

**CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH CONGREGATIONAL
ASSESSMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

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by

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ABSTRACT

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by

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My Doctoral project is designed to explore and identify issues that have created decline and a poor quality of church life. I will examine literature and biblical passages that address the unhealthy church and of lack of competent leadership. I will highlight several biblical references that will address current church issues around decline and congregation life.

My research evaluation will give voice to the problems, needs and strategy for revitalization of the local church of fifty or less that struggles to remain alive and relevant in this current church economy. The literature will provide praxis to assist pastors and congregations in revitalizing or rebranding their declining church.

My project will provide an example for other congregations with similar demographics and will serve as a resource for such churches and ministries that seek to evaluate their effectiveness, assess their health and address their strengths and weaknesses.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Nature of And Reasons for This Project

Chapter one will explore the nature and reasons for this project that focus on the significance of capacity building through congregational assessment and ministry leadership development. A strong and healthy congregation needs spiritually competent leadership to be effective. For a church to thrive and remain effective from generation to generation, leadership beyond pastoral ministry is necessary. Outlined in this chapter is the history of the Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary, Indiana and the City of Gary, Indiana which have an influential relationship that impacts capacity building and ministry leadership development for this project. Also included, is an explanation of how the project will proceed, including pertinent definitions, assumptions, and limitations. The concerns that will be addressed represent genuine problems in pastoral ministry relative to capacity building and ministry leadership development that negatively impact the church congregation.

A lack of capacity building and leadership development contribute to spiritual decline in the Metropolitan Baptist Church. There is a need for capacity building in the church to promote competent ministry leaders who have the tools, knowledge, and skills needed to build the body of Christ and nourish the congregation. Also, the history of the Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary, Indiana, the history of the City of Gary, Indiana, and concerns around the origin of the problems; the lack of capacity and poor leadership will be discussed. Moreover, the impact that the lack of capacity and poor leadership has had on my congregation will be shared. These concerns are the cause of spiritual decline

within the Metropolitan Baptist Church. A brief personal history in terms of church affiliation and exposure to ministry development is provided.

I am a third-generation pastor, raised in the Baptist church on the west side of Chicago. My grandfather, three great uncles, three uncles and more than 10 cousins have served as pastors in my lifetime. Having experienced the rise and decline of congregations due to church members coming and going for a variety of reasons. My experience is based on having served six congregations, four established churches, and two church plants. Several family members organized churches that continue to thrive even today.

A good amount of time was spent attending church planting training, church growth conferences, ministry development meetings and other venues that would provide the tools that were necessary to effectively work towards the improvement of the church. Although I have served several churches, I have never experienced the level of decline, apathy and organizational collapse being experienced in my current pastoral ministry.

A strong and healthy congregation needs spiritually competent leadership. For a church to thrive, leadership beyond pastoral ministry is necessary. The transitioning and stages of church life bring to bear questions that need to be answered for our declining congregations to remain visible, viable and vocal in the community. By transitioning and stages of church life we mean the current circumstances and age of the congregation. The circumstances and the overall age of the congregation often determine the activity of the church. While serving a different church in my thirties, tremendous growth and development was realized; this was in part because the membership consisted of many

young families. The commonalities between the pastor and peers within the church provided the congregation with competent and capable leadership that was necessary to accommodate the growth of the church.

What are the roots of incompetent leadership? What occurred to render the church ineffective and on the verge of life support? What is the significance of discipleship to the fundamentals of a church leadership role? There is a need for capacity building to equip a church to grow naturally and spiritually. There is a need for professionalism in leadership rooted in biblical principles and spiritual integrity.

In Ephesian 4:11-16, the Apostle Paul addresses the gifts given to the church to build up the body. These gifts are given for the edification of the body of Christ:

¹¹ “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^[e] and teachers,^[d]¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^[e] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”¹

In addition, the lack of adequate building up of the body and nourishment of the local congregation has led to the moral, spiritual, financial and numerical decline in many churches. The Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary, Indiana has slowly lost the competent leaders and the deterioration of the organizational structure did not happen

¹ All biblical references will be taken from the English Standard Version of the Bible (ESV), unless otherwise noted.

overnight. There has been a gradual decline over the years and throughout the tenure of various pastors. And, under my watch, it has come to full manifestation.

After being chosen as the interim pastor of the Metropolitan Baptist Church, various ministry initiatives were implemented as a result of debriefing with the congregation concerning their needs:

- A. Selected 12 senior women to become church mothers
- B. Started prayer calls for the mothers on Mondays
- C. Facilitated a monthly leadership workshop
- D. Reinstated the weekly bible study
- E. Visited all the incapacitated members
- F. Started 30 Days through the New Testament
- G. Started 30 Days of prayer and fasting
- H. Trained a devotion team
- I. Hired a music director and quality musicians
- J. Reignited the youth ministry
- K. Organized an evangelism ministry
- L. Created a discipleship program
- M. Developed a social media presence
- N. Reconnected church fellowship
- O. Maintained office hours
- P. Started trustees training
- Q. Started ushers training
- R. Started additional Sunday School classes

There are other ministry-related activities that could be a part of this list. Despite these initiatives, Metropolitan still faces decline and possible death.

Demonic strongholds are indicated by the lack of capacity and inadequate leadership. This problem has plagued Metropolitan for decades. This research is intended to explore a few of the root causes, effects and options of a dead church. The idea of a dead church may raise eyebrows, but the reality is clear: an unhealthy and ineffective church in the community is dead or dying. This may be applicable to anyone who face these realities.

In addition, some would say the city of Gary, Indiana has one of the poorest socioeconomic disparities in the country. Statistics would agree with that evaluation of the situation considering the insecurity pertaining to food availability and quality, economic despair, dismantling of the public-school system, silence of the church, declining population, and apathy around morality and matters of justice.

The next section will discuss the problem that plagues the Metropolitan Baptist Church and many churches and ministries with similar demographics.

Introduction to the Problem

The problems that exist in the context of the Metropolitan Baptist Church is a lack of capacity and poor leadership. Simply stated, there is a lack people who have the skills, knowledge, tools, and resources necessary to competently perform in ministry. There are only several members who are willing to adhere to a disciplined process of leadership development; this has been a long-term issue. The problem has roots that manifest in ways that are detrimental to the growth and spiritual development of the congregation.

This doctoral project is focused on church revitalization through capacity building and leadership development. The Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary, Indiana is the setting for this project. This research will explore establishing a church by equipping and edifying leaders who, in turn, increase the capacity to build up more people.

The church is a microcosm of the City of Gary, Indiana. I am utilizing the word “microcosm” because of the similarities of socio-economic decline and parallels between the City of Gary and the church on a smaller scale. In the following section, I will discuss the problem of the church, the City of Gary and the potential for the rebranding of our church.

Next, the historical context of Metropolitan Baptist Church will be discussed to give insight into the dynamics that precipitated the current situation. The historical context of the church and the issues that led to the present-day problem of lack of capacity and competent leadership will be highlighted.

Historical Context of the Church

The Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary, Indiana, Incorporated, was organized in November 1962, as the Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church under the leadership of Rev. Floyd E. Dumas, Sr. Metropolitan was birthed out of a controversial split from the Galilee Missionary Baptist Church of Gary where Rev. Floyd E. Dumas served as pastor for two years. Pastor Dumas served the Metropolitan Baptist Church for thirty-eight years until his health deteriorated.

Many church members have stated that the quality church leaders began to leave the church near the end of Pastor Dumas’ tenure. As a result, the leadership qualifications

and expectations had substantially declined. The decline is based on the lack of training, required skill sets, experience, and know-how in terms of the ministry leadership. Consequently, upon the selection of a new pastor, people who were uncommitted, untrained, lacked biblical knowledge and who were carnal thinkers began to take leadership roles.

For eight years, the church declined numerically, financially, spiritually, morally and physically. In addition, the congregation was devastated by the resignation of the pastor and, immediately afterward, another pastor in the community took on Metropolitan as his second church. Basically, he was a Sunday preacher and seldom at the church. He spent no time on leadership development or church revitalization. After a while, he became the pastor and served for three years. Three years later, he left under contention and split the church over a crisis-driven issue to start a new church. Seven weeks after his departure, he died.

While I was preaching at Metropolitan Baptist Church on the Sunday that he died, the members were stunned. The church was in denial, but they were also hurt by his departure and devastated by his death. Many of them had spoken negatively about their former pastor. However, active listening and spiritual presence were offered to understand their hurt from the past. Prayer and condolences were shared to encourage them to remain strong and not to focus on the bad memories of the last pastoral tenure. Shortly thereafter, I became the interim pastor, serving for one month. On the last Sunday as interim pastor, the church elected me as the Senior Pastor which resulted in me inheriting a grieving, wounded, fractured, abused, abusing, hurting, demoralized, depleted and dilapidated congregation.

The church saw itself as normal. However, the process of breaking the cycle of this false identity is a stripping and equipping process, they were living in the past. The church members were holding on to what they used to be as if the church was still the same as in its glory days. The Greek word for equipping means to restore, to complete, to perfect. Restoring a person back to God's original design is a critical part of breaking the cycle of despair. We want to create a cycle of authentic identity; this begins with creating self-awareness by helping each person rediscover their gifts and talents. As the membership take responsibility for their gifts and talents with a grateful heart, it produces true humility, which produces authenticity—and from the authenticity, love and service arise and their light begins to shine.²

The reality of destructive cycles can be alarming. However, it can be affirming that nothing remains the same. A thorough assessment and properly addressing the root causes can lead to breaking unhealthy cycles; this can lead to establishing the identity that the scriptures have declared for the church.

The state of the church is a microcosm of the City of Gary. In the City of Gary, residents are experiencing a food desert. Basically, a food desert is an urban community that lacks access to and availability of food with high nutritional value. The City of Gary has a history of leadership with no nutritional value. The City of Gary has struggled as a result of poor leadership, poor leadership is qualitative and quantitative in nature. The soil of the City of Gary has been contaminated by the steel mills and other environmental

² Barna Group, "A Missing Link In Christian Leadership," *Research Releases in Leaders & Pastors*, last modified 2013, <https://www.barna.com/research/a-missing-link-in-christian-leadership/>.

contributors. In a like manner, the churches have been contaminated by poor leadership, lack of leadership, economic violence, and other external influences.

In addition, the focus on being healthy is based on eating right, but the real focus on health must be placed on building up the soil and making it very fertile. Rich, fertile soil is necessary for increased health. Consuming lots of fresh fruits and vegetables grown in impoverished soils provides produce with little to no nutritional value.

Moreover, the idea of poor, infertile soil producing a poor quality of fruit is a metaphor for the quality of life faced by the church. The foundation of Metropolitan Baptist Church appears to have been affected since its inception. Metropolitan was birthed amidst a church fight. As a result, the contention and confusion that existed in the beginning have been passed along throughout the life of the church. To establish a revitalized congregation, the Metropolitan Baptist Church needs a new reputation, and a new beginning.

Next, some historical context of Gary, Indiana will be shared. The background and development of Gary, Indiana should shed light on the challenges and changes that have negatively impacted our community, our churches and the people in general.

Historical Context of Gary

The City of Gary Indiana's historical context lends itself to hope for a brighter future. Gary has experienced talents such as musical sensations like Michael Jackson and the Jackson Five, actor Fred Williamson, and wrestler and dancer Sharmell Sullivan-Huffman.

The University of Indiana Northwest is a positive highlight in the City of Gary. The Nursing program, Pre-Med program and School of Social Work provide a quality education for students from near and far. In the past, Gary's public-school system was a leader across the nation.

The Gary, Indiana public schools, founded in 1906, were developed by Superintendent William A. Wirt from 1907 to 1938 and quickly expanded into an illustrious example of Progressive education through the 1920s. Wirt's school innovations, particularly a more diversified elementary curriculum and flexible schedule, as well as, improved facilities, paved the way for his selection as Gary's first professional superintendent. Heavily influenced by the ideas of the American philosopher and educator John Dewey, as well as his own rural, Protestant background, Wirt believed that public schools should provide salvation for the children as well as the community.³

Historical information with respect to the Gary School system is being shared to establish that there are, and have always been, outstanding qualities within the city. There are people, organizations and leaders who have the best interests of the residents and the overall well-being for the future of the City of Gary at heart. I see education as a part of the salvific restoration of the city. Hosea 4:6 states, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." That passage suggests that people are perishing for the lack of knowledge and are being

³ "Gary Schools," last modified 2019, <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2002/Gary-Schools.html>.

destroyed because of their refusal to accept knowledge and the willful neglect of leadership to share knowledge.

Gary has a tremendous amount of land, the railways, the highways, water, the steel mill, the University, the baseball stadium, the Genesis Convention Center and plenty of unchurched people. The dominant population is Black or African American. Note the population distribution in table 1.

Table 1. Demographics Gary, Indiana

| Race | Population |
|--|-------------------|
| Black or African American | 62,676 |
| White | 10,803 |
| Some Other Race | 1,744 |
| Two or More Races | 1,638 |
| Asian | 300 |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | 129 |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander | 126 |

Source: "Gary, Indiana Population 2019," *World Population Review*, last modified 2019, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/gary-in-population/>.

How My Project Will Proceed

This section will discuss how this project will proceed. The details provided in each chapter will progressively create the big picture.

Chapter One will introduce the history and background of the church and ministry. In addition, chapter one will explore the nature and cause of the problem that exists within the context of Metropolitan Baptist Church and the origin of the problem and how it has manifested in the congregation.

Chapter Two will discuss the biblical foundations for this project, share insight from seven passages of scripture that address church challenges and problems that congregations face today. The biblical passages are listed below:

- A. Biblical Reference 1: Luke 10:1
- B. Biblical Reference 2: Genesis 6-9
- C. Biblical Reference 3: Nehemiah 4:6
- D. Biblical Reference 4: Revelation 2:1-6
- E. Biblical Reference 5: Revelation 3:1-14
- F. Biblical Reference 6: Ezekiel 37
- G. Biblical Reference 7: Acts 6:7
- H. Biblical Reference 8: Acts 2:42-47

In addition, Chapter Three will review seven books that address the subject matter of this research. The books are listed below:

Book 1: *Surviving Ministry: How to Weather the Storms of Church Leadership* by

Michael E. Osborne

Book 2: *Problems of Christian Leadership* by John Stott and Ajith Fernando

Book 3: The Seven Pillars of Church Revitalization & Renewal by Tom Cheyney

Book 4: Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again by

Andrew M. Davis

Book 5: Scrappy Church: God's Not Done Yet by Thom S. Rainer

Book 6: Church Revitalization from the Inside Out by R.D. Stuart

Book 7: The Unstuck Church: Equipping Churches to Experience Sustained

Health by Tony Morgan

Chapter Four will share the research findings and the results of the surveys that were used in this study. Chapter four will report the information as it was tabulated by our facilitator. Also, it will include charts and graphs of the pastor survey results and the membership survey results.

Chapter Five will discuss the implementation and strategy of pragmatic steps to initiate the necessary steps to address the process of capacity building and leadership development in the Metropolitan Baptist Church.

Finally, Chapter Six will conclude this project with observations of key points that stood out throughout this project that could be of value to other pastors, churches and ministries. With my observations, I will include recommendations for pastors and churches.

Definition of Terms

The following terms that are of great significance for my project and will be defined: 1. Microcosm, 2. Revitalization, 3. Capacity building, 4. Church leadership and 5. Leadership development.

First, the word microcosm. Microcosm is a “little world”— “mikros kosmos” in Greek. The Greek term was modified to “microcosmus” in Medieval Latin. When early medieval scholars referred to humans as miniature embodiments of the natural universe, they either employed the Latin word *microcosmus* or they used the English translation “less world.” “Man is called the lasse world, for he shewyth in hymselfe lyknesse of all the worlde,” wrote John Trevisa when he translated the Latin text of Bartholomaeus Anglicus’ encyclopedia in the 14th century. But, by the 15th century, scholars had adopted an anglicized version of the Latin word: the word we use today— “microcosm.”

4

Second, the definition of church revitalization by Tim Harmon in church “revitalization is, a return to life . . . a return to vitality . . . a return to health. Importantly, what we are talking about here is spiritual life, vitality, and health. The concept of ‘church re-vitalization’ presumes an existing congregation that was at one time spiritually vivacious but is in a state of stagnation or a cycle of decline.

Statistics show that church plants cannot keep pace with the number of existing churches that are dying. In short, more churches are dying than are being planted. The solution is to invest in existing churches rather than neglecting them. In order to keep an even pace, revitalization work is imperative. “Church revitalization does not intend to merely accomplish stylistic changes, programming changes, homogeneity, or numerical

⁴ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/microcosm>

growth. The main goal of church revitalization is spiritual life, spiritual vigor and spiritual growth.”⁵

Third, Capacity Building is defined as the process by which individuals and organizations obtain, improve, and retain the skills, knowledge, tools, equipment, and other resources needed to do their jobs competently. It allows individuals and organizations to perform at a greater capacity.

Fourth, church leadership refers to the ministry leaders of the church. This includes, but is not limited to, trustees, finance, music, evangelism, discipleship, Christian education, children, youth, seniors, legal clinic, community garden, mothers, food pantry, and so on.

Fifth, leadership development. Leadership development deals with monthly training, mentoring and the edification of persons who will avail themselves to the process of learning. This learning will take place formally and informally. The idea is to equip potential leaders with knowledge, tools and skills to build their capacity to lead.

Assumptions

Many researchers believe that the Christian church in America is experiencing a decline. There are varying opinions as to the major contributing factors which challenge the church today. Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary, Indiana is an example of a church that needs revitalization as a result of lack of capacity and poor leadership.

⁵ “Church Revitalization: A Manifesto,” last modified March 28, 2017, <https://transformedblog.westernseminary.edu/2017/03/28/church-revitalization-a-manifesto/>

Some suggest the decline is due to the emergence of the millennial generation and their apathetic views toward the institutional church. Others give a biblical rationale that we are living in the great falling away that the Scripture predicts. Then there are others who have church burnout. The last group appears to be most prevalent among long-term church attendees, pastors and ministers, children, and folks who have invested their lives in the local church over an extended amount of time.

The Statement of Limitations

The focus of this research will be limited to the deacon's ministry and general membership and leadership of the congregation. It focuses on the ministry and church-related activities that add value to the life of the congregation or take away from the viability of the church fulfilling its mission in the earth.

Research Methodology

The research methodology will include the following: the facilitation of a Pastor's survey, church membership survey and the evaluation of the results through Qualtrics, an online survey tool that will be overseen by Professor Marsheila Harris, Ph.D. The pastors will be invited by a phone call and/or referral. Each pastor must meet the criterion of serving a congregation of fifty or less, leading a congregation that is experiencing a decline, actively serving a church that is dead or dying and any or all the above characteristics of a declining congregation.

Dr. Harris will facilitate the explanation, completion and processing of the data in order to ensure a confidential, reassuring opportunity for each participant to have their opinion expressed without fear of consequences or violation of their private feelings.

Upon completion of the surveys, Dr. Harris will create graphs, charts and reveal the data for the research as recorded to the Qualtrics and report that data accordingly.

CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Chapter one explored the nature and reason for this project focusing on the significance of capacity building through congregational assessment and ministry leadership development. For a church to thrive and remain effective from generation to generation, leadership beyond pastoral ministry is necessary. Chapter one outlined the history of the Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary, Indiana and the City of Gary, Indiana and the influential relationship that impacts capacity building and ministry leadership development. The concerns addressed in chapter one introduced genuine problems in pastoral ministry relative to capacity building and ministry leadership development that negatively impacts the church congregation.

Chapter two provides a review of eight biblical references and how they relate to the research subject. The eight biblical references chosen are relevant to the research and evaluation of the problem that exists within the congregation of the Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary, Indiana. The authors share information that can be helpful in discovering a potential solution for issues that hinder the congregation from growing naturally and fulfilling its purpose in Christ. The biblical references will shed light in terms of what God has said about the topic at hand. Also, the biblical references will provide pertinent examples of what worked for people that God used in the Bible.

Biblical and Theological Foundation

Chapter two forms the foundation beginning with ecclesiology, the study of the church, and the characteristics and nature of the church. Also, this chapter will examine the strengths and weaknesses of individual churches in Asia Minor that Jesus addressed in the Book of Revelation. Furthermore, chapter two will explore biblical leaders of

revitalization, God and revival, the nature of the church, and additional aspects that will assist in unfolding insight into the issues that plague the Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary Indiana.

The nature of the church, (ecclesia), which is called out by God will be discussed. The church is called out to worship God, walk together in righteousness and love, and to be witnesses in the community. This is what characterizes the nature of the church. The church is described as a body, as a bride, and as a living organism.

Moreover, chapter two will explore the church and Eschatology. It will address the relationship of the church to end times. The church will be examined in terms of its posture as we anticipate the return of Christ. Hebrews 10:24-25 states, “let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised: and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting *one another*; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.”⁶

Christology will come to bear through the biblical text and its relationship to the church, revitalization, leadership development and capacity building. Matthew 16:18 states, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”⁷ Jesus gives us a better understanding of who he is in a conversation with his disciples.

⁶ *American Standard Version*. (1995). (Heb 10:22–25). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos

⁷ The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

A. Biblical Reference One: Matthew 9:35-38

Matthew 9:35-38 states, "And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'"

In Matthew 9:35, Jesus went through cities and villages teaching and He had compassion for the multitudes. He asked for prayer for help for the harvest. Jesus returned from His preaching and healing circuit. The result, as at the close of the first one, was the gathering of a vast and motley multitude around Him. After a whole night spent in prayer, He had called His more immediate disciples, and from them had chosen the twelve. Then, He came down from the mountain, on which this was transacted, to the multitudes that waited for Him below. Soon after this, the multitudes were still hanging on Him. Jesus was touched with their wretched and helpless condition.⁸

Matthew 9:36-38, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted."

This reading, however, has hardly any authority at all. The true reading doubtless is, "were harassed. "and were scattered abroad—rather, "lying about," "abandoned," or "neglected."⁹as sheep, having no shepherd—their pitiable condition as wearied under bodily fatigue, a vast disorganized mass, being but a faint picture of their wretchedness as the victims of pharisaic guidance; their souls

⁸ Jamieson, Robert, D.D.; Fausset, A. R.; Brown, David. "Commentary on Matthew 9:36". "Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible". .
https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/jfb/matthew-9.html. 1871-8.

⁹ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 2, pp. 34–35). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

uncared for, yet drawn after and hanging upon Him. This moved the Redeemer's compassion.¹⁰

"Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous—His eye doubtless rested immediately on the Jewish field, but this he saw widening into the vast field of "the world" (Mt 13:38), teeming with souls having to be gathered to Him. But the labourers—men divinely qualified and called to gather them in.¹¹

In verse 38 Jesus says, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, the great Lord and Proprietor of all. Compare Jn 15:1, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. "that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. The word properly means "thrust forth"; "When He *putteth forth* His own sheep." (See on Mt 4:1).¹²

This passage relates to Metropolitan in many ways. The potential is great for soul winning. The City of Gary is ripe for a harvest of new converts. The people are hungry for renewal. Yet the same problem exists at Metropolitan. There is a lack of capacity and there is a lack of good leadership. The work is obvious, but there are not enough laborers to meet the needs and demands of ministry.

The Greek word for laborers is *Erg-got-ace*¹³ and means one who works for hire, an agricultural workman, a toiler or teacher. Also, there are a few willing workers. The writer speaks to the lack of quantity and quality, i.e. time, number, degree and intensity. There is a solution for every problem that seems somewhat insignificant to some. The

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 2, pp. 34–35). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

importance of prayer cannot be emphasized enough. The hope in any situation is prayer. In a similar passage John 4:35-36, the harvest or act of reaping represents the gathering of men into the Kingdom of God. Also, it refers to a time of reaping, the final judgment when the righteous are gathered into the Kingdom of God and the wicked are cast into hell forever.

The harvest is ripe suggests the time is now and the opportunity to impact the kingdom is available and ready to bring in the harvest. Many avoid this opportunity because of the work that is involved in harvesting. Reaping is time consuming and involves a process. It requires patience and persistence. It takes energy and enthusiasm. The ripe harvest has a reward attached to it. This is what sowers and growers anticipate. The sowers and growers are putting all that they have into the hopes that the seed will bring forth an abundance.

The few leaders that have served the church often complained that they do not have time or that they are not willing to work outside of their personal schedules. They consistently refuse to make themselves available. As a result, the congregation has suffered, the pastor is overwhelmed with work, the church does not realize its potential in Christ and the leadership is stuck in a cycle of immaturity.

The hope is prayer. The only reliable tool is prayer. The remedy to the challenge of few workers is to pray to the Lord of the Harvest. This is an important biblical concept. We are to pray to the One who controls the harvest and is in the position to hear our prayers and answer them according to His will. In prayer we must believe that God is able to do what we ask of Him. We must appeal in a desperate posture yet call on the Lord with the confidence of being in relationship with Him.

Prayers must be specific, not as if God does not know our needs, but that He wants us to communicate our needs to Him. We should pray for laborers in the harvest. We have an urgent demand for committed leaders, compassionate leaders, and consistent leaders. Prayer is often downplayed and discounted. On one occasion over thirty years ago, I asked a Senior Pastor for a prescription for successful preaching and ministry. He replied, “the secret to successful preaching and ministry is to pray, pray and pray more.” I thought to myself, certainly there must be more to this than praying. However, over time and through life experiences, I have learned that prayer is the key. As a child, people said, “prayer is the key to the kingdom and faith unlocks the door.” If we pray to the Lord who controls the harvest, He will release what is necessary for the harvest just as He has provided the harvest in the first place.

This biblical passage highlights the tremendous need that Metropolitan faces. The church lacks capacity. There are not enough workers who have the capability to appropriately assist in the harvest. There is no lack of unsaved people in Gary. There are generations of folks who need a Savior. Yet, the leaders that are needed are seldom found. Thereby, leaving the harvest without adequate support.

B. Biblical Reference Two: Genesis 6:9-22

The second biblical reference is found in Genesis 6:9-22,

⁹ These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh,^[e] for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴ Make yourself an ark of gopher wood.^[d] Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. ¹⁵ This is how you are to

make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits,^[e] its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. ¹⁶ Make a roof^[f] for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. ¹⁷ For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. ²⁰ Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come into you to keep them alive. ²¹ Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them.” ²² Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

Noah was given what appeared to be an impossible task. God called Noah to expect what he or no other had experienced in the earth. God told Noah that it was going to rain. I can imagine how surprised and alarmed Noah was to hear that it would rain for forty days and forty nights. Next, God enlisted Noah into leading a project that would require a great sacrifice from him. Noah preached for one hundred and twenty years, a message that could have been viewed as ridiculous and without merit. He said it is going to rain. He said what God told him to say. After all of Noah's preaching he could only convince his family to believe the message that was faithfully preached. Noah and his family were to commit to an ark filled with animals; two each of a kind in order to reproduce their own kind. I can just see that ark crowded with animals, filled with odors, feces, noisy animals, and most likely an uncomfortable environment. However, this was necessary to fulfill God's purpose and plan in terms of humanity.

Noah's ark sounds a lot like the process of trying to transform a church in decline into a revitalized church. Dealing with the nuances of people can be odiferous, uncomfortable, and messy. Church people can be rowdy in spirit, needy, and even cramp

your space. It is a tremendous challenge to balance obeying God, leading people through change, and attaining the outcome that revives the life of a congregation.

Noah exhibited great leadership characteristics. He was a risk taker, he was committed, he had faith, he was a man of patience, a family man, he had good organizational skills, management ability, and a teachable spirit. He was willing to trust the plan of God. We live in an era where people are selfish, faithless, uncommitted, unteachable and unwilling to follow the word of God. Relativism has caused many people to question God and resist any level of dedication to the local church.

In this current church economy, we have prosperity preachers who preach simply to name it and claim it, blab it and grab it. Prosperity preachers remove the sacrifice and service out of pastoral ministry and Christian ministry. They elevate avoiding any struggle in life and vilify pastors, churches and ministries that experience decline, transitions and problems that may lead some congregations to shrink or even close. Many new pastors have become their own standard, they despise tenured pastors, they reject wisdom from those who have weathered the storms and have made it through rainy seasons. Many pastors today focus on budgets, buildings and bodies. They only want that which they can count and selfishly take the credit. The story of Noah resonates with the Metropolitan Baptist Church. There are obvious comparisons and contrasts.

There are two most impressive dynamics of the story of Noah that I cannot overlook. First, there is the fact that he preached faithfully for one hundred and twenty years and only eight people were saved from the forty days and forty nights of rain devastation. Secondly, Noah preached a warning regarding the coming rain for one hundred and twenty years. This was in preparation for the forty days and forty-nights of

rain that would occur. God is so amazing that he gives more than enough time to allow all to repent and to change their ways. 2 Peter 3:9 states, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." God has a purpose for His people and His church. I believe that even in His displeasure He wants to preserve that which is the presence of God on earth.

The ark Noah built is a prototype of the declining church. God is angry with humanity because of their sin. Yet God takes a remnant and uses that group to replenish and rebuild according to his original design. The declining church just like the animals in the ark have the potential to reproduce and thereby be used of God to build capacity and develop leaders to revitalize the community and more importantly the world.

Noah's assignment is a challenge that many pastors today would shun and seek a more aesthetically appealing option, a less physically demanding option or such a walk of faith. Noah's ministry was to obediently follow God's plan and to faithfully work within the context where God placed him. God oversaw the results. All the nuances that occurred on the journey to fulfilling the will of God would be handled by God himself.

The Metropolitan Baptist Church has seen glimmers of hope imbedded in what appears to be a hopeless situation. Metropolitan can identify with Noah's story to some degree. It is difficult to faithfully preach to people who have rejected truth and disobeyed the word of God consistently. Those who vow not to comply or cooperate with the change necessary to make it through the storm will reap the consequences. God has allowed a remnant to remain. God determines whether He will revitalize or rebrand a congregation. Noah's management of the animals, his family and the tremendous

assignment that was given to him speaks volumes. Noah's obedience and trust in God was a part of the restoration process.

In contrast, Metropolitan lacks people who are willing to obey the word of God. The rejection of God's word created a vacuum by removing the conduit that imparts faith. Romans 10:17 states, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." This deficit of faith causes problems in the church context because it requires faith to accomplish the assignment of God in the earth. Hebrews 11:6 states, "6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." The lack of obedience to God's word and lack of faith has contributed to weak and carnal leadership. The poor leadership and lack of capacity stems from not having an adequate pool of teachable and committed members.

C. Biblical Reference Three: Nehemiah 4:6

The third biblical reference is found in Nehemiah 4:6 and reads, "So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined to half its height, for the people had a mind to work."

Nehemiah 4:1-6 states, "Many a good work has been looked upon with contempt by proud and haughty scorers. Those who disagree in almost everything, will unite in persecution. Nehemiah did not answer these fools according to their folly, he looked up to God with prayer. God's people have often been a despised people, but he hears all the slights that are put upon them, and it is their comfort that He does so. Nehemiah had reason to think the hearts of those sinners were desperately hardened, else he would not have prayed that their sins might never be blotted out. Good work goes well when people have a mind to it. The reproaches of enemies should quicken us to our duty, not drive us from it."¹⁴

¹⁴ <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/mhc/nehemiah/4.htm>

Nehemiah 4:6 states, “So we built the wall.” Nehemiah and his rebuilding team were not distracted by the hecklers, threats or any opposition that the team faced. They rebuilt the walls because the people worked together. Each team worked in their respective area and they diligently strived toward a common goal. There are several reasons why Nehemiah’s revitalization efforts were successful.

First, the people were willing. The Scripture states, they “had a mind to work (v.6).” The people were on the same page with Nehemiah. The people connected with the needs of their homeland and they were all in. God answered Nehemiah’s prayers. King Artaxerxes granted his request, but without the people he could not have fulfilled his goal of rebuilding the walls. Revitalization cannot occur with a single good leader. It must be a team effort. The congregation must buy into the reality of the present and the potential of the future state of the church. If we work together revitalization is possible.

Second, the people were motivated by a common ancestry. Their heritage was the driving force to unite and to restore what was once a glorious symbol of their existence. Moreover, as Ezra was focusing on reestablishing the worship and the temple, Nehemiah had a viable ministry objective that would restore their rich religious integrity and their historical foundation. The church membership must look forward even as they look back. There can be a certain amount of pride in what God did for the church in the past. However, we must recognize how God intends to lead the congregation in the present in order to preserve the life of the church for the future. If we are to leave a legacy that can speak for itself, it starts with those of us who can make a difference now.

Third, the reason Nehemiah’s efforts were successful was because of the collaboration of all the workers, the donated resources, the vested interest, the passion of

the workers, and everyone having the end goal in mind. John C. Maxwell says, “Teamwork makes the dream work, but a vision becomes a nightmare when the leader has a big dream and a bad team.” So, to make teamwork possible, we must first understand the dangerous and undermining traits of bad teams:¹⁵

- A. Bad teams are comprised of selfish individuals whose me-first attitudes scale to *me-only* results. As such, they work in silos and do not communicate well at the team level, keeping key information and best practices to themselves.¹⁶
- B. Bad teams are dysfunctional with personalities and communication styles that do not complement one another. This can feed a toxic environment where productivity suffers while backbiting runs rampant.¹⁷

Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.” I have often heard this passage preached, but it was always bent toward telling people they are perishing because he refused to accept God’s knowledge. However, I believe God has words for both sides. God speaks to the prophet and the people. The priest was guilty because he refused to proclaim the word of the Lord and the people were perishing as a result of rejecting knowledge.

¹⁵ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2019/05/08/what-makes-a-sales-team-work-teamwork>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

The people had a mind to work, their hearts were engaged in the work. The people had skin in the game, and they were passionate about the project that was at hand. It is impossible to complete a team task with an individual effort. The Priest, the Levites, the men of Jericho, the sons of Hannessaah and so many others as listed in appendix 3.

Thirty-nine years ago, I was employed by the brokerage firm, A. G. Becker in downtown Chicago. After working for several months, I presented a plan to assist young men in the community to become active in church and out of harm's way in the streets. I started a basketball team at my grandfather's church. A few of the brokers from my job accepted the proposal. My supervisor who owned a sporting goods store joined in the commendable effort. We were able to recruit some of the best basketball players in the Austin community on the Westside of Chicago. They bought us uniforms, gym time, donated a vehicle, hosting games in the North suburbs, and paid all fees that were associated with several tournaments, but when we got to tournament, after all the practice, new uniforms and a good supporting cheering section, we lost miserably. Why? We had great players, but our team was horrible, no one passed the ball. Once the ball was passed, it was not passed again. We lost several games because of little to no capacity for teamwork.

Metropolitan Baptist Church relates to the church at Smyrna and the church at Laodicea in Revelation Chapter three. The love for God and God's people has shifted to selfish desires and ambitions. The Metropolitan congregation talks about their former love for the church and fellowshiping with one another. However, the lack of enthusiasm creates vacuums of poor leadership and heightens the need for capacity building. The letters were written to local churches in Asia Minor regarding their

strengths and weaknesses. Each of the churches received observations and commendations around their attitudes and actions. Jesus called out the church in Ephesus for losing their first love. It appears that Metropolitan's deviating from their commitment and devotion to the ministry manifests in immature Christians and people who reject the cost of discipleship.

D. Biblical Reference Four: Revelation 2:1-29

The fourth biblical reference is Revelation 2: Revelation 2:1-7 states, "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands:

I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you do not tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles, but they are not. You have discovered they are liars. You have patiently suffered for me without quitting, "but I have this complaint against you. You do not love me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches, but this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do." Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

Revelation 2:1 state, "To the messenger of the ecclesia in Ephesus write: 'Now He is saying Who is holding the seven stars in His right hand, who is walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.'" The seven stars are the messengers of the seven ecclesia's (Rev 1:20). Christ is holding these messengers in His hand, just where He holds the clay that He crushes and makes into a new vessel - a new creature in Christ. The seven lampstands are separate, not one unit as they were in the Holy Place of the Sanctuary. This may well symbolize the ecclesia being dispersed or scattered at the time of the end.

The true believers will not be in an organization or structure, but Jesus will be right there in their midst, wherever they are gathered.¹⁸

These seven messages, found in Revelation 2–3, were to Ephesus, the church that lost their love (2:1–7); Smyrna, the Persecuted Church (2:8–11); Pergamos, the Compromising Church (2:12–17); Thyatira, the Corrupt Church (2:18–29); Sardis, the Dead Church (3:1–6); Philadelphia, the Faithful Church (3:7–13); and Laodicea, the Lukewarm Church (3:14–22).¹⁹

“A Theology for Churches under Pressure. Revelation was written from exile by John (1:1) as a circular letter to the churches of Asia Minor (1:4) during the reign of Domitian, when growing persecution had already led to at least one martyrdom, at Pergamum (2:12-13), portending a worse crisis. Pergamum had been the regional pioneering city for the imperial cult. When a temple was dedicated to Domitian on the western side of the marketplace in Ephesus, the leading city of Asia Minor and the first to be mentioned in John's letters to the churches, other cities of the province followed suit in a wave of popular fervor. Christians informed against by their Jewish enemies (2:9; 3:9), who were exempt from the requirement to participate, were pressed to join in honoring the Roman emperor *divus*; refusal could be a capital offense. The choice was between Caesar and Christ. From beginning to end revelation presents itself as an exhortation to endurance. Its large predictive element supports this thrust, a point that is important for its balanced interpretation.”²⁰

In verses 2-4, “I am aware of your acts, and your toil, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear evil men, and you try (test) those saying that they themselves are apostles, and they are not, and you found them false; and you have endurance, and you

¹⁸https://goodnewsaboutgod.com/studies/spiritual/revelations/seven_churches.html.

¹⁹ Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., & Harrison, R. K., Thomas Nelson Publishers (Eds.). (1995). In *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

²⁰ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/revelation-theology-of.html>

bear because of My name, and are not wearied.” “You bear because of My name.” This means that they bear persecution because they have the *name* or character of Christ.

First, the Commendation to Remember in verse 2-4. Jesus said, “I know your deeds, I know your diligence, and I know your dedication.” These followers of Christ test the doctrines of apostles with the Word of God and can discern truth from lies in most instances. They do not get weary. They work hard for the Lord, but maybe they do so by doing God’s work their own way.

Verse 5, “But I have against you that you have left your first love. Remember, then whence you have fallen, and repent, and do the former acts. Yet if not, I am coming to you, and shall be moving your lampstand out of its place, if ever you should not be repenting.”

Second, the Complaint to Remember in verse 5. Jesus said, “you have left your first love and you have lost your fellowshiping love.

Verse 6, “But this you have, that you hate the acts of the Nicolaitans, which I, also, hate.”

The Nicolaitans claimed to be Christians, but they were indifferent to practicing adultery, and to eating things sacrificed to idols.” According to Irenaeus, a second-century minister, they believed their faith in Jesus released them from obedience to some of the Ten Commandments.²¹

²¹ https://goodnewsaboutgod.com/studies/spiritual/revelations/seven_churches.htm

God warned that if they did not repent, He would remove their lampstand from out of its place. A lampstand signifies light and spreading that light to others. However, if they did not repent, their lampstand would be removed, and they would no longer discern truth. When they reject truth, “God will bring on them a strong delusion so they will believe a lie.” (2 Thessalonians 2:11)²²

Ephesus enjoyed wide respect as a pagan religious center. Artemis, a many-breasted goddess of fertility also known as Diana, was worshiped there. (Acts 19:35) Aquila and Priscilla, a dedicated couple who were tentmaker friends of Paul, were part of the ecclesia in pagan Ephesus.

Third, the Compliment to Remember in verse 6. Jesus said, “You hate the Nicolaitans’ deeds”.

Verse 7, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the ecclesia’s.”

Fourth, the Caution to Remember in verse 7. Jesus discussed a Call to return, a Candle to be removed and a Command to be received. To the one who is conquering, to him will I grant to be eating of the tree of life which is in the center of the paradise of God. Most Christians today have no interest in hearing truth, and less interest in putting it into practice. They prefer to believe what they prefer to be true.

Revelation 2:8-11 highlights Smyrna, the church that would suffer persecution. The city of Smyrna (today Izmir in Turkey) was located just about 35 miles north of the city of Ephesus.

²² Ibid.

In all of this there existed what was called “municipal vanity” and it was known for its “municipal rivalry and pride.” Everyone there wished to exalt Smyrna. So, it was not without reason that Christ spoke of Himself as “the first and the last.” In comparison with His glory, all earthly distinctions are pure emptiness and strife. For being first in something pales into insignificance in view of His eternal glories.

Another fact of importance concerns the Jews there. There was a population of Jews in the city who were not only numerous, but influential and who did everything they could to hurt the church in Smyrna. So, the Lord also addresses this issue in this letter as well (vs. 9-10).

Another interesting fact is that the city received its name from one of its principle products, a sweet perfume called myrrh, this was a gum resin taken from a shrub-like tree. Though it had a bitter taste, the resin of the tree was used in making perfume (Ps. 45:8), was one of the ingredients used in the anointing oil of the priests (Ex. 30:23), and in the embalming of the dead (John 19:39). Smyrna is Ionic Greek for myrrh, a fragrant perfume used in burial. Many believe this church represents the martyrs of all time and the sweet-smelling fragrance of their devotion until death (cf. 2 Cor. 4:14-16).

Smyrna was the home of Polycarp, an elder in the church, who was martyred because of his faith in the second century. You may recall that when Polycarp was told to renounce Christ he said, “eighty-six years I have served the Lord, and He never wronged me; how then can I blaspheme my Lord and Savior?” Polycarp’s strong faith was typical of the faith of the Christians who were in Smyrna at the time of the writing of the book of Revelation.

The city of Smyrna was also a seat of the worship of the pagan idols Cybele, called "the Mother of the gods," and of Dionysus or Bacchus of the city of Rome. There was a temple built to worship the goddess Roma in 195 B.C. Emperor worship was practiced with a temple built to honor the Roman Emperor Tiberius in 28 A.D.

The church in Smyrna was probably established by the apostle Paul (Acts 19:8-10). It was being severely persecuted at the time this letter was written. Smyrna had a large Jewish population and many of the Jews were hostile toward the church.

John Gill makes an interesting statement regarding the meaning of the name Smyrna:

Smyrna signifies "myrrh", which being bitter of taste, is expressive of the bitter afflictions, and persecutions, and deaths, the people of God in this interval endured; and yet, as myrrh is of a sweet smell, so were those saints, in their sufferings for Christ, exceeding grateful and well pleasing to him; wherefore nothing is said by way of complaint to this church; not that she was without fault, but it was proper to use her tenderly in her afflicted state: (John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible).²³

The churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia are the only congregations of the seven that Jesus addressed that were not condemned for having sin in the congregation. Moreover, Smyrna, unlike the city of Ephesus, stands today. Though many of these believers died a martyr's death, Satan could not stamp out their testimony. Suffering has a way of keeping us pure in our devotion to Christ and it was evidently so with this church.²⁴

Below is an outline for Revelation 2:8-11:

- First, the Church's Persecution. The church was persecuted because of their works, they were persecuted because of the word and they were persecuted because of their witness. (v.9a)

²³ Gill, John. "Commentary on Revelation 2:4". "The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible". <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/geb/revelation-2.html>. 1999.

²⁴ Ibid.

- Second, the Church's Problems which included the slander of the saints and the synagogue of satan. The synagogue was the seat of pagan worship and where sacrilegious people worship. (v.9b)
- Third, the Church's Poverty which was discussed in terms of three areas: their faith persuasion, their few possessions and their future promise. (v.10)
- Fourth, the Church's Path which seemed dismal; Problems (Suffering), Prison (Jail), Proving (Testing) Persecution (Tribulation), and the Promise (Overcomers) (vv.10-11)

Jesus identified their situation in terms of their dilemma, their dwelling and their dedication:

Satan's seat—rather as the Greek is translated all through Revelation, "throne." Satan, in impious mimicry of God's heavenly throne, sets up his earthly throne (Rev 4:2). Aesculapius was worshipped there under the serpent form; and Satan, the old serpent, as the instigator (compare Rev 2:10) of fanatical devotees of Aesculapius, and, through them, of the supreme magistracy at Pergamos, persecuted one of the Lord's people (Antipas) even to death. Antipas is another form for Antipater. SIMEON METAPHRASTES has a palpably legendary story, unknown to the early Fathers, that Antipas, in Domitian's reign, was shut up in a red-hot brazen bull, and ended his life in thanksgivings and prayers. HENGSTENBERG makes the name, like other apocalyptic names, symbolical, meaning one standing out "against all" for Christ's sake.²⁵

Jesus identified their sin: The church adhered to false teaching. Balaam was a prophet of Mesopotamia who used his God given talent for illicit purposes. He tried to sell his gift. The doctrine promotes falsehood for personal gain to pervert grace into a license for immortality. The perversion of grace twists liberty into ungodly freedom.

²⁵ Gill, John. "Commentary on Revelation 2:9". "The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible". <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/geb/revelation-2.html>. 1999.

The church allowed false teachers. The Nicolaitans were descendants of Nicolas, a deacon in Acts who converted from paganism. This encouraged worldly participation and free thinking. It created tolerance for occult and sinful behavior, they insisted that it was alright to straddle the fence. They ate things sacrificed unto idols, an act common to the Israelites of old, and the Nicolaitans in John's day.

Jesus introduced their solution: He called them to repentance. He cautioned them to regret and He challenged them to receive.

The description of the church is found in Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29) -- The church known for its charity, whose "latter works are greater than the former;" held the teachings of a false prophetess (2:20)

Revelation 2:18-29 was the longest message sent to the church in the smallest city! Thyatira was a military town, as well as, a commercial center with many trade guilds. Wherever guilds were found, idolatry and immorality—the two great enemies of the early church—were almost always present too.

The city boasted a special temple to Apollo, the "sun god," which explains why the Lord introduced Himself as "the Son of God" (the only time in Revelation this title is used). John had to deliver a message of severe warning and judgment to this congregation, which explains the description of the Lord's eyes and feet.

Revelation 2:19-20 states, The imperial cult employed some priestesses in first-century Asia Minor; but even if Jezebel was advocating compromise with the cult, it is unlikely that she could have had any credibility with Christians while being a priestess in it.

Below is an outline for Revelation 2:18-23.

- First, the False Prophetess is described. Jezebel was loud, she was loose, and she was a liar. (v.20)
- Second, the False Prophetess was deceptive. John addressed her deceptive teaching (her shrewdness), her deceptive trap (her sex appeal) and her seductive aura. (v.20)
- Third, the False Prophetess is doomed. John discussed the problem for Jezebel, the precedence for Jezebel, the prediction for Jezebel (a bed of sin a bed of sickness), the punishment for Jezebel (the refusal to repent brings wrath and the rejection of righteousness brings wrath). (v.22)

This passage in relation to the Metropolitan Baptist Church gives insight to the root causes of the problems. Sin that is unchecked creates a norm that disrupts the work of God in the church. Especially, when leaders live immorally without conscience and with deceptive motives. Leadership moral failure at the church put the congregation in a compromising position and established a carnal precedent that voided Godly principles. Leaders such as Jezebel surfaced and have deceived many. Also, the allowing of false teachers and false teaching has hindered the ability of the spiritual teachers to surface.

E. Biblical Reference Five: Revelation 3:1-14

Revelation 3:1-3: The Temple of Artemis was constructed at the point where an ancient temple devoted to Cybele, goddess of abundance, was located. The Carians and the Lelegians, who inhabited the area before the Ionians worshipped that goddess and they used to call her the "Great mother". The Ionians named that goddess "Artemis" and when the Lydian king Croesus invaded the city, the temple, which was surrounded by walls and a wooden statue devoted to Artemis had been placed in it, was

destroyed by a flood. Croesus started constructing the new stone temple at the same position and adorned it with columns, in the 7th century BC.²⁶

Artemis was the main goddess of the city and the temple was dedicated as one of the seven largest Greek temples. She was the goddess of the hunt, the moon and fertility. Artemis was known as Diana by the Romans. She was the daughter of Zeus and the twin of Apollo. The Gymnasium/Bathhouse was over five acres with vaulted ceilings. The Synagogue was noticeable as one of the largest excavated. It was in the heart of the urban center.

- First, the people in Sardis are described by their name, their noticeability and their nature. (v.1)
- Second, the problems in Sardis were the challenge to wake up, work unconditionally and to walk unsoiled. (vv.2-4)
- Third, the promise to Sardis is regarding their garment, their guarantee and their guardian. (vv. 5-6)

First, the church is called to wake up. Christ therefore gave Sardis a jolting command to “wake up!” (3:2). The call was meant to encourage the church to act. The members were to strengthen what little remained, to obey, to repent (3:2-3). Jesus told the church at Sardis to wake up or he would come like a thief does. “You will not know at what time I will come to you,” he said (2:3).

Second, the church is called to work unconditionally. The righteous saints in Sardis were also promised that their names would appear in the book of life (3:5). Only

²⁶ <http://www.ephesus.ws/temple-of-artemis.html>

those names entered in the Lamb's book of life will be allowed into the New Jerusalem (21:27). The idea of a divine ledger is an Old Testament figure of speech for the Lord's salvation (Exodus 32:32; Psalm 69:28). Daniel was told that at the end-time, "everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered" (12:1).

Third, the call to walk unsoiled. While most in the church at Sardis were in a dead spiritual state, "a few people" were faithful to Christ, and had "not soiled their clothes" (3:4). They were promised that they would be taken on a walk in Christ, and to be dressed in white (3:4-5).

White garments are mentioned on five other occasions in Revelation. The church at Laodicea hide their spiritual shame (3:18). The 24 elders wear white garments (4:4). The martyrs waiting for God's judgment are given white robes to wear (6:11). The armies appearing with the Messiah wear white and clean linen (19:14). The great multitude of the saved in Revelation 7 wear robes made white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14).

The reality that the robes are given to the people of Sardis as a gift, reflects that we are not justified by good works, but we are justified by the redemptive work of Christ on Calvary through his sacrificial propitiation for our sin.

The metaphor would have been familiar to the non-Jews in the Sardis church as well. Ancient cities in the Greek world kept registers of the names of their citizens. Criminals were removed from the civil register and lost their citizenship.

Finally, Jesus promised to acknowledge the name of the overcomer in Sardis before his Father (3:6). This recalls Jesus' promise as the incarnate Son of God:

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

Revelation 3:7-13: First, the significance of Scripture in verses 7-8. Christians of the first century lived in an uneasy relationship with Judaism. Most Jewish Christians probably attended the synagogue, took part in ritual worship and used the Hebrew Scriptures as their Bible. Then on the first day of the week they met with those who believed in Jesus as the Messiah. At the same time, the church considered itself the rightful spiritual heir of Judaism the new Israel. It had accepted Jesus as its Lord, the Messiah spoken of in the Hebrew Scriptures. The church saw itself as composed of spiritual Jews who had received “circumcision” through the Holy Spirit. This caused a rift between Christians and Jews, as they both claimed to be God’s people. That meant Jewish Christians often endured exceptional pressure and stress. They were called apostate Jews by their own relatives. Non-Christian Jews accused Christians of being usurpers. They insisted that Jews and not Christians had the open door to God’s presence and the keys to the kingdom.

The Christians in the Asian city of Philadelphia were among those who took the brunt of these claims. Then, in about A.D. 96, John, in the book of Revelation, assured those in the church that they were, indeed, the heirs to salvation (Revelation 3:7-13).

John wrote that Christ is the One “who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open” (verse 7). Christ had set an open door before the church that “no one can shut.”

What was this key that unlocked a door that could not be shut? The answer lies in analyzing the key and door metaphor, which is found in the writings of the prophet Isaiah. He referred to an individual of his time named Shebna who had charge of the palace of the Judean king. Today, we might call him the chief of staff.

The prophet Isaiah said the Lord would replace Shebna with a man named Eliakim. The Lord would “place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open” (Isaiah 22:22). Thus, Eliakim would be a kind of gatekeeper with power to control entry into the royal kingdom. As the king’s steward, he would decide who could or could not have access to the king.

The story in Isaiah serves as a prophecy of the Davidic Messiah. “The imagery suggests that Christ is the only one who can grant access to God,” writes Norman Perrin. Christ “has given the Christians at Philadelphia access to God and no one can deprive them of it.”²⁷

Second, the Synagogue of Satan in verse 9. The Jews of Philadelphia who were persecuting and intimidating the Christians are called a “Synagogue of Satan” (3:9), as they were identified in the letter to the church in Smyrna (2:9). They will experience a reversal of fortune – be forced to acknowledge that the church constitutes the true people of God (3:9).

The background for verse 9 is also to be found in the Old Testament, but with an unexpected twist. Isaiah had pictured the victory of Israel over its enemies (60:14). In one

²⁷ *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom : Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

place Isaiah said Gentile nations would do homage to Israel at the start of the kingdom.

“They will bow down before you and plead with you, saying, ‘Surely God is with you...’” (Isaiah 45:14).

The imagery of Isaiah bears a striking similarity to Revelation 3:9. But a stunning reversal of fortune has occurred. What the Jews hoped to gain from the Gentiles, they themselves must render to the Christians. The Jews in Philadelphia must play the part of the heathen and concede that the church contains the people of God.

Revelation 3:9, however, looks to the time when the Jews will finally acknowledge (thus, “bow down” to) their Savior and the largely gentile church as the people of God. In that time, “All Israel [that is, the Israelite people as a whole] will be saved” (Romans 11:26).

Third, the Security of the saved addresses the promise to the church at Philadelphia in verses 10-12. The church in Philadelphia kept faith with Jesus. He will keep them from “the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth” (3:10). This expression “hour of trial” refers in Revelation to the affliction on the world to come before God’s kingdom is established on the earth.

This period of worldwide ordeal is a main theme of Revelation. “The hour of his judgment has come” (14:7). The death of the world system, dubbed “Babylon the Great,” which stands in opposition to God, is described in dramatic symbolic language in Revelation 15-19. The doom of this Babylon comes “in one hour” (18:10). “In one hour” the world’s Babylonish “great wealth” is “brought to ruin” (18:17, 19).

When the world's anti-God system collapses, the church will face terrible persecution and martyrdom. That is because it will be called on as a faithful witness to the rule and authority of God in a godless world. But because the names of the faithful witnesses are written in the book of life, they will be delivered and saved for eternal life.

While the church will suffer persecution, it will not be destroyed. The earth is not harmed until the saints are sealed (7:1-8). The individual worshipers are counted, a sign of God's caring protection on those he personally knows (11:1). The woman, a symbol for the church, is protected in the wilderness (12:14-16).

The church at Smyrna would receive "the crown of life" (2:10). Philadelphia was instructed not to allow anyone to take its crown. In both instances, the word is *stephanos* which refers to the wreath of victory awarded to winners of athletic contests. Since Philadelphia was famous for its athletic games, this word was significant.

Christ promised the faithful in Philadelphia that he would make them pillars in God's temple (3:12). And, they would never again leave his presence. This is another symbol of assurance that the members would gain eternal admission into the kingdom of God.²⁸ Christ also promised to write three names on the believer – the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and Christ's new name (3:12). Ancient pillars had the names of people they honored inscribed on them. The metaphor means to say that God will honor and bless his people. But in what way?

²⁸ Kroll, Paul: *Revelation: Revelation 3:7-13 – The Church at Philadelphia and the Key of David*, 1995, 2013 www.gic.org. (Accessed April 27, 2020)

- First, the believer will have God's name. In the Old Testament, the Lord told the priests to pronounce specific blessings on Israel, which concluded with this thought: "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them" (Numbers 6:27).²⁹
- Second, to be named with the city of God – the New Jerusalem – is a symbolic way of saying that the believer has citizenship in God's spiritual commonwealth (Galatians 4:26; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 12:22).³⁰
- Third, the believer is to have Christ's own new name. Perhaps this refers to a future full revelation of Christ himself, which cannot be grasped until the believer is glorified (1 John 3:2).³¹

In Revelation 3:14-22 Jesus spoke to the church at Laodicea. He addressed their lukewarmness. He talked very strongly about their noncommitment, lack of loyalty, enthusiasm or concern.

In Revelation 3:16 Jesus said, "So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." This is an indictment against the church. God is sick of apathetic churches and their lack of commitment and neutral position in the world.

As with some of the previous churches, the Lord adapted His words to something significant about the city in which the assembly was located. In this case, Laodicea was known for its wealth and its manufacture of a special eye salve, as well as of a glossy

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

black wool cloth. It also was located near Hieropolis, where there were famous hot springs, and Colossae, known for its pure, cold water.

The Lord presented Himself as “the Amen,” which is an Old Testament title for God (see Isa. 65:16, where the word truth is the Hebrew word amen). He is the truth and speaks the truth because He is “the faithful and true Witness” (Rev. 3:14). The Lord was about to tell this church the truth about its spiritual condition; unfortunately, they would not believe His diagnosis.

The Laodicean church was blind to its own needs and unwilling to face the truth. Yet honesty is the beginning of true blessing, as we admit what we are, confess our sins, and receive from God all that we need. If we want God’s best for our lives and churches, we must be honest with God and let God be honest with us.

The Lord demonstrated four areas of need in the church at Laodicea. They had lost their vigor (vv. 16–17). In the Christian life, there are three “spiritual temperatures”: a burning heart, on fire for God (Luke 24:32), a cold heart (Matt. 24:12), and a lukewarm heart (Rev. 3:16). The lukewarm Christian is comfortable, complacent, and does not realize his need. If he were cold, at least he would feel it! Both the cold water from Colossae and the hot water from Hieropolis would be lukewarm by the time it was piped to Laodicea.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have every reason to be “fervent in spirit” (Rom. 12:11). Fervent prayer is also vital (Col. 4:12). It was as the Emmaus disciples listened to the Word that their hearts were warmed. No wonder Paul commanded that his letter to Colossae be sent to the Laodicean church! (Col. 4:16)

The church cannot be a “closed system.” Jesus said, “Without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). The Laodicean church was independent, self-satisfied, and secure. “We have need of nothing!” But all the while, their spiritual power had been decaying; their material wealth and glowing statistics were but shrouds hiding a rotting corpse. Their Lord was outside the church, trying to get in (Rev. 3:20).

They had lost their values (vv. 17–18a). The church at Smyrna thought itself poor, when it was rich (Rev. 2:9); the Laodiceans boasted that they were rich, when in fact they were poor. That church declined spiritually because of their pride regarding their ministry. They measured church by human standards instead of by spiritual values.³²

Laodicea was a wealthy city and a banking center. Perhaps some of the spirit of the marketplace crept into the church so that their values became twisted. Why is it that so many church bulletins and letterheads show pictures of buildings? Are these the things that are most important to us? The board at the Laodicean church could proudly show you the latest annual report with its impressive statistics; yet Jesus said He was about to vomit them out of His mouth!

The solution? Pay the price to get true “gold tried in the fire.” This suggests that the church needed some persecution; they were too comfortable (1 Peter 1:7). Nothing makes God’s people examine their priorities faster than suffering!

They had lost their vision (v. 18b). The Laodiceans were “blind.” They could not see reality. They were living in a fool’s paradise, proud of a church that was about to be

³² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 580.

rejected. The Apostle Peter teaches that when a believer is not growing in the Lord, his spiritual vision is affected (2 Peter 1:5–9). “Diet” has bearing on the condition of one’s eyes, in a spiritual sense as well as a physical one.³³

These people could not see themselves as they really were. Nor could they see their Lord as He stood outside the door of the church. Nor could they see the open doors of opportunity. They were so wrapped up in building their own kingdom that they had become lukewarm in their concern for a lost world.

The solution? Apply the heavenly eye salve! The city of Laodicea was noted for its eye salve, but the kind of medication the saints needed was not available in the apothecary shop. The eye is one of the body’s most sensitive areas, and only the Great Physician can “operate” on it and make it what it ought to be. As He did with the man whose account is told in John 9, He might even irritate before He illuminates! But we must submit to His treatment, and then maintain good spiritual “health habits” so that our vision grows keener.

They had lost their vesture (vv. 17–22). Like the emperor in Hans Christian Andersen’s story, these Christians thought they were clothed in splendor when they were naked. Salvation means that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us, put to our account;

³³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 580.

but sanctification means that His righteousness is imparted to us, made a part of our character and conduct.³⁴

This church did not receive any commendations. The Laodiceans were applauding themselves! They dishonored God with their behavior and attitude. However, they believed that they were special and that they were pleasing God.

Jesus gave three closing statements: First, Revelation 3:19a, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten”. God loves those lukewarm saints. Even though their love for Him had grown cold. God would chasten them because he loved them and wanted them to repent and change.

Second, Revelation 3:19b, “Be zealous therefore, and repent” The church at Laodicea was filled with pride and arrogance. They needed to repent of their sins and make changes to live in such a way to please the Lord.

Third, In Revelation 3:20–22, Jesus spoke to the individual, “if any man,” These verses are frequently used to witness or express a need for salvation initiated by Jesus. However, Jesus was knocking for the believer. Jesus was outside the church at Laodicea. God can do great things in a church through one dedicated individual. The Laodiceans were an independent church that had need of nothing, but they were not abiding in Christ and drawing their power from Him. The letters to the seven churches are God’s X rays, given to us so that we might examine our own lives and ministries. Judgment is going to

³⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 580.

come to this world, but it first begins at God's house (1 Peter 4:17). In these letters we find encouragement as well as rebuke.

John identified Jesus in his report to the church at Laodicea as the Amen, the Faithful, the True Witness and the beginning of God's Creation. Also, Jesus rebukes the church and he said they were not hot, they were not cold, they were lukewarm, they made him sick on the stomach and he would spit them out of his mouth.

Jesus gave the Laodicea a review, "this is an indictment stresses Jesus' displeasure with the church at Laodicea. Their lack of commitment, their indecisiveness, and their false sense of pride were offensive to Jesus. The Laodiceans false report was not enough to divert attention away from their repulsive beliefs and behavior.

Fourth, the reward of the church is based upon two things: their hearing and openness and for holding on and overcoming. The Metropolitan Baptist Church reflects the characteristics of the Church at Laodicea in several ways. First, the lack of commitment and unwillingness to commit, most within the church not relying upon God, and many lackadaisical attitudes is a major part of the issue of lack of capacity and poor leadership. Most of the leadership that has served during my tenure have displayed pride, haughtiness and an unhealthy sense of independence without respect for accountability and expectation of the reward that awaits us. Arrogance and self-righteousness will not submit to the authority of leadership. As a result, many of the members with potential to lead refuse training and avoid living up to their full potential.

F. Biblical Reference Six: Ezekiel 37:1-11

The sixth biblical reference is the book of Ezekiel 37:11. This chapter demonstrates revitalization through building capacity and leadership development.

Ezekiel is both the name of the sixth century b.c. prophet and the title of the book that records his preaching. Ezekiel's name (Hb. *Yekhezqe'l*) means "God strengthens" or "May God strengthen," appropriate for a prophet called to proclaim a message of uncompromising judgment and later a message of a restoration for God's sake, not Israel's. Ezekiel lived out his prophetic career among the community of exiled Judeans in Babylon. He belonged to the priestly class and was married cf. Ezekiel 24:15-24.

The book of Ezekiel was written after the defeat of the southern kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians. The Northern Kingdom had already ceased to exist; the Assyrian empire had defeated the north some 130 years earlier. It was now the time of judgment for Judah. After Solomon, David's son, who was the third king of the United Kingdom of Israel, died, a revolt and near civil war erupted. God intervened and although war was averted the kingdom was divided in two. There was a king to the north and one to the south and they were never united again.

The modern Israeli state is not really the same size or composition as the ancient kingdom. The Northern Kingdom lasted around 210 years, and they never had a single king that honored God and did what was right in His eyes. The southern kingdom of Judah had nine kings out of a total of twenty who walked after the Lord, but the kingdom of Judah eventually became so wicked there was really no difference between them, God's chosen people, and the pagan people that surrounded them. As a matter of fact, those who were supposed to be God's people were often worse. As a result, God sent the

prophets to warn of coming judgment, but according to scriptures messengers are often rejected, ignored, persecuted and disregarded.

Ezekiel spoke to a community forced from its home, a people who had broken faith with their God. As the spokesman for the God of Israel, Ezekiel spoke oracles that vindicate the reputation of this holy God.

The primary purpose of Ezekiel's message was to restore God's glory before the people who had spurned it in view of the watching nations. But Israel's own welfare was bound up with its God. So, the prophet pleads: "Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so, turn, and live" (18:31–32).³⁵

There are three key issues relative to the issues of capacity building and leadership development. First, the question that God asked Ezekiel is a vitally important piece to understanding the source of capacity building, leadership development in revitalization. Ezekiel 37:1-22, "And he said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' And I answered, 'O Lord GOD, you know.' We must careful in terms of how we rush to answer questions. Ezekiel's conversation is God who is omniscient. Ezekiel does not try to impose finite thinking upon an infinite God. Ezekiel gives the best theological reply and simply states that God who is the architect of the Anthropos, or humankind understands us and knows all about our frail frames. God asked Ezekiel a rhetorical question because he already knew the answer. In this life the only answer to God's eternal question is LORD you know. Three questions that come to mind: First, can the

³⁵ https://content.wtsbooks.com/shopify/pdf_links/esv_studybible_sample_ezekiel.pdf

bones remain in this condition and sustain hope? Second, can these bones be revived considering how bad a shape that they are in? Third, can these bones be restored or revitalized despite their devastation? God asked Ezekiel a rhetorical question because he already knew the answer. One can speculate about why God asked Ezekiel the question, but we do know that only God could turn that situation around and give life since he is the creator God and giver of life.

Second, the quandary by God's answer. *The word quandary is a noun and plural quan·da·ries.* It means a state of perplexity or uncertainty, especially as to what to do, dilemma. Ezekiel must have felt perplexed and as desolate and useless as the piles of bones that he had seen in a startling vision. The prophet sat in the middle of a valley, amidst decimated and scattered people. Yet as Ezekiel watched, God's divine intervention revitalize his people. The dry bones were everywhere, the Lord added muscles, tendons, and tissue, and God breathed new life. The widow's son comes to mind. Elijah laid on top of the dead boy and restored him to life. God can stir up the wind of restoration and activate an army, bless the breath, create a new community, develop dedicated disciples, empower the empty, fill the faint, generate growth, help the harvest, initiate the influx, motivate the ministry, and resuscitate the remains.

Third, the quickening by God's assistance as God instructs Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones. Ezekiel 37:4 states, "Then he said to me, 'Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.' God instructs Ezekiel to prophesy to the wind. Ezekiel 37:9, "Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'

In this current pastoral assignment, there have been feelings of defeat, emptiness, emotional distress, aloneness, and a panorama of death unfolding. When we relocated to the new location, Metropolitan lost over half of its members and others refused to attend at the new location. Even those who attended displayed anger towards the current pastor and regret for leaving their dilapidated and declined building. The church was in a state of somberness, grieving, disconnection and decline. As a result of the preoccupation of the changing church, potential leaders continue to slack, miss church regularly and avoid any sign of commitment to leader development and equipping with the intent of building capacity. One of the main correlations of Ezekiel to Metropolitan is the leadership disloyalty to God and the trickle-down effect that caused the church to become wicked in practice.

G. Biblical Reference Seven: Acts 6:7

The seventh biblical reference is Acts 6:7. This passage includes variables that are foundational for the function of any church that desires to build capacity and develop leaders. Acts 6:7 states, "and the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith."

In this passage the word of God increased by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Apostles. The fruit of the Spirit's labor is obvious.

First, the word of God increased. The result of prayer and ministry support is invaluable. The Apostles gave themselves to prayer and the word and the word of God increased. Competent servants help to build capacity and allow all who are in ministry to

serve more effectively and fruitfully. The word of God is the key ingredient to church health and church growth.

Second, the number of disciples multiplied greatly. Each disciple is responsible to disciple others. Those who are adequately prepared and equipped will impact the kingdom in ways they could never imagine. Matthew 28 speaks to making disciples of all nations. The disciples cannot be multiplied unless the word of God increases. Disciples should be willing to share the word while seeking to make disciples of all nations.

Third, many of the priests became obedient to the faith. The Spirit led preaching that was shared impacted the church in every conceivable way. The increase in disciples provided the capacity to relieve the Apostles of menial tasks and it opened opportunities for the new disciples to witness effectively.

In contrast, Metropolitan Baptist Church has struggled with attendance and attentiveness. A few members even boast that they do not attend Bible class or Sunday School. Others have suggested that Bible class and Sunday school is for children. Bible study has ceased because of a lack of attendance. Week after week no one would show up after I prepared and waited for a good while. The sporadic attendance makes it difficult to disciple people who refuse to commit to hear a sermon series, attend classes, participate in Christian Education or even unite in corporate prayer. Building up requires time and repetition. The joyful and willing element is missing. Thereby, the motivation for personal development, personal devotion, and a desire to mature spiritually is lacking at Metropolitan.

H. Biblical Reference Eight: Acts 2:42-47

The seventh biblical reference is Acts 2:42-47. The Book of Acts gives us a panoramic view of what a healthy church looks like. Acts 2:42-47 reads,

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

The early church is a portrait of what the church should look like in function, faith and fellowship. We can gain valuable insight as it relates to the missional and koinonia nature of the church in its infancy in the book of Acts. There are five things that they did well that stand out:

- First, they continued to observe and obey what they had been taught by the Apostles. They did not seek erroneous doctrine or wayward movements. One of the biggest problems today is that many pastors and congregations are moving away from the word and are settling for productions, musicals, positive thinking and prosperity preaching and teaching. The lack of firm teaching that encompasses the word of God that is handled accurately is a pressing problem in many communities. Many people prefer theatrics above truth, demonstration over devotion and feeling good versus their faith growing.
- Second, they remained in fellowship. Christians need the support and the sharing of experiences that comes through fellowship. The encouragement and

exhortation that is realized in the koinonia is a tremendous piece to healthy church relationships.

- Third, they continued to break bread together which afforded them the opportunity to have a light moment and to get better acquainted. Oftentimes in the church setting we are so formal and disconnected that we miss the opportunity to bond with other believers.
- Fourth, prayer is always a vital part of the church and the everyday life of the believer. We cannot effectively maneuver and do ministry in this world without a substantial and consistent prayer life in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Fifth, they shared all things to ensure that all the believers were on equal footing. They were philanthropic and hospitable. They sold their personal possessions and gave selflessly but out of brotherly love and a deep sense of compassion for the least. Their focus was not on individualism but community and building up one another as to build up the capacity of the entire fellowship.

In contrast, Metropolitan Baptist Church is missing the five vital components that existed in the early church. The lack of commitment, corporate fellowship, collaboration and generosity have left a void in the church. This void has manifested in lack of quality leadership and the inability to build capacity to facilitate ministry objectives and biblical mandates. Metropolitan has suffered as a result of selfishness, lackadaisical members who place a higher priority on individualism versus a more communal oriented perspective. There is an absence of serving with joy and the spirit of humility which hinders capacity building and leadership development.

Theological Rationale

The fifth chapter of Peter spells out the characteristics of a healthy congregation. The church leaders are challenged and encouraged (v. 1-3). The congregation is encouraged to submit to the leaders, to practice humility and servanthood amongst one another, and to practice faithful prayer (v. 5-7). The congregation is cautioned to be alert and prepared for attacks from the evil one (v. 8, 9). Finally, the congregation is encouraged to continue to persevere in their trials (v. 10, 11).

CHAPTER THREE: EXTRA-BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Chapter Two discussed the biblical and theological foundations for this project. It highlighted capacity building and leadership development from a scriptural and theological context. Chapter Two also provided a framework to support church revitalization through building capacity and leadership development.

Chapter three provides an explanation of the extra-biblical foundations from relevant fields through a review of seven books that relate to this project. The seven that were chosen are representative of the nature of the research and the potential solutions for addressing the issues of capacity and leadership. These seven authors have a wealth of professional and practical experience that will add value to this project. Metropolitan Baptist Church attendance continues to decline, the shrinking congregation has prompted this research to explore the challenges and viable solutions for a dying congregation.

Book One: *Surviving Ministry: How to Weather the Storms of Church Leadership* by Michael E. Osborne ³⁶

Michael E. Osborne's book shares his experiences with defunct leadership and the impact that the missing component has on the congregation. The author writes to assist the pastor in leading recovery, regrouping, and reviving strength and hope in the congregation. Also, at the end of each chapter is a list of survival strategies.

Michael E. Osborne deals with congregational conflicts and confrontations that bring questions and regrets to the mind of the pastor. The author designed the book in three parts. First, he talks about preparation and preventing storms. Then, he touches on

³⁶ Michael E. Osborne, *Surviving Ministry: How to Weather the Storms of Church Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016).

how to handle hurricanes. Next, he expresses the four essentials of a gospel-centered approach to crisis in ministry.

Michael E. Osborne shares a story about a biblical issue. This issue was about baptism and the biblically correct manner to baptize. As a result of the conflict surrounding the issues, a church meeting was called. People came out of the woodwork. The media got wind of it and it was disastrous. The meeting took place and the vote barely went in his favor. As a result, the church split. The disgruntled group left and started a new congregation. In addition, the church that suffered the divide declined in every conceivable way.

Also, the importance of knowing your church's story is a vitally important part of gaining trust and support that is most crucial in the process of leadership development and capacity building. Meetings, demographic studies, talk with previous pastors, interviewing random church members are essential components to learning the story of the church and grasping insight into the heart of the congregation.

Osborne addresses the importance of leaders knowing themselves and understanding their own story. Pastors minister from the total of their experience, exposure, education and environment. Self-assessment is imperative to be successful in the process of building up people. Isaiah 6:5-8 states, "And I said: 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'. 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar."

People have learned behavior that must be addressed to adjust their cognitive, behavioral practices and beliefs. Many of the things that were learned in the past may be detrimental and even deadly to the pastor or the congregation.

Osborne speaks about building up the levees. Building relationships with staff members, preaching strategically, and making oneself available opens the doorway to developing trust and potentially establishing trust. Trust will be determined by an individual's trustworthiness. The character conduct and communication of leaders often give a clear picture of the trustworthiness of those who are in pastoral leadership.

Osborne addresses maintaining focus during storms. Inconsistency is an enemy to the progress of long-term capacity building and development. It takes time to withstand storms, develop viable plans, prioritize and maintain vision, fulfill a mission and edify a congregation.

Teamwork is of uttermost importance to the success of weathering storms and allowing the church to have an opportunity for revitalization through capacity building and leadership development. Osborne addresses the "lone ranger" pastor. He listed ten questions that each pastor should ask themselves to assess whether they are an asset or liability to the process.

One of the key challenges set forth in this book is to tell the truth. Pastors are obligated to maintain unbiased positions and to utilize the word of God as the foundation. Many times, there are no simple answers, but the truth must outweigh special interest and the pastor cannot seek to please people and compromise truth for power. Characteristics such as honesty and integrity are vitally important in capacity building and leadership development.

Osborne recommends consulting experts, skilled guides to assist pastors and congregations through storms and difficulties that appear to be overwhelming. Oftentimes, a professional presence and perspective can add wisdom and give insight to the situation to lead to an agreeable solution. Counseling and external guidance is frowned upon in some context. However, denominational affiliations, other pastors, professors, church consultants, and therapists may be helpful to provide quality resources for the pastor and congregation seeking to build capacity and develop leaders for the revitalization process.

As always, prayer is a central component to the success of any endeavor. Prayer and desires work together. Psalms 37:4 states, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." Delighting in the Lord speaks to having sole gratification in the Lord and going to Him alone with all our concerns and thoughts. Consistent prayer brings us into the presence of the Lord and exposes our sincere desires to Him. Prayer is a major theme in the Bible. Daniel prayed, Job prayed, Hannah prayed, Samson prayed, David prayed, the disciples prayed, and Jesus prayed.

The pastor, leaders, and membership must pray in undertaking the path to capacity building and leadership development. Prayer is a preeminent part of the Scripture and anything that will be accomplished for the Lord must happen in prayer. Also, listening is a quite significant part in the capacity building and leadership development process. Pastors must prayerfully listen to hear the voice of God and not simply talk without waiting to hear God respond. Also, listening to others without filters is necessary to understand their story and to affirm them as a part of the process. As well

listening to difficult messages that we may need to hear whether from experts, colleagues, members, reality or God.

This book speaks to several issues Metropolitan has faced. The church needs strategies to assist in capacity building and leadership development in route to revitalization. Biblical examples and practical applications that can coach through a crisis are necessary. Osborne's eight suggestions for a potential or new pastor to get to know a congregation are especially helpful. Metropolitan has a lot of proud people who refuse to acknowledge that there is a real problem and that extreme measures are needed to address the problems and potentially correct or open the door for all options.

Book Two: Problems of Christian Leadership by John Stott and Ajith Fernando³⁷

The authors John Stott and Ajith Fernando discuss very pertinent topics for pastoral problems. These problems include discouragement, self-discipline, relationships, and the youth. The story of the Two Timothy's and the appendices have additional insights into the handling of issues within the context of Christian Leadership.

Discouragement is akin to hopelessness. Too many pastors feel helpless and hopeless in church situations. The pressure, the stress of ongoing challenges cause many to throw in the towel and seek to escape the tremendous task of leading a congregation. In 2 Corinthians 4:1, the Apostle Paul encourages us not to lose heart and not to be discouraged in the context of ministry.

"There are two problems that caused discouragement in this chapter. The first is an external and objective problem in our listeners, and the second is an internal and subjective problem in ourselves. The first he calls the veiling, which is kalyma. This is the veil that lies over the minds of unbelievers, and it blinds them

³⁷ John R. W. Stott and Ajith Fernando, *Problems of Christian Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014).

to the truth of the gospel. The second is soma, the body, that is our own body, its frailty, this fragile human vessel, which maintains the treasure of the gospel.”³⁸

The glory and gloom of ministry do not necessarily balance out on our scales.

Paul reminded the Romans that our present sufferings do not compare to the future glory that we shall observe. Pastors must be reminded that the call to pastoral ministry is worth the challenges that are encountered however difficult they might be.

The requirement of the pastor to be a teacher and to teach that which is sound doctrine is one of the many themes in this book. This is a short book but has a powerful plan for handling problems within the church leadership. Storms are inevitable and will come in various forms. Since one cannot live a storm free life, measures can be taken to survive and thrive in the midst of the very circumstance that appears to be the death or decline of a congregation.

Jang’s discussion of the crisis of church decline today in South Korea and propose that developing the psychological, in addition to spiritual, maturity of church leaders as well as the laity, is critical to regaining hope in the church, and suggest the church must prioritize the development of the psychological maturity of the people as its foremost mission in contemporary society.³⁹ Jang relates to Stott and Fernando in terms of the need for psychological fitness in church leaders.

The members of Metropolitan often speak of the despair in Gary and they express the level of stress that is associated with being a part of a declining church and city.

³⁸ John R. W. Stott and Ajith Fernando, *Problems of Christian Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014).

³⁹ Son, A. Crisis of Church Decline in and Revitalization of Korean Churches. *Pastoral Psychology* 67, 569–577 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-018-0803-7>

Psychological well-being should be taken into consideration when the pastor and church are considering revitalization.

Stott and Fernando address how to maintain spiritual freshness. The issues of rest, relaxation, discipline of time, and the discipline of devotions are key factors in remaining spiritually fresh. Even Jesus took time out to retreat and to gather Himself. Pastors need qualitative and quantitative time to refresh and rejuvenate personally.

Stott and Fernando stress the problems of relationships and how to treat people with respect. People should be respected based on their innate worth as the creation of God. A person's worth should not be judged by external factors. There should be respect in intentional listening. Not simply waiting to speak but listening to understand and to support the person that is communicating. Respect in decision making is also important because it honors that valuer of others in the decision-making process and highlights the team concept is important in leadership development and capacity building.

Stott and Fernando list six vital items for the young pastor to consider that are beneficial in the congregational context. The young pastor is encouraged to watch your example, identify their authority, exercise their gifts, share their progress, mind their consistency, and adjust their relationships.

Mark Labberton and Corey Widmer were the Two "Timothy's." They were two of John Stott's sons in the ministry. They both shared sermons that stood out in their experience with John Stott as a mentor in the ministry. Every pastor/leader should have a mentor and confidant who offers spiritual guidance, one who is a godly example and reference for accountability.

Stott shares helpful insights and perspectives in the appendix. He speaks to serving people as the priority for ministers. This service characterizes humility and gentleness. Christ is the model for all Christian ministers. Christ provides lordship and pastors provide leadership.

The pastor is the shepherd and teacher that oversees the flock. The pastor by virtue of the nature of the role is an enabler in a positive sense. The pastor is responsible for building capacity and developing leaders who can partner in the discipleship process. Stott was an ongoing learner which is a tremendous standard for all pastors and leaders to consider serving while in a local church context. The importance of leadership development and capacity building must be a priority even for the primary leader of the congregation if the revitalization process is expected to produce the expected results.

This book touched on several topics that relate to Metropolitan. However, the discouragement and relational subjects are close to home. The church has been filled with discouragement because of the dilapidated landscape of the city of Gary. People complain about the blight and the overall decline of a city that once was booming and full of life. Now most people only see the remnants of what used to be. Hopelessness fills the air for so many. Working in conjunction with the discouragement is the lack of quality relationships. It is difficult to build a team, develop leaders or build capacity with people who do not trust you or trust one another.

Book Three: The Seven Pillars of Church Revitalization & Renewal by Tom Cheyney⁴⁰

In this book the author, Tom Cheyney, addresses the massive decline of churches in North America. He estimates over 300,000 Protestant churches in America have less than 100 members. He talks about the decline in the local church and at the denominational level.

In addition, the Message on the Seven Churches of Asia Minor speaks volumes to the state of the church and the biblical remedy for the issues. The topics include revitalization and realignment of the church, re-visioning, refocusing of the church, renewing of the church, restarting the church, reinvention of the church, and the restoration of the church. These stages of church renewal work hand in hand with the seven churches represented in the Book of Revelation. The theological dynamic of this passages and the historical relevance of these churches are both good for the redevelopment and rebranding of the local church.

Cheyney's stuck in the sand analogy is a tremendous challenge. The problem is facing reality. He also gives a list of outcomes that may happen when the church is unwilling to take its head out of the sand:

- A. The challenges and difficulties get worse.
- B. The children's children are forsaken by the church.
- C. Most pastors will regret serving churches that opt out of making a difference for Christ.
- D. Membership refuses to work together as a team to restart the church.

⁴⁰ Tom Cheyney, *The Seven Pillars of Church Revitalization & Renewal* (Renovate Publishing Group, 2016).

- E. Urgency is eliminated and a failure to relaunch.
- F. Focus on the same old things with nothing to show for it.
- G. The best and the most committed will take flight.
- H. Become comfortable with being comfortable.

Cheyney addresses the role of socioeconomic factors that contribute to being stuck. People are indeed affected by their environment. Also, pastoral availability may be negatively impacted in a stuck church context. There are several factors to consider.

First, the finances are most likely not particularly good. This will adversely affect the church in every area of church life. People that can give appear to give. However, so many withhold their finances and others give infrequently.

Next, low and dwindling attendance adds to the already depressing scenario and is a visible reality check of what may happen eventually. There is nothing like watching people look around at an empty sanctuary and then shake their heads in dismay. This is a very disheartening experience.

Moreover, when the pastor has outgrown the church, or the church has outgrown the pastor. This is a most challenging discovery that if handled incorrectly can leave permanent damage on the congregation.

These issues may be resolved through prayer, church ministry assessment, development of disciples, empowering of ministry workers and honest dialogue around practice feasibility. Many believe that prayer alone will correct these issues. However, prayer is appropriate, but prayer must be accompanied by a godly strategy and methodology for implementation with outcomes in mind.

Cheyney addresses some key issues that relate to Metropolitan. One of the issues that he addresses is the idea of “living with your head in the sand.” Metropolitan Baptist Church is stuck in the sand and most refuse to accept the reality of the current circumstances. This impedes the progress of leadership development and capacity building. Cognitive adjustments must take place in order to revive the congregation. However, changing the minds of congregations especially older members can be a lifetime assignment.

Book Four: Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again by
Andrew M. Davis⁴¹

In this book, Andrew M. Davis uses the word revitalization to describe the effort to restore by biblical means a once healthy church from a present level of disease to a state of spiritual health, as defined by the Word of God.

“I will establish an array of characteristics that define both a healthy church and an unhealthy church, by which church leaders can evaluate their local church. Churches in need of revitalization differ from healthy churches that simply need maturing in that toxic forces are at work that will make ministry there a particular challenge, and if left unchecked, will finally result in the death of the church.”⁴²

“The timeless message of Revelation 1–3 must be applied to churches in our generation. Every local church must listen carefully to what the Spirit says to each of these seven churches (Rev. 2: 7, 11, 17, 29; 3: 6, 13, 22). Christ is still walking among the seven golden lampstands with eyes of fire and a sword coming out of his mouth. His zeal for the holiness and fruitfulness of every local church is undiminished. This book is intended to be an instrument in his holy hands for the

⁴¹ Davis, Andrew M., and Mark Dever. *Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 19, 2017.

⁴² Ibid.

revitalization of churches across America, and perhaps even around the world. My desire is to be an encouragement to brothers and sisters, and especially to elders (pastors), who are called to churches needing revitalization.”⁴³

Andrew M. Davis describes the messenger and the message to each of the seven churches that Jesus addressed in the book of Revelation. They were actual churches that existed and with their respective characteristics that Jesus both commended and critiqued. Davis expresses that Christ is the owner of the church and Christ is interested in revitalization of the church as the one who established the church. Christ’s zeal and love for the church is displayed in His rebuke and call to repentance to the local congregations. Davis highlights fourteen lessons that he learned in church revitalization:

- A. Embrace Christ’s ownership of the church
- B. Be holy
- C. Rely on God
- D. Rely on God’s Word
- E. Saturate the church in prayer
- F. Cast a clear vision
- G. Be humble towards opponents
- H. Be courageous
- I. Be patient
- J. Be discerning
- K. Wage war against discouragement
- L. Develop and establish men as leaders

⁴³ Davis, Andrew M. *Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 16, 2017.

M. Become supple on worship

N. Embrace the two journeys of disciple making⁴⁴

Davis emphasized the harsh reality that many churches are actively dying or are already dead. The truth is that it appears to some that it would be more sensible to start a new church plant rather than to attempt to resuscitate a congregation that simply takes up space. He defines the word revitalize as “to make alive again.” Davis states that only God can give life, and this is a biblical truth that is easily seen in Ezekiel Chapter 37.

Davis speaks concerning lessons that he learned with respect to church revitalization.

“Faith Based Church had entrenched power structures and unbiblical attitudes in many vital areas, including an unbiblical church government based on committees and democratic processes that resulted in unbiblical lay leadership for decades; a large number of influential members whose status as regenerate believers in Christ was at best suspect; a chronic pattern of running off godly pastors who had sought to minister well to the church; an unbiblical attitude toward money, with an unhealthy focus on the beauty of the building to the exclusion of missionary efforts; a poor discipleship program; a bad history of racism in dealing with the surrounding community; a clique of powerful lay leaders who considered it their responsibility to dominate church life in secular ways; and a large contingent of senior adults who had received little solid biblical training.”⁴⁵

Davis suggests that capacity can increase with the implantation of a well-prepared plan. He stresses the importance of God leading the way and empowering leaders to impact dead or dying congregations through the word and leadership that is relational and righteous.⁴⁶

Davis also conveys that relational leadership and relational well-being can and ought to be accentuated in each congregation at some level. Viable leadership in a small

⁴⁴ Davis, Andrew M. *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 23-27, 2017.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 16

⁴⁶ Ibid. 17.

church must have the option to look forward. Such leaders must have the option to see social and segment patterns. Such leaders must be capable to foster change inside the congregation itself. Such leaders must be cognizant of new opportunities, necessities, and damages in their community.

Furthermore, there are many factors that add to the achievement or disappointment of a church; sociological, authoritative, and passionate issues are included. These variables may seem insignificant, but they can determine the plight of a congregation and whether the church dies or can be revitalized.

There is no one size fits all equation that is appropriate to all churches. Each church has its own history, character, dreams, and battles. Any great leader perceives this and will provide a vision to fit the unique circumstance. There are fundamental rules that are relevant in each setting. Each pastor and congregation must evaluate their circumstances to develop a plan of action.

If leaders are going to enable their churches to develop, they should support these churches, face these ruinous examples by demonstrating "sound connections" that will represent regard, honesty, unconditional love, and loyalty. In the case of existing congregations that do not flourish, it will be virtually impossible to revitalize through capacity building and leadership development without people to pool from who can become a part of the process.

Church revitalization requires mental stability, capable leaders, and leadership abilities. The skills and methodology can be developed through training, mentoring and modeling but the participant must have desire, passion and be teachable. Energy for

revitalizing the church must be motivated by their ability to serve and a heart for helping the church to revitalize.

The leadership style that will work best in this setting is relational. Choices are made by the congregation and driven by the priority of history. These churches are led by a solo pastor, who may be a bi-vocational pastor. Change happens from the bottom to the top through key individuals. Development happens through interest and appeal through relationships. Pastors and churches that are not relational may have difficulty with this process and they may need assistance in approaching this rewarding task.

In order to execute a revitalization plan effectively, the pastors, leaders and congregation must adapt an attitude and practice of relational thinking. Viable leadership requires execution aptitudes. This is the capacity to assume individual accountability, and to be responsible in helping the vision of capacity building and leadership development become a reality.

Leadership is not the only component in revitalization. This is unquestionably not a top-down approach. It requires a cautious way to deal with developing trust, creating a vision, building a group, encouraging experimentation and continuing to change. A quality revitalization process will select, prepare and potentially build up that sort of leadership.

This book spells out the current reality of Metropolitan. The signs of a dying church are all over the congregation. It is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain without competent support. The lack of capacity is related to the lack of people who even understand what it means to be a leader. The spirit of contention and the arrogance that

exists negate the potential to develop leaders who can partner in the revitalization process. Also, many have expressed that our church location is a problem. They do not invite others and some still despise the current location that has been home for the past five years.

Book Five: *Scrappy Church: God's Not Done Yet* by Thom S. Rainer⁴⁷

In this book *Scrappy Church*, Thom S. Rainer a leader in church revitalization seeks to dispel the hopelessness that many dying and struggling churches feel or are experiencing. He introduces the overall issue of hopelessness, but he gives us encouragement that "hopeless churches can become turnaround churches."⁴⁸

Rainer's analogy of a football quarterback and his work ethic and unrelentless scrappy play is a tremendous picture of hope and possibility for churches to exercise determination and resilience. These kinds of metaphors of life help to convey a message of hope to churches and members as they experience the challenges of rebounding from dying or death.

Rainer discusses what it means to be scrappy. Scrappy means to be feisty, tenacious, determined, dogged, and persistent. He paints a picture of leaders who refuse to give up but are willing to fight a fight that is bigger than them. It is the idea of a small dog who obviously does not measure up to a larger dog. However, that smaller dog is not intimidated or afraid to stand its ground. David was scrappy in comparison to Goliath.

⁴⁷ Rainer, Thom S. *Scrappy Church: God's Not Done Yet*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2018.

⁴⁸ Rainer, Thom S. *Scrappy Church: God's Not Done Yet*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2018.

But God gave David what he needed to be victorious over the reigning champion fighter. God wants to empower the pastor and declining church to fight to win and to overcome the threat of death and defeat.

God's power working in the leaders and the membership is what provides the motivation for persistency and defiance that can ultimately lead to capacity building, leadership development and eventual church revitalization. Rainer discusses six transitions that scrappy church leaders must make. The transitions are to ownership, obstacles to allies, limitations to abundance, despair to joy, fear to courage and impossible to possible.

God has a plan for each church and Rainer is calling and encouraging leaders and congregations to become a scrappy church. Rainer has an affinity for church revitalization and wants the church to trust God for a turnaround. Every pastor and congregation can be assured that they are not the only ones experiencing the effect of decline, poor leadership and the lack of all that is necessary to function as a healthy church.

Scrappy churches are welcoming. These kinds of churches are hospitable and inviting. Welcoming churches have good signage, a safe and clean environment, greeters, and the people are warm and genuine. Also, follow-up gives a visitor a feeling that a congregation knows them and has a warm inviting faith community. A welcoming church sets the stage for visitors to become new members and for new members to become faithfully committed to the worship and ministry of the local church.

Scrappy churches close the back door. Rainer emphasizes follow-up and groups. This is an effort to have access and accountability with new members. The follow-up assists with maintaining good communication with new members and a lifeline to developing the relationship. The groups provide support and create a level of trust and comfort for the new member as they assimilate into the new congregation.

Rainer offers five steps in closing the back door. First, have a mission statement that includes the importance of members getting involved in a group. Second, communicate the importance of groups in the new members class. Third, make certain the church is intentional about starting new groups. Fourth, have a leadership group review the status of new members at least every quarter. Fifth, follow-up persistently if a church member is not in a group.

The next scrappy church can happen if the pastor and congregation realize the importance of the welcoming model, leadership priority, organize passionate servers, make changes quarterly, give guests an experience to remember and do an evaluation on their welcoming ministry. The entire experience at church needs to be evaluated by the pastor and leaders to determine the level of effectiveness of the current methodology. After evaluating current method, the pastor and leaders should devise and employ a strategy that will enhance the welcoming dynamic of the church.

Metropolitan has potential to become a scrappy church, but most of its members do not have the desire or passion to pursue revitalization. Most members shun any effort that requires time, commitment or a structured setting that involves instruction outside of morning worship. The lack of desire and passion adversely affects the ability to build capacity and leadership development.

Book Six: Church Revitalization from Inside Out by Robert Stuart⁴⁹

Robert Stuart addresses the ailing churches. Many issues that are manifesting in the church are relative to the poor health of that church. Weak leaders duplicate weak leaders. There is a direct link between unhealthy leadership and unhealthy congregation.⁵⁰

Stuart discusses healthy leadership as leadership who take charge. The leadership factor is a key to revitalization through capacity building and leadership development. Strong leaders are emphasized, and the qualities associated with good leaders. Good leaders make tough decisions, governing people well, loves people, take charge and take responsibility.

The parity of leadership highlights sharing the ministry and thereby removing any opportunity for leaders to become puffed up and overcome in prideful arrogance. Innate in the pastoral or leadership position is a level of authority. Authority is the entryway for power. Some leaders abuse or misuse their power because of their position of authority. Stuart shares that good leaders utilize their authority and power appropriately. In the church that is elder led, the elders are for the most part equal and the pastor is the first among equals.

The leadership styles that Stuart describes are three church management methods that pastors/elders employ. First, the cattlemen who have a dominant style and who

⁴⁹ R.D. Stuart, Church Revitalization from Inside Out. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2016.

⁵⁰ Ibid,

overindulge in self-aggrandizement. Second, the drovers lack understanding in what a healthy church should look like. They work for the cattlemen and have unhealthy habits and disposition. Third, the shepherds lead the sheep and they provide nourishment for the sheep instead of fleecing the flock.

The Hartford Institute for Religion claims that 59 percent of all Protestant churches average between 7 and 99 attendees, and 35 percent average between 100 and 499. Stuart also addresses the conflict statistics that reveal that most churches experience conflict that leads to disgruntled and damaged churches.⁵¹

The Balm of Gilead is the solution to healing and maturing an ill or unhealthy congregation. Stuart contends that the church is ailing because of weak leadership. He calls poor leadership a disease. Some of the symptoms are bad decisions, the guise of uniformity, gossip, sacred cows, irreconcilable attitudes, fear of change, and lack of vision.

Stuart talks about trouble in the church and he gives insight to the challenges and problems that are a result of poor and weak leadership in the church. Some leaders who have experienced conflict in the church have lost their enthusiasm and zeal for ministry. As a result, many churches have become stagnant and some have even closed. Church trouble can have long lasting effects that the church does not rebound from and it will lead to the ultimate decline of a congregation.

⁵¹ Stuart, R. D. *Church Revitalization from Inside Out*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 14, 2016.

Ed Stetzer, writing in 2003, stated that 80 percent of churches were trending downward. With the closing of between four thousand and seven thousand churches each year, the percent of decline has not decreased since his book was written and may in fact have increased.⁵²

Poor leadership may be a contributing factor to the decline and demise of the church. The expectations of leadership and the nature of the task of revitalization process require a level of character and commitment that is unmatched. Godly leaders are vital in the process of capacity building and leadership development.

Stuart suggests that the cure for poor leadership is selecting godly leaders who love the sheep and who will do so willingly. Leaders who take their commitment seriously and who will fulfill their role assignment while promoting peace and unity within the congregation. Poor leadership is destructive and counterproductive. This kind of leadership must be corrected in order to facilitate the change that is imperative in leadership development and capacity building.

One of the symptoms of poor leadership is the refusal to change. Good leaders are capable of adapting to the needs of their flock. They have the best interest of the flock at heart and will provide nurture and nourishment for the flock. Change is a part of the church experience. Leaders must lead the church through change with confidence that God will provide for their needs.

⁵² Stuart, R. D. *Church Revitalization from Inside Out*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 14, 2016.

Also, another symptom of poor leadership is the fear of making decisions. The dreading of making difficult decisions does not negate the need to make those decisions. Many pastors are afraid of hurting someone's feelings or offending them. Pleasing God must take precedence over being in good standing with people. Leaders are required to make decisions no matter how unpopular. The decisions may be hard, but the end results may justify the means to the end. This is not always the case. However, decision making in difficult situations may be necessary at times.

A congregation cannot experience leadership development and capacity building which leads to revitalization without pastoral leadership. The pastor and membership must develop a strategy. They must concentrate on the key issues and intentionally choose to make building up leaders and creating capacity their main interest. Leaders have such an effect on congregations that a church cannot be revitalized without good leadership.

Consensus is a good methodology to use for pastors to avoid bad decision making. Entertaining the conversation and accepting the decision of the majority is a balanced approach to curtailing bad decisions in the church leadership.

Stuart talks about the will of God and how shepherds and leaders should learn to accept God's good and maturing will. God's will may be misunderstood, but His will is always for our good and towards a good end for us. God's will is perfect. He already has everything in place for us. Submitting to His will is the challenge for pastors and leaders. God's will include some suffering, but suffering is a part of our development.

Stuart highlights being called by God. This is a holy calling. The pastor and leaders are expected to represent the Savior in fulfilling His plan and purposes in the context of leading His sheep.

Unity above uniformity is promoted. God wants spiritual unity in the church. Too often congregations dress up for special days and have colors coordinated and the church is falling apart. People may be at odds with one another and have unsettled disagreements. God has called us to be single minded, to have the same vision, to have the same purpose and to walk together in unity. Uniformity may also be looked at as conformity. People are not expected to be void of ideas and expressions, but they should have viable solutions or at least a reasonable explanation for their position. The church needs every member's creativity and gifted abilities.

The Holy Spirit creates unity. However, the church should work hard to maintain that unity. The effort that is put forth to hold on to the unity is the lifeline to revitalization and the entryway to leadership development and capacity building. The Holy Spirit can breathe life back into a congregation that is declining or on life support. A significant component in leadership is to promote peace and to maintain unity in the congregation.

Stuart addresses the Five V's of relationship building. The Five V's are the view of self, vacuous (empty), vulnerable, vocal, and visible. These terms are key to self-realization and to making adjustments that forge healthier relationships. Relationships are important. Throughout Scripture people's lives were impacted positively and negatively because of good or bad relationships. Relationships are key to capacity building and leadership development. People simply do not trust the unknown. Building relationships takes time and interpersonal communication.

Stuart describes idols that are within the church context. The idols that he discusses are self-importance, doctrinal fixation, personal preferences, the pastor, a tribal leader, and unrepented sin. Idols are obstacles and potential hindrances to the healthy life of the congregation that need to be addressed and alleviated. Repentance and prayer are two vital remedies to cure the idol sickness in the congregation. All the idols are detrimental and should be treated as such.

Metropolitan Baptist Church can identify with many of the issues described by Stuart. The idol dynamic is a hindrance for the church and has established an unhealthy environment. Also, there is an issue with trust and relationships. It appears to be the same issue within the city of Gary. It is often stated that people in Gary despise people from Chicago. This has created a long-term distrust of people who may not have even given any reason to be distrusted over a long period of time. After eight years of serving, distrust is still on the forefront. This is a problem for the hope of capacity building and leadership development.

Book Seven: The Unstuck Church: Equipping Churches to Experience Sustained Health by Tony Morgan⁵³

In this book Tony Morgan presents a non-technical perspective on what church is supposed to be. He explores what God's intentions and design are for the church. Also, he discusses God's desire to reach lost people. Morgan shares the life cycle stages of a church:

A. Launch

⁵³ Morgan, Tony. *The Unstuck Church: Equipping Churches to Experience Sustained Health*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017.

- B. Momentum Growth
- C. Strategic Growth
- D. Sustained Health
- E. Maintenance
- F. Preservation
- G. Life Support

Morgan also discusses the various stages of every church. Each stage has unique characteristics that describe a phase in the life of that congregation which causes the church to function in a healthy or unhealthy manner. The following is a summary of each stage.

The first stage is the Launch Phase. This is where it all begins. In this space everything is new. There is a new church, a new pastor and a new mission. Vision casting helps to catapult the church into new realities. The sky is the limit and conceptualizing the great things that are to come motivates the launch phase. The hope of potential fills the air with anticipation of what is coming.

The second stage is the Momentum Growth Phase. In the phase Momentum Growth, the church is filled with joy and excitement. It is like a honeymoon. Everything is falling in place. The wave of newness is driving a level of expectation that manifests in great attendance, successful outreach and a season of contagious momentum. The phrase “riding the wave” comes to mind when thinking about momentum. This is a tremendous time in ministry when things just seem to fall in place and possibilities become realities.

The third stage is the Sustained Health Phase. In this stage, churches embrace the tension between vision and systems. They straddle the fine line between outreach and spiritual formation. Growth continues to occur not only with numbers but also with people accepting Christ, engaging a discipleship process, and sacrificing their lives to get on mission with Jesus. In this phase, the church appears to be productive. There is a semblance of the momentum phase, but it is a carryover and is slowly dwindling.

The congregation seems to be doing well. However, there are signs that the church has lost focus on the main function of the church and more attention is given to programs versus people. The maintaining of the status quo becomes the priority of the church in lieu of soul winner and connecting with people and meeting their needs. When the church is progressing well, it can be a time when the congregation lulls into complacency and loses the cutting edge of the launch and momentum phases.

In the fourth stage, which is the Preservation Phase, leaders leave voluntarily or are forced to leave. By the time churches land in this season, it is difficult to turn things around. In many instances, this is the first-time churches begin to experience a decline in both attendance and giving. By now, the methods are sacred. What the church needs is fresh leadership and a fresh vision.

The fifth phase is the Life Support Phase. Once a church ends here, they either close their doors or experience a relaunch. Many churches would choose to die rather than experience a rebirth. It is a stubborn attachment to the past that leads to the church's ultimate demise. Traditions win over life transformation. Personal preferences crowd out sacrifice and full devotion to the gospel mandate. Attendance dissipates and the money

ultimately runs out. I wish it were the fact that people were not being reached for Jesus that precipitated the urgency that comes with the Life Support phase.

In an article entitled, “Secularization and Attribution: How Mainline Protestant Clergy and Congregants Explain Church Growth and Decline,” an analysis is offered for explanations for growth and decline given by 22 clergy and 128 congregants from 21 mainline Protestant churches in Canada, including both growing and declining congregations.⁵⁴

Both clergy and congregants attributed growth and decline to a wide range of external and internal causes. People in declining churches were more likely to attribute them to external factors outside the churches’ control. People in growing churches tended to attribute them to the characteristics of the churches themselves.⁵⁵

Both groups overwhelmingly relied on human explanations rather than supernatural ones, with some exceptions from growing church participants. We argue that these results align with the predictions of attribution theory and reflect a high degree of internal secularization that is more advanced in the declining churches. We discuss the role of theological factors in these differences and suggest possible implications for understanding church growth and decline.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Kevin N Flatt, D Millard Haskell, Stephanie Burgoyne, Secularization and Attribution: How Mainline Protestant Clergy and Congregants Explain Church Growth and Decline, *Sociology of Religion*, Volume 79, Issue 1, Spring 2018, Pages 78–107, <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srx044>

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Kevin N Flatt, D Millard Haskell, Stephanie Burgoyne, Secularization and Attribution: How Mainline Protestant Clergy and Congregants Explain Church Growth and Decline, *Sociology of Religion*, Volume 79, Issue 1, Spring 2018, Pages 78–107, <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srx044>

The church projects and activities enable individuals to have a profound experience and keep them energized and vivacious about their confidence in the hope of revitalization. This provides motivation and often ignites passion and leads individuals to evangelism and discipleship. This may be a conduit that assists in revitalization, capacity building and building up people for the ministry.

Morgan reminds us that pastors and churches should not forget the bottom line for why the church exists. He contends that the church has the greatest mission in the world. Yet, the church often loses focus on keeping the first things first. The church is charged with witnessing to the world and making disciples of every ethnic group. We have the awesome task of evangelizing, equipping and empowering people to reach their full maturity and to develop a committed relationship with the Lord.

The church must define their purpose and recover their mission in the world. There is a need to identify life themes for the church to connect with people. Such topics as managing people, change management, making more money, relationships, and time management are all important issues that matter to people today. While assessing what people need, the opportunity to modify the presentation for training leaders and equipping leaders to serve is available.

Morgan discusses discovering the mission of the church. He gives an interesting observation. If the church's music and ministry make older adults happy, you are reaching older adults. If your ministry is making middle-aged adults happy, you are reaching middle-aged and older adults. If your ministry is making young adults happy, you are reaching young adults, middle-aged, and older adults.

A preacher told a story of taking his three daughters to the mall. The two oldest asked for twenty dollars apiece. He gave all three twenty dollars apiece to spend. However, the youngest daughter stayed with her father while other two went from store to store. Several hours later, the two sisters met with their father and younger sister. To their surprise, the younger sister had at least eight bags. They wondered how she could afford all the things with just twenty dollars. She explained, "because I was with our father; I told him what I wanted, and he agreed to purchase it. I was in his presence." The two sisters targeted a dollar amount. The younger sister targeted the father who controlled the money.

The church must focus on or target a group to design a model for that ministry. In the above example, it appears that targeting the young adults will gain all three groups. The young adults, the middle aged and the older adults. This could save a congregation a lot of time and futile efforts if the time is taken to acknowledge, assess, and strategically address the target group.

Morgan shares strategies to help a church become more financially stable. He talks about the pastor being bi-vocational for a season, saving money where possible, the staff raising money for their support and requesting assistance from denominations and other churches. People that attend church have money challenges and some may need help with getting on track. Encouraging members to volunteer in ministry can give insight into giving of time outside of the worship context. Also, an intentional approach to discussing giving which includes personal testimonies may be helpful in guiding the congregation to more consistent giving.

The thought of adding a service prior to building a new building is very practical. The idea of adding services creates an opportunity for others to lead. In preparation for leading, training would be necessary. The training of new leaders will increase the church's capacity to handle expansion in the current building prior to undertaking a new building project. This is vitally important because it maximizes the skills, abilities, and talents in the congregation which will in turn place the congregation in the position to increase numerically, financially and in ministry capacity.

The topic of giving power away is powerful in and of itself. Team building and leadership development is vitally important in capacity building and edifying members for leadership. Allowing the team to problem solve, discover options for solutions, develop a rationale for the solutions, evaluate their learning from the process and make viable recommendations is a process that is loaded with unlimited opportunities for growth and expansion in the church ministry.

Growth can come suddenly as well as swelling. Swelling is an abnormal growth that may indicate an unhealthy situation. Strategic planning should be done prayerfully and thoughtfully to create a team environment which strengthens the congregation. Morgan shares several characteristics of churches in a strategic growth season.

- A. The shift from personalities to teams.
- B. Growth pains force leaders to think more strategically.
- C. Churches confirm their discipleship path.
- D. Systems are established to reinforce healthy behaviors.
- E. Structure forms to support future growth.
- F. Churches begin to flex their healthy change muscles.

Good stewardship calls for a good plan to execute the strategy. The gains that are realized in the above process will add value, confidence, viability, and effective development. Also, this establishes a context for leadership development and capacity building that will include additional trained and experienced leaders.

Books about ministering in a declining church cover a wide spectrum. Some confidently offer a turnaround strategy, while others focus on making peace with dying. Each of the books under review here is written by a pastor and so is concerned with the psychology of leading a dying congregation. Church people look to us to lead even when they are dead set against changing anything.⁵⁷

An article in the *Journal of Religion and Health*:

Describes the processes utilized to design and implement an initiative to increase capacity for laity-led, comprehensive health ministry among Kansas United Methodist Church (UMC) congregations. Seven elements within faith-based health promotion programs (CBHPP) considered to be beneficial in establishing CBHPP and demonstrating desired health promotion outcomes were identified in a 2002 literature review (Peterson et al. 2002). These key factors include (1) partnerships; (2) positive health values; (3) availability of services; (4) access to facilities; (5) community-focused intervention; (6) health behavior change; and (7) supportive relationships.⁵⁸

The article expresses seven elements that are key to capacity building for laity led, comprehensive health ministry among Kansas United Methodist Church congregations. Yet it shares some helpful factors that other churches may use in building capacity and the development of leaders.

⁵⁷ Jason Byassee and Anna B Olson, "A Practical guide for Revitalizing Your Church" (2018): 4.

⁵⁸ Judy A. Johnston, Kurt Konda, and Elizabeth Ablah, "Building Capacity Among Laity: A Faith-Based Health Ministry Initiative," *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 4 (August 2018): 1276–1284, accessed March 5, 2020, <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/s10943-017-0445-6>.

Metropolitan Baptist Church can relate to the life support stage. The congregation is on life support financially, numerically, and in areas of relationship. It is difficult to develop people into leaders who do not want to be developed, but they want to wear the title. As a result, the capacity potential remains limited because of the pool of people. The life support stage is no fun. Metropolitan is facing the life support stage and the options that go along with that reality.

CHAPTER FOUR: EVALUATION STRATEGY AND RESULTS

Chapter three provided an explanation of the extra biblical foundations from relevant fields through a review of seven books that relate to this project. The seven that were chosen were representative of the nature of the research and the potential solutions for addressing the issues of capacity and leadership. The seven authors' wealth of professional and practical experience added value to this project.

Chapter four provides an explanation of the research that has been influential to the project and the results obtained through the quantitative research of two surveys administered to pastors and the Metropolitan congregation. One survey asked questions relevant to pastors regarding their role as leaders of a congregation. The second survey asked questions of congregation members of Metropolitan Church which is the subject of this project. Both surveys were developed by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research in Connecticut. The surveys asked several sets of questions about the congregation's current ministry including inquiries relative to church dynamics and vision for the future to provide a baseline to measure whether the congregation is moving in a positive direction.

Methods and Procedures

Chapter four addresses the methods and procedures used for this project research. This research used a quantitative data collection method using surveys for adequate results. Quantitative Research was selected for this study to quantify the problem by generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. The data was used to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and other defined variables from a small sample population. Quantitative Research was appropriate for this study because it

is more structured than qualitative data collection methods because it uses measurable data to formulate facts and uncover patterns in research. Quantitative data collection methods include various forms of surveys – online surveys, or paper surveys. I used surveys that consisted of multiple-choice questions to measure my research.

The study was designed to examine the causes and effects of lack of capacity and poor leadership development at the Metropolitan Baptist Church. The aim of the project is to research contributing factors to dead or dying churches in relationship to lack of leadership and the absence of capacity building. A multiple-choice survey was used for both the pastor survey and the membership survey. The research findings revealed the following survey results.

First, the pastors survey results convey that each pastor's context may have similarities with the others in the survey in terms of issues, but the cause and effect may be different. Second, the pastor's perception of ministry may vary based on ministry expectations. The congregation's results reveal their perception of and expectations for the church and ministry. The church results indicate that Metropolitan Baptist Church lacks the capacity to execute effective ministry and does not have the leadership that is necessary to build a healthy congregation. Pastors and congregations need mentoring, training, leadership development, nurture, health assessment and an overall assessment of the pastoral and congregational ministry.

Dr. Marsheila Harris was the third-party facilitator who administered the survey to both pastors and congregation. She is a professor and director at the Indiana University Northwest School of Social Work. Moreover, she facilitated the actual survey process

and the tabulation of the results. In addition, she was responsible for the reporting of the results that are included in this chapter of the project.

Sampling Method

The population for this study consisted of two groups that were targeted for this research. The first group of subjects for this survey was 15-25 pastors who serve similar congregations, i.e. less than 50 people. The second group was the members of my congregation, which has gone through a church split, inadequate church leadership and is a declined church that needs revitalization. 83% of the pastors that were invited responded.

The second group of subjects for this study was 23 members of Metropolitan who participated. At least 85% of the membership participated in the survey. The members were requested to complete a multiple-choice survey.

An announcement was made for several weeks by Pastor Kelley requesting referrals and calls were made to solicit participants who would meet the criteria and qualify to complete the survey. Each participant completed their informed consent for participation in the survey. They were provided the criteria for participation for local pastors with demographics of decline, numerical and financial decline, fifty members or less and/or other factors that contribute to the death and dying of churches. In addition, the church members that participated were at least 18 years old and active members of Metropolitan Baptist Church.

Measurement tool

Church leaders must evaluate various ministries to determine if a ministry is relevant. This evaluation is based upon several factors. First, there must be missional priority as given to us by Christ. Next, the vision of the church must reflect the reason for existence of the church. Finally, some ministries must produce income for the church.

The Transformational Church Assessment Tool (TCAT) provides the church with the ability to assess the health of the congregation, celebrate areas of strength, and address areas of concern. Lifeway, through the Transformational Church initiative, is seeking to help churches change the scorecard--to better understand how to become a transformational church. The guidance provided in the book and DVD discussion guide, and the help offered through consulting services, will be most difficult to apply without the ability to understand where your church is and how your congregation perceives what your church is doing⁵⁹

The pastors survey was administered to pastors who were in a leadership role at a church with comparative size and demographics. Pastors were asked to complete a survey which consisted of 14 questions to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their congregation, specific attributes they attribute to their numerical decline, how to increase attendance, worship convenience, amenities, ministries, stewardship, and church revitalization.

The membership survey was administered to active congregational members. Participants were between the ages of 18-89. Almost all our participants are natives of

⁵⁹ "Transformational Church Assessment Tool," last modified 2019, <http://tc.lifeway.com/marketing/page/32>.

Gary, Indiana. The membership varies in terms of how long they have been members from one year to fifty-seven years. Most of the members are African American women. Every member received instructions regarding their participation in the survey. Dr. Harris shared the logistics of the study and she answered questions and provided support as needed.

Limitations

The limitations that may impact the outcome of the research are:

- The unwillingness of the participants to honestly share their opinions regarding the questions that they answered
- A lack of transparency due to an unwillingness to accept facts, expose reality, and help with good data
- A lack of transparency and honest opinions could be a problem in the data analysis and addressing the root of the problems that the church faces
- Incomplete surveys could have a negative impact on the outcome of the research findings

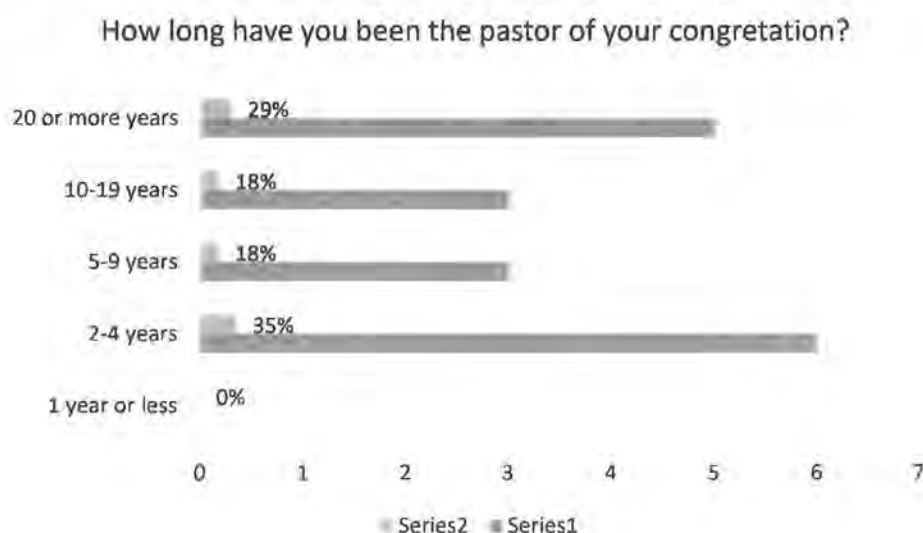
The main challenges of lack of capacity and poor leadership were not addressed as much by the congregation. Also, the pastors survey reported no replies as it relates to a lack of leadership as a weakness. Results of this survey may be impacted by subjective data which expresses the opinions of the participants. The opinions of the participants may be legitimate. The survey participants may provide answers to the survey questions that do not reflect reality. Consequently, this may negatively impact the outcome of developing the appropriated strategy.

Finally, limiting the survey to churches with similar demographics who are located in Northwest Indiana may be a factor in terms of feedback around cause and effect, measurability of variables in the assessment of the problems or solutions and perspective that could be gained based on location. The philosophy of ministry could create limitations in terms of creativity and innovative strategy for building capacity and leadership development.

Survey Results

Pastor Survey Results

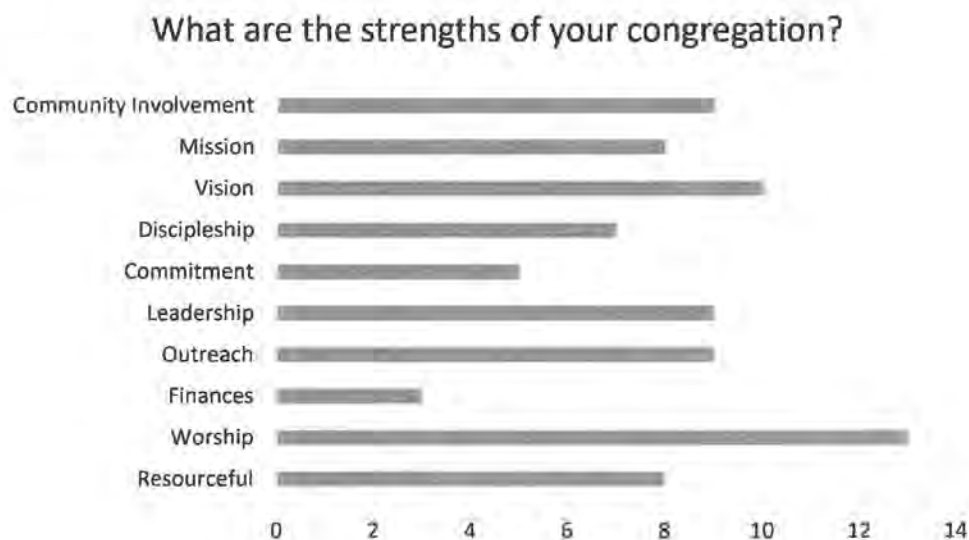
Graph 1: The length of pastoral tenure



Source: Metropolitan's Pastor's Survey Results

This graph depicts that most of the pastors who participated in the survey have only served in the community for 2-4 years. Only about one third have pastored for 20 years or more. Only 6 out of 17 served long enough to initiate change and realize transformation or revitalization within the context of their ministry. Some suggest that it takes at least a generation to effect change in the life of a church.

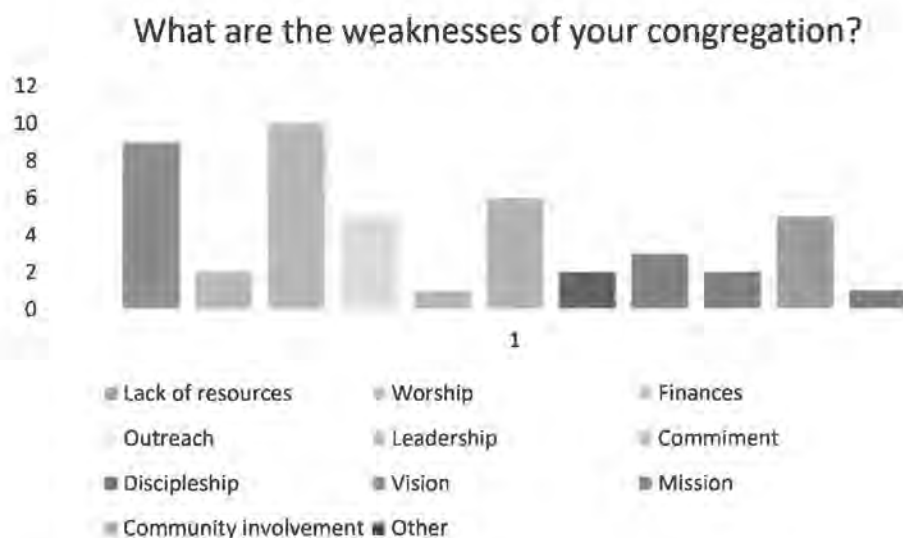
Graph 2: Strengths of the congregation



Source: Metropolitan's Pastor's Survey Results

According to the survey results, most of the pastors conveyed that worship and vision were their two greatest strengths. Leadership, community involvement, and outreach are the next three strengths. Ironically, finances and commitment were the two lowest in terms of the strengths of the congregations as reported from the pastor's survey. Leadership, mission and discipleship are recorded relatively close. This could suggest work needs to be done in the area of internal capacity development and additional leadership training.

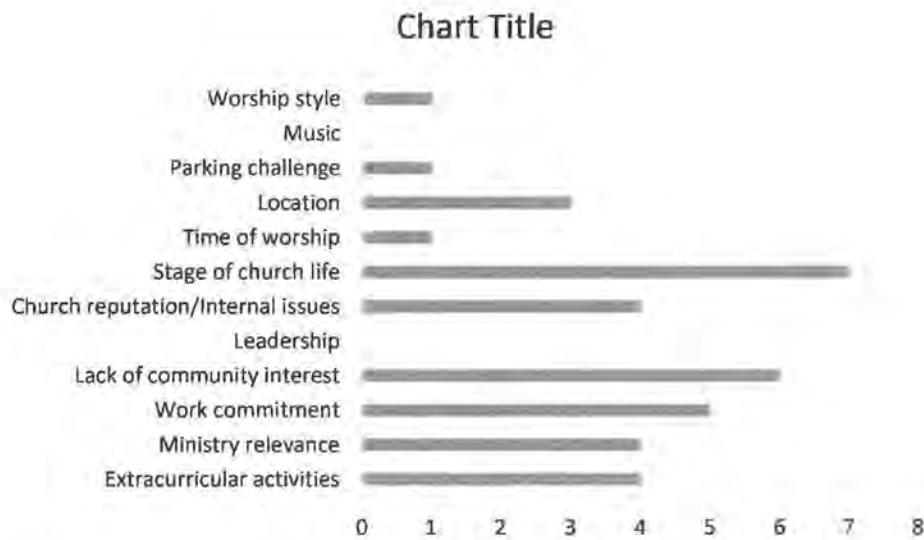
Graph 3: Weaknesses of the congregation



Source: Metropolitan's Pastor's Survey Results

According to the survey most of the pastors surveyed describe finances as the greatest weakness of their congregation. The lack of resources, and commitment are also weaknesses of the various congregations. Combined lack of finances, resources and commitment create lack of capacity and the need for developing leaders. The lack of commitment supports the issues of the lack of capacity and a need for leadership development.

Graph 4: Source of numerical decline



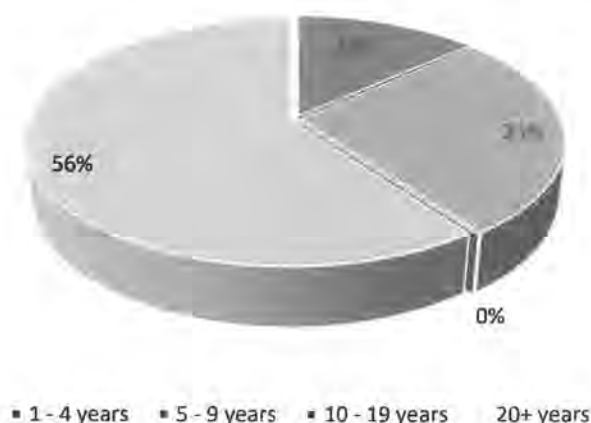
Source: Metropolitan's Pastor's Survey Results

Most pastors that were surveyed believe the stage of church life is the largest contributor to the numerical decline of Metropolitan. This suggests that their churches are aging, and the average age of the membership may be in an inactive status. The aging congregation has less manpower for membership and a need to develop new leaders. The next two main factors are the lack of community interest and work commitment.

Membership Survey Results

Graph 5: Length of membership

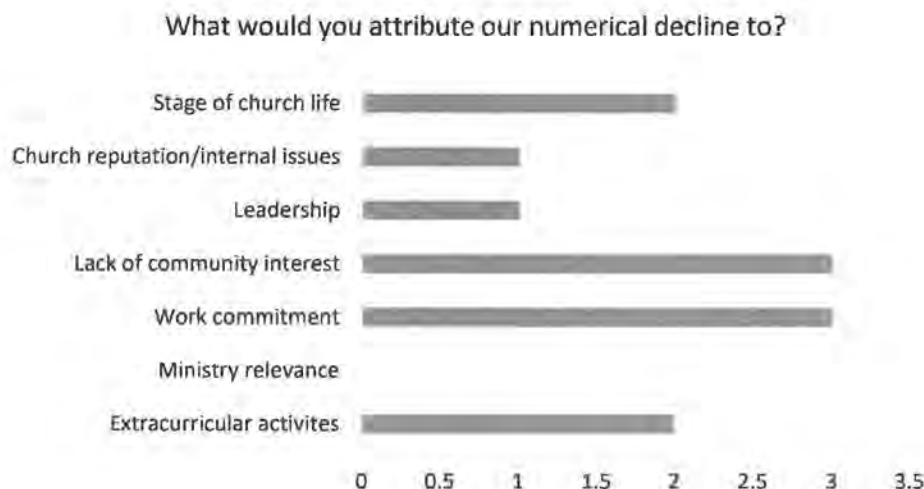
How long have you been a member of this congregation?



Source: Metropolitan's Membership Survey Results

This graph reports how long a member has been a part of the congregation and states that the great majority of the members of Metropolitan have been members for 20 years or more. This could mean that the great majority are loyal to the church, but not necessarily to the ministry. About a quarter of the membership has been a part of the congregation for less than 10 years.

Graph 6: Source of numerical decline



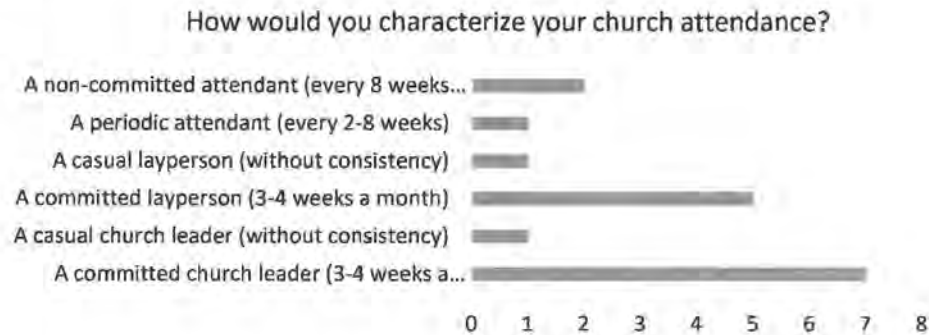
Source: Metropolitan's Membership Survey Results

This membership graph suggests that lack of community interest and work commitment are the two major factors in the numerical decline of the Metropolitan Baptist Church. This places the emphasis of decline on external issues and not the internal issues of leadership development and capacity building. The next two main contributing factors are the stage of church life and extracurricular activities.

Most of our members are in senior status and are not able to physically or administratively support the church. The stage of life of Metropolitan may be the leading cause of lack of capacity building and poor leadership. The members lack desire, energy and the motivation to consistently fulfill ministry obligations or to volunteer at any level.

Extracurricular activities appear to be a reason that is used for decline. In other words, the people have other things to do. They refuse to commit to anything that requires them to volunteer their time and resources.

Graph 7: Church attendance



Source: Metropolitan's Membership Survey Results

This graph suggests that most members are committed church leaders and attend church on a regular basis. The results from this graph do not actually reflect the reality of Metropolitan Baptist Church. The results give an inaccurate description of the attendance activity. The idea of a church leader without consistency is oxymoronic.

The attendance pattern at Metropolitan is very inconsistent and unreliable. The members miss church based on the weather, personal feelings, and a hint of sickness, some visit other churches or participate in entertainment events.

Graph 8: Solution for church revitalization



Source: Metropolitan's Membership Survey Results

According to the membership survey, most members surveyed believe that personal commitment, increased membership, increased membership involvement and evangelism are needed to revitalize the congregation. The results and observations identify issues as perceived by the congregation. The need to change leadership has a low evaluation and appears to be an underrated need within the congregation. Also, the role and value of discipleship may be overlooked in the survey results. The results may not reflect the actual steps that are necessary for resolution of the prevailing issues of lack of capacity building and lack of leadership.

Data analysis

The data were entered and analyzed using the SPSS version 25. The Qualtrics software was utilized by the facilitator. Both univariate and bivariate descriptive analyses were carried out. The varied relationships between the different items in the questionnaire were examined with the use of correlations (Pearson's) and regressions.

Ethical considerations

The IRB approved both surveys with a few corrections. There were two potential challenges that this research could have encountered. They were the unwillingness of members to share their insights and the level of transparency of members. Also, to ensure anonymity a third-party facilitator, Dr. Marsheila Harris was solicited to administer the pastors and congregation's survey.

Summary

Descriptive statistics

The pastoral surveys consisted of 17 participants. They were local pastors with similar demographics to Metropolitan in terms of membership size, decline, leadership and capacity building challenge. Every pastor was given directions and allowed to ask questions relative to the content of the study as they completed the survey. Each pastor was afforded a private and confidential setting to complete the survey. The pastor's surveys and results remain confidential and are stored in a secure place per the understanding with the IRB.

The church survey was challenging considering the lack of precise and accurate answers to some of the questions of capacity building and leadership. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of the church decline from the membership surveys. There were 25 members which participated in the study. They all received instructions and were offered support in relation to completing the survey. Each participant had enough privacy and time needed to satisfactorily complete the survey. Several responses consisted of missing values. The surveys were managed, the data was analyzed, and the documents have been stored for confidentiality and privacy per the understanding with the IRB.

The membership survey reports that 44% of the members describe themselves as committed church leaders and 31% say that they are committed lay members. The results share that 19% of the members who completed the survey believe the lack of community interest and work commitment are the two main reasons for the decline of Metropolitan. The survey results also reveal that 13% feel that extracurricular activities and stage of church life contribute to the decline of the church. Ironically, only 6% expressed that the primary reasons for the church decline are leadership and church reputation/internal issues.

In addition, the results convey that 50% of the members surveyed believe that personal commitment is the number one solution for revitalization. Furthermore, 38% of members feel that increased membership, increased membership involvement and additional ministries are necessary for church revitalization. Discipleship was identified as a viable solution by 19% and 6% suggest that leadership is the remedy.

Of the pastors surveyed 35% have served in their current pastorate for 2-4 years, 18% 5-9 years, 18% 10-19, and 29% for over 20 years.

The pastor's surveys revealed that 16% of the pastors believe that worship is their church's greatest strength. Also, vision 12%, leadership 11%, outreach 12% and mission 10% are identified as strengths of the various congregations. The pastors identified finances and lack of resources as their congregation's greatest weaknesses. Commitment, outreach and community involvement were selected weaknesses as well.

The pastors who participated in the survey believe that the stage of their church life is the number one contributor to their church decline. Also, other factors are lack of

community interest, work commitment, ministry relevance and extracurricular activities.

None of the pastors surveyed cited leadership as a reason for their church decline. This could be because they perceive their leadership is functioning properly and is healthy.

Healthy leadership has competent, skilled, spiritual, teachable and committed people who have a love for the church. In the research of church leadership, the top ten trends that affect the health of a congregation are listed below.

1. The healthiest churches have a high reverence for the Bible and are involved in discipleship and the multiplication of it.⁶⁰
2. There is a direct correlation between the decline of small groups, those who actually study the Bible, or a decline of quality small group Bible-based curricula (versus a mere book study) and the decline of evangelism, stewardship, spiritual growth, and leadership participation!⁶¹
3. There is a direct correlation between the decline of personal devotions and personal prayer and Bible study amongst leaders and pastors and the decline of church health, evangelism, stewardship, spiritual growth, and leadership participation!⁶²
4. American Christians increasingly tend to be more and more isolated from their non-Christian counterparts, in one's family, workplace, and secular society in general. The more one is involved as a Christian, the less influence they have to others in the world for the Gospel.⁶³
5. Non-Christians, academia, and the media are more and more openly hostile to the Gospel. At the same time, many younger non-Christians (ages 14 to 30) are more receptive to the Gospel message.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ <http://www.churchleadership.org/Research>

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ <http://www.churchleadership.org/Research>

6. Less than 10% of Reformed and Evangelical churches (not mainline or Catholic) have an evangelism program or plans for one.⁶⁵
7. The churches that are growing both numerically and spiritually in fruit and maturity have an active missions' program and local outreach.⁶⁶
8. The churches that are growing both numerically and spiritually in fruit and maturity have preaching and small groups doing active teaching or expository or exegetical Bible sermons and not simple messages.⁶⁷
9. Younger people, 14 to 30-year-olds are seeking a deeper relationship in churches than previous generations. They want relevant worship, deeper Bible studies, preaching that is centered on the Bible and the glorification of Christ, and practical life-relational helps. The dropout rate of 14 to 30-year-old is at an all-time high-50% to 70%. The primary reason is that they want more and the churches they visit do not offer it! The other 30% to 50% drop out because of apathy and indifference, a loss of hope, and the Church cannot fulfill them anymore.⁶⁸

In the meantime, remember this basic fact: 65 percent of churches are plateaued or declining and 35 percent of churches are growing.⁶⁹

The lack of resources, lack of collaboration, stages of church life, lack of community interest and work commitment were selected by the study participants. They will be addressed in the next section.

Lack of resources

The lack of finances appears to be perceived as a challenge for both the pastors and the members of the Metropolitan Baptist Church. Finances can indeed be a major

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ <https://thomrainer.com/2017/06/dispelling-80-percent-myth-declining-churches/>

contributing factor to the inability to build capacity or adequately train leaders.

Sometimes, the lack of resources is linked to the inability, unwillingness or unawareness of collaboration options within the community that can assist with church capacity building and the development of leaders,

Collaboration

Collaboration is the order of the day. However, many pastors and congregations would rather be the lone ranger and refuse to pool their resources, manpower and finances for the greater good. Those congregations that can remain independent because of the weight of their budget could gain genuine fellowship and partnership if they would be open to collaborating for the greater good of the community and the glory of God in kingdom work.

Stages of Church Life

Every congregation may be living in a different stage than their counterpart. This reality must be taken into consideration when evaluating the capacity building potential and the congregation's ability to effectively train new leaders. In a young or relatively youth dominant context, training and development may be etched in stone. However, in a more aged congregation, oftentimes the membership has already participated in ministry for years and may be in the retirement frame of mind.

Lack of Community Interest

The lack of community interest may be a result of the lack of church interest in the community. There is a saying, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." The community watches the church week after week huddle in our various congregations often without any concern for the plight of the neighbors. The church has become so membership focused that meeting needs and attending to people who we desire to attend our churches has become secondary to the superficial mission of the church.

There is an article that was re-published entitled, "Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders" by Larry C. Spears. Spears describes ten characteristics of the servant leader that are of critical importance. They are listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ The Journal of Virtues & Leadership, Vol. 1 Iss. 1, 2010, 25-30.

There is a story that was told by a preacher about a church that caught on fire. The church was burning and a neighbor to the church saw the fire. He ran to get an extinguisher and he began to put out the fire. By that time, the pastor walked up and spoke to the neighbor with surprise. The pastor exclaimed, "I am surprised that you came to the rescue of the church in a time of crisis because you have never visited the church before." The man replied, "The church has never been on fire before." This story illustrates why so many in the community are distant from the church in participation although they may be close in proximity. They see nothing happening that relates to them and many feel unwelcomed.

Work Commitment

In this era of varying and flexible work schedules, it can be difficult to imagine that an individual could not choose a congregation that will best suit their needs with consideration to the time factor. Metropolitan has mostly retired members with a couple of entrepreneurs and a few who are blue collar workers with regular work schedules. It is interesting to hear people state reasons why they cannot commit to the work of the ministry because of their work commitment and their career or job obligation.

In a study by Barna the following was reported and appears to be relevant to addressing the decline of the church and the inability to build capacity and leadership development. The research conducted by The Barna Group discovered some interesting correlations between the absence of a Strategic leader and the condition of a local church. First, churches without a pastor, staff member or key elder in a recognized strategic leader position tend to remain numerically small. Such churches average fewer than 100 adults in weekly attendance. Second, these are churches that are significantly behind the curve in adopting new approaches to ministry. One example is the failure to embrace new technological tools for ministry. That condition is partly a result of the budget limitations attributable to limited attendance, but also relates to the narrower thinking common to such ministries. Third, churches that do not esteem and release the strategic abilities of these leaders are more likely to be in a constant state of crisis due to the failure to anticipate foreseeable problems that ultimately hinder the ministry. The absence

of a Strategic leader typically produces more restricted analysis of situations and less effective problem-solving skills within the leadership ranks of the church.⁷¹

Aaron Earls states, “When asked about the biggest challenges to leadership today, half of respondents (50%) say everyone is too busy and distracted.”⁷²

The congregation that will develop capacity must have a strategy and a pool of potential leaders: leaders who will commit to the process of building capacity and adequately developing new leaders.

The results of the pastor and congregation surveys suggest that there is a need for change management. There appears to be an unwillingness to face reality and the need for capacity building and leadership development. It can happen if the church agrees to strategically engage in change methodology. In order to affect change, dialogue with the senior members may have to be occur. Communication is the key and must be established as the congregation strives to build capacity and train leaders to assist in the revitalization process.

In a recent global survey from Barna, 82% of 18 to 35-year-olds believe we are amid a leadership crisis because there are not enough good leaders right now. This statement had one of the highest levels of agreements among young adults surveyed, with 43% strongly and 39% somewhat agreeing.⁷³

⁷¹ <https://www.barna.com/research/church-leaders-emphasize-motivation-but-struggle-with-strategy/>

⁷² <https://factsandtrends.net/2019/12/12/young-adults-see-leadership-crisis-in-society-lack-of-opportunities-at-church/>

⁷³ Ibid.

In the update of Statistics on pastors surveyed said, their biggest challenge was recruiting volunteers. Other challenges included leading change, leadership development, and conflict.⁷⁴

In a report from the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, the following was stated. "Current approaches to business excellence and leadership fail to provide companies with the tools and mechanisms to respond. As a result, even ambitious organizations that seek to lead progress are unclear how best to deliver effective solutions across markets and supply chains. There is an urgent need to address this challenge. Over the next decade companies will need to align purpose, strategy, and ambition with long-term value creation to motivate their people and thrive as a sustainable business. Companies will have to adopt transformational practices and organizational innovations and implement ambitious strategies and programs for change."⁷⁵

The issues of lack of capacity building and the lack of leadership development have been identified and addressed as the problems which hinder the growth and health of the Metropolitan Baptist Church. The problems that exist within Metropolitan are challenges for other pastors and congregations as well. Pastor's and congregations alike need mentoring, training, leadership development, nurture, and an overall evaluation of the health of their pastoral and congregational ministry. The development, and implementation of a strategy and a system to evaluate the process will prove vital and necessary to address the underlying issues that plague the church.

⁷⁴ <http://www.churchleadership.org/Research-on-Pastors>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapter evaluated strategy and the results of the pastors and membership surveys. Chapter four also explained the social research that was used quantitative methods. The library research that was influential to the project, and the results that were obtained is also included.

Chapter five will discuss strategy for the implementation of the project findings. Also, the data analysis conducted in the previous chapter will assist in discerning next steps. The next steps will enhance leadership development and capacity building for the Metropolitan Baptist Church ministry in context with specific objectives, and plans. Conclusions as a result of this project will be reviewed in Chapter five.

Church and Ministry Context

My current church context is the Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary, Indiana. The congregation decline is based on the past lack of training, required skill sets, experience and know-how in terms of the ministry leadership. Consequently, upon the selection of a new pastor, people who were uncommitted, untrained, lacked biblical knowledge and who were carnal thinkers began to take leadership roles.

Strategies for Implementation

Implementation for Discipleship

1. Discipleship training *Disciple's Path #1: The Beginning: First Steps for New Disciples*
2. Casting a new vision, new life, and new harvest. What will the community and church look like in 15 years?

All ministry groups and the congregation will utilize the *Disciple's Path #1: The Beginning: First Steps for New Disciples*⁷⁶. This will provide reliability and validity to the research.

Table 2: The Beginning: First Steps for New Disciples



Source: LifeWay Adults, *Disciple's Path #1: The Beginning: First Steps for New Disciples* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2014)

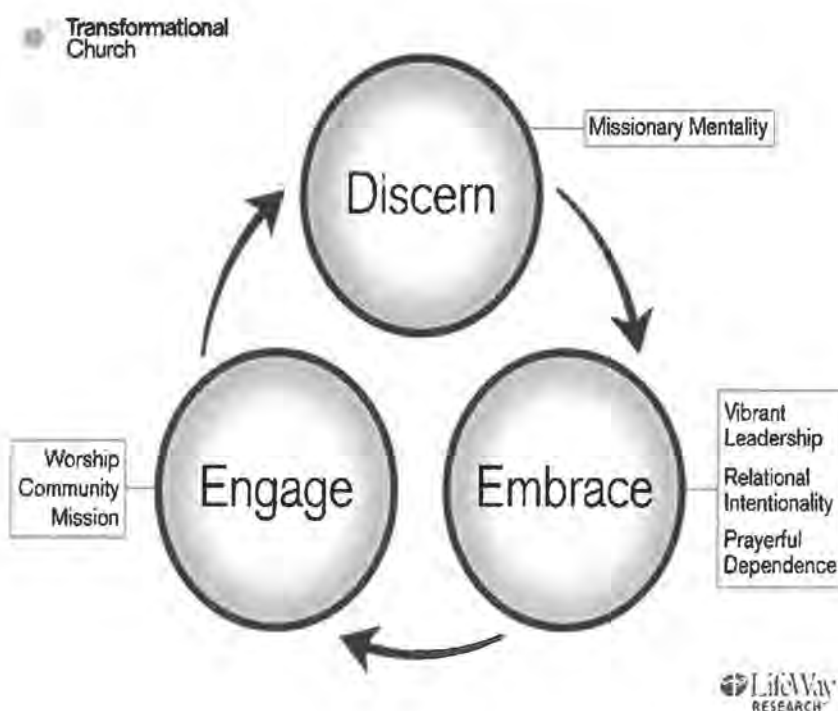
There were two surveys, one for pastors and the other for the congregation of Metropolitan Baptist Church. Both surveys were 100% anonymous. The IRB spelled out the guidelines and reviewed pertinent information prior to approving my application.

⁷⁶ LifeWay Adults, *Disciple's Path #1: The Beginning: First Steps for New Disciples* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2014).

Dr. Marsheila Harris was the third-party facilitator. She is a professor and director at the Indiana University Northwest School of Social Work. She was responsible for administering the survey to both the pastors and to my congregation.

The Transformational Church Assessment Tool (TCAT) provides your church with the ability to assess the health of the congregation, celebrate areas of strength, and address areas of concern. Lifeway, through the Transformational Church initiative, is seeking to help churches change the scorecard--to better understand how to become a transformational church.

Chart 3: Transformational Church Assessment



Source: Transformational Church Assessment Tool," last modified 2019, <http://tc.lifeway.com/marketing/page/32>.

Implementation for Deacons Training

1. Deacons Ministry (2 Timothy 3:8-13)

Qualifications for Deacons

1. Member of congregation
2. Meet biblical qualifications
3. Must complete yearlong deacon training class

Duties: The duties of the Deacons are to assist the Pastor with communion, baptism, prayer ministry, and pastoral visits.

Definition of "Deacon"

The word "deacon" is derived from the Greek word *diákonos* (διάκονος), which is a standard ancient Greek word meaning "servant", "waiting-man", "minister" or "messenger". commonly promulgated speculation as to its etymology is that it literally means 'through the dust', referring to the dust raised by the busy servant or messenger.⁷⁷

Included in the Appendix 3 is the Biblical Basis for Deacons which describes qualifications and responsibilities of deacons, expectations and questions for deacons in training and a clearly defined ministry call request. The next section will address the strategy for implementing the leadership plan which includes a developmental outline to increase the capacity of leaders and systemic leadership development.

Leadership Development

The objectives for the implementation of the lay leadership ministry are as follows:

- (1) To provide qualitative training for the leadership of the Metropolitan Baptist Church,
- (2) to create an environment conducive to growth and learning, (3) to promote prayer and fasting in disciplined leadership, and (4) to equip the leadership for the work of the ministry.

⁷⁷ www.primidi.com/deacon

Serving is a great challenge for the Metropolitan Baptist Church. Mark 10:43-45 is a tremendous passage that gives a humble definition of leadership and a genuine picture of servitude. Two disciples were lobbying for seats in the kingdom of God and preferential treatment. However, Jesus put capacity building and leadership development into perspective. Jesus addressed their motives and character.

Many desire titles without towels. They want positions without responsibility and authority without accountability. Many want to be in charge and yet they refuse to commit to the work of the ministry. As a result, we need to reframe the definition of church leadership in order to provide clarity to that role in the local church context.

This next section will discuss the qualification requirements and the duties that are associated with this process of identifying and adequately training future leaders.

Qualifications for Leaders:

1. Member for at least a year
2. New membership class completion
3. Teachable
4. Leadership development training
5. Team Oriented

Expectations for Leaders:

The leaders are expected to guide ministry teams through planning, promoting and performing prospective ministry tasks as conveyed through the pastoral vision, congregational needs and leadership. Church leaders must evaluate their ministries to determine if a ministry is relevant. This evaluation is based upon several factors.

First, there must be missional priority as given to us by Christ. Next, the vision of the

church must reflect the church's reason for existence. Finally, some ministries should produce income for the church to continue to function in a healthy and productive manner.

Leadership Development Plan for 2021

Table 2: Leadership Development Plan

| | |
|-----------|--|
| January | Leaders Training on Prayer and Fasting |
| February | Leaders Training on Spiritual Gifts |
| March | Leaders Training on Spiritual Gifts |
| April | Leaders Training on Dynamics of Ministry |
| May | Leaders Training on Dynamics of Ministry |
| June | Leaders Training on Biblical Leaders Examples |
| July | Leaders Training on Biblical Leaders Examples |
| August | Leaders Training with Mock Leaders Fair |
| September | Leaders Training on Ministry Development |
| October | Leaders Training on Retreat Planning |
| November | Leaders Training on Leading Teams/Organization |
| December | Leaders in Training Fellowship Dinner |

Source: Metropolitan Baptist Church Leadership Development Plan

The year-long training will conclude with a dedication of sorts to officially and publicly introduce the new leaders to the congregation. Within the worship service is a place for the leadership commitment responsive reading to be read and accepted by all the new leaders. This leadership commitment response is intended as a motivator to serve. It is a reminder in the form of a vow and a covenant before God and man in relation to congregational servitude.

Also, within the context of a month each specific ministry will have training by the pastor or a third-party facilitator. Each facilitator will provide training to establish protocol, increase knowledge, supply ministry tools and address leaders' needs in the sessions. The following are a sample of the ministries that will be participating in the training.

A. Trustee Ministry

B. Finance Ministry

- C. Music Ministry
- D. Food Pantry Ministry
- E. Legal Clinic Ministry
- F. Youth Ministry
- G. Children's Ministry
- H. Christian Education Ministry
- I. Media Ministry
- J. Associate Ministers

Leadership Commitment Response

Pastor: In the sight of God and these witnesses you are receiving an appointment to service at the Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary Indiana. What is your response to this appointment?

Ministry Leaders: 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man/woman of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!' Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.' And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." (Isaiah 6:5-8)

Pastor: Ministry leadership requires faithfulness and fruitfulness. Are you willing to give your time, talent and treasure in the ministry of Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary, Indiana?

Ministry Leaders: Yes, with all my heart and strength.

Pastor: “But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant” (Matthew 20:26)

Ministry Leaders: I will submit to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to manifest His power and presence in me however He pleases.

Pastor: What is your relationship to your Pastor?

Ministry Leaders: Hebrews 13, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Pastor: The Ministry is sacred, sacrificing and spiritual, how will you keep yourselves. “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:17)

Ministry Leaders: For the Scriptures say, “If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies.” (1 Peter 3:10)

Pastor: Are you willing to accept this challenge with all your heart?

Ministry Leaders: Yes, I will serve the Lord with gladness and in whatever capacity I serve, I will serve as unto the Lord.

Plans and Objectives

The church in North America is struggling. Among Southern Baptists, the nation's second largest denomination, approximately 1,000 churches close their doors every year and thousands more drift closer to that point every day. Thousands of students graduate

seminary each year and step immediately into leadership of a declining church where they face incomprehensible challenges, and many do it alone.⁷⁸

Research from a previous study examined the condition of the Southern Baptist Convention churches over an eleven-year period ending in 2016. The study results identified those churches that have been led to revitalization. The study also examined the influence of leadership structure, leadership culture, and a leader's competencies, on church revitalization.⁷⁹

The study identified leadership structures implemented by successful revitalization pastors to influence change leading to health, as well as explored the leadership development culture within the church prior and after revitalization. Furthermore, the study identified the leader's competencies deemed most important by successful revitalizers.⁸⁰

This research project revealed that the age of my congregation and life stage are two of the leading challenges that our church faces. It has highlighted that the root causes are the lack of capacity and the lack of leadership. These results offer viable solutions for congregations that are experiencing the same or similar challenges. Moreover, as a result of this research project the strategic plan will be implemented for deacons, leadership and

⁷⁸ Aiken, C.M. *Church Revitalization and the Role of Pastoral Leadership: A Mixed Methods Study*. ProQuest LLC, 2019. <https://books.google.com/books?id=W20xUEACAAJ>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

the membership. Having assessed the problem, the pastor and church can address the problem and utilize strategy to alleviate the problem.

There are two outcomes that were expected from the research of two problems of the Metropolitan Baptist Church that affect capacity building and leadership development. First, the selection of qualified men to serve as deacons, training of those men for one year, consecration of those men and the appointment of new deacons.

The next expected outcome is the prayerful selection of Ministry Leaders. These leaders in training will go through a one-year process which consists of a monthly workshop, mentoring and equipping with resources and exposure to good examples of leadership. The goal is to produce leaders that will be properly trained, confident to perform competently and equipped to lead in their ministry context.

In addition, our third objective is to disciple our congregation at large through class instruction, modeling, mentoring, prayer and devotion. Also, book readings will be utilized to create an environment of disciple making at the Metropolitan Baptist Church.

Team Building

An essential part of leadership development is team building. Jesus was the best at building a team. He took fishermen, tax collectors, and others with varying personalities and blended them into a team that would affect change in the world. Building a team must be intentional, consistent and with a goal in mind.

Matt Thomas states, "Jesus sets before us a model that determines a mentee's trajectory based on the mentor's commitment to invest in personal development more than charisma or giftedness that may naturally be possessed. Biblical mentorship is

grounded in the principle that there is a responsibility assumed by the leader that development will be a priority in the relationship.”⁸¹

Goal Setting

The developing of goal setting touches on the dynamics of time management, organizing, planning, and establishing a system that is reproducible and trackable. In an article entitled, “A Model of Effective Goal-Setting for Leaders,” five areas of impact related to goal setting are discussed:

1. Competence: Setting and achieving goals improves individual and/or collective skills or performance results. Goal setting is a simple way to get things done through your team.⁸²
2. Confidence: When people see that they can achieve targeted results, they become more confident in their ability to pursue and achieve future results. Goal setting can then become an iterative process, like a “self-licking ice cream cone.”⁸³
3. Direction: Establishing a goal focuses peoples’ efforts on a targeted result or behavior.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Matt Thomas, “The Indispensable Mark of Christian Leadership: Implications from Christ’s Methods of Leadership Development in Mark’s Gospel,” *Perichoresis* 16, no. 3 (July 1, 2018): 5, accessed March 5, 2020, <http://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/perc/16/3/article-p107.xml>.

⁸² <https://3x5leadership.com/2018/07/05/a-model-of-effective-goal-setting-for-leaders/>

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

4. Assess: Goals can provide a clear and tangible way to determine progress, effectiveness, and efficiency.⁸⁵
5. Ownership: Goals provide a simple method to challenge your people to assume responsibility and to make progress on the intended target.⁸⁶

Change Management

One of the most difficult tasks that rests in the care of a pastor is to lead a congregation through change. This can only be successful through prayer, participation from the membership, dialogue, assessment and strategic planning. Most people do not like change. Though, it may be necessary and beneficial, the idea of leading change requires courage to initiate it and commitment to see the change come to fruition.

Jeffrey D. Jones states, “This is a time to face the difficult, often painful reality that new life comes only when we die to the old life. Too many renewal efforts seek to avoid this practical and theological reality and are unable to address the true nature of our situation and offer a solid hope for the future. We need to be more concerned about resurrection than renewal.”⁸⁷

K. Thomas Rasane states, “The shepherd-leader is proactive to change. This is a leader who is on the cutting edges of the changing context and the threatening environment of the sheep. According to Franklin (2009:412) ‘leaders in God’s mission must lead in a rapidly changing world – in social, cultural, economic, political and religious environments at local, national, and global levels. The

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ <https://3x5leadership.com/2018/07/05/a-model-of-effective-goal-setting-for-leaders/>

⁸⁷ Jeffrey D. Jones, *Facing Decline, Finding Hope: New Possibilities for Faithful Churches* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) 146.

shepherd-leader participates in eschatological journey with the sheep, as he is also a human being still under construction.⁸⁸

Project Summary

Finally, one of the most shocking discoveries in this research is the idea that revitalization may not be the best option for many churches. Some church strategists and church planters believe that revitalization or starting a new church is necessary to revive or keep a congregation from becoming obsolete. This is an interesting perspective for many to process. Mark 2:22 reads, “²² And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.” In the *9Marks Journal Series* there is an article entitled, “Revitalize: Why We Must Reclaim Dying Churches and How.” K. “Thomas Rasane”

“Revitalize Church planting is a great thing, and there's no need to take anything away from it. But there should also be a default setting in a Christian's heart that always longs to see dying churches revitalized. It's not like the debate in your head about whether to fork over \$2000 to the mechanic to fix your clunker of a car or to just buy a new one. It's more like a decision about whether to walk away from a dear but difficult relationship.”⁸⁹

The Metropolitan Baptist Church is a microcosm of the City of Gary, this is true because both have experienced numerical, financial, and moral decline as a result of poor leadership and the lack of capacity. The lack of capacity and leadership development has allowed for poor leadership and unqualified, uncommitted people to occupy positions of authority that they are not equipped or authorized to fill.

⁸⁸ K. Thomas Resane, “Leadership for the Church: The Shepherd Model: Original Research,” *HTS: Theological Studies* 70, no. 1 (2014): 1–6.

⁸⁹ J. Leeman, B. Jamieson, M. Schmucker, M. McKinley, J. Rinne, G. Gilbert, J. Fulmar, J.D. Greear, B. Croft, and A. Davis. *Revitalize: Why We Must Reclaim Dying Churches and How*.

Yet, the potential for revitalization exists in building capacity and developing leaders who can effectively move the church and the city in a strategic manner into healthy practices and principles that will give life to the church and community. This research provides the opportunity to assist other congregations with similar needs in their quest for capacity building and leadership development by sharing this project.

CHAPTER SIX: FINAL OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Six concludes this project with observations of key points that stood out throughout this project. These key points could be of value to other pastors, churches and ministries. With my observations, I will include recommendations for pastors and churches. This final chapter will review the entire project, share observations and state conclusions that may be beneficial to other churches/ministries and pastors who face the same or similar challenges that plague the Metropolitan Baptist Church.

For a church to thrive and remain effective from generation to generation, leadership beyond pastoral ministry is necessary. Outlined in this project is the Metropolitan Baptist Church of Gary, Indiana and the City of Gary, Indiana which have an influential relationship that impacts capacity building and ministry leadership development for this project. The concerns addressed in this study represent a genuine problem in pastoral ministry relative to capacity building and ministry leadership development that negatively impacts the church congregation.

The lack of capacity building and leadership development contributes to spiritual decline in the Metropolitan Baptist Church. There is a need for capacity building in the church to promote competent ministry leaders who have the tools, knowledge, and skills needed to build up the body of Christ and nourish the congregation.

Moreover, the impact the lack of capacity building and poor leadership has had on the Metropolitan Baptist Church was shared. These concerns could be the byproduct of spiritual decline within the Metropolitan Baptist Church. This project explored the nature and cause of the problem that exists within the context of Metropolitan Baptist Church. It also considered the origin of the problem and how it has manifested in the congregation. Biblical foundations for this project, provided insight from seven passages of Scripture

that address church challenges and problems which congregations face today. The biblical passages are listed below:

- I. Biblical Reference 1: Luke 10:1
- J. Biblical Reference 2: Genesis 6-9
- K. Biblical Reference 3: Nehemiah 4:6
- L. Biblical Reference 4: Revelation 2:1-6
- M. Biblical Reference 5: Revelation 3:1-14
- N. Biblical Reference 6: Ezekiel 37
- O. Biblical Reference 7: Acts 6:7
- P. Biblical Reference 8: Acts 2:42-47

Chapter Three reviewed seven books that address the subject matter of this research. The books are listed below:

- Book 1: *Surviving Ministry: How to Weather the Storms of Church Leadership* by Michael E. Osborne
- Book 2: *Problems of Christian Leadership* by John Stott and Ajith Fernando
- Book 3: *The Seven Pillars of Church Revitalization & Renewal* by Tom Cheyney
- Book 4: *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again* by Andrew M. Davis
- Book 5: *Scrappy Church: God's Not Done Yet* by Thom S. Rainer
- Book 6: *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out* by R.D. Stuart
- Book 7: *The Unstuck Church: Equipping Churches to Experience Sustained Health* by Tony Morgan

Chapter Four shared the research findings and the results of the surveys that were used in this study. Chapter four reported the information as it was tabulated by the facilitator. Also, it includes charts and graphs of the pastor survey results and the membership survey results.

Chapter Five discussed the implementation and strategy of pragmatic steps to initiate the necessary steps to address the process of capacity building and leadership development in the Metropolitan Baptist Church.

Observations

The observations in terms of church revitalization through capacity building and leadership development relate to pastors' and churches' role in the process of building leadership. There are several potential benefits for churches and ministries who select to utilize and implement our research methodology and findings.

First, congregations can take advantage of the time and energy that was spent in researching the challenges that declining churches are experiencing. Each pastor and congregation can glean from the books, articles, literature and resources that are highlighted as tools toward revitalization and at least the entryway to dialogue around choosing life over death. Pastors and churches can benefit from the study of capacity building and leadership development as it has been realized by our congregation.

Second, pastors and churches can gain insight from the results of this study from those who comprise the ministry. All the issues that plague a dead or dying church can give perspective to those who are looking for clarity in terms of the effects of lack of capacity and poor church leadership on churches that decline and cause death to our

congregations. Pastors and churches may be able to identify methodology that will assist their church or ministry in revitalizing or rebranding.

Third, observations from the pastors and churches can serve as affirmation that other churches/ministries are not facing a unique struggle. There are many pastors and congregations across the nation who have dealt with the possibility of dying and have survived the tedious road to revitalization. Many pastors feel like they are in an isolated battle and no one understands. This study has generated conversation that can lead to transparent dialogue. Next, this chapter discusses recommendations to readers that desire to apply my findings to their ministry/church context.

Recommendations

The first recommendation is that every pastor and church that is facing the possibility of closing should engage in fasting and praying. I believe that fasting helps to discipline us and prayer communicates with God and moves Him in accordance to His will. The context of fasting is prayer. Fasting should conform to the same conditions as prayer: unostentatious quietness before God, arising out of gratitude, expressing thanksgiving, grounded in faith, as a means of spiritual growth.⁹⁰

Second, each church should do a periodic evaluation and examine the current status of the church or ministry to determine what adjustments may be necessary to remain relevant to the current cultural needs. Pastors and congregations could greatly benefit from open communication and the sharing of perspectives, goals, and

⁹⁰ C. B. Bass, (1988). Fast, Fasting. In Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. (Vol. 1, p. 781).

expectations. I have personally set intentional time slots for me to accept questions and concerns from my congregants. Also, spell out sequentially the big picture in order to keep them engaged. I believe that communication is the key.

Third, every congregation should participate in a church health survey. The church should be more intentional in terms of healthy church practices. This in turn could reduce the need for as many curative measures. A healthy church will grow naturally, and it will be fruitful by virtue of its connection to the vine and nurture through the word of God.

In his book "To Dream Again," Robert D. Dale writes to educate church leaders to gain a better understanding of the organizational health cycle of their congregations. Along that cycle of birth, growth, maturity, decline, and death, he describes healthy churches in the first part of the cycle and unhealthy congregations in the disintegrating stages.⁹¹

Church revitalization is possible, he contends, by redreaming God's vision for the congregation and by planning for its implementation. Numerous personal and group "action exercises" are included to help church members assess the vitality of their congregation. Dale's creative work offers a stimulating model for organizational evaluation.⁹²

The church became accustomed to treating symptoms and not addressing the root cause of our problems. We bandaged age old wounds and left life and death crisis unattended to.

⁹¹ (1983). *Review and Expositor*, 80(4), 585

⁹² Ibid.

While this new scorecard measures the tangible—leadership training, worship attendance, and group Bible study attendance—it also measures some of the intangible elements of church life.

The TCAT helps churches honestly evaluate how their members perceive they are doing in relation to spiritual transformation. The results provide them with a snapshot of perceived strengths and perceived challenges based on the seven elements of a healthy, transformational church.⁹³

The transformational church is described as having a Missionary mentality. Having vibrant leadership, relational intentionally, prayerfully dependent, worshipping, community-minded, mission minded, build non-Christian relationships, and celebrate the goodness of God.⁹⁴

I recently consulted with a church that took the TCAT. I helped the leaders see how they could take their top two scores and celebrate what God is doing. This encourages the church and strengthens belief in the direction of the leaders, as well as recognizes God's work among them. I then showed them how they could turn their bottom two areas into strategic goals for the coming year. After a year of focusing on those areas of weakness, they will find they have made progress making disciples, in substantive and measurable ways.

⁹³ Micah Fries, Lifeway. <https://factsandtrends.net/2015/06/09/how-to-assess-your-churchs-well-being-2/>

⁹⁴ Ibid.

A church that takes seriously Christ's command to be and make disciples, and that invests in the necessary tools to evaluate its effectiveness, is far more likely to be a church where people are experiencing the gospel and where lives are being changed.⁹⁵

Churches that do not take this seriously are more likely to find themselves lying on the proverbial hospital bed, struggling to survive, and wondering if the doctor's diagnosis has come too late. Do not let that happen to your church. Take seriously the call to assess your church's health and effectiveness as you make disciples, and watch God help your church thrive.⁹⁶

Change is inevitable. Metropolitan Baptist Church, like many others, struggles because of an unwillingness to change. Thomas S. Rainer states it best,

He understood that we have an abundance of material, resources, consultants, and coaches to provide solutions for revitalization. That is not the key issue. Instead, the key issue is why church members and leaders choose not to change even when the solutions seem to be staring them in their collective faces. In fact, Robert could articulate well the wrong choices his church made. What he could not explain is why the church continued down the path of wrong choices.

- A. They chose tradition over change.
- B. They chose comfort over change.
- C. They chose preferences over change.
- D. Ultimately, they chose death over change.⁹⁷

This research should encourage pastors and congregations to engage in open and honest dialogue around the topic of change prior to the acceptance of a new church. Now this may not be possible in certain faith traditions since the pastor appointed or placed.

⁹⁵ Micah Fries, Lifeway. <https://factsandtrends.net/2015/06/09/how-to-assess-your-churchs-well-being-2/>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Thom S. Rainer, *Anatomy of a Revived Church: Seven Findings of How Congregations Avoided Death*, Nashville, 159, 2019.

Upon their placement they have limited ability to discuss or negotiate the terms of the pastor and congregation relationship.

Third, every congregation should encourage their pastors in self-care and to provide for a sabbatical for the pastor and family. Also, every pastor must focus on self-care and spend quality time away from the rigors of pastoral ministry. Jesus Himself took time away to pray. It is essential that pastors have quality time with their families.

Early in pastoral ministry, my children's birthdays were observed while attending a church function. However, that should not have been the case. Pastors should not sacrifice family for the congregation. God is first, the family is second and then the church. Through time and wise counsel, adjustments were made to accommodate the needs of my family.

In addition, there are other key factors in the life of a healthy church. The church should be visible, vocal and viable in the community for Christ. Matthew 5:13, "You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world. A city that sits on a hill that cannot be hidden." The church must be the catalyst to make a difference.

The book *Flickering Lamps* is much more than just a memoir of Henry and Richard Blackaby's experience in Saskatchewan. In the book, Henry and his son, Richard, sprinkle stories of Faith Baptist Church between biblical exposition about the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. Henry and Richard pulled out principles about Christ's purpose, plans, presence, power and pre-eminence and His church.

The book's stories will encourage pastors involved in revitalization with a powerful vision of what God can do when His people let the Lord renew the church based upon His inspired Word. Henry and Richard's teaching on the topic will give you a practical handle on some of the most vexing struggles faced by a pastor attempting to revitalize his church.

Finally, for pastors and churches seeking to build capacity and develop leadership in order to increase capacity and build up leaders one should consider the willingness of the church membership to partner in the process. There are several factors that should be addressed.

First, can a church build up with the remnant of what is left? It is possible to build up from even the smallest of numbers if the pastor and members agree that there is a problem, and both are willing to participate in the journey to build capacity and develop leadership.

Second, does the membership have the desire or fortitude to apply themselves to the process of revitalization? I have always heard from people that I should work with what I have. The congregation or enough people must engage the process and address the issues that are at hand. Even in building capacity there must be potential in the people who will become the future leaders. However, if individuals or entire congregations refuse to face reality and reject the possibilities of what can be then it may be virtually impossible to exact change within that church.

Third, what if what you have does not work? If principles and methodologies are going to be effective, they must be implemented and utilized to reap the benefits of those strategies. We must practice the principles if we are to profit from the promises. Jesus

gave the churches in Asia Minor definite remedies for their issues. Someone has said that “insanity is do the same thing over and over again and expect different results.”⁹⁸

Fourth, are we obligated to try to spend a substantial amount of time engaged in trying to change the thinking of people who are not interested in leadership development and capacity building as a part of church revitalization? Jesus did not offer the churches in Asia Minor the option to remain the same. However, He cautioned them regarding the consequences of their choices and their actions. If the church has no desire to build capacity and does not have a large enough pool of willing or able persons to develop in the way of church leadership, the process of revitalization through capacity and leadership development will be virtually impossible.

Finally, Luke 14:28 states, “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?” Since this is a tedious project we must thoroughly plan and prepare for the journey of building capacity and developing leadership in route to revitalization.

According to an article entitled, *Revitalize: Why We Must Reclaim Dying Churches and How*,⁹⁹ the authors state, *Revitalize Church* planting is a great thing, and there's no need to take anything away from it. But there should also be a default setting in a Christian's heart that always longs to see dying churches revitalized. It's not liked the debate in your head about whether to fork over \$2000 to the mechanic to fix your clunker of a car or to just buy a new one. It's more like a decision about whether to walk away from a dear but difficult relationship. Our hearts should never want to do that, even if once in a great while we must. Start with Andy Davis' remarkable story of reforming one church, and you'll find something that feels strangely like it's from the Bible, as if Andy were only doing what the apostles did”

⁹⁸ Albert Einstein). “The Ultimate Quotable Einstein, Princeton University Press (2010), p.474

⁹⁹ J. Leeman, B. Jamieson, M. Schmucker, M. McKinley, J. Rinne, G. Gilbert, J. Fulmar, J.D. Greear, B. Croft, and A. Davis. *Revitalize: Why We Must Reclaim Dying Churches and How*. 9Marks Journal Series. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016.

A Congregation experiencing the death and dying stage may want to really consider professional consultation and methodology that will at least give the church an opportunity to evaluate their options. The questions around capacity building and leadership development can be answered biblically and clinically. Every aspect of capacity building and leadership development should be evaluated to determine what is necessary to revitalize a congregation.

APPENDIX 1

Metropolitan Baptist Church: Pastor Survey

Introduction:

This moment provides an important opportunity for us all to share together in assessing our individual church and ministry. The survey not only asks several sets of questions about your congregation's current ministry and your own involvement, but also seeks your input on church dynamics and your vision for the future of your congregation. Completing this survey ensures that your views will be heard, and it will give us a baseline from which to measure whether your congregation is moving in a direction that you think is important. We ask that each pastor complete the entire survey.

Instructions:

This survey will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. When answering this survey, please circle the appropriate answer or supply the required information as indicated. If answering questions with limited choices, please choose the answer that comes closest to the appropriate answer for you, even if it does not fit perfectly. Unanswered items reduce the usefulness of the inventory. Your responses are completely voluntary and will be kept anonymous. They will be handled by a third-party. Thank you for your cooperation. We hope you enjoy completing this questionnaire and that in addition to assisting your church, you find this process helpful in reflecting on your faith, the meaning of your church experience, and expectations for the future. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during this process, feel free to withdraw from this survey without any negative consequences.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact the church at metrobc1920@sbcglobal.net.

1. How long have you been the pastor of this congregation? Circle one:

a. New Pastor (1 year or less)

b. 2 - 4 years

c. 5 - 9 years

d. 10 - 19 years

e. 20 or more years

f. Comments

g. _____

2. What are the strengths of your congregation? Circle all that apply:

a. Resourceful

b. Worship

c. Finances

d. Outreach

e. Leadership

f. Commitment

g. Discipleship

h. Vision

i. Mission

j. Community Involvement

k. Comment:

l. _____

3. What are the weaknesses of your congregation?

- a. Lack of resources
- b. Worship
- c. Finances
- d. Outreach
- e. Leadership
- f. Commitment
- g. Discipleship
- h. Vision
- i. Mission
- j. Community involvement
- k. Other _____

4. What would you attribute your numerical decline to? Circle all that apply:

- a. Extracurricular activities
- b. Ministry relevance
- c. Work commitment
- d. Lack of community interest
- e. Leadership
- f. Church reputation/internal issues
- g. Stage of church life
- h. Time of worship
- i. Location
- j. Parking challenge
- k. Music
- l. Worship style
- m. Comment: _____

5. How can you help your church become more welcoming for visitors? Circle one:

- a. Teach on hospitality
- b. Pray for your congregation
- c. Speaking well of your congregation
- d. Become more personally welcoming
- e. Comment:
- f. _____

6. Is there a time that you believe would produce better attendance? Circle one:

- a. 8:00 a.m.
- b. 9:00 a.m.
- c. 10:00 a.m.
- d. 11:00 a.m.
- e. Other _____

7. Are you open to a Saturday worship? Circle one:

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

8. What is a convenient time for a Saturday worship? Circle one:

- a. 5:00 p.m.
- b. 5:30 p.m.
- c. 6:00 p.m.
- d. Other _____

9. Which of the following amenities does your church offer? Circle all that apply:

- a. Refreshments
- b. Eating gatherings
- c. Church fellowships
- d. Other _____

10. What Ministries does your congregation have? Circle all that apply:

- a. Christian education ministry
- b. Intercessory prayer ministry
- c. Deacons ministry
- d. Media ministry
- e. Maintenance ministry
- f. Music ministry
- g. Mother's ministry
- h. Conference call prayer
- i. Social media ministry
- j. Youth ministry
- k. Children's ministry
- l. Men's ministry
- m. Women's ministry
- n. Health and fitness
- o. Community garden
- p. Nursing home
- q. Evangelism/discipleship
- r. Prison
- s. Food pantry
- t. Thanksgiving basket give-away

u. Christmas give-away

v. Other _____

w. Comment:

x. _____

11. How would you characterize your average weekly church attendance? Circle one:

- a. 1-10 people
- b. 11-20 people
- c. 21-40 people
- d. 41-50 people

12. How would you describe your church's stewardship? Circle all that apply:

- a. Tithing congregation (consistent 10% of earnings)
- b. Consistent giving (less than 10% but with regularity)
- c. Inconsistent giving (periodic)
- d. One-Time/Lump sum donors (annual contribution or donation)
- e. Non-giving (giving does not meet church budget)
- f. Other _____

13. What do you think will help to revitalize your congregation? Circle all that apply:

- a. Increased membership
- b. Current membership involvement
- c. Evangelism
- d. Discipleship
- e. Personal commitment
- f. Change of leadership

- g. Change of location
- h. Additional outreach
- i. Additional ministries
- j. Community engagement
- k. Rekindling of the past
- l. Rebranding for the future
- m. Other _____
- n. Comment:

APPENDIX 2

Metropolitan Baptist Church: Membership Survey

Introduction:

This moment provides an important opportunity for us all to share together in assessing who we are and where we see ourselves going. This survey is designed to assist in this task. The survey not only asks several sets of questions about our congregation's current ministry and your own involvement, but also seeks your input on church dynamics and your vision for our future. Completing this survey ensures that your views will be heard, and it will give us a baseline from which to measure whether we are moving in directions that we think are important. We ask that each member of your household over the age of 18 to complete the survey.

Instructions:

To complete the survey, you can begin a new questionnaire and page forward to pick up the survey where you left off. If you complete the paper survey, please return it to the church so that your responses be entered into the computer. This survey will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. When answering this survey, please check the appropriate box or supply the required information as indicated. If answering questions with limited number of choices, please choose the answer that comes closest to the right answer for you, even if it does not fit perfectly. Unanswered items reduce the usefulness of the inventory. It is important that everyone participates voluntarily in this survey! Your responses are anonymous. Your survey process will be facilitated by **Marsheila Harris, Ph.D. from Indiana University Northwest**.

We hope you enjoy completing the questionnaire and that in addition to assisting our church, you find this process helpful in reflecting on your faith, the meaning of your church experience, and your hopes for the future. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during this process, feel free to withdraw from this survey without any negative consequences.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact **Marsheila Harris, Ph.D. from Indiana University Northwest** at mdharris@iun.edu.

Thank you for your cooperation!

How long have you been a member of this congregation? Circle one:

- a. New member (Joined within the last year)
- b. 1 - 4 years
- c. 5 - 9 years
- d. 10 - 19 years
- e. 20 or more years

2. What do you most enjoy about attending services here? Circle all that apply:

- A. Music/Worship
- B. Sermon
- C. Fellowship
- D. Ministries
- E. Outreach
- F. Other

3. What, if anything, would you change about attending services here? Circle all that apply:

- A. Time of worship
- B. Music
- C. Hospitality
- D. Location

Comment: _____

4. Would you recommend this church to a friend or family member?

Circle one:

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Maybe

Comment:

5. What are some ways in which we could improve our welcoming ministry for visitors? Circle all that apply:

- A. Greeters ministry
- B. Welcome gift
- C. Follow-up
- D. Community involvement
- E. Friendliness to visitors

F. Visitors reception

G. Refreshments

Comment:

6. Have you attended a different church in the last year? Circle one:

A. Yes

B. No

7. If you circle yes for number six, what did you like about that church?

Circle all that apply:

A. Time

B. Convenience

C. Parking

D. Music

E. Worship

F. Sermon

G. Membership

H. Youth ministry

I. Accessibility

J. Other _____

Comment: _____

8. Which worship time are you most likely to attend? Select one:

A. 8:00 a.m.

B. 9:00 a.m.

C. 10:00 a.m.

D. 11:00 a.m.

E. Noon

F. Other _____

9. Are you open to a Saturday worship? Circle one:

A. Yes

B. No

C. Maybe

10. What is a good time for a Saturday worship? Circle one:
- A. 5:00 p.m.
 - B. 5:30 p.m.
 - C. 6:00 p.m.
 - D. Other _____
11. Which of the following ministries are you interested in participating in during the coming year? Circle all that apply:
- A. Christian education ministry
 - B. Intercessory prayer ministry
 - C. Deacons ministry
 - D. Audio/visual ministry
 - E. Maintenance ministry
 - F. Music ministry
 - G. Mother's ministry
 - H. Conference call prayer
 - I. Advertisement ministry
 - J. Social media ministry
 - K. Youth ministry
 - L. Children's ministry
 - M. Men's ministry
 - N. Women's ministry

Comment: _____

12. Which of the following amenities do you enjoy the most? Circle all that apply:
- A. Coffee bar
 - B. Church barbecue
 - C. Eating gatherings
 - D. Church fellowships
 - E. Other _____

Comment: _____

13. Which of the following outreach programs would you be most interested in volunteering with? Circle all that apply:
- A. Health and fitness initiative
 - B. Free legal clinic
 - C. Community garden
 - D. Nursing home ministry
 - E. Metropolitan Initiating Neighborhood Discipleship (M.I.N.D.)
 - F. Bible and Breakfast on Sundays (B & B)
 - G. Food pantry
 - H. Block club ministry
 - I. Thanksgiving basket give-away
 - J. Christmas give-away
 - K. Food give-away

Comment:

14. What would you attribute our numerical decline to? Circle all that apply:
- A. Extracurricular activities
 - B. Ministry relevance
 - C. Work commitment
 - D. Lack of community interest
 - E. Leadership
 - F. Church reputation/internal issues
 - G. Stage of church life
 - H. Other _____

Comments:

15. How would you characterize your church attendance? Circle all that apply:
- A. A committed church leader (3-4 weeks a month)
 - B. A casual church leader (Without consistency)
 - C. A committed layperson (3-4 weeks a month)
 - D. A casual layperson (Without consistency)
 - E. A periodic attendant (Every 2-8 weeks)
 - F. A non-committed attendant (Every 8 weeks or more)

Comment: _____

16. How would you describe your stewardship? Circle all that apply.

- A. Tither (Consistent 10% of earnings)
- B. Consistent giver (less than 10% but with regularity)
- C. Inconsistent giver (Periodic with consistency)
- D. One-Time (Annual contribution or donation)
- E. Non-giver
- F. Other _____

17. What do you think will help to revitalize our congregation? Circle all that apply:

- A. Increased membership
- B. Increased membership involvement
- C. Evangelism
- D. Discipleship
- E. Personal commitment
- F. Change of leadership
- G. Change of location
- H. Additional outreach/additional ministries
- I. Community engagement
- J. Rekindling of the past
- K. Rebranding for the future
- L. Other _____

Comment: _____

APPENDIX 3

Biblical Basis for Deacons

The biblical basis for deacon's ministry is introduced in Acts 6:1-7.

"6 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists^[a] arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables."

"³ Therefore, brothers, ^[b] pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch."

⁶ These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷ And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith."

The qualifications for the deacon's ministry are set forth in this passage.

2 Timothy 3:8-13 states, "⁸ Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to too much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹ They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹ Their wives likewise must^[d] be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

The Apostle Paul gives nine qualifications for deacons ministry in 1 Timothy 3:8-12.

1. **Dignified (v. 8):** This term normally refers to something that is honorable, respectable, esteemed, or worthy, and is closely related to "respectable," which is given as a qualification for elders (1 Tim. 3:2).¹⁰⁰
2. **Not double-tongued (v. 8):** Those who are double-tongued say one thing to certain people but then say something else to others or say one thing but mean another. They are two-faced and insincere. Their words cannot be trusted, so they lack credibility.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ <https://equipthepeople.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/qualifications-of-deacons-merkle-in-9marks-journal.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

3. **Not addicted to too much wine (v. 8):** A man is disqualified for the office of deacon if he is addicted to wine or other strong drink. Such a person lacks self-control and is undisciplined.¹⁰²
4. **Not greedy for dishonest gain (v. 8):** If a person is a lover of money, he is not qualified to be a deacon, especially since deacons often handle financial matters for the church.¹⁰³
5. **Sound in faith and life (v. 9):** Paul also indicates that a deacon must “hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” The phrase “the mystery of the faith” is simply one way Paul speaks of the gospel (cf. 1 Tim. 3:16). Consequently, this statement refers to the need for deacons to hold firm to the true gospel without wavering. Yet this qualification does not merely involve one’s beliefs, for he must also hold these beliefs “with a clear conscience.” That is, the behavior of a deacon must be consistent with his beliefs.¹⁰⁴
6. **Blameless (v. 10):** Paul writes that deacons must “be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless” (v. 10). “Blameless” is a general term referring to a person’s overall character. Although Paul does not specify what type of testing is to take place, at a minimum, the candidate’s personal background, reputation, and theological positions should be examined. Moreover, the congregation should not only examine a potential deacon’s moral, spiritual, and doctrinal maturity, but should also consider the person’s track record of service in the church.¹⁰⁵
7. **Godly wife (v. 11):** It is debated whether verse 11 refers to a deacon’s wife or to a deaconess. For the sake of this discussion, we will assume the verse is speaking about the qualifications of a deacon’s wife. According to Paul, deacons’ wives must “be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things” (v. 11). Like her husband, the wife must be dignified or respectable. Secondly, she must not be a slanderer or a person who goes around spreading gossip. A deacon’s wife must also be sober-minded or temperate. That is, she must be able to make good judgments and must not be involved in things that might hinder such judgment. Finally, she must be “faithful in all things” (cf. 1 Tim. 5:10). This is a general requirement which

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ ibid

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

functions similarly to the requirement for elders to be “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6) and for deacons to be “blameless” (1 Tim. 3:10).¹⁰⁶

8. **Husband of one wife (v. 12):** The best interpretation of this difficult phrase is to understand it as referring to the faithfulness of a husband toward his wife. He must be a “one-woman man.” That is, there must be no other woman in his life to whom he relates in an intimate way either emotionally or physically.¹⁰⁷
9. **Manage children and household well (v. 12):** A deacon must be the spiritual leader of his wife and children.¹⁰⁸

Responsibilities of Deacons

Perhaps the most noticeable distinction between elders and deacons is that deacons do not need to be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). Deacons are called to “hold” to the faith with a clear conscience, but they are not called to “teach” that faith (1 Tim. 3:9). This suggests that the deacons do not have an official teaching role in the church.

In 1 Timothy 3:4, 12 deacons are required to be good managers of their households and good managers of their family affairs. This may be a comparison to be a good steward in God’s house as a carryover of being an effective steward in their own home and family structure. The deacon’s role in the church is a service ministry and not a position of ruling or administration. The deacon is a servant that serves alongside the pastor and elders to fulfill the work of the ministry.

In 1 Timothy 3:10, the Apostle Paul addresses the qualifications of a deacon. He states that the deacon must be tested. This testing may be necessary to safeguard against

¹⁰⁶ <https://equipthepeople.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/qualifications-of-deacons-merkle-in-9marks-journal.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

pride and arrogance. Also, the deacon should be a believer that is rooted and grounded in the word of God and is mature enough to serve in humility and with purpose.

By the nature of this role the deacon who is a servant should remain humble enough to meet the needs of the congregation without an occasion to overstep their role. The deacon's ministry is simply stated a ministry of service to assist the pastoral leaders in providing qualitative and quantitative support in terms of meeting the needs of the congregation and the community.

The Bible shares a glimpse of the function of deacons. Most of what we extract from the Scriptures around deacons is the established description in Acts 6 with the apostles and the Seven. The bible in Acts 6 appears to portray deacons as servants. In addition, these servants do whatever is necessary to serve and free the elders to fulfill their primary assignment of pastoral care and teaching the congregation. The Apostles delegated administrative responsibilities to the Seven which would allow them to direct all their energy and attention to preaching and teaching

1 Timothy 5:22 states, “²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.” The role of deacon is a viable ministry position in the life of the church, and it should not be offered without prayerful consideration. Moreover, every pastor should have expectations of deacons in terms of their role and function. In the following are stated the pastor's expectations for deacons, questions for deacons in training, and a ministry request form to aid in organizing the ministry efforts.

Pastor's Expectation of Deacons:

1. Communication with Pastor on a regular basis.
2. Participation in the Church Outreach Ministry.
3. Attend Prayer, Bible Study and Sunday School.
4. Support the Pastor and Ministry of the Metropolitan Baptist Church.
5. Maintain personal prayer life and devotion.
6. Be available for church ministry as needed.

Questions for Deacons in Training

1. Share your conversion experience
2. What are the tables of the Baptist Church
3. What are the 2 Ordinances of the Baptist Church
4. What are the Articles of Faith? How many are there? Name 10
5. What is Eternal Security? Do you believe in Eternal Security?
6. How does James describe Religion?
7. What do you believe about Creation?
8. What do you believe about the Fall of Man?
9. What do you believe about Sin?
10. What do you believe about Salvation? What are the 3 aspects of Salvation?
11. What does Hebrews 11 say about faith?
12. How do you know that you are saved according to scriptures?
13. Explain John 3:16.
14. Explain 1 John 5:11-12.

15. Describe your prayer life, devotion and personal Bible study.
16. What is the Rapture?
17. Are you a Pre-Trib, Mid-Trib or a Post-Tribulationist?
18. How do you feel about Christian Education?
19. How do you feel about the lost or unsaved?
20. Name at least 2 Bible passages that address the believer's posture toward the least and left out of society.
21. Why do you want to be a deacon?
22. How is Spiritual Life?
23. What does the Bible say about Spiritual gifts? Name your Spiritual gifts?
24. How many times have you read the entire Bible? Most recently?
25. Describe your level of commitment.
26. Describe your Christian Development.
27. How do feel about being a servant?
28. Describe your worldview.
29. What is your passion?

Deacons Ministry Call Request

Name: _____ Member ___ Non-Member

Address: _____
(If not provided, member has requested phone call only)

Phone Number: _____ Date of Request _____

| |
|------------------------|
| Type of Call Requested |
|------------------------|

| √ | Type | Date | Additional Information |
|---|--------------------|------|--|
| | Home | | See Address Above |
| | Hospital | | Hospital Name: _____ Phone: _____ Room #: _____ |
| | Phone | | See Phone Number Above |
| | Prayer | | Request: _____ |
| | Communion | | Request: _____ |
| | Counseling | | Request: _____ |
| | Rental Assistance | | Request: _____ |
| | Funeral Assistance | | Request: _____ |
| | General Assistance | | Request: _____ |

Name of Person requesting a Ministry Call if other than above:

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