ABSTRACT

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR MICRO-COMMUNITIES: DEVELOPING LEADERS IN UNITED METHODIST MICRO-COMMUNITIES

by

G. Anthony McPhail Jr.

The purpose of this project was to formulate a process for developing lay leadership within the context of micro-communities of faith planted by existing United Methodist churches in order to establish a pattern of sustainable, indigenous, and shared leadership of those micro-communities. Within the context of this project, the term "micro-communities" was preferred to the broader term "Fresh Expressions" and was used to denote small communities of faith launched as parallel entities to existing churches. The rationale for this project centered around a promotion of the biblical model of shared leadership, a desire to develop mature disciples within micro-communities of faith, and to promote sustainability within micro-communities by preventing the brunt of leadership from falling on the shoulders of a solo pastor. While the work was primarily focused on micro-communities of faith in the United Methodist context, the literature review covered the Fresh Expressions movement from its roots in Britain, as outlined in the Archbishop's Council's work *Mission-shaped Church*, to United States based work through Fresh Expressions US. The review also covered leadership development principles from multi-site church planting, church planting movements, discipleship movements, and corporate organizational leadership.

Ten pastors and fifteen lay persons participated in this study. The participants reside in five different states in the Southeastern United States: Alabama, Florida,

Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. All twenty-five of the participants are or have participated in the leadership of at least one United Methodist micro-community. Some participants were identified through pre-existing relationships, and others were identified by annual conference officials in the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church. The research process involved mixed methods, utilizing some quantitative sampling for demographic and perception measurements and qualitative sampling through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with pastors, and focus groups with laity. The goal of the research process was to assess the challenges associated with micro-community leadership development and to determine the necessary attributes and abilities needed to lead in a micro-community and the best practices for micro-community leadership development.

The study led to five major findings: 1) While it is not considered to be difficult to develop lay leaders for micro-communities, there are challenges that should be acknowledged such as commitment levels, availability, and the different dynamics of this unique type of ministry. 2) Good relational attributes and abilities are necessary to lead a micro-community of faith. 3) A deep level of spiritual investment is considered a key attribute for potential lay leaders of micro-communities of faith. 4) An apprentice-style leadership development process is ideal for developing leaders of micro-communities of faith. 5) An ideal leadership development process involves a five-phase process of exposure, prayer and observation, hands-on experiences, conversations, and empowerment.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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G. Anthony McPhail Jr.

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I am first of all thankful to the Lord for calling me to serve in the church and, as part of that calling, giving me a chance to explore innovative practices of ministry. It was through that exploration that I applied to the Doctor of Ministry program, with specific interest in the newly formed Church Planting cohort. Doing so gave me the opportunity to be inspired by so many wonderful friends from all over the world, as we traveled together, learned together and shared life together. I thank each and every one of you for the joy you have brought to my life. It also gave me the joy of studying with Drs. Arthur McPhee and Bryan Collier, and I am thankful to both of them for their leadership. I also am grateful to Dr. Collier for his patience and guidance as we exchanged drafts of this project as he also served as my dissertation coach. Dr. Collier, along with Drs. Ellen Marmon and Milton Lowe in the Doctor of Ministry office, deserve complete thanks because I could not have completed this project without their direction and grace.

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While they remain unnamed, I am extremely grateful to the participants that were a part of this study. Each questionnaire I read, interview I conducted, and focus group I facilitated were all gifts. The conversations not only helped me to fulfill the requirements of this project, they inspired me. Thank you for telling your stories and allowing me to learn from you.

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CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter lays the foundation for this project by introducing the reader to the researcher, the problem considered, and the method of study. This project emerged out of my context as a United Methodist pastor with an interest in launching parallel micro-communities out of a traditional church setting, with the micro-communities being designed as alternative forms of church in order to effectively reach un-churched and de-churched individuals. In this process I identified that one of the greatest areas of concern for launching micro-communities relates to adequately leading the existing church and the micro-communities without having all of the responsibilities fall on the lead pastor. This led to determining the problem analyzed in this project and establishing that in this type setting it is necessary to implement a process for lay leadership development amongst micro-community participants for the purpose of them taking on roles within a healthy shared leadership setup.

This chapter develops that problem with adequate research questions and sets the course of action for the remainder of the project by describing the relevant literature and research methods utilized. This project utilized a pre-intervention approach, and so, the relevant literature and research was designed to analyze what has worked in similar settings to establish what might be beneficial for developing a new system.

Autobiographical Introduction

My journey into church planting emerged a few years before this project began as my wife and I moved through the discernment process of planting a church through the South Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. I began discerning

this path while I was in seminary from 2010–2013, and in the fall of 2014, I started to have more intentional conversations with conference leaders about the possibility of starting a new congregation. At first, I fully anticipated that we would plant a church as a traditional "parachute drop" style church, where our family would move into a new community and build relationships for the purpose of developing a congregation. In the fall of 2015, our annual conference experienced an unexpected resignation in the Congregational Development office right around the time our proposal came up for consideration, which unfortunately meant our plans for planting were put on an indefinite hold at the beginning of 2016. I knew that despite the fact that I would not receive an appointment to plant a church that I would move into a new appointment in June of 2016 regardless, but by this point I also had felt a distinct call to start new communities of faith. This paradox caused my discernment journey to head in a different direction.

Sensing that I would be appointed to a traditional church setting, I knew that I would need to find another way to direct my passion for planting new communities of faith. I also knew that based on my limited years of experience, I would likely be appointed somewhere small without much potential for being a mother church or the hub of a multi-site setup. This caused me to wrestle with how I could reconcile my passion for reaching new people for Christ through church planting with my placement in an established church setting that likely would not have a culture for reaching un-churched and de-churched individuals. I began to take a deeper look at my motivations for planting, the type people I wanted to reach, and what new model of church I hoped to introduce in order to reach a different segment of the community. I also began to realize that the church planting models that resonated with me the most were not the large scale

"big launch" style plants, but rather the more organic and smaller-scale setups that were rather unassuming and subsequently might be more accessible to those without a strong church background. I began to wrestle with how that setting might be possible within the context of my impending traditional church appointment.

As I moved through this process, I became introduced to the concept of "Fresh Expressions," which emerged out of Anglican communities in Britain before starting to make inroads within the United Methodist Church connection more recently. The concept of a "fresh expression" is simply an alternative style of church designed to reach people that would not ordinarily be drawn to a traditional style of church. Examples include some larger scale communities but mostly include groups that meet in coffee shops, homes, bars, sport fields, around meals, and other alternative environments outside of church buildings. This movement manifested exactly the type of new communities I envisioned, and the fact that many of them started as parallel projects of existing churches intrigued me even further. This caused me to shift my focus from disappointment over not being able to plant a church to optimism for what might be if I had the opportunity to start these small-scale communities while simultaneously serving as the pastor of an existing congregation.

This change in perspective led me to many questions about the best methodology for launching such communities, but most central was the question of leadership. By this point in my discernment process I knew that the apostolic drive to plant existed within my ministry DNA, and so I knew I wanted to start these communities. I also realized that being a "lone ranger" style planter would not be sustainable. If I were to try to both plant and lead micro-communities while also leading a pastoral charge, all aspects of my

ministry would likely suffer. Furthermore, if I tried to do all the work on my own, I feared that the new communities would develop around my personality, which would be problematic whenever I shifted into my next subsequent appointment. All of these thoughts led me to a puzzle that I began to wrestle with daily: How can I faithfully start new communities of faith while subsequently pastoring an established community of faith, and yet have these new communities thrive and be sustainable without my undivided attention? My sense was that in order for me to do this faithfully I would need to develop leaders both within the church and within these new micro-communities. This project in particular focuses on the latter.

In June of 2016, I began my tenure as the pastor of Centerville United Methodist Church, a fifty-plus-year-old congregation that sits in a growing area. Yet, the congregation had declined significantly over the course of the previous decade and a half. My annual conference appointed me to this congregation specifically for the purpose of revitalizing their ministry and exploring additional opportunities for evangelism and worship. The church offered only traditional worship when I arrived, and previous attempts to begin non-traditional worship services had floundered. I embraced the challenge as a three-fold process of revitalizing the worship services in place, exploring new opportunities for worship within the church, and finally offering additional experiences outside the walls of the church building. I knew that each of these three emphases would require a significant effort to establish the necessary systems for effective discipleship to take place, but due to there being a lack of precedent for the experiences outside the church, I knew that the work there would be most substantial. With this in mind, I began to examine the needs for effective ministry to take place with

launching parallel micro-communities and developed the problem that I considered in this project.

Statement of the Problem

In many church-planting scenarios, the founding pastor will be not only the carrier of the vision but also the one that executes many of the initial responsibilities. This can cause new communities of faith to gravitate towards and develop around their personality on the front end, which can create long-term questions related to growth and functionality. Additionally, starting something new can be exhausting particularly when the planter is carrying out the majority of the roles. Aubrey Malphurs describes this aspect of church planting saying, "I define church planting as an exhausting but exciting venture of faith.… Church planting involves long hours, perhaps longer than those put in by pastors of established churches. There's so much to do when starting from scratch and never enough time to do it all" (ch. 1). In light of this reality, many church planters will develop a team and will have established responsibilities for the leaders that become a part of that team.

Launching micro-communities creates similar challenges and likewise requires the need to develop leaders to carry on the work beyond what the founding pastor is able to do. When planting a church, the pastors commonly experience burnout, and so it is unreasonable to think that a pastor of an existing church will be able to dedicate all of the necessary energy to ensure that a subsequent micro-community can grow and reach new people for Christ while also maintaining their other responsibilities. In describing the process of starting new communities of faith, Stuart Murray notes, "Burnout is common, especially where adequate support structures are not in place. Working in teams rather

than in isolation is preferable in most situations" (ch. 7). In order to shift the brunt off of a solo pastor-planter's shoulders, it is necessary to develop other leaders to share in the process of developing these new communities in order to promote sustainability and viability of the micro-communities of faith.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to formulate a process for developing lay leadership within the context of micro-communities of faith planted by existing United Methodist churches in order to establish a pattern of sustainable, indigenous, and shared leadership of those micro-communities.

Research Questions

In order to achieve this purpose, it was necessary to evaluate lay leadership in United Methodist micro-communities to determine how leadership development has taken place amongst micro-community participants, to analyze the unique localized factors presented by micro-communities of faith, to evaluate what characteristics have proven to be important for leadership development, and to assess what healthy shared leadership has looked like in sustainable micro-communities.

Research Question #1

What do United Methodist micro-community pastors and lay people identify as challenges to developing sustainable, indigenous, and shared lay leadership?

Research Question #2

What do United Methodist micro-community pastors and lay people identify as attributes and abilities essential for lay people to lead in sustainable, indigenous, and shared ways?

Research Question #3

What are best practices for developing sustainable, indigenous, and shared lay leadership in United Methodist micro communities?

Rationale for the Project

The first reason this study matters is because it promotes a model of ministry that is strongly rooted in Scripture. Because those with the apostolic gifting would move from community to community to spread the Gospel and plant more churches, it became necessary to develop untrained and new believers to serve as lay leaders within the new churches. Paul describes different "offices" within the church in Ephesians 4, and in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, he spent extensive time describing different spiritual gifts. The argument regarding the nature of the different parts of the body acknowledges that within the church there will be ample opportunities for different people to play a role(1 Cor. 12). The "lone ranger" spiritual leader concept is inconsistent with the team-based approach in the New Testament. Jesus modeled this by traveling with disciples whom he empowered for kingdom work. Paul modeled this in his missionary travels, and the new churches were never addressed as entities run by a single individual. This ensured that the work would continue on after the primary leader departed for their next ministry objective or passed away. There is a biblical precedent that suggests a shared leadership approach is healthy for both existing churches, and newly established churches whether they are full-fledged independent church plants, secondary sites to an existing church, or parallel micro-communities.

The second reason that this project is important is because it promotes a model of ministry that reflects opportunities for mature discipleship. In the New Testament, taking

on ministry responsibilities was part of the natural progression of discipleship. In Jesus's ministry, the call was to follow him and then for his disciples to do the same ministry that he had demonstrated. In the Pauline churches, there was a heavy emphasis upon spiritual gifts and the offices in the church. With this in mind, developing micro-communities that promote shared leadership will provide opportunities for spiritual gifts to be developed, which will in turn produce more mature disciples. If the micro-communities are started and solely led by a single planter-pastor, there will not be as many opportunities for participants to lead, and so it has the potential to hinder their spiritual growth. This promotes a spectatorship model rather than one of active participation in the ministry of the church. By having a plan in place for lay leadership development, it provides an opportunity for the un-churched and de-churched individuals that are the target audience of micro-communities to not only experience the Gospel but also to grow into a more sanctified discipleship.

The third reason that this project is important comes from its potential to help shape avenues for pastors of established churches to reach new people for Christ through innovative and external venues for church to take place. It is not uncommon to encounter pastors of traditional churches that desire to reach the un-churched and de-churched people in their area, but they feel as though their existing worship venues and styles do not appeal to those that they are trying to reach. Furthermore, it can be intimidating to try and start new initiatives when considering all of the pastoral responsibilities associated with the existing congregation and the challenges presented by launching an alternate ministry experience outside the walls of their church. As the United Methodist Church seeks to navigate the challenges associated with a changing world in a postmodern and

post-Christian context, providing additional and different opportunities to reach new people for Christ becomes key. The primary challenge will likely be resourcing existing initiatives and starting new initiatives with limited time in the pastor's schedule. Developing a pattern of shared leadership provides an opportunity to positively address this challenge.

Definition of Key Terms

Shared Leadership – This term does not necessarily refer to a lack of a point leader but rather refers to the responsibilities of ministry being shared in some capacity. Within shared leadership, there may be a point leader that organizes and oversees, but others will carry out much of the ministry.

Indigenous Leadership – As a more common term in foreign missions, indigenous leadership refers to leaders emerging out of a newly reached group rather than being imported into the group. This often benefits the foreign group and makes the ministry more sustainable because the leadership is native and presumably will stay in place long after the missionaries depart. This becomes important in United Methodist micro-communities as itinerant pastors will inevitably be called into new appointments and developing leaders that are already a part of the community will help lead to sustainability.

Micro-communities – While "fresh expressions" is a commonly used term to describe what is meant in this study as micro-communities, this project prefers the micro-community terminology. The primary reason for delineating between the two is that the term fresh expressions emerges from initiatives of the Church of England, and it refers to a variety of different options of doing church differently than the traditional model, such

as alternative worship styles, café churches, cell churches, midweek congregations, church plants etc. (Cray ch. 4). Micro-community is not a commonly used term within this field, but it fits the spirit of the type of communities considered in this project. The basic concept of this model of church is to develop a network of small non-traditional church settings that function parallel to an existing United Methodist congregation.

Mixed Economy – The term "mixed economy" is common in Fresh Expressions literature and amongst pastors and laity that are well versed in the Fresh Expressions movement. It refers to a mix of types of churches all under one umbrella, usually referring to an established church, which is often called and "inherited church," and the non-traditional forms of church that the established church sponsors and potentially resources. When describing a mixed economy setup, a Fresh Expression church is said to be "tethered" to the inherited church.

Multi-site Churches – This fairly recent genre of churches refers to single churches that operate in multiple locations. It falls under the umbrella of church planting because often times a second site, sometimes called a campus, may be launched out of a church in the same way that a new church is birthed. While most multi-site churches plant additional sites to grow comparatively to the size of the original campus, this study focuses on parallel communities that are intentionally designed to be small. However, many of the principles associated with launching and developing leadership within multi-site churches will apply.

Delimitations

This study focuses on pastors and participants within United Methodist micro-communities in the southeastern United States that have launched parallel to existing

congregations since 2005 and have been sustained for one year or approaching one year. In an effort to be more concentrated, participation was solicited from only annual conferences in adjacent states to Georgia (Alabama-West Florida, North Alabama, Memphis, Tennessee, Holston, Western North Carolina, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida) and from the other conference within Georgia that the researcher does not belong to (North Georgia). By focusing on United Methodist micro-communities in the southeastern United States, the scope was narrowed to similar ecclesial and cultural approaches, and by concentrating further to border states and conferences, it allowed for an even more contextual sample. The study was limited to communities launched since 2005, because this is a fairly new model and micro-communities that have been around longer have likely shifted from a missionary concept to more of an institutional concept. The one-year mark is important because it demonstrates some initial sustainability. To be included micro-communities did not necessarily need to demonstrate a pattern of shared leadership, as this allows the research to show differences between initiatives with an intentional emphasis on shared leadership and initiatives without one.

Review of Relevant Literature

This study sought to evaluate relevant literature by using the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" as a model. In the United Methodist Church, there is an emphasis upon using the quadrilateral for theological reflection, and the four parts are scripture, tradition, experience, and reason.

The first section of the review of relevant literature evaluated Scripture to determine what the Bible, specifically the New Testament, says about shared leadership and leadership development. This included exploring biblical scholars interpretative work

regarding what the Scriptures mean for believers today. A notable focus was on the ministry of Jesus and his method of developing disciples and empowering them for ministry. Another focus was the ways in which the church in Acts shared leadership, specifically focusing on the commissioning of the seven in Acts 6. Finally, evaluating the Pauline understanding of spiritual gifts and offices helped formulate a New Testament understanding of shared leadership and leadership development.

The second section of the literature review evaluated the traditional and historical development of church leadership and discipleship processes. While a general overview of all of Christian tradition might be helpful, the Methodist movement was the most significant arena considered. The writings of John Wesley served as a helpful starting point, specifically those relating to training of local lay leadership within the frontier churches, and even more specifically the "Class Meetings" and "Bands" since they were small entities connected to a larger parish community. Furthermore, reading contemporary works that evaluate the potential for the class and band systems for today's church was helpful for developing a Wesleyan understanding of spiritual formation.

The third section of the literature review focused on experience, particularly the experience of others in the fields of church planting, multi-site ministry, micro-community ministry, leadership development, and spiritual formation. Much of this experience was gleaned by reading about the challenges and victories of contemporary practitioners, with those being primarily found in blogs and other online sources. Particular interest was given to how others have developed leaders in similar settings, as well as assessing the experience of micro-community practitioners to discern the unique challenges associated with this type of ministry.

The fourth section looked at reason through an analysis of different social sciences. While much of what qualifies as reason-based literature is also built upon a biblical and theological foundation, the researcher analyzed it under the lens of reason because the work is practical and potentially prescriptive. This section contains analysis of sociological and anthropological factors such as small group dynamics and un-churched cultural dispositions that need to be navigated in order to develop a healthy pattern of shared leadership and leadership development. Additionally, this section reviews how leadership development, including the spiritual formation side of it, takes place from an educational and developmental standpoint. Finally, the section analyzes the practical characteristics of church and micro-community leadership and the proven methods for developing leaders.

Research Methodology

Beyond evaluating the relevant literature on this subject, the best way to understand what should be included in a new system is to evaluate what has proven to be effective in other systems. In order to complete this objective, this study focused on micro-communities that have launched since 2005 and evaluated the ways in which leadership had been shared and how pastors went about developing leaders. It was important to evaluate the demographics of these type ministries, measure the challenges experienced by leaders of micro-communities, assess the characteristics they value in leaders, and discern where their leadership processes have been most effective. Because of this, this project evaluated these micro-communities with both qualitative and quantitative methods. Furthermore, the researcher analyzed the characteristics present in

settings with a strong culture of shared leadership compared to settings with less of a culture of shared leadership.

Type of Research

This study was a pre-intervention style project in which the research focused on the successes and failures of existing micro-community's leadership development in order to determine a suitable system for developing shared leadership for future micro-communities. It included a blend of qualitative and quantitative research. From a qualitative perspective ,it described the experiences and approaches of previously launched micro-communities as they developed their own systems of leadership development, both formal systems and implied systems. From a quantitative perspective, some questions on a questionnaire distributed to pastors and lay leaders helped to provide statistical analysis in order to show where there was agreement and disagreement regarding some preconceived ideas of challenges to leadership development in micro-communities and the desired characteristics of leaders in micro-communities.

Participants

The participants included pastors that lead micro-communities and key lay leaders within the same micro-communities. Through some pre-existing relationships as well as some recommendations from Annual Conference officials in adjacent conferences, ten pastors that were identified as fitting the criteria of the project participated in an initial survey, and six of those same pastors took part in a semi-structured interview. The key lay leaders were all recommended by pastors that were also a part of the study, and fifteen of those lay leaders participated in the questionnaire, with five of those also participating in follow-up focus groups. These participants represented churches in five

different states, with a variety of ministry settings and periods of sustainability. A full description of the participants is available in Chapter 4.

Data Collection

Data was collected utilizing three instruments. Once the participants were confirmed, a nineteen-question questionnaire noted as "Questionnaires" was emailed out to pastors and lay leaders for them to complete within a two-week period of time. The Questionnaires could be completed online via SurveyMonkey and completed at the convenience of the participants. At the conclusion of that two-week period, invitations went out to some pastors to participate in a follow-up semi-structured interviews noted as "Interviews." At that same time, an open invite was given to laity to participate in one of a few online focus groups noted as "Groups." Six pastors agreed to be interviewed, and five laity agreed to participate in the focus groups. They were divided into two time slots. All six Interviews and both Groups took place as online video conferences via Zoom over a two-week period of time, and they were recorded and transcribed in order to be analyzed.

Data Analysis

Once the data was collected, the quantitative questions of the Questionnaires were calculated, and the qualitative questions were coded using a grounded theory approach. The quantitative analysis and coding allowed for major categories and trends to emerge from the Questionnaires. Using that as a foundation, the next step was to read through the transcriptions of the Interviews and Groups. After reading through the transcriptions multiple times, the researcher took note of themes that emerged from those conversations. The researcher also compared the coding from the Questionnaires to find where the same

ideas were discussed in the Interviews and Groups, in order to develop a deeper understanding of what the participants meant by the initial responses in the Questionnaires. An additional step was to analyze themes that emerged in the transcriptions that were not a part of the results of the Questionnaires and to categorize those in the list of categories and trends as well. Finally, the responses in Interviews and Groups were reviewed an additional time to see what patterns emerged to formulate potential steps of a leadership development process.

Generalizability

The specific purpose of this project was to develop a shared leadership approach to micro-community leadership so that the burden of leadership did rest solely on the shoulders of a pastor. While it was limited to a particular region of the United States and to a single denomination, the principles gleaned from the research could be applied to other existing churches looking to launch micro-communities and develop leaders within them. The challenges, desired abilities and attributes, and best practices for leadership development did not vary significantly by location, group type, or size. It should be noted, however, that while the goal was to develop a plan that promoted shared leadership to support a solo pastor, over half of the pastors that participated were on large church staffs with multiple appointed clergy. This created a bit of an unintended bias that should be acknowledged, and it might make this approach to launching new expressions of church and leadership development more applicable as extensions of larger churches. Despite some of the limitations of scope in this project, the goal was to find and elevate the consistent themes, and so this research could be beneficial to a wide range of locations and settings.

Project Overview

Chapter two evaluates the literature that is relevant to the problem under consideration. This literature breaks down into four categories: New Testament scriptures, Methodist and other relevant traditions, experience of contemporary practitioners, and analysis of the progression of spiritual and leadership development. Chapter three explains the method of research, with specifics related to the design of the research instruments. Chapter four shares the results of the research portion to describe what factors contribute positively to developing a system of sustainable, indigenous, and shared lay leadership. Chapter five expounds upon the major findings of the research, offers a sketch of a potential leadership development plan, and discusses the ministry implications of this project.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

In reviewing the relevant literature, there is a significant amount of justification for micro-communities as a movement and the need for shared leadership within them. This chapter begins with the biblical and theological rationale for the movement and shared leadership, before shifting into a basic overview of the Fresh Expressions movement and the sub-section of micro-communities. In discussing the biblical foundations, there is a precedent and rationale for micro-communities within Scripture, as there is also for shared leadership and a pattern of leadership development. From a theological perspective, this chapter analyzes the way that the micro-community movement emerges from the *Missio Dei* and the call to evangelize the world. It also discusses the strong Wesleyan roots associated with micro-communities and shared leadership.

The latter half of the chapter focuses on specific practical aspects for developing a system of leadership development within micro-communities by drawing on the experiences of practitioners and reviewing some systematic approaches to leadership development. The section begins by focusing on unique factors associated with this particular project: micro-community leadership, indigenous leadership, sustainability, and the characteristics of un-churched and de-churched individuals. Then, it discusses the characteristics needed to lead and processes to be considered when developing leaders for micro-communities, including spiritual formation and apprenticeship. Finally, the chapter

concludes by reviewing the relevant literature for designing the research methodology that is outlined in Chapter 3.

Biblical Foundations

The biblical narrative provides a foundational understanding of the ways people engage in ministry and mission in the world today. While the concepts of Fresh Expressions and micro-communities were not relevant in biblical times, there is a precedent for a contemporary approach to having a mixed economy of multiple expressions of church to reach multiple communities and networks. Within the biblical narrative is a pattern of shared leadership that began in Old Testament times, and some argue that it is rooted within the character of the Trinity and that Jesus models the different expressions of church leadership that believers are called to live into as well. The ministry of Jesus, of the early church, and of Paul all point towards a reliance on different gifts and roles to fulfill the mission of the church. Additionally, the biblical story also provides a foundation for understanding how to develop leaders, as modern Christians look at the pattern of discipleship that was first demonstrated by Jesus and then carried out by the New Testament believers.

Biblical Foundations for Micro-Community Ministries

Throughout the New Testament the emphasis is not necessarily on building a church but rather reaching people for Christ. The Great Commission called the disciples to go and *make disciples*, not necessarily build a church. In discussing the Great Commission, J.D. Payne notes, “Believers are not commanded to go into all the world and plant churches, but rather make disciples…. Biblical church planting is about using contextualized methods in a strategic manner to reach unbelievers, equip them as church

leaders, and send them as evangelists and church planters throughout the world" (*Discovering Church Planting* Chapter 1). This drive to reach unbelievers and to make disciples is a key motivation for any church movement. While not exactly likened to church planting, the launching of micro-communities is the result of an effort to reach more people for Christ, specifically those that might connect more effectively in a smaller and non-traditional ministry setting.

Furthermore, the idea of a church sending out others to start new communities of faith amongst those that have not been reached by other methods is consistent with the New Testament narrative. Michael Moynagh notes, "It is often said that there is a shift from the Old Testament's centripetal – 'you come to us' – approach to mission to the New Testament's centrifugal one: 'we'll go to you'. Ancient Israel saw its missional task as being to attract the nations, whereas the first Christians went in mission to the nations" (ch. 1). The idea of being sent out to reach others runs throughout the New Testament and is embedded in the nature of God according to biblical scholar Christopher Wright. Wright notes, "The mission of God's people, then, calls them to participate in a long and rich tradition of sending and being sent that originates within God the Holy Trinity. The God of the Bible is the sending God – even within the relationships of Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Ch. 12). The sending nature of God culminates in Jesus's commission to his disciples at his ascension that they go out into all of the world. In Acts 1, the call is to start where they were in Jerusalem and to move out from there unto the ends of the earth. Starting micro-communities of faith that provide an alternative form of church for those not currently a part of a church provides a means for fulfilling the call to reach those living nearby as the church responds to the call to be sent.

The concept of church ministry taking place in a variety of settings is consistent with the ways in which the New Testament church operated. The early church is described as meeting together in the temple and eating together in the homes (Acts 2.46). Yet, with both it is implied to be part of the ongoing life of the community of faith. The church was also described as meeting in a large gathering on Solomon's Porch (Acts 5.12). Steve Addison writes that Paul would use a variety of venues for church noting, "If he was forced out of the synagogue but able to remain in the city, he moved to other venues such as the home of a wealthy sympathizer (in Corinth) or a lecture hall (in Ephesus)" (*What Jesus Started* Chapter 14). It is clear from Paul's movement that pragmatic adjustments were necessary in order to navigate the challenges associated with the culture of a community.

There is also precedent in the New Testament of having multiple churches that are part of a particular movement. There is a sense that the vast array of churches that were part of the Christian movement in different regions were interconnected in unique ways. Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears note:

> Many of the New Testament letters were written to networks of churches scattered throughout a particular city (e.g., Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica, and Philippi). Some of the instructional letters, such as Hebrews, James, and the epistles of Peter, are called general epistles because they were intended to be read and obeyed at multiple churches. Furthermore, the New Testament seems to indicate that churches spread across regions as a linked network of congregations. (244)

This indicates that many of those churches were affiliated with others and operated in a scattered but connected fashion. Some of these met in homes, others in public places. Yet, all were considered to be sufficient means of church. It stands to reason that the churches of the New Testament operated as forerunners for not only the more developed churches of today but also for those that might be small, unique, and scattered for pragmatic reasons.

Biblical Foundations for Shared Leadership

Scripture not only affirms the validation of micro-communities, it also provides a strong foundation for the idea of shared leadership within the church, which naturally extends to smaller versions of the church as well. This principle of shared leadership began as early as the leadership of Moses as part of the Exodus. In Exodus 18, Moses's father-in-law extended advice to Moses to keep him from getting burned out and to more effectively handle the leadership of the nation. Jethro advised breaking the nation into smaller groups, and commissioning leaders over the different size groups. In *The Multi-site Revolution*, the authors note:

> Moses saw the wisdom in his father-in-law's advice. He broke the nation of Israel into small groups and community-size groups, and he commissioned leaders over them. He continued to be the primary vision caster and the one ultimately responsible for the direction of the children of Israel, but he entrusted the day-to-day care and feeding of the people to trusted leaders. You might say that Moses created the first multi-site church. (Surratt, Ligon, and Bird 143)

This principle was foundational for the exodus, and it serves as a helpful model in church leadership today as well.

The New Testament church also modeled a pattern of shared leadership. From the ministry of Jesus, the work of ministry extended beyond just a select few. Jesus made it clear through his teaching and discipleship method that he was not interested in being the sole leader of the movement. In Luke 9, he named the twelve, giving them certain authorities and responsibilities, and he then subsequently commissioned the seventy-two to go out in ministry in his name in Luke 10. The emphasis was on his disciples performing great works for the sake of the kingdom, and in the case of the seventy-two. they were sent out in teams of two. In John 14, Jesus encouraged the disciples by saying that they would do greater works than the ones that he did while on earth. Jesus modeled throughout his ministry that while he was the leader of the group, all were capable of fulfilling a role in the ministry.

Acts chapter 6 provides a key moment for understanding the development of shared leadership in the New Testament context. In this passage, a complaint arose that the Greek-speaking widows were being overlooked in favor of the Aramaic-speaking widows, which caused frustration to grow between the disciples. When the complaint reached the twelve, they recognized that they had an issue on their hand and would need to delegate responsibilities for the food distribution to keep from being distracted from their work of "word and prayers" (cf. Acts 6.4). Robert Wall analyzes the conflict that arose by saying, "The present threat to the widows' welfare, therefore, is defined in two ways: On the one hand, the most needy members of the community are being neglected; on the other hand, the apostles find themselves spending more time in administrative matters than in the ministry of the word to which they are called" (111). Luke Timothy Johnson adds that this passage falls at a crucial point in the church's history saying,

"Luke shows considerable narrative skill in placing the dispute at this point. The conflict is seen to result from the natural stress created by rapid community growth, with needs outstripping administration" (105). As the community grew, responsibilities grew, and the leadership became stretched too thin. Recognizing the need to share leadership, they commissioned "The Seven" by the laying on of hands, and the seven men were sent to share in the leadership of the community in a specific way by being charged with the leadership of the food distribution.

As the New Testament continues, the ministry of Paul reflects the concept of shared leadership as he moved from region to region to spread the Gospel and to establish new churches. This is first of all evident by the fact that Paul himself was commissioned as part of a team. In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas were commissioned by the laying on of hands and sent out to reach the Gentiles for Christ. Paul talked throughout his writings about the different roles that individuals played within the life of the church, which all took place for the common good. Bauknight argues that Paul's three different lists of spiritual gifts in Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Ephesians and his multiple references to spiritual gifts indicate that the New Testament church was already operating under the mindset of different individuals carrying out different functions within the life of the church (in Christensen 106).

This is perhaps most evident in Paul's listings of spiritual gifts and different offices within the church. In Kenneth Berding's work *What Are Spiritual Gifts?* an argument is made to view these lists in terms of being spiritual-ministries that are ministry assignments. These assignments might be long-term or short-term. Some positions might be leadership positions, and others might simply be for a particular

function. People are given spiritual-ministries and are subsequently given to and for the church (195). These different offices, or ministry assignments are not for the sake of the individual, but, as Russell Moy points out, the purpose of the different offices of the church is to equip the saints for the ministry of the church (Moy in Christensen 41).

Among these different lists of ministries, Ephesians 4 stands out as presenting different offices within the church, which scholars often denote as APEST: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds (Pastors), and Teachers. This list demonstrates that different functions exist that can take place within the church ministry, and it is perhaps unreasonable to think that one person can fulfill them all. Berding notes that the primary emphasis of this section of Ephesians is on preserving the unity within the church and that each party operates together for unity of the body (87–92). Alan Hirsch contends that the five-fold ministry of the church is an extension of five ministry functions we observe in Christ: "APEST is not only an integrated system; it is derived from the definitive expression of the ministry of Christ himself. It is Jesus' ministry in and through the local ecclesia" (*5Q* Chapter 1). He argues that Jesus was the "Exemplary Apostle," "Exemplary Prophet," "Exemplary Evangelist," "Exemplary Shepherd," and "Exemplary Teacher" (*5Q* Ch. 6). Hirsch's primary argument about APEST, or as he nicknames it "5Q," is summarized by this statement, "As I have tried to lay out, 5Q is grounded in the being of God himself; woven throughout the creation orders in archetype, myth, and hero; recapitulated in Christ; and subsequently bequeathed to the church, to be expressed in and through the lives of its saints for the glory of God and the edification of his people," and by his assertion that all believers have a unique function to carry out that is

embedded within them for purpose of sharing leadership and ministry in the church (Chapter 7).

Paul functioned in the role of an apostle as one sent out to begin new initiatives and organize the work of the churches and sought to encourage the leadership and gifts of others. Paul modeled throughout his ministry a system of leadership development that utilized leaders that were already in place within the communities he reached (cf. 2 Tim. 2.2, Acts 14.23), and propelled them into greater leadership within the body of Christ without feeling the need to be the solo leader. This concept of shared leadership is not limited to just the writings of Paul. It also appears in other New Testament writings, such as 1 Peter 2, which emphasizes the concept of the priesthood of all believers. In describing church planting movements, a movement defined by rapidly multiplying churches that are often small in nature (Garrison Chapter 2), David Garrison makes the connection between the priesthood of all believers and Jesus's calling of ordinary people, which thrived in biblical times because there was not yet a separation between clergy and laity (Chapter 11). He also notes that the precedent began in the New Testament for shared leadership. In rapidly growing movements like the New Testament church and contemporary church planting movements, there is not enough time to put everyone through seminary level training, so you will have to raise up ordinary believers from within the communities (ibid.).

Biblical Foundations for Leadership Development

Jesus, Paul, and others extended leadership opportunities to a variety of individuals through the process of discipleship that they modeled. Addison refers to this pattern of New Testament leadership as following the same pattern or steps: 1) see the

end, 2) connect with people, 3) share the Gospel, 4) train disciples, 5) gather communities, and 6) multiply workers. He notes that this pattern shows up in the ministry of Jesus, the early church, Paul, and he argues it should also be carried out within the Christian movement today (Addison, *What Jesus Started* Introduction). In describing Jesus's approach to leadership development Addison notes, "Jesus taught by setting assignments: cross this stormy lake, feed these thousands of people, go out on mission, watch and pray, cast out this demon, and so on. The learning began once the disciples discovered how much they didn't know" (*What Jesus Started* Chapter 4). Addison and others argue that Jesus provided a pattern, and it gave his disciples the chance to learn through experiential discovery.

In the ministry of Jesus, there is a clear model of discipleship through a process of apprenticeship. Dave and Jon Ferguson argue in their model of starting a missional movement out of one's own individual leadership that the way to start is by bringing alongside an apprentice, who will eventually take over that leader's role while also beginning to coach others, and eventually it will keep trickling into further growth. They recognize this as the model that was present in Jesus's relationship with his disciples: he appointed them, trained them, and then sent them out to do what he did (31–33).

Perhaps the most effective part about the leadership development model of Jesus was its simplicity. J.D. Payne claims, "An examination of the life and manner of Jesus demonstrates that his missionary activity was relational, simple, and highly reproducible-all necessary characteristics for the simple, uneducated Galileans to continue after the ascension" (*Discovering Church Planting* Chapter 1). Furthermore, it extended beyond his immediate ministry. Addison notes in *What Jesus Started*, "Everything Jesus did on

mission was reproducible and sustainable. Moving on meant new disciples had to take responsibility to reach their community" (Chapter 2). In his work *Pioneering Movements: Leadership that Multiplies Disciples and Churches*, he notes that the Book of Acts is merely a continuation of the model of Jesus's leadership: "Acts is about the ongoing ministry of Jesus, the risen Lord. Acts tells the story of the growth, the spread and the multiplication of the dynamic Word of God" (Chapter 1).

The goal of Jesus's ministry was not the building of the church but rather the building of disciples. Nonetheless, the church should be a natural overflow of making of disciples. Mike Breen notes:

> Jesus has not called you to build his church. In fact, in all of the Gospels he mentions the church only two times. One time he mentions it, it's about conflict resolution. The other time? To say that he will build his church. Our job, our only job and the last instructions he gave us, was to make disciples. And out of this we will get the church. Out of this, the future will emerge, and out of this, there will be a missional wave the likes of which we have never seen. (Chapter 1)

Breen points out later that the word disciple merely means learner, and so the disciple's role is to learn the ways of Jesus (Chapter 3). The New Testament's model of leadership development is intimately connected with being a disciple of and learning the ways of Jesus.

Dan Dick and Barbara Miller contrast the nature of the Jesus school of ministry and the Pauline school of ministry, noting that the ministry of Jesus was "small, flexible, and highly mobile," while the Pauline churches were more institutional with leadership hierarchies that developed shortly after being planted by an apostle. They do, however,

qualify Paul's model as being a natural extension and continuation of Jesus's model (17). Paul's pattern of ministry, while perhaps more institutional, is described by Rodney Harrison, Tom Cheyney, and Don Overstreet as a simple movement of "win them, build them, and then send them" (171). Part of sending them was using them within the church from which they were "won." J.D. Payne describes the method of Paul's mission saying, "The team would enter into a city, preach the gospel, gather the believers together as new churches, and later appoint elders over those congregations. The latter part of Acts 14 records that after the two of them had planted churches in many cities, they backtracked, returning to those cities to appoint elders" (*Discovering Church Planting* Chapter 1). In the ministry of Paul's missions, developing leaders was a natural part of starting new communities of faith, as leaders would need to be developed and/or appointed in order for the community to be sustained. this was necessary in order for Paul and Timothy and others to move onward in their mission to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Theological and Historical Foundations

The biblical foundation is essential because it provides a foundation upon which to build the rest of an understanding of what it means to be the church, the people of God, and how to develop leaders for the purpose of carrying out God's mission. The next lens is the theological and historical foundation. Due to the focus of this project being on micro-communities launched as parallel entities of existing United Methodist churches, the theological and historical foundation of the early Methodist movement is of particular interest. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, was known as a deep thinker and a master organizer. Within the roots of the Wesleyan movement are keys to understanding how micro-community ministry and shared leadership might be relevant

today. In this next section, attention is given to how micro-communities connect with the traditional understandings of church and Christian community in the Methodist movement, how early Methodism was built upon a structure of shared leadership, and how the United Methodist Church encounters a contemporary situation that calls for a need to rethink their approaches to church, including the opportunity to start alternative forms of church through micro-communities of faith.

Wesleyan Roots for Micro-communities

The idea of micro-communities may seem foreign to contemporary United Methodist congregations, but it has significant connections to the earlier roots of the Methodist movement. From the very beginning, the "people called Methodists" have had an affinity for small groups. Bishop Carter acknowledges:

> While the Christian life may begin as an individual search, it can only be sustained and supported through participation in a small group, where we are loved, blessed and held accountable. The contribution of the Fresh Expressions movement is that these groups are not confined within our local churches, although they may happen there—this is the "mixed ecology." And, as we have noted, this is deeply embedded in the practices of the early Wesleyan Christian movement (class meetings and band meetings)." ("Discipleship as Spiritual Formation and Mentoring")

This statement brings to light the significant heritage that Methodists have in taking part in community in a micro manner. Class meetings (seven to twelve individuals) and band meetings (smaller groups of around five) were essential practices within the early Methodist movement.

The class meetings and band meetings took place within "Methodist Societies" primarily to function as a smaller version of church community since a regular large church service might not always be available due to the travel challenges associated with circuit riding preachers. Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears highlight Francis Asbury as a notable model of multi-site ministry, and the same argument could easily be applied to micro-communities that are under the leadership of a pastor of an existing congregation in contemporary methodism:

> Historically, preachers have even traveled between churches to provide teaching and pastoral leadership. One such example is the Methodist circuit riders, who would travel on horseback to preach at multiple churches. Each of the meeting places had local identity and leadership, with the pastor serving successively at each site. Francis Asbury (1745-1816), the founding bishop of American Methodism, traveled more than a quarter of a million miles on foot and horseback, preaching about sixteen thousand sermons as he worked in his circuits. (245)

It is within the Methodist ethos to have groups that operate under the leadership of a given pastor but for the community to function intermittently in between times that the pastor could not physically be present. In today's context, this argument is generally applied to larger churches with a teaching pastor that may be located at another venue, but it can also be applied to churches in which a pastor serves a traditional congregation while subsequently serving as the "circuit riding" elder for other smaller communities of faith under his or her care.

Part of this method of circuit riding came out of Asbury's frustration with the American situation, but it proved to be an effective model for ministry then and can also be a productive model for now as pastors seek to oversee micro-communities within their area. J.D. Payne notes:

> Asbury, having been trained under the methodology of Wesley in Great Britain, quickly became discouraged upon arriving in America when he noticed that Methodists were remaining in the cities and not developing circuits. Out of frustration and need, Asbury's organizational genius became forever etched in Church history when he began to apply Wesley's methods to the burgeoning frontier… Sweet observed in his monumental Religion on the American Frontier 1783-1840: The Methodists that "more than any other single factor, `itineracy' was responsible for the rapid spread of Methodism throughout the United States in the frontier period." These men enlarged their preaching circuits, thus enlarging the Church, as the frontier boundary was pushed westward. Where settlers were found, there the Methodist circuit riders followed. Circuits generally took weeks to travel, with the average having fifteen to twenty-five preaching points where the riders would stop and proclaim the gospel.' (*Discovering Church Planting* Chapter 17)

This model, which is a treasured component of Methodist heritage, points to roots of having a parish overseen by a traveling pastor that is only present a handful of times per year. This subsequently requires the need for leadership to be raised up within the group, and in Methodism, that has historically been carried out by the laity that formulated the

local community and subsequently required an organizational structure built upon smaller groups that functioned as expressions of church.

The groups spread rapidly and effectively, in large part due to the simplicity involved in their approaches. Payne notes, “First, the Methodists believed in preaching a simple gospel message. Methodist preachers focused on clear gospel presentations that could easily be understood by pioneer peoples” (*Discovering Church Planting* Chapter 17). Furthermore, the class meeting structure was easily adaptable regardless of the setting. “It was streamlined, easily adaptable to the context, and expanded without much difficulty…The simple organization of the class system allowed for growth without a great deal of oversight by the circuit rider [and] [t]he local lay leadership was responsible for the people under its care” (Payne, *Discovering Church Planting* Chapter 17). Furthermore, Payne notes, “This approach of gathering together in small groups across the frontier was a system that required little preparation and was easily adapted to the American context. The class meetings allowed for ongoing accountability, ability, fellowship, and encouragement, especially in light of the fact that it would generally be several weeks before the circuit-riding preacher could return to meet with the believers” (Payne, *Discovering Church Planting* Chapter 17).

A goal for these smaller church settings was growth in holiness, which might be a helpful model for micro-communities today. Kevin Watson notes, “For Wesley, the least common denominator for Christian faith was holiness as expressed by Jesus in the greatest commandment: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ For Wesley, Jesus’ words

were not advice for a select few; they were commandments for all who were created in the image of God" (*Pursuing Social Holiness* 41). Watson and Scott T. Kisker's note in their work *The Band Meeting: Rediscovering Relational Discipleship in Transformational Community* that the small group settings like class meetings provided a mechanism for "social holiness," which they contend, "For Wesley, social holiness was not a synonym for social justice, which is how church leaders commonly use the phrase today. Rather, it was the context in which the pursuit of holiness was possible" (Chapter 1). For the Wesleyan movement the opportunity to gather in smaller communities has always been a platform for people to discover the faith and grow in holiness, and in today's context, that could take place through small groups based out of a traditional church setting or through micro-communities of faith that seek to function with the same tethering to an established church just as the classes and bands were tethered to a particular local society.

Wesleyan Roots for Shared Leadership

In large part due to the itinerant nature of preachers, the Methodist movement has had since its origin an emphasis upon lay leadership. At the center of the Wesleyan model of shared leadership was the "class leader" who would function as a lay pastor for a small group of Methodists in between the rounds made by the itinerant circuit rider. Despite their significant role, Watson notes, "In early Methodism, there was no separate training for being a class leader. A class leader's preparation was his or her prior experience of being in a class meeting and observing the class leader" (*The Class Meeting* Chapter 6). Howard Snyder notes that the class meetings were essentially house church that met in various neighborhoods. He writes, "The class leaders (men and women) were effectively

pastors and disciplers" (Chapter 5). Between the band system, the class system, and the fact that many of the early Methodist preachers were themselves lay, it has been noted that "[t]he extensive system of bands, classes, societies, and preachers, together with other offices and functions, opened the doors wide for leadership and discipleship in early Methodism" (Snyder Chapter 5).

Snyder notes that the class meeting leaders carried out two specific functions, as required by Wesley: "To see each person in his class once a week at the least" and "To meet the Minister and the stewards of the Society." The former was to evaluate the spiritual wellbeing of the class members, and the latter was to give an account to the society pastor or point leader how the various members of the society were doing (Chapter 5). This demonstrates a high level of responsibility amongst the lay leaders of the class meetings as they carried out functions traditionally associated with a clergyperson, performing pastoral care in many United Methodist churches of today. This would have been in addition to their role of facilitating the class meetings and being the "spiritual leaders of the people in their class meetings" (Watson, *The Class Meeting* Chapter 6).

Steve Harper contends that laity were essential to the early movement. He writes, "Wesley was a priest in the Church of England, and whenever he could, he made use of other clergypersons to help him. But by and large early Methodism was sustained by the laity…Wesley's theology of the priesthood of all believers was clearly expressed in the early Methodist movement" (122). It is impossible to think of the early Methodist movement outside of the idea of shared leadership. It was essential from a structural standpoint, and according to Harper, it was theologically significant for Wesley as well.

The Contemporary Situation

United Methodists today enter into a unique and challenging contemporary situation. The challenges are similar to those on the frontier of early Methodism in that the movement has room to further develop, but different in that the context that the contemporary culture has changed. Part of the challenge is the growing number of de-churched and un-churched individuals in the surrounding communities. Bishop Ken Carter notes three observations about the most recent research, and the ways in which it describes a decline in the church's market share: people no longer participate in church simply for cultural conformity, there are an increasing number of "dones" those that are de-churched and no longer affiliated with the church, and an 8 percent increase from 2007-2015 of the number of "nones" those that are un-churched and have no religious affiliation ("Discipleship as Spiritual Formation and Mentoring"). The dones are a complex group within the Mosaic (i.e., Millennial) generation that David Kinnaman breaks down into nomads and prodigals. Nomads are described as those that no longer are engaged in church but still consider themselves Christians, while prodigals are those that have walked away from their faith entirely. Kinnaman adds one more group called the exiles that have not yet left church, but they are disengaged and feel like they are stuck between church and culture (Kinnaman Chapter 1).

While these challenges are not unique to United Methodism, the decline of the denomination only adds to the gloominess of the situation. The church is being forced to reevaluate how they seek to reach people and to realize that for many people a new way of doing church might be the way to reach them. For many years, the church felt that it needed to simply perform the established church tactics with more excellence, but as

Travis Collins notes, there are many existing churches with superb preaching and music, yet they too are in filled with empty seats. Collins also notes that at one point a contemporary service was considered the "silver bullet" to reengage the dones and engage the nones, as though it was merely traditional practice that was hindering church engagement, but that silver bullet no longer seems to be working by itself (Chapter 2). Furthermore, fresh expressions practitioners like Luke Edwards have noted that it is not necessarily traditions of the church that keep un-churched and de-church individuals away from church, it is the restricting nature of the established church. He describes his context saying, "My friends at King Street Church are fascinated by the traditions and wisdom of the historic church; I'll even quote the *United Methodist Book of Discipline* on occasion. It's not church tradition that has kept my friends from established churches, it's the restricting structure of the modern church that has held them back" (Edwards "How to Innovate in a Traditional Denomination").

The challenge for the contemporary situation is how to offer new kinds of church while not neglecting the existing churches. The effectiveness of new initiatives will undoubtedly be how well leadership is shared on the existing church level and within the new initiatives. Navigating leadership within the existing congregation will be a primary hurdle for a pastor that desires to become more missional and engage the community by offering new forms of church. While the focus of this project is on developing leadership within the planted micro-communities, a few notes are warranted about the potential barriers to getting off the ground due to constraints of existing church expectations. Angela Shier-Jones notes:

> Very few of those who entered the priesthood did so in order to spend their time as pastoral or social workers, building maintenance engineers, untrained child minders and teachers and committee chairs. Yet a significantly large number of clergy and professional lay people now believe that they are not expected or able to engage in mission. When pushed to explain, most point to the constraints on their time caused by the existing demands of their congregations. The defining question for this boundary is therefore 'What ministerial resources will this church commit to a mixed-economy mission?' (114)

Even for churches not looking to start new initiatives, but wanting to grow their established church, the demands and expectations of the congregation can be a hindrance, particularly related to pastoral care. Carey Nieuwhof notes in his book *Lasting Impact: 7 Powerful Conversations That Will Help You Grow Your Church* that the pastoral care model of most existing churches does not scale, and a church will almost always cease to grow beyond 200 people if the pastor is solely responsible for care giving. The solution according to Nieuwhof and others is to develop a shared leadership model for pastoral care (13).

For this project, it is considered a given that healthy micro-community planting and pastoring will only be effective if a shared leadership approach is incorporated within the established church and within the micro-communities that are started parallel to the established church. An entire project could be developed around how to lead change within existing congregations to develop a pattern of shared leadership within them so that the pastor might become more missional. However, this project seeks specifically to address how leadership can be developed effectively within micro-communities so that

those communities themselves might become sustainable. Drawing on the missionary spirit of the Methodist Church's roots is a helpful starting place. The circuit riders were intentional about developing local lay leadership, if for no other reason than that they did not have a choice. The movement thrived in large part because it remained missional, and for the sake of the mission, shared leadership was a necessity. Contemporary practitioners like Watson note, "Today, many people point to the lack of lay leadership as a key and particularly disheartening sign of decline in the church" (*The Class Meeting* Chapter 6). In order to address the contemporary situation of decline and disengagement, new approaches will be needed, and a healthy pattern of shared leadership is foundational to these efforts. Failure to properly develop lay leadership within micro-communities will only place these new expressions of church on the same trajectory as many of the existing churches: relying on the pastor to handle all the leadership needs of the church and thus quenching any potential freedom for missional movement.

Basic Overview of the Movement

The concept of micro-community ministry within United Methodist churches has emerged into the context of traditional congregations as a North American adaptation of a portion of the "Fresh Expression" movement that started out of the Church of England. While there are variances in the approach of this project, a basic understanding of the original movement and the subsequent adapted movements is helpful before delving into the problem under consideration. As stated earlier, the term "micro-communities" is preferred to the more popular "Fresh Expressions" because the original term serves as an umbrella over a wider spectrum of ministry initiatives. Travis Collins describes Fresh Expressions in this way:

> A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. Fresh expressions of church are even more likely than megachurches and typical church plants to engage people who have no history with, or affinity for, 'church.' (Chapter 2)

The Church of England itself describes the "Fresh Expressions" of Britain as having several common features: 1) small groups are important for discipleship and relational ministry, 2) the "churches" do not meet on Sunday mornings typically, 3) they relate to a particular network rather than a particular neighborhood, 4) despite denominationally based leadership the groups tend to operate as post-denominational entities, and 5) some have connections to larger resourcing networks (i.e., large churches and/or networks) (Cray Chapter 4). Of these descriptors, all but number four are relevant to this project.

The Church of England's initial study developed into the work *Mission-Shaped Church*, which was originally released in 2004 and has subsequently been updated (Cray Preface). The findings of the working group concluded in short, "our diverse consumer culture will never be reached by one standard form of church" (Cray Introduction). Their analysis sought to understand the various movements of church planting, which included everything from churches with a modern worship style to various alternative forms of church, and even including the micro-communities under consideration in this project. Foundational to their research was a move towards viewing "networks" as the primary arena of community rather than geography. This shift means that people are more likely to align according to lifestyles and interests rather than because they live within a certain parish boundary. "Community and a sense of community are often disconnected from

locality and geography." Furthermore, towns will have a variety of networks, and that is where the true sense of community will arise rather than physical address (Cray Chapter 1). Simply stated, "People define their communities through leisure, work and friendships (ibid.)."

This move towards networks corresponds to the changing culture and role of the church in a post-Christian world. *Mission-shaped Church* notes that believers find themselves in a period of time where the traditional church context does not have the widespread appeal that it once did. Loyalty to the neighborhood parish prevailed in a Christian age, but as networks become more prominent in the community landscape and society emerges as a consumer society, newer approaches to ministry will be needed. "The emergence of a network and consumer society coincides with the demise of Christendom" (Cray Chapter 1). Ken Carter, bishop of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, describes the movement amongst Anglican Churches and the British Methodist church saying, "In a nation that is increasingly multi-religious and non-religious, these two church traditions (and others) have recognized the need for planting expressions of Christianity outside the pattern of traditional church practice" ("A Movement Begins").

These principles have taken root in the Church of England and subsequently have been adapted into the North American landscape. North American and United Methodist practitioner Luke Edwards states it this way:

> We all live in networks. Whether it's our workplace, our children's activities, our favorite restaurant, or a hobby, networks are where fresh expressions are born.

> We start fresh expressions with the people in these networks and we gather in ways that are familiar to them. ("How to Start a Fresh Expression")

The Fresh Expressions that have taken root in North America have responded to the shift that preceded the American context in the United Kingdom. Churches extend themselves to reach these networks by being intentional about their mission. In Michael Frost's *The Road to Missional*, he talks about how in order to reach certain groups Christians will need to reach out into their world, and be close in proximity to those networks. "Incarnational mission means moving into the lives of those to whom we believe we've been sent" (123). Verlon Fosner, the pastor of a Seattle-based congregation that has launched multiple micro-communities with meal-based worship services called "dinner churches," describes this incarnational sense of being sent as being a necessary part of our mission to live out God's mission (the Missio Dei) and adds, "Restoring apostolic sent-ness means we are going to have to adopt a missionary stance, a sending approach rather than an attractional one, and adopt best practices in cross-cultural missionary methodology for our local ministries" (*The Dinner Church Handbook* Chapter 2).

While much of the scholarship on Fresh Expressions is positive, the movement is not without detractors. In their work *For the Parish*, Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank argue that the urging by the church to launch fresh expressions has resulted in methodologies based on weak theology, and they encourage choice-led participation that the church should be speaking against (vii). In other words, it gives into a consumerist mindset by providing options rather than encouraging participation in existing parishes, and *Mission-shaped Church* itself admits that society has become increasingly shaped by

consumerism and that Fresh Expressions are in part a response to that (Cray Chapter 1). Additionally, Davison and Milbank question fresh expressions because they do not model the same integrity as the parishes they are birthed out of in that they are essentially special interest groups rather than being open to all (vii). They further argue that the Fresh Expressions movement calls for the throwing aside of the church's theology in favor of pragmatic considerations (41).

Despite the criticism of Fresh Expressions, the movement is predominantly seen in a favorable light with rationale given as to how they can positively contribute to the life of existing churches. Edwards argues, "Fresh Expressions gives churches and clergy a license to innovate while upholding the value of the traditional church. The traditional sending church thrives as they participate in mission through planting new forms of church. They are relatively easy to start, take only a few volunteers to lead, and cost next to nothing to run" ("How to Innovate in a Traditional Denomination"). Collins sees it as a benefit to the missional morale of existing congregations adding, "The optimal situation (from a Fresh Expressions perspective) is an existing church with a missional pastor sending out a handful of apostles from its membership to begin a new form of church among a particular subculture…The existing church is rejuvenated by the intentional efforts to evangelize the world and thrilled by the stories that the apostles from among them tell" (Ch. 5). Shier-Jones feels that they are merely a natural response to a pioneering and apostolic ministry spirit, and they present no threat to the unity of a church (9).

The micro-community approach fits along with this rationale, as pertaining to smaller entities designed to run parallel to existing churches, and to function as "fresh

expressions" that reach certain niche demographics that the church might otherwise not meet. A "mixed economy" or "mixed ecology" is the term associated with the Fresh Expression movement that best describes this parallel approach to ministry. In other words, these types of churches exist not as competition but as complimentary to each other, as an existing church seeks to reach out with different forms of church in order to reach different parts of today's culture. Collins describes this well saying, "In today's diverse cultures, God's church needs both our inherited approaches and novel approaches" (Chapter 5). Edwards adds, "This model says that the traditional church is a perfect launching pad for new forms of church. Instead of dismissing or threatening tradition, fresh expressions of church actually give a renewed sense of purpose to the traditions we love" ("How to Innovate in a Traditional Denomination").

This movement has shown great promise in the United Kingdom, and since taking root in American Methodism in the past few years, it has shown promise stateside as well. Speaking from a United Methodist perspective, Bishop Ken Carter and Dr. Audrey Warren note in their work *Fresh Expressions: A New King of Methodist Church for People Not in Church*:

> We believe that disciples of Jesus represent him not only in local churches but also in campus ministries, camps, children's homes, immigration ministries, and through missionaries, chaplains, and professors. In this way, the world is our parish: The larger purpose of our becoming disciples is that the world be transformed toward God's purposes and for God's glory. (15)

This highlights their perspective that Fresh Expressions and micro-community ministries can simply serve as a part of our larger efforts to embrace "the world (as) our parish."

There is a sense in the writings about Fresh Expressions that they are pragmatic, and the practical aspects build upon the biblical and theological foundations to make a strong argument for engaging in micro-community ministry and developing shared leadership within them.

Experiential Understandings and Reason-based Practical Applications

Examining micro-community ministry and shared leadership from a Wesleyan perspective leads to both the third and fourth lenses of consideration when evaluating the relevant literature. In the Wesleyan quadrilateral, there is value in both experience and reason, and so the goal of the next section was to pull from the experiences of practitioners and the reason-based practical applications generated by ministry practitioners and other social science fields. Experience and reason are grouped together because the analysis of each generated similar topics, and so it was necessary to group these two lenses together rather than separating them. This is due to the fact that many practitioners utilize their experiences and the experiences of others to quantify and qualify their practical applications, and many that seek systematic approaches to leadership development will develop their processes by both analyzing data and drawing from experiences.

This section begins by evaluating several unique considerations that emerge from the experience and reason-based literature. In order to formulate a leadership development plan amongst in micro-communities designed to be indigenous, sustainable and shared, it was important to note what is unique about micro-community leadership, indigenous leadership, and sustainable leadership. It also was important to evaluate any unique considerations for developing leaders out of groups designed to reach un-

churched and de-churched individuals. So, defining those terms and who constitutes those demographics was essential. Then, the review shifts to evaluating the characteristics of leaders before covering aspects of leadership development such as spiritual formation, apprenticeship-based approaches, and other considerations for leadership development.

Unique Considerations for Micro-community Leadership

Many of the strategies employed for developing leaders in both existing church systems and in church planting scenarios can be helpful in formulating a shared leadership development plan in micro-community ministry. However, while those principles will be explored in full detail below, understanding the unique considerations related to micro-community leadership is a good starting place in order to establish the lens through which other proven methods are understood. The types of micro-communities under consideration are those specifically designed to reach individuals that are not associated with an established church. This means that while some characteristics of established church lay leaders will carryover, others will not. Identifying the right type of leaders is essential for the development and continuance of the micro-communities.

The first place that many will start for sharing leadership is to invite someone or a few individuals from the established church to help start the micro-communities. Collins notes that while lone pioneer types have established a lot of these communities, there are significant benefits to having the camaraderie of others taking part in the planting and leading (Chapter 17). Edwards cautions that is important to not have too many people from inside the church because then the micro-community will take the shape of the established church's culture instead of reaching a different culture, and it will more or

less become an alternative Bible study for churchgoers ("How to Start a Fresh Expression"). In identifying established church goers to help participate in micro-community leadership, Collins cites the work of Edwards and notes that these communities should look for people "who are street smart, who are at home with un-churched people, and who actually have friends who are not believers." Furthermore, it is okay for these potential partners to have "rough edges" (Collins Chapter 17).

While this is a helpful place to start the micro-communities, it may not be the best system long-term, as developing leaders from within the network being reached by the micro-community will help it to take on an indigenous missional nature. This is consistent with the findings of The Archbishop's Council that determined in *Mission-shaped Church* that "all church plants and fresh expressions need to have the development of leadership as a core part of their DNA…A critical factor that decides whether a new development will be culturally authentic is whether new members are drawn into ministry" (Chapter 7). In analyzing the work of Charles Brock, J.D. Payne argues that it is essential for the long-term trajectory of new initiatives for them to be indigenous by way of self-teaching, self-expressing, and self-theologizing. Self-teaching connects to taking responsibility for their own teaching ministry. Self-expressing pertains to worshipping and fellowshipping in a way that is relevant to their context, and self-theologizing means that they begin to think through their own understanding of cultural issues within the parameters laid out in scripture (Payne, *Discovering Church Planting* Chapter 2).

While church planting leadership principles do not represent an exact parallel, it is the closest option available when seeking a comparative approach to launching micro-

communities. In describing roles for starting a church, Harrison, Cheyney, and Overstreet acknowledge three roles as both essential and fitting of different types of leaders: church starter/initiator, founding pastor/developer, and growth pastor/propagator (181–83). In making this delineation it should be noted that while these roles could be fulfilled by the same individual, they require such different emphases that they could possibly be filled more effectively by multiple leaders (181–83). Using these roles as a parallel to micro-communities, the missional pastor of an existing congregation will likely play the role of an initiator. He or she will bring alongside himself or herself a developer from the sending church, and they will look to identify and develop a propagator from amongst the network reached by a specific micro-community.

While there are challenges associated with developing leadership amongst un-churched and de-churched individuals within the context of micro-communities, there are also some advantages. Dan Dick and Barbara Miller argue that part of the challenge of institutional churches is that they are structure-based rather than gift-based (18–19). In other words, in an established church leadership will develop around the structural needs of the institutional nature of the church. Micro-communities present the advantage for true spiritual leadership development because the leadership needs are simple rather than being complex. This aspect of micro-communities allows them to narrow their focus to a certain type of leader with certain characteristics, rather than having to fill a variety of roles in order to run a highly structured parish. For the purposes of this study, the aforementioned role of an indigenous propagator that will oversee the sustained growth of the micro-community is a helpful target for this leadership development plan, which means this project needs to also draw on the experience of practitioners to understand

how indigenous leadership works and how these communities sustain under developed leaders.

Unique Considerations for Developing Indigenous Leadership

Indigeneity is a high value in foreign missions, and so much of the relevant literature on developing indigenous leadership comes from works focused on missions and global church planting. Church planting movements, which are mostly based overseas in pre-Christian cultures, speak a lot of the need for indigenous lay leadership in small churches that are rapidly reproducing. Garrison notes that church planting movements utilize untrained lay converts to lead the newly planted churches because it is need based. As a movement seeking to create thousands of churches it will need thousands of leaders, and there are not enough missionaries or enough time to formally train the converts to keep the rapid movement going (Garrison Chapter 11). This provides an opportunity for sustainability as well, as the churches will not be dependent upon itinerating missionaries but instead will utilize people that are already a part of their communities. Craig Ott and Gene Wilson argue that this is a need-based issue that can actually become a strength, as paying leaders and/or relying on outside funding of missionaries can be deterrents to growth in church planting movements (83–84).

Garrison also notes that the most effective church planting movements are those where the foreigners understand their role as vision casters and trainers, and that it is also their role to pass on the leadership "to the local brothers and sisters with whom they serve… (for) in Church Planting Movements, the primary evangelizers are always the new believers themselves, and they contextualized the gospel better than anyone" (Ch. 11). This enables leadership to develop, for indigenous individuals to take ownership, and

for potential new participants to hear from a leader that speaks their own language. Passing on the leadership to local leaders not only enables the local churches to hear from their own worldview, but it also enables the planter to keep moving as a pioneer leader. Both Ott Wilson and Addison acknowledge that this is modeled in the way that Paul and his teams planted churches, established leadership, and kept moving on to pioneer new areas, while maintaining minimal contact with the planted churches (Ott and Wilson 68 and Addison, *Pioneering Movements* 98). In citing New Testament sources, Addison adds, "Effective church planters release authority and responsibility to local leaders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)" (*Pioneering Movements* 98).

In other scholarship on global church planting, J.D. Payne notes a concern that "many church planters in the United States and Canada were attempting to impose many of their cultural preferences regarding the local church onto the people they were trying to reach, while I noticed many church planters serving outside of North America were intentionally working to contextualize as much as possible" (*Discovering Church Planting* Preface). Payne goes on to note that this goes against what he finds in scripture, which emphasizes an apostolic figure laying a foundation of key principles but then seeking to raise up indigenous leadership to carry on the work as quickly as possible. He adds, "the weight of the Scriptures is on the church planter functioning in an apostolic role while raising up pastors/elders from out of the harvest" (ibid.). This suggests that micro-community leadership development has an opportunity to embrace a lesson from the global scene by developing indigenous leadership as the norm in the networks they reach, rather than trying to impose the cultural perspective and leadership of the established church onto the new community. Ott and Wilson even go as far to say that

paid church leaders and expensive buildings can do significant damage to church planting movements: “the three expectations of the Western church that have done the most damage to indigenous church-planting movements are expensive meeting places, formally educated, paid church planters, and overdependence on outside resources” (83–84).

The connection between the global church planting experiences and the Fresh Expression movement reside in the fact that both are designed to reach networks and people groups that are not a part of the faith. The global efforts are largely pre-Christian context, and the micro-communities envisioned in this project are designed for largely post-Christian contexts, yet many of the same principles apply. Whereas an indigenous leader in a foreign culture can speak the literal language and culture of the people group being reached, an indigenous leader in a secular North American network can speak the figurative language and culture of the people group being reached. In describing indigeneity in Fresh Expressions, Travis Collins puts it this way: “Indigenous simply means originating in, or at least fitting and functioning naturally within, a particular setting or environment…In an indigenous church, everything from discipleship to service expresses the local culture and reflects the backgrounds and experiences of the participants” (Chapter 8).

This preference for indigenous leadership is noted in the written experiences of countless practitioners engaged in this pioneering work. It also has roots in Methodist movement as noted by David Goodhew, Andrew Roberts, and Michael Volland:

> Methodism was so effective as a missionary movement in its infancy, saving thousands of souls and possibly the nation from self destruction, because it raised

> up a small army of people who could speak the languages of the gospel and the ordinary person in the local culture. It raised up indigenous leadership. If the fresh expressions movement is truly to change the landscape, then a great number of new indigenous leaders will need to be raised up or released. (ch. 4)

Any leadership development plan for micro-community leadership in the United Methodist context should take seriously the lessons provided by the early Methodist movement, as well as consider the lessons from global church planting regarding the power of indigenous leadership.

Unique Considerations for Sustainability

Due to the fact that the fresh expression movement has not been around for very long in general and has been around for even shorter period of time in North America, it is difficult to evaluate the communities from a perspective of sustainability. An assumption can be made that mission churches in different international cultures will provide a reasonable parallel to mission churches in different domestic networks. The global standard for sustainability has long been Henry Venn's "three self" formula, which is described in *Mission-shaped Church* as having been "developed and is now remembered as the 'Three Self' formula: self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending, or sometimes 'self-propagating.' These categories help describe three dimensions of church maturity" (Chapter 6). In a micro-community of faith, the small expression of a church could live out the three-selves by providing all of their financial needs, leading itself with indigenous leaders, and extending its reach to start new communities on its own that function as second generation separation from the established church.

Michael Moynagh provides another approach to thinking of sustainability, "in a more flexible way – as four questions," when describing fresh expressions that he calls "contextual churches." The four questions are "is the initiative bearing fruit," "is the initiative paying attention to flow," "is the initiative well connected to the wider family," and "does the initiative have an appropriate degree of freedom" (Chapter 20)? Fruit is understood as growing towards God and one another and reaching out to the world and to others. Flow pertains to ensuring that when members leave the contextual church that they become connected to another body of Christ. Connected refers to a sense of belonging to the larger body of Christ and perhaps a connection to other contextual churches and/or a sponsoring church. Freedom pertains to the same ideas highlighted in Venn's three self movement.

For the purposes of this project, sustainability was difficult to define based on the available relevant literature. Moynagh's description provides a helpful understanding, although in the context of the United Methodist itinerant systems one of the chief concerns is what happens to the micro-community once the founding pastor moves to a different appointment. Another section from the same chapter pulls upon biblical examples and contextual church examples regarding sustainability and leadership development, which provides a helpful framework for considering how to go about creating a leadership development plan:

> The diaspora model is represented by the converts in Jerusalem at Pentecost (and the other major festivals), which attracted Jews from around the known world… those from the diaspora who became believers appear to have returned home, shared the good news with their family and friends, and started churches in their

> households. Most would have remained in their new churches. This model makes sense today for individuals who are starting contextual church among friends or among those who share their hobby or interest…Indigenization occurs as the leadership is shared. Sharing leadership means that the church does not depend on one individual. If personal circumstances change and the founder leaves, the transition has the potential to be stable. (Moynagh ch. 20)

In this model, both indigenization and the sharing of leadership happen naturally, and sustainability is a possibility because the community has not developed around the personality of a single individual leader.

The second model that Moynagh pulls upon is that of Paul, who planted churches and would stay in those new congregations for brief periods before moving on to the next mission:

> He appointed elders for each house church, and these elders appear to have shared the leadership of the church in their town (Acts 20.17ff). The elders seem to have been drawn initially from converts among the Jews and 'God-fearing' Gentiles, who attended synagogue and were familiar with the Jewish Scriptures. Their pre-existing knowledge presumably made rapid indigenization possible. The equivalent today might be contextual churches among people with considerable church background. (ch. 20)

In this model indigenous, leadership takes place, but it appears to take place by empowering those with a pre-existing understanding of the scriptures and the faith.

The third model that Moynagh highlights is the ministry of Jesus who spent three years developing his disciples for carrying on his work and leading the church:

> This mentoring was highly intensive. Though like Paul's converts Jesus' followers attended synagogue, what Jesus was doing was so unprecedented that they needed extensive discipling before they could be entrusted with the church. This model perhaps speaks to situations where a church is birthed among the never or scarcely churched. Converts have too much to learn for indigenization to be rushed. (ch. 20)

In following Moynagh's argument, the third model requires a lengthier period of training for the potential leaders, as they are likely un-churched and need both the catechetical training as well as the practical training. Regardless of the model the issue of sustainability as well as the approach needed to develop leaders, the chief concern is over the starting place of the potential leaders.

Unique Considerations for Reaching Un/De-Churched Individuals

Using Moynagh's assessment as a guide, it is important to know the starting point of potential leaders before developing a leadership development plan that involves them. The goal of this project is to formulate a leadership development that involves un-churched and de-churched individuals for the purpose of creating sustainable and indigenous micro-communities of faith, so it is important to understand the distinctions that define un-churched and de-churched individuals. Bishop Ken Carter and Dr. Audrey Warren provide simple definitions of un-churched and de-churched, as well as nones and dones, and variances of un-churched:

> Unchurched: Persons who have never been to church and have no historical or social memory of church.
>
> Dechurched: Persons who did participate in church but no longer participate.

Nones: Persons who do not currently practice a religion.

Dones: Persons who have practiced a religion and no longer observe this practice.

Open unchurched: Persons who have never been to church but are open to going to church.

Closed unchurched: Persons who have never been to church and are closed to the idea of going to church. (12)

Based on these definitions, a leadership development plan for un-churched and de-churched individuals would not be one size fits all. A person that is de-churched or considered a "done" of the Christian faith will likely have a stronger base knowledge of Christian practices despite not currently practicing. Someone that is un-churched without a "historical or social memory" from which to draw will not start at the same point.

Pulling from research from the 1990s, the British study *Mission-shaped Church* estimated that 10 percent of the population attended church regularly, 10 percent attended sporadically (defined as fringe attenders that attend 1-3 times per month), the open de-churched accounted for 20 percent of the population, the closed de-churched accounted for 20 percent, and 40 percent of the population were classified as un-churched. The Archbishop's Council refers to these as five different tribes. They contend that most churches design their evangelism "among the 30 percent nearest to us," meaning the fringe attenders and the open de-churched. According to their study, churches will need different approaches to reach different tribes, and so micro-communities of faith provide an alternate option to reach those that the regular evangelism tactics of traditional churches are not designed to reach (Chapter 3).

Carter and Warren note that while the British study describes the church landscape in their nation, attitudes towards church and Christianity in the United States continue to catch up with those of secular Europe. They offer three "interpretations" for how to engage in this shift in the culture. The first is that the age of the cultural Christian shaped the present landscape has faded, leading to an acknowledgment of a "present reality of a church that was built not on discipleship but social conformity, and the future vision of a flourishing church that makes disciples, nurtures spiritual growth, and engages next generations" (36–37). Second, they contend that the growing percentage of dones requires the church to take responsibility for the "self-afflicted wounds" caused by the church not fulfilling its mission, by doing harm to one another, and generating critiques from both within and without the church (37). The third interpretation draws upon the rising number of "nones" and also research from Pew that describes Millennials as "detached from institutions, networked with friends." They use this as a foundational argument for the necessity of fresh expressions of church, and that these non-institution-oriented expressions built around networks will provide an opportunity for those that have no cultural affiliation with the church (37).

In engaging with the nones and the dones, Verlon Fosner's experience of launching micro-communities called Dinner Churches in Seattle is formative. The Dinner Church experience centers around a meal, and the worship experience flows out of that. Fosner describes how their perceptions of secular Seattleites were off and how their approach needed to change:

> We did not expect to find much interest in the gospel when we entered our first neighborhood in Seattle. We believed the sentiments of other frustrated church

> leaders, that Seattleites were simply not interested in Christianity anymore. Our assumptions turned out to be wrong—way wrong. We found surprising interest in the person of Jesus. There may not be equal interest in debating doctrine, or religious instructions, but our tables revealed significant interest in talking about Christ. Once we started limiting our speaking themes to the stories about Christ, agnostics, Muslims, Hindus, and almost everyone in the room started listening… To this day I am shocked at the interest in the life of Jesus that is commonplace in our city, the most liberal city in the United States. I have come to this conclusion: the average secular is fine talking about pure Christianity; it's churchianity that they don't like. (*Dinner Church: Building Bridges* Chapter 4)

Fosner's experience calls upon pioneering church leaders to not make the assumption that ministry to the nones and dones requires watering down scripture or theology, a sentiment articulated by Luke Edwards in a previous section. The challenge is to recognize their starting point and recognize that they are not looking for the same kind of institutional church structures and models that they have spent their life avoiding.

Characteristics of a Leader

While the goal is to build leaders that relate well to the un-churched and de-churched and are indigenous to the micro-communities, it is considered a given that they must be a believer in order to take on spiritual leadership for the group. Therefore, the first step towards indigenous micro-community leadership development is ensuring that someone has experienced salvation, either previously as a de-churched individual that is coming back to experience the church in a new way or as an un-churched individual that has experienced salvation through their participation in the micro-community. Beyond

being a believer, there are certain principles from church planting literature and Wesleyan literature that are helpful for developing a profile for micro-community leaders.

From the multi-site branch of church planting Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird list the following as the top five campus-pastor qualities: someone completely bought into the church's vision and loyal to the leadership, team player with strong relational skills, team builder, pastor with a desire and heart to shepherd groups and individuals, and a flexible entrepreneur (144). A micro-community is not designed to have all the characteristics of a mature church and is not necessarily designed for entrepreneurial growth like a multi-site campus will be. However, finding individuals within the micro-communities that are strong relationally, loyal to the vision, and possessing a pastoral heart will be key. Furthermore, J.D. Payne describes a strong walk with the Lord as perhaps the most important characteristic of a church-planting pastor. He states, "It is out of their intimate and individual walks with God that the team members are able to minister effectively to those outside the Kingdom. That Spirit-filled walk does three things: provides wisdom to engage unbelievers, provides boldness for evangelism, and provides perseverance" (*The Barnabas Factors* 22–23).

In addition to walking with Lord, Payne also emphasizes seven other healthy practices of new church team members found in the life of Barnabas in the New Testament, all of which greatly assisted with Kingdom expansion. The other seven factors are: maintains an outstanding character, serves the local church, remains faithful to the call, shares the gospel regularly, raises up leaders, encourages with speech and actions, responds appropriately to conflict (*The Barnabas Factors* 10). Of these "factors," character, encouragement, responding to conflict appropriately, evangelistic, and raising

up other leaders have the potential to be key components of micro-community leaders. From the perspective of church planting and multi-site lay leadership, it comes into focus that the leaders developed will need to be positive and spiritually growing individuals with an appropriate temperament, and a desire to nurture others, including helping to develop others in their discipleship by becoming leaders themselves.

While these individuals will certainly lead, it is important to note that most of the relevant literature talks more about the character of the leaders rather than the skill sets of the leaders. Perhaps this is because Scripture emphasizes that the gifts of the community are given to individuals for the purpose of building up the community and developing unity (see Berding 71–72).

The relevant Wesleyan literature also points to character rather than specific skills in identifying strong class leaders, one of the essential leadership positions within the early Methodist movement. Watson describes the class leaders as the spiritual leaders of the societies:

> In early Methodism, the class leader was a crucial position. They were seen as the spiritual leaders of the people in their class meetings. The leader kept track of attendance and visited people who missed the weekly meeting. They also provided support and encouragement as needed. (*The Class Meeting* Chapter 6)

Furthermore, Watson describes them more as shepherds that go after those that are missing, and keep the group moving in the right direction (*The Class Meeting* Chapter 6). This function of shepherding is essential because the goal is to create an environment where individuals can experience personal growth, not necessarily be taught doctrine. In a class meeting style setup, Watson notes that the class leader does not have to function

as a teacher, so there is no set level of biblical knowledge needed to lead a class meeting. (*The Class Meeting* Chapter 6). He also adds that the most important characteristic of a class leader is their spiritual maturity and not necessarily the particular leadership skills that might make them good candidates for standard church leadership positions (*The Class Meeting* Chapter 7).

From the field of organizational leadership, Patrick Lencioni writes in *The Ideal Team Player*, “For organizations seriously committed to making teamwork a cultural reality, I'm convinced that ‘the right people’ are the ones who have the three virtues in common—humility, hunger, and people smarts” (155). Regarding humility, he describes the virtue as one that lacks an excessive ego or strong concern about their own status. Further he adds, “They are quick to point out the contributions of others and slow to seek attention for their own. They share credit, emphasize team over self, and define success collectively rather than individually” (157). Hunger relates to an eagerness and dedication to learn and be involved (159). People smarts requires more explanation than the others; so, he is careful in defining it:

> In the context of a team, smart simply refers to a person's common sense about people. It has everything to do with the ability to be interpersonally appropriate and aware. Smart people tend to know what is happening in a group situation and how to deal with others in the most effective way. They ask good questions, listen to what others are saying, and stay engaged in conversations intently. Some might refer to this as emotional intelligence, which wouldn't be a bad comparison, but smart is probably a little simpler than that. Smart people just have good judgment and intuition around the subtleties of group dynamics and the impact of their

words and actions (160).

These three virtues provide the framework for what it takes to be an ideal member of a team, and they are based on years of consulting and observation of team dynamics, making it a helpful perspective for designing systems of shared leadership.

Another organizational perspective that builds upon the idea of the interpersonal skills that Lencioni emphasized under people smarts comes from Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey proclaims, "Communication is the most important skill in life" (249). For Covey, this does not just mean the ability to communicate your point of view, but the key part of it is not the speaking or writing part of communication, it is the listening part. He notes that people receive ample training on speaking, writing and reading, the other three forms of communication, but little time is spent on listening. He notes, "If you want to interact effectively with me, to influence me—your spouse, your child, your neighbor, your boss, your coworker, your friend—you first need to understand me" (250). This idea ties in not only with the humility and people smarts emphasized by Lencioni but also with the important aspects stressed by Watson about what it means to lead effectively as a class leader, namely the ability to set aside one's own agenda and perspective in order to hear and guide the others under his or her care.

Spiritual Formation as Leadership Development

In any leadership development process, some characteristics are innate, and some are developed. The innate characteristics are likely the ones pastors will need to look for when evaluating potential leaders, but then there needs to be a system in place for developing the trained aspects of leadership development. From a Christian perspective,

the relevant literature highlighted spiritual formation as being a key aspect of leadership development. While there are leadership characteristics and skills that will need to be developed, which will be discussed in the next section on apprenticeship, this section focuses on the need for spiritual formation to take place in the process of leadership development.

In *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders*, Chuck Miller explains that effective leadership develops out of a lifetime walk with God, and he describes two rooms in which the leader is formed: the Soul Room and the Leadership Room. These two rooms of formation emerge out of Miller's conviction that leadership development should not follow a model but rather be a part of an ongoing "God-process" in which the person grows in their relationship with God in the Soul Room and subsequently grows in their leadership capabilities as the Soul Room overflows into the Leadership Room (15–22). Similarly, Alan Hirsch notes, "the quality of the church's leadership is directly proportional to the quality of discipleship. If we fail in the area of making disciples, we should not be surprised if we fail in the area of leadership development" (119). Hirsch goes on to describe discipleship as growing in Christlikeness, something that is possible through spiritual formation as discipleship. With this in mind, it is natural to use discipleship as the launching pad for micro-community leadership development.

The practice of developing a pattern of discipleship through spiritual formation has the potential to be difficult in a micro-community setting that focuses on reaching non- and de-churched individuals. Bishop Ken Carter notes,

> For the non-churched (nones), the language of becoming a disciple is entering a new world of practices, habits and relationships. For the de-churched (dones), the

> path of discipleship requires a detachment from negative experiences of church in the past and a turning toward the gift of new forms of church. And for leaders, lay and clergy, there is the essential and lifelong basic work of spiritual formation. ("Discipleship as Spiritual Formation and Mentoring")

These challenges are also significant with the Millennial "dones" highlighted by David Kinnaman. He asserts that the "dones" struggle to connect with church-based discipleship practices because they desire something more relational than what the church offers. The church does not always offer a connection between their vocation and faith, and they have viewed spiritual formation practices in the church as largely about information rather than wisdom and guidance (ch. 1). In order to develop a spiritual formation process in micro-communities, the approach will have to contend with these challenges and shape a different type of spiritual formation than what has usually been practiced in the church.

While there are disadvantages, movements like micro-community ministry have advantages that other ministry settings do not when it comes to developing leaders through spiritual formation. In the church planting movement, which as identified as earlier focuses on developing small multiplying churches, discipleship is a key element and part of the reason the churches stay small and keep multiplying. Dennis McCallum and Jessica Lowery say in this way: "Discipleship and church planting movements are intimately linked…Discipleship is a means of leadership development that permits multiplication, because it doesn't require feeding leaders through a central hub, like a seminary or Bible school" (Chapter 1). From their perspective, a multiplying movement built around small communities has the advantage of smaller discipleship settings that require and promote spiritual growth and commissioning of raised up leaders.

David and Paul Watson encourage the power the of prayer in discipleship and emphasize the role it plays in leadership development. In evaluating the top disciple-makers in their ministry, they observed one common thread in their lives: "We found many common elements among the different groups, but the only element that was present in every team was a high commitment to prayer" (79). They encourage those that develop leaders through discipleship to develop a strong prayer life (84), to develop a strong prayer network involving others (91), and to use prayer as a vehicle for taking others along on the journey of discipleship with you by engaging in prayer walks around the community you are trying to reach (97).

In order to develop a spiritual formation process to develop leaders, the process does not need to be rushed. Eugene Peterson describes the process of spiritual formation in terms of a "long obedience" and finds inspiration from the "Songs of Ascent" or Psalms 120–134, which he refers to as a "dog-eared songbook." His attraction to the image is that they were songs that people would make on their pilgrimages three times a year up to Jerusalem, and also because it reminds him of the in between times that discipleship must likewise be nurtured (18–19). In addition to the "long obedience," there will also need to be a higher degree of challenge than the church has typically experienced with discipleship. Mike Breen notes, "Jesus created a highly inviting but highly challenging culture for his disciples to function and grow within. If we are going to build a culture of discipleship, we will have to learn to balance invitation and challenge appropriately…A gifted discipler is someone who invites people into a covenantal relationship with him or her, but challenges that person to live into his or her true identity

in very direct yet graceful ways" (ch. 2). This process of spiritual formation and discipleship echoes the type of apprenticeship that Jesus modeled with his disciples.

Apprenticeship as Leadership Development

The relevant literature surveyed points to an emphasis upon apprenticeship as the ideal model of spiritual formation and leadership development. Dave and Jon Ferguson avoid using the word disciple when describing the spiritual formation involved in developing leaders because they feel that Jesus's original intention for the word "disciple" has been lost. They argue that the contemporary church has reduced discipleship to attaining a certain degree of cognitive absorption, but Jesus's original term referred to ones that would complete a mission. They prefer instead to use the word "apprentice" and "apprenticeship." This is because apprenticeship involves the practice of a certain role and responsibility for the purpose to take on that role and responsibility themselves, thus fulfilling Christ's desire for believers to be a part of completing a mission (44–45).

The first step is naturally to identify those that might be a potential apprentice. Jon Ferguson identifies three qualities of an aspiring apprentice: Spiritual Velocity, Teachability, and Relational Intelligence. Spiritual Velocity refers not to where one is in their spiritual journey, but "What it really means is that the trajectory of your life is moving you closer and closer to Jesus." Teachability refers to a desire to grow and also an openness to feedback and development without a sense that they already know everything there is to know. Relational intelligence refers to a genuine care for other people, and a desire to look for the best in others ("3 Qualities of an Aspiring Apprentice"). Gary Nelson expands the idea of apprentice and claims, "The call of

leadership today is a call to be apprentice-pastor-theologian-missionary" (Chapter 4). An apprentice nurtures a passionate life in Jesus Christ. A pastor is committed to the formation of a genuine community of faith. A missionary is committed to engaged and incarnational living outside the church, and a theologian is committed to live deeply in the questions (ch. 4).

Alan Hirsch also argues for apprenticeship as a model and suggests that the strength of Jesus's discipleship methodology was his use of apprenticeship over simply incorporating content transmission. He further claims that there is no other method that will ever be as effective for developing leaders than apprenticeship-based discipleship. He calls this "Action-Learning" versus the "Academy" (120–125). Mike Breen also calls for an application model because "Knowing something in your head alone is never what Jesus was after. The truth of Scripture is meant to be worked out in us, not something that we hold as an abstract reality" (Chapter 3). This type of truth that is worked out within us takes place most effectively in an apprenticeship-based model. Breen also adds "immersion" as another biblically based development style, which involves being thrown into a learning experience without any prior training (Chapter 3).

There are multiple models available for effective apprenticeship-based leadership development. Dave and Jon Ferguson offer a helpful list of five steps of leadership development: 1) I do. You watch. We talk. 2) I do. You help. We talk. 3) You do. I help. We talk. 4) You do. I watch. We talk. 5) You do. Someone else watches (64). In the case of leadership development for micro-communities, this means that the pastor/leader begins leading the group while a prospective leader observes, the prospective leader begins to help before slowly taking on the responsibility themselves, and eventually the

pastor/leader will be able to phase themselves out of the leadership equation altogether. An international parallel to this approach would be an example provided by Steve Addison. In *What Jesus Started*, one of the most powerful examples is that of the Ugandan Assemblies of God denomination. Addison describes their method of church multiplication as one in which the pastor of a church would install a trainee to oversee their existing church while they and another trainee went to plant a new church. After two years, the pastors would return to their original church while the trainee continued to pastor the new church, which would subsequently replicate that same process (Part 3).

The value of apprenticeship as a model is that it does not require any prior training in ministry leadership, which will likely be the case for participants in micro-communities. In *The Multi-site Revolution,* Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon and Warren Bird talk about the leadership development of Mark Jobe, pastor of New Life Community Church in Chicago. Jobe's first "leadership team" consisted of a young Hispanic man that had just left the Marines, two gypsies, and a former alcoholic that became a Christian in his sixties. They described this team as having no formal biblical training and no prior church leadership experience. Jobe's strategy was "he looked for people who matched the qualities of the acronym FAST—people who were faithful, available, Spirit-filled, and teachable. Then he would follow the example of how Jesus apprenticed his disciples, by building a highly relational, hands-on team" (147). As the community develops, this method of observing the group to identify individuals that are "FAST" will be beneficial for developing leaders within the group.

Other Considerations for Leadership Development

In addition to developing prospective leaders spiritually and through hands on apprenticing, there are also a few other considerations raised by the relevant literature. The first of these is to identify the needs of the micro-community. In terms of building a team of leaders for multi-site churches, Scott McConnell shares in *Multi-Site churches: Guidance for the Movement's Next Generation* that a helpful rule of thumb is to identify each of the core ministries a new campus will have and to identify a leader to correspond to each of those ministries (112). Micro-communities will have fewer responsibilities, but this approach from multi-site ministry fits well with sharing the leadership. While many micro-communities can be led by one to two people, identifying the needs upfront will help establish how many prospective leaders that the pastor needs to intentionally invest in to develop them.

Another consideration raised is the need to empower within the group. Surratt, Ligon, and Bird argue in their list of "Ten Practical ideas for Leadership Development" to "Remember that most leaders are already present; they can be raised up from within the congregation" (145). They add that leaders raised from within will understand the DNA of the church better than someone brought in from the outside, as they are already a part of the strong culture of the church (145). While it might be tempting to bring in additional leaders from the sponsoring church rather than raising them from within the micro-community, this may cause the group to lose its authenticity and also will rob the participants the opportunity to grow spiritually as they develop into leaders. McConnell adds that with secondary sites of a multi-site ministry it is essential to empower the leaders of sites by creating a sense of ownership. He argues this can easily take place

when the overseeing pastor allows space for the raised up leaders to make decisions instead of always providing all of the answers (121).

This leads to the final consideration raised, the role of the pastor. *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* describes as part of the role of pastors that they are "To give pastoral support, guidance, and training to the lay leadership, equipping them to fulfill the ministry to which they are called" (¶340.c.1.a.) and "give diligent pastoral leadership in ordering the life of the congregation for discipleship in the world" (¶340.d.2.). In other words, as United Methodist pastors it is part of the established responsibilities that they equip laity and help order the life of the congregation for discipleship. The pastor will have to live into their role of equipping for shared leadership to take place. Bishop Carter adds that being a mentor requires "Listen[ing] to the other person," and "reflect[ing] back to the person that you are wanting to get to know and understand them" ("Discipleship as Spiritual Formation and Mentoring"). By establishing these types of relationships, a mentoring relationship can develop.

Research Design Literature

The relevant literature was helpful for identifying a basic understanding of micro-communities and shared leadership from a biblical, theological, historical, and practical point of view. It also provided insights into factors that need to be considered when formulating a leadership development plan for micro-community lay leadership and perspectives on spiritual formation and leadership development from other fields of church and organizational leadership. A specific approach for developing lay leadership within the context of micro-communities of faith was not discernable from the relevant literature, and neither was it evident what would lead to a pattern of sustainable,

indigenous and shared leadership of those micro-communities. Because this is a field with little research conducted within it, a mixed methods approach was chosen with an emphasis on qualitative research and developing a grounded theory.

John W. Creswell describes mixed methods as involving both quantitative and qualitative approaches and defines it with the following description:

> An approach to research in the social, behavioral, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two, and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems. A core assumption of this approach is that when an investigator combines statistical trends (quantitative data) with stories and personal experiences (qualitative data), this collective strength provides a better understanding of the research problem than either form of data alone. (2)

The goal of this approach is to draw from data in the field of micro-community leadership and to glean from the experiences of practitioners. Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell describe a possible approach of utilizing mixed methods saying, "You might begin by developing a quantitative survey exploring people's attitudes and interests, their involvement in community issues, and what they are concerned about, as well as including the usual demographic queries… you might choose to also include a qualitative component whereby you interview a certain subset of survey respondents based on purposeful criteria" (44). In approaching the questions of this project, the mixed methods approach helped to collect the right information, as it provided a chance to test

attitudes and assumptions through quantitative analysis and to gain personal insights through open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews.

Because the overall goal was to formulate a leadership development plan and to discern the components of such a plan, qualitative analysis was the most important aspect. Tim Sensing notes, “Qualitative research is grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of lived experience. Qualitative researchers, then, are most interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth” (Chapter 3). In a project focused on formulating a plan where no formalized plan exists, drawing from the experiences of those within the field was a crucial aspect. The goal was to develop an understanding and even a theory, which Sensing notes is known as grounded theory in which the goal is to “build theory rather than test theory” (ch. 7). The relevant literature pointed to a research design that would enable a building of theory around a process for developing leaders rather than testing a theory since pre-existing theories were not widely available.

Merriam and Tisdell write, “As is true in other forms of qualitative research the investigator as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis assumes an inductive stance and strives to derive meaning from the data. The result of this type of qualitative study is a theory that emerges from, or is ‘grounded’ in, the data—hence a grounded theory” (31). In order to develop a grounded theory, they suggest the data “can come from interviews, observations, and a wide variety of documentary materials” (32). For the purposes of this study, the relevant literature pointed towards utilizing less structured and more open ended interviews as well as focus groups (Merriam and Tisdell

110–114, Sensing Chapter 4), which allowed for an open-ended format for "respondents (to) define the world in unique ways" (Merriam and Tisdell 110) and an "interactive discussion through which data are generated, which leads to a different type of data not accessible through individual interviews" (114), respectively. The exact instruments that the literature pointed towards are defined in Chapter 3.

Summary of Literature

Micro-communities provide a significant vehicle for established churches to engage a part of the population that they may not otherwise reach. This idea is supported through the biblical, theological, and practical literature that is available. There also is significant support for shared leadership in the biblical, theological, and practical literature. Moving towards the research stage, it will be important consider the nature of micro-communities that are studied to evaluate any unique considerations related to developing a model for spiritual leadership development. It is also clear from the literature that a helpful starting point for micro-community leadership is to use people from the established church, but there is also an argument for the long-term sustainability of the communities that indigenous leadership should be raised up. It will be important during the research phase to evaluate the challenges to indigenous leadership and to consider factors such the best practices for identifying and equipping potential leaders.

It also will be important during the research phase to evaluate the characteristics for micro-community leaders that emerge consistently amongst the micro-communities under consideration. Most of the relevant literature pointed towards spiritual character as the most important category for identifying and equipping leaders, but there was also a significant emphasis on interpersonal characteristics. Traditional leadership skills (e.g.,

teaching and organizing) are minimized in importance in the relevant literature. One question that should be asked of existing micro-communities is what that spiritual character and walk with the Lord looks like and how can it be identified. Another challenge to evaluate during the research is beyond the spiritual characteristics, what skills and gifts are important as well, since the literature did not reveal these as much as it revealed the importance of character traits.

The relevant literature also points towards the heavy involvement of spiritual formation as a key process within the leadership development of micro-community leaders. It will be important to evaluate how pastors leading micro-communities are intentional in nurturing prospective leaders spiritually. It also will be significant to assess the particular challenges associated with developing leaders spiritually that do not have a strong background in church life and discipleship processes.

Apprenticeship is a theme that emerged repeatedly in the relevant literature. There are multiple models of apprenticeship that are derived from biblical and practical sources, and in the research phase, it will be important to analyze which models are most viable in order to move towards a model of shared leadership within micro-communities. Finally, it will be important to evaluate the role of the pastor in both micro-community leadership and in micro-community leadership development. Asking questions of practitioners regarding their role in each arena will be key to assessing the best practices for both leadership and leadership development.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Having reviewed the relevant literature for developing leaders in micro-communities of faith, the next step was to test emerging theories through research with practitioners. Because there are limited resources available on micro-community leadership, it was essential to gather data from pastors and lay leaders that are participating in this type of ministry. This chapter lays out the methodology used to select participants, collect data, and analyze data that will help lead to developing a process for developing lay leadership in United Methodist micro-communities.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to formulate a process for developing lay leadership within the context of micro-communities of faith planted by existing United Methodist churches in order to establish a pattern of sustainable, indigenous, and shared leadership of those micro-communities. In order to accomplish this goal, it was necessary to evaluate and analyze the ways that previously planted micro-communities connected with United Methodist congregations had experienced both successes and failures in developing leadership from the ground level. The relevant literature pointed towards micro-communities having a unique set of challenges for developing leaders, an emphasis on character and fit within the community as being of equal or greater importance than leadership skills, and highlighted apprenticeship as one potential model for discipleship and leadership development in micro-communities. With this in mind, the research methodology sought to explore what United Methodist pastors and lay leaders identify as

the unique challenges, the necessary characteristics to lead within a micro-community, and the best practices for micro-community leadership development.

Research Questions

RQ #1.

What do United Methodist micro-community pastors and lay people identify as challenges to developing sustainable, indigenous, and shared lay leadership?

In order to identify the challenges, a series of questions related to RQ #1 were developed. Six questions were included on the questionnaires (Appendix D) that went to both pastors and lay leaders, three that were Likert scale for a quantitative analysis, and three that were short answer for qualitative perspectives. The semi-structured interviews for pastors (Appendix E) and focus groups for lay leaders (Appendix F) each had one question a piece related to RQ #1, which furthered the qualitative analysis. The questions were designed to shed light on what pastors and lay leaders have experienced as the unique challenges to this type of ministry and leadership development.

RQ #2.

What do United Methodist micro-community pastors and lay people identify as attributes and abilities essential for lay people to lead in sustainable, indigenous, and shared ways?

To answer RQ #2, the same formula from RQ #1 was utilized. Questionnaires featured three Likert scale-style questions and three short answer questions, and the semi-structured interviews and focus groups included one question a piece. Each of these questions allowed for a clear understanding of what pastors and lay leaders have

experienced to be the most important attributes and abilities for leaders of micro-communities.

RQ #3.

What are best practices for developing sustainable, indigenous, and shared lay leadership in United Methodist micro communities?

This question dealt directly with the best approaches for leadership development and allowed for some insights to help shape a process for developing leaders. The questionnaire included one question related to RQ #3, which allowed for some initial insights that could be analyzed further through the semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The semi-structured interviews and focus groups were more closely tied to RQ #3 than the first two research questions, as the open-ended format of both settings allowed for deeper sharing of the best practices from the pastors' and lay leaders' perspectives. The goal of these conversations was to have data to utilize in formulating a well thought out process for developing leaders within micro-communities.

Ministry Context(s)

The micro-communities analyzed within this project operate as parallel entities to existing United Methodist congregations, and they are designed to reach un-churched and de-churched individuals that may not connect within a traditional local church setting. This means that some of the participants, and even some of the leaders, will not have a strong church background. It also means that in many contexts there is a tension between the needs of the existing church and the needs of the mission field around them, which can be difficult for pastors to navigate. This contextual element is a major factor being considered with this project.

This project also focused specifically on micro-communities within the southeastern United States of America. This particular region features a higher percentage of church participation than other parts of the country and is colloquially referenced as “The Bible Belt” to signify the cultural influence of Christianity and churches within the region. The assumption made by many congregations within this area is that everyone residing in this region has experienced at least some exposure to Christian beliefs and practices. Often times, this exposure has had a negative impact upon individuals, which is why alternative forms of church are needed to help reach those that no longer feel comfortable in a traditional church setting. Because of the prevalence of traditional churches and traditional models of church planting, this region also has been slower than other regions to adopt alternative approaches to developing Christian community.

Participants

Criteria for Selection

Pastors that participated in this study were identified by two different methods. During the course of this project, the researcher gained the acquaintance of some pastors through networking at conferences and training events for Fresh Expressions ministry, and so they were contacted directly and invited to be a part of the research. Other pastors were identified by annual conference officials within the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church. The researcher obtained permission to contact these pastors from the conference officials before inviting them to participate. For laity, all of them were recommended by their pastor, and the researcher received permission from the pastor to conduct research within their parish and amongst their leaders before inviting any of the lay leaders to participate. The communication to request permission from both

conference officials and pastors is outlined in Appendix A, along with the permission forms they were asked to submit. The sample selected incorporated what Merriam and Tisdell describe as "purposeful sampling," which is "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (96). Whether the researcher identified the pastor, or a conference official identified them, the goal of purposively selecting participants was to find churches that were attempting to develop micro-communities alongside existing churches and developing leaders within the communities, as these would be the ones that could lend the most insight.

Description of Participants

The participants all came from the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church. Specifically, they came from five states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina each had clergy and lay representation, and Alabama and Tennessee only had clergy representation. Of the pastors that participated in the Questionnaires, eight were male, and two were female. In the Interviews, five were male, and one was a female. Of the laity that participated in the Questionnaires, six were male, and nine were female. In the Groups, three were male, and two were female. All of the participants had been involved in micro-community ministry for over a year or were at least approaching one year. Half of the pastors that participated in the Questionnaires were solo pastors with the remaining half serving on a multi-clergy staff, and in the Interviews, two of the six participants were solo pastors. Nearly half (seven out of fifteen) of the laity were a part of an existing church with a solo pastor, but none of those laity were available for the Groups. Ethnicity was not considered as criteria, nor was number

of years that the participant had been a Christian. The only selective factor was if the participant had been involved in micro-community leadership in a ministry affiliated with an existing United Methodist Church.

Ethical Considerations

Before contacting pastors that were not previously known to the researcher, the researcher received permission to contact them from their conference offices. The researcher also received permission from pastors before contacting any of their laity. Both pastors and lay leaders were required to agree to a consent statement before they could take the questionnaire, which was set up through SurveyMonkey to ensure accurate agreement before they could proceed. The consent form was designed to cover both the questionnaire participation as well as their participation in an interview or focus group, if selected. Furthermore, because the focus groups involved multiple participants, the introductory prompt included a reminder to everyone to be mindful of the confidentiality agreement.

The names of individuals and churches are not mentioned at any place in the study. The titles “Pastor” and “Laity” along with numbers are used when there is a need to identify and distinguish, and only basic demographic information is used in order to keep from the sites being easily identifiable. Other than the researcher, only the transcriber of the interview and focus group recordings had access to the data.

Instrumentation

This project utilized three instruments: questionnaires for pastors and lay leaders, which are abbreviated as “Questionnaires” (Appendix D); semi-structured interviews with pastors, which are abbreviated as “Interviews” (Appendix E); and focus groups with lay leaders, which are abbreviated as “Groups” (Appendix F). Additionally, as Merriam

and Tisdell note, a "characteristic of all forms of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (16). They explain that "the researcher can expand his or her understanding through nonverbal as well as verbal communication, process information (data) immediately, clarify and summarize material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses" (16). The utilization of the researcher as the primary instrument was key in the Interviews and Groups, as the open-ended flow of those sessions enabled a broader collection of data.

Expert Review

Due to the utilization of researcher designed instruments, two individuals were consulted for an expert review of the project. Dr. Bryan Collier, a church planter and lead pastor of The Orchard in Tupelo, Mississippi served as the primary reviewer within his role as the coach for this project. He lent his expertise as a planter and as the pastor of a multi-site church with multiple leaders serving under his leadership. Additionally, the instruments were reviewed by Dr. Ellen Marmon, the director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Asbury Theological Seminary. Through the review of each of these experts, the instruments were refined to ensure that the three instruments would reliably lead to adequate answers to the project's primary research questions.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

For a qualitative study, the goal of reliability is "not whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (Merriam and Tisdell 251). This means that the goal of the project was to offer findings that made sense and were consistent with the data collected. In order to achieve this, it was important to

prevent against researcher bias by utilizing multiple methods in order to triangulate the data. Sensing notes that "The multi-method approach is an important aspect of triangulation and the issues of validity" and that "triangulation (multiple data-collection technologies designed to measure a single concept or construct) provides a complex view of the intervention enabling a 'thicker' interpretation" (Chapter 3). By utilizing multi-instruments, the research questions were able to be explored from multiple angles. The Questionnaires provided insights that could be confirmed or reshaped through the Interviews and Groups, and the findings of the Interviews and Groups likewise could be compared to the findings of the Questionnaires.

Furthermore, consistency was essential to make for a reliable study. Questionnaires were distributed to all pastors and all lay leaders, and no one else had access to each other's answers so that they could all answer honestly and uniquely. The Interviews and Groups also operated under consistent procedures. Each session was conducted via video conference, and each was limited to forty-five minutes in length. Additionally, all of the Interviews and Groups were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions.

In terms of validity, it is difficult to reach complete validity in a qualitative project, but the goal is to reach what Earl Babbie calls "face validity," which means it has "that quality of an indicator that makes it seem a reasonable measure of some variable" (185). Sensing adds that "If those to whom it was presented judge the research useful, relevant, and significant, then the research is deemed valid" (Chapter 8). Those that reviewed the project in written form and those that provided feedback during the

presentation offered validity to the project by helping shape and refine the project's findings.

Data Collection

The data for this project was collected over a period of one month. Once the participants were identified, the researcher contacted them through an email (Appendix B) to invite them to take the Questionnaire (Appendix D) through SurveyMonkey. The first part of the Questionnaire included the informed consent statement (Appendix C), which required agreement before they could move on to the questions in the Questionnaire. Participants were given two weeks to complete the Questionnaires, and once all of the results were in, the researcher scheduled the Interviews and Groups over the course of the next two weeks.

Pastors that indicated favoring of an apprentice-style model of leadership development in the final question of the Questionnaires were the ones targeted for the Interviews. This decision was made because the Questionnaires utilized a mixed methods approach, and as Merriam and Tisdell note, in a mixed methods qualitative project the researcher might include "a qualitative component whereby you interview a certain subset of survey respondents based on purposeful criteria" (44). In this case, finding a sample of pastors that favored apprenticeship served as the purposeful criteria. During the Interviews, the researcher followed a semi-structured format with set questions, but the ability to ask follow-up questions based on what the pastors shared. Sensing notes that the semi-structured format limits probing by offering "a preset protocol that correlates with the project's problem and purpose statements" and that "an interview guide lists the questions or topics that the interviewer desires to explore" (ch. 4). By having a preset

script, the researcher was able to ensure that the purpose statement and research questions were the guide but was also able to probe deeper as needed.

Lay leaders were all invited to participate in one of the Groups, which were offered at two different times with participants selecting the time that fit their schedules. Because not everyone would be able to make those times, it provided for a random sampling. In the event that a site had more than one representative, they were not allowed to participate in the same time slot in order to maintain confidentiality. The random sampling via availability helped prevent bias in selection and provided the opportunity to bring multiple perspectives to the Groups conversation. The format of the Groups sessions was similar to the Interviews in that the moderator followed a guide with an opportunity to probe deeper as needed. The difference between the two was the group dynamic involved in a focus group compared to the one-on-one interaction in an interview. Groups began by going over the ground rules, which are outlined at the beginning of Appendix F, in order to ensure good group dynamics. Beyond setting the ground rules, it was also important for the moderator to be rehearsed with the material and pay attention to group dynamics. Sensing notes, "The more rehearsed the moderator, the more comfortable the setting, thus encouraging the participants to be more relaxed…. Similarly, the facilitator will need to know how to tone down the talkative person and draw out the silent one" (Chapter 4). In order to prepare for this, the researcher conducted a test session with members of his clergy small group so that he could be at ease when conducting the live Groups.

The open-ended nature of the Interviews and Groups allowed for adaptability as the research unfolded. Creswell notes that one of the skills in the qualitative research side of mixed methods is to start with a theory that guides the research but to also let it evolve:

> The inquirer may start with a theory that guides the research questions, but this theory is modified during the research rather than being fixed. The key idea is to let the research evolve and change based on what the investigator learns from the participants in the study. (29)

The research questions and findings from the relevant literature informed the development of the research instruments but having instruments with some flexibility allowed for adaptability as the participants shared their perspectives.

Finally, the Interviews and Groups were all conducted via video conference, and a video recording was made off of the researcher's computer to allow for accurate transcription. One individual assisted with the transcription to improve reliability, accuracy, and prevent against researcher bias in recording the data.

Data Analysis

The researcher began the analysis by finding the mean and the standard deviation of the Likert scale quantitative questions on the Questionnaires. This enabled the researcher to identify trends and patterns in the ways they perceived the presumptions identified through the relevant literature. One additional step was to sort the different demographic questions related to whether they were pastors or laity, the type of participants that are a part of their micro-community, the size of the groups, and the number of years their micro-community has operated.

The next step was to code the responses to short answer questions on the Questionnaires. Key themes and words were identified and color coded to take note of patterns and consistent perceptions amongst the participants. The researcher kept separate lists of the pastor responses and the lay leader responses to note if there were differences or similarities, and the researcher also analyzed them in their entirety to see where there was congruence since the goal was to gain insights from both types of participants. A similar approach was likewise used for the transcriptions of the Interviews and Groups. The researcher also utilized the transcriber to do the same type of analysis and coding to ensure that similar conclusions were reached, in order to prevent against researcher bias.

Once the researcher had collected all of the common themes, words and patterns, he ranked them under each research question to see which similar types of responses were made to each question. This helped to identify where there was agreement amongst the participants as to the most common challenges, necessary attributes and abilities, and best practices for developing leaders.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Micro-communities of faith that run parallel to established churches, often referred to as Fresh Expressions, have emerged in the early twenty-first century as one of the primary frontiers of evangelism and as a form of church planting. The fields of church planting, Fresh Expressions, and leadership development have significant literature associated with them, but micro-community leadership development has not received as much attention. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the challenges associated with micro-community leadership development, to discern the attributes and abilities necessary to lead in a micro-community of faith, and to formulate the best practices of leadership development processes in micro-communities of faith. The overarching goal was to determine a process for developing sustainable, indigenous, and shared lay leadership for United Methodist micro-communities. This chapter describes the participants in this study and then presents the quantitative and qualitative information gleaned from a series of Questionnaires, Pastor Interviews, and Laity Focus Groups. Chapter 4 concludes with the major findings of this study.

Participants

Through personal connections and recommendations from conference officials in five different states in the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church, twenty pastors were considered to be a part of this project. Invitations to take a questionnaire went out to sixteen of those pastors, and ten completed the questionnaire. Additionally, eight of the pastors that completed the questionnaire plus one pastor that

did not recommended certain lay persons to participate in the study. In total, the pastors recommended twenty-five lay persons, and twenty invitations went out. Fifteen lay persons completed the questionnaire. Eight of the ten pastors were asked to participate in follow-up interviews based on if they included the idea of apprenticeship in their description of an ideal process for leadership development, which was an emergent theme in the relevant literature as well as confirmed as a dominant theme in the pastoral questionnaires. Six of those eight pastors participated in an interview. All laity were invited to be a part of one of the available focus group times, and five participated.

All of the participants have experience in micro-community leadership as either a pastor, lay leader, and/or volunteer, and they came from five different states in the southeastern United States. The types of micro-communities surveyed include home churches, jail churches, brewery ministries, coffee house communities, special interest/hobby groups, and dinner church ministries in low income areas. Figure 4.1 gives gender and home state information for each of the questionnaire participants, as well as the interview and focus group participants. Figure 4.2 gives age and size demographics for the micro-communities represented by the participants. Figure 4.3 highlights the dominant experiences of the traditional church by participants within the micro-communities represented by the research participants. It should be noted that while each pastor completed each question of the questionnaire, some lay persons left certain questions blank, so some answer totals may not equal the full number of laity survey participants.

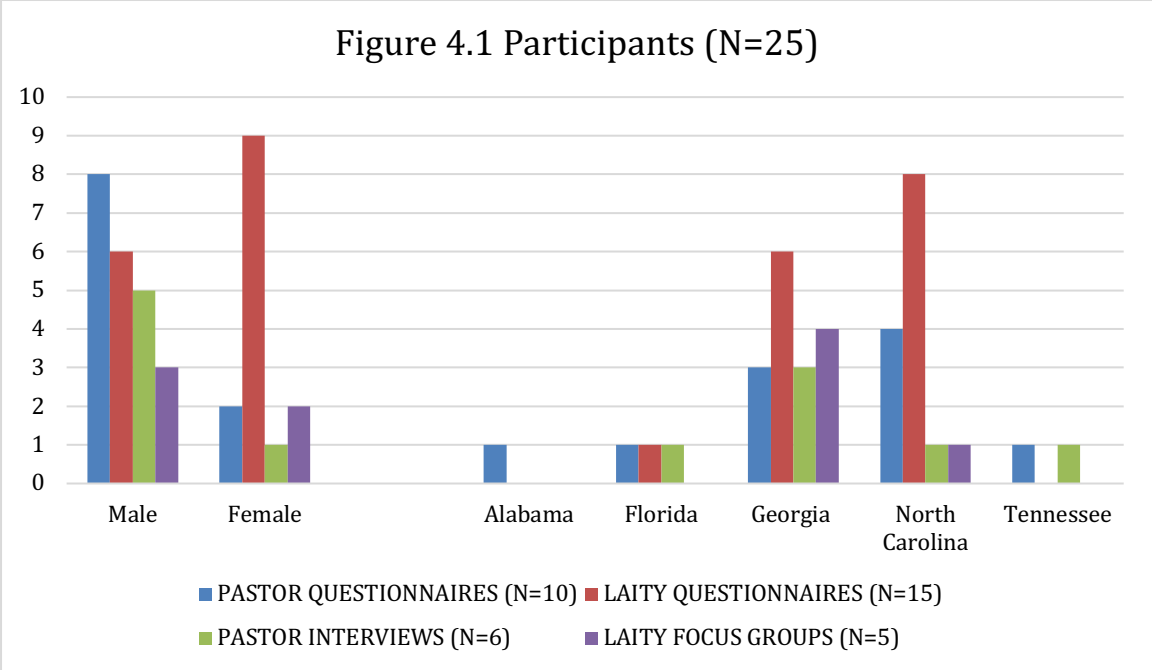


Figure 4.1 Participants (N=25)
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
Male
Female
Alabama
Florida
Georgia
North Carolina
Tennessee
PASTOR QUESTIONNAIRES (N=10)
LAITY QUESTIONNAIRES (N=15)
PASTOR INTERVIEWS (N=6)
LAITY FOCUS GROUPS (N=5)

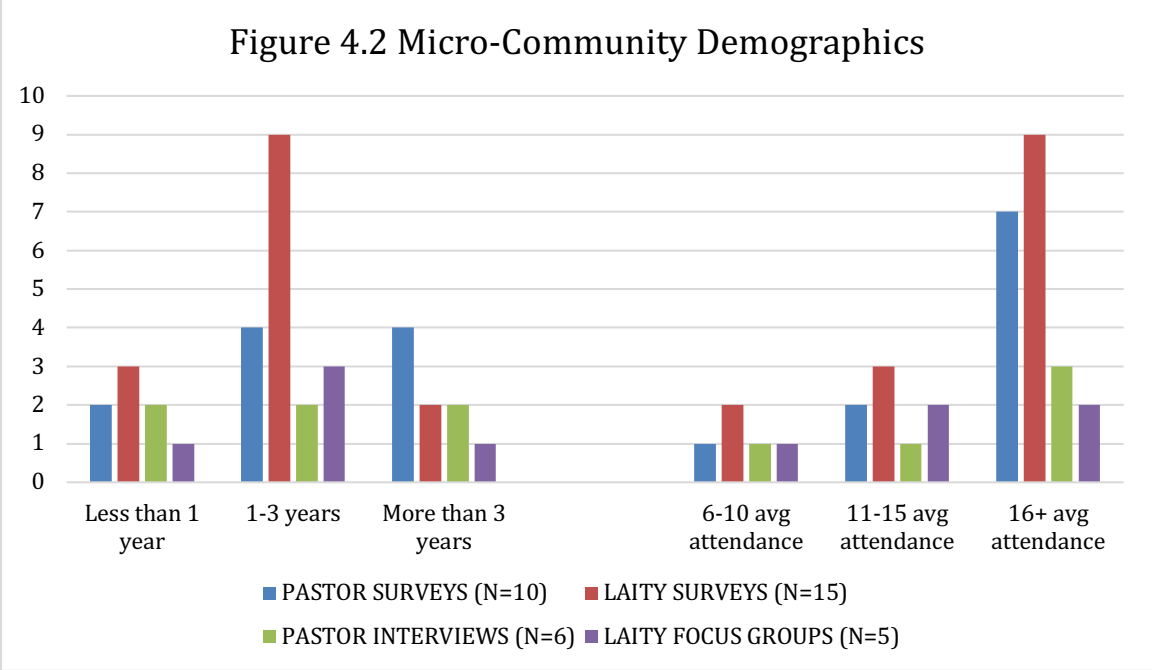
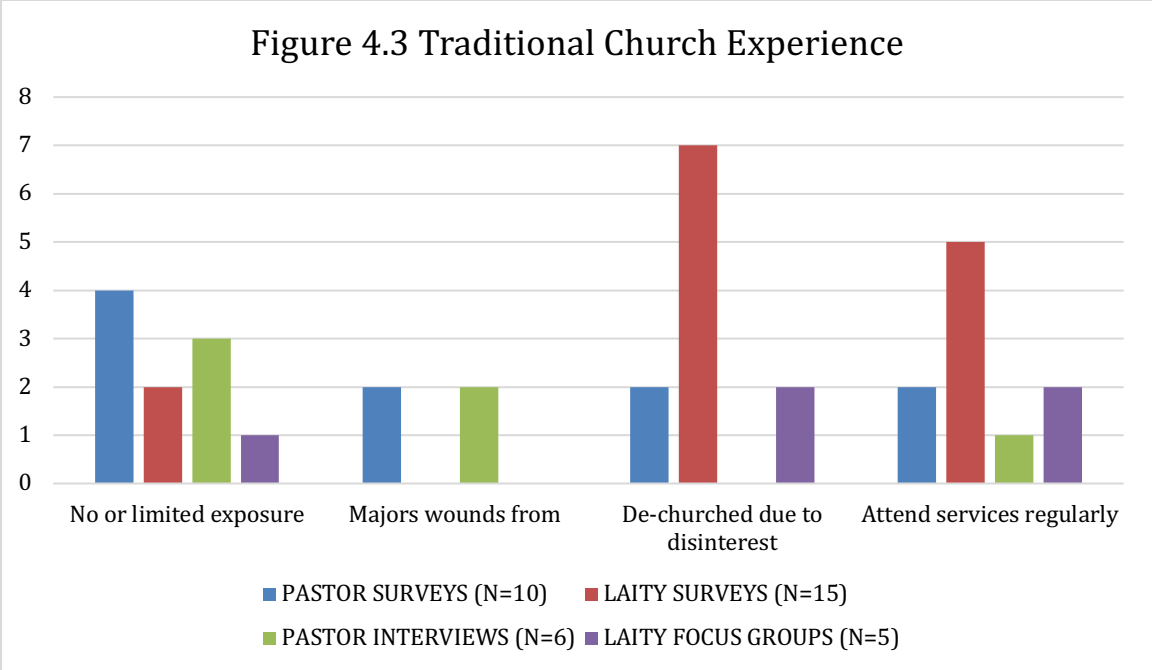


Figure 4.2 Micro-Community Demographics
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
Less than 1 year
1-3 years
More than 3 years
6-10 avg attendance
11-15 avg attendance
16+ avg attendance
PASTOR SURVEYS (N=10)
LAITY SURVEYS (N=15)
PASTOR INTERVIEWS (N=6)
LAITY FOCUS GROUPS (N=5)



Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

What do United Methodist micro-community pastors and lay people identify as challenges to developing sustainable, indigenous, and shared lay leadership?

The pastor and laity "Questionnaires" served as the primary tool for assessing RQ #1 by including six questions pertaining to the challenges associated with micro-community leadership development, and both the Pastor "Interviews" and the Laity Focus "Groups" featured one question a piece pertaining to RQ #1. Three of the questions on the Questionnaires (5, 7, 9) sought to quantify perceptions related to the challenges by utilizing a Likert scale. Three short answer questions (11, 12, 14) followed an open-ended format to provide a more in-depth qualitative approach. Finally, question 2 of both the Interviews and the Groups sought to expand upon the answers in the Questionnaires with more qualitative insights.

Table 4.1 provides the results for the quantitative questions in Questionnaires regarding RQ #1. Pastors and laity were asked to state their level of agreement with pre-

generated statements to assess their perceptions of the difficulty of developing leaders in micro-communities. While the mean of all three questions favored to the side of disagreement, the perceptions varied greatly with at least one answer for every level of agreement for each of the three questions and a standard deviation of over 1.15 for all three as well. The statement with the most agreement was question 5, which dealt with the level of difficulty compared to developing leaders in an existing church, but even that question favored disagreement. The question with the highest number of "strongly agree" responses was question 7, but it also featured the mean with the strongest disagreement. Question 9 fell in the middle in both mean and standard deviation. In total, the results indicate an optimism by pastors and lay leaders in the possibilities of developing leaders in micro-communities.

Table 4.1 Responses to "Challenges" Related Statements on Questionnaires

	N	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean	Standard Deviation
5. Developing leaders for a micro-community setting is more difficult than within a traditional church setting.	24	4.17%	33.33%	12.50%	37.50%	12.50%	3.21	1.15
7. A solo pastor cannot effectively pastor an existing church, and effectively start new communities of faith that run parallel to the existing church.	24	16.67%	8.33%	8.33%	50.00%	16.67%	3.42	1.32
9. It is difficult to develop leadership amongst un-churched and de-church individuals.	24	8.33%	25.00%	12.50%	41.67%	12.50%	3.25	1.20

In general, these results favor disagreement, although the perspectives of the participants varied greatly. Questions 5, 7, and 9 were designed based on hypotheses of what might be considered challenges and how participants might experience the

challenges, and the original hypotheses proved to be inconclusive. This did not mean, however, that leadership development within micro-communities is without notable challenges. The qualitative part of the assessment found in questions 11, 12, and 14 of the Questionnaires as well as question 2 of both the Interviews and the Groups raised several thematic challenges that should factor into the design of a development plan for sustainable, indigenous, and shared lay leadership in United Methodist micro-communities. Through reviewing the results of the Questionnaires and the transcripts of the Interviews and Groups, the following challenges emerged: commitment, time and availability, getting leaders out of their comfort zone, differences from traditional church, empowerment and delegation, and recruitment.

Commitment

Commitment was referenced in fourteen of the twenty-three answers provided to question 14 on the Questionnaires, which made it the most cited "unique challenge" to training leaders within micro-communities. Over half of these answers simply listed the word commitment, and then some of the others went into more detail with additional phrasing:

- "Inconsistent level of dependability (no-shows, not fully committed, etc)"
- "(Lack of) commitment from those already serving in the local church"
- "Folks are less committed, don't come every week" (Questionnaires)

Pastor 4 in the Interviews shared about the commitment issues they have faced in trying to start different types of micro-communities, and how their desire for indigenous leadership makes it even more of a challenge:

> Most of our groups that have failed have been because of leadership issues… I place a high value on indigenous leadership (e.g. a single mom should lead a single mom's group, someone in recovery should lead a recovery group, and someone that has experienced grief should lead a grief group). The challenge with that is when the population is marginalized or more transient, then it is hard to find the consistency that someone is going to be there every week and be committed. (Interviews, P4)

Additionally, Pastor 1 from the Interviews described how it was hard to maintain consistency from a leadership perspective because of irregularity and that "people are in and out" and "engaged in many other family activities and travel" (Interviews, P1). In contrast to Pastor 4's cultural context, Pastor 1's cultural context features a more affluent segment of the population. (Interviews, P1 and P4).

Time and Availability

The theme of time and availability appeared in twelve of the twenty-three valid answers to question 14 of the Questionnaires, which tied for the second most unique challenge highlighted by the lay and pastor participants. This manifested itself in a variety of ways:

- "Need to commit time to prepare"
- "Availability during the day"
- From a leader's perspective, "The challenge is creating real time and space in my life to invite them in" (Questionnaires)

While this proved to be a consistent issue for new leaders the different participants were trying to develop, it also emerged as a theme in the Groups when lay leaders described the challenge of their pastor's time and availability:

- Laity 2 stated, "They have their church duties that they have to attend to, and so as a lay leader you are never sure (if they) will be there" (Groups, F1).
- Laity 1 added, "The pastors have their church responsibilities, so we have to be more available and take on more responsibility with the micro-community" (Groups, F1).

Getting Leaders Out of Their Comfort Zone

Statements about comfort zone tied for second on the responses to question 14 in the Questionnaires, as they appeared on twelve of the twenty-three valid responses. The questionnaire responses provided numerous examples of how leaders must overcome their fears and get out of their comfort zone:

- "Many of our leaders aren't coming from leadership roles, so we are learning how to lead as we go"
- "New leaders need confidence"
- "Overcoming their fears of leadership"
- "Helping them see themselves as caregivers"
- New leaders are "skeptical" (Questionnaires)

The comfort zone challenge did not emerge as much in the Interviews and Groups transcripts, but Laity 5 did make the following observation when discussing challenges to leadership development: "The biggest thing is (people) getting over that fear and getting them to interact with that demographic" (Groups, F2).

Differences from Traditional Church

The last unique challenge that emerged as a pattern on the Questionnaires were the responses that related to micro-community ministry being different than what people expect in a traditional church setting. Five out of twenty-three responses highlighted this theme as participants responded to question 14. From the Questionnaires, the following statements provided context to this challenge:

- "Church in a new/different worship setting with new people can be as difficult for the traditional worshiper to navigate as it is for the newcomer."
- "This is a 'no rules apply, come as you are' philosophy (of ministry)"
- "What works in church world doesn't always work in fresh expressions"
- "Attendees and leaders are more transient than in a traditional church" (Questionnaires)

In the Interviews, Pastor 6 gave several insights as to how the difference between a regular church experience and micro-community experience creates challenges:

> Pastors need to be translators between church people and Fresh Expressions people. The "mixed economy" requires interpretation for regular church people. It is hard to get "regular church folks" to see what you are doing… Church people tend to think that it needs to be led like a church service… it requires a lot of prayer and patience – it's not a program in a box. (Interviews, P6)

Empowerment and Delegation

The theme of empowerment and delegation did not appear in the Questionnaires but was prominent in the Interviews when the pastors talked about the challenges that they have experienced in developing leaders. For some pastors, they talked about how

there is an expectation for the clergy to take the lead and do most of the leading, and how part of their role is to redirect that expectation:

- Pastor 5 shared, “It is a type of ministry that thrives under decentralized leadership, and through the empowerment of multiple leaders” (Interviews, P5).
- Pastor 6 described a pitfall saying, “If the pastor is leading everything then it leads to sustainability issues” (Interviews, P6).
- Pastor 2 thought of it as a systematic problem by sharing, “We’re trying to combat the perception created by separate classes of clergy and laity, where clergy are put on a pedestal that makes it seem as though the church or ministry needs the pastor in order to survive… (Jesus) spent time with people and slowly gave them authority to cast out demons and to preach the word and to go out from town to town, so this idea for me is ‘how do I deconstruct something that systematically has been put in people’s minds that in order to do things I need a pastor to be present?’” (Interviews, P2).

Empowerment and delegation was something that some pastors indicated they wish that they had done more of earlier:

- Pastor 1 shared, “I need to make it a higher priority to pass off leadership; I should’ve made it a priority earlier on, and now I’m playing catch up” (Interviews, P1).
- Pastor 5 indicated that sometimes it is a matter of it taking a long time to find the right leaders to empower, “I’m in my fifth year, and it’s the first year that I feel like I have good leadership where I could pass it off if I had to leave tomorrow” (Interviews, P5).

Recruitment

Questions 11 and 12 on the Questionnaires served as a two-part question for the purpose of discerning whether it was better to bring leaders from an existing church or to develop them within the micro-community. The results were split evenly with eight favoring bringing leaders from an existing church, eight favoring developing within the micro-community, and seven saying that you needed both. The rationale given in question 12 validated all three perspectives (Questionnaires):

- Participants favoring bringing leaders with you commented, "typically you know them, trust them, and are aware of their spiritual gifts and graces" and "bringing leaders from the sponsoring church shows the community that the 'Church' loves them unconditionally."
- Participants favoring developing leaders from within stated, "often the 'churchy' vibe of church folks can throw off the dynamic of a group" and "it is essential to develop within (because) the whole process of multiplication relies on development and multiplication of disciples that make disciples."
- Finally, the participants favoring both shared, "it's both/and not either/or… fresh expressions and inherited expressions of church can and must exist side by side in mutually beneficial partnerships; it's not a competition" and "sponsoring church leaders are more committed; Indigenous leaders have an easier time connecting with folks." (Questionnaires)

Recruitment was noted as a challenge for both participants that favored bringing leaders from the sponsoring church and for those that favored developing leaders within the micro-community. Some of those that favored both bringing and developing within,

suggested bringing leaders was easier on the front end because they felt that they were easier to recruit and deploy but that the long-term goal should be developing leaders within the micro-community, which they expected to be a longer process of recruitment.

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

What do United Methodist micro-community pastors and lay people identify as attributes and abilities essential for lay people to lead in sustainable, indigenous, and shared ways?

Similarly to RQ #1, the pastor and laity "Questionnaires" served as the primary tool for assessing RQ #2 by including six questions pertaining to the attributes and abilities necessary to lead a micro-community, and both the Pastor "Interviews" and the Laity Focus "Groups" featured one question a piece pertaining to RQ #2. Three of the questions on the Questionnaires (6, 8, 10) sought to quantify some of the ideal attributes and abilities by utilizing a Likert scale. Three short answer questions (13, 15, 16) followed an open-ended format to provide a more in-depth qualitative approach. Additionally, question 3 of both the Interviews and the Groups sought to expand upon the answers in the Questionnaires with more qualitative insights.

Table 4.2 provides the results for the quantitative questions in Questionnaires regarding RQ #2. Pastors and laity were asked to state their level of agreement with pre-generated statements, to assess their perceptions of the ideal attributes and abilities of leaders in micro-communities. In contrast to the low levels of agreement with the statements regarding RQ #1, the participants found a stronger level of agreement with these statements and also a narrower variance in terms of standard deviation. Question 6 regarding the ability to lead upfront in micro-communities garnered a good level of

agreement with a mean of 2.13 and standard deviation of 0.88. Question 8 generated even stronger agreement with a similar level of standard deviation. Finally, question 10 produced the highest level of agreement of any of the Likert scale statements, as all but one participant rated the statement as agree or strongly agree, meaning twenty-three out of twenty-four participants agreed or strongly agreed that it is necessary for micro-community leaders to be committed to their own personal discipleship. Question 10 also had the narrowest variance in terms of standard deviation.

Table 4.2 Responses to "Attributes and Abilities" Related Statements on Questionnaires

	N	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean	Standard Deviation
6. Despite being a smaller setting, the ability to lead "upfront" is essential to leading a micro-community.	24	58.34%	20.83%	12.50%	8.33%	0.00%	2.13	0.88
8. The ability to relate to people that are disengaged from the traditional local church is essential to be a micro-community leader.	24	50.00%	37.50%	4.17%	8.33%	0.00%	1.71	0.89
10. It is necessary for micro-community leaders to be committed to growing in their own personal discipleship.	24	54.17%	41.66%	4.17%	0.00%	0.00%	1.50	0.58

The results of questions 6 and 8 demonstrate the importance of the abilities to lead "upfront" in a teaching or facilitating capacity and to be relational with those disconnected from the church. The results of question 10 strongly confirm the attribute of being a disciple and committed to spiritual growth. The qualitative questions of the Questionnaires (13, 15 and 16), the Interviews, and the Groups provided more context on these attributes and abilities, as well as bringing to the surface other attributes and abilities. The attributes that emerged the most were personable, spiritual investment,

committed and reliable, and humble and teachable. The abilities that appeared the most were being relational, preparation, teaching, and evangelizing and inviting.

Attributes of a Leader: Personable, Spiritually Invested, Committed, and Humble

Personable

When participants were asked to describe the top five character and spiritual attributes a pastor should look for in a potential micro-community leader, seventeen of the twenty-four answers to question 13 on the Questionnaires mentioned at least one interpersonal trait. These interpersonal traits included characteristics such as "hospitable," "relational," "loving," "compassionate," "open-minded," "empathetic," "flexible," and "encouraging" (Questionnaires). Additionally, when participants were asked to describe red flags that should steer a pastor away from considering a potential leader, they highlighted "being difficult," "negative," "close-minded," and "unwillingness to gather and listen to ideas from a team" (Questionnaires). All of these red flags have as their inverse the same types of interpersonal skills that were highlighted in the characteristics leaders should look for in a potential leader.

The Interviews and Groups also emphasized the interpersonal qualities needed to be a micro-community leader. During one of the Groups, a lay person started listing the first few adjectives that came to their mind for what they are looking for in leaders: "vulnerability, mercy… to be able to relate" (Groups, F1). Pastor 4 shared that they are looking for "someone that listens well and takes their time to learn the group" (Interviews, P4). Along these same lines, Pastor 2 noted, "Trust is built upon the relationships that have been established, and so (the leader) must be able to build up good trust when the group is forming" (Interviews, P2).

Spiritually Invested

Spiritual investment was initially highlighted by question 10, which as noted above generated the strongest level of agreement of any of the Likert scale questions. Pastors and laity alike agreed that leaders need to be committed in their own personal discipleship. Additionally, spiritual investment was the second most common theme in responses to question 13 on the Questionnaires. Participants used phrases like "radical love of Christ," spiritually mature," "love of the Word," "faithful in prayer," and "committed to spiritual growth" (Questionnaires).

In the Interviews and Groups, this particular attribute emerged most when I asked about the role of spiritual formation in the leadership development process, which was question 6 in both tools. Pastor 4 described that he is looking for leaders with a term he came across called "Spiritual Velocity." He adds, "it's not how long you've been a Christian, it's the pace that you are pursuing Christ… that's hard to teach, so that's something I want to look for in a leader, and would want to encourage" (Interviews, P4). Laity 2 shared, "You have to have a good grounding in your faith, and a desire to share God's love with other people" (Groups, F1). Pastor 2 also added the role of sSripture and that they expect all leaders in their house churches to have a "base level knowledge of the Bible, and intentionality and desire in learning the scriptures" (Interviews, P2).

Committed

In assessing the challenges to leadership development in micro-communities, RQ #1 revealed commitment to be the most common challenge. So naturally, being committed was identified by participants as an attribute needed in micro-community leaders. In addition to the word committed, participants also used phrases such as

"reliable," "engaged," "persistent," and "consistent" to describe character attributes to look for in a potential leader (Questionnaires). On question 16 about warning signs and red flags, the theme emerged with negative phrases like "lack of consistency" and "express excitement… but never attend or follow through with a commitment."

Commitment was a major them in the Pastoral Interviews. Pastor 5 shared that they want to see someone with "a sense of ownership and a passion to do things the right way" (Interviews, P5). The first attribute Pastor 3 looks for is "want to" and that "they understand the long-range spiritual and evangelistic reach of doing this kind of work, and the commitment it takes" (Interviews, P3). Additionally, Pastor 1 added the word "energetic" when talking about commitment level and dedication to the cause. When asked to elaborate Pastor 1 shared, "This is different than traditional church, and some of these folks I have seen show excitement for doing something new and non-traditional… I am looking for people that are willing to try new things" (Interviews, P1).

Humble

Humble and/or teachable on nine of the twenty-four answers to question 13 about character and spiritual attributes. #go and pride were the second most common warning signs highlighted in question 16. When describing it in a positive light, participants highlighted leaders that were humble and teachable, and some added the phrases "willing to take direction" and "hungry to learn." In addition to the words "ego" and "pride," other warning signs listed under this theme included "attention seekers" and "someone who enjoys the limelight too much."

Abilities of a Leader: Relational, Preparation, Teaching, and Evangelizing

When participants were asked in question 15 of the Questionnaires about the duties a pastor should expect a lay leader to perform, the actual top response was "Everything!" A common thread throughout many of the responses was that pastors should do everything in their power to empower and delegate as much as possible to the lay leaders, other than administering the sacraments. The following four abilities demonstrate what is meant by the word "everything" and show what leading a micro-community looks like from the perspective of those currently leading in a variety of capacities.

Relational

Building off of the top attribute of being personable, there is a high expectation for lay leaders to be engaged in the relational aspects of ministry. In the responses to question 15 in Questionnaires, participants highlighted the relational duties of "providing care for their group," "praying with and for micro-community members," "helping facilitate group interaction," "engaging the people," and "relationship building."

Furthermore, the Interviews and Groups highlighted the ideas of needing someone that is strong in relational abilities. Pastor 4 shared, "Our groups are very dialogue based, so someone that needs to hear their own voice and not make space for others will struggle" (Interviews, P4). In one of the Groups, Laity 3 talked about how you have to be ready to be relational with others. Laity 3 said, "You've got to be able to pray for someone at the drop of a hat… we go through some difficult conversations, and you have to be able to handle that" (Groups, F1). Being relational does not necessarily mean that a leader has to be a larger than life figure, and some leaders highlighted that the smaller

setting of a micro-community caters to those with a particular type of relational leader. Pastor 6 summed this idea up well saying, “It’s not usually the public speakers or the charismatic ones… a lot of the ones that we have recruited are actually introverted, but they thrive in the smaller environments” (Interviews, P6).

Preparation

Both laity and pastors had an expectation that lay leaders should be heavily involved in preparation duties for micro-community gatherings. These duties included things like “setting up for services,” “help(ing) coordinate activities”, “creative and resourceful thinking,” “meal planning and prep,” “helping discover local mission/service opportunities,” and “communication”.

The duty of preparation was stressed as the primary duty by three of the five lay persons that participated in the Groups. Laity 1 said, “they need to organized, use the app to schedule volunteers, and mobilize others,” and Laity 2 highlighted “communication” with other leaders and participants as being a primary duty (Groups, F1). Laity 5 said the person in charge “has to be super organized” and added their ideal leader would be described as a “spiritual leader and an organizer” (Groups, F2).

Teaching

While this was not an expectation of all micro-community leaders, it was emphasized on one quarter of the Questionnaires as a duty that should be expected of lay leaders in micro-communities. It manifests in different ways depending on the type of group, but it includes “leading discussions,” “presenting the message,” and even “preaching.” Teaching also relates to the “upfront” leadership evaluated in question 6 in the Questionnaires in which eighteen out of twenty-four participants that answered that

question either agreed or strongly agreed that it was an essential ability for micro-community leaders (Questionnaires).

Teaching and even "presenting the message" are typically not thought of as a single individual delivering a talk, as it would be in a traditional church setting. During the Interviews and Groups, each participant was given an opportunity to describe their setting. Two pastors lead ministries in breweries and facilitate biblically-based conversations around different service projects that their groups work on during their gatherings. Two other pastors described dinner church settings where a leader would give a short biblical story that would lead to "table talk" around the various tables. The other two pastors described smaller gatherings in homes or other establishments where the group would sit in a circle and discuss a biblical passage (Interviews). In each of these cases, the role of the teacher would fit the description of a facilitator more so than a speaker. The five laity all served in similar settings and had a similar understanding of teaching in micro-communities. One pastor bluntly said that a minimum requirement for lay leader is "you have to be able to lead a discussion" (Interviews, P2), and an upfront teacher that facilitates conversation within the group appears to be an ideal ability to look for in potential lay leaders.

Evangelizing

The duties of evangelizing and inviting appeared on one quarter of the Questionnaires as well, showing the expectation of lay leaders to help the group grow and reach more people. Interestingly only one pastor highlighted "invitation" on the Questionnaires, but five out of thirteen laity answers to question 15 involved the idea of reaching out to new people. The laity used phrases like "reaching out to guests and

finding new members," "inviting others," and "outreach." When asked what attributes they look for in potential leaders, Pastor 5 hit on the evangelistic theme by saying, "You watch out for the people that are going out of their way to welcome people" (Interviews, P5). Additionally, when asked what abilities and attributes they would need if they were to serve as the point leader a lay person shared, "I have always been timid about inviting people… asking people to join you is an essential responsibility of leaders, but it would also make me nervous" (Groups, F2).

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What are best practices for developing sustainable, indigenous, and shared lay leadership in United Methodist micro communities?

The primary tools for assessing RQ #3 were the Interviews and Groups, and the final short answer question of the Questionnaires (17) set the stage for the questions that were asked during the Interviews and Groups. Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7 on both the Interviews and Groups helped shed light on the participants views about the best practices for developing sustainable, indigenous, and shared lay leadership in United Methodist micro-communities.

Question 17 on the Questionnaires was put in place to gain initial insights before proceeding into the Interviews and Groups. All but two of the pastors mentioned apprenticeship or some other type of one-on-one mentorship and on the job training when answering question 17. Specifically, they used phrases like "apprentice model where the pastor takes a leader under their wing," "on the job training," "practical things," and "watching and learning from a pastor's day to day walk." Even one pastor that said, "I don't really have a process" added, "I usually just mentor them and lead alongside them

so they understand all aspects of the ministry," which could be understood to be apprenticeship. The laity alluded to apprenticeship in their responses, but they also stressed the importance of "classroom studies," "conferences," and "immersion experiences" where they can see a ministry format and its leadership modeled. In total, eight of ten pastors emphasized apprenticeship, and five of the eleven valid responses by laity emphasized formal training such as studies, conferences, and/or immersion experiences.

The major insights gleaned under RQ #3 came from the Interviews and Groups, which provided participants the opportunity to share about their best practices through a series of questions about their process for developing leaders. While some leaders described an exact process that they follow in developing leaders, others merely responded to the questions and reflected on some things that they are doing and things they have discerned that they need to do to achieve more effective leadership development. Through a careful reading of the Interviews and Groups transcripts, five phases of leadership development emerged that formulate a best practices approach to micro-community leadership development that is sustainable, indigenous and shared: Exposure, Prayerful Observation, Hands-on Experience, Conversations, and Empowerment. Every participant highlighted at least three of these phases, and three of the pastors highlighted four. The remainder of this section highlights those five phases and how lay leaders and pastors describe each phase as it should occur in an ideal process for developing leaders for micro-communities.

Exposure

Exposure involves giving potential leaders and participants an opportunity to visualize the ministry that they might take part in through formal training such as studies, conferences, and/or immersion experiences. The idea of exposure is that people are more eager to take on a leadership role when they can visualize what they will be doing and why they will be doing it. In the Groups, this emerged as being particularly important to laity, just as it did in the Questionnaires. Laity 1 shared that "people will learn best through serving" and talked about the experience their group had attending an immersion experience for "Dinner Church" before they decided to launch a Dinner Church of their own (Groups, F1). Laity 5 shared that their group began by doing a study on the type of ministry they planned to engage in within their community, and the class "gave the spiritual and scriptural process for what we are doing." Then they received the opportunity to be a part of an immersion experience, which was key because "no one really understands what we are looking to accomplish until they can visualize it" (Groups F2).

Two of the pastors indicated that they would encourage attending some sort of training event or series of classes as well. Pastor 6 emphasized that Vision Days through Fresh Expressions US can be beneficial for generating ideas amongst potential leaders (Interviews, P6). Pastor 5 talked about the importance of starting with "why" the group is engaging in a particular type of ministry, and that immersion experiences and studies can help shape that understanding amongst potential leaders (Interviews, P5). While both of these pastors talked from their experience of developing leaders amongst participants at the sponsoring church, several of the pastors talked about how exposure is key to

showing opportunities for de-churched and un-churched individuals as well. Instead of going through a formal class or a training event, their exposure will likely be their participation in the micro-community once it is formed. Once they become a regular attendee of the micro-community, the same process of observation of attributes and abilities will be relevant for them as it would be for individuals from the sponsoring church.

Prayerful Observation

Prayerful observance is a concept that pastors stressed as both a step for starting a micro-community and for identifying leaders. Pastor 6 described the process that a church where they served utilized to do a "Steeples to the Streets" Sunday where the congregation went out to "pray, observe and encounter." You pray for your community, observe what God is doing in the community, and encounter people that cross your path (Interviews, P6). The idea is to experience your community and observe where God is working. Pastor 1 shared that this is exactly what you do when you try to identify leaders, except the goal is to pray for your participants, observe who God is working in, and encounter them in their journey. Pastor 1 said your prayerful observance begins by seeing "who is engaged and committed, relational, and invested in the mission" (Interviews, P1). This stage of the process leads to identifying those that a pastor may want to develop as a leader.

Hands-on Experience

The Questionnaires highlighted that the best way for someone to learn how to be a leader was to jump in and start serving and leading. In one of the Focus Groups, Laity 1 noted, "the way I have always trained people… is by having a shadow," and so you bring

them alongside by giving them opportunities to lead and let them shadow you in your leading as well (Groups, F1). Pastor 3 added, "Jesus's discipleship process was almost all experiential… Yes there was some information – e.g. the sermon on the mount – but it was really that they were with him – They spent twenty-four hours a day living with him" (Interview, P3). Laity 3 shared that being given hands-on opportunities was essential for his development and shared that his pastor "doesn't mind getting you to take on leadership, and will prompt you on the spot to 'take the lesson' or 'pray for someone' – he wants to see people go out on a limb and lead" (Groups, F1). Finally, Laity 1 concluded, "people will learn best by serving" (Groups, F1).

Conversations

All six pastors described that their process of relating to leaders either includes an aspect of conversational guidance or would in an ideal setting. For some pastors like Pastor 5, these conversations take place through group debriefing after their micro-community meets, where they are able to share "God moments" and talk through what they learned (Interviews, P5). Other pastors felt that a group conversation built around the same concepts as Wesley's discipleship groups provides the best avenue for developing leaders through conversations. Pastor 3 shared, "(We) want (our leadership team) to get to a point with relationships where it is like Wesley's classes, bands and select societies, where people are deeply invested in accountability and willing to share their spiritual experiences and grow" (Interviews, P3). Pastor 6 shared that these group meetings can be a great platform for prayer and that "prayer is the best avenue for introducing discipleship, even more so than searching the scriptures; It opens the doors…

(our) discipleship happened the most at the 'meeting after the meeting' through debriefing and sharing experiences… and praying for one another" (Interviews, P6).

For other pastors, meeting with leaders one-on-one is an essential part of developing leaders. Pastor 4 talked about their role as being a bit of a spiritual guide and noting they do this through "one-on-one gatherings, being a resource to them, and encouraging people in their spiritual experience… using the Wesley question 'How is it with your soul?'… It starts out as conversation, but it can lead to more intentional and traditional discipleship of pointing them towards disciplines and specific teachings" (Interviews, P4). Pastor 2 shared that they spend the majority of their week meeting one-on-one with leaders of their house church network and "pour(ing) into them as they pour into others." Often times this will be a coffee meeting, a lunch, or at the least a 10-minute phone call (Interviews, P2). The one-on-one approach allows each development opportunity to be custom-built for the emerging leader, which Pastor 1 talked about being a key part of understanding discipleship. "We don't start where they are at, and assume that everyone is starting in the same place… If I have ten people, I may have nine to ten different starting points" (Interviews, P1). The one-on-one opportunities allow each person to grow in ways specific to the areas they need to grow. These one-on-one meetings allow the pastor to share areas they can grow and deal with their specific questions and struggles.

Empowerment

The final phase that the Interviews and Groups brought to the service was a step of empowerment. Several of the laity surveyed through the Groups discussed the importance of empowerment to the leadership development process they have been a part

of in their micro-community. Laity 1 said that their pastor started off being more hands-on and holding regular meetings "but now has empowered the team to hold their own meetings and do their own evaluation." This same lay person felt that their group could be self-sustained without the pastor except for sacramental leadership in large part because they have been empowered (Groups, F1). Laity 3 talked about how in micro-communities that minister to marginalized and fringe populations. Laity 3 said, "Leadership is transient, you pass through and bring someone else along… one of the goals of leadership is to raise up the next generation of leaders."

In the Interviews, there were four pastors that indicated they had developed a structure they felt could be passed off to their lay leaders in the event they were appointed to another community, and all four talked about the idea of empowering leaders in their comments. Pastor 5 shared how they subconsciously empower their laity by not arriving on time "intentionally" to force them to have to step up and organize. Pastor 5 has also delegated most of the responsibilities of their micro-community to others, with exceptions being sacramental leadership and leading the conversation with the leaders at the end of their gatherings (Interviews, P5). Pastor 4 stressed how this would benefit the group long-term and that if they simply took on a coordinator role and served as a "leader of leaders" then it would empower more indigenous leadership. This is key for them as they feel "the indigenous leaders have an ability to approach people in a way that I'll never be able to approach them… I don't think it stops you from being able to reach outside of your population, but it does limit you." This also plays into sustainment and multiplication as Pastor 6 notes, "The pastor should already be searching for someone they can raise up and empower… if you are built it around one dynamic leader, it's hard

to shift that to a shared leadership, and then it's hard to develop more communities because it's impossible for the solo leader to cover that much ground" (Interviews, P6).

Summary of Major Findings

Through the analysis of the transcriptions of the Questionnaires, Interviews, and Groups, five major themes were discovered as a result of the research. These five themes are numbered and listed here, and they will be expounded upon in the next chapter:

1) While it is not considered to be difficult to develop lay leaders for micro-communities, there are challenges that should be acknowledged such as commitment levels, availability, and the different dynamics of this unique type of ministry.
2) Good relational attributes and abilities are necessary to lead a micro-community of faith.
3) A deep level of spiritual investment is considered a key attribute for potential lay leaders of micro-communities of faith.
4) An apprentice-style leadership development process is ideal for developing leaders of micro-communities of faith.
5) An ideal leadership development process involves a five-phase process of exposure, prayer and observation, hands-on experiences, conversations, and empowerment.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Many new church initiatives revolve around the founding leader, which in some cases can lead to issues of sustainability and an overreliance upon one-point leader. The problem considered in this study was to evaluate United Methodist micro-communities of faith that were planted alongside existing United Methodist churches and to identify ways to empower a shared leadership structure in which the burden would not all be upon the pastor. This led to identifying the purpose of this project, which was to formulate a process for developing lay leadership within the context of micro-communities of faith planted by existing United Methodist churches in order to establish a pattern of sustainable, indigenous, and shared leadership of those micro-communities. After reviewing the relevant literature on this topic and the sub-topics contained within it and conducting research amongst ten pastors and fifteen laity, this chapter outlines the major findings of this study.

Major Findings

The Challenges of Commitment, Availability, and Uniqueness Impact Micro-Community Leadership Development

I approached micro-community leadership from a theoretical perspective, in which I tried to envision the difficulties associated with developing leaders within a micro-community and how challenging it might be to lead a church with pastoral care and administrative needs while still attempting to develop pioneering movements alongside the established church. Furthermore, in an itinerant system, I feared the

challenge of being moved to another community and a micro-community that I started failing if it had developed around my personality and relied upon my leadership. These preconceived ideas along with observations of practitioners at conferences talking about the challenge of managing a mixed economy, as well as my experience of watching colleagues struggle to fully develop new initiatives out of their established churches, led me to understand micro-community leadership development to be more difficult than leadership development within the local church. My experience both during and after the research stage of this project called me to rethink my position and instead view it as not being difficult but rather different altogether. I observed from the literature, but especially from the research process, that the key points of struggle were commitment of potential leaders, availability of both pastors and potential leaders, and the unique ethos of micro-community leadership compared to established church leadership.

The relevant literature did not readily support my hypothesis that issues of leadership development would be dominated by concerns over sustainability and the difficulties of developing leaders amongst unchurched and de-churched individuals. Instead, the literature pointed more towards who to identify in order to start Fresh Expressions rather than how to develop leaders and sustain communities. My observation of the literature and experiences of practitioners is that pioneering movements are so vulnerable in their infancy that most of the energy is spent on starting and keeping the community afloat rather than strategizing. Still, the relevant literature and the research process unveiled some of the challenges associated with developing leaders for micro-communities. Commitment and the availability of potential leaders were both resounding themes of the Questionnaires responses and the Interviews and Groups discussions,

which connected with the organizational literature that pointed towards an eager and teachable pupil being necessary for team participation and leadership development (cf. Lencioni and Jon Ferguson). Additionally, the unique considerations and style of micro-communities showed through both the relevant literature and the research data as practitioners in both revealed that the type of ministry involved in micro-community leadership is simply different than a regular church environment and requires a different approach.

From a biblical and theological perspective, the challenges of commitment and availability ring true. Jesus called his disciples to a life of sacrifice and called upon them to take up their cross and follow him (Matt. 16.24; Mark 8.34; Luke 14.27). Furthermore, he acknowledged that the harvest was plentiful, but the laborers were few (Matt. 9.27; Luke 10.2), indicating a mission field that awaits but few that are willing to take up the challenges of reaching it. From the Wesleyan theological perspective, there was a call to commitment to be a part of the Methodist societies and especially for leaders that would commit to serving as stewards of the people as class leaders. The work of contemporary Wesleyan scholars emphasizes the high level of responsibility placed upon the laity in the early Methodist movement and implies that commitment, availability, and flexibility would have been required.

Good Relational Attributes and Abilities Are Necessary to Lead a Micro-community

I went into this project recognizing that micro-community leadership would be different than leadership within the context of a traditional church setting, but I was uncertain what attributes and abilities might be necessary. My presumption was that relatability to people outside of the traditional church would be key, and organizational

and teaching abilities would be necessary. During the course of the research, I discovered that practitioners I surveyed during the literature review and practitioners I collected data from all favored character attributes over particular abilities. While there was a baseline expectation of being comfortable in front of people and having a basic understanding of scripture, many of the first attributes that came to practitioner's minds were character based rather than ability based. The top of these in my observation were interpersonal and relational attributes and abilities such as communication (particularly listening), hospitality, and openness to others. Furthermore, the skills I observed as being most vital were all about facilitating conversation in such a way to elevate the experience of others.

The literature review revealed many characteristics that should be identified in potential leaders, in addition to the expectation that character would trump other considerations when identifying potential leaders. Within the literature, there was an emphasis upon relatability of leaders and a pastoral heart as being key characteristics. Kevin Watson also identified that in the early Wesleyan movement a shepherding spirit was necessary amongst the class leaders and those that would lead the societies while the pastors traveled from church to church in an itinerant fashion (*The Class Meeting* Chapter 6). Connecting with the idea of relatability, there also was a high expectation within the literature and the research data that potential leaders be relatable in such a way that they came across as having little ego. Leaders should be humble and ready to support the needs of the team and others.

From a biblical perspective, character is of vital concern when considering leaders. Jesus emphasized the importance of loving both God and neighbor (Matt. 22; Luke 10) and emphasized that we would be known as his disciples if we loved one

another (John 13.35). Paul describes elders in the church as being hospitable and non-irritable in their dealings with others (Tit. 1; 1 Tim. 3), in addition to being skilled as teachers (1 Tim. 3.2). Furthermore, Paul emphasizes the character of all within the body of Christ with a variety of virtue lists, such as the passage in Colossians 3, which calls for believers to be clothed with "compassion," "humility," "patience," and "love." The common thread in all of these is that they correspond to the same types of interpersonal attributes and relational abilities emphasized by micro-community practitioners.

Spiritual Investment is a Key Attribute for Potential Leaders

I have long observed within the church that the most effective leaders are the ones that are most committed in their spiritual devotion. I also observed colleagues and friends that engaged in church planting and missions and saw how the experience of engaging in pioneering ministries took a toll on the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of pioneers and their families. This caused me to develop an understanding that a strong degree of spiritual investment was necessary for Christian leadership, particularly when engaging in ministry on the margins of society. My initial instinct in this project was that this was something that would need to be developed within leaders as they grew into the experience of leadership, but my interactions with the literature and with research participants convinced me that a solid starting point of spiritual investment should be expected before involving someone in leadership of a micro-community. This does not mean that new Christians or less mature Christians cannot volunteer and begin to develop their own leadership, it means that those that take on key leadership roles that could lead to long-term, sustainable, and indigenous leadership within the micro-communities

should be taken by those that have demonstrated a certain level of commitment in their spiritual life.

Perhaps most foundational in the literature was Jon Ferguson's description of "Spiritual Velocity," which one of the pastors specifically cited during the Interviews portion of the research ("3 Qualities of an Aspiring Apprentice"). This concept points to how someone is moving towards God in their spiritual life rather than where they currently are in their spiritual journey. In other words, a person that has only been a Christian for a short period of time yet is pursuing God with reckless abandon will likely be more prime for spiritual leadership of a micro-community than someone with years of biblical knowledge and church participation but little pursuit in their spiritual walk. Furthermore, the literature pointed towards an ongoing commitment to the spiritual life, or a "long obedience" as Eugene Peterson called it (18–19).

Biblically speaking, there is a precedent for having a spiritual investment in order to lead. Critics might point to the fact that Jesus's disciples did not have to undergo any tests other than "following" in order to become his disciples and become a part of his movement, but this neglects the fact that the simple move of following and subsequently leaving their lives behind them was a key initial step. Furthermore, as they continued to follow Jesus, he would model what it meant to lead and serve, and so when they were released to lead on their own, they would have had both the commitment of following and the experience of learning firsthand from Jesus what it meant to be a leader. In Paul's instructions to Timothy about appointing leaders, he requires that they not be new believers (1 Tim. 3:6). The concern was that they might become proud if they were elevated too quickly, and it demonstrates a need to evaluate a person's heart for God

before elevating them too fast into a position of power. It should be noted that in Titus 1, Paul does not give any such instructions, but there is an emphasis that they be faithful to the message that they have been taught (Tit. 1:9), which is only relevant if they have been trained in the faith. Regardless of the level of maturity, the canonical witness is consistent in that God desires for all believers to pursue a spiritually devoted relationship through Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, and so it is consistent that spiritual investment is a key aspect of not only leadership but common discipleship as well.

An Apprentice-style Model is Ideal for Micro-Community Leadership Development

My initial observations as I entered the field of church-planting scholarship centered around concerns that new initiatives are often focused around the personality and gifts of the founding leader. As I observed new initiatives being launched within churches in my ecclesial circles and new ministries and churches being established outside the walls of existing churches, I consistently noted this trend. In many cases, it could be attributed to a dynamic leader that people gravitated around, and so it was a natural progression. In others, I observed an element of control and authority and perhaps a belief that responsibilities could not be passed off because they might not be done to the level of expectation and style of the founding leader. I likewise observed that in most church planting circles that shared leadership was a rarity but that also continued into the micro-community planting as well. The concern arose that while in a traditional church planting environment a solo pastor may take on the bulk of the leadership but at least they are fully invested in that endeavor, in a micro-community planted as a parallel entity, it is difficult to maintain that level of split attention and carry out leadership functions within the inherited church and the parallel church. In my view, this was a crucial issue for those

starting micro-communities of faith and the key motivation for this project. I observed that there was a need for a leadership development plan, and both during the review of the relevant literature and throughout the collection and analysis of data, apprenticeship emerged as the ideal model for lay leadership development in micro-communities.

This idea of apprenticeship not only emerged out of the findings of the research portion of this project, but it constituted a large portion of the preliminary findings of the literature review as well. Jon and Dave Ferguson, Mike Breen, Alan Hirsch, Gary Nelson, and Steve Addison all highlight the importance of apprenticeship as a model for leadership development within micro-communities and multiplying movements. These practitioners and scholars acknowledge that untrained believers seeking to lead small expressions of church will need some sort of training, and the best approach for learning how to lead these type groups is through hands-on learning. Apprenticeship emerges as the best mechanism for this to take place, with an emphasis upon a pastor bringing alongside a potential leader. This model allows trainees to shadow pastors, and then allows the new leaders to take on responsibilities slowly before eventually shifting them into the role of point leader.

Biblically speaking, apprenticeship is rooted deeply within the fabric of the New Testament church. Jesus's ministry was built upon disciples following him in his everyday endeavors, watching how he taught and engaged in ministry, and then being empowered and released in order to serve in ministry themselves and carry on the work of the movement. Likewise, Paul modeled this same type of leadership development as he took younger leaders like Timothy and Titus under his wing. After they learned by serving alongside him, he spent his later years empowering them in their ministry

endeavors and responsibilities. Furthermore, the call of apprenticeship is merely the call of discipleship extended to all believers to come and follow Jesus. All Christians are called to follow in the way of Jesus, and if they do, they inevitably should take on the responsibilities Christ has entrusted to the church and to the body of Christ.

An Ideal Leadership Development Plan for Micro-Communities has Five Phases

When I first began exploring micro-community leadership, I immediately noted the lack of information available about developing leaders. That helped motivate the purpose of this project to formulate a plan for leadership development within micro-communities for the purpose of creating a pattern of sustainable, indigenous, and shared lay leadership. While I sensed early on in the process that apprenticeship was the likely key for a leadership development process, that did not answer the question of what this type of leadership development process should look like within micro-communities of faith. Apprenticeship can be applied to a variety of ministry and organizational settings as a tool for leadership development, but what does apprenticeship look like specifically within micro-community leadership development? As the process unfolded and as I read the Questionnaires responses and engaged in conversations through Interviews and Groups, I began to notice a progression that was consistent as leaders described their ideal processes for leadership development.

This progression included five phases: Exposure, Prayer and Observation, Hands-on Experiences, Conversations, and Empowerment. Not every practitioner noted all of these, but they consistently showed up and consistently showed up in a similar order, indicating that this was an ideal model for implementing a leadership development process. Exposure refers to an initial phase of discovery where potential leaders are able

to experience the ministry either as participants or through classroom or immersion experiences. The second phase of prayer and observation refers to a process of a pastor prayerfully observing the participants in their micro-community to see who emerges as potential leaders. This involves noting which participants comes across as showing the characteristics expressed earlier of being committed, available, humble, and showing the interpersonal attributes and relational abilities needed to lead. The third phase of hands-on experiences simply means giving potential leaders that have been identified the opportunity to try their hand at things, whether it be taking on an organizational task or leading a session. The next phase of conversations can take place either one-on-one or in a group setting, where participants are allowed a venue to reflect on their experiences and their growing leadership opportunities. The fifth phase involves a pastor empowering the leaders that have been developed to take on the leadership role themselves, either as a point leader or as a key leader as part of a team approach.

In the relevant literature, the exposure phase is considered a given when it comes to participants being involved in the ministry setting but downplayed when it comes to exposing participants to classroom and other training exercises. There was such an abundance of emphasis on action-based learning that classroom-based learning was downplayed or in some cases discarded. Yet, this was a key feature amongst the laity that participated in the Groups that the classroom and immersion foundations were pivotal in their understanding of why they were engaged in the ministry in which they served. Prayer and observation on the other hand showed up frequently in the relevant literature, in particular within the work of those that called for a prayer focus (Watson and Watson) and those that discussed what to look for when scouting out potential leaders (Collins,

Ferguson and Ferguson, and Edwards). Hands-on experience appeared as a key feature of leadership development in almost all of the reflections provided by the practitioners and scholars in the relevant literature, and the importance of conversations was emphasized in describing the apprenticeship process by Dave and Jon Ferguson when they shared about "we talk" after potential leaders engaged in the ministry practices. Empowerment was emphasized in the micro-community writings (Moynagh), in the multi-site literature (Surratt, Ligon and Bird), and in missional living writings as well (Hirsch).

A strong argument could be made that this five-fold process of leadership development is rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus. He exposed people to the Kingdom of God. He remained in a consistent state of prayerful observation of those that were eager to accept the message of the Kingdom of God. He gave them opportunities to carry out the hands-on work of the Kingdom of God, and this was followed up with more teachings and conversations about the Kingdom of God. At his ascension, he empowered the disciples to carry on the work of the Kingdom of God. This pattern is visible not only in the ministry of Jesus but also in the ministry of the early church and of Paul. The key for movements being sustained has always been the last step, as Jesus, Paul and even pastors of today empower trained believers to carry on the work of God. This is what gives ministries a chance to be sustained beyond just the reach of a single leader.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

The first ministry implication of these findings pertains to my own context of ministry as a pastor of an established United Methodist Church. At the conclusion of this project, our church has begun the exploratory stage of engaging in micro-community planting. Therefore, this project provides a model for us to follow as we seek to develop

these communities. Specifically, it provides guidance for me as the pastor in knowing how to develop leaders and to keep the communities from developing around me and relying upon me. Prior to completing this study, the church has been timid to launch micro-communities because we wanted to avoid the pitfall of everything falling on the pastor's shoulders. This project provides a way to empower others and share leadership in a sustainable way.

We will begin with a process of exposure, in which potential participants from the church will be able to experience different types of micro-communities of faith through studies and immersion experiences. This will enable me as the pastor to identify through prayerful observation those that might be called to be key leaders, as well as for us to discern together which ministries to launch. Initially, I will take the lead in some areas of organization and teaching but will seek to have an apprentice or two for each micro-community that will engage in hands-on experience alongside me in order to discern their role within the communities. We will follow that up with conversations, either one-on-one or as a group depending on the number of leaders we are able to develop. My hope is to eventually empower the leader or leaders in an effort for the communities to function without me. Beyond that, the goal will be to raise up leaders within the communities that we hope to reach and to repeat the process with an unchurched or de-churched participant in mind.

The second ministry implication will be amongst other pastors and micro-community leaders across the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church. As existing micro-communities seek to establish leadership development plans and new micro-communities launch with an intention to have a pattern of shared leadership, the

findings of this study will provide a blueprint for pastors to follow. While each setting needs contextualization, the process outlined above for my own context could be replicated in other communities. Furthermore, the findings of this study could be used on conference levels and the jurisdictional level as any easily accessible training for those looking to develop a pattern of shared leadership within their congregations. Additionally, this model could also be used in the same way in other denominations and networks.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation I acknowledged going into the study is that this type of ministry is fairly new, and so that limits available participants and also limits the ability to monitor how leadership dynamics have evolved over a longer period of time. I did find it helpful that the participants with the longest tenures echoed many of the same themes that shorter tenured participants noted, and vice versa. Another limitation that comes from the newness and limited scope of this type of ministry is that as the movement grows the practitioners with the longest tenures and greatest fruit are often called upon to speak and teach on Fresh Expressions, and that limits their availability to be a part of this type study. There were two practitioners I had hoped to include as participants, but they could not fit it in on top of pastoring a church, leading micro-communities, and traveling to help others begin new communities of their own.

The biggest limitation of this study was two-fold: a small portion of the laity were willing to be a part of the focus groups, and subsequently I was not able to have a follow-up conversation with any of the lay participants that came from an un-churched or de-churched background. A few of the Questionnaires participants had this background, but

it would have been helpful to hear in more detail about their discipleship journey, as I considered the specific implications of developing leadership amongst a non-traditional population. The primary reason given for this type of laity not being available for the Groups was that they often come from a more vulnerable background, and so being in a focus group setting with others they did not know created hesitancy. A few pastors would not recommend laity for the Questionnaires for this reason, and some laity that did participate communicated this to me when they declined an invitation to participate in the Groups. Thankfully the pastors that were interviewed provided some insights to help fill in the gaps that this segment of the laity could have provided.

Unexpected Observations

Two things surprised me about the research process, and both involved my experience of the pastors that participated in the study. The first is that they did not seem phased at all by the difficulties of developing leaders for micro-communities, and as the quantitative data in the Questionnaires showed, they did not consider it to be considerably more difficult than developing leaders within a traditional church setting. They acknowledged challenges associated with leadership development in micro-communities but still in an optimistic fashion. I attribute this to their pioneering spirit, openness to alternative approaches to ministry, and subsequent openness to alternative opportunities for leadership development.

The second unexpected observation was that as a general rule the pastors that participated had not formulated a thought-out leadership development process of their own. Some of the more seasoned pioneers were able to describe how they had developed leaders, but only in a couple of cases were these plans they had before implementing

them. Most of the leadership development, as well as much of the planting of these communities, has taken place through trial and error. Some of the pastors even commented that they should start thinking about having a plan for leadership development as we moved through the questions about how they have gone about developing leaders.

Recommendations

The primary recommendation of this study is for those engaging in micro-community planting and leadership to consider formulating a leadership development plan and/or adapting the principles outlined in the findings of this research into their contextual setting. Long-tenured practitioners highlighted the empowerment of other leaders as being crucial to the success of their ministries. Others lamented at failed attempts because of leadership difficulties, Some said that they wished that they had started developing a plan before now, and still others wondered if they had waited too long to start developing others to lead. In communities where there was the most intentionality in leadership development, there also appeared to be the greatest level of ease on the part of the pastor's feeling comfortable to not be in charge and on the part of the laity to feel as though they were a key part of the mission and able to carry on the work if their pastor was no longer a part of the ministry.

The secondary recommendation relates to how this research could be furthered in future studies. The goal of this project was to take a wide shot of the micro-community scene throughout the Southeastern United States, and so it was difficult to get a full picture of each setting, particularly with the low participation of laity in the Groups. A recommendation for future studies would be to take a case study approach and take a

deeper look at four to five micro-communities in order to gain a deeper understanding of the inner dynamics of leadership development. This would require pastoral permission, but a case study approach could include site visits and observations as well as in person interviews and focus groups amongst pastors, lay leaders, and even regular participants.

Postscript

The journey of this project has been a long and winding road. My initial proposal revolved around developing a team-based leadership plan within a church plant, as I fully anticipated planting a church within the first year of the program. Instead that dream died, and I began to evaluate not only my calling to pioneering ministry but also how this project could provide me a chance to reflect on potential endeavors for the future. This redirection along with the birth of two amazing children into our family caused me to take a year longer than I originally anticipated to complete the project. It was a long and emotional process, but one that has strengthened my faith and deepened my understanding about the nature of the church, the nature of God's call, the nature of leadership, and what God is doing in the world today. Regardless of what ministries I launch and churches I pastor, I will forever remain grateful for the lessons learned as a part of this program, especially as I had the chance to interview inspiring pastors and laity that are doing amazing work for the glory of God!

APPENDIXES

A. Permission Requests

B. Emails to Participants

C. Consent Forms

D. Questionnaires

E. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

F. Focus Group Questions

Appendix A: Permission Requests

Email to Conference Officials

Dear Rev. ABC,

My name is Anthony McPhail, and I am a Doctor of Ministry candidate at Asbury Theological Seminary and a pastor in the South Georgia Conference. My research focuses on micro-communities planted alongside existing United Methodist congregations (e.g. "Fresh Expressions"), and how leadership is developed amongst laity within these communities. The reason I am reaching out to you is because of your role as the **[insert title here]** within the **[insert conference name here]** Annual Conference.

I am writing to request your recommendations for **three** existing churches within your conference that are attempting this type of pioneering ministry, and for permission to contact the pastors of those congregations. In order to protect their confidentiality, I will not conduct research with all of them. Pastors will be asked to complete a questionnaire by email, and some will be asked to participate in follow-up video conference interviews. Laity within the micro-communities will be asked to complete questionnaires by email as well, and some will be asked to participate in a follow-up video conference focus group. I will request permission from the selected pastors before contacting their laity, in addition to requesting your permission to contact the pastors.

If you are willing to assist in this research project, will you please complete the attached request form and return a scanned copy to me at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via the contact information provided below. Your assistance will greatly enhance my research endeavors, and this opportunity to improve our reach as United Methodists in this important Kingdom work!

Blessings,

Rev. Anthony McPhail<><
D.Min. Candidate, Asbury Theological Seminary
gary.mcphail@asburyseminary.edu
478-960-5843

Permission Request Form for Conference Officials

I, _____, give permission to Rev. Anthony McPhail to conduct research amongst clergy members of the _____ Annual Conference, as part of a Ministry Transformation Project at Asbury Theological Seminary. I understand that the information gathered will be kept confidential.

Permission is granted to contact the following pastors:

Pastor's Name	Church Name	Email Address
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Email to Pastors

Dear Rev. ABC,

My name is Anthony McPhail, and I am a Doctor of Ministry candidate at Asbury Theological Seminary and a pastor in the South Georgia Conference. My research focuses on micro-communities planted alongside existing United Methodist congregations (e.g. "Fresh Expressions"), and how leadership is developed amongst laity within these communities. The reason I am reaching out to you is because of a recommendation by **[insert conference official's name and title]** and because of your work in this type of pioneering ministry.

I am writing to request your recommendations for **three** lay leaders within your micro-community ministries that are leading in some capacity, and for permission to contact them. In order to protect their confidentiality, I will not conduct research with all of them. At a later date I will be contacting you and other pastors to participate in an email-based questionnaire, with some pastors also being asked to participate in follow-up video conference interviews. For the laity you recommend, I will be asking them to complete questionnaires by email as well, and some will be asked to participate in a follow-up video conference focus group. Both you and the laity will have an opportunity to provide consent, and all information gathered will remain confidential.

If you are willing to assist in this research project, will you please complete the attached request form and return a scanned copy to me at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via the contact information provided below. Your assistance will greatly enhance my research endeavors, and this opportunity to improve our reach as United Methodists in this important Kingdom work!

Blessings,

Rev. Anthony McPhail<><
D.Min. Candidate, Asbury Theological Seminary
gary.mcphail@asburyseminary.edu
478-960-5843

Permission Request Form for Pastors

I, _____, give permission to Rev. Anthony McPhail to conduct research amongst laity within the _____ community of _____ United Methodist Church, as part of a Ministry Transformation Project at Asbury Theological Seminary. I understand that the information gathered will be kept confidential.

Permission is granted to contact the following lay leaders:

Name of Lay Person	Role	Email Address
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Emails to Participants

Questionnaire Email to Pastors

Dear Rev. ABC,

Thank you for your initial interest in this research project. As we covered in our previous correspondence, I am a Doctor of Ministry candidate at Asbury Theological Seminary and a pastor in the South Georgia Conference. My research focuses on micro-communities planted alongside existing United Methodist congregations (e.g. "Fresh Expressions"), and how leadership is developed amongst laity within these communities. Previously I received permission to contact you by **[insert conference official's name and title]** and you also gave me permission to contact lay leaders within your micro-community, and I am grateful for the ways you have already been of help to this project.

At this stage of the research, I am inviting you to take part in completing a questionnaire through Survey Monkey. Some pastors will also be asked to participate in follow-up video conference interviews, and if you are one of the ones selected then I will contact you at a later date. The survey is available at **[insert web link for survey]**, and it includes an opportunity for you to state your consent to be a part of this project. Please complete the survey by **[insert due date]**.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via the contact information provided below. Your assistance will greatly enhance my research endeavors, and this opportunity to improve our reach as United Methodists in this important Kingdom work!

Blessings,

Rev. Anthony McPhail<><
D.Min. Candidate, Asbury Theological Seminary
gary.mcphail@asburyseminary.edu
478-960-5843

Email to Laity

Dear Participant,

My name is Anthony McPhail, and I am a Doctor of Ministry candidate at Asbury Theological Seminary and a pastor in the South Georgia Conference. My research focuses on micro-communities planted alongside existing United Methodist congregations (e.g. "Fresh Expressions"), and how leadership is developed amongst laity within these communities. The reason I am reaching out to you is because of a recommendation by **[insert pastor's name]** and because of your work in this type of pioneering ministry.

If you are willing to be a part of this research, I want to invite you to take part in completing a questionnaire through Survey Monkey. Some of the lay participants will also be asked to participate in follow-up video conference focus groups with lay leaders in other micro-communities, and if you are one of the ones selected then I will contact you at a later date. The survey is available at **[insert web link for survey]**, and it includes an opportunity for you to state your consent to be a part of this project. Please complete the survey by **[insert due date]**.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via the contact information provided below. Your assistance will greatly enhance my research endeavors, and this opportunity to improve our reach as United Methodists in this important Kingdom work!

Blessings,

Rev. Anthony McPhail<><
D.Min. Candidate, Asbury Theological Seminary
gary.mcphail@asburyseminary.edu
478-960-5843

Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR MICRO-COMMUNITIES: DEVELOPING LEADERS IN UNITED METHODIST MICRO-COMMUNITIES

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Rev. Anthony McPhail from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because of your leadership within a small-scale community of faith that operates outside the walls of a traditional church building.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire through Survey Monkey and may be asked to participate in either a video conference interview (pastors) or a video conference focus group with other laity serving in similar settings (laity). The video conference will last no longer than forty-five minutes.

If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

For the questionnaires, only Rev. McPhail will see your responses. If you participate in a follow up interview or focus group, the video conference will be conducted via an online platform and will be conducted and recorded on Rev. McPhail's computer, but will be recorded in a secure area with no one else present in order to protect your confidentiality. In focus groups all participants will be reminded of the consent process, with the study's commitment to confidentiality restated as a reminder to all participants. Although focus group confidentiality will be encouraged, it cannot be guaranteed. The recordings will be transcribed with the assistance of a transcriber.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please let Rev. McPhail know at gary.mcphail@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdrawal from the process at any time.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Rev. McPhail.

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 no one will be mad if you do not 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.

_____ _____

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study Date Signed

Appendix D

Questionnaire for Pastors and Lay Leaders

Questionnaire distributed via Survey Monkey:

1. Informed Consent Agreement
2. How long has your micro-community been in existence?
    - Less than 1 year
    - 1-3 years
    - More than 3 years
3. What is your average number of attendees?
    - 5 or less
    - 6-10
    - 11-15
    - 16+
4. How would you describe the most common church background of people within your micro-community?
    - No or limited exposure to a traditional church setting
    - Major wounds from a traditional church background
    - De-churched due to disinterest in the traditional church
    - Attend services at a traditional church

Please rank the following statements (#5-10) based on your level of agreement or disagreement:

5. Developing leaders for a micro-community setting is more difficult than within a traditional local church setting. (RQ #1)

- Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

6. Despite being a smaller setting, the ability to lead "upfront" is essential to leading a micro-community. (RQ #2)
    - Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
7. A solo pastor cannot effectively pastor an existing church, and effectively start new communities of faith that run parallel to the existing church. (RQ #1)
    - Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
8. The ability to relate to people that are disengaged from the traditional local church is essential to be a micro-community leader. (RQ #2)
    - Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
9. It is difficult to develop leadership amongst un-churched and de-churched individuals. (RQ #1)
    - Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
10. It is necessary for micro-community leaders to be committed to growing in their own personal discipleship. (RQ #2)
    - Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

11. Is it better to bring leaders from the sponsoring church to help lead the micro-community, or to develop from within the micro-community itself? (RQ #1)
12. Why is this (answer to #10) the case? (RQ #1)
13. What are the top five character and spiritual attributes a pastor should look for in a potential micro-community leader? (RQ #2)

14. What are three to five unique challenges to training leaders within your micro-community setting? (RQ #1)
15. What duties should a pastor expect lay leaders to perform within a micro-community? (RQ #2)
16. What are two warning signs or red flags that should steer a pastor away from considering someone as a potential lay leader in a micro-community? (RQ #2)
17. What would be an ideal process for training lay leaders in micro-communities? (RQ #3)

Appendix E

Pastor Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Introductory Prompt: [Name], thank you again for taking the time to complete the questionnaire, and for taking some time to answer some questions today. I know that you have a busy schedule as a pastor striving to do innovative things, so I want to be respectful of your time. I am looking forward to hearing about your micro-community ministry, and your approach to developing leaders within your ministry.

Stage Setting Question

1. Can you walk me through a typical meeting of your micro-community?

Transition Prompt: I want to follow up on the questionnaire by asking about the challenges associated with developing leaders within this type of ministry.

Pertaining to Research Question #1: What do United Methodist micro-community pastors and lay people identify as challenges to developing sustainable, indigenous and shared lay leadership?

2. In the questionnaire you shared about some of the challenges to developing leaders in micro-communities. Can you recap those challenges you have observed and elaborate on how you have experienced those challenges?

Transition Prompt: Moving beyond the challenges of this type ministry, I want to ask about what it takes to lead in these ministries.

Pertaining to Research Question #2: What do United Methodist micro-community pastors and lay people identify as attributes and abilities essential for lay people to lead in sustainable, indigenous and shared ways?

3. If you were called to move churches tomorrow and had to handoff the responsibility of leading your micro-community completely to a lay leader, what attributes and abilities would you want to have been developed within them?

Transition Prompt: Thanks for everything that you have shared thus far. I want to shift to talking specifically about the process of developing leaders.

Questions Pertaining to Research Question #3: What are best practices for developing sustainable, indigenous and shared lay leadership in United Methodist micro communities?

4. If I were to spend a couple of days shadowing you as you interacted with your micro-community, what would I see you intentionally doing to develop leaders?
5. If you were to start a new micro-community tomorrow and wanted to have a process in place for developing leaders, what would that process look like?
6. What role does spiritual formation play in the leadership development process?
7. How can a leadership development process benefit a micro-community long-term?

Appendix F

Laity Focus Group Questions

Introductory Prompt: First of all, thank you for being a part of this focus group today. Secondly, I want to applaud how you are making an impact in a tremendous field of ministry, and helping your pastors reach people that traditional church settings have struggled to reach. I want to be respectful of your time, so we will stick with the time limit of forty-five minutes. I am both excited about what I will learn from each of you, but also hopeful that it will be beneficial for you to hear the perspective of others as well. Before we jump in there are a few ground rules I want to cover:

1. Please remember that all of you consented to be a part of this study with the understanding that your responses would be confidential. I will keep your responses confidential, and I want to ask all of you to agree not to disseminate the contents of our conversation once this group conversation concludes.
2. Please speak one at a time and allow space for each person to express their opinion. As the moderator I may intervene if we need to keep moving for time purposes or in order to hear from someone else, but otherwise we want to allow each person adequate time to speak.
3. Please be respectful of each other during this process, and refrain from criticizing the perspectives of others. The reason we are meeting as a group is to learn from other perspectives, even if they might not be the perspectives we personally adhere to in our ministry contexts.

Transition Prompt: If everyone is in agreement with those ground rules, let us jump in with a couple of questions about our contexts.

Stage Setting Questions

1. How would you describe your micro-community to someone that has never attended?

Transition Prompt: I want to follow up on the questionnaire by asking about the challenges associated with developing leaders within this type of ministry.

Question Pertaining to Research Question #1: What do United Methodist micro-community pastors and lay people identify as challenges to developing sustainable, indigenous and shared lay leadership?

2. In the questionnaire you each shared about some of the challenges to developing leaders in micro-communities. Can you share with the group about the challenges you have observed and elaborate on how you have experienced these challenges?

Transition Prompt: Moving beyond the challenges of this type ministry, I want to ask about what it takes to lead in these ministries.

Questions Pertaining to Research Question #2: What do United Methodist micro-community pastors and lay people identify as attributes and abilities essential for lay people to lead in sustainable, indigenous and shared ways?

3. If your pastor completely handed off the responsibility of leading your micro-community to you, what attributes and abilities do you think should have been developed within you?

Transition Prompt: Thanks for everything that you all have shared thus far. I want to shift to talking specifically about the process of developing leaders.

Questions Pertaining to Research Question #3: What are best practices for developing sustainable, indigenous and shared lay leadership in United Methodist micro communities?

4. If I were to spend a couple of days shadowing your pastor, what would I observe about their role in the leadership development process?
5. If you were planting your own micro-community and wanted to have a process in place for developing leaders, what would that process look like?
6. What role does spiritual formation play in the leadership development process?
7. How can a leadership development process benefit a micro-community long-term?

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