God’s garden now, permeated by distrust, there is control and distortion. But that distortion is not for one moment accepted as the will of the Gardener” (Brueggemann 51). God does not will

these things to happen, but rather offers hope through continued relation and eventual redemption. For after proclaiming their ejection from the Garden of Eden, “God remains in relationship with the creatures involved, connected and concerned enough to identify further what has just happened” (*New Interpreter’s Vol. I* 362). An understanding of this relationship also applies to the social and institutional structures of humanity, for society, government and other institutional constructs are of human design. If the human element is present, the human nature—along with its original sin—persists.

The human condition and its religious constructs in the Judeo-Christian tradition understand that, “the message of the Fall, as of original sin, is that a sinful world is not of God’s design, that it has come to be through human failing, and that through this fact all human beings are born into a sinful world and, failing the grace of God, themselves become sinners” (Richardson 209). These sins lead us into the act of distancing ourselves and even our institutions from God. We allow sin to corrupt not only ourselves, but also our human creations such as society, institutions and programs.

### The Fruit of Disobedience is Rebellion

The sin of humanity not only traces its roots to Adam but its rebellious nature as well. Augustine of Hippo addressed this to the early church in *The City of God* as he wrote about the nature of a fulfilled life and one that was discontent:

Since the happiness of all angels consists in union with God, it follows that their unhappiness must be found in the very contrary, that is, in not adhering to God.

To the question: ‘Why are the good angels happy?’ the right answer is: ‘Because they adhere to God.’ To the question: ‘Why are the bad angels unhappy?’ the

answer is: 'Because they do not adhere to God.' In fact there is no other good which can make any rational or intellectual creature happy except God.

(Augustine 246)

Augustine was not alone in recognizing that rebellion happens on both individual and institutional levels. This tendency continues to plague souls and organizational units.

Congregational narratives can parallel the story of Creation and the Fall. A school can deviate from the message and mission of the church that created it. Daycare centers, preschools and primary schools are created by congregations with the notion that they will deliver elements of Christianity to the families in their weekday early childhood education program. Yet, as these offerings grow, they can also grow apart. Something created by the congregation can experience a fall when the mission of the child-care or educational center deviates from the core mission and message of the congregation. The creation account in Genesis is the "god-delusion" that speaks of, "human beings who would rather be creators themselves than creatures and who, through this infringement by the image of God, transform devoted love into the caricature of love: lying to the Creator" (Feldmeier and Spieckermann 309). One of the most graphic understandings of this happens when Satan is ejected from heaven. Jesus acknowledges this in a section of Luke when the seventy that were deployed returned with stories of both rejection and success. Jesus proclaims woe on the unrepentant cities when he states in Luke 10:13-17:

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But at the judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and

Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades.”

“Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.”

If the Christian tradition of God’s chief angel, Lucifer, holds any truth about the temptation of power and rebellion, then the same could hold true for rebellion against the mission of a congregation whose desire is to make disciples of Jesus. When the mission of the church is trumped by the ambition of a school’s program as a distancing entity from the church, then rebellion’s ugly narrative is told once again. This course could ultimately lead to a call to repentance or the more jarring action of closure or mass ejections of critical personnel.

Much of this rests on the fact that human freedom coupled with human ambition sometimes leads to unfortunate results. In our case, it is the separation of church and school. Pastors are forced to “deal with the problem of human autonomy and the ways in which such autonomy leads to alienation and death, for self and for others. The Genesis narrative understands that autonomous thinking, albeit theological autonomous thinking as embodied in the serpent, dares to assert that God is a paper tiger, an idle threat, a literary hypothesis” (Brueggemann 52). This alienation and death are problems that the pastor must engage to ensure that autonomy is respected while maintaining integrity to the yoking of a church with its early childhood program.

An entity within an organization can become distanced, if not contentious, with its host. This can happen when certain elements sever the missional relationship between a church and its school. Perhaps we can identify that these elements are present in the life of the congregation and its school. Christian leaders attempt to correct those sinful elements of rebellion and discord if a ministry area has gone astray. In our context, this leadership can happen at the level of the pastor, a head of school or member on a board that feels the conviction that spiritual alignment is necessary. Apathy, arrogance or greed can inhabit the hearts of different Christian leaders. In these instances, repentance and realignment lead to faithful restoration of an early childhood education program in a church. Even in the most radical of instances, restoration is possible. One of the most graphic examples from the Bible happens through the conversion of Saul. He, who at one time was distanced and hostile towards the church, engaged Jesus and turned his life into one of serving Christ and the church.

### Atonement

While this discussion is focused on a congregation in relation to its daycare or early childhood education ministry, there are also parallels to human souls. There are particular liberties exercised to note that institutions, like people, are susceptible to flaws. The extent of the flaw in an institution, such as a church and even its school, can resonate with Paul's charge against humanity in Romans 3:21-23 which states, "But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Whereas

the salvation of humanity comes through the cross, any church seeking reconciliation with its programs comes through the cross by understanding that all of their efforts are for Jesus. All activities are aligned to fulfill the purposes of God.

Churches have deviated and will continue to deviate from God's purposes, as will their programs including their daycares and schools. What is important is that in the atonement, we are reminded of the price paid by God so that we may stand justified in faith. "The cross of 2,000 years ago exposes what kinds of people we are" (Guthrie 256). We are, individually and corporately, worldly vessels that fall short of God's glory. God offers opportunities for redemption. It is through the cross of Christ that the sins of humanity are addressed and forgiven. This is exactly why Paul refers to Jesus as the "second Adam." Restoration happens through Christ and it can occur in the life of an individual. In the ritual of Holy Communion, United Methodists affirm Paul's statement from Romans 5:8 with an absolution of sin with the celebrant stating, "Hear the good news: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God's love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!" (*United Methodist Hymnal* 12). This death offered a victory to our souls and for the future of the world. Although there are multiple theories of the atonement, the *Christus Victor* theory offers hope to congregations who have a daycare or school that has fallen away from its ultimate mission: to make disciples for Jesus Christ. If Jesus can victoriously overcome sin and death, then answering the prayerful desires of a congregation to bring a program back into the fold is possible. It could also happen with a Head of School or Director of the daycare who appeals to the Lord for fruitful ministry to flourish in the classrooms and staff under their direction. It may come as a Kingdom victory for the preschool board that realizes that, although the

business model is sound, the mission of the program is not aligned with the mission of the church in which the program operates. Pastors can have an epiphany that their apathy towards the school neglects the needs of families who are in desperate need of their pastoral care. Reconciliation is needed in many levels of leadership when the programs fall out of harmony. The act of justification is possible because God offered a way through Jesus. One's acceptance of God's grace in Christ allows for a deep change in that person to happen. Similarly, the desire for God's grace to move through a program in Christ's Bride, the Church is driven by an individual or group making the appeal to God for reconciliation. This act can lead a program into great change.

In no way can we act or operate alone in this endeavor. God is the primary mover and we are the respondents. Christians note that, "creation is the road to the covenant, its eternal power and external basis, because for its fulfillment the latter depends wholly on the fact that the creature is in no position to act alone as the partner of God, that it is thrown back wholly and utterly on the care and intercession of God Himself" (Barth 150-151). Through God's atonement on the cross, humanity is offered reconciliation and redemption. This means that re-creation is possible through the justification of Christ's cross.

### Redemption

People and their institutions operate in a world that offers differing paths of existence. For some, individuals follow a worldly path that can lead to brokenness and possible destruction. Another one, revealed by Jesus, leads to wholeness and life. How these paths are traveled is determined by values, habits and actions. Those acts that lead to brokenness and possible destruction can intersect with Christ's offering to change

course and find redemption. As John Wesley states in his sermon, *God's Love for Fallen Man*, "Unless all the partakers of human nature had received that deadly wound in Adam it would not have been needful for the Son of God to take our nature upon him" (Wesley 477). Our opportunities to effectively minister are restored as Jesus takes on our sin. This concept, known as the *Felix Culpa* was addressed in Augustine's *Enchiridion* when he noted, "For He judged it better to bring good out of evil, than not to permit any evil to exist" (Augustine 33). One of the great theological mediums that Wesley worked with was grace and its applications to persons who had drifted from the church. This same concept could apply to the programs and ministries of a congregation.

Certain vessels within a church exist to introduce outliers of the Christian faith to the grace of Jesus Christ. One of the most effective vessels can be the daycare or preschool ministry that affords families a place to receive childcare and early childhood education. Faithful congregations will note the need of families with small children and structure their infant and early childhood ministries in a manner that is philosophically and theologically consistent with the church. A congregation's daycare or school ministry should reflect the mission of the church—which is to create disciples for Jesus Christ.

As parents of newborns are oftentimes apathetic towards Christianity, they gravitate towards the church seeking childcare. The faithful church sees this engagement as not only caring for a child, but also caring for a family. In essence, it is a conduit to allow an entire family to engage the grace of God.

Realizing that these families are recipients of God's grace, Karl Barth notes of God's desire to partner with them in salvation that, "God creates, preserves and overrules man for this prior end and with this prior purpose, that there may be a being distinct from

Himself ordained for salvation, for perfect being, for participation in His own being, because as the One who loves in freedom He has determined to exercise redemptive grace—and that there may be an object of this His redemptive grace—a partner to receive it” (151). A faithful congregation has the intent to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all generations with the expectation that it will reach the next generation.

These partnerships of God’s grace intersecting with apathetic families happen when the administration of the daycare or school ministry is in harmony with the leadership of the congregation. Jesus stated that, “If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand” (Mark 3:24-25). In churches, we have multiple kingdoms at work and sometimes toiling in tension with each other. A congregation may have effectiveness in introducing children to Jesus, while its weekday school may demonstrate a level of success in educating children.

The tension over space, finances, staffing and mission may contribute to the repelling of schools by their congregational hosts. Conflict and tension can have healthy outcomes just as the divide between a church and its school can reconcile through unified vision. This is how God viewed a fallen creation in need of redemption. Christians engage in this work so that in “our identity as Christian people, we also participate in a wider world of coalitions with others seeking to understand each other and working toward mending creation” (Seymour 283). Just as the bridge between God and sinful humanity utilized Jesus, so a church and its distanced school program can utilize Jesus to bridge the gap, heal the wound or close the distance.

### Second Adam

Concerning the resurrection of Christ, I Corinthians 15:22-23 says, “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.” If a program of a church has fallen away from the church, it is possible to re-align the mission of the program with the mission of the church, which is to make disciples for Jesus Christ. Paul furthers the thought in I Corinthians 15:45-49:

Thus it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

With Christ, a healing of the soul restores the initial intent of humanity. Through the Second Adam, we once again can breathe deep the breath of life. Just as breath is unseen but critical to life, forces are at work not only in the church, but also sustain it through seasons of trial.

### Cooperation or Contention

Unseen forces are an understood element in a variety of disciplines. Science embraces gravity, atoms and magnetism just as religion embraces spirit and mystery.

Within the church, evident and empirical markers identify a ministry's effectiveness and fruitfulness. The existence of joy and peace are a precious commodity and seemingly natural by-product of the Christian life lived in community. What happens when the unseen forces within the church are forces of mistrust, misaligned purpose and territorial disputes? These factors become evident in many different ways.

At times, these unseen factors are evident in a congregation that has created a school ministry such as a weekday nursery, preschool or grade school. Two substantial entities can many times work in harmonious conjunction with one another. At other times, they are at odds. Magnets will either attract each other or repel each other. Ministries, like magnets may align to attract each other, and stick together solidly. If action is taken and the magnets become repositioned, they will repel each other. While the Bible does not address the science of magnetism, it most certainly demonstrates forces that work in cooperation when aligned. Paul is an individual who not only shaped the Christian church but also had interactions with many of the early leaders of the Church. Some of these individuals might help us to understand how cooperation can help the church and how contention can divide the church.

According to Acts, Paul shaped the mission of the church by responding to the call of Jesus and taking the Gospel to the Jews and Gentiles. He did this work with effective yoking with Christians such as Silas, Barnabas and Timothy. In his journeys with these individuals, they had many great accomplishments for Christianity. There was also contention with Paul's ministry companions as seen in Acts 15:39-40a, "They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left." Although this separation occurred, Paul still had a

successful pairing with Silas, and Barnabas with Mark. The fruits of the disciples' labors are evident throughout the Epistles and the book of Acts.

In addition to these narratives of cooperative ministry, there are references to persons working in adversarial relationships that actually erode the effectiveness of ministry. Again, Paul's letters to the first century congregations reveal some of the tensions that existed in the infancy of the Church's ministry. Those who work in opposition to the purpose of God's grace pit themselves against God's will. Augustine in his writing, *The City of God*, noted that:

In Scripture, those who oppose God's rule, not by nature but by sin, are called His enemies. They can do no damage to Him, but only to themselves; their enmity is not a power to harm, but merely [an inclination] to oppose Him. In any case, God is immutable and completely invulnerable. Hence, the malice by which His so-called enemies oppose God is not a menace to Him, but merely bad for themselves—an evil because what is good in their nature is wounded. It is not their nature, but the wound in their nature, that is opposed to God—as evil is opposed to good. (Augustine 249)

In this tension between good and evil, oftentimes blurring of the lines occur for those that do good sometimes do bad and, likewise, those that do bad sometimes do good.

Eventually, the nature of Christ is instilled in His followers and institutions. This was carried out from the initial work of the apostles onto others that were called not by Jesus in the beginning of his ministry, but much later. As the Church strives to address and correct the woes of the world, we can assess Paul's relationships as markers for healthy programmatic ministry.

Paul and Silas—Ideal State of the Ministry Partnerships

Just about every church, and every pastor, longs for a ministry without trial or tribulation. However, this is completely unrealistic. Every now and then, a pairing works. Pastors are paired with congregations and congregations are able to create schools that foster a ministerial relation such as that which Paul had with Silas.

This could just as easily have been seen as Barnabas, Timothy or a multitude of others toiled with Paul. The essence of this argument is that there are functional, fruitful and faithful pairings that occur with a respectable frequency. The congregations that are able to minister with fruitful and faithful schools are simply reflecting the apostolic nature of Paul as he tarried with ministry partners throughout his life.

Silas experienced some incredible things in his journeys with Paul. He met Lydia, had a possessed woman follow him and eventually saw her deliverance from demonic power. Through this act, the slave girl's master had Paul and Silas arrested and thrown into prison. Before their imprisonment, they were stripped and flogged for simply administering the power of the Holy Spirit. A great earthquake opened the doors of their prison, and when seeing that a breach was possible, the guard attempted suicide. Paul coaxed the guard and assured him that all were still there. This powerful testimony gave credence to the integrity of the early Christians. According to most accounts, Silas moved from ministry with Paul around the year 52 (Comay and Brownrigg 413). Not coincidentally, Silas continued in ministry with many others including Peter.

This healthy pairing is reminder that although ministry was at times difficult, certain ministerial partnerships flourished in the early years of Christianity. Paul and

Silas were effective in their work together despite the trials that they encountered. As they were spiritually yoked, they accomplished much for the Lord's Kingdom. They worked, suffered and prevailed in the end. The church is no different in that there are a variety of partners, challenges and triumphs that come from the opportunities of ministry.

### Paul and Philemon—Strained States of Ministry Relationship

Paul was able to minister with individuals in tension as evidenced in his dealings with Philemon over Onesimus. Paul was firm in resolve, yet humble in his appeal balancing the equitable treatment of a fellow believer with the reality of slavery in his day. His appeal to Philemon concludes with this:

So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you. (Philemon 1:17-22)

Even in tension, Paul still wishes to reside with his Christian brother, Philemon, when he comes to visit. He tells him to keep the guest room ready because next time he comes through town, he is planning to visit with the Christian believers in the home—whether the host or slave. This is not by coincidence, but more by design. Paul knows that a relationship where one enters into guarded territory such as one's home is more likely to

have certain liberties afforded to them. Among these are opportunities for open communication, forgiveness and the chance to shape reconciliation. A church presents a variety of leadership opportunities, but a notable work happens when leaders effectively operate together even in tension.

### Paul and Hymenaeus—Contentious States of Ministry

Paul typically lauds the efforts of partners in ministry, yet in contentious relationships, Paul also chastises those whose work and behavior are contrary to the work of Christ in the early Church. Evil and discord are but a few of many unfortunate by-products of the Fall. Paul was provoked by the likes of Hymenaeus along with co-conspirators Philetus and Alexander. Hymenaeus was a “heretical teacher within the Christian community, probably at Ephesus or Troas, on the coast of Asia Minor, whom Paul found it necessary to excommunicate, as his teaching represented a real threat to the faith and loyalty of the local congregation” (Comay and Browning 144). Paul wasted no time in outing the destructiveness of the likes of Hymenaeus and Alexander while writing the Pastoral Epistles. In I Timothy 1:18-20, he writes:

I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith; among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Paul does not mention Alexander in the latter letter, but names another antagonistic Christian named Philetus. Paul never reveals why he replaces Alexander with Philetus. What is known is that Paul once again evokes the name of Hymenaeus as if he were an adversary. He warns the early church in 2 Timothy:

Avoid profane chatter, for it will lead people into more and more impiety, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth by claiming that the resurrection has already taken place. They are upsetting the faith of some. But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness."

Heresy has traditionally associated deviance in belief with the ostracism of an individual. However, "the Greek word *hairesis* (literally 'choice' or 'thing chosen') was used by Paul in a negative sense to mean a divisive faction" (Richardson and Bowden 248). The heretical activities of these early converts to Christianity demonstrate how quickly a mission or message can become distorted. It also exposes the unseen forces of evil repelling ministerial efforts from one another.

Paul continues this thought of contention in I Timothy as he reveals the poles between good and evil. These different points of existence expose the flaw of Adam as Rudolph Bultmann notes, "However, Adam's fall, especially its cosmic significance at first plays no role in ancient Christian literature; only in I Tim. 2:14 is there a hint of it. But when Col. 1:20 nevertheless characterizes the work of Christ as 'reconciling all things to himself' and Eph. 1:10 calls it 'uniting all things in him,' that presupposes that

prior to Christ the world had fallen into disorder and contention” (Bultmann 149). In the face of great controversy, the work of God can happen when God’s disciples seek to fulfill Kingdom purposes. Affirming that God wishes to bring unity to the work of his laborers, those disciples must understand character flaws such as pride and ego that undermine God’s desire.

Hymenaeus and those who behave in his manner do great damage to the church because of their unfortunate traits. His are notable because of the frequency of Paul’s warnings about his destructiveness. The sin of arrogance plagues even those institutions founded on holiness. The pride of pastors has led to the fall of healthy congregations and the pride of school directors and administrators has done the same. Understandably, the disconnection between churches and schools can come as a result of a leader’s ego or arrogance. Barth noted this character flaw in theological terms when he stated, “From the very first man as such has continual illusions about himself. He wants always to be more than a creature. He does not want merely to be under the universal lordship of God” (Barth 155). In this fallen state, evil prevails and the work of a congregation and Christ’s church are severely undermined.

This is where the work of evil is so prevalent because as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:12-14, “And what I do I will also continue to do, in order to deny an opportunity to those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about. For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.” Just as the darkness of evil can look radiant in light, so too can ministries of a church work in a contentious relationship against the congregation. This again goes

back to the nature of a fallen world as a result of the Fall. In our original nature, we were good. We are corrupted because of the Fall and are in need of redemption. St. Augustine, in The City of God stated, “It follows, therefore, that what makes the wicked angels differ from the good ones is not their nature but a perversion or imperfection” (Augustine 247). Angels, persons and institutions can have this perverse influence that corrupts them from the ultimate desire of God. This is why a church’s focus on mission must remain as a guide to align all of its ministries.

The school and Church’s unified mission must have a clear purpose. It cannot happen to increase territory or influence outside of the purposes of Christ. “But we go into the desert to meet, not God, but the Devil. In the desert we are stripped of all our support systems and distractions so that, naked and vulnerable, we face the demons without and within. There in the desert alone, we look squarely into the face of the seductive powers of greed and prestige. Satan tempts us with wild fantasies of status and influence. We feel the inner pull of these fantasies because deep down we really do want to be the most important, the most respected, the most honored” (Foster 223). In many ways, pastors, preschool directors, school principals and other administrators act like Hymenaeus. God calls those who have drifted apart through rebellion to repentance, humility and restoration.

Hymenaeus became an agent of the opposition of the Church because of some element of spiritual corruption. He did not know it because he was involved in his own mission and not that which stemmed from Paul and the Apostles. Like Hymenaeus, there are a multitude of initiatives and programs that stem from the congregation, are nurtured by mature Christians and eventually morph into something other than the intended end

product. What started off grounded in Christ ended up working contrary to the nature and mission of Christ's church.

### Faithfully Yoked Through Mission

The concept of yoking is evident in the scriptures. The roots of our interrelatedness can be traced back to our Christian understanding of the Trinity. Christians see a perfect example of harmony in the three persons of the Godhead working for a unified mission. This understanding of the three persons of the Trinity and their unique contributions evolved over time as did the vessel that would transmit the message and carry the mission of God. This vessel, also referred to the Bride, is the Church. Within the church are numerous congregations that seek to proclaim this message and carry out this mission to their local communities and beyond. This creates ministries that seek to engage individuals and groups with the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Looking to the unification of the three persons of the Trinity, we can have a better understanding of the unity within different components of a congregation. They do not work against one another, but together in beautiful harmony.

This hope for faithful yoking yields a fruit of infinite value, for God desires all aspects of the world to find redemption through Christ. When the impediments to this redemption originate in the Church, they are not only counterproductive, but also disappointing to God. God desires to continue working towards a redeemed creation. As Barth said, "between Creator and creature in the sense of biblical theology there is a connexion [sic] which makes it impossible for the Creator to leave His work to itself, and makes immediately necessary the reality and knowledge of a second action of the Creator

following the first, i.e., His action in the sense of the concept of providence” (Barth 155). We may see the tension of ministry through the historical lens of biblical understanding, but the lens of the future facilitates better understanding of how faithful servanthood serves God’s providence.

These servants will engage in collaborative ministry together; sometimes, however, circumstances call for separation. Even in the tension of controversy, is the people involved would be wise to prayerfully discern the will of God and see where the Spirit leads rather than to continue on egocentric agendas that defy God the opportunity to redeem Creation.

The theological underpinnings of a church that creates a new outreach ministry such as a daycare or school are going to encounter certain risks. These risks include distancing from the congregation, conflicting egos of church leaders, idolatry and apathy towards the overall mission of the church. Grounded in the idea that the world was impacted by Original Sin, redemption was offered through Christ’s atonement for sins. Included in his wondrous work is the salvation of humanity and the healing of its institutions.

There is hope for those programs that have distanced themselves from one another as repentance is in order, leadership is crucial and formation of a common mission is imperative. Looking at the doctrine of the *Felix Culpa* and understanding that God can take mistakes and turn them into something good is applicable to these congregations where separation has occurred. A congregation can clarify roles and initiate a new chapter of collaborative ministry with their church and school working in harmony together. The unseen forces that can either repel or draw near are understood in the work

of good and evil. With vigilance, evil can be kept at bay and goodwill acts as the force that draws the two together. Good will draw all programs and outreach ministries together in the hope that the unseen Spirit of God is seen through a fruitful ministry of a congregation. In this spirit, a theological and scriptural understanding of the relationships of a congregation with its school will allow for a great conversation to emerge that defines roles, boundaries and expectations. The interconnectedness of the Trinity is a great model for the church. Noting how three persons work together in perfect harmony, the church can have significant parts operating as a whole. Just as we are asked as Christians to model the life of Jesus, the church can model the harmonious nature of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

#### Foundations of Religious Education and Children

Christianity has a rich history in the realm of education. Educators know that the development of a child is more than just physical growth. With the realization that maturation in children occurs in multiple ways, the spiritual development of children received attention noting that, “the child learns through people—whether they talk about God or not, whether they express love for God or not” (Cully 62). Instruction in the Bible occurs with persons such as the apostles—adults who were the principal recipients of instruction. This understanding of Christian education for adults is further evidenced as seen through the monastic communities of the Middle Ages to the creation of universities. The Renaissance and emergence of technologies such as the printing press furthered the extent and scope of education—which expanded the range of education to include younger children.

Roman Catholic teaching was prevalent through much of this era, but a large part of the teaching focused on indoctrinating children into Roman Catholicism. This system of indoctrination would instill members of their communion with the knowledge of their faith system. Jesuits adhered to the philosophy, “Give me a child until he is seven, and he will remain a Catholic for the rest of his life” (Reed and Provost 205). These methodologies worked so well for the Roman Catholic Church that the Protestant denominations took note.

Rearing a child through religious education was not something monopolized by the Roman Catholic Church. Any group that wishes to instill their values or knowledge to successive generations must employ such strategies. This was reflected in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by one of the shaping forces of education, John Amos Comenius:

If, then each man have the welfare of his own children at heart, and if that of the human race be dear to the civil and ecclesiastical guardians of human affairs, let them hasten to make provision for the timely planting, pruning and watering of the plants of heaven, that these may be prudently formed to make prosperous advances in letters, virtue and piety. (Comenius 212)

The Protestant movement noted the value in sustaining faith traditions through teachings. An emphasis on children was impacting the methodologies of education by finding ways to reach younger students.

A broader notion of education was emerging. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Horace Bushnell’s work, *Christian Nurture* reshaped the conversation of Christian education and shifted a larger emphasis to the shaping of younger children. In this work, he clearly states: “What is the true idea of Christian education? –I answer in the following

proposition, which it will be the aim of my argument to establish, viz: *That the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise*” (Bushnell 10). The nurture of a child was to instill the values through teaching and modeling beginning with the home. Education was beginning earlier with the anticipation that the child would receive education through learning the fundamentals of the family’s Christian faith. The primary intent was to make Christians and the byproduct was education.

As Bushnell was emphasizing the nurture of children as an avenue for education, two significant institutions were emerging in America—the Sunday School and the common public school. Robert Raikes was the principle force of the Sunday school movement, but with many others, this educational force swept through churches that valued education for their children. “In addition, as Bushnell was bringing out his first version of *Views of Christian Nurture* in 1847, Horace Mann in Massachusetts was championing the cause of universal public education, separate from sectarian education” (Bushnell xxvii). The institution of education was evolving in society through the home, church and now various iterations of the school. The nature of educating children was emerging so communities, families and congregations engaged new methods to educate their students.

Religious education emerged throughout the United States in a variety of ways. Much of this included the child at an increasingly younger age. Once again, Bushnell shaped the conversation when he stated, “Let every Christian father and mother understand, when their child is three years old, that they have done more than half of all they will ever do for his character” (Bushnell 248-249). The church did its part to shape character, virtue and piety through the education conduits of its day. Horace Bushnell

may have created a “focus on the organic connection of faith between family and children,” but religious leaders such as John Wesley created “focus on education as a means to save souls [and this] became foundational to his approach to childhood education” (Maddix 318). A certain tolerance existed with regard to religious aspects within public education. However, a growing movement proposed challenging sectarian influences and embracing education without religion.

Much of this relates to the interpretation of the United States Constitution and its language from what has become known as the “Establishment Clause” from the First Amendment. It states:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The challenge to religion’s place in the public sector changed with the passage of this amendment in 1789 and was debated until 1971 when the United States Supreme Court made a ruling in *Lemon vs. Kurtzman* which effectively separated religion from the public education system. It “remains the leading case on the Establishment Clause and continues to guide the courts in deciding when a school district’s action violates the First Amendment” ([centerforpubliceducation.org](http://centerforpubliceducation.org)). This was a significant shift for discourse regarding the role of religion in public schools.

Secular forces have commanded a presence in the ebb and flow of where faith fits with education, but there are still institutions such as churches that wish to offer education with religious emphases of various degrees. Many of these initiatives have

developed into the educational landscape today where private, religious schools exist in addition to the public school system.

### Emergent Veins of Religious Education

Over the past century, the variety of religious education has broadened to encompass everything from short-term introductions to the scriptures through programs such as Vacation Bible Schools to full-time, weekday schools that operate as early childhood education centers in churches. These programs and offerings meet a host of needs—but one thing that these programs have in common is that they are designed to engage families with children expecting to offer those children and families the message of Jesus. In essence, the family unit is sharing the rearing of the family's children with the Church.

The traditional task of the family was to raise its children but, with a changing society, the church offerings adapted to meet the needs of these families. Families left their children in the care of the church for longer periods of time thus allowing the church more time to shape the child. This presented an opportunity to shape the family. The church has a history of finding ways to take Christianity to others as noted by Mary Jane Hamig who writes, “Church history teaches about medieval missionary monks going to the unchurched, sixteenth-century reformers seeking to gather and instruct those who, though nominally Christian, had barely an idea of what that meant, and nineteenth-century missionaries travelling to non-European parts of the world, to name a few.” (Haemig 313). Congregations that formed preschool and daycare ministries placed themselves firmly in the evangelical tradition of the church by creating modern manifestations that embodied the church's ancient practices of taking its mission to the

unchurched. Through these acts newcomers are introduced to Jesus and encouraged to join the Church in its mission. Even with the creation of these programs for families, changes happened over time.

Over the past several decades, Christian schools and daycares have changed substantially. “Until well into the twentieth century, child care was considered the responsibility of parents or the extended family. Only the most unfortunate and indigent children or the children of immigrants became wards of the state and/or were given to the care of a nonfamily agency, such as an orphanage or settlement house” (Reed and Provost 366). Emerging societal patterns challenged institutions such as the church to expand their understanding of providing new services to those in need. Even if they are not aware of a lacking religious foundation in the family, the church takes it upon itself to instill Christianity in the child because “religious educators have a variety of approaches to guide people in reflecting on religious meanings” (Foster 525). These approaches can help a child to grow in areas such as kindness, forgiveness and love while using religious stories to undergird the significance of such development. Families disengaged from the church have immersed their children into religion because of the shifting nature of modern culture.

This shift happened as more parents entered the workforce to meet increasing economic demands. The result of this shift in the economic burdens was the necessity to have both parents working outside of the home. “The shift in attitudes is only one element in the growth of churches providing day-care services and/or kindergartens. Since the 1950’s more and more public school kindergartens are available to build children’s basic educational needs” (Reed and Provost 366). Professional demands on

parents intersected with opportunity as many congregations recognized the ability to minister to families in this area of need. “Various factors have motivated churches to provide day-care and kindergarten ministries. One impetus has been to provide a ministry to families that need it or want it. Here, children are shaped not only by the actual curriculum, which prescribes the material to be conveyed. In addition to the official educational theory, the mere necessity of co-existence and cooperation in school has a shaping function” (Schirmacher 111). Another is that churches have become aware of the often-unused resources and high investment in their educational buildings and space. “Children of the church who are enrolled in the center or kindergarten are further integrated into church as a way of life” (Reed and Provost 366). Pairing the needs of community families with the offerings of the church has not only provided a much-needed service to the families, but it has also provided another channel by which the congregation can share the message of Jesus. This message begins with children, and if designed correctly, can minister to the entire family.

These nursery programs, daycare offerings and preschool ministries have laid foundations for other congregations to establish full-time grade schools on their church campuses. These may go from grade school to high school depending on the scope of the school’s capacity or desired focus. “Private schools have been a part of Christian education throughout its history. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church has long maintained parish schools in the United States. Since 1950, however, private schools have grown significantly, many located in churches and identified as ‘Christian’ schools” (Reed and Provost 366). These Christian schools at their core seek to instill Christian values in an environment independent from the public education system. Their goal is to

provide education in addition to instill Christian principles. A report published by *Harper's* in 1986 noted that public schools were increasingly focusing on one end: to groom students for the workplace. Nicholas Wolterstorff notes that a panel of nine experts concluded, "What ails the schools...is not insufficient money or inadequate regulation but the goal that the schools set for the education they offer. The symposiasts [sic] suggested that the dominant goal of American schools today is to induct students into the job market" (Hauerwas and Westerhoff 4). The independence of Christian schools allows them to produce more than persons with a workplace readiness. They also can focus on the whole individual including the person's morality and soul.

The foundations of many private, Christian schools are based on principles of evangelism. While maintaining traditions of religious education within general education, not all schools have the kind of reputation that are fitting of the name "Christian." Some schools fell prey to temptations of "religious fundamentalism, right-wing politics, and the rejecting of the Supreme Court desegregation order by white racists. The curricula and character of these schools have been debated including whether or not the schools and their curricula are, in fact, Christian" (Reed and Provost 366). Even as these schools are peppered among a much larger sample of congregations that do education and ministry well, they do their share to tarnish the reputation of Christian education. Other factors can spoil fruitful ministry as well. These factors may mean that the congregation and its school develop a chill in relations or repulsion over misalignment of values. This is why an institutional analysis of these systems is important.

### Alignment

There is a temptation to relegate the matters of business and the world to areas separate from the Church. However, as the Church can benefit from certain principles drawn from the business world, it is fitting to note that certain elements of corporate effectiveness may apply to a Church's missional alignment. The Church does not hold a monopoly on ways to fulfill a mission. Multiple businesses and non-religious entities have incorporated elements of institutional alignment and intentional connection into their corporate cultures and business models.

Many congregations host daycares, preschools or grade schools. Some of these programs are reasonably successful in educating children. Others are reasonably successful in attracting families from the program to the life of the church. Some programs that do an excellent job at both. These programs are the examples of those that Jim Collins may consider worthy of moving from good programs to great programs. In his book, *Good to Great*, he presents several theories and narratives about corporate strategies to take a secular organization from an acceptable place to an exceptional place. Using the analogy of a bus on a trip, he notes that, "The executives who ignited the transformations from good to great did not first figure out where to drive the bus and then get people to take it there. No, they first got the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figured out where to drive it" (41). In the case of a congregation, a leader faces the challenge of matching the right people on the staff with the mission of the church. In the case of the daycare or preschool, sometimes the leader realizes that certain members of the staff are not in harmony with the mission. In these cases, the leaders of the church or the senior administrators, such as the Senior Pastor, are

faced with certain choices such as allowing the current culture to abide and exist in fruitlessness or make some bold decisions to facilitate change that benefits the Kingdom. In *Crucial Confrontations*, the authors present situations in which an organization's future is dependent on well-resolved confrontations. These circumstances are understandably necessary, yet tumultuous in a sense, because change does not happen without resistance. One should anticipate resistance when a change is proposed. It is likely that the resistance will increase as the focus fulfills the mission of the congregation and not simply the administrative order of the school or daycare. One of the propositions from this work is that resistance will happen when one starts to change the culture. They note that, "many organizations are just beginning to ask their employees to step up to a new level of initiative, teamwork, customer service and so on" (Patterson et al. 242). They further state that changing a culture requires clear communication. Pastors should be effective communicators with clear language as they engage this practice with great regularity and as they proclaim a message each week from their pulpit. The expectations communicated to senior leadership positions in a congregation's ministry areas are not exempt from such qualities. The authors claimed that, "with unclear expectations, you don't have the right to confront with individual violations" (242). This principle applies to daycares and preschools that have wandered from the congregation's mission. Clarity through communication allows for directors and workers to understand their role. "Only after you've clarified your new expectation do you have the right to begin having crucial confrontations with those who violate the standards" (243). These moments cannot occur if there is an aversion to conflict or a serious dysfunction in the congregation's system.

Patrick Lencioni describes how different dysfunctions become embodied in an organization. He states that a fear of conflict can keep an unfortunate reality perpetuated. If there is a manager or leader who is incapable of addressing the problem, it may persist until such time that it does even more damage. Healthy conflict allows for timely action to remedy the issue. Unfortunately for the church, we are in an environment that values peace and we often associate peace with an absence of conflict. Sometimes healthy conflict can bring organizations or institutions to a place of greater effective practice. Lencioni illustrates a corporate scenario involving staff members addressing and growing through professional impediments. One of the employees involved in a workplace incident says to one of her colleagues, "If we don't trust one another, then we aren't going to engage in open, constructive, ideological conflict. And we'll continue to preserve a sense of artificial harmony" (Lencioni 91). Many congregations want to believe that their programs are running well. This is especially true in preschool and daycare offerings where children receive care and education. However, when looking at the core of the mission, most Christian leaders affirm that confrontations are justified when dealing with the powers or principles that usurp the church's central mission of making disciples for Jesus.

In matters of a congregation's program, there is one core that should never change: the mission is to make disciples of Jesus. All programs and staff serve this purpose. Sometimes it means that shifts or eliminations of personnel fulfill this objective as Collins illustrates through the analogy of a bus. There are times when those in certain positions, whether as paid staff or lay volunteer, undermine the mission. Manifestations such as these warrant healthy confrontation that can lead to measures to realign

components within an organization or eliminate parts that have fallen out of the boundaries of the mission. This can lead to elimination of programs, staff members or lay volunteers in the case of churches.

Another theory presented by Collins in *Built to Last* notes that there are cultures that preserve their corporation's core identity. In particular he states that, "the most enduring and successful corporations preserve a cherished core ideology while simultaneously stimulating progress and change in everything that is not part of their core ideology. To put it another way, they distinguish their timeless core values and enduring core purpose (which should never change) from their operating practices and business strategies (which should be changing constantly in response to a changing world)" (220). The vision of these companies for a greater effectiveness in executing their plan is something that congregational leaders can utilize in seeking the fulfillment of their ultimate mission. For a congregation connected to a school or daycare, this means that execution of the program, utilization of facilities or leadership within may change to accommodate the core purpose of serving a congregation's mission. Christians have a conviction to fulfill that mission as this abides not only in thought, but also in the depths of their soul. Robert Quinn states that, "When we take necessary risks, we become self-empowered. We begin to better align our internal self with our external world. As our internal power base grows, we become confident and make genuine progress towards our goal" (219). This alignment of mission will allow leaders to emerge with a clear focus on their work.

These secular propositions are not intended to undermine the rich theological work that is happening in many of our congregations and their schools. They simply are

demonstrating that the same forces that undermine corporations undermine congregations. Those elements that cause systemic dysfunction in a church's preschool affect the world's greatest companies. Similarly, these paradigms for successful connection within a corporation can offer a model for successful collaboration at the sacred level. With a grasp of institutional or corporate alignment, we can understand better the need for a congregation's missional connection with its school and daycare.

### Christian Leadership

Christian leaders such as clergy, school directors and board members are influential forces in the congregation. As they deal with challenges such as congregations aligning with schools, they wrestle with problems in need of remedies. Christians work within the framework of resurrection, which always offers hope. There are principles of alignment as expressed through authors such as Tom Bandy who notes that, "The good news is that whenever you identify a fundamental problem, you also uncover a golden opportunity." He further notes that revitalizing spiritual components "can renew the church, even without additional program initiatives or capital risks" (92). Leaders grounded in spiritual alignment often see the blessings of God accompany their efforts.

The traits of Christian leadership have slight differences from secular leadership just as a Christian daycare or school has differences from a secular daycare or school. These fundamental differences are sometimes confusing when a Christian leader or a Christian program begins to mimic their secular counterparts. Harry Reeder claims that, "The American church is standing at the brink of a self-inflicted death spiral accelerated by worldly leadership" (12). This observation is noted in the behaviors of leaders and

programs alike. Christian programs and leaders are aligned with the Scriptural models of devotion to Jesus and his vision. A non-aligned leader or program seeks to build up in ways other than what God would desire. Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges claim that the ego of the leader is often times the impetus for falling away from God's hope. They offer the choice a leader faces through the acronym "EGO" and its proposition for helping bring alignment. "Your Heart's EGO-Edging God Out or Exalting God Only? As you consider the heart issues of leadership, a primary question you have to ask yourself is, 'Am I a servant leader or a self-serving leader?'" (40) Although the church does not possess a monopoly on the model of the servant-leader, the example of Jesus certainly lends itself as a model for workers in the church. It is therefore acceptable to expect this in a school culture as exemplified in its leadership and staffing. These behaviors reflect values, which align with a core tenant of the church: to offer grace to the lost.

### **Research Design Literature**

In order to achieve the goals of this project, appropriate subjects provided evidence of their interrelated departments working in harmony together. To discover these sites, a two-stage process of implementing systems for discovery and research was necessary. Creswell's system of a dominant-less dominant design (Creswell 179) provided the beginning framework for letting an initial stage lead to another stage of greater significance. In this case, a simple survey refined hundreds of congregations into a much smaller group that demonstrated an effectiveness with incorporating families from their schools into the general life of the congregation. Discovering how these congregations accomplished this relied on narrative-based data. This is common; Michael

Patton pointed out that, “Research and evaluation studies employing multiple methods, including combinations of qualitative and quantitative data, are common” (5). The inductive nature of such a project allowed for the information shared by participants to open the conversations beyond the questions from the semi-structured interview list. Follow-up questions enriched the nature of data collection and when compared to other interviews, similar patterns of behavior and leadership became evident.

Utilizing William Wiersma’s funnel approach (220) for data collection emerged as a reliable model to gain information through narrative. This method of eliciting information through conversation can provide reliable data when it is triangulated with other interviews and theories proposed by authors. With sites identified and subjects agreeable to converse about their program, semi-structured interviews provided the bulk of narrative information. Using this funnel approach, certain parts were discarded while pertinent themes emerged using Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman’s pattern coding system (69). These coded words created repetitive themes from multiple interviews and helped to identify emergent themes to formulate conclusions. This process of refining congregations using multiple systems to narrow the field, generate the data, code it and analyze the data came from the multiple systems presented by the authors mentioned above. This system addressed any bias going into the project because the voice of each participant had its place to contribute to the narrative of how each environment conducted its work and only when compared to others could an independent source of data emerge.

### **Summary of Literature**

The nature of this project addresses a sensitive subject for many churches because congregations that host daycares or schools often deal with a variety of conflicts. With so many churches hosting these types of programs, a very thin body of literature addresses how United Methodist congregations can hold their daycares and schools in alignment with their congregation's mission. The authors reviewed in this chapter demonstrate systems that work harmoniously together. These texts began with a biblical and theological foundation and progressed into models of collaborative work with a culmination of models of Christian leadership in the church.

As this was a study focused on identifying intentionally connected components in a congregation, the sources sought pairings that could correlate to models that would emerge from the study. These congregations mimicked the biblical narratives and contemporary theories of faithfully connected and harmoniously working entities.

Theological principles and biblical accounts provide a rich framework for reconciliation and restoration. Additionally, texts exist about administering a church school and about leadership—both Christian and secular. Part of this review exposed secular models that discussed troubleshooting and alignment and the chapter concluded with a glance into the role of Christian leaders who handle conflict and seek unity.

In its entirety, this project takes multiple literary perspectives, identifies their common themes and connects them to the prevailing narratives from the four sites that demonstrated cultures of intentional connection. These cultures are found in history and continue to exist in corporations, congregations and any system with interrelated parts.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This project involved a data collection plan with two stages, which sought to discover paradigms of collaborative leadership where their efforts fostered a culture of intentional connection. This chapter will address the methodologies of this project and their applications.

Stage One was a confidential survey that addressed the level of activity between congregations and their schools. It identified leadership values and correlated preschool enrollment with the number of families participating in the principal worship services of the congregation. Additionally, it denoted integration between the entities.

Stage Two commenced when the key leadership of four congregations with at least twenty participating school families in their worship services agreed to a semi-structured interview. These conversations involved open-ended questions that allowed for the leaders of the congregation and school to share principles, strategies and techniques that kept the congregation and school connected in ministry. These church and school leaders answered questions pertaining to particular practices that linked school families to the congregation's life. Preliminary inquiries such as "Can you tell me a the history of the school?" and "How did you get involved?" created a more relaxed environment and thus created in turn an atmosphere of confidence and trust. With a healthy rapport established, it was natural for the leader to comfortably address questions pertaining to the program's practices, leadership qualities and systems for perpetuation of the culture. Eventually,

there were questions asked of each congregational or school leader relating to the core issues of intentionally connecting the church and its school or daycare.

### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

This study on congregations and their daycare or weekday school program sought cultures that were faithfully yoked to one another, yielding participation of families in both the congregational life and weekday daycare or school offerings. The project started with a survey sent to every United Methodist congregation in the Florida Annual Conference hosting a daycare or school. The questions pertained to their congregation's daycare or weekday school program and its relationship to the host congregation. After analysis of the surveys, I chose four site locations to conduct semi-structured interviews with leaders of the churches and their schools. The purpose of this project was to identify effective practices of congregations in the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church where cultures of intentional connection fostered a unified ministry between their church and its daycare and/or weekday school program.

### **Research Questions**

**Research Question #1:** What are some common elements exhibited by congregations that are effective at integrating families from their preschool into their congregation's worship and discipleship formation process?

The first research question sought to find practices or habits of congregations or their schools that connected them in some manner that would allow for families from one entity to get involved in the other. Metaphorically speaking, one could call this the bridge between the church and the school that families might cross to find involvement in the

other area. The specifically crafted question for this inquiry was: “How are families introduced and integrated into either the school or congregation and how are they introduced to the other entity?”

**Research Question #2:** What leadership qualities are present in the clergy, church staffs, school administration and school staffs that foster a collaborative ministry throughout the various entities?

This research question sought to identify principles or models of effective leadership by asking, “What leadership qualities do you possess that help facilitate a culture of connection to the other entity?” Understandably, the subjects took time to process this because now they were asked to describe foundational principles. In two instances, these answers began with narratives involving influential persons in their life lives and then concluding with principles that they developed as a result of these influences. This was a question that the leaders struggled with the most as they attempted to recall theories or styles that shaped them. If a vague answer was offered, a follow-up question would seek to refine authors, educators, religious leaders, business leaders or others who might have inspired them as they shaped their professional skill set.

**Research Question #3:** What systems are in place to ensure the common goal of introducing children and families to Jesus through its church school?

When neglected, sustainability is an element that can severely impede an organization’s mission. Without it, a lack of clarity can ensue in a time of transition—particularly when attempting to perpetuate values from one generation to the next. There

are good habits that can sustain an organization's effectiveness or bad habits that can erode it. Whether this is carried out through the systems of proper governance of an organization's boards or carried through by the conviction of the senior leadership, there are core values that can diminish if not sustained in some manner.

For the sake of this project, I made an effort to identify the functions of churches yoked in mission with their schools because they were effectively connected.

Specifically, in the semi-structured interviews in Stage Two, every interview addressed the question: "What systems are in place to ensure that this culture is sustained?" This yielded an array of answers and once again, there were follow-up questions to help the individual refine some elements to sustain the values and culture that had been created.

### **Ministry Contexts**

There were two hundred and two locations considered for this study because these were the congregations that hosted a church-sponsored daycare or preschool in the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The Florida Annual Conference has seven hundred and two congregations and its geographical boundaries include all parts of the state of Florida in the Eastern Time Zone. The area west of Apalachicola belongs to the South Alabama/West Florida Annual Conference. The average worship attendance for the population of churches asked to participate in the study ranged from forty-four in the smallest congregation to two thousand three hundred and ninety-eight at the largest. Their programs ranged in enrollment from twenty at the smallest school to three hundred sixty-two in the largest.

Four sites participated in this project. These sites were selected after analyzing results from fifty-eight responses to a survey pertaining to their congregation and its

daycare or school program. These locations were in the northeast, southwest, southeast and central parts of the state.

The congregation that is in the northeast part of the state is Metropolitan United Methodist Church. With an average worship attendance of one thousand one hundred sixty-seven and a preschool enrollment of two hundred and five, they indicated that they were reaching more than twenty family units currently enrolled in the school. This program is in a predominantly Anglo-Saxon neighborhood and is affected by transient families due to two United States Military installations that are located near the church. Their preschool is filled to capacity and their church affirms that families who enroll their children in the preschool also participate in the life of the congregation through worship, programs and other activities.

On the opposite corner of the state is Hope United Methodist Church in the southwest region. The congregation has an average worship attendance of one thousand, four hundred and nine and according to their website had an enrollment of one hundred ninety-seven in the lower school (through 6<sup>th</sup> grade) and one hundred sixty-five in the middle school. They recently built a high school campus to continue the growth of the school. The Headmistress is married to the senior pastor of the church and together, they built this program up from a preschool. Their vision emerged as parents in their preschool wished to continue educating their children in this setting of excellence. This led to the creation of a grade school, which ultimately necessitated relocation. Their new campus and buildings were able to host classes through ninth grade. This community is an affluent Anglo-Saxon community that attracts a large number of retirees. However, the

school and its church have a large population of professionals from the region involved in their program because the retirees require a workforce to serve their needs.

In the center of the state is Faith United Methodist Church. This program had just over forty students enrolled eight years ago with one family participating in the life of the church. With the reconstruction of a children's wing, the preschool has grown to an enrollment of around one hundred and forty. The church averages one thousand five hundred and thirty-five in worship on a Sunday morning and there are over forty families involved in the congregational life of the church that were introduced to the congregation through the school. It is in a city with the headquarters of a large corporation. This dynamic has led to an influx of those corporate leaders who are predominantly Anglo-Saxon to populate the school.

The final school participating in this study is Community United Methodist. Its grade school, Community School was founded in 1969 and has grown into a program that offers a reputable education from pre-K 2 to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Although its community reputation is solid, the capacity of the school is capped because of its limitations to expand on the church campus. With limited space to grow, Community has wrestled with challenges that come from being a program that is almost fifty years old. Aging classrooms, inability to grow enrollment and diverse leadership styles of clergy and Heads of School have complicated matters. This program is in a desirable neighborhood that has multi-cultural elements. Most of those enrolled are Anglo-Saxon, but there is enough diversity in the community reflected in the school and congregation.

The sites studied were in geographically different areas throughout Florida. The northern part of the state tends to reflect conservative theology while the locations further

south tend to reflect more diversity in terms of ethnicities, theology and ideologies. These sites are distant from each other and there are no intentional interactions between any of the programs.

## **Participants**

### **Criteria for Selection**

The churches that I selected to participate in Stage Two of the study utilized their daycare or preschool as a means to draw new families to the congregation and have succeeded in attracting more than twenty families to participate in worship. After these results were filtered, eight potential sites emerged based on their levels of participation and focus of the program. Thirty-five programs indicated that they designed their preschool to introduce families to the church. Nine congregations from the total pool of two hundred and two indicated in the survey that their school attracted “more than 20.” Those programs that met these two thresholds were retained for further study because of the evangelical focus and discernible success of attracting and retaining currently enrolled school families. Eight programs indicated that they had more than twenty families from the school present in their Sunday worship and that their school introduced new families to the congregation. The ninth program was disqualified because it indicated that its school’s principal function was to make money and not introduce families to the congregation. Follow-up contact by email to these eight programs resulted in four respondents willing to participate in an interview to further the study.

The numbers of participating families from the school or daycare emerged as a key element to narrowing the results of the survey. Additionally, one of the questions in the survey asked about the primary function of the school. As this project was seeking to

identify evangelical ties, respondents that selected that “The school introduces the congregation to new families” were elevated above all others. The reason for this refinement is that familial involvement and integration into the church is the primary focus of this study.

### **Description of Participants**

The study involved four congregations throughout the state of Florida. One is in the northeast part of the state, another in the southwest. One is in the center of the state. The final site is located the southeast corner of Florida. These congregations share healthy, vibrant ministries between the churches and schools. Each of these locations involved in-depth interviews with key leaders. In two cases, it was a preschool director. In two other cases, it involved the Heads of School as one program went through fifth grade and the other through tenth grade. In three of the situations, the Preschool Director or Head of School reported directly to the senior pastor. In one case, there was an additional interview with the Director of Children’s Ministries because the Preschool Director reported to this person. In this ministry’s organizational structure, the Preschool Director reported to the Director of Children’s Ministries and this person reported to the pastor.

Four men and five women participated in interviews for this project. Ages were not requested as the research did not rely on this information. All of the pastors had over twenty years of ministerial experience each, and the Preschool Directors or Heads of School all had over fifteen years of experience each. The Director of Children’s Ministry had twenty years of teaching middle school in the public school system before gaining five years of experience directing the children’s program in the church. All of the respondents were of European descent. Every respondent had, at a minimum, a bachelor’s degree from college.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Maintaining standards of ethical behavior is of paramount importance in any research project. As this study did not include minors or any other population with vulnerabilities, the risks were limited. This cannot diminish the importance of maintaining confidentiality for the project.

Two documents were presented to the subjects before conducting the semi-structured interviews. One of them was a list of questions that may come up in the interview (Appendix C) and another was the Letter of Informed Consent. (Appendix D). The letter and its implications were discussed with the subjects and after their agreement to the conditions set forth, they signed it and we proceeded with the interview.

Recordings were kept on a digital recorder until they were transcribed. After completing the transcripts they were stored on a password protected removable flash storage disk that was locked in a safe belonging to the principal interviewer. The transcripts were held on a password protected computer and the printed copies once produced were kept in the same safe mentioned earlier. Every person involved in an interview was provided with a copy of the transcription to affirm that those recorded and transcribed conversations accurately reflected the interview.

At the conclusion of the project, all transcriptions were erased from digital recorders, all paper copies of transcriptions were shredded in a cross-cut paper shredder and all digital copies of the transcriptions were erased from the computer and removable flash drive. The only outstanding copies of the interviews belonged to the persons who granted the interview as it was sent to them to review and affirm its accuracy.

### **Instrumentation**

This project employed different techniques to create data. It began with a confidential, online survey supplied by SurveyMonkey.com that was emailed to every congregation in the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church that hosted a school or daycare. This simple survey asked eight questions of the respondents about the relationships between their church and school (Appendix A). These questions requested the name and title of the person completing the survey along with their role in the organization. Other questions asked pertained to the levels of involvement of the pastor within the school, the director's participation in the church's worship and the involvement of the school staff in worship as well. Two questions focused on the nature of the church's function for the school and the school's function for the church. These questions attempted to identify if these programs served evangelical purposes, facilitated space or served as channels for maximizing financial and human resources—both paid and volunteer. A further set of questions sought to gauge the levels of participation by the enrolled school families in the church's worship. This factor of church involvement became a crucial component of the survey to identify those congregations whose churches attracted and retained families from the school. Questions were fashioned to describe the nature of the school in an effort to identify those programs where there was intentionality to the relationship. Thirty-seven respondents indicated that the primary function of their school was to introduce families to their congregation. Thirteen respondents indicated that the primary role was to generate additional financial resources for the church. Four indicated that their school's primary role was to maintain the classrooms and four others responded that their school resourced the church with

personnel. Those respondents that indicated that the primary function of the school was to introduce families to the congregation were selected for further investigation.

Out of the fifty-eight respondents, eight were asked by email (Appendix B) to further participate because of their answers. The key leaders agreed to converse in a confidential one-on-one semi-structured interview (Appendix C) that was recorded on a digital recording device. The recordings were transcribed and individually emailed to each of the interview participants to affirm their accuracy. Once approved by the participants, these interviews were coded and incorporated into pertinent parts of this work.

### **Pilot Testing**

Feedback is a critical component of any investigative work with the objective of getting the highest quality results. Testing these questions allowed for critical feedback to refine the initial survey.

My pilot testing revealed that some of the questions lacked focus or clarity of vocabulary. Using the term “weekday program” was modified to read “daycare or weekday school”. Many churches run weekday offerings for mothers such as Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) or classes for new and expecting families. A legitimate question arose as to the inclusion of these short-term, hour-long classes hosted by the congregation. It was determined that they were not a part of the daycare or preschool, so there was a change in survey’s verbiage. The pilot test also caused a reduction in the number of questions. Those eliminated included a) describing incentives offered by the congregation to families enrolled in the school, and b) ranking the importance of the pastor, director, church board or school board in the weekday school or daycare program.

The end result for Stage One's online survey was a streamlined, eight-question survey sent to a knowledgeable person who could appropriately respond to the inquiries. Stage Two did not utilize pilot testing for the semi-structured interviews because these open-ended questions encouraged free-flowing conversation. The first questions sought to build a rapport with the participant with successive questions leading the participant to address components pertaining to the three research questions. Each participant had access to the possible questions (Appendix C) with particular attention focusing on the three topics with asterisks that would come up in the interview.

### **Reliability & Validity of Project Design**

Certain variables could skew the project's sample pool, such as the utilization of rough estimates versus verifiable data through the completion of the online survey. In the case of a congregation that attracts families from the preschool or daycare program, congregations typically lack the systems to identify the visiting entity along with the factors that influenced them to attend worship or participate in classes.

What is ascertainable is that some school and daycare programs are effective in attracting families to the church and retaining them. Whether it is a small church with a high proportion of its school participating at some level or a large congregation whose school adds to the gross number of participants on Sunday, it is evident that there are congregations effectively reaching families in their school or daycare.

The year-end statistics submitted by the congregations of an Annual Conference are reliable as they are managed by a conference statistician who affirms the data's accuracy as they are able. Additionally, the Florida Annual Conference requires that

churches submit their weekly average attendance to a website designed to track a congregation's viability.

Data from the surveys submitted revealed several potential interview sites. Before asking for a commitment to further participate in the study, verbal verification of submitted results occurred through phone conversations with key ministry leaders to affirm the responses from their survey were accurate. These conversations served to arrange meeting dates for interviews with a site's key leaders.

Ministry leaders who participated in the project received two documents. One was the Letter of Informed Consent (Appendix D) that affirmed their role in this study. The other document was a list of questions that might come up in the semi-structured interview (Appendix C). Three of these questions were asterisked because they were directly related to addressing this study's research questions. The subjects were told that, even though the interview was semi-structured and could lead to many different paths of narrative, all three of these questions would occur at some point in the interview. This type of "theory triangulation" (Sensing 73) allowed for multiple locations to substantiate data points that were similar in nature. These common themes emerged after conducting interviews, transcribing them and identifying prevailing and recurring words or phrases. This is where one congregation's successful ministry validates similarly effective practices by another congregation in a different location.

### **Data Collection**

This study involved two phases. Structured as a dominant-less dominant design (Creswell 179), this study combed through the data populated by the responses from the surveys in Stage One. The dominant results, however, would come from the Stage Two

interviews, which produced data from semi-structured interviews. Certain narratives revealed prevailing themes, which were categorically identified. Some of this data yielded explicitly evident topics such as a potential director feeling called to a certain program. Others are implicit, such as studying the Head of School whose career had paralleled her husband's as she created and managed schools in his congregations.

This study involved the researcher and subjects engaged in conversation related to the subject's role in the church and/or school. The organization of data was done through coding according to major themes. These "context codes" (Wiersma 217) came from recurring words from the interviews. Other themes emerged implicitly from the interviews. Some of these themes came from hypotheses such as the role of leadership and the nature of a church or school's systems to perpetuate the church's mission and values. Some of the unanticipated results included the subjects of quality and call.

As the narratives addressed the study's research questions, the dominant themes not only emerged, but also progressed into understandable categories. Refining data in this manner is what Wiersma calls the "funnel approach" (Wiersma 219) and this theory detailed the nature of the narratives from the interviews conducted. This funnel narrows in the following way:

*General Questions → Possible Sites → Initial Data Collection → Revision → Focus on Subjects → More narrow data collection → Specific phenomenon and Focused Conclusions* (Wiersma 220)

This refining of the data involved what Creswell calls "sequential triangulation" (Creswell 182), because the nature of the study relied on one stage leading to the other.

Once the data was collected and scored from surveys from Stage One, then the second stage could proceed.

Stage One began with an invitation to all United Methodist congregations in the Florida Annual Conference that ran a daycare or preschool. The information for these congregations came from the Florida Annual Conference Office of Risk Management, which provides an umbrella policy of insurance for every United Methodist congregation in its boundaries. The information included only the name of the congregation and the number of enrolled children in its program. Contacting the congregations happened through emailing clergy at each appointment. The clergy emails came from the Annual Conference website. Out of two hundred and two emailed requests to fill out the online survey, there were fifty-eight responses. It was requested to have the most qualified individual complete the survey. The first question asked for the respondent's name, title and congregation. This question allowed for points of clarification should multiple responses come in from a single site. This study saw no multiple responses. This stage filtered the results of the survey according to familial participation from the school with the church.

Stage Two of the project involved qualitative research conducted through confidential, one-on-one interviews in a setting of the respondent's choosing. Most of these interviews occurred in the office of the individual. One interview took place in a respondent's automobile and one in a classroom at an off-site location. The subjects selected the locations for their interview.

This study was investigative in nature and therefore there were no hypotheses implemented at any time in its course. As its design was a pre-intervention investigation

into best practices, it concluded with identifying common habits and elements within a culture where faithful yoking demonstrates a culture of intentional connection between a church and its daycare or school program.

### **Data Analysis**

This multiphase study relied on a simple survey followed by qualitative interviews. Coding the data relied on differing theories to refine the data from different stages. The study proceeded with a survey emailed to every United Methodist congregation in the Florida Annual Conference that ran a daycare or weekday school. Submitted responses were entered into a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet included the name of the congregation, its enrollment in the daycare/school, the congregation's average worship attendance and answers to the eight-question survey. From the survey in Stage One, criterion-related evidence (Wiersma 313) was used to score and elevate potential sites. These sites were respondents who indicated that their ministry attracted "more than 20 family units" from question 2 and that "The school introduces the congregation to new families" from question 4. The second stage utilized content-related validation (Wiersma 313). This method was necessary as the study was ultimately seeking skills, qualities and habits of individuals and organizations.

The research focused on locations where the school acted as a conduit to the congregation's greater ministries and where a large number of participants in both the daycare/school and worship were present. Identifying those sites, a) whose focus on the school was to expose families to the church and b) that had more than twenty families from the school involved in worship, reduced the field of potential locations. Once the

field was narrowed down to eight potential interview sites, emails were sent to the leaders of the churches asking for a further review of their ministry (Appendix B). Ministry leaders from four sites agreed to participate in further study. In all instances, the senior pastor and director of the program were critical components to complete the interview so that sufficient data could populate the study. Four senior pastors, two preschool directors, two head of the school and one director of the children's department comprised the field of nine interviewees.

The nine interviews were recorded and transcribed. These individual transcripts were merged into a master transcription that allowed for analysis of recurring words and themes. These themes fell into categories pertinent to addressing this study's research questions:

**Research Question #1: What are some common elements exhibited by congregations that are effective at integrating families from their preschool into their congregation's worship and discipleship formation process?**

**Research Question #2: What leadership qualities are present in the clergy, church staff, school administration and school staff that foster a collaborative ministry throughout the various entities?**

**Research Question #3: What systems are in place to ensure the common goal of introducing children and families to Jesus through its church school?**

I coded the transcripts utilizing a system of tagging frequently used words or themes within the interview. Significant words and phrases pertinent to answering the study's research questions were highlighted within the interview transcript and included in a consolidated list. Major topics emerged as a list of terms and phrases revealed

consistent themes from the study's interviews. This method of categorizing data into a second-level coding was in accordance with Miles and Huberman's "pattern coding" system. These codes assisted to "identify an emergent theme" (69) of cultures operating with effectiveness and intentionality. These varied topics were refined into headings pertinent to answering questions within the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter will rely on the recorded interviews and portions of the confidential surveys as detailed in the data collection plan. The persons interviewed were in the highest levels of leadership in the church and its school or daycare. These individuals were chosen because they have the greatest level of influence as they are able to channel resources, focus the vision and communicate the efforts of their respective parts within the organization.

This chapter will address the significant practices of the participants, describe the collection of evidence to support the three research topics and summarize the findings. The emergence of this evidence will come through methods of refining data collected from the semi-structured interviews and categorizing these findings under subheadings that address the three research topics. This project sought to identify effective practices of congregations in the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church where cultures of intentional connection foster a unified ministry between their church and its daycare and/or school.

#### **Participants**

Four senior pastors, four program directors/heads and one who served as the director of a site's children's programs contributed the data for this chapter. In three of the programs, the Director or Head of Program reported directly to the senior pastor. In the fourth location, the preschool director reported to the Director of Children's

Programming, so he was included in the interviews as the ninth. Three of the senior pastors were male and one was female. All four of the Directors or Heads of Program were female and the Director of Children's Programming was male. Each person interviewed was a Christian committed to serving God through his or her respective role in the organization.

### **Research Question #1 Description of Evidence**

“What are some common elements exhibited by congregations that are effective at integrating families from their preschool into their congregation's worship and discipleship formation process?”

Families in search of childcare or preschools often find a church that offers these programs, which attract them for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons include convenience of location or the strength of reputation. A family that enrolls their child in a church's preschool may not initially be a family seeking a church community in which they can practice and nurture their faith. Several factors can lead a family who enrolls their child in a church's daycare or weekday school to become involved in the life of the congregation. The elements below describe some of the practices of programs that are effective at integrating school families into the life of the church.

#### **1. Directors or Heads of Schools Involved in Worship**

In this study, all four leaders in the weekday school and/or daycare ministry were Christians actively worshipping with their congregations. In some cases, school leaders

attended other locations of worship , but all four would be considered active in their respective churches. The survey from Stage One addressed the director's involvement with worship within the hosting congregation. 50 percent of the respondents indicated that their daycare or school director was a member who worshipped regularly with the congregation. 26 percent of the respondents indicated that their director worshipped occasionally. There were four programs (7 percent) whose director only came to participate in a preschool Sunday worship service. The remaining ten respondents (17 percent) indicated that their director had no involvement with the congregation's worship. Of those where their director had no involvement in worship, six programs indicated that they had five or less families participating in the church and the remaining four had no more than ten families.

Of the twenty-five programs that had student enrollment of one hundred or more, twenty-three had directors who worshiped regularly with their congregation. Additionally, all nine programs that had involvement of twenty families or more also had directors who regularly worshiped with the congregation. Eleven programs with eleven to twenty families in worship had ten directors that were members who worshiped regularly with the congregation. One program had a director that worshiped occasionally. The evidence is strong that a congregation whose school director regularly worships has a greater number of school families that are involved in the life of the church.

Of the four churches interviewed, in one case, the director transferred her membership to the host church from a neighboring United Methodist church. In another, the Head of School was already happily involved in the congregation she would serve—although at the time of her calling to serve as the Head of School, she was unaware that

her congregation even had a school. One of the Heads of School was married to the pastor of the congregation. This church was their fourth site in which she headed a school program while he was pastor of the congregation that hosted the program.

All of the interviewed school leaders demonstrated a deep commitment to worship not only to model it for parents and teachers—but also because they value this component of spiritual engagement. As their call to ministry was rooted in the faith traditions of the church, their practice in worship reflected that devotion to the Lord. Perhaps this director could have spoken for all of the school leaders when she said, “That’s one reason I like to worship here is that the families can see me here and I can see them here, too.” The commitment to worship is not just a personal discipline, but it is a model for the rest of the school.

## 2. Commitment to Quality

One of the clear markers of congregations that are reaching families is that the school and daycare programs are in environments where their staffing and facilities are of the highest quality. One of the recurring words in the interviews was the word “quality” when describing the staff, facilities, curriculum and overall program. No other word occurred as much as this descriptor. At three of the four sites, attracting the most highly qualified teachers occurred by offering insurance and full-time competitive salaries. Three of the four facilities were utilizing newly constructed classroom space. The oldest of these new buildings was fifteen years old. The fourth location was longing for new space, but could not afford it until a previous mortgage on their gym is paid off.

Teachers seeking the best curriculum for their classes revealed another area where they pursued quality because it was one of their core values.

These commitments to the highest standards of quality showed marked improvements in the overall programs. One head of school noted that its reputation in the community improved when the quality of their church's preschool improved. She stated that, "when the quality started going up, the people started putting their children in and they were those people who loved the attention their children got." This grew their program and its reputation to a level in which participating families demanded higher grade levels in which the children could learn.

In another program, the congregation decided to tear down its old space in order to rebuild a new children's wing that would accommodate modern air-conditioning and safety measures. Additionally, it created beautiful, functional areas in which children could learn and parents would feel confident in the program because of its commitment to quality. Evidence of this quality occurred in the facilities, staffing and overall programming. One might wonder about the correlation between a quality preschool program and participation of its families in the church's ministries. Perhaps the senior pastor of this congregation seeded an idea by stating that, "we went from zero families involved to over forty families involved here. The facilities are better. The teachers' quality is better. And the involvement is better." There may be many factors involved in enticing school families to participate in a congregation's life, but quality was a foundational factor in all four of these programs that increased levels of participation in their congregation.

### 3. The School or Daycare is Viewed with Evangelism as Focus

Pastors with an eye for ripe fields of potential will see their daycares and preschool ministries as environments where families are engaging the church for the first time or re-engaging it after many years of absence. Often, the community reputation of the school is enough to elicit even the most entrenched non-believer to inquire about enrolling their child in the program. Sometimes these inquiries lead to enrollments, which allow for congregations to engage previously non-religious families.

For many churches, a simple invitation to events beyond the preschool or grade school program is enough to encourage a family's attendance at a church-sponsored event. Currently events such Trunk-or-Treat nights seem to attract school or daycare families with great success. Multiple sites in the interviews spoke of significant levels of participation of school and preschool families with this type of event. Directors noted that families of enrolled students attended these church-sponsored events when invited.

In two of the interviewed locations, they made an effort to expose daycare and preschool families to many of the different buildings on the church's campus. They did this with the intent of acclimating families to the complexities of a church campus. One director probably spoke for the majority of non-member school families when she noted, "As someone who was looking for a church, I know that it is scary to not know where to go." Providing a family with the confidence to navigate a church campus is a tremendous benefit for any church that wishes to see them return for Sunday worship. Confidence eliminates the barrier of unfamiliarity and potential embarrassment.

All of the interviewed churches involved in this study actively reached out to families. This initiative occurred through newsletters, verbal invitations in preschool chapel and personal interaction through offerings such as breakfasts. One pastor said that he expected church staff to attend school functions. This individual noted that, “There is a level of intentionality with everything that happens. We try to have a pastor there and we always send invitations to be a part of the [church] community.” Other programs hosted a preschool Sunday at least once a year to encourage families to attend worship. One pastor noted that congregations could do “[s]omething simple like getting the kids to sing in church a couple of times a year. You can’t make them sing in church, but a bunch will. And when they do, they are going to invite every member of their family. The grandparents, aunts and uncles and neighbors are going to come.” Even if the students in the weekday program are not involved in the church, the same pastor noted that, “When we do a children’s department activity, we make sure that the preschool families are invited.” This inclusion through invitation does not foster a two-world environment where children’s ministries clash. Rather, there is one church with multiple offerings for families in the preschool and its congregation. This singular view of environment allows for all participants to see the unified work of the whole. When that unified work is happening, the clear goal is to reach all people in the programs with the message of Jesus.

## **Research Question #2: Description of Evidence**

“What leadership qualities are present in the clergy, church staff, school administration and school staff that foster a collaborative ministry throughout the various entities?”

Leadership is a key characteristic of any organization, and the church is not immune to this necessity. In all four interview sites, the pastors, directors and Heads of School demonstrated leadership qualities that yielded effective results for ministry. There is a need for this type of cohesive behavior as all four sites noted their utilization of “collaboration,” “alignment” and “intentionality” of the church and school staff working together. With so many respective leaders, powers could easily clash and struggles ensue. However, the collaborative spirit and intentional work of a church and its school rests on the exercise of respect. Without respect, mistrust erodes confidence and conflict ensues. Christian leadership thrives in the environments filled with love, respect and focus. A few prevailing elements emerged from this study.

### 1. Clarity of Purpose

One of the key components that seems conducive to deterioration in the relationship between the church and its daycare or school is the lack of focus on the purpose of the school. Many understand the necessity of a school to teach children the fundamentals of education. However, the necessity of a preschool ministry is more than simply childcare. It educates—and if done within a church, it also teaches the Christian qualities of loving, forgiveness and learning how to pray. For some programs, such as these studied, they remained focused that their existence is to serve the Lord. In some

circumstances, parents compare the quality of education with nearby pricier, private schools. They believe that the high standards of education should eliminate any Christian formation process in favor of adding more math, science or technology. When comparing his school to a nationally recognized prep school nearby, one senior pastor commented:

I really do think with the school right now we are in this place where we are asking-what does it mean to be in alignment together? And so we still do have some parents who see the mission of the church to be a little [version of the other school]. And that isn't the mission of the church so just those ongoing conversations about alignment and what we are called to do and who we are called to be. The purpose of the school is not to be a little [version of the other school]. It's to make disciples.

This congregation's pastor is leading with the understanding that the mission to shape in the way of Jesus is equally as important as instilling knowledge through education.

Part of the work of the church and the school is to create an intentionality of integration. As the pastor of one church noted, "We work really hard to integrate, too. It is a ministry. 'How do we share the love of Christ with them?' is our question." For some, their purpose is to introduce Jesus to all members of the family. That is why the purpose of the school helps to fulfill the mission of the church, which is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

## 2. Awareness of Divine Role in Program's Leadership

Many Christians should realize that God works in various levels in a church and its ministries. This study revealed that God played a role in the leadership of the preschool or grade school for all four ministry sites interviewed. Two of the directors spoke of God calling them to lead their particular school. One chose to serve the congregation's school because of its proximity to her home, yet her supervisor indicated that her coming to the congregation's preschool, "was a God thing." The final site involved an appointed pastor who had a career of serving churches that involved his wife serving as the Preschool Director or Head of School, so the implicit understanding is that she fulfilled a calling to ministry with him.

The directors shared about activity that has traditionally been associated with persons called to ordained ministry. Hearing a preschool director describing their call to serve in terms consistent with a candidate for ordained ministry interviewing with a District Committee on Ministry was unexpected, but not surprising.

In one case, the Head of School shared about her accountability group meeting where one of the participants encouraged her to apply for an opening at her church's Christian school. Oddly enough, the members of this group were not aware of the other's congregational involvement, so none of these women knew where the other attended church. When the participant shared that her friend would have to worship actively with the school's congregation, the individual noted that she could not leave her church. Only after investigation did she discover that the position in question was one at her own church. She was not only unaware of her friend's congregational affiliation, but she was

also unaware of her congregation's school. Her training, paired with her epiphanies regarding her congregation's grade school ministry, led her on a path where she heard God's call and answered it. With a toddler at home, she wrestled with this call, but ultimately came to the conclusion that, "I struggled with it, because I really felt God was calling me here to be a change agent."

In another case, the persistence of God led the director to go from conversations to action. She states, "The Lord didn't leave me alone, so I applied. He said—just apply and see where it goes." She has taken a program from a floundering preschool with forty-two enrolled and one family involved in the church to a program with over one hundred twenty children enrolled in the school and over forty families involved in the church.

### 3. Mentoring

The leaders of the heads of school acknowledged that they made a niche for themselves by starting as public school teachers and working themselves into Christian schools. Because there was no formal training, nor United Methodist literature to groom one on how to run a school or daycare within a United Methodist congregation, they relied on the mentoring of others. The care and patience of pastors and church school directors who invested in these leaders filled this void of literature.

Most of the Directors or Heads interviewed made an effort to groom their teachers for future leadership positions. Whether involving the faculty in committee work or enlisting them to head a department, the Directors and Heads of School provided an environment that allowed teachers with potential an opportunity to lead. This, in turn

gave them a chance to grow and experience the trust of a superior within the organization. This equipping of a new generation could have significant impact on the future of private Christian education as there is a looming leadership crisis in this field. One of the school leaders noted that, “If you want to be a head of school, it is wide open. I can’t tell you how many notifications I get in a day because people don’t want to do it. Millennials don’t want to work like that. There is a large turnover in Heads because the Millennials can’t do it. And I’m doing it [grooming leaders] for the sake of the Independent Schools and for this school.” Investing in the future is not just for the administrative order. Mentoring happens because of the desire to continue ministry in the structures of church-based programs.

Many of the school leaders in the interviews learned through mentoring by others. These leaders see their program’s excellence as a value to instill in another generation. The best programs should have the ability to further their effectiveness and spread such influence to other environments where these values are greatly needed.

#### 4. Hiring of Mostly Christian Staff

The vetting process for hiring members of a preschool staff can take on an increased level of complexity by weighing the merits of a potential hire’s teaching ability with the depth of their Christian faith. As finding the highest quality teacher in the classroom is a priority, the issue of desiring people of faith teaching in a Christian school is an equally weighty matter.

The preschool director from Faith United Methodist Church tells potential hires, “But if God put it in your heart, this is your ministry and you are going to love working here.” She furthers her comments by stating, “That is one thing I insist on. I ask them do you go to church? Even if they go to Mass, I want to make sure they are in church.” The preschool director at Metropolitan noted that, “They need to have a relationship to the Lord and what is in their heart has to align with what they believe at Metropolitan.” Examples exist where persons of faith were not the most qualified and some programs seek quality over a level of Christian faith, but those were only in those extreme cases where no other person of faith was qualified to fill the position. In one case, the Head of School was forbidden to hire non-practicing Christians. When I asked if it affected the quality of her staff, she indicated that this had a negative impact. The desire is to uphold the integrity of a Christian environment. All four of the programs studied upheld Christian ideals and offered preference to Christians to fill vacancies. In order to shape a child, they are led by individuals such as teachers. In a Christian school, the hope is to lead them to the greatest leader in human history: Jesus.

As this question involved roles of leadership, no single paradigm can emerge as the sole descriptor for clergy or directors of the school. Leadership is complex because a variety of people effectively demonstrate competence in this area. The theme of collaborative ministry emerged as the strongest prevailing theme in this study. One preschool director noted that, “It seemed like [the preschool] was called a ministry of the church, but it had no real connection. You all had to build a bridge back to the church.” This connection occurred when the director worked collaboratively with the Director of the Children’s department at the church. The preschool director said that the “Children’s

ministry and I became much more involved in having [a shared staff member]—that liaison has helped. [The church staff] come over once a month have a breakfast where they are inviting parents to things. We make sure that we are inviting parents to things at the church, and have pastors present at our programs.” Noting that these actions came with strategic planning, she spoke with relief that, “We are much more connected than we were, which makes us feel less like an island to ourselves.” In another location, the pastor and Head of School noted the need to identify and connect with newcomers including school families on Sunday mornings. Through these conversations, he realized the large church’s need for this function, so he created a position and filled it with a person “who is in charge of connections. We have just hired [sic] and she has developed a Connections Team.” This team works to connect newcomers on Sunday mornings to the broader programs of the church.

These collaborations took on descriptions such as “alignment,” “focus,” “intentionality” and “bridge-building” within the interviews, but senior leaders from the church and school clearly understood that all worked together to ensure families in the school were in contact with the broader church. This bridge-building in shared leadership gave an undeniable path in which families who enrolled in the school came into the life of the church and participated in worship, classes and other activities. The bridge worked the other way too as families from the church benefitted from the quality offerings of their congregation’s preschool and school ministry. This two-way path on a bridge between the entities revealed models that demonstrated faithful, fruitful leadership that led families into both schools and congregations that served them well.

### 5. Clergy Committed to Supporting the School or Daycare

The greatest recurring factor in this study pertained to the role of the clergy in relation to the daycare or school. In every interview, the clergy or staff highlighted the importance of pastoral support and involvement. This role did not entail a pastor's constant participation in the regular day-to-day activities of the daycare, school or preschool's program. It was a role based on unwavering support and presence at events. Question six in the survey from Stage One indicated that 51 percent of the clergy regularly participated in the school's program. Less than 2 percent noted that they were never involved in the school program. Most clergy had some level of involvement in the activities of the preschool or school. The four pastors interviewed in this study were among those who were regularly involved in the school.

When noting the pastoral presence, a degree of difficulty is evident for one or more clergy to participate in every event hosted by the school. However, one director noted that, "We have pastoral presence at our preschool events. We have a prayer and a welcome." Even at this level, a simple ministry of presence can affect a congregation. It is an area of acclimation. In larger congregations where the pastors may never have a chance to meet school families in worship, their participation in a school's weekday chapel affords an opportunity for families and the pastor to interact. In one program, the pastor leads chapel with the intent to meet parents and lead the children. He notes of the parents that attend chapel that, "We often see them, for instance in elementary chapel" because their children are acolytes or reading scripture. Parents have engaged him in these moments to share about their involvement in the congregation or to simply have a

time to interact with these new families. The pastor as the leader of the overall worship life can establish rapport with families by simply interacting with them in a school's chapel service.

When asked to describe the role of the pastor, one Head of School commented that, "It's paramount. You get to know the kids. The kids get to know the staff. All of these things say that we have a soft approach of saying that we care about you. So if they have a need or are looking for a church, they come here."

The supportive role of the pastor is a quality that showed up in all four interviewed ministry sites. The Heads and Directors equally valued both pastoral presence and the supportive role of the pastor. In one particular time of crisis, one ministry leader noted the consistent support of the pastor through the ordeal. When pressed about where exactly the pastor showed the greatest support, the response was, "All the way through. I mean I wouldn't have made it."

Another Preschool Director spoke of her senior pastor and noted that, "One thing that I will say is that [the pastor] always had my back and that this is my ministry. And those times were when I was overwhelmed and he will tell them that [she] is the director. That means so much to me." The senior pastor of this particular Director noted in his interview that his philosophy in shared leadership rests on the principles of trust and clear communication. He stated this about the working relationship with any director: "You have to be able to trust them. You've got to give them some freedom to explore some ideas. You also need clear communication." To him, this entailed granting the director the latitude to make program decisions in conjunction with the Preschool Board, but keeping him informed as the senior pastor of the overall program.

### **Research Question #3: Description of Evidence**

“What systems are in place to ensure the common goal of introducing children and families to Jesus through its church school?”

Organizations that succeed are capable of accomplishing this feat by not only executing their plan at the moment, but also thinking ahead anticipating matters such as leadership succession, perpetuation of values and preservation of the quality of their product. Congregations operate in such environments as many of them succeed in aligning the ministries of the congregation and its daycare or school. Various factors can lead to the deterioration of this harmonious work of the two.

This study revealed a few factors that congregations and schools embodied in preparation for their future in ministry. Both individuals and the broader corporate systems possessed these qualities. A concerted effort to ensure strong governance with various leaders playing critical roles was most evident.

#### 1. Values and Administrative Oversight Held by Governing Boards

Good corporate governance was consistently evident in programs such as those studied in this project. In all four of the ministry sites, there were active, well-qualified boards of the preschool or grade school. Congregants with a desire to keep the school aligned with the church’s mission overwhelmingly populated these school boards. It was in their interests to keep the school running as a functional, Christian ministry of the church.

A lack of clarity can occur when the entities charged to perpetuate these core values are derelict because they feel that other entities hold the responsibility. Some believe that the school's director holds these values. Others believe that this task rests with the pastor. Others might say that it is the faculty of the school and still others would suggest that the responsibility rests in the governing board. When asked about the powers that keep and perpetuate the ongoing mission of a church's school, one pastor noted that, "it goes back to the Board of Directors. One of the things I focus on is leadership development. I really believe in our system of shared leadership between lay and clergy, staff and volunteers." In her estimation, however, the board holds the primary responsibility of perpetuating the values and vision of a school's mission.

One attribute of a good board is the support of its director. One Head of Program expressed gratitude for her predecessor who groomed the School Board to support the Head and many of the difficult decisions related to the position. She stated that, "she set up the board to support whoever the head was at the time." This acting Head was operating in an environment that offered this kind of support for the program's senior leadership. The nature of supporting the school's head is of great importance and the supportive role of the clergy is discussed in the next section.

Senior leadership is critical for a program within a church to run with the kind of effectiveness that these programs exhibit. Searching for a new director or Head of School is a daunting task, but one that is taken seriously by more people than just the senior pastor of the church. The governing boards, if run correctly, are tasked with the responsibility of finding a suitable leader. Even as the members of the board may have reservations or questions, they sometimes look beyond themselves to plan for a change in

leadership. In one program, the director noted that in their case, the board, “brought in a consultant to help us with succession planning.” This move was not only critical in keeping a program aligned with its congregation, but also sometimes a poor transition can threaten the overall entity. One leader noted that, “I have watched schools and being on the board—watched the transition be horrible. Some even causing schools to close.” This outcome is always a possibility, but the oversight of the governing boards along with senior leadership at the congregational and school levels can help avoid such situations. The plan should expect that a suitable candidate can fill the role of leading a school that is yoked in mission to its congregation.

A functional, well-trained Board of Directors for a school is one of the great qualities of these programs that run with such effectiveness. They keep the values such as maintaining a clear, Christian focus in all matters. They are actively involved with the oversight of the Director and that individual’s decisions ranging in everything from staffing to scheduling. They also are involved with the financial governance to ensure that there is a solid business model implemented for the school. The Director handles many of these matters, but the support of the Board is critical in keeping the entity rooted in its values.

## 2. Clergy Assert Themselves Within the School at Critical Junctures

The role of the clergy is to lead the church. Within the church are certain ministry areas including their school or daycare. An emerging attribute is that a pastor develops trust in others to lead in their respective environment. However, at times situations

warranted their assertiveness in the program. In these cases, they initiated conversation, facilitated clarity and insisted on collaboration.

Understanding that leadership in the school is a shared responsibility, their assertiveness showed most clearly where critical decisions were concerned. One pastor was involved in relocating and building out the church and school campus at a cost of over ten million dollars. He understands that he does not get to make the decision about his successor but anticipates that the succession plan will include a pastor who has an interest in the school. He engaged the appointive system by facilitating a meeting for his leaders to communicate to the empowered authorities: “we arranged for [the Bishop] to come down and preach and not just to primarily preach, but so that he could have lunch with some of my officers-about fifteen of them and talk about this church and where it’s going and what they want. It was them telling him what they needed. I didn’t have to tell them. They knew what they wanted.” He had already done his part by grooming his leadership and arranging a meeting with the episcopal leader to communicate their congregation’s needs regarding a pastor with an interest in the school. He asserted himself through grooming his leaders and then by facilitating a meeting.

In another program, the finance committee recommended levying a heavy financial assessment upon the school to raise more than what some considered their appropriate share. When the director of children’s ministries brought this to the senior pastor with evidence that the financial burden was going to erode the quality of the program, she replied, “I’m going to have a team look at this.” The children’s director noted that, “The team leader looked at this and came to the same conclusions. That was a big turning point for us. But all of this led to some changes.” The intervention of the

pastor, who gathered other decision-making groups together, kept the school focused on making disciples and not just making money.

One pastor was distraught at the program's condition as it was financially unsound and had little congregational connection to any of the enrolled families from the school. In improving the quality and connection of the church to the school, he said, "I'm not an advocate of replacing public school, but for those years leading up to it I thought, if we're going to do it—we're going to do it well. I got very involved where I needed to be in talking through some of the problems and challenges and setting goals about how we can turn this around." Ultimately, he was behind the move to replace the preschool director with one that would lead the program to financial stability and help connect families to the church.

When engaged, the pastors become critical catalysts for keeping the ministry of the school rightly aligned. They work with boards and deal with succession plans or replacement of leaders. Many times, they balance administrative responsibilities in matters such as personnel and finances with spiritual responsibilities like missional alignment and pastoral care. Their balance also includes allowing the Director of Head of Program to lead their school and not intervene unless the situation warrants such involvement.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

This study revealed a number of qualities demonstrated by effective programs capable of reaching families in the school or daycare and integrating them into the life of the church. Perhaps with all of the findings noted above, one of the prevailing themes is

that in all of these programs, the congregational leaders and the school leaders worked together.

They intentionally collaborated with one another and included the other entity in programs where appropriate. They caught a vision of what the greater role of the staff could be when moving beyond the perceived barriers of the program. They were also intentionally involved—most notably seen in a Director or Head who worships on Sundays with the congregation or in a Pastor who leads the school’s chapel services. In other areas, staff and volunteers are involved in each other’s programs, whether serving in a supportive role or simply allowing for acclimation of the greater ministry’s personnel.

Another revelation from this study was the nature of preserving a Christian environment whenever possible. A focus on purpose led to viewing the school as a source of introducing families to Jesus. This focus in turn allowed for hiring practices that seek Christians to fill their school’s staff positions. Although the interviews revealed that a qualified Christian at times was not available to fill a teaching position, the hire was clearly informed about the Christian culture—even if they were not practicing the Christian faith at the time. Sometimes the preservation of this Christian environment necessitated the assertive involvement of the pastor. These interventions, though rare, were crucial in keeping values upheld and missions aligned.

A number of intangible elements emerged through the study. These included the role of God and the commitment to quality. Every congregation should anticipate God’s activity in their church. In the programs participating in this study, the work of God was evident and expected. Valuing quality also was evident in the selection of curriculum,

maintenance of facilities, selection of staff, training of staff, grooming staff to become excellent leaders and training board members to be supportive, faithful and active in maintaining these environments. Leadership in such a program is thick and complex. It involves God, a senior pastor and a school/program director. Additionally, leadership includes a governing Board complete with its own hierarchy of leadership. Within the staff, leadership is shared and decisions made among department heads, committee leaders and other positions. The complexities of leadership are many, and yet when faithfully aligned with an intentionality of purpose, ministry occurs alongside education. These connections happen when school families connect to the church, when church families connect to the school and when people connect to other people in healthy ways and in healthy environments. These cultures of intentional connection strive to make the most significant connection of all: the connection of people to Jesus.

These different elements work in harmony to create a culture that serves the Lord through healthy, vibrant ministries. Together, they contribute to major findings for this study:

1. Churches That Attract Families From Their Schools Value Evangelism and Quality.
2. Cultures of Intentional Connection Have Leaders Collaborating with a Unified Purpose.
3. Functional Systems Sustain the Mission.

## CHAPTER 5

### LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

This project sought to investigate those cultures where the church and its school were intentionally and effectively connected for the purpose of reaching families from their school. This study revealed a number of congregations effectively engaged in these practices. Other schools or churches can implement some of these strategies for use in their own programs.

The major findings that arose from this research indicated that culture, leadership and effective governance are significant factors for these types of programs. The connection between a church and its school can present challenges, but these prevailing themes can offer some insight for those pursuing this vision. First, churches that attract families from their schools value evangelism and quality. This quality is seen in the contexts of offering Christian education in a variety of ways—whether through Sunday School, preschool, grade school or occasional offerings like Vacation Bible School. These congregations sought to educate children about the Christian faith. Next, cultures of intentional connection have leaders collaborating with a unified purpose. These leaders involve pastors, directors, board members and lay volunteers who purposefully communicate and create common goals. The final finding revealed that functional systems in the church and school helped to sustain the mission. These systems include good board governance and mentoring opportunities.

## Major Findings

### **First Finding: Churches That Attract Families From Their Schools Value Evangelism and Quality.**

In keeping with the practices of biblical imperatives and church tradition, modern churches engage in a variety of educational venues including Sunday Schools, Vacation Bible School, Preschools and grade schools. These programs vary in their scope and quality. Those churches and schools interviewed in this project demonstrated that they had cultures where a drive for quality and Christian emphasis on education allowed for evangelism to occur in their respective educational programs. The churches that implement quality in their cultures of intentional connection tend to attract school families to their broader programs as witnessed in instances from this study.

Congregations that attract families from their daycares or schools seem to have a clear evangelical focus for their daycare, preschool or grade school. This clarity leads directors to hire Christians on their staff so as to fulfill the congregation's mission to make disciples of Jesus. This is a result of the collaborative leadership named in the first finding producing fruits that fulfill their mission. Blanchard and Hodges state that, "[Leadership] is how we influence others to accomplish a specific mission, vision and goal, whether grand and glorious or humble and mundane. Leading like Jesus is infusing harmony in our influences on other people with God's plan for their lives and ours" (Blanchard and Hodges 193). This focus on vision to accomplish a mission is a leading factor in successfully connecting a church and its daycare or school. This value not only seeks to reach a new generation, but it honors the historical role of a church involved in

evolving education, “congregations should give emphasis to providing resources for family [sic] to nurture faith in their children” (Maddix 322).

When programs are in harmony and evangelically aligned, even a potentially contentious topic such as sharing classroom space becomes a common ground as workers in the church and the school view these rooms as tools for Christian outreach. One of the programs had a novel idea that demonstrates the passion to serve Christ in their culture by defining space as neither church nor preschool space. They claimed that the classroom was God’s space. This simple designation highlighted the supremacy of God in their program. In a way, it reflects the *Christus Victor* in that beyond many impediments, a victory ensues. It signaled to Sunday School Superintendents and the preschool director that the classrooms could exist to serve a variety of purposes—not an either/or proposition of hosting a Sunday School class or preschool.

The evolution of some educational programs originated from congregations using their rooms to educate children using the Bible as the primary text. As Christians led many of the early North American public schools in the age of Horace Bushnell, the lines between education and Christian education were blurred. The separation of church and state has intentionally separated these two institutions. In a church environment, however, these two can operate unified once again in Christian mission to offer Jesus to the world through education. In many ways, it reflects the early church as seen in Acts 2:44, “All who believed were together and had all things in common;” and Acts 4:32b, “and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.” These examples of alignment are seen in the biblical accounts, early Christian education and in examples such as these studied in this project.

All four of the programs interviewed valued quality. Perhaps this focus on offering the best kept their enrollment full and their reputation strong. Participation in other church programs rested solely with school families desiring to participate in the activities of the congregation. This participation is significant because the daycare and school programs that sought to instill quality Christian values in their children saw that this was present in the overall program of the congregation. Good quality programs implemented measures to ensure that new families engaged staff who were Christians and eventually received invitations to participate in worship and discipleship opportunities offered by the church. Some of these classes offered included parenting classes, marriage enrichment workshops and financial planning classes. These school parents also received materials about enrolling in other entry point programs such as Upward Sports, which is a ministry that many churches utilize as another point of engagement with families. This harmony of programs demonstrated through these four sites exposed various techniques that show cultures of intentional connection.

A culture of intentional connection will embody quality as it challenges complacency and creates innovative ways to engage new people. Robert Quinn observed that, "Excellence...requires continued deviance from the norm. When an individual or organization excels, it will encounter pressure to return to conventional behavior" (174). An evangelical culture of excellence requires focus on maintaining the classrooms and renovating when necessary. Focus is required to implement standards for quality in hiring staff which possess characteristics beneficial to the church's mission. Focus is required to create innovative events that attract and engage a variety of individuals such as school parents and their children. These hiring practices ultimately reflect an institutional

commitment to Jesus. Teachers, assistants and caregivers are screened and vetted so that Christians are hired, if possible. The interviews noted that a hiring may be postponed until a suitable person of faith can carry out the duties. In a few instances, the quest for quality instructors foregoes the prerequisite of Christian faith. These circumstances seemed rare as only one Head of School referenced it in our time of conversation. She noted that this instructor's ability was of such a caliber that the position was rightly filled with that person regardless of their religious affiliation.

Most churches with an excellence in ministry have the type of program where senior leadership appreciates the need to invest in staff, facilities and curriculum. Teachers are offered ample continuing education and their technology is up-to-date. These ideas materialize when church boards support the vision of a leader. This symbiosis of leadership and governing boards is discussed in this study's next two findings.

**Second Finding: Cultures of Intentional Connection Have Leaders Collaborating with a Unified Purpose.**

Successfully yoked programs have leaders committed to collaboration with a focus on their purpose. The church structures the school as a vessel of Christian education with the additional benefit of operating as a fertile ground for evangelism. A unified purpose has an intentionality of alignment. These churches use their influence to shape their employees to understand their roles as both educators *and* ministers. The teachers of the school and daycare see themselves as ministers of the Gospel to the children and their families. This results in part from a pastor who reminds school staff

about their place in the work of God. The Director or Head of School reinforces this function. The weekday teachers are agents of the church and they not only educate, but also demonstrate the Christian life. Knowing that not all of the families involved in the daycare or school program are Christian, the expectation on the staff is one of Christian example and Kingdom mission.

Synergistic relationships in ministry can yield effective results. The Bible provides narratives of functional and collaborative ministry. Paul's ministry partnerships exemplified effective pairings, particularly in examples such as his work with Silas. These results scale well from the Biblical narrative to corporate structures of the institutional church. Many congregations view their daycare, preschool or grade school ministries as more than just a stream of revenue to support the burden of maintaining a physical plant. Faithful congregations see these programs as doorways to discipleship. Pastors and staff from the congregations work collaboratively in partnership with Directors, Heads of Schools and the staff of these programs to create environments where children learn foundational and educational components as well as spiritually significant ones.

An effective example of collaborative leadership occurs when senior leaders participate in each other's programs. For the senior pastor, this is embodied in their involvement with school programs, chapel services and assemblies. For the head of a daycare or school, this is seen through their involvement in worship. Though this may not seem like a leadership role because they are participants only, they are still leading by example. This evidence is supported from Stage One's data, which suggests that there is an increased incidence of involvement of school families with the church when a director

is actively worshipping with the congregation. Additionally, this study discovered that pastors played a role in supporting the Director of Head of School through their involvement with the daycare or school. When each leader is involved in the other's activities, it allows for multiple points of contact with families from the school.

The programs interviewed exhibit successful collaboration by having regular meetings between the pastor and the leader of the daycare or school. The Directors or Heads of School are part of the senior staff meetings and in many cases, answer directly to the senior pastor. Additionally, the programs that exhibited a higher level of success in attracting families from their school to the host's congregational life had senior pastors and preschool directors planning coordinated ministry events.

This relationship between leaders is not always natural. Sometimes the church and school become islands of activity disconnected from each other. Pastoral changes are instances where this separation is likely to occur. During these times of transition, a tension between the director and a new pastor can arise regarding the roles of the respective leaders. Reeder claims that working through transitional tension is beneficial to the whole. He says, "So if a change really is needed, how do you as the principal leader of the team of leaders bring it about? First rather than focusing on removing someone, you should focus on helping the individual in question find where God wants him or her to be" (164). Sometimes getting a director to understand their Kingdom role helps them collaborate more effectively under the spiritual leader of the organization. This shared responsibility of the senior positions allows certain leaders to assume authority at appropriate moments. When these leaders determine the most faithful course of action, they will have worked together for a common goal. When a separation occurs

between the school and the church, a focus on reconciliation can provide a model for healing and restoration. In a way, this behavior embodies the fruits of *Felix Culpa*, where the areas of greatest trouble do not lead to the closure of the school or forcible removal of a leader. Instead, it serves as a catalyst to further refine the possibilities of restoring a common relationship in ministry between the two. The programs in this study had undergone multiple transitional periods of both pastors and directors. The results varied in the outcome of these periods of transition, but in all interviews, the pastors expressed their desire to work with school leaders and bring them into a place of cooperative relationship. At times, they required restorative measures. This work of reconciliation is sacred in nature and is a testimony to the healing that happens when God is at work in a church and its ministries.

One of the tension-creating realities of a church daycare or preschool program is that numerous individuals are empowered to make decisions. This dynamic can confuse staff members or parents as to who has authority over the decisions being made. Ultimately, the senior pastor is in charge of the program because the preschool or daycare is typically considered a ministry much like a music department or youth group. Its most significant difference is that the preschool or daycare can charge fees for their services rendered. Even though this tuition can cause a program to achieve profitability, it still must answer to the mission of the church and the senior pastor. Achieving this mission is a shared task with others responsible for administering the educational and Christian aspects of the environment. This is why effectively connected programs like the ones studied require continuous collaboration between the senior leaders.

Another important part of intentional connection occurs with mixed environment offerings. All people in church and school leadership must understand the importance of these events. When individuals ask if the church or the school hosts a program such as a Trunk-or-Treat, the answer is that it is a joint event. This concept is further enhanced when the church advertises its programs and offerings to the families in the school so that parents are informed and can participate if desired. Families get to know the church staff because the latter participate in the school events. This cross-program facilitation of resources was mentioned in all four interview sites which further supported the evidence of ministry engineered through joint ideas between church and school leadership.

Collaborative leadership does not solely exist in executive offices. Whether in the classroom or through the curriculum, cultures of intentional connection have leaders who are passionate about serving their Lord. In many ways, they embody what Paul affirms in Romans 8:28 that, “we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” They feel that, even through the tension of sharing space or differentiating leadership roles, God is the end-goal and that harmony in a program allows them to not compete with one another, but to compliment one another.

### **Third Finding: Functional Systems Sustain the Mission.**

The mission of the church is to create disciples of Jesus. When the programs of a congregation focus on that goal, then the church is fulfilling its role in the world. Regardless of the ministry area, when clarity is given to the core mission, systems sustain this momentum. The interviews from this study revealed that functional boards and

leadership mentoring sustained the long-term mission of the program. Christians joyfully anticipate the future in many ways including the return of Jesus. The United Methodist communion ritual has the congregation affirming the mystery of faith that, “Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again” (*United Methodist Hymnal* 14). This anticipatory expectation is further affirmed by the celebrant who prays, “By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet” (14). We also plan for successful ministry to the next generation. This study discovered two practices in sustaining a unified mission into the future: good board governance and mentoring.

The school’s Board of Directors or Steering Committee sustains the values of the program. Maintaining these values in a church-related daycare or school involves a group that collectively upholds these qualities over time. Pastors and directors have tenures that are limited, but a group of directors collectively holding these values allows for ministerial consistency. All of the programs in this study had functioning and well-trained Boards where the expectations were clear. The composition of these boards included church members who were uniquely qualified to execute their duties for the church school. Since these members were church members, their loyalties would presumably align with the church and its mission. Spiritual maturity was a prerequisite to serve in these different capacities. In the four interview sites, these Board members understood that their program would offer quality Christian education to the broader community. This understanding meant that they were willing for their schools to relocate, rebuild, remodel, re-structure or implement new technologies. Collins’ claim from *Built to Last* addressed this topic regarding institutional adjustment as these boards

distinguished their timeless core values and enduring core purpose (which should never change) from their operating practices and business strategies. These core values remain while personnel or property may change.

One great example was in the congregation where the Head of School and senior pastor, who were married, worked together to build a program that grew through middle school. These two envisioned an entity that offered quality education alongside quality worship. Their expectation was that both the school and church would involve families in each other's activities when appropriate. This couple is an anomaly as few programs have a husband and wife team to run the school and church collaboratively. However, theirs is an example of a clear vision pursued by engaged leaders and functional boards. Both the school and the church had leaders serving together who had a clear goal in mind: to offer high quality, Christian education. The school offered this type of education on the weekdays and the church offered this education on Sunday mornings. The boards worked to relocate the entire program, construct new buildings, and create intentional cultures and to support the executive leadership.

Another quality that emerged from these interviews revealed that mentoring matters to cultures of connection. Many of the directors indicated that other leaders in the church school field groomed them for their current role. The programs that invested in a new generation of leaders experienced significant involvement of families with their church activities, thus attracting a new generation of congregants. In the following quote, J. Oswald Sanders spoke of missionaries, but could have easily been speaking of programs that groomed church school leaders for a new generation. He says, "Perhaps the most strategic and fruitful work of modern missionaries is to help leaders of tomorrow

develop their spiritual potential. This task requires careful thought, wise planning, endless patience, and genuine Christian love” (148). Some can say that the church schoolteacher of tomorrow is not that different from a missionary. Bill Hybels offers this suggestion regarding leadership: “I think that leaders are at their very best when they are raising up leaders around them...because only leaders can develop other leaders and create a leadership culture” (122). Blanchard and Hodges frame these questions regarding grooming the next generation, “How well am I doing in preparing others to take my place when the time comes? Do I consider them a threat or an investment in the future?” (46). These programs studied are future-focused as they anticipate reaching new families and as they groom a new generation of leaders. These programs are similar to the way Jesus called and equipped the disciples in that they select and equip others to carry out a mission. For Jesus, it was the establishment of the Kingdom. For the preschool, it is the perpetuation of leadership as a facet within the Kingdom that educates children and ministers to their families.

The New Testament has stories of mentoring going back to our Lord, Jesus. He called and equipped a dozen men to learn and take the mission into the future. Called later by Jesus, Paul took his own partners to train and teach. These persons had opportunities to serve alongside their instructor. Eventually, these understudies would become leaders themselves. Cultures of intentional connection saw the value of investing in a new generation of church school leaders and trusting these persons with responsibilities in the program.

The existence of well-run boards and mentoring programs indicates that there is a culture within a church and its school that these partners are planning for the future.

Theirs is one of hard, yet fruitful work. Sustaining these types of systems requires talent, devotion and training. Whether maintaining good board governance or grooming a new generation of church-school leaders, these efforts are difficult, yet serve the Kingdom well.

### **Ministry Implications of the Findings**

Maintaining harmony between a church and its school is a quandary for many congregations. Several individuals that completed the online survey from Stage One sent follow-up emails inquiring about the findings of the study as they were dealing with these types of chasms in their ministry. Numerous obstacles are present for programs that exist together. These problem areas can find resolution through Christian leaders who are willing to find faithful solutions to their situations. Some of the following thoughts could help resolve conflicts in churches with a preschool or daycare ministry. The question for many is where to start.

Improving the quality of a program can happen in a variety of ways. Establishing a curriculum review team within the school staff could empower emerging leaders and could improve the quality of faith-based education. Refurbishing the facilities could begin with a workday to clean and organize the classrooms. This action does not cost any money, yet could refresh an area by reducing clutter and could demonstrate quality through a neatly presented space. Staff improvement can happen through training events or team building exercises that boost morale and increase effectiveness in the classroom. Some programs may opt for more ambitious goals such as renovating classrooms or

seeking out teachers with higher levels of education by offering competitive salaries and benefit packages comparable to that of the public school system.

Many sometimes see meetings as cumbersome or mundane. However, many cultures without effective connection lack interactions between the pastor and director. One simple way to rectify this is to foster a relationship between these two. A starting point could begin with a simple conversation over coffee or sharing a meal in order to establish a relationship. This, in turn, can lead to more formal meetings to talk about alignment of values and to discuss harmonizing of programs. These meetings could expand to include certain staff or board members in the conversation.

Engaged and well-trained boards are something that all programs can develop through offering resources and training to its members. However, finding the right people to populate these governing entities present problems as potential participants may have unclear objectives for their purpose. Once again, a pastor or director can establish a relationship with members of the board. This connection can then serve as the means to instill values, cast vision and develop trust with each other.

The implications of this study are that cultures of intentional and effective connection are possible in any congregation whose leadership is committed to establish harmony between their church and school. This study uncovered multiple narratives and various techniques to establish healthy paradigms that create collaborative ministries. Even troubled programs have been able to heal systemic wounds and create larger visions for the church and school as evidenced in some of this study's interviews. These programs are doing effective ministry and their tips, techniques, strategies and principles can serve other programs well.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The scope of the project sought to describe cultures of intentional connection. Stage One narrowed the field of potential sites. As many congregations do not keep records of daycare or school families that attend worship, the accuracy of data provided either by the church or school is susceptible to error. Additionally, because of a flaw in one of the survey questions in Stage One, the sample of churches included only the largest of programs because of the gross number of families involved in the worship of the church. An unintentional limitation due to an error in accuracy caused the flaw in that question. Conclusive evidence of participation from a percentage basis was difficult to ascertain because of the vast range offered in question 2. The flaw revealed itself when calculating percentages of participation showed that congregations with very low average worship attendance had the highest percentages of involvement. More accurate data would result if a modification to the survey simply asked each respondent to submit the number of families from the school that are involved in the congregation's worship. This correction should allow for churches of all sizes to be included in a study of this type for the future.

The comparison of family units to the average worship attendance produced another minor but notable limitation. Measuring how many children from the school were involved in worship with the congregation could have led to a more accurate result. This step would eliminate the utilization of family units as the gauge of participation and would further refine the answers of the respondents. This limitation did not consider that a "family unit" could have two or more people and could differ wildly depending on the familial circumstances.

### **Unexpected Observations**

The most surprising findings in this study came from the nature of leaders who stated that they had a divine call to their position. All Christians have a call to ministry in life. However, what was surprising was the level of articulation expressed by directors who shared their indisputable call to ministry in the school. It is the kind of answer that one might expect to hear from a candidate for ordained ministry explaining their call to a District Committee on Ministry. There are few differences between these candidates for ordained ministry and those who were leading large, successful preschool and grade school programs.

Another surprise involved the leaders' undeterred and, in some instances, almost all-consuming commitment to quality. All four sites interviewed indicated a desire to constantly seek improvement. This commitment to that quality seemingly bridged the gap between a church and school. An assumption is that families involved in the school received an exceptional education for their children and therefore may have felt that they could also trust their family to the same entity for their spiritual formation. There was an undeniable correlation here and it may warrant further investigation to identify why those families seemed to participate in the fullness of the program.

### **Recommendations**

For a future study, a number of recommendations could improve the quality of the data. The first and most critical would be to ask for a numerical figure, not a numerical range regarding those families from the school that are involved with the church. This move would improve the accuracy and validity of the calculation of the participating

percentages. A further recommendation would be to cross-examine the percentage of families involved from the school who participate in the church. This percentage may be a more telling figure relating to the level of participation from the school. Additionally, as stated above in the limitations section, it could be prudent to compare the number of individuals in the school participating in worship, rather than comparing family units to overall worship attendance. One last recommendation would be to seek enough locations where small, medium and large churches could participate in a study such as this. If the field was expanded to nine sites split into three size categories, it could help to identify effective practices of intentional connection between these programs.

Multiple studies could complement the work initiated in this project, such as creating an assessment tool for congregations or schools to gauge their levels of involvement or effectiveness with each other. It could be a post-intervention study in which additional tools could be designed and implemented to assist churches and their schools or daycares to come into more faithful alignment with one another.

Another project that could arise from these findings could center on the unchurched families within the schools whose lives were spiritually changed because of their exposure to the Christian faith through the daycare or school program. This study could feasibly happen within the school or daycare environment if it is operating with a Christian mission as one of its core values.

### **Postscript**

For many years, my perspective of a church and its school ministry involved using a metaphorical bridge as the link that unified the two. Yet, as these programs

demonstrate, a bridge still reflects a distance between two separated areas. What these programs showed me were models of closing the gap. As I used the different poles of magnets in the beginning, I am more apt to talk about the shifting so that the two are attracted to one another—not left in positions where the two repel each other. These programs demonstrated positioning that brought enormous good to many. For teachers, this environment offered a Christian school where a career ensued. For the families, they received a school that was filled with love and joy. When they drew near through the congregation, they received a home church that could serve their needs for all their lives—and for all eternity. What may have started as a location for childcare resulted in a community of faith that could touch every member of their household. Perhaps the story of Peter ministering to the household of Cornelius in Acts 10 and Paul and Silas ministering to the jailer in Acts 16 are biblical examples of grace touching entire households. These biblical accounts were extraordinary for many reasons, but they still demonstrate that an interaction with an individual can affect an entire family. Perhaps the daycares and schools in our churches will do more than just care for children during the day. The hope is that they will minister to the entire family and offer them that gift of salvation as offered freely through Christ.

## APPENDIXES

### Appendix A. Confidential Online Survey

*Thank you for participating in this brief and confidential survey. It should require no more than a few minutes of your time. Your answers may lead the principal researcher to contact you for further information. All answers will be protected on a password protected USB storage device to maintain confidentiality. However, no guarantees can be made regarding maintaining confidentiality through this site.*

- 1) Your name, church name and position
- 2) How many family units from your school and/or daycare program worship with the congregation on a regular basis?
  - a. Less than 5 family units
  - b. 5-10 family units
  - c. 11-20 family units
  - d. More than 20 family units
- 3) Which of the following best describes the relationship of the church to the school? (Select one from dropdown menu)
  - The church provides space for the school and/or daycare.
  - The church provides staffing for the school and/or daycare.
  - The church assists with the needs of the school and/or daycare families.
  - The church provides volunteers to assist with the school and/or daycare.
- 4) Which of the following best describes the relationship of the school to the church? (Select one from dropdown menu)
  - The school introduces the congregation to new families.
  - The school generates additional financial resources for the congregation.
  - The school helps to maintain classrooms.
  - The school provides staff support to other congregational programs.
- 5) How many school families remain active in the church's worship, missions or discipleship offerings after their children have aged out of the school or daycare?
  - a. Less than 10 family units
  - b. 10-15 family units
  - c. 16-25 family units
  - d. More than 25 family units

- 6) What role does the clergy have with the school/daycare program?
  - a. Leads or participates in the school program occasionally.
  - b. Is regularly involved in the school program.
  - c. Is rarely involved in the school program.
  - d. Is never involved in the school program.
- 7) What role does the daycare/school director have with the congregation?
  - a. Is a member of the congregation who worships regularly.
  - b. Attends worship with the host congregation occasionally.
  - c. Coordinates a preschool Sunday at least once a year.
  - d. No involvement at all.
- 8) What role does the preschool staff have with the congregation?
  - a. Most members of the daycare/school staff worship regularly with the congregation.
  - b. Some members of the daycare/school staff worship regularly with the congregation.
  - c. Members of the daycare/school staff attend worship with the congregation for special services.
  - d. There is no involvement of the daycare/school staff with the worshiping life of the host congregation.

Appendix B- Scripted Invitation to participate in interview

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Based on a previously completed survey, it was discovered that your congregation met certain criteria with its relationship to your daycare and/or preschool. I would appreciate your willingness to participate in a one-on-one semi-structured interview with you in a location of your choosing where we may converse confidentially. The location you choose should be one that will allow for a safe, confidential environment where we may discuss aspects of your church and/or school. If willing, a date that will accommodate your schedule will be determined at a later time. The interviews will be conducted in one-on-one sessions as to accommodate the schedules of clergy or school directors.

## Appendix C- Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Stage Two will take the results of the survey above and determine which congregations are especially gifted at integrating children and families from their weekday schools or daycares into the worshipping and programmatic life of the congregation. These semi-structured interviews will take place at 4 locations and interview clergy, administrators, staff and board members.

Thank you for agreeing to this interview today. Our conversation will seek to understand better the relationship that exists between this congregation and its weekday school/daycare program. This conversation will be recorded and parts of it will likely be integrated into this project that is identifying habits of congregations and schools that foster a culture of intentional connection. You are encouraged to speak freely about the cultures in which you work and if need be—can take time to clarify statements or refine thoughts with the interviewer.

- Can you tell me the history of this school?
- What do the school (or daycare) and the church have in common?
- What do you envision as the relationship between the two?
- What are the shared values that exist between the congregation and its school?
- What elements contribute to the collaboration between the church and its school?
- How do you make followers of Jesus and how are families in the school introduced into this process?
- How do leaders interact with each other?
- \*How are families introduced and integrated into either the school or congregation and how are they introduced to the other entity?
- What do you feel is unique in the bond that exists between your congregation and its school?
- If applicable, how do you share space with the weekday classes and the Sunday school classes?

- \*What leadership qualities do you possess that help facilitate a culture of connection to the other entity?
- What do you do to retain a relationship with the families when their children progress out of the program?
- How is the system of connection sustained or how do you see it being sustained?
- \*What systems are in place to ensure that this culture is sustained? i.e.- newsletters, boards populated with church and school families, dedicated staff, shared staff, Church School Christian curriculum that is in harmony with Sunday School curriculum, etc.
- How have you experienced conflict and how has it been resolved?
- Where have you seen God at work in the school or church?

Appendix D- Letter of Informed Consent

**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

***Identifying Cultures of Intentional Connection Between a Church and its School***

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Mark Caldwell from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because of your congregation's interaction with its daycare or preschool.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked questions in a one-on-one recorded conversation about values, activities, principles and practices of your church or weekday childcare or school activities. The location will be at your institution in a location that you feel comfortable having this conversation. This interview will provide a narrative that may be interwoven with others to identify those core values and practices of your church and/or school.

Your family will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A pseudonym will be used instead of your name. A pseudonym will also be used for your congregation's name as well.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell Mark Caldwell. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Mark Caldwell questions any time about anything in this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and there will be no ill-will should you choose not to sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

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Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

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Date Signed

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