

**ABSTRACT**

**RELATIONAL INVESTMENTS IN MINISTRY: ROBUST COACHING**

**PRACTICES IN MULTI-STAFF CHURCHES**

by

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For decades ordained pastors have been trained to effectively study the Bible in the original languages, present evangelistic sermons, and lead a variety of worship experiences that follow the flow of the liturgical season interspersed with weddings and funerals. Theological education and church hierarchy have failed these men and women. Their training has not prepared pastors to navigate the minefield of relationships that they will encounter with potential future church members or staff persons.

While sermon preparation, worship leading, and Bible study are integral to a pastor's calling, relationships will determine the longevity in a particular pastorate as well as the reciprocation of God's love among the body of Christ. Utilizing Bill Hybel's indicators of successful relationships built on character, competency, and chemistry, this research shows the importance of those foundational influences in relationships, focusing specifically on the medium, or large multi-staff church. The work of John Maxwell, Mike Bonem, Clay Scroggins and Tom Tumblin were also influential in this work.

Between 300 and 1200 members, these churches are most likely to hire staff that has little or no experience and is in great need of coaching by an experienced leader in ministry. Part friend, parent, guide, and mentor, a coach is one who invests in

relationships that focus on ministry and influence the whole person. Through this relational coaching, staff members are better equipped to build friendships and recruit volunteers that expand discipleship within a congregation. Because character, competency, and chemistry encompass the tasks and relational themes of ministry, both Senior Pastor and staff members were interviewed for this research to discern how these foundational themes influenced their relationships. Their responses revealed a wide spectrum through the joy and heartbreak of these relational investments.

This research, which identified best coaching practices in multi-staff churches, took place in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. Research was initiated first through an anonymous online survey that was followed by more than twenty interviews across the South Georgia Conference about character, competency, and relational chemistry. Each participating Senior Pastor also completed an online demographic survey that described their congregation and the neighborhood surrounding the church. Interviews took place in ten churches; several Senior Pastor voluntarily participated along with parallel interviews with staff members that they selected. Sampling criteria from the interviews compared previous coaching relationships, current affairs among the program staff, and a side-by-side comparison of the efficacy of the Senior Pastor, Program Staff and health of those relationships. Each interview concluded with the presentation of a case study to learn the staff person's perception of best coaching practices with problematic relationships. This research gleaned how each staff

member might handle hypothetical relationships and all-too-often typical dysfunction uncovered therein.

Interviews revealed that the majority of persons questioned had experienced coaching through an athletic or musical experience with a leader who built a relationship with them that had a positive influence. These foundational experiences were augmented by learning situations early in ministry that had profoundly influenced their personal character and relational chemistry in the ensuing years as well as their desire and ability to increase competency. Nearly 15% described influence from negative examples while one person, one , hauntingly replied more than once: “I long for that type of relationship.”

**RELATIONAL INVESTMENTS IN MINISTRY:  
ROBUST COACHING PRACTICES IN MULTI-STAFF CHURCHES**

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by  
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## CHAPTER 1

### Overview of the Chapter

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up (*New American Standard Bible*, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

Two are superior to one and even more so if one of the two has traveled a similar journey previously to act as a guide for the inexperienced voyager. This is true of Senior Pastor and their teams in multi-staff churches. The larger congregations are primarily characterized as employing at least one or more clergy and a minimum of two additional staff persons that oversee programming for specific division of ministry. The primary source of wisdom, encouragement, and counsel in these multiple staff situations emanates from the Senior Pastor. He or she has worked their way up the ladder from a small church where they were quite likely the only paid person within the church. As they move to larger congregations, the scope of ministry increases and demands that additional staff or specialists be called to assist and facilitate increasing ministry needs. An assignment to a multi-staff church will often happen mid- to late career after learning a considerable amount about themselves, relational ministry and how to inspire others on the journey of faith.

In a perfect world, these people with seniority have honed motivational and leadership skills acquired in student organizations or their family of origin. These same skills are further refined in the smaller churches served in early years of their ministry where those staffing ministries were actually volunteers recruited and trained to facilitate

the work of discipleship. Working in the trenches to build pastoral relationships, the Senior Pastor grows into the opportunity to lead professional staff members so that together they shepherd the flock. According to Gallup's delineation of Clifton's

Strengths:

Managers are important. Seventy percent of the variance in team engagement is determined solely by the manager. That's a big stat -- all things related to teamwork fall back on the manager -- so let's rephrase, managers are the most important. Great managers provide a clear definition of quality work and link this description to performance standards. When team members know what excellence looks like, they can better deliver quality work. (Chapter 5)

It is quite possible that the one who leads an age-level or music ministry might come to the medium-large church with little or no ministry experience but possesses a wealth of passionate enthusiasm to work in their specialized area. Their individual and collective success depends largely upon their ability to build on a bilateral foundation of the quality and quantity of their own work and the capabilities of their Senior Pastor who will play a large supporting role if they are to succeed.

### **Personal Introduction**

The very best years of my life have been in ministry with two Senior Pastors that were exceptionally gifted and strong leaders. They were coaches who possessed wisdom and patience and excelled in people and administrative skills. Ministry in this environment was challenging and fulfilling. Our team worked well together as we performed capably and learned from each other, fulfilling God's call to lead, equip, and encourage His people, under the tutelage of our encouraging coach. Because of the

leader's maturity and strong skill set, staff members were free to be in ministry with minimal distractions. Even occasional challenges could become teachable moments. We were members of a well-coached team that could individually carry our share of the load yet worked together in unity with even better results.

The most tumultuous and difficult years of ministry have been in the very same churches. The dysfunction was the direct result of a personnel change. In my frame of reference, the most marked difference came with the change of the Senior Pastor. One staff member can make the difference between a remarkable band who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, has the capability to grow and shepherd a solid church family. Jesus exemplifies the best of leadership countless times through his teaching of the twelve. Surprisingly, Christ was indifferent to raising His own status but consciously chose to use His power to create rather than flaunt (Crouch 165-166). Using examples primarily from a military frame of reference, Sinek penned an entire volume on the power of a leader who creates an environment of success based entirely upon the relationships of leaders with in their those willing to sacrifice for the good of the team.

Healthy and vital congregations can be one personnel change away from trouble as there can be a refusal to acknowledge small problems that could spread. God designed the body of Christ to be a means of grace. By contrast, the change in dynamics with just one misplaced staff member can plunge the entire group from an unbelievable high to crisis.

Everything rises or falls on leadership. No organization, no ministry, no church, no family, no school, and no business can go any further than the leaders who are leading it. If everything rises or falls on leadership, then the quickest way for the opposition to

halt any project, any family, or any business is to neutralize the leadership. When the shepherd is removed, the flock scatters. That is true today in our churches. When Satan wants to cripple a church, he takes on the leadership. This is not just about the pastor and the paid staff, but also the church's lay leadership. If you want to be a leader, some people are not going to like you, and they not going to attack you. Some people are going to try to make you fail (Warren).

The term shepherd describes a particular form of care for others. Over the course of my ministry I have received grace in the form of unbelievable, unconditional love from colleagues and church members where I have served. It is only because of their investment of time, patience, and energy in our relationship that I am alive and have the strength and courage to love as Christ loved me. Because I have received and learned so much, enabled to grow in positive ways, I have consciously sought to coach younger colleagues on the same journey. My father wisely taught me that life is too short to make all the mistakes myself when I can learn from the experience of others and assist those coming behind me to do the same.

On the other side of the coin, there have been staff members incapable of giving and receiving grace or love. Betrayal always stings. When done purposely by a co-worker on your own team, pulling together becomes especially challenging. Worse yet is when it is a supervisor whom you had loved, trusted and confided in. I am who I am today because of persons like this on both sides. I have learned to be extremely cautious and careful whom I rely upon in order to protect myself and those I care for. Lawson and Boersma espouse that staff members are strengthened by healthy, caring relationships that build longevity and satisfaction; by the same token, working in isolation often leads

to failure to thrive in ministry (121). I have found that the balance between healthy, loving relationships and those that distract or self-destruct are often separated by a very fine line.

Those who seek education to pursue a ministry calling are well educated in seminary on how to be the resident theologian in their congregation. Pastors are trained in theology, preaching, and spiritual formation. Much of their theological education is spent on how to prepare a sermon, study the Bible, or care for those in need of counseling. Their fundamental function in the pastorate is building interpersonal relationships. Through interaction with members and constituents, two amazing goals are accomplished. The primary goal is to disciple these persons, as John Wesley said, to “perfect them in love.” Secondly, the Pastor recruits laity for various leadership positions in order to broaden the outreach and delegate the enormous task of pastoral care. As these Pastors move to larger and larger churches, coaching and recruiting skills become even more vitally important and will include the addition of paid staff persons under their authority.

The ultimate coaching setting would be one where each colleague in a multi-staff church is supported by a loving, growing, and faith-filled congregation headed by a pastoral coach who discipless the staff. This discipleship, in turn, is passed on to the congregation, via the staff, through multiplication. These staff persons should be committed to loving and caring for each other for in mutual support and long-term commitment. This would take place through self-evaluation in addition to a 360° appraisal by fellow staff members and laity in order that plans could be implemented to help each staff member grow to their full potential in a safe and loving environment.

When a mature leader disciples, guides, and cares for those whom they coach, it enables their team to do the same. While Sinek describes this in a secular environment, he neglects the depths of human love and sacrifice in relationships possible when they are lived for the glory of God (14). Such coaching reflects the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit in amazing and miraculous results of grace and growth. Nothing compares to seeing God at work in churches where this was a reality. In my experience, I have seen these very same families of faith, following one or more personnel changes, transformed from a position of unparalleled growth to one where discipleship is a desperate dream and the future grows dimmer with each passing month. The organizations that are putting out fires within do not have the energy to extinguish fires outside that endanger the organization (Sinek 16).

### **Statement of the Problem**

A newly ordained pastor at their first appointment within the United Methodist Church will wear many hats: theologian, preacher, song leader, secretary, and youth director. With career progression, this person will move on in the years ahead to serve larger churches. Wherever their first appointment may be, it is likely to be a small church driven by laity who look to this pastor as the leader. Not unlike a family in need of a firm but compassionate parent, every church desperately needs a strong, healthy leader. This first congregation may be a stepping-stone to a larger appointment, but it is also a testing ground for the new pastor's leadership. Mentoring the laity to become a unified team that shares the love of God effectively with each other and their community is often the best preparation for coaching a multi-staff church in the years ahead (Tumblin 19).

This research addressed the need to support clergy by providing them the skills to coach their people well. This may mean reinforcing traits they already possess or teaching them the building blocks of successful coaching. If an athletic team trains thoroughly for each game, their success depends largely on the skill, maturity, and congruence of their coach. When they are mentored by a person who truly knows the game and can help them work together like a well-oiled machine, they are able to play with passion and integrity to the best of their ability. In the church, and in sports, this becomes a win-win culture. Arneson describes the traits that make this success possible as listening, physical presence, preparation, coaching and challenging. The goal of this research was to show how these areas come together in one key term: coaching.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this study was to identify robust leadership development practices for Senior Pastor and staff in multi-staff churches in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church.

### **Research Questions**

Pastors may be able to describe their particular call to ministry and preach a sermon even prior to beginning formal theological training. Seminaries teach these men and women how to study the Bible and sermonize effectively. What is desperately needed is the conveyance of skills for relationship building and coaching that are necessary in order to teach and lead these ministry professionals as they seek to embody the resurrected Christ in order to make and build disciples. Men and women who have learned these skills in their family of origin or from participation in other organizations are able to motivate and encourage the people in their church with much greater

effectiveness than those who are not afforded that luxury. If learned and practiced early in their ministry, the Pastor can utilize these tools by honing skills within the small church. As they submit themselves obediently to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and mature in the faith, the Pastor can model a life of prayer, humility and accountability. This encourages the laity to do the same through example and by the spoken words of exhortation.

### **Research Question #1 (Interview)**

RQ #1. How do senior leaders from multi-staff churches indicate character, competency, and chemistry are among the best practices for coaching staff and volunteers?

### **Research Question #2 (Interview)**

RQ #2. What do senior leaders from multi-staff churches indicate are barriers to coaching staff and volunteers?

### **Research Question #3 (Interview)**

RQ #3. What other conditions enhance robust leadership development practices of coaching staff and volunteers?

## **Rationale for the Project**

This research is important because for decades men and women have attended theological institutions following God's call to the ministry. The preeminent, primary calling of these individuals is the call is to preach. Pastors are educated to be the resident theologian and Bible scholar in a church. In the United Methodist Church, specifically South Georgia, which is the target of this research, a person appointed to the role of

Senior Pastor will be the single most influential person in shaping the congregation during the current season and, potentially, for decades to come.

Relational skills are first learned and imprinted by the family of origin. A small handful of second-career pastors have the advantage of training within a secular environment coupled with life experiences that can be advantageous. Coaching experiences that a candidate brings to the early ministry setting are refined through practice within their congregation. Frustration can develop when a new pastor arrives exuding an abundance of enthusiasm and spiritual zeal but lacks maturity and experience on how to build connections with the persons in their congregations. With increasing frequency, a challenge arises. When coaching qualities are not learned prior to seminary, and there are no requisite courses on the subject, the candidate likely cannot successfully learn such skills. As Baldovinos projects, too often leaders fall into their roles with little or not enough training to do well, let alone be effective.

This project is important because those who serve in ministry, especially the Pastor, benefit from proper preparation. Specifically, they must have the firm foundation necessary for healthy mental and emotional well-being and relationship building. This is learned through coaching in leadership and interpersonal skills.

In a smaller church, where a brand-new pastor is likely to be assigned, there are no staff members to supervise. In this setting, the pastor must seek to cultivate their budding skills as a coach and leader through recruiting and motivating the laity of the church in one-on-one relationships across several generations. Doing so successfully enables this leader to learn the building blocks of a solid, emotionally healthy foundation for the remainder of their ministry. This foundation will serve them well as they continue

to build relationships with laity and eventually how to coach staff as their career progresses to larger churches. Each choice in relationships builds upon the success or failure of this foundation, as learned through the Apostles and their work with the early church in Jerusalem.

For the basis of this research, the researcher has chosen passages in which those serving God trained and coached others as addressed through scripture in two well-known passages. It happens first through Moses as advised by Jethro to delegate his long days serving as judge for all his people as described in Exodus 18. The people stood in line day and night in order for Moses to judge and speak God's word in their particular situations. His father-in-law, Jethro, observed and instructed him how to divide the duties; Moses needed to delegate to others, freeing himself to be God's liaison in the most important matters and, with a hierarchy of leaders, everyone was served more efficiently. Those chosen judged groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty or ten and were to be trustworthy men of integrity who hated corruption.

Lesser known, but lending itself more appropriately to this research, is the pivotal story about the growing pains of the early church in the Acts of the Apostles. The disciples had waited obediently in Jerusalem as instructed by Christ for the arrival of the Holy Spirit. After Pentecost, the church exploded. Each day thousands of converts came to know the Risen Christ. The Apostles frantically needed support so that no one would fall through the cracks. Luke states in Acts 6:1-7 that seven men, full of the Holy Spirit, were set apart to assist the apostles in their ministry. While it appears that the apostles and the believers in Jerusalem were simply looking to ensure that the Greek widows were

not overlooked, God used the appointment of these additional people to minister in unexpected ways.

The spreading of the Gospel in ever widening circles might never have happened if the seven had not been appointed. The challenge of serving effectively led to the appointment of the seven: Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas (Acts 6:1-7). While Luke immediately tells Stephen's story of powerful, anointed preaching and how Philip was a faithful witness of Christ, the remaining five are never mentioned again. The Apostles could have addressed the conflict in Acts 6 by buckling down to work longer hours to care for the widows personally. Instead, this became a defining, watershed moment for the Christian movement and the spread of the gospel via the diaspora following the martyrdom of Stephen. Because the Apostles addressed this population with love and, in the process, gave them ownership through coaching, the church grew exponentially yet again.

The Apostles successfully navigated this encounter by observation of Jesus through His care for others. Sometimes He brought swift and intentional healing; at other times he confronted or probed an issue further. The most important relationship modeled before the apostles was between God the Father and God the Son. Christ exemplified this loving communication by withdrawing to pray alone, yet close enough that they could easily witness His habit of prayer (Luke 9:18). The Disciples knew that Jesus had spent the night in prayer before He chose them as His closest associates (Luke 6:12-17). The twelve witnessed the importance Jesus placed on prayer in the Garden prior to His betrayal by Judas (John 18:1).

Each time, when given the choice, Christ chose to love and pray. He did nothing without consulting the Father. When the Apostles were confronted by the Greek widows in Acts 6, there was no questioning what needed to be done because Jesus himself had shown them: love and pray.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Clergy:** Individuals (full- or part-time) who serve as ministers, deacons, elders, and local pastors under appointment of a bishop, who hold membership in an annual conference, and who are commissioned, ordained, or licensed. The word *clergy* comes from the Latin *clericus*, meaning priest (umc.org glossary).

**Coaching:** Relationship between two or more ministry professionals that is comparable in many ways to mentoring. An experienced advisor, often the Senior Pastor helps their staff to further discover who they are, who God is calling them to be, and what He is calling them to do. May include ministry planning, vision casting, or priority management to assist staff members in becoming better stewards of their time, energy, and gifts (Hyatt).

**Laity:** From *laos*, meaning "people of God," used to describe members and attenders of a congregation or parish (umc.org glossary).

**Leadership Development:** The intentional process of helping established and emerging leaders at every level of ministry assess and develop their Christian character and acquire, reinforce in their and refine their ministry knowledge and skills (Malphurs and Mancini 23).

**Ministry:** From the Greek word *diakoneo*, meaning "to serve," or *douleuo*, meaning "to serve as a slave." In the New Testament, ministry is seen as service to God and to other

people in His name. Jesus provided the pattern for Christian ministry; He came, not to receive service, but to give it ([www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)).

**Program Staff:** Non-ordained, paid lay staff working in program areas that are employed part or fulltime. Five specific categories of ministry generally account for the highest percentage of lay workers: children's ministry, office administration, music, facilities, and youth. In churches with more than 500 attendees, children's ministry and office administration top the list, each accounting for just under 20%. For the "price" of one clergy person with a conference mandated minimum salary, benefits package, and housing allowance, a congregation often can hire several part-time lay staff (Michel 2, 6).

**SPRC or Staff-Parish Relations Committee.** This committee works closely with the pastor and staff concerning their relationship with the congregation and the entire work of the church. In essence it is the personnel committee of the pastoral charge. The committee should be sensitive to the opinions and concerns of the congregation concerning the pastor and staff and confer with the district superintendent or the bishop about the appointment of the pastor for the church. The committee recommends the salary for the pastor to the Charge Conference. It consists of from five to nine members of the pastoral charge. ([umc.org](http://umc.org) glossary).

### **Delimitations**

For this qualitative intervention, churches were mandated to meet the membership criteria of 300 - 2000 members. Further delimitation included that the church must employ three or more full-time program staff (lay or clergy), including the Senior Pastor. Two parallel groups of people were chosen by the researcher via a self-selecting, general online survey about character, competence, and chemistry sent to the Senior Pastor of the

churches who met the research criteria Senior Pastor. The first interviews were conducted with Senior Pastor of multi-staff churches within the geographic confines of the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. The second group interviewed consisted of one senior colleague chosen by each Senior Pastor (either an Appointed Associate or Senior Staff Member) at the same churches in a second, separate interview. Twenty-two people were interviewed using open-ended questions and responses to a case scenario that interviewees received prior to the meeting. Interviews were conducted in the church where the staff members currently serve in ministry together. The purpose of the study was to determine the preeminent practices to coach the best possible leadership and behaviors from the Senior Pastor and their staff members.

Further delimiting the parameters of the research were additional criteria: The Senior Pastor and senior staff member were further delimited as either first or second career for the purpose of the research. Excluded from the study were support staff such as those involved in a church school setting and secretarial, financial or custodial staff.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

Because the academic research on multi-staff coaching is rare, sources included popular books and articles by well-known Senior Pastor and church leaders such as Bill Hybels, founding pastor of Willow Creek Church; John Maxwell, Wesleyan Pastor and author of multiple books on leadership; Mike Bonem (Leading from Second Chair); Ed Stetzer (Wheaton College); Tom Tumblin (Dean of Beeson School of Practical Theology at Asbury Theological Seminary), and Rick Warren (Saddleback Church). Additional research was completed in the area of coaching effectiveness, often as a means of increasing sales for a secular entity, through books by authors Leith Anderson, Mac

Anderson, Henry Cloud, J. Robert Clinton, Bill Eckstrom, Jon Gordon, John Murphy, Peter Scazzero, Clay Scroggins, and Simon Sinek.

The effectiveness of any church is dependent on the staff and specifically the healthy, visionary leadership of ordained leaders with the support of the program staff. While the Senior Pastor coaches program staff, the entire staff team is responsible for coaching and guiding the laity toward a strong future. The primary building blocks of coaching addressed in this research are character, competency, and chemistry. Success within the church is determined only in part upon the number of persons attending. It becomes a precarious judgement if a staff person's efficacy is graded solely on the number of participants involved in any particular area. The highest and best purpose these leaders serve is to divide the work of ministry so that participants learn how to lead and, above all, grow closer to Christ.

### **Research Methodology**

The academic topic of coaching in multiple staff churches is virtually non-existent and much of this research has been collected from multiple disciplines and popular sources to initiate research of this topic. Until the past two decades, with the publication and litigation of abuses in Roman Catholicism and similar challenges in Protestantism, there was a real lack of personnel or leadership literature for pastors and staff members of any kind. Tomes continue to be widely produced and mass-marketed on countless evangelism, prophetic, stewardship, or programmatic emphases. To replicate successes on one of these topics in another church by a different pastor would require more than just reading a text. For this qualitative pre-intervention research, Senior Pastors and staff members in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church were

interviewed. Utilizing the statistical table of the Conference Journal, ninety-five Senior Pastors were emailed and invited to participate in a researcher prepared survey on coaching relationships.

**Robust Coaching Practices.** The hypothesis of the researcher was that the foundation of successful coaching was constructed via leadership activities as a student and young adult and refined in the small church setting. Leadership is a life-long journey, and those who lead a church must be chosen in the same manner as the aforementioned scriptural examples: men and women who are persons of good character, competent and willing to build chemistry with the other staff.

**Biblical and Theological Foundations.** This research explores what the Biblical and Theological basis for team ministry are for those who seek this type of work. While to many it is a job, it is also ministry because of the eternal significance of what is done. The difference between activities offered by a school or community group and the church is found in the means and the end result. Outside the church, there is possible educational value to some activities but primarily these pursuits produce entertainment and fellowship and increasingly involve a fee to participate. By contrast, the medium to large church can offer a spectrum of activities and pursuits as a means to an end: to disciple young and old and welcome those in need.

**More than a Preacher.** A simple parson might have provided a sermon and a mid-week prayer meeting in the smaller church in the past and found their seminary training to be quite adequate. Now they find themselves sermonizing, providing Bible studies, and managing a small contingent of people who look to the simple pastor for leadership. While many pastors imagine that they will preach and move up the ladder to a larger

church; managing others with less experience is not something they learned in seminary.

It is unclear where these men and women will learn such skills.

**Changing Culture, Expectations, and Relationships.** Our culture has moved from an independent, pioneering culture and hard-working agrarian economy in which nearly everyone pulled their own weight; this allowed families and organizations to move ahead with varying degrees of momentum. Now the family unit has become fragmented.

Whereas Baby Boomers learned the value of hard work under the watchful eye and apprenticeship of their parents, their example is quickly fading into obscurity. Often people now look to the church to reinstate or repair relationships that form the basis of healthy self-esteem and a good work ethic. There must be church staff to lead by example and action to be reminiscent of the family unit. When there is a conflict between a lay person of the congregation and a poorly prepared staff person, this needs to be transformed into a teaching moment. The pastor must learn to address and mediate the disagreements between staff members in the church, and the SPRC must determine its role in adjudicating these conflicts.

**Partnership of Clergy and Laity.** In decades past, the overwhelming majority of seminary graduates and professional staff members served their entire career in local church ministry. While there are increasingly more options available, those who chose to serve in the local church will do so in partnership with both laity and clergy. With the connectional nature of the United Methodist Church, clergy and laity work together toward the potential of growing healthier churches and stronger leaders who are encouraged together in ministry. The journey is far from easy and relationship building can be messy and difficult.

**Relational Coaching.** By questioning and observing the leadership of medium-large churches, the researcher can gauge Pastoral/Program Staff to find who would most benefit from coaching on healthy and encouraging relationships with specific emphasis on character, competency, and chemistry. These actions will have a direct correlation on the health of the churches that they serve. In a time when many do “what is right in their own eyes,” Christians are called to live into a higher standard of communication, excellence in their work, and loving, supportive relationships. This standard is seen throughout the Scripture and modeled by Jesus and His disciples and further exemplified in Acts by observation of how the Apostles followed the leading of the Holy Spirit to disciple the early church.

### **Type of Research**

The introductory instrument for this qualitative pre-intervention was an online survey (Appendix A) sent to the Senior Pastor of congregations that met the initial threshold criteria of 300 - 2000 members. Via this survey, respondents self-selected if they would be willing to participate in a face-to-face, recorded interview. A brief demographic survey (Appendix B) was used by those churches where interviews took place to complete the research. Following analysis of these responses, transcriptions of interviews, and observations from site visits, results were compiled. The best practices depicting robust coaching methods for the Senior Pastor as a successful leader and coach of an effective staff were gleaned. These same traits are transferrable to church staff members who will utilize the same, or similar, practices to enlist and coach volunteers with which they work.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed for further analysis, and the researcher collected demographic information in a second tool. The second and third tools (see Appendix C and D) were sent ahead to the churches in preparation for the interviews so that the demographic tool could be completed by any staff person and were verified with the Journal of the South Georgia Conference. Pre-interview release of the third tool allowed those participating in the interviews to be adequately prepared. The meat of this research were twenty-two semi-structured interviews conducted at ten churches within the geographical confines of the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. This specific investigation gathered the best coaching practices for ministry staff and laity volunteers in a multi-staff church setting.

### **Participants**

All churches queried were within the geographic boundaries of the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church with churches whose membership was 300 - 2000 people and who employed three or more paid, full-time program staff, including the Senior Pastor. For the purpose of this research, two people were interviewed at these congregations in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. At each church, the Senior Pastor was interviewed. The second interview took place with a senior associate or member of the program staff with seniority that was selected by the Senior Pastor. As full-time employees, these people were financially compensated by their church to resource, lead, and implement ministry. The colleague to be interviewed was invited via a request extended by the Senior Pastor.

## **Instrumentation**

Three different instruments were used in this research.

1. An on-line self-assessment was emailed to Senior Pastor in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church that met the criteria of 300 - 2000 members. This survey included a consent form and an invitation to self-select for on-site, face-to-face interviews with the researcher. Additionally, each pastor who self-selected that their church met the membership criteria and had two additional full-time program staff members were requested to share a link to this same survey with all program staff to complete. *See Appendix A.*

2. Primary data came from researcher-conducted interviews at each of the eight churches with the Senior Pastor and a senior colleague whom they selected. Open-ended questions on coaching and staff relationships and a scenario for their response (*See Appendix D*) were sent to each participant prior to the interview. Each interview was audio recorded for purposes of transcribing and further analyzation of responses. *See Appendix C.*

3. The final instrumentation for the research was a demographic survey of the church and surrounding community that included a brief organizational scan of the congregation completed only by the churches who agreed to meet with the researcher for the face-to-face interviews. (*See Appendix B*)

## **Data Collection**

Data was collected by mixed methods in three instruments starting with a general online survey to each church that met the research criteria for membership and full-time, self-selecting staff. This was followed by face-to-face interviews, again self-selecting,

with open-ended questions and a second online survey regarding a brief history and demographics of the congregation and their surrounding community. Included was a matrix that examined number of staff, their titles, and whether they were full or part-time status in order to compare and contrast each church.

This data was further clarified through onsite, recorded interviews with ten Senior Pastor and twelve senior staff members whom were either appointed associates or program persons who had served for multiple years. Each of the twenty-two were interviewed about their perceptions of church staff leadership and specifically the benefits of a supervisory coach through open-ended questions that aligned with the research questions on character, competency, and chemistry and the purpose statement of the dissertation. At the time of the site visits, the Senior Pastor was interviewed separately from the senior colleague whom the pastor had invited to participate. Qualitative information collected through the interviews and surveys was analyzed to identify best practices, patterns, and themes in coaching. To ensure anonymity, each participant and church was coded to protect their identity and do no harm.

### **Data Analysis**

For this qualitative, pre-intervention research, the researcher conducted interviews at ten churches with the Senior Pastor and one or more members of the professional program staff without the presence of the Senior Pastor. Responses of participants were compared to understand whether specific examples of coaching were actually being implemented or only discussed and whether they were needed. Analysis yielded best practices utilized in multiple environments that are taught by example, coaching, or both

methods. Further study of the interviews and initial online survey yielded intended purposes and goals and effective methods of coaching staff.

### **Generalizability**

This study focused solely upon those currently serving within the geographical confines of the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. Participants ranged in age from 25 - 64. The Senior Pastor had all completed college and seminary and were ordained elders in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. Their staff members had a wide diversity of training. Some were ordained in other denominations with only Bible School training while others earned a seminary degree and full ordination. As a result, this research may be challenging to duplicate with the same results in another Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church or even at a later date with a similar group because of personnel changes. The outcome of this research should be helpful to pastors and staff members in medium to large churches with memberships of 300 - 2000 persons who wish learn adaptable concepts and to invest their time and energy in order to improve working relationships in the unique church environment.

### **Project Overview**

Chapter 2 of this dissertation reviews the Biblical and Theological foundations shown through scripture through Jethro and Moses, the Acts of the Apostles, and Jesus himself. Additional information discusses relevant literature and research in the area of staff relationships and the need of coaching for church staff members in the face of declining and defragmenting familial relationships. In Chapter 3 the design, methods, and data collection are explained in detail. Chapter 4 describes the analysis of this research,

and Chapter 5 states the findings and implications of short-falls and the best, robust coaching practices in place as well as potential areas in which staffing relationships can be strengthened and studied further.

## **CHAPTER 2**

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

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

While those who are ordained within the context of the United Methodist Church are theologically trained, the same education can and should not be assumed for professional lay staff. At minimum these persons should personify a Spirit-filled life of maturity that includes faith in the Triune God and a vibrant commitment to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives. In stark contrast to a secular vocation, these persons have discerned a particular calling to their work which draws them, and those in their sphere of influence, into scriptural holiness.

As leaders who are Biblically and theologically trained, the Senior Pastor and staff understand the importance of seeking to follow God and His will for their church family through casting vision and leading their people toward the future. In a world where many people work a shift and look forward to their time off or the weekend, this vision must be clear: the church staff is building and pursuing a consuming and contagious fire of eternal significance. Because these church leaders are set apart, they have made a conscious choice to move in the direction of that vision by way of short and long-term spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical goals set for themselves and those that they lead. They do so by following the example of Jesus who ministered to the whole person: body, mind, soul, and spirit. This is done through positive relationships and the pursuit of excellence, both of which are personified in the life of Christ.

Because of the example of Jesus, these leaders seek to provide a healthy, creative, and positive environment for their church family. Children grow best in a nurturing

environment where they can learn under the guidance of loving parents what their gifts and talents are. The church should provide a similar positive, loving environment where people are nurtured, God-given gifts are encouraged, and others are helped so that they become strong together. Inevitably there are those who may seek to enter this fellowship in an effort to siphon the inspiration and crush the character, competency, and chemistry that God extends as a means of grace to nurture His children in this safe environment.

Christians seek the forgiveness and accountability of confessing their sins and shortcomings to God and, when necessary, to those they have wronged. They embody the scriptures because their lives may be the only sermon some will ever hear. Most often this is fostered most effectively through small groups, as demonstrated by John and Charles Wesley. The Holy Club at Oxford that fostered these methodical persons valued mutual accountability, respect, and self-evaluation facilitated through living in the Holy Spirit.

### **Biblical Foundations**

While scripture does not refer to leadership or coaching directly, God has woven these threads across the tapestry of history since Creation. Markedly, this was modeled primarily through the presence and work of the Trinity from the very beginning as God labored as a team (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) to create the world. Genesis 1 refers freely to the Spirit hovering over the deep sans the formal introduction to this part of the Trinity. Adam and Eve were made in “our” image. God continues to demonstrate His loving care and desire for human relationships through the era of the Father in the Old Testament, chronicles of the life of Christ the Son in the Gospels, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament through the present day.

The theological exclusivity of the Trinity among world religions originated in the Creation story of Genesis, and some purport this an example of division of labor. Christianity alone teaches that One God is manifest in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They function seamlessly together and separately, throughout scripture and history. "...though God is one, there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead—Father, Son, and Spirit, who were engaged in the creative work" (Jamieson, et al). The work of the Trinity was undeniably visible through the Creation account in Genesis and the incarnational ministry of Jesus, the Son, when He took on flesh and became both fully human and remained fully God.

### **Jethro and Moses**

The precedent for coaching in ministry is witnessed clearly in the Old Testament when Jethro guided Moses in setting up judges in Exodus 18:13-23, rather than attempting to do all the work himself. The Hebrew children waited in long lines to see Moses in order for him to rule on disagreements. The long wait most likely escalated frustrations and flared tempers. As Jethro visited Moses and Zipporah, he saw with keen and understanding eyes the need for wise change. The structure served neither Moses nor the people well.

If the people were as quarrelsome one with another as they were with God, no doubt Moses had many causes brought before him...There may be over-doing even in well-doing...Jethro advised Moses to a better plan. Great men should not only study to be useful themselves, but contrive to make others useful. (Henry)

As Moses attempted to lead, everything came to a stand-still instead. Moses literally sat while the people stood, and many grew angrier. The most important role for Moses to

maintain was his relationship with Yahweh and delegate the remainder, not to be judge and jury.

After discussion with Jethro, Moses defined the specific rules for the deputation of those who would command thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens in Deuteronomy 1:1-15. The people of God were already divided quite naturally by tribes according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Once Moses was able to remove himself as the bottleneck and admit that he was not able to carry the load alone, the wheels of justice moved freely. Moses was unmistakably called by God to a life of ministry. He was not the only one selected by God but Miriam, Aaron, and the tribal leaders were designated because Jethro coached Moses to do so. Today there are still men and women who, like Moses, have heard the call of God and attempt to complete the work alone. Seventy elders were appointed to assist Moses, and the leadership of the community seemed loyal and strong. When a plague occurs and chaos breaks loose, turmoil is instigated by two inside leaders, Aaron and Miriam. Moses' resentful siblings jealously question why Moses got the glory, Why should their brother get to speak on behalf of God? Hadn't God also worked and spoken through Miriam and Aaron (Beaumont)?

### **The Seven**

With the descent of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1, people were converted by the thousands at Pentecost and in the days that followed. The exploding population of those who desired to follow Christ was truly miraculous. This challenge illustrates that the more people involved, the greater the need for delegation and accountability. The Apostles teach an important lesson in Acts 6:1-7. "An embarrassing situation arose threatening to break the unity of those who were at one time one in heart and one in

soul!...they as a group looked for a solution [and] reaped a rich harvest” (Varickasseril, 168-169). Rather than putting a halt to the vital ministry that they were called by God to do and attempting to appease those who were disgruntled, they asked the Greeks to choose persons wise and full of the Spirit. This led to the appointing the Seven.

It is important to note their wisdom. When the Apostles were confronted by work not completed, they instructed the Greeks to choose from among themselves seven who were mature in the faith and full of the Spirit.

“Seven” was a reasonable number for leaders; Josephus suggests that an average of seven elders governed most towns (Jewish Antiquities 4.214, 287; Jewish War 2.571). Moses also delegated his work to other leaders who met some spiritual and moral qualifications so Moses could focus on interceding for the people before God and teaching his Word. (Keener 334)

By superficial appearances, one would assume that they are set apart solely to distribute food and to serve the widows of the community. To the contrary, there is much more God has in store. In Acts 7, Luke describes how powerfully Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, preached and became the first martyr while introducing the vitally important character of Saul to the narrative. Philip was used powerfully to convey the word of God nearby in addition to the continent of Africa through the chariot riding Eunuch that he baptized in the days that followed.

On the contrary, there is more than meets the eye and one opinion is:

The apostles and the Seven clearly defined their separate roles...there was a recruitment of team members who have the requisite abilities and character qualities necessary to complete the mission. While Acts 6 does not list the

differing gifts and talents needed to accomplish the mission of the Seven, it does address the character qualities necessary for the team members. (Sell 66)

Because the Apostles coached the church with wisdom and grace in Acts 6:1-7, a crisis was averted. With the appointment of the Seven, a framework was put into place for the rapidly growing body of Christ.

### **Jesus**

The most important individual that taught leadership via a coaching ministry was Jesus himself. He set the example for team ministry by sending the disciples out by twos, giving them power and authority to proclaim the good news, cast out demons, and heal the sick. Sending them in twos further reinforced team ministry and the focus of servant leadership while serving together. Keener describes this passage as important because the number twelve is reflective of the twelve tribes of Israel and “the true, obedient remnant of Israel, perhaps a source of renewal” (136).

And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. (Mark 6:7-13)

Focused on servant leadership, serving and loving others sacrificially as a team, is what Jesus had in mind, first stated in Mark and then re-emphasized in Luke 10:1 and Matthew

10:2-15, which painstakingly lists Jesus' colleagues by name, two by two. For even a small task, such as retrieving the donkey for the Lord in Matthew 21:1, Jesus sent two disciples together. The best leaders are cut from the same cloth as Jesus; those who know they are responsible to and answerable to God (Scroggins). It is important to note that when the disciples were sent two by two, they were sent as apostles that Miriam Webster defines as, "one sent on a mission...to preach the gospel." Representing Christ, He sent them with His power and authority.

### **Christ in Team Ministry**

The Son of God set the example for teams when He began his own ministry in solitude. Coaches must be comfortable in their own skin with good self-esteem before they can coach their team toward the same goals. As He recruited the disciples, it was not done with an eye to their education or social standing in the community. While these are certainly factors in the secular and church environment, Jesus chose those willing to follow, listen, and learn. In essence, He apprenticed them for three years and taught them through life experiences. The crowd of five thousand was fed because Christ built relationships with His disciples and instructed his team on what to do.

They were not fit enough to be leaders during the time when they met Jesus. Their attitude changed from close-minded to teachable, self-centered to obedient, self-distrustful to self-confident, fearful to trustful, skeptical to full of faith. The transformation of the life and behaviors are found among the followers of Jesus especially in the lives of Peter and Paul. (Otto 30)

As the disciples observed Jesus, He modeled a lifestyle of coaching through prayer, vulnerability, servanthood, and mission. Christ continued that example through

delegating the work, sending them out two by two. He empowered them to speak and heal in His name.

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Traditional, secular leadership is known as management, commonly following the wishes and goal fulfillment of a direct supervisor, most often with no regard to cost of conscience or resources to the customer. To follow this model ensures job security and higher earning potential. In ministry, the paradigm is vastly different. Ministry is found in Romans 12:6-8; προϊστάμενος is a present active participle of προϊστημι derived to mean ruling with a long-earned reputation to model by example and a proven track record. Keener states that all Christians have a gift for ministry, but some are blessed with an abundance (448). Actions should show integrity based upon the example of Jesus who chose love, humility, and service.

Essential to Christian leadership is integrity, translated from the Hebrew to mean upright, whole or blameless. In Psalm 25:21, David states that God is the source of תָּמַר (integrity) with יָשָׁר (uprightness), which support him. Job refused to sacrifice his personal integrity, תְּהִי, even in death (in Job 27:5), in spite of the insistence of his confidants that he confess his sin. It is interesting to note that Job and David made life choices with two vastly different outcomes after defending their integrity.

As one considers the theological foundations of leadership and team ministry, Holcomb and Pace advises three questions to ask while reading the scriptures:

- 1) Who is leading in the Bible? 2) How did they lead? And 3) By what power did they lead? When we use these three questions, we see that the leaders in Scripture did not all lead the same way: they ranged in personality types, but the

one thing they did have in common was the power by which they led; namely the power and authority granted them by God through Christ. (2-3)

Scripture speaks of leadership as both positional and as influence. Positional leadership is perhaps the most common way most church leaders understand leadership. Acts 20, I Timothy 3, Titus 1, Hebrews 13, and I Peter 5 sum up how positional leadership should be understood. Positional leadership is for not for everyone: it is a role that God has ordained and calls particular people to. The Holy Spirit gives to each person gifts and strengths with which they can serve, including leadership. This research explores how the church staff leads by an example of servanthood and empathetic devotion, exemplified by the senior staff members.

There is no better prototype for leadership and relationships than Christ who was fully God and fully human. Jesus called an incredibly diverse group of men, without regard to age, career choice, or temperament. By all appearances, absolutely nothing distinguished these men above anyone else except that Jesus hand-picked them and coached them for three years prior to turning over the reins of His ministry after his departure (Richardson). The primary means of conveying leadership skills to the disciples was through observing the servanthood exemplified by Jesus as He loved and cared for individuals, meeting their needs. It was a ministry of care and nurture. Those who encountered Christ, notably the disciples, were marked and unmistakably changed by His life-sharing teaching and instruction that were filled with grace and love. Acts 4:13 states that when outsiders observed “the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.” The disciples were plain, ordinary men. The Twelve were

chosen by Jesus for whom they would become and for the potential that Christ saw in them.

While the numbers of those following Jesus increased exponentially over His three-year ministry, it is worth noting that His focus was never upon building a larger following. Multiple times Jesus wearied of the crowds and initiated various attempts to leave them. By stark contrast, his motivation was on making disciples and coaching these men through interaction with the thronging, fickle masses that followed them to witness the miracles. Jesus did not choose the Twelve because of pedigree, education, or winsome personalities. None of these appear to have factored into his choices. The two primary things that marked the disciples were willing availability and loving Christ enough to follow in obedience.

The primary, but largely unspoken, competency of each staff person is the assumption of a vibrant daily relationship with Jesus Christ. As they wait on God, they grow in their ability and competency to serve Jesus through ministry. John Wesley termed such an investment as growing in grace toward Christian perfection. As believers yield themselves to Christ, they are perfected in love:

The nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart, now appeared to me in a stronger light than ever it had done before. I saw, that giving even all my life to God, supposing it possible to do this, and go no farther would profit me nothing, unless I gave my heart, yea, all my heart, to him. (Wesley)

One of the unique beliefs of those who follow John Wesley is that they unabashedly seek to know Christ more deeply with a thirst for holiness and entire sanctification. Wesley believed that as Christians grew closer to God and committed themselves more and more

to Christ that they were filled with the love of God and thus increasingly respond to others with the same love that they have received. Having addressed Biblical and Theological foundations for this research, the next sections explore the values of character, competence, and chemistry.

## **ECCLESIOLOGY**

There is more to ministry as a team than meets the eye. If people do not follow the example of Christ, they will be hard pressed to finish well or to honor Him in the process. A staff team must utilize this ecclesiology as they build the relational foundations for church staffs, realizing interdependence (Perkins 29-30). Christ set the standard by seeking to lead and heal with love and humility. He tenderly balanced supremacy with meekness as God, both fully divine and born fully human. This model is one that church staff members can utilize as a template for being servant-leaders who love and serve sacrificially with integrity as exemplified by Jesus. No matter what work is done as ministry, these activities are merely a means to an end. All that is done and said must be completed with such great love that others see the love of Christ in every action, word, and attitude.

Humility is not popular in today's culture nor was it highly sought after in the early years of the church. Like many patterns in the Old and New Testaments, it is counter-cultural and diametrically opposed to what the human flesh desires. It is perceived as foolishness by outside observers that those who seek to be humble make themselves more available to God who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I Peter 5:5 declares that the Lord gives more grace to those who choose humility. Paul, in his

farewell to the Ephesians, reminded them of the importance of serving God with humility in the face of trials and tears (Acts 20:19).

Humility, obedience, and cooperation are traits that cannot be compromised in ecclesiology. Ephesians 4 fleshes out the need for teams with a variety of gifts that build up the entire body of Christ. The goal, according to Paul, is for people to attain unity of the faith and knowledge of Christ in His fullness. Keener clarifies that some terms overlap and that while they are useful to describe a local church body or staff, such did not exist until more than a century later. It definitively points out that the body is to be trained and equipped so that they might become mature in the faith (Keener 547). This Ephesians passage emphasizes that many people with differing gifts are needed to build up the church.

### **COACHING THE MULTIPLE STAFF CHURCH**

The body of Christ, known as the church, is a group of people who have made a commitment through church membership vows to be faithful and fruitful disciples. It is up to each believer to seek Christ daily through prayer, study, and action. When these people are gathered together, the Pastor and staff equip them for service, devotion, and ministry. As employees of the church, the staff must receive feedback on job implementation. Before addressing the building blocks of coaching a church staff, the preparation for the foundation must be made with the leader.

Avolio and Gardner (2005) indicated that to know one's self is perhaps the most critical first step for any leader. They further indicated that the correlations of positive psychological capital, positive moral perspective, leader self-awareness, and leader self-regulation (which include relational transparency and positively

embodying authentic behavior) are all essential ingredients for authentic leadership. (Puhls et al. 2)

A leader who has issues and unclaimed baggage must endeavor to know themselves and deal with past hurts and hang-ups before making an attempt to help others to do the same. It is impossible for people to give to others what they have never received or experienced themselves.

The foundation of coaching is flexible evaluation so that adjustments may be made as needed, in much the same way an athletic coach calls plays and time-outs during a game. Affirmation and constant, consistent assessment are the processes that power the mill of leadership development. All ministry should be examined for efficacy and return on financial and spiritual investment. Incremental and informal evaluation can be done in a few moments in an ongoing, frequent basis, such as weekly or, at most, monthly. These frequent adjustments allow for a formal evaluation to take place on a scheduled, annual basis. The coach can meet with the team individually if an area of concern arises. Such a process can help the team improve in the short and long term. The formal evaluation of ministries and personnel should hold no surprises. The focus of any evaluation should be on success and working from strengths and, as necessary, touching upon vulnerabilities.

An important ingredient in coaching is a reciprocal, trust-based relationship, according to Eckstrom. Team members and coaches must keep their word and carry through on promises. If a team member is seen as an employee or a number, their performance will suffer negatively. Players need feedback from the coach, and the coach must be able to listen to players in order to benefit from the reciprocal nature of the relationship. This has a direct effect on the team and their success. When the feedback to

the coach or the player is positive, it can be life-changing because all too often it is an infrequent occurrence. If there is not trust on both sides, dysfunction will take root and distract the entire team. The coach must build trust through caring and a positive attitude in order to motivate their staff. This is done through four specific tasks, according to Eckstrom: one-to-one meetings, team meetings, performance feedback and career-development plans (63). The foundation of building trust is showing care.

Coaching an athletic team provides a large and measurable target: victory over an opponent. The coach is responsible for more than simply securing a single win or even one season. Long-term success stories and championship coaches assist the players each time they meet with each choice, whether it be equipment or the attitudes that help them to achieve their goals. Stetzer further depicts the difference between supervision and coaching: Coaches care about their players, expect to see improvement, and want them to win. “Whether you’re working with paid staff or volunteers, the message is simple: less supervising and more coaching is a winning formula” (Bonem, *Quit Supervising*). The pastor walks a fine line in coaching a church staff. While management appears to be easier and more efficient, it is not the best route for those in ministry together because it focuses on production from a secular perspective.

Many of those hired by the local church, including those appointed by a Bishop within the United Methodist Church, have received the best education available. As stated previously, they know well how to conduct a Bible Study or prepare a sermon. Unfortunately, the ability to care for and coach a staff or a group of volunteers may not have been part of the preparation for ministry. Mac Anderson tells the story of success at Nordstrom’s department stores; this secular source does not hire ducks in hopes of

making them eagles. Products and culture can be taught but service, attitude, and personality must already be present (M. Anderson 19). A church staff member may seek continuing education in an area that is visible for one or two hours a week, such as preaching, teaching, or leading a rehearsal while ignoring the career building blocks of character, competency, and chemistry.

### **The Coach**

The most visible person of the staff team in a church is generally the Senior Pastor. This person may lead the team personally or defer the day-to-day activities to an Executive Pastor. Depending upon the attendance and the number of staff who serve, the Executive Pastor may serve as an extension of the Senior Pastor to specifically cover particular areas such as administration or human resources. These, or perhaps others, are potential tasks that a Senior Pastor prefers to delegate in order to focus their primary energy on their strengths. Regardless of who leads the team in their day-to-day action, it is imperative to be forward thinking beyond the immediate needs of the ministry.

One of the most beneficial things about the relational dynamics of a healthy church staff is team ministry under a Senior Pastor who successfully works with the team like the aforementioned coach. Beyond winning one time or an entire season, this Senior Pastor patiently coaches the staff individually and collectively. “There is a big difference between a boss and a leader. A boss says, ‘Go.’ A leader says, ‘Let’s go.’ The purpose of leadership is to take others to the top” (Maxwell *Leadership Gold* 5). Regardless of the environment, this is a person that mentors the members of the team to success through their words, example, and expectations. To grow the staff, the coach must first be committed to the team by focusing on long-term relationships and goals. Decisions are

often critical and must take into consideration everything, even those things others will never see or know, with intention and purpose (Austin, Arneson).

The first building block necessary in building staff relationships is genuine care for the employee and their family. “Gifted members of the body do not show up fully formed. They may be awkward at first. They may be tired or wounded. They may need some exercise and training. They (and we) require space to grow into more Christlike-ness” (Tumblin 18). By way of contrast, Longenecker describes the development of leaders as “kneading,” combining the model set forth by Jesus in training his disciples and the potter in Jeremiah 18 who kneads, molds, and prepares the clay to be used. New attitudes are formed, and as the vessel is formed it becomes malleable. Of primary importance, Longenecker states, is that they [leaders] are whole persons who can relate as such to themselves and to others. Because the Holy Spirit has formed them for relationships, allowing them both to respect and influence, they are marked by specific traits that Longenecker outlines as “a commitment to growth, a sense of vision, an empowering influence and an ability to lead” (9). Under the nurturing and watchful eye of the Senior or Executive Pastor, awkwardness is eventually left behind as an apprenticeship of sorts takes place. Relationship building takes a large investment of time and energy for the entire team. Praising each staff member without expecting anything in return, acknowledging them publicly and rewarding good behavior are foundational for healthy staff relationships. Building success at this basic level will help ensure that each ministerial profession has the opportunity to invest relationally with other staff and volunteers.

When leaders listen, they learn and realize what their team needs. “In my organizations I don’t have employees; I have teammates...We reach our goals together. We need each other. If we didn’t, then one of us is in the wrong place” (Maxwell 7). Arneson further believes that great leaders have five key qualities that help build their staff: they listen, they are present, they are prepared, they coach, and they challenge those in their sphere of responsibility. Many workers across the United States would say that they are employed by someone who does not care for or listen to them. John Maxwell says that “it is impossible to get the best from people if you don’t know who they are, where they want to go, why they care, how they think and what they have to contribute” (54). A coach makes a commitment for success. Scazzero describes it as “Loving well was now the most important task among all our work for God” (17). The commitment of Christ-like love is a lubricant when there is the slightest friction. Malphurs and Mancini state that in times of disappointment or failure devoted loyalty holds the team together to serve together when they might otherwise give up. Attitude is a contagious, self-fulfilling prophecy. The attitude of individuals and the team as a whole can be demoralizing or energizing.

### **Character**

There is a saying that one must be careful in the steps taken and where they lead because those who follow will step into our same footprints. Building character for an individual and trust among members of a team is not something done overnight. These are life-time commitments which require daily decisions. Even the seemingly most insignificant choices will have a domino effect on the decision maker and everyone who knows them. These words are especially true regarding co-workers and members of the

family. Character is found, according to Scroggins, in five basic components of identity: a person's past, people, personality, purpose, and priorities. Specifically, a person's past is made up of foundational relationships, primarily immediate family and close friends, that formed the present-day person. Current relationships define a person's current and evolving identity and affect day-to-day decisions. While these relationships form a large part of a person's identity, personality and hard-wiring determines how they view those relationships and the circumstances they find themselves in. How a staff member treats others, in the past and at present, speaks volumes about their character.

D.L. Moody described character "what you are in the dark," according to Ed Stetzer. "The subtlety and inevitability of character are why it is both so important and such a major weakness for many leaders". Stetzer further emphasizes that knowing weakness and staying alert will help: "Paired with a support group who holds you accountable accompanied by humility, teachability and honest personal assessment are the inoculations against most leadership character flaws." (Stetzer) Character care is imperative to protection against and prevention of a plethora of potential social, mental and psychological snares.

Over more than three decades of leadership at Willow Creek, Bill Hybels put an extremely high priority on character in hiring staff because he found that it was an area that was nearly impossible to remediate. This is described in his article "The Three C's of Team Building". Checking references thoroughly, Hybels looked for someone that placed high emphasis on spiritual disciplines, integrity, humility and maturity as best qualities. Simply being in a nurturing, healthy environment was not enough to change the habits in a new hire. Willow Creek saw first-hand that bringing on a candidate that "looked good"

could be very detrimental to their staff and potentially the church as well. Hybels discovered that researching a potential candidate prior to bringing them on staff was much easier than attempting to clean up in the wake of damage.

A top priority for staff is learning and challenging them to grow. Necessary to the coaching process is learning how to effectively build relationships and resolve conflict. Such work can be emotionally costly and time-consuming but will pay big dividends in the long run. This relational investment can be accomplished through observation at other churches, professional memberships, and media. While the church is not a secular business, there is much to be learned from those in the corporate environment who coach their employees well. When they learn, a staff member is making an investment of themselves in two primary ways: first, by submitting themselves to be teachable and loving; and secondly, by pouring their time and energy into ministry. As they grow in love and grace personally, this overflows onto the corporate body as well. If they stop learning, they stop leading because the two processes are indivisibly woven together (Malphurs and Mancini). This is why coaching has the potential to be such an effective tool in ministry. As staff members essentially apprentice with the Senior Pastor, they learn through observation and real-life practice under the watchful eye of another. This relationship can allow them to glean from the maturity, life lessons, and wisdom of the Senior Pastor. Ministry is simultaneously a high calling from God and a minefield of spiritual warfare. Those who have the support of a coach should have a much higher rate of survival and finish well a lifetime of ministry.

While a coach may be whole-heartedly committed, working long hours to invest in their team, each player must carry their own weight. This reciprocation will aid in

cementing the relationships of the entire team. A player who is not dependable will not see much playing time. Murphy espouses that team players must take ownership and responsibility and show self-control for team accountability and long-term success. Passing blame makes team members victims rather than change agents and only perpetuates dysfunction and increases challenges.

It is not about winning at all costs but hopefully as a result of mastering the aforementioned life lessons. Three particular lessons help drive this home, utilizing the acronym of ELM:

Effort: Coaches exhort players to give all that they have in every area of life.

Learning: Whether new plays, lessons in the classroom or how to play well with others, players must be teachable.

Mistakes: Human, sinful nature works to hide short-comings. A double-goal coach wants to find mistakes so that they can be utilized for learning and betterment of the player and of the team. (Luong and Westcost, 351-352)

It is the partnership and commitment of the coach and players that teach both behavior and life skills needed on and off the court. Mistakes will be made but are rarely permanent and always present a new opportunity to learn.

Just as an athletic team practices drills and plays prior to meeting their opponent on the field, in order to prepare the staff team can discuss scenarios that prepare them for real ministry. This can easily be done in the regular staff meeting as the group evaluates events or anticipates what will arise in the future.

If our communities develop the habit of delighting in the truth, we will be in a better position to deal with the inevitable conflicts and disagreements that are part

of shared life. As we face conflict, truth-telling should include remembering and rehearsing who we are. (Pohl)

As the staff discusses celebrations and challenges, they build rapport with each other and create a foundation to see them through difficult storms that will inevitably rock their ship. According to Pohl, as the staff works together to build the foundation of their home that is loving, safe, and truthful, they prepare for a better future together. There is no guarantee that this communication will be easy or that they will agree 100 percent of the time. As they learn about each other, their communication, and their learning styles, it is possible to learn to love one another and grow stronger together.

Avoidance of necessary conversations has the capacity to kill congregational momentum and stifle staff enthusiasm. Moving too quickly can be equally detrimental. At critical decision points in the life of each church, it is imperative to go slowly, be deliberate, and examine the pace of the prevailing leadership style (Austin). Reliability is essential from both the staff and the pastor. While positive accomplishments speak well for the staff and church, those involved learn as much or more from mistakes and being forthright about them:

What has built trustworthiness for me in my ministry is not just my plain-spokenness, but also my ability to apologize and course correct when I get it wrong. What helps create transparency is when you make a mistake and are willing to be open, accept blame, take responsibility, correct course, and apologize. (Farr and Kotan, *The Necessary Nine* 48)

An error gives individuals and teams the opportunity to learn. Challenges and mistakes can be embraced when viewed as the occasion to step up the intensity, brilliance, and success of actions in the future.

There is a human tendency to cover-up mistakes and avoid admitting weaknesses. This behavior will follow the person who endeavors only to put their best foot forward. Experience will be a good teacher if people learn from their mistakes, confess them appropriately, and use the chance to change through the power of the Holy Spirit. General Colin Powell stated, “If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception. It is a prevailing attitude.” There is a fine line when working in the kingdom of God where sometimes grace can be overextended. Fernando reminds pastoral teams that,

A healthy team encourages its members to be open about their faults and fears. Their desire for all of God and their belief in the sufficiency of grace will urge them to confront sin and problems fearlessly and to look for God to use that to purify, teach, and deepen the community. A community that deals with problems openly and biblically will become a community with a deep spirituality because God is able to minister and teach deep truths through the grappling that takes place to solve the problems. (146)

Mediocrity is not acceptable. The pursuit of excellence can bring joy to the individual and the team because tasks completed well can be enjoyed by all, even outside observers. Goals must be set high enough for the health of the team to encourage them to seek God and to work together to achieve with a sense of purpose and urgency even at the risk of failure. Excellence in character opens the door to competency.

## **Competence**

Coaching guru Ken Blanchard defines competency as the “function of knowledge and skills, which can be gained from education, training, and experience.” This research has already spoken candidly about the training and equipping that is gained or earned through education, specifically at a theological seminary that focuses on ministry effectiveness. Blanchard goes on to state that competence “can be developed with appropriate direction and support. It’s not something you are born with, it’s learned.” If this is true, an effective coach will affirm their staff and adapt to their current skill set and learning style in order to aid in building their competency.

Great coaching requires a partnership in which the coach is not the only responsible party. In “A Message to Garcia,” Hubbard describes a dangerous mission desperately needed just prior to the Spanish American war. As the President considered qualified soldiers, only one rose to the top as the one who could deliver the message to General Garcia and did so in a manner where he was undetected as he arrived, delivered the message, and departed Cuba. For decades this story was a popular legend that encouraged others to take initiative and carry out their responsibilities and goals as effectively and with as little fanfare as possible. The most effective leader puts extraordinary thought into goal setting, planning how to secure success and anticipating potential obstacles. For instance, working with volunteers can be a mixed blessing for church staff. Recruitment of people with the gifts and graces needed to staff activities and outreach is time-consuming. Inevitably volunteers forget, change their minds, or have a last-minute emergency that keeps them from fulfilling the best intentions. A leader who anticipates these challenges recruits extra people and plans for eventualities to avoid

disaster. This leader, because of their competency, has at the ready needed essentials and resources. Bonem states that effective, thoughtful leaders and coaches are not content with mediocrity. When they seek changes, they do so with individual and team goals in mind (Not So Great Team).

Competency is not limited solely to experience or education. It also includes integrity to perform the job and follow-through on tasks as assigned plus the ability to do the right thing when one might be tempted to assume that no one is watching. “We tend to think of integrity as being a personal and private matter. Ultimately it is. Practically, however, it also is a community affair. We do not live in isolation but in relationship. When integrity falters, it typically finds expression in relationship to others” (Foggs 46). It is important to build and maintain a network of relationships, especially for those who must guard their hearts and minds in order to be effective in ministry.

The error sometimes made by well-meaning laity in churches is withholding valuable feedback because they are not comfortable dealing with negative or less than ideal circumstances. This error can potentially be compounded by feelings of spiritual inferiority. “When bumps are discovered and work is not being done, many senior clergy and personnel committees respond with nurture and concern for the ill-performing worker” (Rendle and Beaumont 220). To leave poor performance unaddressed means that a staff member continues in a position that does not suit their personality or capacity, which is a breach of stewardship and increasing liability exposure for the church. Ministry professionals are definitely human. Each evaluation, formal and informal, should include discussion of suggested, acceptable behaviors as clearly defined goals make changes in conduct possible and achievable. With prayer and grace the staff,

including the Senior Pastor, may grow relationally and spiritually as they take this wisdom into consideration.

Lovett Weems at The Lewis Center for Church Leadership suggests two types of feedback: formative and summative. Formative feedback is done on a more informal basis when no decisions must be made. This is considered a brief meeting or touching base, such as a passing request that is meant to help the ministry leader to improve, address an issue early, or to clarify if something is not working well. Summative feedback is given in a formal meeting and would be similar to an annual evaluation to consider future decisions on continued employment and salary and whether the staff member is advancing the church's mission. Because of the formality, a record of the meeting would be kept in the personnel file. Summative feedback gives consideration to performance, skills, and clearly delineated progress on previously named issues. If an issue comes up for the first time at the annual summative feedback, the process is not working as it should. Issues should always be brought to light informally during formative feedback then re-evaluated during an annual evaluation ("Why Year End Evaluations Rarely Help").

John Wesley, seeking to help his followers grow in grace, founded small groups. Participants endeavored toward perfection by bringing imperfections to the loving light of God's tangible love in the committed small group. In this confidential setting, where confidentiality, safety, and nurture are agreed upon, weaknesses may be addressed and worked out with mutual accountability to increase both competency and character. These molehills become insurmountable mountains without the support of brothers and sisters who take fellow pilgrims by the hand to help each other climb higher. Cloud clarifies:

The reality is that the people who make the choices that lead to long-term benefit have become the kind of people who know that taking painful steps to get where you want to go is a necessary part of anything good. They have learned to never go back to thinking that pain and discomfort can be avoided in the pursuit of long-term benefit. (92)

The primary difference between successful and unsuccessful people is how they address pain. “Over and over again I saw the same theme: pain first, payoff later. No pain, no gain. Death before resurrection. Discipline before strength. Investment before return” (Cloud 85). When finding themselves in dead-end circumstances, successful leaders will face the challenge of the short-term discomfort in order to find relief and success on the other side, building character and deepening competency. As people of faith, the church staff must go the extra mile to exemplify the commitment of Christ. They are also human: “Good leaders tackle hard things and face uncertainty and fear on a regular basis. They have moments of regret and worry like I do. Just because I’m experiencing pain, it doesn’t mean I’m a lousy leader—it means I have an open door to become a better one” (Surratt). The commitment of the team can help ease the pain of facing difficult situations through providing opportunities to talk, pray, and process about obstacles that threaten their sanity.

Often times those who show great competency through education may lack maturity. In such cases the Senior Pastor or staff may describe their team situation as a great opportunity and add a qualifier. The three most common responses to this scenario are that they are not working together, the team lacks chemistry, or they simply are not meeting expectations, according to Bonem (*Not So Great Team*). Magnificent individual

players do not spontaneously form a great team. If they work in silos or do not work well together, the effect is detrimental to the staff morale. In order to pull together, there must be a humble willingness to pull the same yoke in the same direction in order to accomplish great things. When a team pulls together there may be one staff member who can accomplish their own tasks but has never learned to work with a team. Instead their first priority may be stroking their own ego, their own bad attitude, or climbing the church political ladder.

Bonem, in the same text, identifies the player who simply does not play to their full potential. They may have been one of the top in the class to study for the work or know how to curry favor with those in the church family. The downside is their lack of accountability agrees with them and encourages their propensity to accomplish only the very minimum amount of work necessary. Churches are bastions of grace and love but often at the price of greatness. Bonem labels this as:

A strong emphasis on “team” harmony prevents them from being “great.” To have a great team, you need to address whatever follows the “but.” In the first case, it’s essential to clarify vision and create common goals that transcend individual silos. In the second, unacceptable behavior needs to be addressed.

Hopefully, the individual will change, but if not they should be removed from the team. In the last case, a shift toward greater accountability can help the team rise to a higher standard. (*Not So Great Team*)

As the children of God, church leaders are call to accountability and to excellence as individuals and as the body of Christ. This excellence is a life-long journey and a

commitment to continue higher and higher. To seek any less is settling for mediocrity and God deserves the very best from those pledged to serve Him.

When underperforming staff members are left at their post, their own work suffers, and those who want to seek greatness will either be lulled into the same attitude or seek to work in a healthier environment where they are not forced to pull another's weight. "There are two places you should never send your partners. One is 'under the bus.' The other is 'hung out to dry.'" (Lewis). Before a departure from competency, Vaters makes the case that even the obvious should not be overlooked when considering competency: "Mistakes caused by innovation should never be criticized, they should be praised. But if you're chronically late, unprepared, leaving early or any other signs that you're lazy and not giving it your best, we'll have a talk." Christians must seek to give their best and this is no truer than for those employed by the church and paid by the generosity of God's people. Competency is vital and worthy of their full attention.

### **Chemistry**

While countless references have been made to coaches and teams thus far, the chemistry of an athletic team embodies the concept of coach/player/team particularly well. On the field or court, players may specialize but have the ability to change at a moment's notice to cover for their teammates and for the good of the team. Excellence and grace are exemplified and amplified when a player makes a mistake and rather than aberration their teammates choose affirmation. The team that works well together encourages and urges their colleagues to keep their chin up and try again. Mistakes are inevitably part of the learning process. Win or lose, they are in it together. As a team, they work and play together. It sweetens the victory all the more when it is done as a

team who seeks victory and success to the glory of God. Church staff make sacrifices of love as Christ did so that the church is the victor, not just one individual. Commitment to the Lord and each other brings about a tenacity, fierceness, and pursuit of excellence that is rarely reproduced in any other environment.

The church staff is part of the body of Christ. When they seek healing and wholeness, it strengthens the church and sets an example of how Christ can heal, restore, and work miracles in and through the entire family of faith. When individual players have a good self-esteem, receive consistent feedback, and know the value of their work the team becomes cohesive. To reach this level of excellence is an example of great chemistry and is made tangible through their praise of others without seeking to stroke their own ego. “Without factual information and timely, candid feedback, teams quickly dissolve into weak, dependent groups, shifting responsibility and ownership for problems to those who are informed” (Murphy 17-18). Open, honest communication and information sharing is a hallmark of successful teams, even if it may be uncomfortable in the moment. As the communicator clarifies the message, misinterpretation can be prevented.

Many coaching aspects may be addressed in staff meetings. This should be a time to allow the staff team to evaluate their work as a team and address how to improve in a nurturing environment; the staff meeting can also be an opportunity to unpack and address the challenges before them.

A passion for leadership development must ooze from every pore of the lead pastor as well as from every paid and unpaid leader of the church...Not only does the lead pastor begin speaking about leadership development at every meeting and

quite often in the pulpit, they also begin modeling effective leadership at every turn...if you want to develop leaders, you must talk about it. Each staff meeting must have a time when the focus is squarely on leadership development. (Easum and Tinney-Brittain 67-68)

As concerns are addressed in a safe place, people should be reassured that they do not face struggles alone. Coaches can make themselves available for further conversation. Mental and spiritual maturity is necessary for any leader and those who possess this maturity are at peace with God and themselves. They are able to reciprocate in relationships, comfortable in the gifts and graces that God has placed in them.

Anyone who has served any length of time on a church staff has been a witness to a meltdown by a colleague on staff or lay person. Chand observes that public expressions of anger shatter trust with everyone involved. He instead suggests that if a party feels hurt or betrayed that they dig a bit deeper to dialog about the pain that caused the anger. “Own your responsibility for the problem and have the guts and humility to say, 'I'm sorry,' without shifting the blame for your part to anyone else. Humble leaders are attractive leaders. Angry, arrogant leaders may effectively dominate but they don't build lasting trust” (167). Taking responsibility can be extremely difficult in any situation, and there will even be times when a leader apologizes for hurt feelings that they did not cause. Such words can be very challenging but important for the mental and social health of the staff in order to serve together.

Awareness that these gifts are not earned or deserved but are to be utilized in building others toward a similar maturity adds to the tranquility and achievement of the leader (Otto). Effective, positive feedback is the single response that increases a team

member's desired behavior moving forward and motivates them to continue. A negative response will encourage behavior modification. No response, positive or negative, regardless of how their actions are viewed, will cause the staff member to lose heart because they begin to believe that no one cares at all (L. Anderson). Positive feedback is important coming from laity and other team members, but none more important than the team coach.

A leader who works with an open door to the other staff willing to be a sounding board is working toward great relationships. The coach can also help their team player to see the faux pas after the fact, if they have not realized the potential prior to the embarrassment. If there is correction to be made in the course of the player, coaches do well to advise this trajectory in private. The coach comes along side to remind their players that God is still sovereign and loves them unconditionally, like Jesus, regardless of their mistake. Additionally, there should be dialogue about anything that might have been done differently to produce a positive outcome in similar circumstances.

It is of utmost importance that the coach shows grace through prayer for and with the staff member as they discuss how to seek forgiveness from any offended parties while making things right and avoiding the same mistake twice. Negative feedback can and should be addressed in positive ways as often as possible. When this pattern is followed the grace and blessing of God flow both ways. The ministry professional learns that in spite of sin, God's love is still there, and the Senior Pastor is blessed and humbled through being used as a means of God's grace.

Malphurs and Mancini encourage coaching to take place in a variety of ways offering wisdom via phone or face-to-face, which make coaching a great choice both for long-distance and daily relationships.

Positive, strong relationships with significant others foster high levels of pastoral wellbeing, while weak or poor relationships can be very damaging to clergy's flourishing. This kind of connection helps pastors recover their centeredness as individuals; they often involve those people who have journeyed with them for many years, and know them best. The emotional support, love, care and compassion these relationships provide can have a powerful impact. (Bloom and Bloom) The Blooms further describe the importance of peer relationships as pastors face mountain and valley experiences, professionally and personally, which can leave these persons exhausted mentally and physically. The shared experiences among those in ministry who understand those circumstances are priceless gifts to aid each other in journeying through the challenges of ministry.

There is a well-known leadership proverb that describes a turtle that sat atop a fence post. This ascent could only happen either through the help of a team of friends or on the backs of those who stand in the way. A team is built up when they lift each other up and do not allow disrespect of other team members: "Those people who have helped you get on the fencepost will continue to do so when they hear you give the team credit for your success and when they hear you take responsibility for their failure" (G. Lewis 4 Insights). Lewis utilizes this story to encourage coaches to treat their team with respect and loyalty. When one member of the team is willing to go to bat for another, the chemistry and loyalty increase.

Instilling loyalty begins with treating every team member with the same respect and affirmation, looking for ways to strengthen and challenge them so that they are perfected in love. Leaders must carry their share of the load without rescuing others or shirking their own responsibilities. Every individual who composes the team should be treated equally with the expectation that they will play their position to the best of their ability. When a player makes a mistake, the investing coach will utilize the infraction as a teaching moment. It is not completed with the goal of belittlement or ostracizing but to aid the team in learning from mistakes. Doing so also allows everyone to see how to better themselves and the entire team as a direct result. Advocating for coaching as an effective model for pastoral leadership, Luong and Westcott believe that pastors use the aforementioned methods in order to coach their team toward strong relationships and accomplishing goals.

Healthy relationships are best when reciprocal and when players learn from each other; even the coach is a learner in the process. No two persons on staff are identical and everyone can learn from each other. The scripture speaks about iron sharpening iron and enabling the players to do so brings discernment to situations. “The secret to developing win/win solutions is to listen to the people closest to the problem, recognizing that their honest input and insight are vital to team effectiveness” (Murphy 34). Each staff player must do their part to participate in staff meetings and communicate well to keep their colleagues apprised of events and persons involved in their ministry. Family crisis may be leaked in unsuspecting ways through youth or children who reach out for help on behalf of their family. The children, music, or student pastors should not assume that the

Senior Pastor is aware of a pastoral care need. As these are spoken, they should be shared to ensure that adequate pastoral care can be given.

When chemistry is built, a staff member is less likely to be blindsided by a parishioner who feels neglected. Celebrations should be shared, whether they are new visitors, a great curriculum, or new worship music that they hope to teach. A staff member's personal issues can be shared one-on-one or within a confidential staff meeting to allow others the opportunity for prayer and support. Long-term trust can be undermined if situations shared in confidence are spoken of in public or if team members hear second-hand from others rumors about the rest of the staff. All human beings want and need to feel connected. Outside of the nuclear family, the best place for this to happen is in the church family. When the staff connects and builds chemistry, it will spread to the congregation.

What has struck us as important is the need great men and women have for a deeper personal connection in which they can feel safe and secure to express and metabolize their deeper emotions and pains...We are suggesting that these normal, healthy human processes of communication and relationship are essential to the health and well-being of executives, whose psychological health has benefits for all those with whom they work in organizations. (Quick and Macik-Frye 72)

While Quick and Macik-Frye write from a secular standpoint, their study and findings apply to those in the church as well. God designed people for connections and to love deeply as Jesus loved. Just as such chemistry affects the staff and spreads to the church, the reverse is true, and church leadership is affected by church members.

As leaders and players listen, they learn what their team needs. “In my organizations I don’t have employees; I have teammates... We reach our goals together. We need each other. If we didn’t, then one of us is in the wrong place” (Maxwell 7). In any relationship, it is important that those listening are present in soul, mind, and body; some listen, simply waiting their turn so that they can resume talking. Admired leaders coach those who work under them in order to build more leaders in contrast to traditional top-down management which is simply and directly aimed at pleasing the supervisor and increasing productivity. As mentors challenge those under them, these coaches encourage their reports to think outside the box rather than simply fulfilling status quo (Arneson).

As the public face of the church, the Senior Pastor must build upon a firm foundation of integrity and trust. Loving, loyal, and devoted relationships are the foundation that trust is built upon. As leaders observe behavior, actively listen, and ask questions, they are able to coach their team members toward desired thoughts, actions, and behaviors that will help them to grow in grace. In so doing, Collins depicts the Senior Pastor as a coach who encourages, challenges, and holds their team member accountable without giving orders. The comparison of coach is similar to a parent who yearns to guide their offspring but knows that to be effective children must make their own choices. The freedom to fail or succeed can make permission-giving an anxious process for even the most seasoned of coaches.

In forming the team, Jesus believed that differences would lead to team strengths. Purposely, the Savior sought out a variety of people that complimented the strengths and weaknesses of the others. The norming, or teambuilding, that McKenna proposes was the time that Jesus set the expectations of His followers and modeled His mission. The men

were expected and encouraged to ask questions of each other and of Jesus. They watched Him interact with those who needed him, specifically through the avenue of healing.

Inevitably “storming,” in today’s context known as conflict, is a given in any organization, including a church. Jesus dealt with it from multiples sources: James and John wanted to be "first" in the kingdom; the disciple’s failure to heal the epileptic boy, and mistakenly thinking someone was trying to steal their thunder by healing in the name of Jesus (Mark 9). Christ was not only betrayed by one of his followers but the very same person who brought the guards to arrest him with swords drawn. Tuck suggests that when chemistry suffers, the hallmarks are staff:

Putting each other down, circumventing each other for a place of greater recognition in the church, and unable to relate well with their fellow ministers, they will have great difficulty in understanding what it means to be servants in Christ's name. If staff workers are to function effectively in today's world, the model for ministry cannot be taken solely from the business and economic world but from the one who came to serve and who is still Lord of his Church. (Tuck, 11)

The example and leadership of Christ shows that He chose to serve. It is utterly impossible to disciple effectively for the kingdom of God if staff members are jockeying for position. Diametrically, when the coach and staff seek to serve and love as Jesus did, the power of the Holy Spirit will move and the lives of everyone around them can be changed as they allow God room to accomplish what He will.

Healthy conflict resolution is based upon Jesus reaction to these things in seven

steps.

1. Jesus accepted conflict as another opportunity for developing His disciples.
2. He confronted conflicting parties immediately.
3. He diagnosed the root of the problem in human nature.
4. He moved the conflict to common ground where protagonists agreed.
5. He found a common a common symbol with which all parties could affirmatively identify.
6. He used the occasion to refocus His vision and reinforce His mission in the minds of His 'storming' disciples.
7. He patiently and positively dealt with conflict even when the problem surfaced repeatedly again in different guises. (McKenna 136)

Conflict resolution involves special skills that must be developed because relationships inevitably involve disagreements. “Change creates tension between people and makes people feel threatened which gives birth to conflict” (Talley 217). A leader can set the tone in the face of a conflict that breeds anxiety and doubt or builds confidence. “Responsible leadership sets the tone so that God is able to work and build people’s faith” (Talley 218). The Senior Pastor in a large church setting must set the tone that allows staff members to feel secure enough to explore new ideas, to brain storm, and even to share convictions. “Few conflicts are pleasant. Healthy resolution requires practice bathed in trust and forgiveness. The tensions do not magically disappear, but they can enrich the relational soil of fruit-bearing ministry” (Tumblin 34).

This type of nurturing environment is a necessity for a healthy chemistry as the staff create a level playing field to work together and even disagree safely. Through leadership, a safe space can be created that fosters the ability to discuss and negotiate uncomfortable things until a new platform is built on trust offered mutually by all staff members.

In a changing environment that depends on the creativity of adaptation and invention, this discomfort is to be protected and preserved at all costs. Senior leaders need to provide safety and guidance that keep people at the table and engaged in conversation that may feel uncomfortable so that new things can be learned...this discomfort is to be valued. (Rendle and Beaumont 208)

Scroggins argues that Jesus was a positive leader who persuaded people via self-sacrificing love, “positivity is attractive and produces other qualities in leaders that are naturally attractive to others. Leaders who exude positivity will begin to see their influence grow” (124). It is important to understand the difference between critical minds and critical thinkers. Critical minds hope that others will lose. Critical thinkers ultimately want everyone to win and do not care who gets the credit for the success.

Open Communication is a rare and priceless gift in the relational chemistry of a healthy staff environment. “People need to be able to share their ideas and speak openly without fear of retribution. Your team wants to be heard; they want to know they are respected for their opinions” (Noble). A staff member, especially a , can silence or encourage the communication that builds a culture of open communication and self-esteem. The stakes are very high. Some staff members may be weighed down with personal baggage that keeps them from listening with their ears and their hearts. One of

the best ways to accomplish this is to avoid the “toxic trap of comparison” (Lawson, *Attitude*) in the church. Playing as a great team means focusing on “we” rather than “me.” Doing so encourages forward movement of the staff and the congregation.

### **Finishing Well**

When character, competency, and chemistry are combined successfully, team members grow together personally and spiritually as they travel the leadership journey together. This forward movement is aided by four primary considerations that must be at the forefront over the course of their career: “care for your character, manage your measurements, grow in the gaps, and fight for the physical” (Stetzer). Those who enter full-time ministry as a pastor, worship leader, or age-level minister do so with eager hearts and a burning passion to change the world. Somewhere along the way life happens, and they may become distracted by student debt, church politics, and family issues and become overwhelmed. The once important things that had been a burning passion have been forced to take a back seat to the pressures of daily ministry and sometimes simple survival. Life gradually shifts, regrettably, from wanting to do ministry to having to do ministry.

Discouragement and unrealistic expectations can be pits of quicksand for ministry professionals. Success and failure rates are judged on a different scale in the church. A large part of the definition pertains to the making of disciples, with quantity at the forefront. It is natural to push the goals to see ministry take place and numbers of disciples made. If unsuccessful, there is the temptation to wallow in failure. Prominent pastors and role models are careful to highlight their successes when addressing peers on formulas for success, whether the setting is intimate or as a keynote teacher. At such an

event, acquaintances are made with a perfunctory exchange of names and size of church by attendance, membership, or location. While these descriptors tell a story, it is by no means the entire account. Such partial descriptions can cause anxiety or embarrassment while accenting a sense of failure. Discouragement and the trajectory toward burnout for those who are doing everything in their power to succeed can seem unavoidable. “The solution is to engage with realistic expectations. See your church for what it is, and avoid the comparison trap that kills your joy,” says Stetzer, “Managing your measurements is a great step toward journeying well in ministry.” Staff members will do well to remember that Jesus was not seeking to increase metrics but to build disciples. He focused primarily on his close-knit group of twelve hand-picked disciples. These men were chosen before they were proven in character, competency, or chemistry. In fact they indeed failed, and Peter, who said he would follow Christ no matter the circumstances, was the very first to deny Jesus. The disciples were tested and sometimes failed but they did not give up. Church staff, including coaches, will make mistakes as they grow in love and grace. Success comes when they admit their needs and lift each other up to continue the journey together.

### **Research Design Literature**

This project adopted an explanatory mixed-method approach to study multiple staff churches that met the criteria for memberships (300 - 2000) and had three or more staff members. This was discerned through sending an online, anonymous survey to every pastor in the South Georgia Conference (See Tool One, Appendix A) which allowed pastors to self-select as participants in the research. Those met the minimum criteria, and, following face-to-face interviews, the researcher utilized an ethnographic

survey to collect foundational, qualitative data on the church, local community and geographic region. Invitations were sent through the office of the Bishop to every pastor in the South Georgia Conference. Review of the 2017 Journal Statistical Table stated that less than 100 pastors actually had congregations with 300 - 2000 members. From the volunteer churches, twenty-two interviews were conducted. These twenty-two people consisted of ten Senior Pastor and one or more Senior Staff members that they invited from their staff to be interviewed. Each interview was audio recorded to offer the advantage of transcription and study of each individual's responses. The interviews give fuller explanation to the efficacy and robustness of team coaching, or lack thereof, by the Senior Pastor. On-site interviews allowed the researcher to observe first-hand staff dynamics and how these peers interacted as well as their comfort level in their working environment. "Ways of seeing are ways of knowing and of not knowing. And knowing well is knowing in more than a single way" (Shulman 23). This type of research "provides a complex view of the intervention enabling a 'thicker' interpretation. It is a way to cross check data that provides breadth and depth to your analysis and increases the trustworthiness of your results" (Sensing 72).

### **Summary of Literature**

Understanding the urgency of coaching for multiple staff churches reveals the necessity for relational and emotional health of the entire staff, starting with the Senior Pastor. Coaching, as defined in Chapter 1, is a relationship between two or more ministry professionals that is comparable to mentoring but adds goal setting and a partnership for improvement. An experienced advisor assists the staff to further discover who they are, whom God is calling them to be, and what Christ is calling them to do. Through these

actions and dialogue, those on the team become better managers of their time, energy, and gifts, according to Hyatt. A captivating homily, compassionate visitation skills, and theological accuracy are vital proficiencies learned in the seminary setting. Leadership capability, which often determines long-term vitality in ministry, is learned by trial and error while working. While some pastors have gleaned relational leadership nuggets from their family of origin or their previous educational setting, the church that they serve may not be quite as forgiving as they learn, hone, and expands such skills. Navigating the uncharted waters of leadership unscathed is impossible. If aided by the voice of wisdom, staff members are much more likely to survive the journey and, in the process, are strengthened through valuable life lessons.

The lost art of apprenticeship can be a bridge as those with experience guide novices to find their own success. This guide, in the form of a Senior Pastor, becomes liaison, observer, mentor, and friend as they disciple those who have arrived on the scene more recently. This is a tangible way to take up the yoke of grace that Christ offers in Matthew 11:28-30. As each one is coached to communicate, lead, improve skills, and build relationships, the hope is to point these persons to integrity, humility, love, and even rest. Through building character, competency, and chemistry pitfalls may be avoided if a spiritual director can prayerfully and humbly coach their players before they slip, are tackled, or blindsided.

Some authors have accomplished this from their own personal study or experience via internet blog posts such as Ed Stetzer, author, pastor, professor, researcher, and church planter who has added “Interim Pastor” at Moody Bible Church to his resume. John Maxwell, a prolific author, has become a coach to many over the past

five decades with his self-taught leadership and relational coaching that has expanded from the written, published word to cassette tapes and CDs that were once mailed by subscription and have now evolved into multiple media outlets for both church and secular settings. With the heart of a coach, Maxwell desires to equip others to lead lives of significance that will impact those they lead. Will Mancini is a relatively new name on the church leadership landscape that utilizes his backgrounds in engineering, consulting, and pastoring to write and coach a new generation of pastors. One of the most prolific voices still in pastoral ministry is Rick Warren who founded and continues to pastor Saddleback Church, producing “The Purpose Driven Life,” and other books with similar titles.

Each one of these people employ their gifts to lead, pastor, coach, and encourage. Each one has served or continues to do so in a mega-church setting offering captivating stories of success. Failures are rarely touted if they exist. One of the benefits that can be derived from studying history is to understand the circumstances, causes, and effects of both victory and defeat. To do so may change the course of one’s lifetime and any who might follow in their footsteps. The experienced coach disciples their team with the assistance of their own experiences through both the human failure and God-given success. These people work to expand their own knowledge through observation, study, and personal implementation. Healthy and balanced coaching takes into account both sides of the leadership coin: triumph and tears.

## **CHAPTER 3**

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

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

This particular section addresses the specifics of this research of robust coaching relationships. This research considers how character, competency and chemistry affect staff relationships, what barriers discourage these relationships, and what additional factors encourage robust relationships based upon coaching. The context and demographics of the South Georgia Conference are outlined, and it should be noted that participants in this research are employed by churches that ranged in membership size from 300 - 1200 with average attendance most often 200-600 in weekly worship services. A triad of instruments were utilized in the research: an online introductory inquiry into relationships; an online demographic survey completed by churches who invited the researcher to conduct face-to-face interviews, and the demographic study utilized. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed with responses from the first two instruments for completion of the research methodology.

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

This research project studied an amalgam of church settings that are home to multiple full-time staff persons and a Senior Pastor. The purpose of this study was to identify robust leadership development practices for Senior Pastors and staff in multi-staff churches in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. For each church that fit the criteria, the Senior Pastor was emailed a survey. Within the body of the email, these Ministers were asked to complete an online survey titled “Leadership Self-Assessment.” From those who responded to the request to complete the assessment and

volunteered to join the potential interview pool, all Senior Pastor and one or more full-time staff members were invited to be interviewed face-to-face. The interview asked about their experiences with coaching staff and volunteers and their relational skills and ability to coach or to be coached.

In the initial email contact with each pastor when the Leadership Self-Assessment was solicited, there was a second link that the researcher requested be shared with their full-time ordained and program staff to the same survey in order to comparatively evaluate leadership and coaching practices and to appraise whether Senior Pastors and their staff view the needs, strengths, and weaknesses of their congregation similarly.

Specifically, the desire of this research was to gain insight into coaching practices, or lack thereof, in multiple staff churches and how can such practices be improved, made robust, and worthy of replication for the benefit of other churches and for making disciples in the future. From those who completed the initial Leadership Self-Assessment, eight churches were chosen, and an additional request was made for onsite interviews. These interviews were conducted with two staff members: the Senior Pastor and a senior, full-time staff person of the Senior Pastor's selection. Interview questions and an online demographic survey were sent to the churches for the on-site interviews. These on-site visits were conducted solely by the researcher and completed one-on-one with the pastor and separately with a Senior Staff Member who was asked identical questions about their staff, communication, and coaching practices for comparison purposes.

## **Research Questions**

### **RQ #1. How do senior leaders from multi-staff churches indicate character, competency, and chemistry are among the best practices for coaching staff and volunteers?**

The purpose of this question is to ask interviewees about the best practices they know for coaching staff and volunteers. This will identify robust leadership development practices for Senior Pastors and staff first through an online, general survey. Self-selecting pastors and a Senior staff person will then be questioned further through a semi-structured, face-to-face interview. From the Leadership Assessment online survey tool, Questions 7 and 8 defined coaching and queried if they had participated in a coaching relationship previously. Questions 9 - 20 addressed attitudes regarding coaching character, competency, and chemistry as well as frequency of training in these elements utilizing a Likert scale. Concluding the survey were four open-ended questions (Numbers 23-26) that allowed the respondent to offer additional clarification on relationships and coaching from their point of view. During the on-site interviews, the researcher asked in questions 7- 14 about a perceived need for coaching and about positive coaching experiences.

### **RQ #2. What do senior leaders from multi-staff churches indicate are barriers to coaching staff and volunteers?**

This is of utmost importance so that mistakes are minimized. In the online initial survey, questions 12, 16 and 20 probed if there was a particular person(s) that might be a barrier to greatness in the areas of character, competence and chemistry; open-ended Question # 19 and 21 seek to gauge the temperature of the team and barriers. Utilizing

the face to face interview, participants were questioned what barriers they face in coaching staff and volunteers in open-ended question 15. In the same spirit, questions 16-18 conclude the bulk of the questions asking about staff relationships and the depth of said relationships.

**RQ #3. What other conditions enhance robust leadership development practices of coaching staff and volunteers?**

In order to replicate robust leadership development in the South Georgia Conference at multi-staff churches, interviewees were questioned if there were specific practices that they found helpful to augment or multiply the robust leadership development practices of coaching and volunteers. Questions 21 and 22 of the Initial Survey asked about the strength of relationships via a Likert scale, and Questions 23 and 25 asked this as an open-ended question. At the close of the online Leadership Assessment, Question 28 informed respondents of the scope of the research and offered the opportunity for them to self-select for the next stage of the research via the interview. Questions 7 - 14 of the On-site Interview were open-ended questions targeting the respondents experience in coaching relationships including curriculum and types of coaching relationships.

**Ministry Context**

This research took place within the confines of the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church, which was formed in 1866 when the state of Georgia became two separate, geographic conferences following the Civil War. The line of delineation between the South and North Georgia Conferences primarily follows county boundaries. It begins where the Chattahoochee River intersects with Pine Mountain near Columbus and continues

to the Monroe County line north of Macon. It then dissects Jones County before skirting the southern reaches of Baldwin, Hancock, Warren, and Richmond counties to the Savannah River south of Augusta. This area covers 65 entire counties that computes to 35,665 square miles, more than 60% of the state of Georgia. While there had been previous divisions of the Methodist people in Georgia, 1939 saw the unification of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Methodist Protestant Churches; the church joined sixteen other conferences at that time to convene the regional Southeastern Jurisdiction. In 2014 the previous nine districts named by the cities where their offices was located became six larger districts that were defined solely by geography and are presently headed by Bishop Lawson Bryan. Currently there are 589 churches within the conference boundaries ([sgaumc.org](http://sgaumc.org)).

The United States Census reported in 2018 that there are more than 10.5 million residents in the entire state of Georgia and that median annual income is \$52,977. Membership in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church in 2017 was 110,957 with an average weekly worship attendance of 45,908 or 41.4%. The ethnic diversity of the Conference as listed in the 2017 Journal ([sgaumc.com](http://sgaumc.com)) is by attendance and percentage: 271 Asian or 0.27%; 3827 Black or 3.5%; 518 Hispanic/Latino or 0.5%; 39 Native American or 0.04%; 70 Pacific Islander or 0.06%; 105,916 White or 95.4%, and 316 multi-racial or 0.3%. The Pew Research Center reported that 79% of Georgians describe themselves as Christian and 5% as Methodist.

Economically, South Georgia remains agriculturally based, known for timber, peaches, peanuts, pecans, Vidalia onions, cotton, Kaolin, seafood, and watermelons. The timber business facilitates both energy industries and paper products like conglomerate

Georgia Pacific. Tourism is a staple of the economy, particularly in the Coastal region where Jekyll Island and neighboring St. Simons and Sea Island are extremely popular. The Sea Island Company, a large exclusive family-owned golf and beach resort on St. Simon's and Sea Islands, hosted the G8 Summit of World Leaders at its famed Cloister resort. Historic Savannah attracts 14 million visitors annually, a \$4 billion industry for the area. Additionally, a deep-water port brings countless shipping containers to and from the area. Insurance giant AFLAC was founded in Columbus (Georgia.org).

The South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church is composed primarily, but not exclusively, of orthodox Christians who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, the Virgin Birth, and God as a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While there are small pockets of progressivity in the South Georgia Conference, these are located primarily in metropolitan areas such as Savannah or Macon. The clergy and lay delegates elected as representatives to General Conference are overwhelmingly conservative Christians who espouse holiness of heart and habit. These Methodists closely align themselves with their founder, John Wesley, whom they proudly claim as the first missionary in Georgia.

## **Participants**

### **Criteria for Selection**

Participants were chosen by email solicitation sent to the Senior Pastor of each church that fit the primary criteria: a minimum of three full-time program staff people, which could include the Senior Pastor, and a membership average of 300 - 2000 people. The Senior Pastor and senior staff members were further delimited as either first or second career for the purpose of the research if they chose to participate in the face-to-face interview.

**Description of Participants**

As part of the instrumentation, each participant was requested to self-describe their gender, age grouping, length of time in full-time ministry, and length of tenure at their current church through the Leadership Self-Assessment instrument in Questions 2 - 7. Each participant was queried about their title at the church if they participated in the face-to-face interviews. All participants, beyond the initial membership criteria of their church, was either self-selecting or selected by their Senior Pastor.

Each person who self-selected to complete the initial survey or further self-selected for the interview were employed full-time by their local church and identified as Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor or a Program/Ministry staff member. These self-selecting people were males and females 19 years of age and older employed full-time as laity or appointed full-time as clergy in a local church in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church.

**Ethical Considerations**

One of the two instruments that was to be completed online, the Leadership Assessment, included a statement of confidentiality and informed consent. The demographic survey asked questions that pertained only to demographics of the church that were readily available through public records. The opening statement clarified that their answers were voluntarily and that by choosing to participate they gave consent to use of this data when submitting the survey. For the on-site, face-to-face interviews, an informed consent was signed and dated by all participants stating that they could stop the interview at any time and their participation was totally voluntary. Each interviewee received a hard copy of this form

which is found in Appendix E. Additionally, the informed consent carried a permission to audio record the interview.

All answers were collated and compiled with confidentiality in mind and the initial online survey did not track IP addresses or mandate the submission of any personally identifying information. Any specific examples presented will be identified as “Subject A” or “Church B” in the report that follows in order to maintain this confidentiality. The compilation of responses may be stored until the dissertation is completed and accepted. Responses will be destroyed at the completion and acceptance of this research.

### **Instrumentation**

Three researcher-designed instruments were utilized in this research. There was an initial survey, “Leadership Assessment,” sent via email to Senior Pastors. These people were asked to send a link to the same survey to their full-time program staff people to complete. A second instrument, “Interview Questions,” was available to those who volunteered to give more information to the researcher face-to-face. The third and final instrument, the demographic survey, surveyed the make-up of the church and surrounding community.

Initial contact was conducted via email to the Senior Pastor of congregations who fit the criteria of the research according to the statistical tables of the 2018 Journal of the South Georgia United Methodist Church. The instrument “Leadership Assessment” was designed by the researcher to seek information on the work environment, relationships, and coaching principles and practices that participants utilize or wish to learn as they lead their staff. The Leadership Assessment began with a six-question demographic survey followed by ten questions which included open-ended questions, Likert scales, multiple

choice, and simple check mark queries. This survey was used to inquire how Senior Pastors perceive their abilities and church environment and what is needed to help them develop robust coaching practices within their church. This same survey was also used to test how full-time staff members assess their team's ability to lead and coach, their perception of their staff relationships, and what is needed to help them develop or improve robust coaching practices within their church.

At the completion of the Leadership Assessment for Senior Pastors and their staff, volunteers were sought via the survey for two recorded, face-to-face interviews that were scheduled to be one hour in length at self-selecting venues. These interviews were requested with the Senior Pastor and a Senior Staff Person of their choice and were composed primarily of open-ended interview questions and some multiple-choice queries that were emailed to interview participants prior to the interview. The nineteen open-ended questions known as "Onsite Interview Questions" were sent in anticipation of the onsite interview. This instrument was also designed by the researcher to further probe influences for success in ministry and specifically for coaching in the multi-staff church.

The third and final instrument, an online demographic survey of the church and surrounding community, was sent to the church to complete in order to have a better understanding of the environment where participants served. Designed by the researcher, this eight-question survey asked open-ended items such as population, ethnic make-up of the congregation and community, staff census, number of worship services, and long-term goals of the church. This instrument is designed with the goal of reaching a better understanding of participating churches and the communities that they serve.

**Expert Review**

The researcher-designed instruments were reviewed by former church staff members: two pastors and a youth director. With their feedback, questions were grouped according to specific topic in order to make the queries more pertinent to the Research Questions. Multiple Choice answers on the Likert scale were redesigned from a ten-point scale to five to limit answers and give greater specificity.

**Reliability & Validity of Project Design**

Through feedback from the expert review, the Dean of the Asbury Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Program, the Dean of the Beeson International School, and the Institutional Review Board at the same institution, tools were examined and structured to align with the purpose statement and research questions. The online survey instruments were structured and presented in identical manners to each participant.

While responses will vary slightly from church to church and person to person, the structure of the interview and questions were stated in the same order and manner at each interview. Some respondents replied with minimal answers of just a few words, while others of differing personalities might reply with paragraphs to the researcher. Each participating church met the criteria of 300 - 2000 members along with employment of a Senior Pastor and two additional full-time staff persons. Beyond this criterion, the relational dynamics studied will consistently reflect the bias and personalities of those individuals who participated.

**Data Collection**

The research protocol included three different instruments: a demographic survey, a structured, open-ended interview, and a highly structured and specific survey of Senior

Pastors and program staff at medium-large churches in the South Georgia Conference (Knox & Burkard). The researcher believes that responses to Instrument I will present an overall view of relational dynamics and coaching practices in a cross-section of the South Georgia Conference.

The Demographic study is important, as stated by Lobar et al, because it examines the patterns of behavior, rituals, rites, values, and beliefs of the culture that surround the subject being studied (181). In this research, the demographics of the churches where interviews took place will assess age of the congregation, number of staff serving along with title and whether they serve full or part-time. Additional questions gauged household income for the neighborhood surrounding the church in contrast to household income of members and constituents of each congregation.

Through responses from both Senior Pastors and their supporting staff, the analysis is more likely to be honest rather than presenting a “rehearsed script” that Sensing cautions avoiding (21). At the outset of each interview, participants signed an informed consent, gave permission to record the interview, and were informed that they were free to answer with as many or few words as they liked or to refuse to answer any inquiry if they should choose. Because of this freedom, the researcher received a wide variety of answers in greatly varying lengths. The briefest interview was 18 minutes and the lengthiest was over 75 minutes.

### **Data Analysis**

Raw data was gathered through all three instruments: two online surveys and onsite interviews at ten churches. Each interview was recorded and transcribed by the researcher for further analysis and comparison. Churches were coded A - J to insure

anonymity with no tie to location or staff names. Staff members were then coded as “1” for all Senior Pastors and “2” for the interview with the Senior Staff member that the Senior Pastor chose as a participant. If a third staff member from the church participated, that person was given the corresponding letter and number “3”.

Answers within the online surveys and interviews were compared and contrasted from church to church and across staff positions. These comparisons and interpretations will be reviewed in detail in the following chapter. Instrument I (Appendix A) is the initial survey sent to all Senior Pastors. Instrument 2 (Appendix B) is the demographic survey for churches who participated in and answered questions from Instrument 3, the face-to-face interview (Appendix C).

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT**

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

Seminary trained pastors are well-educated and know how to lead a Bible Study, baptize a new convert, preach a sermon, and even translate scriptures from original ancient languages. As they reach the pinnacle of their career, they will inevitably find themselves managing and mentoring staff as well. The key to the success or failure of a pastor in leading a team is not in how well they lead Bible study, where they attained their education, or how well acquainted with Biblical languages and theology they may be. Maxwell points out that, “Leaders need to remember that the point of leading is not to cross the finish line first. It’s to take people across the finish line with you. For that reason, leaders must deliberately slow their pace, enlist others to help fulfill the vision and keep people going” (15). There is accountability, safety, and better decision-making when the work of ministry is done by a team. The purpose of this research was to explore human behavior and relational dynamics between Senior Pastors and their staff and specifically the practice of coaching in the medium to large congregation, which the researcher defines as a church whose membership is 300 - 2000).

This chapter identifies the participants in the study and the individual, staff, and congregational demographic makeup. The chapter then presents the quantitative data from the interviews conducted and the coded qualitative data from the interviews and two online surveys that were in answer to the three research questions. Chapter Four concludes with a list of major findings from the presented data.

### **Participants**

The initial, anonymous survey regarding coaching, Instrument I (see appendix A), was sent via email to 95 pastors in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. Based upon a study of the 2017 South Georgia Conference Journal, this was the number of ordained clergy serving in churches with 300 – 2000 members. These congregations potentially met the criterion of employing two additional staff members in addition to the Senior Pastor. Additionally, these pastors were requested to email the anonymous survey invitation to their staff in order to receive a robust result from a cross-section of full-time staff members in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. At the conclusion of the survey, the clergy were given the opportunity to participate in face-to-face interviews about coaching and staff relationships. There were no responses to this initial request.

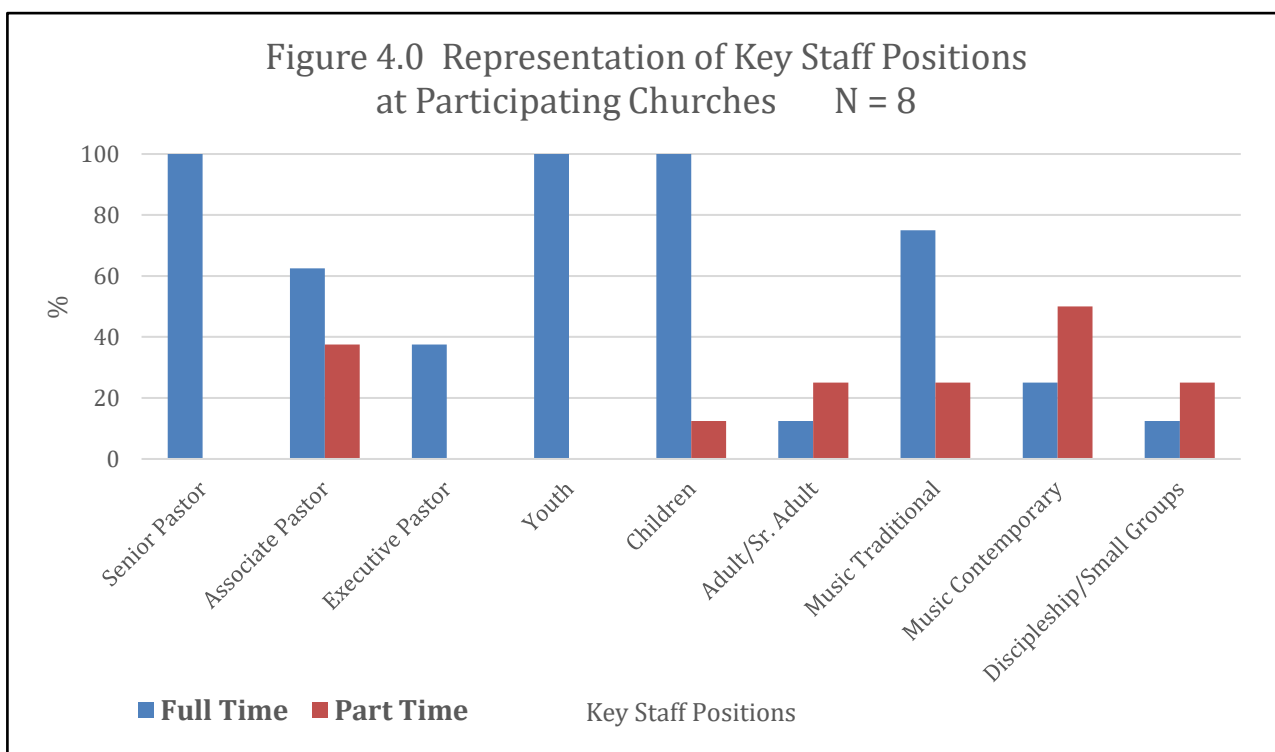
The researcher then requested that the South Georgia Conference office of the Bishop send the invitation to complete the anonymous survey to all pastors in the conference. This email with Instrument I was sent to all conference pastors and received nine responses to the survey with four churches volunteering for face-to-face interviews. Due to a low rate of return, additional requests were sent to pastors who employed two or more full-time professional staff to solicit interviews. Six additional churches granted interviews. In all, twenty-two interviews were conducted at ten churches. After the interviews were completed, two congregations were disqualified. One employed only two full-time program staff persons which necessitated disqualification of both interviews conducted. The second's pastor granted only one instead of the required two face-to-face interviews.

To learn about robust coaching at a deeper level, the researcher requested and was granted a third interview with an additional staff person at three churches where interviews were previously conducted. These additional interviews were invited for the purpose of response comparison. Robust coaching practices built around the topics of character, competency, and relational chemistry within the churches of those who took part in the research are described within Chapter 4.

To ensure anonymity, respondents were assigned a random code that began with letters A-H. All persons with the number one following the assigned letter are Senior Pastors. The remainder of participants were assigned number two or three to signify that they were the second or third staff member to volunteer for an interview from that particular congregation. Figure 4.0 shows that each of the eight churches who met the research criteria have a full-time Senior Pastors as well as full-time Youth and Children's staff persons. It should be noted that one church employed a full-time children's pastor and a part-time staff person. Some churches employed no Associate Pastor or only a part-time person in that position. This data was lifted directly from responses to Instrument III (See Appendix B); a follow-up survey sent to the churches who met research criteria and completed onsite, face-to-face interviews.

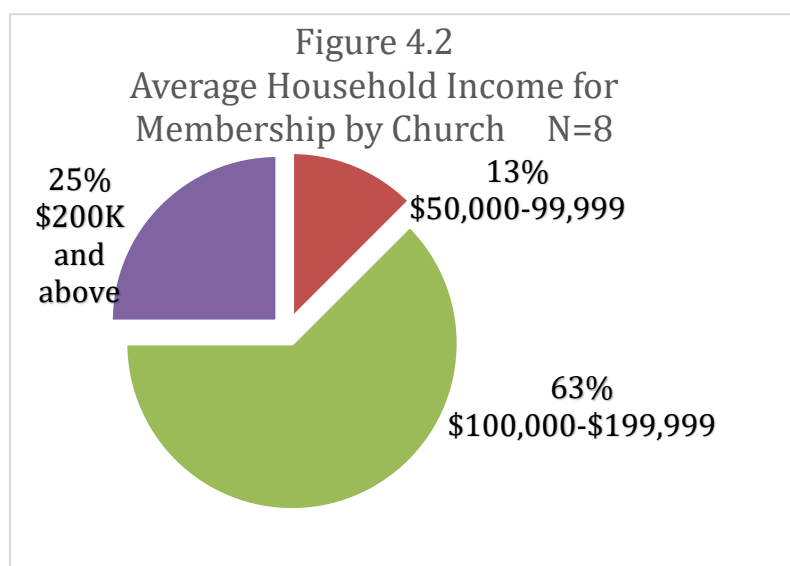
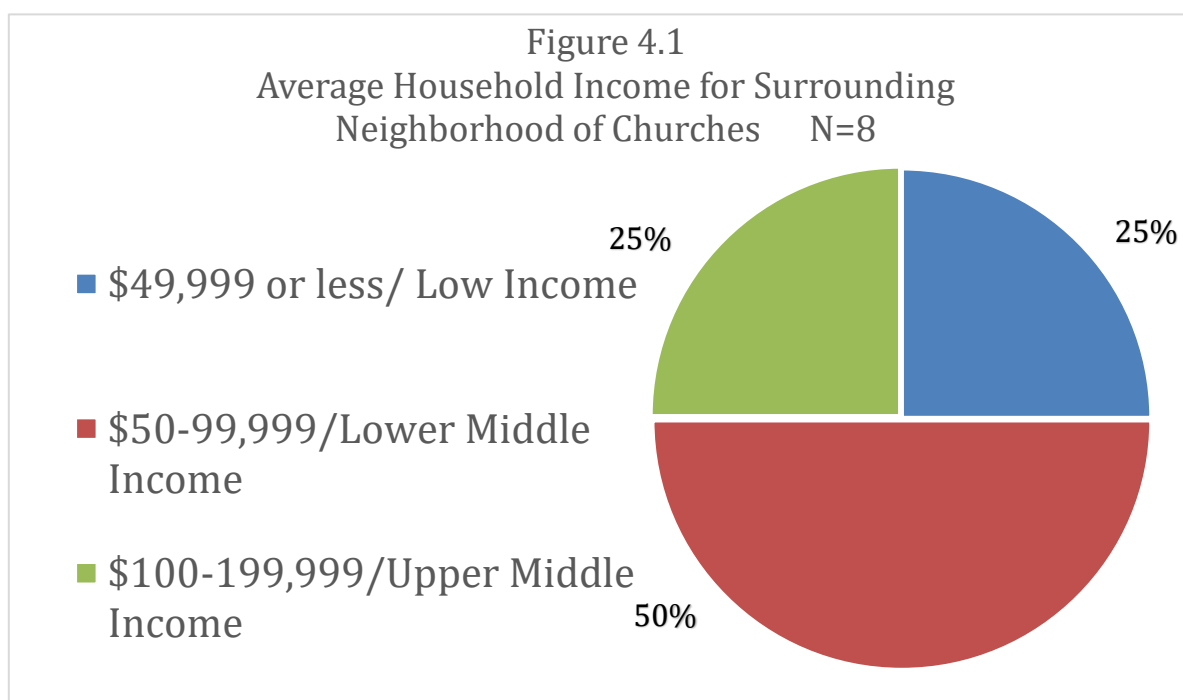
The interviews revealed that all eight Senior Pastors were white males that are fully-ordained elders in the United Methodist Church. Two Associate Pastors were also full elders, one a probationary elder, and two more are candidates pursuing ordination. Two more Associate Pastors interviewed were fully ordained Deacons, and three interviewees were ordained previously in another denomination. The mean years in ministry, considering all nineteen persons interviewed, was 20.6, and the median was 22

years of ministry with a standard deviation of 10.3 years. Average membership size of the eight churches where interviews took place was 1342 with a standard deviation of 587, and the median was 1204.



Respondents serve churches that reside within three districts in the South Georgia Conference: Coastal, North Central and Southwest. In the anonymous online survey, respondents identified themselves as males aged 35-64 years old. From the interviews and online surveys, the majority of all respondents had nine years or more experience in full-time ministry. Based solely on responses from Senior Pastors via the online Demographic Survey, Instrument III (See Appendix B), respondents self-characterized themselves and their churches as 100% white. Further, they characterized their churches as middle-upper income in membership, but 100% of their congregations were residing in areas that are home to middle-lower income residents (see figures 4.1 and 4.2 below). Figure 4.1 represents the average household income of the neighborhood surrounding the

eight churches in which interviews were conducted. The average household income of members and constituents of the eight churches is reflected in figure 4.2. It should be noted that the income level of the church membership exceeds the average income of the neighborhood in all eight locations where the churches reside.



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

RQ #1. How do senior leaders from multi-staff churches indicate character, competency, and chemistry are among the best practices for coaching staff and volunteers?

All Senior Pastors stated that relationships are the first priority in working with staff and members of the congregation. Several responded that if honesty, intentionality, and trust are held in high esteem, a strong foundation is prepared for these relationships to flourish. Also gleaned from these interviews is the idea that the character of a person is integrally involved with relational chemistry, delineating how a person lives out their integrity and courage through behavior and investing in the lives of others. These relationships, as stated by Respondent E1, are similar to a six-lane interstate. Some staff members may merge too quickly from the on ramp or change lanes without signaling their intention, making it difficult for others to travel safely with them. If the majority of the staff have worked together for a period of time, newcomers will likely feel left out or untrusted because long-time co-workers share the bond of well-formed relationships.

Competency, stated by multiple interviewees, is not the equivalent of book knowledge or education. To coach, according to respondent D1, “you have to be competent to show the way to those that you lead and this is built on experience and application.” Those with less experience or education would do well to seek the input of their colleagues and learn as much as possible about applicable situations before interjecting change or upsetting a potentially delicate balance. Respondent C3 stressed that ministerial professionals must be well prepared and educated, especially if the

congregation has a high education or income level: “If you are not prepared, they will sniff out incompetence in three seconds.”

This coaching relationship was probably best encapsulated by Senior Pastor H1 whom had been coached as an Associate in the Savannah area right out of Seminary:

He became my friend and we still stay in close contact today. I knew his expectations, but it was definitely a reciprocal relationship. He’s retired but we still stay in contact frequently. It is about building two-way relationships where you can ask questions and have accountability. His door was always open. There was no formal curriculum used but we planned together and worked together. We talked through everything and he listened. Computers were fairly new when all this started so I would help him with ‘tech stuff’. When he gets a new phone or computer, he still calls me and I go visit. He doesn’t call his children. He calls me. He treated me, and still does to this day, as an equal.

All interviewees were asked what best practice was used that they would like to replicate in their own ministry. C3 discussed that they learned strategies for handling specific situations in a positive manner by speaking in ways that diffuse others’ anger and frustration. Communication was important to D3 who replied that people fail to express themselves clearly and hesitate to repeat themselves. If needs and expectations are not clear, practices can become harmful and degrade to feelings of self-defense quickly. D3 further clarified that ministry is personal, and people can make the mistake of wearing feelings on their sleeve: “we have to look for ways to encourage and help each other as the body of Christ.” Their colleague, D2, stated that “making disciples is the most

important practice to replicate. We have to take relational investments to the next level and this applies not only to human relationships but growing closer to Christ.”

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

RQ #2. What do senior leaders from multi-staff churches indicate are barriers to coaching staff and volunteers?

Utilizing the face-to-face interview (See appendix A), in open-ended question 15 participants were questioned what barriers they face in coaching staff and volunteers. This is of utmost importance so that mistakes are minimized. In the same spirit, questions 16 - 18 conclude the bulk of the questions by asking about staff relationships and the depth of said connections. Each interview probed to inquire about past coaching relationships, both before and after entering ministry, and if they had been productive. All nineteen responded that they felt better prepared for the future. One Senior Pastor, B1, revealed a criterion that he had found nearly fail-safe. When first entering the ministry, he served under a Senior Pastor who had no social skills and horrifically mismanaged staff. When faced with a decision to be made, he contemplated what this same Senior Pastor that he had served under might choose to do in the same or similar situation; “I then choose to do the exact opposite. The supervising pastor that I worked for was always negative, never gave a complement and treated people poorly.”

Two common practices that interviewees prioritized to be harmful are micro-management and long, boring, and useless staff meetings essentially used as calendar reviews or gripe sessions. Control can be difficult to give up when work is viewed as important, and this is especially true when dealing with the eternal, spiritual outcome of parishioners’ lives. This, coupled with a need to control or repair people and situations

can easily lead some Senior Pastors to dictate both the how and when of the work to be accomplished. More than one leader had been corrected by either a member of their congregation or their SPRC when they made small human mistakes even with the best of intentions. Misplaced priorities while attempting to juggle the many demands of ministerial work coupled with typical life distractions can become dangerous. In the face of this stressful and chaotic schedule, there can be other leaders who have never learned to lead and utilize the staff meeting merely as a volume of time to repeat upcoming dates as they loom closer and, potentially, to rehash mistakes made or unfair treatment. These practices were found to be not only unhelpful but abhorrent and avoided by those interviewed.

“It is important to conference like John Wesley did with the Methodist movement,” said G1. “We dance around the real issues and hope people know what we mean. Kindness doesn’t get you off the hook! You have to address problems head on, or they will simply get worse.” Other issues will be outlined specifically in regard to the discussions of character, competency, and chemistry later in this chapter.

There are multiple barriers to relational investment through coaching that include incompetency, self-protection, and moral failure. “Double standards in character are tremendously harmful. I have witnessed more than one moral failure and the person who falls harms far more than themselves,” according the F1 who further stated: “The fallout hurts their family, their church and especially their colleagues in ministry.” D2 addressed disappointment in answering about the necessity and importance of character. As their staff and congregation recover from the former Senior Pastor’s personal indiscretion, character is a non-negotiable and potentially most difficult barrier to relationships.

“Character provides the foundation for buy-in from the staff and congregation. Strength of character provides peace of mind. When character is not there, relationships become a farce. There is a lot of anger, denial and disappointment that we are dealing with. Instead of being the leader he should have been, he let us down,” said D2.

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

RQ #3. What other conditions enhance robust leadership development practices of coaching staff and volunteers?

In order to compile and replicate robust leadership training and best practices in the South Georgia Conference at multi-staff churches, interviewees were asked if there were specific practices that they had found helpful. These practices may have been utilized in their current or past congregations as a means of augmentation or multiplication of robust leadership development practices of coaching staff and volunteers. This allowed the researcher to ask interviewees the best practices that they know or have experienced. Practices may be applicable for coaching staff and volunteers or identifying robust leadership development practices for Senior Pastors and Staff. This was accomplished through semi-structured, face to face interviews. The researcher asked in questions 7-14 about a perceived need for coaching and about positive coaching experiences.

Among the interviewees who had experienced coaching previous to full-time ministry, respondents indicated that this took place predominantly through athletics. Additional coaching took place in College Ministry and Christian camp settings. Two respondents informed that coaching took place via music lessons or band experiences. From the online coaching survey, only one Senior Pastor indicated he had received any

direct coaching for ministry and that came from an outside source who was both a Senior Pastor and Life Coach in a different denomination. Ordained in another denomination, two respondents stated that they received on the job training and coaching by being paired with professors and other experienced ministers in the field multiple times during their seminary training. Other mentoring and coaching relationships came from preaching planning/peer groups and meeting with more experienced Senior Pastors from other churches.

Without fail, relationships were the highest priority and actually labeled “relational investment” by respondent D2 in which relationships are intentionally given a high priority. Indeed, relationships are the backbone and breath of the work for the kingdom of God to serve in loving others as the Savior would. These loving relationships begin with colleagues and serve as an encouragement to those who observe them the joy and love in abundance that Christ shares! Respondents affirmed many times that relationships are not easy, even in the church where leaders are expected to be nurturing and loving at every turn. What makes the difference in this relational investment is endeavoring to continue in the face of adversity. When mistakes are made, they are confessed and forgiven so that people can move forward together with love rather than animosity. Love is a choice, interviewees affirmed.

In his interview, B1 specifically addressed working with two vastly different Senior Pastors who coached him early in his career. The one who had the most profound effect was a gentleman who made a commitment to meet a minimum of twice each month to “discuss issues, give guidance and celebrate. This allowed me to know his door was always open to me. Under his leadership, I was encouraged not only in day-to-day

service but to seek candidacy and eventually ordination that led to where I am now. The other Senior Pastor I worked for was totally opposite. They never encouraged, never met, never complemented but seemed to be waiting for us to make mistakes so they could pounce on them.”

Associate Pastor F2 outlined the practices that he found most helpful for robust coaching: “Working together one on one with authenticity has made a huge difference to me. My Senior Pastor listens to me and treats me like I have significance while helping me find the right path for me. He doesn’t listen just because it is his job. He really cares and helps by sharing life experiences. As I go forward in ministry, those are the things I want to replicate with volunteers and with relationships that build.”

A slightly different story was told by G1 who was coached through Little League baseball by a person who made it a point to know the players and build relationships with them. This was followed in early ministry days by another pastor in a small town who convened a group of young pastors together weekly to encourage them. The convening pastor, from another denomination, termed it a lectionary group to plan ahead on sermon preparation, but the pastors used it to discuss anything in their hearts, especially things of significance. “Today I work to steer my staff but do so without a curriculum. I don’t want to drive them. I try to tailor what I have to say and do to the specific person one on one rather than in a group and especially at staff meeting. We spend a couple of minutes on it there and then move on.” His associate, G2, gave the same story by saying, “the best practices I’ve seen come through our one on ones in his office to catch up, build our relationship and discuss goals. I specifically needed help in time management and

evaluating priorities. Character has been a foundational piece of this as we work together.”

None of the Senior Pastors that were interviewed admitted that they would define their work with their staff as coaching per se prior to the research interviews and were reticent to label a particular element of their staff meeting coaching. A1 stated that their program staff meeting includes reading a particular book together that will improve their relationships with each other and their work with members of the congregation. In essence, not one Senior Pastor utilized a group dynamic for coaching or to discuss relational investments.

Each Senior Pastor, except for D1, said that they meet regularly with individual staff persons and maintain an open-door policy with their staff. B1, C1, and G1 specified in their responses to questions about coaching that they endeavor to hire staff that were competent to complete their job with little or, preferably, no supervision at all because they expect applicants to be of an experienced, mature caliber. On the other side of the coin, A1 emphasized that one of his goals was to disciple his staff. A2 distinctly described this same relationship with the Senior Pastor as coaching because he wanted to learn how to be more effective in ministry and in relationships in particular.

### **The Role of Character, Competence, and Chemistry in Coaching**

Each person interviewed was questioned both about previous coaching experiences and about their current ministry practices. If they had been coached prior to entering full-time ministry, this was nearly exclusively done by an athletic coach or a school teacher. From the online coaching survey, character was the most important component of staff relationships, followed by chemistry and competence.

## **Relational Investment**

Relationships and engagement were the recurring topics that echoed regarding the importance of relating to each other consistently and honestly. This is done both privately and publicly, applicable to the character and the relational chemistry of the individuals. According to respondents, the building blocks of the foundation of solid relational investments are honesty, trust, servant leadership, and encouragement. Men and women who are willing to invest themselves in these areas and to help their co-workers when needed are relationally invested. D2 stated that, “as a coach, you have to be competent to show the way, building your relationships on experience, application and clear communication. Clarity is imperative.”

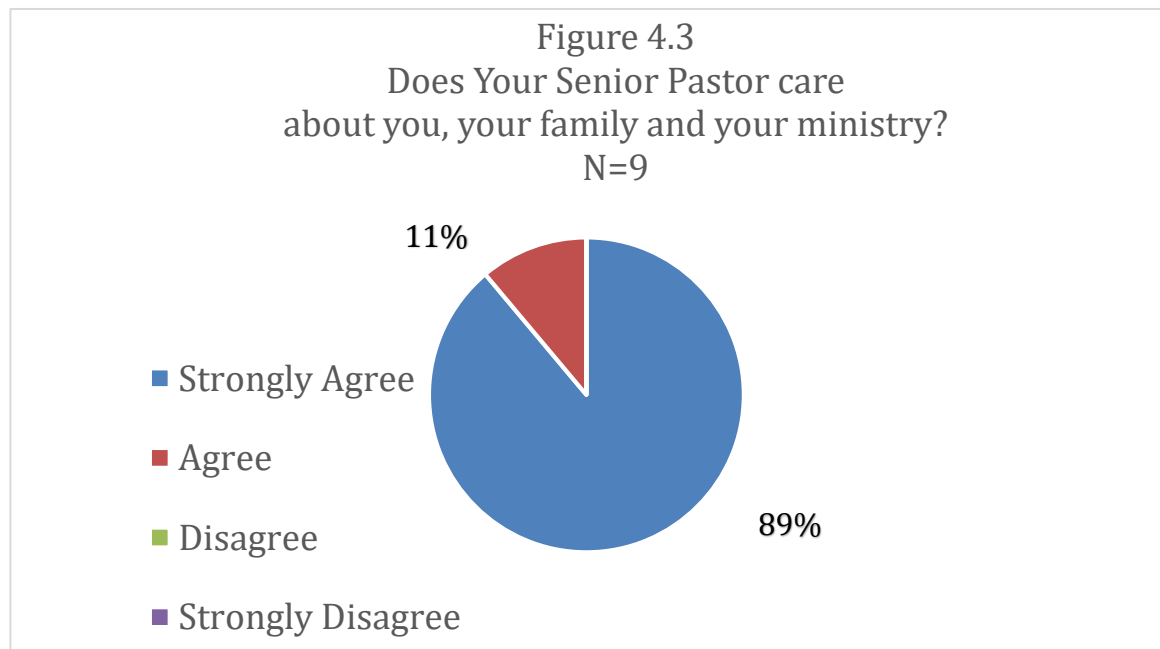
The relational investment important to D2 was an even higher priority to D1, who named more than eight pastors that he believed had coached him and taught him important life lessons. He was able to easily recount what years he had served with each person he listed starting in High School, through college, and for more than the first decade of full-time ministry. Currently D1 is working on a Doctor of Ministry degree at another seminary and continues to see a life coach on a regular basis.

Senior Pastor G1 stressed the importance of knowing his staff members beyond their role at the office. He placed high priorities on doing things together as a staff and going a step further to be acquainted with the families of his staff members. This same investment can take place between the peers who serve on the staff together. Those who are relationally invested will take the time to become a family. Affirming this commitment to relational investments, in response to Question 21 of the initial, anonymous online survey (Instrument I), these staff members said overwhelmingly that

the Senior Pastor cares about the staff as individuals and believes that they desire to see them and their family ministry thrive and succeed. These responses are reflected in figure 4.3 below.

A2 described that he had asked his Senior Pastor to coach and disciple him so that he could grow:

He gives me great feedback on how I interact and a gauge for how I'm doing. It can be a little intimidating, but I need that help. It's about a caring relationship, not just using someone to accomplish a goal or task. You do need clear goals, but we need these relationships to build a framework for one on one relationships and small groups. My Senior Pastor really, truly cares and doesn't want to be hurtful. He loves what he does and is moving things forward. Our team is fun, dedicated and caring. One thing he doesn't do is micromanage, but he is not afraid to dive in when he needs to do so.



### **Team Meeting and Building**

In the church, team building is the work of communication and setting goals that the staff work toward together. It is impossible to eliminate the potential for relational conflict. According to several respondents, this means learning to communicate together and continuing to love each other even in the face of disagreement. There is positive communication, according to B2, “and we have to work hard to be nice while being honest. And we have to admit when we make mistakes. It’s a fact of life---we all make mistakes. Those of us who are older have to mentor and show younger staff how to do this.” This same interviewee stressed that communication must happen between the staff and the church in order to quell gossip. Staff cuts had been made at church B and attributed to lower contributions than anticipated. In reality, the SPRC Finance Committee and Senior Pastor saw the need to change staff who had been hired by a previous Senior Pastor. These hires had been made from young adults in the congregation who were not called to ministry but needed a job following college. “Humility and honesty are needed rather than more gossip due to lack of communication,” said B2. “While competence helps with efficiency, some things can be learned more easily than others,” according to G2, “some things can be accomplished through competence and other through creating the atmosphere of trust. We must be gracious in our relationships.”

Some participants referred to churches served in which the weekly staff meeting was primarily a calendar review of the same dates each week. H1 stated that having participated in such meetings as a young Associate Pastor, he found them to be “a long, boring, useless waste of time that often turned into a pointless gripe session.” As a Senior

Pastor, he was determined not to subject his teams to such punishment. He went on to clarify that he had been instructed by a Senior Pastor early in his ministry to “never enter a meeting where you don’t already know the outcome.” A1 endeavors to “create an environment that includes confidentiality, trust, one on one talks and listening to build trust. The coaching relationships I’ve experienced were confidential and gave me someone to trust yet be vulnerable with. Mutual relationships with peers in ministry have been helpful, too, in bouncing ideas off each other.”

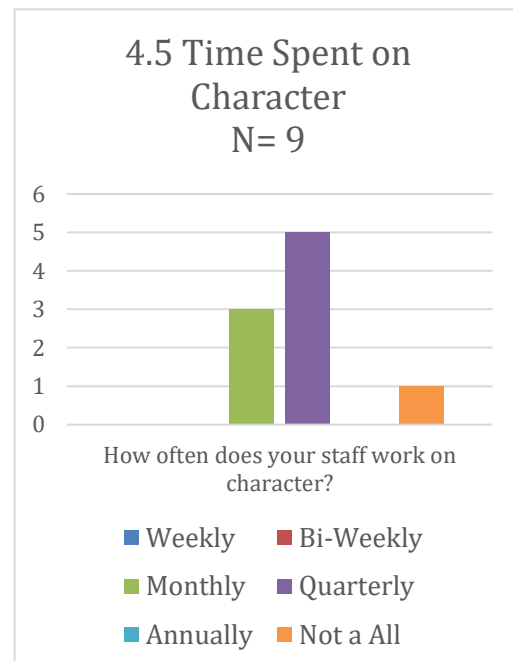
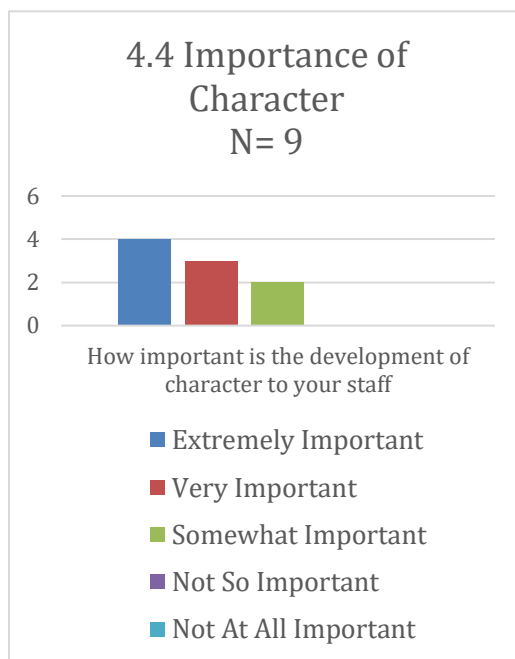
When all respondents were asked in the face-to-face interviews if they had worked in a ministry relationship where a particular person had helped them to grow in character, competence, or chemistry, 100% affirmed that had indeed done so (Question 8). Most often the outcome was positive even if the role model was not because they learned how to conduct themselves in the future through observation and experience. Many well-known current and retired ministers in the South Georgia Conference were named among these influencers. Those secondary people interviewed, Associates and Program Staff, always named two or more people that they found to be influential. The younger associates interviewed all named their current pastor as a person whom they admired and were learning from.

In spite of the good news of the Gospel and bringing light into a dark world, there can be times when these relationships are not positive. For example, respondent C1 reflected on observing a Senior Pastor who could “use people as pawns in order to manipulate a situation or appeared to go into ‘auto-pilot’ to appear loving in a particularly explosive situation. He held his cards close and was often inauthentic until he knew

exactly where you stood because it was more important not to alienate those who could be useful.”

## Character

The researcher defined character as courage, integrity and honesty. All Senior Pastors agreed that this trait was not only necessary but non-negotiable. Instrument one, the online survey, asked respondents to rate on a five-point scale the importance of character. These results are outlined in figure 4.4 and 4.5 below. Character appears to be important but primarily considered to be part of the staff’s own self-care. Most staff work on character only quarterly as a group whereas the importance placed on the trait makes it appear much more integral. G1 stated, “Character is who you are when no one else is looking; it is relating to others, publicly and privately. Relate consistently to your staff in private and public to build their character and your own.” C1 believes that competency starts with respect and practicing what you preach, “This allows you to become more competent and helps you to manage more effectively.”



One hundred percent of respondents believed that character is the cornerstone in building solid relationships and healthy ministry. A powerful response came from E1, “How can I be a person of integrity, honesty, courageous behavior if I don’t have a strong relationship with God? Anything I say or do is dead in the water. I must model this behavior for my staff.”

Character can represent the maturity of staff members and navigating potential issues, according to E2:

Even when you disagree with a colleague, character enables you to navigate through the conflict because you have built trust. Disagreement and temperament differences can be big obstacles. But if I know that your intent is for the overall good of the team and to glorify God, we can work together instead of shutting down progress. These relationships are not much different than a marriage and learning to work together there.

G1 stated during the interview, “This is where the rubber meets the road for me...Trust and character are the foundation for all relationships. Trust moves, stalls or drives the train forward.” As a Christian leader, an individual’s hallmark integrity may be called into question in a new church if their predecessor was disingenuous. C3 followed a staff person who was intensely disliked and has to continue to work hard to build relationships and earn trust. This person confided that they find their work discouraging and disheartening to be judged by the actions and attitudes of another person that they have never met. D1 stated that he is working overtime to “be transparent and accountable because the previous pastor had a moral failure that no one was aware of until the

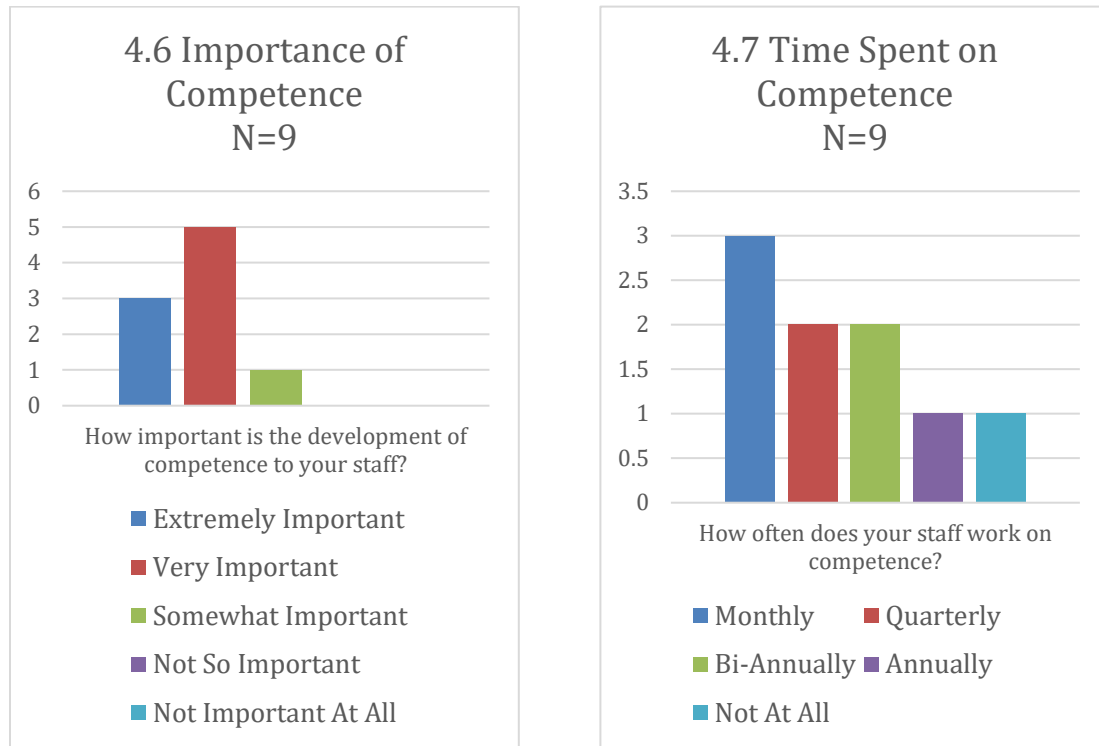
eleventh hour. I am oversharing and doing everything that I can to build trust back so that everything is above board and there is no question of who I am or my character.”

Pastor G1 attempts to build character in his staff through constructive feedback, “It should be a ladder, not a hammer. Staff should hear comments and take them not as an indictment but as a commitment to continually improve so that each week is better than before.” This is part of the maturation process when, as adults, individuals can learn from the observations and commitment of their team members. A3 highlighted that authenticity is imperative, “Without honesty and trust, we can become dangerous. Intentional authenticity, even if we don’t agree on everything, makes a huge difference.”

### **Competence**

One interviewee, A3, testified that “Knowledge is important. It is most helpful when someone who is called by God and has submitted themselves to the discipline of an education to sit under the teaching, wisdom and anointing of others. This will help tremendously not to put people or God in a box and expands your horizons greatly.” Additionally, G1 raised the points that competence, “raises the bar as you sustain excellence and work toward the perception of excellence.” In considering competence, all staff members believed this element to be helpful but not nearly as important as character or chemistry. Online respondents to Anonymous Instrument 1 said competence was very to extremely valuable (see figure 4.7A) and that nearly all worked toward competence on a regular basis (figure 4.7B). One hundred percent of the Senior Pastors interviewed believed that while proper education and abilities were helpful to complete a job description, character and chemistry were higher priorities. In their opinion, education and abilities were important but on-the-job training can be completed by a willing new

employee and more than compensate for education and ability.



E1 believed that it helped tremendously to build on the strengths of staff members, “They may not be great at one area but excel in all other areas. We attempt to focus on strengths and even shift responsibilities around to help our folks be successful.” Reflecting further, C1 said that “effective, competent people can be in the right people with the right pastor in the wrong church. Competence in ministry is not something necessarily taught but vitally important, nonetheless.” Competence can take the shape of continuing education in the area of expertise, asking for feedback from colleagues and laity on skills utilized, or expanding a skill set to begin a new ministry. D1 saw education as both a help and a hindrance, “Some stand on education whether they are competent or not. Sometimes in insecurity others interject their opinion based only upon education without taking a step back and giving grace for particular or extenuating circumstances.” H2 considered that each person is different, “Sometimes it is work ethic or simple

immaturity. If a person refuses to learn the simple skills necessary for the job so that they can fulfill or even grow better, it's not going to work. Those who can and want to will learn but I believe that they are influenced by their character. Character is massive and can help them push for a higher ceiling."

Seven of the eight Senior Pastors who were interviewed began their ministry as an Associate Pastor in a larger church where they received invaluable training under the tutelage of an experienced member of the clergy. Both full deacons currently serve as Associate Pastors and have spouses that are ordained full elders. These people told the researcher in more detail that they have learned pertinent life lessons through observing the Senior Pastors that they have worked with over the years. One currently works with their spouse and another has served the same church at two previous appointments. Lessons learned include both caring, relational investments, and ministry survival. Senior Pastor B1 stressed that they work specifically on this a little bit each week at staff meeting to become acquainted with each other, "Younger staff members need more help in this area and the more we can talk about challenges and preparing for them before they happen and how to steer through them successfully, the better off they will be." C2 reiterated that staff can never rest on their laurels, the response that happens sometimes following multiple successes. "My own competence helps me to do my role, and our people – both staff and volunteers – are more competent than we ask or think."

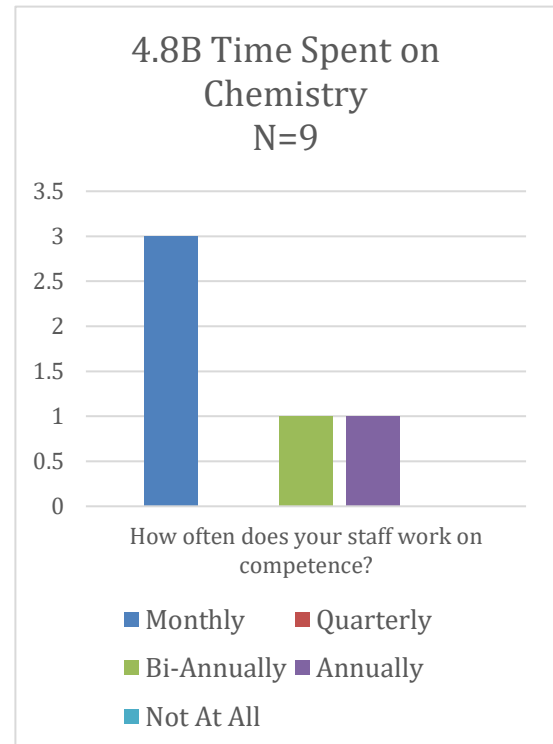
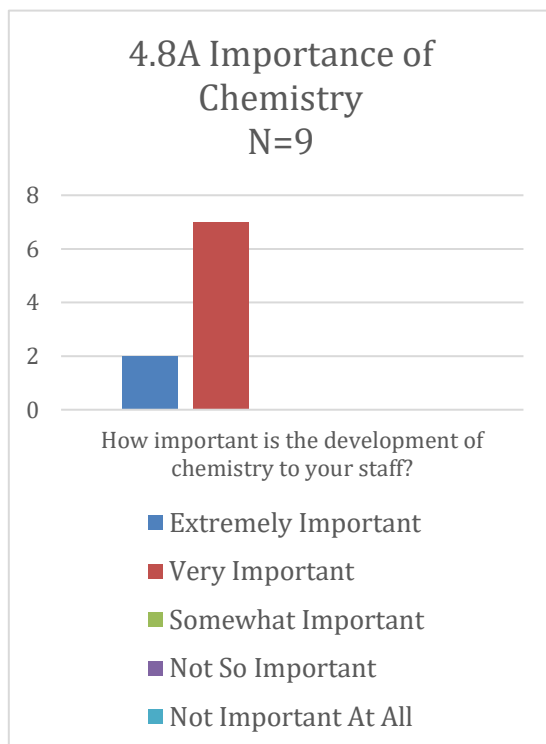
An entirely unanticipated part of the study was interaction with spouses who were also clergy. These interviews were particularly honest about relationships because when working together they had the ability to compare notes about things that happened at work. Possibly most enlightening was that both Associates stated that as clergy couples,

they began ministry with their spouse under a Senior Pastor whose practices they found extremely dysfunctional and have endeavored not to repeat the same mistakes in continuing forward in ministry.

### Chemistry

Chemistry was defined as the ability to work together, a familial spark that drew the team together and enabled them to accomplish the work of ministry effectively.

Figure 4.8A and B show that respondents in the initial, online anonymous survey (Instrument I) value chemistry among team members highly. More than half of the Senior Pastors interviewed found that the ability of the team to fellowship and play together outside of the office was imperative and vital to their success. A3 replied that staff “can bring positive energy, even if they have disagreements. God can work through these relationships miraculous ways. When there is good chemistry there is greater fulfilment and more joy in working together. Those who serve together with the same values and visions complement each other.” C1 affirmed that “our mantra is that we want others to succeed. What we work to say is ‘how can we help you with that?’” Each of the Senior



Pastors referred to the need to do things away from the church office. This relational investment is, according to B1, “very important to our relationships and to celebrate the good stuff as much as possible and publicly if possible.”

E1 was the one Senior Pastor who felt that no one had coached him and “longed for helpful and productive feedback to navigate the minefields of ministry. I am very tentative even in the things I’ve seen other use productively and well with their staffs simply because I feel like I’m very much out here on my own.” Being coached had made a big difference in the comfort level and self-esteem of G2, especially in considering chemistry, “This can take precedence over competence. Ability to communicate and understand each other can be challenging, especially with a large staff.”

When a Senior Pastor moves, most likely he or she will inherit current staff members that may or may not work well together. “Even if words are nice, body language can loudly state lack of trust and support of your Senior Pastor or colleagues,” said A1. These Senior Pastors may inherit willing and competent staff but through the mistakes and failures of their predecessors, building relationships may be thorny and difficult. The moral failure at Church D has already been addressed in this research. D1 found that because of the fall-out and disrepair from the aforementioned indiscretion, the staff did not want his input no matter how well intentioned and went on to say, “I instated communion and worship each week at our meeting and try to get the staff to talk to each other and to me. I’m not sure that they like each other or me at this point. As the new kid, I have to prove myself for the buy-in and because of my predecessor, that is doubly difficult.”

A3 outlined a church where she and A1 had served in which there were always fires being lit and increasing drama just when it appeared to be smooth sailing. By first appearances, there were many unhappy lay people in the congregation. As time passed and reality unfolded, they began to realize that one person could be pinpointed near the source of the troubles each time difficulties arose, and it was one staff person that consistently stirred the pot. At that church, the immediate previous pastor had been neglectfully absent from the office the entire time he was appointed there as he was preparing for retirement and this allowed said a staff member who was long-term and well-loved to gain power and traction to eventually run much of the day-to-day operations of that church. With the appointment of a new Senior Pastor, roles were changed, and a battle for power ensued.

A1 labeled chemistry “secret sauce” because “with relationships built, we don’t have to be afraid to love; we can push more and forgive when we need to. The downside is that someone can portray themselves as a close friend or confidant and supporter only to learn that they have been posing as your supporter and confidant. It hurts to be betrayed but it happens. We work hard to go beyond that.”

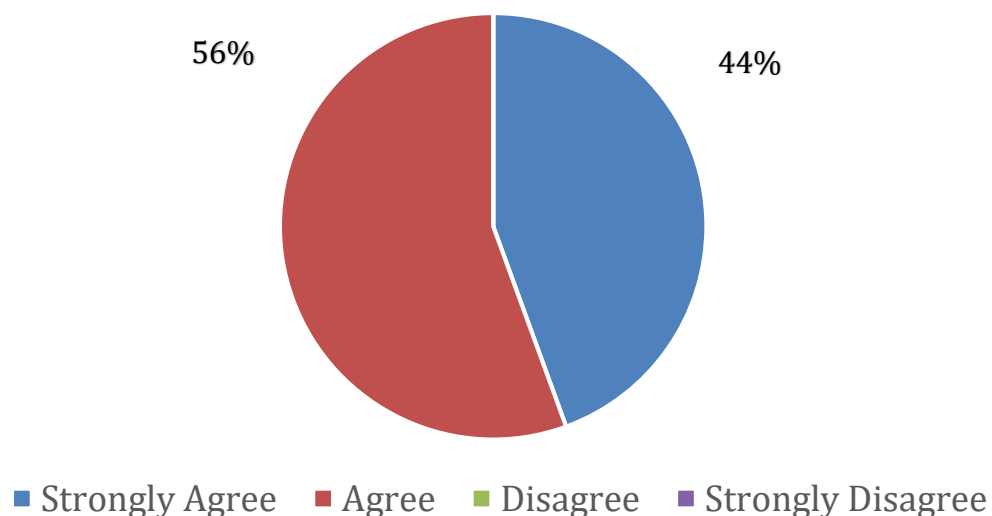
Examples given during interviews for building relational chemistry included going to lunch, an activity like bowling, Christmas shopping, a staff retreat offsite for devotions, team building exercises, and getting better acquainted. The staff who were the happiest with their positions and their Senior Pastor as a coach were receiving regular one-on-one time, encouragement, mutual friendship, and an open door to that office. A1 specifically stated that the one-on-one conversations made a big difference for his staff. H1 affirmed that his staff went out to lunch or another activity a minimum of once each

week with only one caveat, “I am never alone with one or more members of the opposite sex from our staff or our church, even to ride in a car to an event. It doesn’t look good and can easily be misinterpreted. It’s not worth the grief it could cause just because it could look bad. I will ride by myself and we’ll take two cars if need be. It’s just that important!”

A1 and D1 specifically answered that they have a time of worship with music at each staff meeting, along with a book discussion. D1 specified that they partake in communion each week as a staff in their meeting. A1 indicated that team building exercises are an integral part of their meeting. On the other side of the coin, E1 believed that he, personally, was:

failing the team if chemistry is not there or not successful. In my mind, we are traveling on an interstate together and we must maintain our lane. When a new person merges onto the team, they may need help checking for blind spots or accelerating to stay with the traffic flow. Chemistry is huge. I am realizing that my role is to invest in them which creates success for the entire team.

Figure 4.9  
Does Your Staff Team Care for Each Other?



Overall, as rated in the online relational survey, the nine anonymous respondents believe the staff team cares for each other. As stated in the study, these relationships are foundational to the health of the congregation and to the mental, emotional, and spiritual health of the staff members individually and corporately. The results are clarified in figure 4.9.

Associate H2 has served his entire career of twenty years as a full-time local lay Pastor at the same church. When he arrived, his task was to work with the youth. These responsibilities expanded to include leading contemporary worship assuming the title of “Family Ministries Pastor” and supervising those who lead the Youth, Children and Preschool. He reflected:

Chemistry impacts longevity. Friction is difficult to overcome. Staff who play nice and stay long at a church is a good thing in my experience. My job description has morphed since I came as a Youth Worker twenty years ago. But I wouldn't trade it for the world. I'm working with my fifth Senior Pastor and the best one of all so far. His strong leadership makes a big difference. He is gifted: his preaching is connected and courageous. He challenges all of us to be better and to tackle the difficult. I think our staff is willing to learn and very open. This may not be intentional but it sure gives us room to grow!

All three interviews completed at Church D referred to the moral failure of the Senior Pastor who had been moved to another appointment. The impactful fall-out from this situation was an issue for the congregation and staff. The result was that they admittedly suffered lack of trust with the new pastor. As the newest member to the church staff, Respondent C3 stated that they struggle to form relationships with peers

because their predecessor was not a team player and was disliked by the team as a whole. In both cases, it appears that the remaining staff must deal with the fall-out for the ongoing future.

The South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church offers mentors for those seeking ordination through RIM (Residents in Ministry) relationships that pairs a candidate for ministry with an ordained, experienced mentor. While the intent is to train and be helpful, D1 found the RIM process to be riddled with political agendas. In his own words, “I found the entire process to be disconcerting and instead of the encouragement and teaching I anticipated, several of the relationships I encountered were adversarial. Sharks popped up without warning in what should have been friendly waters.”

Conversely, G1, who was involved in the same process in another district, believed that RIM was very helpful and user friendly to young pastors who were learning the waters of leadership.

### **Contrasting Perceptions: Senior Pastor and Staff**

Among those surveyed, staff members overall saw their Senior Pastor in a more positive light than the Pastor’s self-perception of how their staff viewed them. Table 4.1 below states what the Senior Pastor in each church believes their staff would say or think about their leadership contrasted with the actual staff perception. Church H, where the Associate was highly complimentary of the Senior Pastor is an especially stark contrast.

<b>Church</b>	<b>Table 4.1 Senior Pastor’s Leadership Characteristics</b>	
	<b>Pastor’s Self - Perception</b>	<b>Staff Perception of the Senior Pastor</b>
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peacemaker</li> <li>• Avoids conflict but not afraid to deal with issues</li> <li>• Wants staff to dream together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loving, Cares very deeply</li> <li>• Loves what he does</li> <li>• Will move things forward but doesn’t want to be hurtful</li> <li>• Not a micromanager but will dive in if needed</li> </ul>

Church	Table 4.1 Senior Pastor's Leadership Characteristics	
	Pastor's Self - Perception	Staff Perception of the Senior Pastor
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young</li> <li>• Wants to move church in a new direction</li> <li>• A peer who is a team player</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respected, loved</li> <li>• Heart is in the right place.</li> <li>• Easy to work with</li> <li>• Great preacher</li> </ul>
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard worker</li> <li>• Caring</li> <li>• Effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard Working, Sharp</li> <li>• Peace seeking</li> <li>• Avoids drama and conflict</li> <li>• Easy to work for</li> <li>• Mediator, Shepherd</li> </ul>
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerned</li> <li>• Seeking to lead in helpful ways</li> <li>• Working to chart course</li> <li>• Provide helpful leadership</li> <li>• Pastoral, Systematic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult</li> <li>• Awkward</li> <li>• consistently bites off more than he can chew as a leader</li> <li>• Either pushes forward with agenda or hides in office.</li> <li>• Wants to project leadership and relationship but comes across bi-polar.</li> </ul>
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring</li> <li>• Avoids decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely caring</li> <li>• Goes above and beyond to be a Team Player</li> <li>• Sometimes finds it difficult to make decisions when feelings will be hurt</li> </ul>
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principled</li> <li>• Shepherd</li> <li>• Dedicated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Player</li> <li>• Wants Greater Good</li> <li>• Positive</li> <li>• Good Heart</li> <li>Doesn't want to upset</li> </ul>
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expect excellence</li> <li>• Want them to be best</li> <li>• High expectations</li> <li>• Giving Direction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driven</li> <li>• Dedicated</li> <li>• Detailed</li> <li>• Busy</li> <li>• Keeps track of relationships</li> </ul>
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Odd, Harsh</li> <li>• Not Emotionally in tune</li> <li>• Wants the best</li> <li>• Fair</li> <li>• Cold</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steers the ship</li> <li>• Strong</li> <li>• Courageous, challenges staff to be better and tackle difficult challenges</li> <li>• Final Authority</li> </ul>

Table 4.2 compares and contrasts responses to the perception of the staff. During interviews, each person was asked to state how they believed that the Senior Pastor viewed the staff. The Senior Pastors view of their staff is at minimum positive to highly complimentary. The staff responses are mixed and do not consistently agree with what their Senior Pastor responded.

Church	<b>Table 4.2 View of Staff Characteristics From Pastor Contrasted with Staff</b>	
	<b>Senior Pastor's Perception</b>	<b>Staff Perception</b>
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very Loyal, Committed</li> <li>• Work well together, even though there may be overlap at times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated</li> <li>• Fun</li> </ul>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good</li> <li>• Capable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggravating</li> <li>• Causing turmoil</li> </ul>
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hardworking</li> <li>• Room for improvement through learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good</li> <li>• Complete</li> <li>• Professional</li> </ul>
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great team</li> <li>• Growing Pains and honeymoon since Senior Pastor appointed less than one year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard Workers</li> <li>• Experienced</li> <li>• Effective</li> <li>• Competent</li> </ul>
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very good team but some staff unhappy with SPRC selection of Pastor's wife for a staff position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very good</li> </ul>
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing in maturity and team dynamics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding</li> </ul>
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capable</li> <li>• Effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective</li> </ul>
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent</li> <li>• Competent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed</li> </ul>

Table 4.3 states the interviewees assessment of relationships on the staff and the coaching health among the staff to discern what source they used for forming that opinion. Interviewees could choose excellent, very good, good, not so good, and non-

existent to describe relational health. Interviewees could assess or comment on relational health based on their opinion of the Senior Pastor, Program Staff, Administrative Staff, one or more program staff, or all of the above. All Senior Pastors are differentiated by the numeral 1 while other staff are labeled with 2 or 3.

<b>4. 3 Church Staff</b>	<b>Staff Relationships and Coaching Health</b>	<b>This Opinion Based Upon</b>
A1	Good	All staff
A2, A3	Very good	Program Staff
B1	Good	One or more program staff
B2	Very good	One or more program staff
C1	Very good	All Staff: I don't coach but model and have one on one conversations
C2	Very Good, supportive	Program and Ordained staff
C3	Very Good	Based on self
D1	Learning to dance, much baggage from former Senior Pastor and moral failure	All staff
D2, D3	Good	All Staff
E1	Good	All Staff
E2	Good	All Staff
F1	Good	All Staff
F2	Good	One or more staff: needs to improve
G1	Very good	All staff -- due to communication on expectations and onboarding for new employees
G2	Good → Very Good	Due primarily to Senior Pastor
H1	Very Good → Excellent Loving	All staff
H2	Good → Very Good	Openness, Above Average with room to grow Willing to learn

From the online survey, Instrument I, Question 23 gauged the success of current coaching among the staff, especially how the current Senior Pastor encouraged staff and built relationships. Of the nine responses, one stated that the coaching was “well intended

but not carried out well. It is more hit or miss.” Though the survey was anonymous, one response stated:

As the Senior Pastor, I keep open lines of communication with my team, making sure that my expectations are communicated and understood, I meet with each program staff weekly to talk about their lives, dreams, faith, and goals. I also do a monthly ‘staff seminary,’ and quarterly ‘staff day away’ to either plan or build chemistry.” A third responded, “We are getting much better at this. There have been some difficult situations, mainly with chemistry (though competency also came into play) and we are now able to work in harmony. Coaching happens situationally and through our two staff meetings each week - one for the entire team and another for program/ministry staff.

### **Response to Case Study**

A researcher-designed case study was submitted with interview questions by the researcher approximately three to seven days prior to the interview for consideration at the end of each interview. The fictitious characters described were created from a composite of staff members that the researcher had worked with or heard about over the course of her career. Each respondent to the case study, presented in full in Appendix D, affirmed the importance of chemistry and character above education or ability. D2 suggested that “research should be done to inquire who is truly the most divisive team member. It is up to the Senior Pastor to build relationships and work toward team buy-in. There must be shared vision and purpose if the church and the team are going to be healthy.” B1 believed that the Senior Pastor needs to work in coordination with SPRC to build character and appreciatively affirm the staff in public and in private. Their belief is

that to ignore issues creates more chaos. A very telling response came from the online coaching survey that is applicable: “One person can inhibit trust and connection of the whole staff.”

A2 and D3 believed that the Senior Pastor should take the lead in remedying the challenges. A2, with training in pastoral counseling, suggested that the Senior Pastor meet with the staff and state to them, “I sense that we are fragmented and then ask if the staff feels the same way,” before moving toward true assessment and working in coordination with SPRC to address what appear to be deep and divisive issues. D3 stated that the “Senior Pastor is the starting point to work down from the top to see how he can help and shepherd others to a better place. The Senior Pastor affects the entire staff and the church.”

The majority of respondents assessed unequivocally that the Senior Adult minister in the case study must be spoken to in a direct, open, and frank manner. If not willing to change, a staff member should be released from his position entirely based upon his inability to be a team player. C1 stated that this staff member was ineffective and that would lead to being fired. H1 encouraged “low hanging fruit” be addressed first and the “easiest problem to fix first would be removal of the uncooperative Senior Adult Pastor.” Anyone who is “critical of the team is off the team,” G1 stated unequivocally.

Responses were mixed in regard to the Youth Director but only one person stated that the Youth Director should be spending as much or more time away from their office “because they were likely spending time with the youth, which is part of their job description.” B1 believed the Youth Director should be coached with specific expectations of office hours and communication with the church office. H2 inquired

whether the fires alluded to in the case study were caused by staff or the congregation.

Was it possible that if these crises were caused by the staff, could the removal of one or more staff members change the dynamics of the current situation for the good?

Additionally, those interviewed felt a responsibility to help the Children's Minister with self-care and learn how to do their job to care for the children without sabotaging their own mental and physical health. G2 believed that the Children's minister could be aided with "time assessment" and prioritizing. Without coaching and direction from an experienced senior staff person, several interviewees were concerned that the Children's Minister was destined for burn-out or to potentially leave the ministry altogether.

Only C3 saw the Director of Music to be problematic and a source of conflict but admitted to having been in a real-life situation in which this was the specific challenge. The respondent's opinion was that the Senior Pastor or Chair of SPRC address staff members who do not work well with others and "be honest and assess whether drama follows them in relationships. If so, they should wake up!" This associate, whose spouse is an ordained elder serving in ministry at another level, further described that, "staff relationships are hard. My spouse says that 'the only thing worse than having no staff is to have any staff!' Individuals should be given honest feedback and asked what is needed in order to do their job better. The Senior Pastor is the key to relationships and whenever possible can and should say 'let's work on this together'"

Connecting with the Senior Pastor head-on about shared ministry was a priority for D1:

Address the Senior Pastor and ask them what is keeping your church from growing? What value is a particular staff person adding to my team? Persons must be able to do their job but with accountability. Always weigh pros and cons and be sure you want to follow through, considering potential outcomes. Ask yourself if you have done everything possible to help the staff member meet expectations.

One respondent, G2, asked how the situation descended into such dysfunction and how the workload could possibly be distributed so unevenly. G1 believed that “expectations should be clarified, and staff members told that if you light fires, they are your responsibility.” F1 believed that the Senior Pastor was the one most in need of help and responsible to make changes in the staff relationships, beginning with themselves. All interviewees showed familiarity with one or more depictions of the staff members. Respondent H2 stated multiple times, “I know this church! I’ve been to this church!”

### **Clarifications to Responses**

In response to Questions 18 and 19, which inquired if there were clarifications to any previous answers, A1 stated that great staff relationships were based on mutual understanding and commonality. A2 believed that an expectation of goal setting would be extremely helpful for staff members. Specifically, A2 said that the Senior Pastor should ask staff members individually, “Where are you now and where are you going from here? Working for different pastors means a large difference between pouring out versus pouring in.”

Interviewees were given the opportunity to add comments to anything that the researcher did not ask. A1, whose spouse is ordained and serves as an Associate Pastor in

the same church, questioned about research with clergy couples. He asked if there had been any feedback or questions in this research or from other participants specifically in regard to the Senior Pastor's spouse working on staff at the same church, "What element does this relationship bring to the table? It affects team dynamics—or it has for us as we have worked together--like adding a new spice to the soup. My wife has a strong personality and her presence has affected my ministry, our staff and our congregation in a positive manner."

### **Summary of Major Findings**

The data from this project yielded significant results from the church staff members who participated in the interviews. These results inform what builds robust staff relationships, especially in regard to coaching. These findings have the potential to influence the depth and success of staff relational investment in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church and beyond the denominational and geographic boundaries of this study. These results will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. In summary:

1. Staff members coached prior to and early in their ministry built more robust relationships.
2. Utilizing character, competency, and chemistry gave the relational investment a stronger, reinforced foundation that encouraged the church to grow and flourish.
3. Openness that is built upon compassion, honesty, and integrity between competent, committed, and caring professionals built healthy staff relationships and robust congregations.

4. The relational investments made are influenced profoundly by the Senior Pastor and a staff that followed that person's example set in word and deed.
5. One staff member can change the make-up of the staff chemistry and the ability of the church to obediently follow God.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT**

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

The research addressed medium-sized churches with a membership of 300 - 2000 persons. They are large enough to have hired a staff that includes professionals leading youth, children, and music ministries, and this staff is potentially augmented by an Associate Pastor, Executive Minister, or both. It is highly possible that these leaders are young chronologically or in the faith. Other staff may be present who are seeking an affirming environment but unable to find previous matches that encouraged their calling. Finally, there are those like this researcher, with three decades experience, ministering in medium churches, that simply prefer and thrive in a church where there is more of an intimate, familial atmosphere.

The opinions and experiences which the researcher gleaned during the research determined specific robust coaching practices in multi-staff churches in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. This chapter will summarize and report the major findings of the research utilizing the categories of character, competence, and chemistry as a basis of important multi-staff relationships strengthened by robust coaching practices. Specifically, it will address the fundamental importance of robust relationships, building upon the foundation of character, competence, and relational chemistry along with openness that is built upon compassion, honesty and integrity. These relational investments cannot help but be profoundly influenced by the Senior Pastor, and, not surprisingly, even one staff member can create a variance in the relational dynamics. Implications, limitations, and unexpected observations will follow

the major findings in the content of this section. Closing the chapter will be the researcher's personal observations and suggestions for further research.

## **Major Findings**

### **The Fundamental Importance of Robust Relationships**

In each church where interviews were conducted, there was a desire on the part of the Senior Pastor and the staff members interviewed to build relationships that were based upon good character, competence, and relational chemistry with the realization that this mandated an investment of time and energy. Those who spoke specifically to their desire to build these relationships put a high priority on communication in the work environment and upon relating with co-workers beyond the work environment through team building and one-on-one relationships among the staff. This allowed strong teams to complete individual tasks and to pull together corporately for the greater good of the congregation to reach goals.

Interviews revealed that Senior Pastors had learned from the life examples and wisdom of athletic coaches and music teachers along the way. Of the nineteen interviews conducted, only one person failed to name at least one influential Senior Pastor that they either work with currently or have done so in the past. Surprisingly, this same person, it should be noted, is the son of a retired United Methodist pastor.

Most often these past relationships were tremendously positive experiences but two Senior Pastors and two Associate Pastors, all of who are fully ordained, voiced that they had learned what not to do as a direct result of these early relationships. Of the nineteen interviews conducted, seventeen witnessed to the positive, encouraging, and robust effect of their current staff connections. Only two (less than 10%) seemed

disillusioned and disenfranchised because of their current or immediate past predecessor and these persons both serve at Church D where the Senior Pastor had departed following a moral failure.

Healthy staff relationships are, according to Trebesch's observation, "Flourishing people [that] have strong relationships and connectedness to community, contributing as well as receiving. They are curious about differences and suspend judgement for optimized learning" (12). Relationships can be time-consuming and difficult, according to Tuck, "The ministers on a church staff can provide the congregation with a model of servant ministry through their relationships with each other and by their performances of their responsibilities" (11). On the other side of the coin, when a congregation witnesses their staff working together as friends, they are encouraged and motivated to do the same within the family of faith, in their homes, and at places of employment. Lawson and Boersma confirm that God utilizes a wide variety of relationships to "strengthen and stretch us as we serve" including our families, vocation, and network of support outside of these integral bonds to build a strong relational foundation (5-6),.

Paul affirmed in Ephesians 4:1-6 that Christians, as leaders, are to act and live diligently to preserve the unity of the Holy Spirit in peace because there is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father who encourages Christians to walk in a manner worthy of the calling, especially in relationships by showing:

- humility,
- gentleness,
- patience,

- tolerance for one another in love, and
- diligence to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 emphasizes the importance of working together because a cord of three strands is not easily broken. If one falls, the other can lift him; a single person may be overpowered, but two, when working together in the power of the Holy Spirit, can fight together.

### **Building on the Foundation of Character, Competency, and Chemistry**

This research asked specifically about character, competency, and chemistry as the foundation of relational investments and framework for robust coaching. Whether within a staff meeting, a worship service, or daily life, other research has shown the importance of these relationships:

The life of the teacher is influential, conducting discipleship outside of traditional classrooms by moving it to real-life settings where both the discipler and the disciple have opportunity to see and learn from each other's context as well as behaviors will probably be more beneficial. (Law 137)

While often unspoken, the staff of the church are scrutinized for their life example and way in which they invest in relationships in the church and in real life. Ministerial professionals are expected to observe high moral character, competence in their work, and a relational chemistry that is exemplified through love, humility, and kindness that places others above self.

All Senior Pastors, with one exception, felt that they had been profoundly influenced or coached prior to becoming a Pastor by a specific person or persons that had set an example through character, competency, or chemistry or a combination of these

three foundational principles. Three of the nineteen interviewed discussed the implications of serving under a Senior Pastor they believed had a negative effect on their staff. Through these experiences the staff members determined what practices not to replicate. C1 referred more than once to learning from a Senior Pastor's actions and reactions about what not to do.

Pastor Bill Hybels, source of the triad character, competence, and chemistry that formed the basis of this research, believed that character was the highest priority for a team member of any kind but especially for a church staff. Character was so important that he found that if a person is unwilling to face mistakes and correct them they should be dismissed immediately, "I know that may seem extreme, but I've learned that it is nearly impossible for a team to fulfil its purpose when one member is involved in the difficult work of character reclamation." In the same article, Hybels stated that if he could secure an employee with great character, he sought to find the best qualified person in the field, "when I look around the table during our management team meetings, I see a Harvard MBA, a Stanford MBA, one Ph.D., two individuals with law degrees, and several with master's degrees. I am the only one seriously lacking in credentials!" When addressing chemistry, Hybels declares that every moment outside of his sermon preparation is spent in relationships doing the work of the Kingdom of God, "it helps if I really like being with those people! ...if two job candidates have equal character and competence, I'll give the nod to the person whose personality and temperament blends with the other team members and with me."

King Solomon instructed in Proverbs 1:1-9 the necessity and blessing of wisdom and discipline that is the beginning of knowledge and are better than the finest jewels one could purchase to wear. This includes the ability to

- comprehend words of insight,
- receive instruction,
  - in wise living and
  - in righteousness, justice, and equity,
- impart prudence to the simple a knowledge and discretion to the young, and
- let the wise listen and gain instruction, and the discerning acquire wise counsel.

John Wesley highlighted such accountability in structuring the Methodist movement through bands, classes, and societies. Wesley visited Pastors regularly who in turn were accountable with the leaders of their band, class, and society leaders. Those more mature in the faith coached those younger, and the answerability bettered everyone involved. Those who were faithful in small things increasingly were given more responsibility that included teaching the younger as well. This model did not originate with John Wesley. Jesus utilized it in teaching and sending out His disciples, and, as discussed in Chapter 2, Jethro taught Moses to use this accountable way to care for God's people in the Old Testament.

Haunted by the repeated words of Senior Pastor E1, "I have longed for a coach," this researcher believes that United Methodist Churches must put into place comprehensive and consistent on-the-job training and accountability measures to ensure the help their Pastors need. This, in turn, will aid staff and volunteers within these congregations toward better health. Two interviewees that work under United Methodist

Senior Pastors but were trained in Baptist schools related how they had worked each academic semester in real world training to preach, teach, and visit. This learning took place under the wing of an experienced Senior Pastor. Those two people were given the opportunity to function in a role in much the same way as a student teacher learns, first by observation, then by completing the same tasks with feedback from a professor or other experienced professional. Unless a new cleric learns as an Associate upon graduation from Seminary, they are left to their own devices and are forced to be self-taught via their education, instincts, and personal experience. A mature Pastor has life experiences and relational capabilities that a new seminary graduate can only hope for one day.

While those interviewed had not previously given thought to or labeled their relationships specifically as coaching, Senior Pastors consider their relationships to their staff a mentoring connection. This includes meeting regularly with their staff one-on-one to unpack scenarios and giving guidance on how to address difficult issues. Staff members who termed their Senior Pastor as good or very good at coaching referred specifically to their ability to make decisions regardless of the situation, even when feelings may be hurt. One hundred percent believed that their Senior Pastor cared deeply for them and their family. Another characteristic of robust coaching practices is that these Pastors and their staffs have a specific agenda for their staff meeting that goes beyond a calendar synopsis, which is a peripheral facet of their work in comparison with the importance of relational investments. Those interviewed who valued and described coaching as a high priority diligently schedule time for the professional staff to spend time together in the office and away from the church. Additionally, they work with an

open door to their staff and routinely utilize one-on-one time as a robust coaching practice.

While Senior Pastors may be viewed as supervising the staff, this gives a mistaken correlation with control. In reality, a ministry team is just that: a team. The Senior Pastor then is a team player with the others but coaches from a wealth of experience. Bonem specifies that:

Supervision has connotations of control and power. It suggests that those who are being supervised don't have enough knowledge to do the job on their own. While a coach may also have some degree of seniority or superior knowledge, the mindset is different than that of a supervisor. Consider these three attributes of a good coach in sports:

- Coaches care about their players. They genuinely want each individual on the team to thrive. Players are not interchangeable parts. A good coach sees them as people who are made in God's image and treats them accordingly.
- Coaches expect improvement. You can care about players and, at the same time, push them to be their very best. In fact, to not expect their best is uncaring. So good coaches work individually with players to help them take one step at a time to reach their full potential.
- Coaches want the team to win. Coaches care about individuals, but their ultimate responsibility is the success of the team. This statement may sound similar to a supervisor's mindset, but there's a difference. Coaches and supervisors both make hard calls about people. But the foundation of

care and attention from a coach means that tough decisions are easier to understand and swallow. (Quit Supervising)

Whether one is working with paid staff or volunteers, the message is simple: less supervising and more coaching is a winning formula. Experienced staff have learned that they need others who stretch them:

You have to be intentional, whether you want to medal at the Olympics or make disciples. I did not realize this at first, and it took me awhile into my ministry to learn to initiate relationships. I was lucky to have people who drew me under their wings. The reason I emphasize the importance even just of falling in with new people is to underscore the fact that others play a significant role in most of our achievements. We do not reinvent ourselves by ourselves. We need others. If we want to become, for example, wiser or more humble, we stand a far greater chance of doing so if we attach ourselves to people who embody wisdom and humility. All the more reason, then, to find the right individuals to turn to.

(Blodget)

The irony of this situation was seen in interviews with the two youngest Associates who each had less than five years' experience in full-time ministry. Both of them spoke with admiration and in very glowing terms about their Senior Pastors but openly disagreed with the researcher on the definition of coaching in Chapter 1, page 20 (Hyatt) or Appendix C (Researcher).

In the Old Testament, this coaching relationship is presented through Jethro, the Priest of Midian, who discipled and coached Moses, the Prince turned escaped murderer from Egypt. As Moses shepherded the flocks in the wilderness and married into Jethro's

family, God refined Moses and prepared him to actually lead the Hebrews back to the Promised Land. This relationship is glimpsed in Exodus 18. First, Jethro celebrates with Moses all that God has done and is doing for his people. This is followed by Jethro's instruction to Moses on how to govern the people fairly, effectively, and efficiently through delegation.

The Prophet Elijah poured himself into Elisha, as recorded in 1 and 2 Kings, to the extent that Elijah granted one wish to Elisha before being whisked into the heavens. Wisely, Elisha requested a double portion of God's Spirit to lead the people. Another coaching example from the Old Testament is the way Eli raised Samuel at the temple when his parents, Hannah and Elkana, gave him to the Lord. Samuel grew in wisdom and stature after he answered God's call, becoming the prophet of Israel that advised Saul and eventually David.

Jesus met regularly with his disciples to coach them via real life experience and to unpack perplexing situations. His parables had multiple meanings as he told the crowds that gathered, then taught through further explanations and discussion with the disciples. The Savior empowered them with the same authority and sent them to take the good news two by two. When they returned and asked why they were unable to complete some tasks, Christ taught them through word and example that difficult things are done only through prayer and fasting.

### **Openness Built Upon Compassion, Honesty, and Integrity**

Character, competency, and chemistry provide a sturdy relational foundation utilizing the materials of compassion, honesty, and integrity between competent, committed, and caring professionals. These people are capable of building healthy staff

relationships and robust congregations that can withstand the storms of life. The Senior Pastors interviewed referred directly to the use of these relational building blocks with their staff. Especially important was the utilization of affirmation that was a combination of these traits. B1 utilized what he termed a “compliment sandwich” that couples constructive criticism preceded and followed with affirmation. President Theodore Roosevelt drove this point home by saying, “No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care” (goodreads.com).

Research findings showed overwhelmingly the importance of building relationships between Senior Pastors and their staff. From observation of the physical environment within the church to the church receptionist and the staff interviewed, the researcher observed that one hundred percent of the program staff cared deeply about their church and each other. This honesty, integrity, and compassion is shown through the gift of time that the Senior Pastor gives to the staff from life experiences and a depth of love that only God can bring. Often this gift is assumed in the staff relationships, but in church A the Youth Pastor had specifically asked his Senior Pastor to coach him to become better. When this happens, there can be an open dialog that allows this coaching relationship to grow in ways that may not be possible if one party in the relationship is reticent or unwilling.

Lawson and Boersma state the “factors that power healthy work relationships: Trust, encouragement and affirmation, loyalty, feedback and evaluation, mentoring, partnership, shared vision and philosophy, and public affirmation” (101-105). Children in a healthy family environment thrive like flowers blessed with sun, water, and nutrients; adult relationships flourish in the same type of environment. In the Literary review of this

research, Bloom and Bloom were quoted to encourage staff to build strong relationships of support. Exposed to issues of life and death, great joy and extreme sadness, life in ministry can extract a high price on the wellbeing of any church staff member. The Blooms affirm that:

The need for safe relationships with ‘similar others,’ people who occupy equivalent positions and can truly understand what a pastor may be thinking and feeling. The importance of these connections can hardly be overstated. They offer empathetic understanding in moments of need, and an external perspective to help clergy process good and bad experiences; they can also provide personal advice about how to solve problems or cope with difficulties. In short, they support positive change, sharing from their experiences and journeying together towards maturity. In this sense, they can be seen as providing holistic support to ministers throughout their professional experience.

Each interview affirmed the importance of the familial connection through relational chemistry to be an encouragement to the members of the staff individually and to their team as a whole. While peers may coach and encourage each other, it is imperative that the Senior Pastor take the lead in modeling this vital practice.

Following the admonition to shepherd the people, Psalm 103:13 directs Christians to have compassion as the Father does on his children, and this should be focused on the congregation as well as colleagues. The prophet Jeremiah faced a dark night of the soul and found that:

The LORD’S loving kindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my

portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I have hope in Him.'...For if He causes grief, then He will have compassion according to His abundant lovingkindness (Lamentations 3:22-24, 32).

God's loving kindness is made real in the human relationships. Even though human love is limited, the perfect love of God can flow through people when they make themselves available. When people share compassion and honesty through lives of integrity, they embody God's love to others.

### **Relational Investments Profoundly Influenced by the Senior Pastor**

Relational investments made by the Senior Pastor set the tone and the staff will follow that person's example set in word and deed. Several of those interviewed said that their Senior Pastor set an example of excellence that challenged them to reach higher. Others, witnessing the care and commitment of their Senior Pastor, were working to learn more from him to make investments in their peers as well as those volunteers within their sphere of influence. B1, A3, and C3 spoke of a common experience with the researcher in which the Senior Pastor did not, or was potentially incapable of, making that life-changing relational investment. Under the leadership of such persons there may be harm, disillusionment, and even heartbreak to staff members and the congregations that they serve. It is rare for people so far advanced in their career to change. Those who observe such behavior and habits must endeavor to break the cycle of dysfunction and work to build healthier relationships based on the powerful lessons they have learned, even from poor examples.

Unquestionably, the influence of the Senior Pastor affects the environment and the people who work under their leadership. "Both ministry supervisors and church

boards have important roles to play in helping associate staff members thrive in their ministries” (Lawson and Boersma 5-6). The Pastor must be unafraid of implementing healthful methods or facing congregational conflict as:

The glue for the staff...[employees] should feel strengthened, affirmed, and that she and the church are on solid ground. In his best-selling book, “Integrity,” Dr. Henry Cloud talks about the two sides of a wake [of a boat]. The task side, and the relational side...be keenly aware of the tension between what is accomplished (tasks), and how people are treated (relationships) during the process of doing ministry...be continually aware of your actions, but also consider how your actions relate to the people around you. The congregation. Your staff. And your Senior Pastor. This awareness will greatly contribute to your success in ministry and the advancement of God’s kingdom. (Lenz)

Living life with exemplary integrity is especially important and must be deliberately safeguarded in order to set a powerful example. History is replete with people who intended to live well but through small omissions and neglect fell from grace. Others should follow the example of Jesus who, though He had all authority, led through the power of life-changing love. It is this kind of love and commitment, time consuming as it is, that will make an extraordinary difference for the leader who wants to finish well.

I Timothy contains many wise admonitions from Paul to his son in the faith about self-care and setting a godly example, the most direct instruction coming in Chapter 5 and to this particular point in verse 17: “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching”. The wisdom of Proverbs 11 encourages other to live by example with integrity:

- With humility is wisdom (v. 2)
- Integrity will guide and righteousness deliver the upright (v. 3, 4)
- Without guidance the people fall but with counselors they succeed (v. 14)
- The desire of the righteous is good, not wrath (v. 23)
- Scattering multiplies while withholding results in want (v. 24)
- The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life (v. 30)

Those who live genuine lives that are humble and open to God chose a higher road that is exemplary to those who follow and challenge them to grow deeper in their relationship with Christ and others.

### **One Staff Member Creates a Variance**

One staff member can change the make-up of the staff chemistry and the ability of the church to obediently follow God. In the research, the researcher anticipated that more than one church where he conducted interviews would have one or more staff members that they considered to be the “weakest link.” In reality, only one congregation hinted that this was a challenge for them. In that scenario, Church A, that particular staff member was the Music Director who chose a different theological path and through their expectations and inflexibility created additional and unnecessary stress for the rest of the staff and specifically for the Senior Pastor who had inherited this hire from a previous administration.

As previously stated, the former Pastor at Church D had left that church in the wake of his moral failure that was not revealed to anyone, including his staff, until hours before his departure. While he went on to another appointment, the church, and specifically the staff, were left to deal with the repercussions of the fall-out. The

researcher is not privy to whether any discipline was implemented by the District Superintendent or the Bishop in this situation. It is hoped that counseling was mandated by the conference for he and the family that he chose to abandon. Therapeutic efforts would go far in assisting his former staff and congregation to recover. By all appearances, the District Superintendent placed a new Pastor in this appointment and has taken a hands-off approach. It will take years or decades for these wounds to heal, particularly in the absence of anyone to admit wrong-doing and with no attempts to aid the healing from that previous Pastor.

While one staff person can pull down the entire team, another can have a positive effect to bring them up. This was made apparent in the interviews about current staff relationships. The tables provided in Chapter 4 gave insight into the comparison of how the Senior Pastor and staff roles are viewed by each other. Often these viewpoints are close matches. The largest discrepancies were at Church D where the current Senior Pastor was appointed six months ago and, in his words, is “still learning the dance.” In stark contrast, his team described this new coach as “a bull in a china shop” and as “bipolar.” Creating an even greater discrepancy were the responses of staff members serving under Senior Pastors who had been in place multiple years. Each of them spoke well of their Supervisor and the leadership they offered.

From the researcher’s three decades of personal observation, which was affirmed in the interviews, one staff person can profoundly affect the chemistry and the competency and character of the team. It should be noted that each of the seven Pastors that received high marks from their staff placed high priority on knowing their team, caring for them, and spending time with them outside of the staff meeting. These men

stated such in their interviews, and their staff corroborated this fact in discussion with the researcher. Character, competency, and chemistry were definitive in these relationships they said.

The contrast between two very different Pastors and how they viewed their staff situations was fascinating. H1 was his own worst critic and saw himself quite harshly in contrast to his Associate who termed him the best Senior Pastor that he had worked with in two decades of ministry. In contrast, D1 knew that he was in a battle to overcome the dysfunction left by his predecessor. What he did not see was that his aggressive pursuit of building staff relationships was increasing the angst and emotional dysfunction; what they wanted and needed was to be patiently loved unconditionally. Instead they felt increasing anxiety through what D2 and D3 termed as a difficult, awkward, and bipolar coach as he aggressively pursued or hid in his office.

Effectively addressing relational anxiety requires leading change through love and then stepping back to observe and evaluate behaviors. This allows staff members to understand their colleagues in a different light:

How do we understand others and their sense of fear and anxiety? Readiness work involves listening closely to what is being said, observing the actions and behavior, and ensuring enough time to process and work through. It involves helping people to name and identify the issues. Biblically, the counterbalance to fear and anxiety is not control, it is not knowing more, it is love. As the leader I am forced to ask, have I loved enough to build trust? Have I loved enough to lower fear and anxiety? Have I loved enough to move people to being willing and able? Have I loved enough to understand the differences? A core practice in

leading change is the ability to get behind immediate observations and answers to the motivations and hidden commitments. (Tumblin, “Anxiety and Readiness”) Nuechterlein affirms that today’s relationships are a direct result of loving faithfulness among the staff but are deeply rooted in their past:

High self-esteem enhances, low diminishes, staff relationships. Many times our emotions are held captive by experiences of our earlier years and transfer onto those whom we work with on a daily basis. For a staff member to have good self-esteem, they must identify emotions that hold them back or affect their relationships and how they relate to their co-workers. (135)

Whether it be a new hire, a current staff member, or an appointed Pastor, each must be at their best as a whole person, mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually, and care for themselves well before they can commit to and add value to the team.

Serving in full-time ministry is a joyful challenge. Church leaders endeavor to serve The Lord’s people here on earth in order to build up the Kingdom of God, which has eternal significance. As such, they must be mindful of the standards in this world and the next. Individually and corporately:

[Though we] walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

Those who are ministerial professionals have made a commitment to lead an exemplary life above the standards of the flesh and what is culturally acceptable, but they do not

labor in vain or in solitude. In fact, those individuals in a multiple staff church have the benefit of mutual encouragement and accountability if they will only make use of this gift.

I Thessalonians 5:11-15 encourages the building of the body of Christ, a task that can and should be embodied by the church staff as an example to those they lead.

Specifically, Paul exhorts Christians to:

- encourage one another
- build up one another
- appreciate those who
  - diligently labor among you and
  - have charge over you in the Lord
  - give you instruction and
  - esteem them very highly in love because of their work
- live in peace with one another
- admonish the unruly
- encourage the fainthearted
- help the weak
- be patient with everyone
- see that no one repays another with evil for evil
- always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people

While the majority of these instructions are affirmational, Paul is careful to state that those who do not meet standards should be admonished, helped, and encouraged by

further challenging them not to repay evil for evil. To do so requires that they seek God in prayer and study with daily consistency, seeking forgiveness when they miss the mark.

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

The intent of the researcher is to continue the conversation regardless of what the future holds with church staff members and create a blog that can be utilized to assist ministerial professionals to grow in grace, love, and faithfulness as they serve. While these people may have at hand the building blocks of character, competency, and relational chemistry, connections that are formed by the staff require a large intentional and daily investment. From that perspective, each staff member can and should make a commitment to the wellness and thriving of their team and their congregation. Self-care of the whole person and the body of Christ is non-negotiable.

The years of guaranteed appointments and hiring someone based on qualifications listed on a resume without checking references must end in order for the church to improve. Ideally, each conference of the United Methodist Church would offer a resource person to be available in a coaching capacity. The secular world has made use of such resources for years with great success. As such, this person should be independent of Pastoral or other staff duties which would divide their attention and affections. More than ever, church staff members need an objective and confidential listening ear. Such a person could encourage or facilitate a local, monthly meeting of peers in ministry and be available to coach one-on-one, be a consultant for churches with multiple staff, and have the ability to refer to a professional counselor as necessary.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The original hope was that a minimum of 50% of the Senior Pastors who met the minimum criteria of 300 - 2000 members and three or more full-time staff persons would complete the initial online survey (Appendix A) or at minimum, pass it on to their program staff to complete. In reality, less than 5% of these Senior Pastors completed the survey, and only two of them sent it on to their program staff to complete. Further, only four Senior Pastors agreed in that initial instrument to move on the second instrument, the face-to-face interview, instead of the initial ten to twelve or more that was hoped. In order to reach the minimum number of interviews additional pastors were sought through direct email request based upon a study of the South Georgia Conference. An additional six pastors agreed to be interviewed, and three Pastors agreed to allow a second Associate to be interviewed in order to add depth to the list of interviews and a wider variety of subjects. As previously stated, three interviews were disqualified for not meeting the criteria set for research.

Surprisingly, all the Senior Pastors interviewed were males. Though not many, there are some female Pastors in the South Georgia Conference, but they predominantly fit into one of three categories: they serve churches smaller than the research criteria or, if they are fully ordained elders who have served well, they are put on a fast track to serve in Conference Administration as a District Superintendent, or they serve with the Conference Council on Ministries.

The United Methodist Church has proclaimed “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” to welcome people outside the stereotypical Caucasian, Anglo-Saxon, Wesleyan background. In the South Georgia Conference, there are a minority handful of multi-

cultural congregations. Unfortunately, no African-American or Hispanic Churches replied to the invitation to the initial survey and thus did not agree to be interviewed for research purposes. When the researcher inquired about the existence of such congregations that fit the criteria for the research, she received a reply from the office of the Bishop of the South Georgia Conference nearly two months later, after the research had concluded. It was a list of less than six Senior Pastors. All serve inner city, metropolitan churches in very low-income neighborhoods with staffs that are primarily part-time employees. Hopefully, the church as a whole will become more inclusive and pour more resources into such congregations that will encourage their growth regardless of ethnicity, location, or income level.

### **Unexpected Observations**

An unanticipated result was how many pastor's spouses were involved. At least three of the eight churches employed the spouse of a Pastor, and two work directly under their husbands. If known interviews questions for the Senior Pastor and their spouse, regardless of whether they served in the same church, would have been included. Pastor E1 admitted during the interview that his wife was a staff member and, specifically, that when there was an opening the SPRC had contacted her directly to request her application. After meeting with her to discuss this employment and her husband had recused himself on the basis of partiality, she was offered the position. During the entire process, he testified that he was not involved at all because he knew that it could and did create friction among the current staff that she was hired. Because of her being placed in this position, some staff members who were reticent to accept her now view a "stacking" of the staff in favor of the Senior Pastor.

As a whole, Senior Pastors were regarded with respect and admiration. With increasing polarization across the landscape of our country, including the church, the researcher expected to find more staff members who were dissatisfied or jaded against their Senior Pastor, the congregation or both. Instead she found the opposite to be true with the exception of church D. That scenario might have quite different if it had not been for the moral failure of the former Senior Pastor.

### **Recommendations**

Above all, a course should be required for seminary graduation that would train ministerial professionals in real life skills that raise the opportunity for thriving as they lead their churches. Curriculum would focus specifically on coaching volunteers and staff, vision casting, how to lead a business meeting, and forming an annual budget. All graduates can make use of additional training in personnel management and policy, with emphasis on the overall cooperation that can spring from healthy relationships in ministry with laity and paid church employees. This should be taught through role play to allow these men and women to experience first-hand the basic skills necessary for survival. Investing in this manner could ensure longevity in ministry and pay dividends of robust relationships through accountable discipleship. These skills, while assumed by members of the multi-staff church as well as church hierarchy, are declining in today's culture. This is a direct result of the degradation of the family unit in the post-modern culture. Because there are no longer moral absolutes, it cannot be assumed that anyone, including those hired to work in churches, has a particular skill set or social standards to build upon.

Future research might focus on relationships between pastors and spouses that serve in ministry. As previously stated, this was an unexpected observation in this research. Some ministerial couples serve in the same church, such as churches A and E do so with the blessing of God and their congregation. It would be interesting to explore questions such as: What challenges do they face at the office? What effect does this have on their relationship and do they believe that it is detrimental or beneficial? While some spouses have the benefit of discussing work situations at home, do ministerial couples find this to be beneficial? How does this affect the relationships with the rest of the staff? Are there spouses that serve together in a church where neither are the Senior Pastor? What are their short- and long-term goals? What obstacles have these couples met and do they anticipate in the future?

Another suggestion for research could be a focus group of pastors who study relationships, with a pre- and post-test focused on a specific area of relational investments such as with program staff, their family, or leading laity within their congregation. They could consider a specific text together or utilize work produced by the researcher designed to improve these relationships.

Tangibly, the researcher intends to create a handbook of personnel policy, discussion starters, and team-building exercises that could be used by groups or individuals in a variety of settings such as staff meetings or in a semi-annual retreat. There are already a variety of resource tools available for use by church staff in the form of print and digital media, as well as human resources in the form of life coaches and experienced leaders. The primary challenge is to convince pastors and their staff to use what is readily available to them. This may be as simple as making people aware of these

resources and the fact that they can and will benefit from stopping long enough to read and hear other opinions. In other settings, the church may need to be convinced to spend funds on these resources. The time and energy saved can justify their use. Sadly, many ministerial professionals already have too much to do as they juggle the day-to-day demands of their work coupled with the swarming unexpected crisis that occur on an ongoing and unpredictable basis.

Before narrowing the focus of this research, the researcher had solicited personnel policies from multi-staff churches for comparison and analysis. She believed that this would assist other churches in initiating an updated personnel policy of their own. Secular sources encourage an update to these important instruments every two to five years. Most policies reviewed did not address personnel issues adequately nor were they current. One church's policy was nearly two decades old. One further goal is to combine the policies received into a template that any church, regardless of size, could utilize to begin their work on bringing their own instrument to a state of readiness.

### **Postscript**

Certain legs of this journey more closely resembled an orb in an arcade pinball machine rather than a breathtaking hike to the summit of a mountain. While there have been hairpin curves and picture-worthy moments along the way, building relationships is messy and difficult. I have attempted, as much as possible, not to allow my personal trials to flavor or bias the research.

Each Senior Pastor and their associates interviewed were encouraged to take as much time to answer the questions as fully as they desired. A few were perfunctory and brief, but, thankfully, they were not the majority. I observed firsthand the desire of these

servants who endeavored to grow closer to Christ and to their colleagues each and every day, regardless of whether they were sought out, misunderstood, or underestimated. To pour your best into a person on your team, whether a colleague or volunteer, demands great love, commitment, and patience. To play the role an encouraging coach is offering yourself as part parent, part best friend, and part counselor. That is, making relational investments that will pay big dividends but with no guarantee. Sometimes someone whom you think shows the most promise betrays you and another, who seems to show no hope at all, becomes a rags-to-riches story.

If what I have learned through decades of experience combined with this research can be utilized to help one staff member or one team to function at a higher level because they have learned to communicate more effectively and love unconditionally, my years of investment have been well worthwhile. I hope it will strengthen the character, competency, and chemistry of individuals and teams who are willing to learn from the mistakes made by and lessons learned from others!

## APPENDIX A

INSTRUMENT 1

*Initial Online Survey to All Self-Selecting Churches meeting the criteria of 300-2000 members and three or more full-time program staff persons*

## Initial Survey for all Program Staff

Top of Form

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1. You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Mary Crowson, a Doctor of Ministry Candidate at Asbury Theological Seminary.

You have been selected because your church meets the minimum criteria for this research: the church that you currently serve has a minimum of three full-time program staff persons which include the Senior Pastor and a membership average of 300-2000 persons. The three full-time staff members may not include secretarial, custodial or church school employees.

If you agree to participate in this research, you will take part in a brief, 15 minute online survey for which there is no financial compensation. No one except the researcher will know that you participated or how you answered this survey.

Any names voluntarily given will be coded to protect the privacy of anyone who chooses to be involved. If, at any time while taking the survey you decide that you would rather not participate, you can simply close the window on your computer and delete the email that you received. If anything asked during the survey makes you uncomfortable, you can tell the researcher. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask the researcher questions at any time about anything in this study. If you complete the survey and submit the survey upon completion, this confirms that you have read the informed consent and are participating voluntarily.

If you do not want to participate, stop now. Do not proceed any

further. If you have questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Mary Crowson at 478-697-2601 or [mary.crowson@pfumc.com](mailto:mary.crowson@pfumc.com).

Participation in the study is voluntary and totally confidential. You can access the [surveymonkey.com](#) privacy policy [here](#).

***If you are participating in this research voluntarily AND there are three or full-time program staff (that work 30 hours per week or more) at your church, please click yes to question 1 to continue.***

**Full-time program staff may not include custodial, secretarial or school staff within the church but may include lay or clergy persons whom are responsible for facilitating ministry for the purposes of this research.**

By clicking yes, this signifies that you agree that you have been told about this research, why it is being done and that you are participating as a willing volunteer.

**Please click "no" if you prefer not to participate OR your church does not meet the minimum of three full-time program staff.**

**In clicking "no", you will be redirected and disqualified from answering any additional questions.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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Bottom of Form

2. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

\*3. How would you describe your ethnicity?

- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Latino
- ☐ Asian

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Another race

\*4. How old are you?

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65+

\*5. How many years have you been in full-time ministry?

- ☐ 1-3
- ☐ 4-8
- ☐ 9-15
- ☐ 16 or more

\*6. What is your current title at the church?

**\*7. *Before proceeding further, please read this important definition to keep in mind for the questions you will be asked in the remainder of the survey:***

**Coaching**, as defined in this context, is a relationship between two or more ministry professionals that shares similarities with mentoring. The coach is an experienced adviser, possibly the Senior Pastor, who helps the staff to further discover who they are, who God is calling them to be and what He is calling them to do. Coaching may include ministry planning, vision casting or priority management to assist staff members in becoming better stewards

of their time, energy and gifts. Unlike mentoring, the target of coaching is specific, measurable improvement and maturation in targeted areas.

Have you ever received any training on how to coach church staff or volunteers? If yes, please describe.

\*8. Have you at any time ever been mentored or coached previously, formally or informally? If yes, what role did this person play (Senior or Executive Pastor, Professor, Parent, Athletic Coach or Group Leader, etc.)? If multiple persons, please list as many as you would like.

\*9. For the purposes of this research, best coaching practices may involve developing leaders in three areas: character, competence and chemistry.

***Character defines a person by their relationship with God and others through integrity, honesty, courage and behavior.***

How important is the development of character to your staff?

- ☐ Extremely important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Not so important
- ☐ Not at all important

\*10. Regarding character, how consistently does the staff develop/work on growing in character?

- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Twice annually
- ☐ Quarterly
- ☐ Annually
- ☐ Not at all or Not Applicable

11. How much does your staff value character?

- ☐ Extremely valuable
- ☐ Very valuable
- ☐ Somewhat valuable
- ☐ Not so valuable
- ☐ Not at all valuable

12. If you answered that the **character** of your staff overall ranged from very good to poor or non-existent, did you choose your answer based upon:

- ☐ Yourself
- ☐ One or more support staff (clerical, custodian or non-program personnel)
- ☐ One or more program staff (non-ordained, lay personnel)
- ☐ One or more Associate Pastors (ordained, appointed personnel)
- ☐ Senior or Executive Pastor

\*13. The second component in robust coaching is competence. ***Competence addresses education, abilities, knowledge, skills, and commitments that enable individuals and teams to complete a variety of tasks.***

How important is the development of competence to your staff?

- ☐ Extremely important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Not so important
- ☐ Not at all important

\*14. Regarding competence, how consistently does the staff develop/work on growing in competence?

- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Twice annually
- ☐ Quarterly
- ☐ Annually
- ☒ Not at all or not applicable

15. How much does your staff value competence?

- ☐ Extremely valuable
- ☐ Very valuable
- ☐ Somewhat valuable
- ☐ Not so valuable
- ☐ Not at all valuable

16. If you answered that the **competence** of your staff overall ranged from very good to poor or non-existent, did you choose your answer based upon:

- ☐ Yourself
- ☐ One or more support staff (clerical, custodian or non-program personnel)
- ☐ One or more program staff (non-ordained, lay personnel)
- ☐ One or more Associate Pastors (ordained, appointed personnel)
- ☐ Senior or Executive Pastor

\*17. The final component of robust coaching addresses chemistry.

***Workplace chemistry includes a spark or connection similar to a family and allows them to do effective work, pulling together and with positive momentum as a team.***

How much does your staff value chemistry?

- ☐ Extremely valuable
- ☐ Very valuable
- ☐ Somewhat valuable

- ☐ Not so valuable

\*18. Regarding chemistry, how consistently does the staff develop/work on growing in chemistry?

- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Twice annually
- ☐ Quarterly
- ☐ Annually
- ☐ Not at all or not applicable

19. Would you rate the importance of chemistry to your staff as....

- ☐ Extremely valuable
- ☐ Very valuable
- ☐ Somewhat valuable
- ☐ Not so valuable
- ☐ Not at all valuable

20. If you answered that the **chemistry** of your staff overall ranged from very good to poor or non-existent, did you choose your answer based upon:

- ☐ Yourself
- ☐ One or more support staff (clerical, custodian or non-program personnel)
- ☐ One or more program staff (non-ordained, lay personnel)
- ☐ One or more Associate Pastors (ordained, appointed personnel)
- ☐ Senior or Executive Pastor

\*21. Do you believe that your Senior Pastor cares about you as a person and wants you, your family and your ministry to thrive and succeed?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

\*22. Do you believe that your staff teams cares for each other?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

\*23. Some authors suggest that the performance and growth of a team reflects how the team is coached. Please briefly describe your perception of the coaching of your staff team.



24. Optional:

If you would like to provide additional information regarding questions 8-23, please do so below.



25. As you think about your own coaching knowledge and skill, what one thing would help you be a better coach of staff or volunteers?



26. What coaching materials have been useful in helping you grow as a coach of staff and/or volunteers?

27. Are there additional comments on coaching, character, competence or chemistry that you would like to offer to the researcher?

**28. The researcher is conducting one-hour, face to face interviews with those who have experienced coaching relationships now or in the past.**

**As a reminder, the definition of coaching for this research is:**  
*a relationship between two or more ministry professionals that shares similarities with mentoring. The coach is an experienced adviser, possibly the Senior Pastor, who helps the staff to further discover who they are, who God is calling them to be and what God is calling them to do. Coaching may include ministry planning, vision casting or priority management to assist staff members in becoming better stewards of their time, energy and gifts. Unlike mentoring, the target of coaching is specific, measurable improvement and maturation in targeted areas.*

If you have been a coach or have been coached by someone else, you may qualify for a face-to-face interview.

**The interview criteria for the research requires that the Senior Pastor and one Senior Staff member be interviewed separately by the researcher, a process that requires approximately one hour for each person. Participation would further this research and potentially assist others to enjoy better, fuller relationships within their church staff setting.**

All answers would be recorded and confidential. If you are willing to participate, please list your contact information below.

Name

Church Name

Address

Address 2

City/Town

State/Province

ZIP/Postal Code

Email Address

Phone Number

---

## APPENDIX B

**Relational Coaching Research Demographic Survey**

By completing this survey, the researcher has my permission to use the data below as submitted.

Top of Form

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\*1. Please enter the following

Name of Church

Year Founded

Current Membership Count

Your title

Years Employed by this Congregation

Your Name

Your City

County

Your district of the South Georgia Conference

\*2. Regarding ethnicity, would you characterize your congregation primarily as:

- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Middle-Eastern
- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Multi-Racial

\*3. What is the average age of those attending your weekend worship services?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65+

\*4. Would the location of your church be considered

- ☐ metropolitan (250,000 or more)
- ☐ large city (100,000-249,999)
- ☐ small city (50,000-99,999)
- ☐ town (10,000-49,999)
- ☐ village (2,000-9,999)
- ☐ rural (1,999 or fewer)

\*5. Would the combined household income in the area surrounding your church be considered

- ☐ Upper Income Household (\$200,000 or more)
- ☐ Upper Middle Income Household (\$100,000-\$199,999)
- ☐ Lower Middle Income Household (\$50,000-\$99,999)
- ☐ Low Income Household (\$49,999 or less)

\*6. Income level: Please check what best applies to the members/constituents of your church

- ☐ \$50,000 or less
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$100,000
- ☐ \$101,000 - \$200,000
- ☐ \$201,000 and above

\*7. How many worship experiences do you host each weekend?

Check all that apply:

How many Traditional?

How many Contemporary?

How many Blended?

How many specialized by target age or specific style of music?

\*8. What program staff does your church currently employ? Please check all

applicable:

	Full-Time	Part-Time	Appointed/Ordained	First Career	Not Applicable
Senior Pastor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Executive Pastor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Associate Pastor (s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistant Pastor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young Adult/College	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adult/Senior Adult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music Traditional	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music Contemporary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Missions/Evangelism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discipleship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Small Groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**APPENDIX C****ON-SITE FACE-TO-FACE  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

This interview is solely for the purpose of research and, as such, each of your answers remain anonymous and confidential. As part of the research, I am asking two things prior to starting the interview.

A. Would you please sign this informed consent that states you are participating voluntarily and receive no compensation in return for your participation?

B. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed, assigning each participant a code to obscure their identity to maintain confidentiality. Do you agree to being recorded as part of this interview? If so, please initial on that line under your signature on your informed consent.

I give my permission for this interview to be audio recorded (initial) \_\_\_\_\_

At any time, if you so choose, you may stop this interview or reserve the right not to answer any question asked by the researcher.

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_

2. Title \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many years in full-time ministry? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many years have you served at this church? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Are you ordained? If so, please state your current status \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is this your first vocation? Yes      No      If no, what was your first vocation?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Before we proceed with the remainder of the interview, please allow me to review my definition of coaching. **Coaching** is a relationship between two or more ministry professionals and shares *similarities* with mentoring. The coach is an experienced advisor, possibly the Senior Pastor, who helps the staff to further discover who they are, who God is calling them to be and what He is calling them to do. Coaching may include ministry planning, vision casting or priority management to assist staff members in becoming better stewards of their time, energy and gifts *Unlike mentoring, the target of coaching is specific improvement and maturation in targeted areas set by the coach or mutually agreed upon by both parties.*

7. Have you ever been coached prior to your career in full-time ministry?  
Yes      No

If yes, by whom and in what environment?

What best practice in coaching was utilized that you found most helpful?

8. When you consider your relationships in ministry, has anyone in a particular role helped you to grow in character, competence or relational chemistry with a staff team?

What best practice in coaching did that person utilize that you found most helpful?

9. Were the coaching relationships that you previously experienced productive? Why or why not?

10. In these scenarios, was a formal curriculum or text utilized?

11. a. Do you currently coach staff, volunteers or both in this church?

b. Do you utilize a particular curriculum in this relationship?      Yes      No

12. If an appropriate and compelling text were readily accessible, would you consider utilizing it?

If yes, would this tool be more helpful to utilize for:

A. coaching staff one on one

B. discussion in regular staff meetings

C. both

13. What best coaching practices in ministry would you like to implement or replicate and where did you learn them?

---

14. For the purpose of this research, I am studying the effect of character, competency and chemistry in multiple staff churches.

A. Character defines a person by their relationship with God and others through integrity, honesty, courage and behavior. What does this means to you and how does it affect the way that you interact with others on your team here at the church?

B. The second "C" in coaching is competence. Competence addresses education, abilities, knowledge, skills, and commitments that enable individuals and teams to complete a variety of tasks. What does this means to you and how does it affect the way that you interact with others on your team here at the church?

C. The final "C" of robust coaching addresses chemistry. Workplace chemistry includes a spark or connection similar to a family and allows them to do effective work as a team.

What does it mean to you and how does it affect the way that you interact with others on your team here at the church?

15. What coaching practices, or lack thereof, have you found harmful or detrimental in ministry?

---

16.

**A. To Senior Pastor:**

How does your team perceive you?

If they could choose one word to describe you, what would it be?

If you could choose one word to describe your team, what would it be?

**B. To the Senior Staff Member:**

How does the staff perceive about the Senior Pastor?

If the staff could choose one word to describe your Senior Pastor, what would it be?

If the Sr. Pastor could choose one word to describe your team, what would it be?

17. How do you perceive current coaching relationships in your church. Would you select excellent, very good, good, poor or non-existent?

18. Did you choose your answer to the previous question based upon (check all that apply):

☐ Yourself

☐ One or more support staff (clerical, custodian or non-program personnel)

☐ One or more program staff (non-ordained, lay personnel)

☐ One or more Associate Pastors (ordained, appointed personnel)

Senior or Executive Pastor

18. Are there any clarifications you would like to give to any of the questions?

---

19. Is there anything you haven't been asked that you would like to add?

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**APPENDIX D****Case Study Scenario for Face-to-Face Interviews**

Among the staff at your church, there are multiple staff members who are young or inexperienced. The Youth Director is disorganized and rarely in their office. The Children's Director works long hours trying to keep everyone happy but their physical and spiritual health is in peril. A Diva, the Music Director wants everyone to love whatever music they choose in spite of a narrow taste. The Senior Adult Minister is a retired Military Chaplain who has no patience for the rest of the staff, including the Senior Pastor. And, last but not least, the Senior Pastor is so busy putting out fires from the staff and attempting to prepare sermons that (s)he has neither the time nor energy to visit, disciple or do long-term planning.

*If, after prayer, you could initiate one thing to redirect one facet of this scenario, what would it be and why?*

## APPENDIX E

### **Informed Consent Letter**

I am a Doctor of Ministry participant at Asbury Theological Seminary and I am conducting research on the topic of leadership and coaching in multi-staff churches. It is my desire to survey full-time staff members at churches with 300-1200 members with three or more full-time program staff. Because your church in the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church fits this criteria, the Senior Pastor and staff of this church were requested to complete online surveys. To further clarify the research, I am conducting face-to-face interviews. Interview participants were chosen from Senior Pastors who volunteered participation and a Senior Staff member that they chose for a parallel interview.

As you know, staff relationships can be a very sensitive issue for those who work in a church. I want to assure you that your responses will be kept confidential. I do not want to do anything to jeopardize the relationships in your church, so I do not ask for your name on this survey. The data will be collected using a code and all of the surveys will be collated to give a blended view rather than to identify any one person.

I believe staff relationships and coaching are central elements to the success and growth of any church and I believe the findings from this survey will allow me to assist congregations as they seek to improve the work environment for those serving on staff. My hope is that churches from around the country will be helped because you, and others like you, have taken the time to participate. Once the research is completed in a few

months, I will destroy the initial surveys and keep the anonymous data electronically for an indefinite period of time, at least until my dissertation is written and approved.

I realize that your participation is entirely voluntary and I appreciate your willingness to consider being part of the study. Feel free to call or write me at any time if you need any more information. My number is 478-697-2601 and my e-mail is mary.crowson@pfumc.com.

Please know that you can refuse to respond to any question during the course of this interview. If at any time during this interview you decide that you prefer not to participate, you may simply ask me to stop the interview and we will conclude the interview at that time. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Mary Crowson

I am a volunteer participant in the study described above and so indicate by my signature below:

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

(please print)

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