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Tyndale University

Wouldn't It Be Nice? An Examination of Inter-Church Relationships Among the
Oxford-Brant Association of CBOQ Churches

A Research Portfolio
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by

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ABSTRACT

The Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec (or CBOQ), contain clusters of local congregations called “Associations” which were originally created over four centuries ago to serve as unifying, resourcing centres of shared ministry for member churches located geographically near to one another. These Associations have been criticized over time for being reduced to administrative bodies that provide little in the way of practical ministry support to the local church. CBOQ discussions about finding a more organic means to associate together (without requiring an official “Association”), prompted this research into fresh expressions of inter-church partnership.

This research portfolio will include surveyed pastors and congregants across the sixteen CBOQ churches in the Oxford-Brant Association to determine the specific role that belonging to an Association played in the pursuit of their respective ministry plans. Once that data was collected and analyzed, a focus group was formed to examine the survey results and to provide insights on the idea of inter-church associating itself. The intent was to galvanize interest in fresh or renewed expressions of inter-church relationship among CBOQ churches.

DEDICATION

This portfolio has taken three years to compile and a lifetime for which to prepare. I dedicate its completed form above all to my wife and best friend Annette. I could say many, many things about your love, support, encouragement and sacrifice but I know the words that touch you most so here they are: “you were right.” You were right that I would one day return to formal academic study despite my having sworn it off forever. You were right that the financial and other details for my return to classes would work out. You were right that I had the abilities to complete it successfully despite my being unsure of those things myself throughout the entire process. Thank you for being so right so often.

Secondly, I dedicate this work to my children Cassidy, Joelle and Brandon. No task, initiative, project or portfolio will ever surpass the satisfaction and success I feel when I look at you. Neither my ministry, my reputation, this portfolio nor any bestowed degree comprise what I hope to be remembered for most clearly. YOU are the best legacy I could ever hope to leave at the end of my time in this world.

Finally, I dedicate this portfolio to my late mother Rae Deene Proctor (1949-1994) whose death helped me eventually gain an indescribable hope despite a painful and life-altering loss. Thanks Ma, for your legacy of encouragement, love and for believing in me.

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I unreservedly acknowledge that nothing I have done, am doing or ever hope to do could happen apart from the love of my Heavenly Father, his beloved Son nor his Holy Spirit. I am a sinner saved by grace. I am a child of the King and my identity rests confidently with him.

I offer my thanks to my parents Rick and Brenda Proctor who, in their way, have cheered me on as I have sought the will of God for my life these last twenty-five years.

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As it relates to this research portfolio itself and the process leading up to its completion, I am grateful to acknowledge the roles of Major Geraldine Lindholm and Rev. Sam Barry who have been encouraging, supportive friends since our first day of Doctor of Ministry (DMin) classes in the summer of 2018. Your ongoing passion and inspiration was, and is, contagious and for that I am eternally grateful to God for both of you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“There is an enormous difference between associating and Association!”

That was the jumping-off point for the talk I was invited to give to a regional gathering of Baptist congregations known as an Association meeting. At some point, the local churches represented by those to whom I was speaking had, generations earlier, professed a theological like-mindedness driven by equal parts biblical conviction and geographic proximity with one another. The voluntary Association they formed eventually became the means for their membership into the convention of churches known today as “Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec” with whom I had been pastorally credentialed since 2002. The phrasing regarding my personal convictions about inter-church relationships and what I was convinced was the difference between associating and Association fell flat that day. What was to me a patently clear distinction between these two words—one being a verb and the other a noun—was unmistakably lost on the audience as delegates sat bewildered and confused trying to determine exactly where I was coming from and how it related to them and their own local congregation. I later learned that one of the bigger reasons my Association talk fizzled that day was that the meeting chair had not informed the delegates that I would be speaking as part of the programme nor about the topic on which I would be speaking. As a result, the audience of delegates had no context for the matters that I clearly felt

passionate about and by extension had no concept of how these matters might impact either themselves or the churches they represented. In addition, I was a newcomer to that Association having recently been called to pastorally lead one of the, at the time, seventeen member churches. This meant that despite my role as a pastor, I had far less historic ownership of Association business than the majority of people gathered that day.

I was disappointed that the talk I gave that day fell flat because I could visualize something much better than I believed relationally existed at the time. I could foresee an era when congregations would recognize ministry affinity that went beyond denominational connection. I longed to do my part to usher in that day when partnerships between churches would naturally arise and where new or stronger relationships would be forged between associating congregations. I could vividly picture a future where pastors and their congregations intentionally invested in one another's wellbeing and ministry effectiveness in a manner that required no structure, no annual dues and no orchestration from an Association executive committee. In truth, I had not once seen these activities ever take place to that point in my ministry career. Sadly, I had never witnessed any Association having the shape and effectiveness of what I was seeing in my mind. Given previous attempts to cast that vision and what I experienced in my Association talk in Oxford-Brant, it was plain to me that not everyone could see the potential future that I was seeing.

This research portfolio is the product of my attempt to clarify and expand on the difference between associating and Association and the perceived value of

inter-church relating at all. This report includes both a Qualitative survey as well as an Appreciative Inquiry-based research project. I endeavoured to explore:

1. Why I believe so foundationally in inter-church associating.
2. How I have experienced that foundational belief within the Associations to which I have been connected.
3. Whether or not I am able to help others see any sort of deficiency in inter-church relating among Oxford-Brant member churches.
4. Whether it is possible or even thought to be necessary for inter-church to be refreshed and renewed among the Baptist Churches of Oxford-Brant who belong to the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec.

Historical Context

Today's Canadian Baptist churches trace their lineage to the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland and Germany following the Reformation of the church in the sixteenth century. Baptists today point to the legacies of provocative reformers like Conrad Grebel and Ulrich Zwingli as founders of Baptist life and thought. But it is the history of Baptists in England which, as with much of Canada's history and culture, primarily informs the Canadian Baptist identity today.

The rise of the English Baptist tradition started in Holland at the dawning of the seventeenth century with the work of luminaries such as John Smyth and Thomas Helwys who themselves were escaping a government in England that was hostile to their religious convictions. Convictions on such doctrinal matters as

modes of baptism and communion as well as separation of church and state (Mullins 1925, 91) eventually gave courageous rise in England of English Particular Baptists. These distinctives led the movement away from its Anabaptist and Mennonite forebears (Torbet 1952, 69).

As more of these Protestant Baptist churches were established in England, streams of Baptist thought diverged. In the middle of the seventeenth century The Convention of General Baptists ultimately gave rise to inter-church connections called Baptist Associations.

Despite having branched off into many differing lines of thought and practice, Baptists were never rabidly independent; instead they actively sought fellowship with other theologically like-minded churches. As a result, the Associations that formed at the time (Maring and Hudson 1991, 174) had a variety of intentions and purposes. But at their root they had helpful communication, godly fellowship and inter-church relationship among theologically compatible churches with a common confession (Brackney 1998, 47).

The Canadian Baptist story is also indebted to Baptist colonizers in what is now the United States of America. Having brought their Protestant practice of faith to the new world and having established Baptist congregations throughout the colonies, there began, around the time of the American Revolution in 1776, a migration north into what is today Canada. This relocation of citizens and their congregationally-styled baptistic religion was first identified as taking place in modern-day Sackville, Nova Scotia where the first Association meeting of local congregations is recorded as taking place in July 1797 (Renfree 1988, 52). By the

dawn of the nineteenth century, Particular Baptists who differentiated themselves from other streams of thought such as General or Free Baptists, had begun to populate the pre-confederation territories of Lower and Upper Canada which are today the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. As with their predecessors in England this not only gave rise to the planting of local churches but also the establishment of regional Associations and Conventions seen as vital to the shared mission of the member congregations. These faithful believers lived out their religious convictions in that new land and continued to do so with great courage and resolve throughout the next century.

Even though Baptist life and thought had continued to fracture and split into different branches, certain events of 1888 demonstrate the desire for unity as well. After merging with the Eastern Baptist Convention in 1887, the Ontario Baptist Convention, merged with three other Conventions and two “societies” to form The Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec or BCOQ (Renfree 1988, 166). In 2008, the BCOQ was renamed Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec and today CBOQ remains the oldest union of Baptist churches in central Canada and is also the convention of churches with which I am accredited.

In 1897 the Woodstock (Ontario) Baptist Association voted to amalgamate with the Brant (county) Association to form The Oxford-Brant Association of Baptist Churches and reported having a membership of thirty-seven churches (Beattie and Kilgour 1967, 7). In 1927 six of those member churches opted to join with seventy-one other CBOQ churches to form the Union of Regular Baptist Churches following a prolonged and painful conflict that had pitted so-called fundamentalism against so-called liberalism. In 2020 the Oxford-Brant

Association consisted of just sixteen congregations and was the Association where I ministered for ten and half years and which formed the context for the research project included in Chapter IV of this report.

Outline of Chapters

This report is comprised of five chapters which includes this chapter, an introduction to the portfolio. Chapter II is a spiritual autobiography that is coupled with a description of my current ministry context. The spiritual autobiography portion is entitled “I Just Wasn’t Made for These Times: My Spiritual Autobiography and Ministry Context.” In it I unfold my faith development and describe my eventual calling into Christian pastoral leadership while also outlining my present ministry context. That chapter is subdivided into sections whose title headings mirror the tracks on the 1966 record album by “The Beach Boys” called *Pet Sounds*. That album has become preeminent in my own journey of music appreciation and an integral soundtrack for my life since childhood and for these reasons it seemed appropriate to unpack my life story with that music album providing the framework. The opening sentence of each section will explain the relevance of the song title that serves as the heading for that portion of the chapter.

In Chapter III, I reflect upon and outline my personal Philosophy of Christian Leadership in a section called “A Developing Philosophy of Leadership.” That chapter reviews my understanding of Jesus’ scriptural directive for disciples to work together, to encourage, support and learn together since,

unknown to them at the time, they would be collectively entrusted with sharing the gospel message following Jesus' death. Within that chapter, I also explain why this biblical imperative is foundational to my understanding of Transformational Leadership development and inter-church associating.

In Chapter IV, I report on my field research project. For that project I surveyed a selection of pastors and church members from CBOQ churches in the Oxford-Brant Association collecting and ultimately analyzing the participant's thoughts and qualitative insights on the ways they may or may not personally value or benefit from inter-church relationships among historically like-minded, associating congregations. The resulting findings from this survey data were then presented to a focus group of CBOQ pastors from Oxford-Brant using some of the principles of Appreciative Inquiry to invite them into collectively determining some agreed upon possible next steps.

State of the Question

The title of this research portfolio is "Wouldn't It Be Nice: An Examination of Inter-Church Relationships Among the Oxford-Brant Association of Canadian Baptists Of Ontario And Quebec Churches." With that substantive identifier and the preceding background information, I want my purpose to be clear. This is not an anti-Association endeavour on my part. This report is not intended to offer overt criticism or condemnation of an historic part of the governance model of Canadian Baptist churches; rather, this is a pro-associating endeavour. My hope with this report and the results of my research is to argue in

favour of an increase in local congregations partnering together in ministry. I further hope to not only visibly identify the enormous difference I am convinced exists between these two realities, but at the same time to offer a constructive, biblically-rooted solution which respects the historic distinctives that Baptists treasure. To put an even finer point on this objective, I hope that, by thinking eternally and critically about shared ministry among congregations, this research will set the stage for increased gospel effectiveness which I am convinced Baptists for generations have treasured.

In 2015, an effort by the CBOQ Board of Directors was undertaken to attempt to answer these challenging questions about inter-church relationships within this Convention of congregations. A task force was established to examine this principle of Baptist polity as well as to present potential solutions to challenges within the existing Association framework. I served as a member of that task force. After approximately twelve months of strategizing and praying, a final report was presented to the CBOQ Board by the task force and which offered three potential courses of action to address the lagging state of interest and perceived value in the organizational level of the Convention known as Associations. That report can be seen in its entirety in Appendix Four. These three options were the most feasible and plausible for the task force:

1. Dissolve the present Association structure altogether and do not, in a formal sense, replace it.
2. Replace the current Association model with a new inter-church relationship structure.

3. Do nothing and let the Associations themselves simply dissolve and whatever purposes they were serving toward inter-church relationship and ministry become evident in time and be addressed as required by local congregations.

The task force submitted its final report (Appendix Five) to the CBOQ Board in September of 2016 and, believing option two to be unsustainable in the long-term, recommended the Board act on either option one or option three. Sadly, and for some unknown reason, the final report from this task force lay forgotten until September 2018 when it was recalled by the Board and resurrected for discussion.

This renewed conversation now included CBOQ staff who, in December 2018, reported that all three options provided in the task force report were legally problematic. Concerns from staff included not only the legal costs of dissolving Associations but the inherent reality within Baptist polity that CBOQ is in fact owned by the Associations and not vice-versa. In this sense the Board acting on behalf of CBOQ has no authority to dissolve nor recommend replacement of, it's owners. The outcome of this staff consultation was the striking of yet another task force commissioned to examine the future of Associations within CBOQ. Its somewhat circular mandate was:

To develop a reformed model of Associations with input from the Associations which upholds the duties and responsibilities of the Associations as outlined in the CBOQ by-laws while taking into consideration the problems and difficulties the Associations face under the current model and the diversity that exists among

the Associations with the understanding that this reformed model must be approved by the Associations prior to its implementation.

(“Report To The Board: Future of Associations” 2018)

As of this writing, I am unaware whether this conversation remains ongoing or has been shelved altogether which is, ironically, the suggestion found in the third option originally offered by the task force.

I have also come to believe that such a change in focus within the current organizational structure of CBOQ would first require a recognition of what Kotter calls a sense of urgency for this type of initiative (1996, 35). That sense of urgency does not widely exist within our existing Association at this time but it is my hope that my Action Research Project would spark that sense of urgency.

As a former lead pastor within the Oxford-Brant Association of Baptist Churches, I have intentionally maintained relationships within the Association church community with both pastoral colleagues as well as members of the various congregations. Despite this reality, I admit that my capability to strengthen forces successfully toward any potential change or working to reduce or restrain forces against potential change, will still rely on invitation and encouragement of interested pastors and churches. I write this knowing that power formally vested in CBOQ pastors to unilaterally affect change is limited but also with an understanding that their informal ability to influence that same change is great. This is not to suggest in any way the use of manipulation or coercion in the pastoral setting merely to get done what the pastor wants to see done. Instead it highlights how, in their roles as ex-officio members of all church committees and leadership teams, they are uniquely positioned to coach and encourage their own

lay-leaders in the direction of the change they may be convinced is necessary for the ministry.

My underlying understanding of leadership and vision-casting is that the proverbial bucket containing the vision for needed change in any organization has a permanent hole in it, requiring that the bucket be constantly re-filled with ministry vision and purpose. That refilling process is the leadership responsibility of those trusted pastors who are seen by their congregations to be visionary spiritual leaders. To ensure the ongoing refilling of the vision bucket with correct information, as opposed to seeing it filled by detractors with misinformation, interested leaders must take every opportunity to remind the congregation and church leadership of what God has called us to do and the unique way he has called us to do it. This, for example, means faithfully celebrating all successful steps in the positive direction determined in this project. Every time pastors build or strengthen another bridge into a deeper relationship with another congregation needs to be celebrated publicly and God given the glory. This means taking every opportunity to tell and retell those stories that positively affect congregational ministry and encourage ongoing pursuit of shared mission in their respective locales.

The original distinctive purposes and mandates for the Association organizational model of CBOQ was focused on improved communication, fellowship and relationship-building between congregations. This was especially important in a time when transportation and technology made gathering together an extreme endeavour requiring effort and deep commitment to one another. In 2020 and given the technology available today, I wonder whether or not the

typical local Baptist congregation in the Oxford-Brant Association of Baptist Churches truly experiences improved communication, fellowship and relationship-building. I further wonder if an exclusive alignment with other Baptist churches is a consideration or in their eyes a necessity.

I am convinced that the original purposes for forming Baptist Associations is necessary but also believe that any new or revised framework to foster associating between churches would need to contain the following distinctives.

1. It must be Christ-centred and put the Kingdom of God above all.
2. It must see the local congregation as a representative outworking of a greater Kingdom mission and not as the mission itself.
3. It must understand and respect historic polity without falling into the trap of making an idol of the past.
4. It must be voluntary in nature.
5. It must foster deepening relationships between churches that make associating a blessing and not a burden.
6. It may not be unilaterally limited simply to CBOQ churches.

The questions I ask and the solutions ultimately arrived at through my Action Research Project, may not be revolutionary but their implementation may still elude our congregations if we remain unwilling to embrace the value of pursuing these simple concepts for the eternal growth of the Kingdom of God. It is my hope that this portfolio will not simply be an addition to the empty talk in our congregational ministries but will be supported with community-based solutions leading to concrete action. Thus the subtitle for this portfolio “Wouldn’t It Be Nice?”

Key Terms

Association – the entity or level of governance originally established via voluntary regional collections of like-minded Baptist Churches as they sought to pool resources and efforts toward a collective Kingdom mission.

Convention – refers to the formalized voluntary gathering or organizing of theologically like-minded Associations which themselves are comprised of theologically like-minded local congregations and where individuals are given authority to govern and lead but where autonomous leadership responsibility is retained by the member congregations. To clarify: whereas denominations are very often seen as top-down decision-making organizations, Conventions are bottom-up decision-making organizations.

CBOQ – an abbreviation which refers in this report to “Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec” and is the specific Convention by which I am professionally accredited.

Baptist Polity – refers in this report to the theological principles and practices of faith which have historically delineated Canadian Baptists from other denominations and Conventions. Such principles include but are not limited to matters such as congregational governance, the observations of certain religious ordinances and local church autonomy (Maring and Hudson 1991, 17).

Appreciative Inquiry – refers in this report to the means of research that is, according to Mark Lau Branson, “a different way for the people of an organization to know, to communicate, to discern, to imagine and to experiment” (2016, 21). This method of research might best be visualized as, at its root, a conversation-based journey of celebration and dreaming intended to highlight the

shared discovery of a preferred future for the organization in question. Key principles of Appreciative Inquiry were utilized in this research.

Participatory Action Research – refers to what Ernest T. Stringer describes as “a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems” (2014, 8). This process might best be visualized as a framework calling on participants to ongoingly “look, think and act” on a common problem or concern (Stringer 2014, 9). It is also iterative. Key principles of Participatory Action Research were utilized in this research.

English Standard Version (ESV) – This is the principal translation from which I will quote throughout this portfolio. Where a differing translation such as the New International Version (NIV) is used, it will be cited accordingly.

CHAPTER II
I JUST WASN'T MADE FOR THESE TIMES: MY SPIRITUAL
AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND MINISTRY CONTEXT

Introduction

In this chapter I will be unpacking my spiritual autobiography. It is my intention that this autobiography will aid the reader in understanding better the personal, and spiritual elements that have helped form my Philosophy of Ministry found in Chapter III and guided my research project outlined in Chapter IV.

The headings throughout this chapter, which demarcate the various phases of my life, share names with the individual tracks of the 1966 album by The Beach Boys called *Pet Sounds*. It is my conviction that this album and its song-by-song exploration of themes such as loneliness, abandonment, feeling misunderstood, redemption and a longing to feel complete serves as a perfect musical framework for my spiritual autobiography.

As indicated by the sub-headings throughout this chapter, I am innately and wonderfully drawn to music as a means of communicating my inner thoughts and feelings. It seemed that it was a waste of time trying to put into words or articulate ideas and emotions lurking inside me if someone else had already said or sung about those feelings far better than I.

Pet Sounds

The song title in the above heading refers to a kind of music that was precious to The Beach Boys founder Brian Wilson and thus became his pet sounds. For me it was with my parent's record collection and enormous floor-model stereo replete with an eight-track player and a turntable where I, at a young age, began to discover "Pet Sounds" of my own.

My parents grew up in the early 1960's and this was reflected in their record rack in our home. These black vinyl and plastic discs with labels identifying such singers as The Beach Boys and The Beatles became the soundtrack for my own childhood years just as they had for my parents. I can recall watching the Capital Records orange and yellow record label drop down onto the turntable as the needle arm automatically swung over and set down into the grooves of the record I had selected. I can remember watching mesmerized as that label swirled in circles and brought forward the most amazing and revolutionary sounds I had ever heard. Those nearly two-decades-old songs would routinely pour from those old forty-fives through the speakers or giant padded headphones into my brain. Frankly it was a balm and an escape as, in the privacy of my bedroom, I sought to identify with the vocalists whom I was naively convinced were way more comfortable in their skin than I was in mine.

My intimate relationship with music continued into my high school years. Having the school music room as a safe refuge likely saved my life during that time in my life. I shudder at the dangerous behaviours I might have been drawn into at that vulnerable stage of my life as I still sought desperately to be accepted and included by my peers. Frankly, the risk of those behaviours was less about my

getting into trouble itself, but more about that trouble subsequently placing the school music room off-limits. This would make my safe place inaccessible and was a prospect that I wished to avoid, and which served as a good boundary with which to reign-in my teenage behaviours. The mutual dependence of instrumental music I played within a band became integral to my thoughts about life and kept me focused on a more positive use of my time and collaborative efforts.

Musically-speaking, a lone saxophone is okay for a few bars and practicing music alone has its place, but the rest of the band joining in and working together created for me a sound far fuller and more wonderful than any instrument being played alone could ever be. The desire for partnerships and relationships to accomplish what I could not accomplish alone has become a repeated theme throughout my life.

Thankfully, even as I was called to pastoral ministry, the vital presence of music never left me. For the first several years of my ministry, out of my own cheekiness and as an inside joke with myself, I would give the names of classic rock and roll songs to my sermons. For example, a three-point sermon about salvation would be named “Gimme Three Steps” as a nod to the southern rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd. A message that focused on the person and work of the Holy Spirit would be called “Spirit in The Sky” after the hit song by singer Norman Greenbaum. And so it went as I, even while undertaking a new direction in life, gave respect and paid homage to the music that had been the soundtrack to my life up to that point.

During early drafts of this portfolio I was in pastoral transition and not serving in a congregational context. During that time, I embraced a season of

renewal and restoration, both emotionally and physically. Unsurprisingly one of the activities that helped me through this time involved my own substantial vinyl record collection. As a means of distraction and simply for the pleasure of it, I launched a music-based podcast called “What IS This?” focused on strange and rare records from my personal collection. The title was informed by my own words frequently spoken aloud after placing an unfamiliar or little-known recording on my turntable. Having concluded this little project after twenty-two episodes, I can confidently say that it was fun while it lasted and served an important purpose in my inner healing and restoration. Music has always been what spoke to me clearest; what soothed my ache and healed my soul. This has been especially true even at this stage of my life.

Wouldn't It Be Nice

In the lyrics to the song titled above, the writer wonders, “maybe if we think and wish and hope and pray it might come true.” I reflect in this section on that which I thought, wished and hoped for in my formative years.

On one hand I want to offer the cliché declaration that I experienced a typical childhood although I am unsure what a suitable definition for “typical” might be when it comes to examining one’s own life and spiritual development. In hindsight, I can at minimum attest that I was brought up in an unchurched, unsaved family where matters of faith and spirituality were not spoken about nor practiced with any personal intentionality. I have often joked that Jesus’ name was frequently heard in my family though usually very loudly in moments of abject frustration or anger while working in the garage! I do remember, however,

that my sister and I were constantly encouraged to offer prayers at meals and at bedtime. Reflecting on those practices I am unsure today why that was made, primarily by our mother, to be such an important activity. It was not as though either of my parents had an observable personal faith which they sought to pass along to us. I suspect it was simply a matter of a worldly routine or ritual of wishing for some sort of good luck not unlike the crossing of fingers or blowing out the candles on one's birthday cake. Despite my still unanswered questions about the religious practices that marked my childhood, I must admit today that through these embedded daily actions, seeds were being planted even then which would bear fruit in my life some thirty years later. One thing I can say with confidence is that my childhood did not contain much if anything that would suggest a personal commitment to Jesus Christ or a career in church leadership.

A near-death experience at the age of four following a bout of epiglottitis left my throat visibly scarred and caused me to become very self-conscious about this perceived flaw for years afterwards. That medical emergency coupled with my academic promotion from kindergarten straight into grade two due to my having mastered the expectations of grade one before the school year even started, were two events that were formative. I would, for example, regularly wear turtleneck shirts to hide the tracheotomy scar on my throat and for the next ten years would largely without success try to keep up emotionally and developmentally with my schoolmates who were now all at least a year older than I was.

Covering up a lack of confidence over who I was while pretending to be something that I was not became both a habit and an escape for me. Specifically,

the presence of this habit contributed to my adopting a lifestyle of denying my actual identity and playacting as someone else who was perhaps older, smarter, more self-confident or even healthier. At the same time my ongoing failure to understand, or be understood by, my father meant I further developed what I would term a “performance mentality” designed as a fruitless attempt to earn his approval. The most painful example of this fruitlessness and the one that still echoes in my mind took place at my grade eight graduation ceremony. At the ceremony I received more awards and accolades than any other student in my graduating class. As I was having my picture taken with my parents and an armful of plaques and certificates my dad offered one ill-timed comment that articulated how my approval-seeking from him was fruitless. As the photo was taken, he simply told me not to rest on my laurels. Perhaps this was his own ill-advised attempt to spur me on even to greater things, but it had the exact opposite effect. I was emotionally devastated. For all that I had achieved socially and academically it felt like it simply was not enough. As a result, I essentially stopped trying to succeed academically. The grades which had placed me at the top of my grade eight class in June plummeted just months later to the point that I was barely passing my grade nine courses.

I can now see where these feelings of being out of place and out of time, feeling unaccepted and unacceptable all lead to my lifestyle of pretending and acting my way through my formative years. Since I would not find total and complete acceptance in Christ until many years later, this negative habit with its fruitless results continued throughout high school and into early adulthood.

That's Not Me

The song titled above contains introspective lyrics about a person who realizes they have been pretending to be someone they aren't. This is an apt descriptor for a portion of my life where I presented outwardly as someone much different than who I was internally.

By the time I had arrived in high school I was still unsure of who I was and who I wanted to be. My participation in a variety of musical, dramatic productions and of course concerts and music festivals allowed me to test different personas and characters while at the same time providing for the much-needed round of applause at the end of each show.

My predilection toward acting, pretending and endorsement-seeking continued beyond high school when, after graduating, I found a job as an on-air radio announcer at the local AM radio station. I spent the next seven years using my newly developed radio voice, still acting and seeking the approval of my employer and my listeners but now being paid for it. There was no guessing or supposing about my relative acceptance or performance approval either, as a ratings book would be published regularly which would tell the tale in black and white.

Interestingly, among the very first duties I was given was ensuring that a series of religious broadcasts were readied and aired at the designated time. To be clear, neither the radio station ownership nor the staff culture shared the values of these programs; they were simply income generators as each program paid for its time slot. Once again whether I was consciously listening or not, God's truth was being presented in my hearing five nights a week which again causes me to

wonder about what spiritual seeds were being planted even as I was simply going about my regular daily responsibilities.

While still employed in the radio broadcasting business, I got married. I was just twenty years old and my wife had turned eighteen the day before our wedding in 1989. As yet another example of how little awareness I still had when it came to Christianity and the Bible, when planning the wedding ceremony the minister asked if there was a particular Bible passage I wanted to have read during the service. I froze. On the spot I could not name a single passage or verse of scripture but then it came to me. Some words bubbled up from deep down inside and I suggested a few lines from a song I remembered: “to everything turn, turn, turn, there is a season turn, turn, turn” (Byrds 1959). Thirty-one years later I can still vividly recall how the minister was quite gracious as he helped me understand that I was partially quoting a folk song written by Pete Seeger and only partly citing a verse from the Bible.

It is convicting and not a little embarrassing to look back and see how, for the first few initial years of our marriage, I simply pretended my way through early adulthood. In many ways, my choices and decisions in marriage and life at this time were intentionally based on doing the exact opposite of what I reckoned my father would do were he in my place. It was not so much that I was unappreciative of my father or felt particularly unloved by him; it was just that having been abandoned by his own father at a very young age, parenthood was something he never seemed comfortable with or was particularly invested in.

Our first daughter was born in 1993 with our second daughter arriving in 1996. At one point, while still working in radio, I came to the realization that

there was simply much too much at risk for my daughter's sake for me to continue going through life as a pretender lacking in character and integrity. I cannot identify what had caused this new, reflective streak within my character; all I knew is that this child was watching me intently and learning from everything I did in the same way I had done with my own father. I decided she needed a better example than what I was showing her. While I enjoyed the ego-reinforcement of being on the radio, I concluded that I no longer respected the person I had increasingly become in order to be seen as successful in the broadcasting industry. For this and other reasons, with no employment on the horizon, in March of 1994, I walked away from the radio business and the paid, professional pretending and performing of the prior seven years.

I Know There's an Answer

In the song whose title heads this section, Brian Wilson sings "I know there's an answer, but I have to find it by myself" (Beach Boys 1966). This section contains the details of my realization that Jesus was in fact the answer for which I had been unknowingly searching my whole life.

There was a significant telephone conversation on the night before I quit radio that must be included in this spiritual autobiography. Knowing that I was committed to leaving my job the next day, I telephoned my wife's uncle (who at the time was employed by Human Resources Development Canada) to discuss my decision to quit. While we talked, he spelled out my legal expectations following my resignation and he helped me to see that there would be no financial upside to quitting the following day. But then the tone of the conversation changed. After

dealing with the professional realities I would be facing, he then turned to my personal reality. While I cannot remember his exact words at the time, they must have been gentle and Spirit-led as any other time I would not have been interested whatsoever in spiritual things. In any event, I do remember him prodding me about my priorities in life. He observed how it seemed that the decisions I had been making in life had led me to a pretty unsatisfactory emotional place (if I were to quit my job with no future plan in place). I could not disagree with him. He then challenged me by asking how much worse it could be if I let someone else lead my life for me. (He was witnessing to me and I was surprisingly listening with resolve.) I remember after getting off the phone self-consciously praying a stumbling, fumbling prayer asking God to intervene. It is to that evening and to those events that I trace the tangible first steps toward salvation and my eventual journey with Jesus Christ.

At roughly this same point in my life, my beloved mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. She had been the one person from whom, throughout my entire life, I never had to seek approval. Perhaps her effusive support of me was an attempt to counterbalance what may have been absent from my father but in a matter of just a few months from her original diagnosis, she would be gone from my life. I still look back on the year 1994 with a mix of disdain and gratitude. That was the year that all of the things that I thought would be present and foundational in my life, forever disappeared: first my career and then my mother. However, I also have eternal appreciation for that year too because these events helped put me on a serious journey to faith that helped me discover who I really was for the first time in my life.

Not having been discipled in my formative years resulted, when I did come to faith, in a very logical and pragmatic approach to faith and ministry. To this day I still find myself excitedly drawn to those things that have never been done before as a means of reaching those who have not been reached with the transformative power of the gospel of Jesus. I believe my ability to have an objective view of the church and to embrace methods and models of ministry that increase our gospel effectiveness is a God-given leadership strength for me. At the same time, I admit that there is a dark side to this strength in that I can be dismissive of those models or methods that stopped working a long time ago without thoroughly understanding their history and purpose. I believe my awareness of this reality (as I studied inter-church relationships for my Action Research Project) has aided me in looking with discernment on the life and practice of churches such as mine. Moreover, this awareness helped me to seek an understanding of why the churches that participated in my research do what they do and the way that they do it. This research along with its findings will be described in Chapter IV.

God Only Knows

The centrepiece of the entire *Pet Sounds* album, this song seemed apt as a heading for the section of my spiritual autobiography detailing my early Christian discipleship.

My decision to place importance on developing a deeper personal faith had an immediate impact on my home life. My all-in personality was certainly evident at this time as; like a spiritual sponge, I sought to soak up everything there

was to know about faith, the Bible and salvation. Unfortunately, this inner spiritual change and its outward impact was negatively affecting my marriage. As I was actively trying to cast-off my former identity as the worldly, prideful radio announcer that Annette had married, my persona, language, interests and passions were all changing.

In the autumn of 1994, our family routine now included regular church attendance. Being among a congregation on Sunday morning was initially something mature and appropriate to model for our daughter but soon became a formative activity for me personally and for my later call to Christian leadership. It was also something which Annette was doing her part to understand but with increasing difficulty. Having decided to start attending a church, we simply went where some of my extended family were attending. In addition to all of this, I had been assured by our pastor that in her final days and more lucid moments, my mother had accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and as a result was in heaven at that moment. That was the tipping point for me in pursuing the things of God. I knew I had to get serious about having Jesus in my life if I ever hoped to see my mother again.

It was my decision to be baptized by immersion that assisted Annette in better understanding my new-found passion for Jesus. In preparation for baptism, the pastor set up several home visits to explain the ordinance, its biblical basis, and spiritual importance. Annette was invited to sit in on these living room sessions and eventually began to ask questions of her own. I was still running at top speed in pursuit of the will of God but as a result of these baptism

conversations, Annette had begun her own tentative first steps as well. We were eventually baptized together on April 23, 1995.

One day while still relatively new to church and young in my own faith development, I was named the youth group leader for a small cluster of teens. I felt totally unprepared and wholly unready to lead the group when the leadership role was thrust upon me only minutes before a group meeting was to begin but I was not one to back down from the challenge. The previous leader felt like her effectiveness had waned and her unilateral recruitment of me was enacted out of desperation. While I do not condone this method of leadership development it was the beginning of my fledgling desire to disciple young people in the Christian faith even as I was spiritually growing right alongside them. I remember that first group of young people with a deep fondness. In-keeping with my natural inclination, I made sure everyone felt included all the time and was valued individually for who they were even if the lessons I was teaching were theologically shallow. Bible studies, campouts, pool parties and overnight lock-ins were just some of the experiences I had with those teens and which I treasure to this day. I still proudly displayed a group picture of them in my office some twenty-two years later.

Success in that leadership role soon led to another leadership opportunity in our church, this time as a Deacon. As my church leadership muscles had strengthened working with the teens, the role of Deacon now allowed me to use those same muscles in spiritually leading and caring for adults. I eventually became the Chair of Deacons at our church and was in that position at a time of significant conflict within the congregation. Remembering this period, I can truly

say it was a valuable season in the refining and strengthening of my rapidly developing leadership skills. One skill in particular that was strengthened was that of active listening. During the conflict to which I just referred, the ability to listen objectively to both sides of a theological debate to hear better the heart behind each vantage point might explain my choice of an Appreciative Inquiry style method in my portfolio research. That manner of research relies largely on listening to participant opinion, experience and related emotions surrounding the research subject at hand.

You Still Believe in Me

I chose this song title as a heading for this section due to its lyrics which depict the singer's amazement that his wife/spouse would still support him in life after all the times he admits to having disappointed her.

It was just three years after having been saved and following several successful church leadership opportunities that I began to sense an even stronger pull to follow in the footsteps of my pastor by pursuing pastoral ministry. Since 1995 I had been working in a secular administrative, managing role that had become complicated due to my employer also being my father-in-law. I began to wonder if being a minister was really the profession I was meant to have. It would take schooling, money and about five years of commuting but I felt like it was doable. This was really stepping out, trusting God and working to discover my identity as a beloved child of God. With the encouragement of trusted advisors along with the support of both my pastor and my wife, I began a seminary degree

program at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario in September of 1999.

It was just months before beginning my part-time studies that I was laid-off from the job that I was becoming increasingly disillusioned with anyway. The university was roughly an hour drive each way from my home and I had multiple classes each week. My now-evaporated job had been ideal in its flexibility and resulting income which now created a new problem for me and my family. Annette and I both recall offering a very specific prayer at that time which included a checklist of matters that God had to work out for us if this seminary track was really in his will. The checklist involved him providing me another job located geographically near to my previous one as we had a single vehicle and such an arrangement would allow my wife to drop me off while she took the car as needed. In addition, the job needed to bring in a wage that matched my previous employment and the employer needed to be understanding of the fact that all of the concessions regarding time and finance would eventually lead me to one day leaving that job as I presumably entered ministry. To our utter shock the Lord delivered on every one of those specific requests almost immediately as I was contacted by a Christian businessman located within sight of my former job who hired me and encouraged my ongoing studies. I later learned that he had also been a seminary student at one time but did not pursue the calling. For that reason, he was glad to help me accomplish what he had not. It was hard to deny that God was in this!

It is important at this juncture to say that this move into seminary though God-led served to exacerbate the spiritual gap that still existed between my still

deepening practice of faith and Annette's. The previous changes in language and mannerism were only heightened by the seminary experience and my own inattention to affirming Annette left her to wonder what my call to ministry would mean for her. While I had clarity about my call, that call was making things increasingly unclear for her. God proved faithful once again as the seminary offered a marriage workshop weekend for students and their families. This event had not been done in recent memory and would not be repeated in the subsequent five years I was a student there but its timing and content were a stark reminder of my need to care for my wife's faith journey as well as my own. It is amazing to look back on this marriage enrichment event at the seminary and realize that the facilitators and leaders would come into our lives roughly a decade later at another pivotal point of spiritual growth.

Another critical event for both my spiritual and leadership development happened at roughly the same time as that marriage weekend. Just six months after I had begun seminary, I was asked to preach for one Sunday at two small, rural, churches about thirty minutes from my home. With gratitude I accepted the opportunity as a means of gaining experience and real time ministry education. It took three weeks and an unknown number of hours before I felt the sermon for that designated Sunday was acceptable. When the day arrived and after having conducted the service in one church and driven to the other church to do it again, the chair of Deacons of the second church pulled me aside. She asked me if I could return the following week to preach again and my immediate inner response was to decline the offer. However, I agreed and somehow managed to cobble together a sermon for the following week. I was already learning the

unpredictability of pastoral ministry schedules and was rolling with the punches. That seemingly ordinary Sunday of pulpit supply turned into a fruitful nine year stay with those churches. After a time of sharing responsibilities with an older, retired minister with whom I traded-off responsibilities every other week I soon became the solo, part-time pastor and eventually the solo full-time pastor. I look back on those nine years as some of the best training a young pastor could ever hope to gain. Despite missteps and mistakes aplenty, those churches were gracious, forgiving and incredibly encouraging. I wish it were the case that every seminary student or student pastor was afforded the same loving, positive atmosphere in which to establish and grow his/her professional skills. Since I know this is not so, I am even more grateful for what I experienced among those people and the way in which God was shaping me through them.

It was perhaps my recognized inexperience and desire to please the congregations that caused me, as had become a life-long habit, to lean into the other pastors and churches in that particular Association. I know I benefited from their examples and advice and saw in time how much stronger my leadership became as a result of that inter-church relationship. It would be my wish that this same positive experience be part of the leadership journey of any pastor new to the call or for that matter new to our local Association. This too points to the reasoning behind my research topic.

Don't Talk

I felt that this song title would be appropriate for a section detailing how I came to a place of having to listen intently to the voices of others with regards to the ongoing states of my faith and my health.

For all that was coming together in my ministry call, a potentially dangerous convergence was happening in my emotional life during this particular “boundary season” (Clinton 1988, 49). As someone with a marked history of performing and pretending in order to gain acceptance, I recognized the need to be increasingly self-aware while preparing and delivering sermons. I needed to ensure that, first and foremost my sermons aided others in seeing Christ and were not, inadvertently, about people seeing or approving of my Sunday morning performance. Each week I was keenly mindful of my own weaknesses and found myself wrestling with the weight of delivering sermons that would encourage my giving glory to God instead of stroking my own ego. I would like to say I figured out and mastered this tension very quickly, but as old habits die hard, sadly I did not. Even as I was continuing to deepen my own faith, at the same time I was also investing more intentionally in the spiritual formation of others than I had ever done before. I did not always manage to balance these two realities in a healthy manner.

As the years progressed and as the heaviness of this responsibility continued to settle in, so too did a dark, simmering sense of frustration. The same passion, sacrifice and desire toward serving God that I was pursuing was not, in my estimation, broadly reflected back within the church context. I was, for example, outraged at other pastors who had chosen not to pursue formal

theological training and whose congregations numerically outsized mine. I was irritated that the sacrifices my entire family was making while I pursued studies was not more appreciated by those around me. I recall being incensed in church meetings at the lack of evangelism and outreach efforts the churches in which I was serving were bringing forward. I was immensely disappointed during an Annual Meeting at one of the churches when the people decided that taking the time and effort to craft a clarifying ministry mission statement for the church was not something they wanted to do. In short, this congregation was not interested in doing the work necessary to bless their local community! I also remember at that time conducting a Good Friday service and being totally convinced that no one was really listening to the words I was preaching, and as a result was not even able to look out at the gathered congregants as I stood in the pulpit. Sadly, the congregants were seemingly oblivious to the cause of my rapidly growing frustration. It was in that season when I finally realized from where that darkness originated. While some of what I just shared would probably still aggravate me today, I now know that my frustration and even condemnation of the people of those two churches was not primarily about them. It was about me.

I was diagnosed with major depression in September 2008, a diagnosis that explained my moods and outlook as well as many unproductive behaviours that comprised my earlier restless years. Once medicated and treated appropriately, the heaviness that had attacked my self-image, appetite, sleep patterns and joy was lifted. It was an incredible and nearly brand-new sensation to feel well again after what I later estimated to be twenty-five years of untreated mental unwellness. I even came to love and appreciate the churches I was serving

in a new and different way than I had ever done before. Today I can joke that the churches were so much nicer and easier to get along with once I was medicated!

Today, I still live with mental health challenges that need to be medicated and managed. I have been humbled to use my story of God's grace in this way to encourage and support other Christians who wrestle with their own mental health difficulties and its related impact on their spiritual lives. This too is just another way for me to role-model, encourage and contribute to productive and healthy inter-church relations among Association churches which is the heart behind my research.

Let's Go Away for Awhile

In this song from the *Pet Sounds* album, the singer longs to step away from his current context and to go out into the world to see and experience new things.

While I was still pastorally leading those two churches in 2006, I realized that my excitement for Christian leadership development had increased dramatically thanks to several formative travel and study opportunities through my denomination. The first was a trip to an international church leadership conference in Atlanta, Georgia. While there, I was exposed to some of the biggest names in Christian leadership who had influenced my leadership thinking. The second trip just one year later, was an international trip to the locations of the seven churches of The Book of Revelation in modern day Turkey. It was while in the city of Izmir (formerly known as Smyrna) that I heard the audible voice of God. His words laid even more foundation in my leadership development when

he stated, “Turkey is not the end, it’s the beginning.” I understood this to mean he had greater things in store for me in ministry. This has repeatedly proven true including in 2008 when I applied and was accepted into the Arrow Leadership Program based in British Columbia.

The Arrow Leadership program is a global training program that promotes itself as being uniquely crafted to increase the effectiveness and skills of those who are already recognized as gifted leaders in the Christian community. It was a great honour to have been welcomed into the twenty-seventh Emerging Leaders Class at Arrow Leadership. I was amazed to discover that the President of Arrow Leadership at the time was Brenda Pue and that her husband Carson was also in a significant leadership role with Arrow Leadership. These were the same two people who had led the marriage enrichment retreat at McMaster Divinity College in the year 2000! Before my acceptance and first residency at Arrow Leadership, I already knew that God was in this. From 2009 to 2011, I would be shaped and reshaped by that Arrow Leadership experience beginning in a surprising way.

Part of the Arrow Leadership process is that participants are assigned an advisor whose role it is to guide them through a time of tearing down and rebuilding. When I say tearing down it is not that we were personally torn down, but that blind spots were identified and addressed. In God’s providence, my assigned advisor looked just like my dad! The one whose job it was to help me deal with issues stemming from my childhood, was a doppelganger of my father.

In one consulting session, he led me in a prayer of confession and release where various lies that I had internally accepted were to be named and any supernatural or spiritual blockages that exist were to be removed as much as

possible. Following one of my prayers of confession my advisor informed me that I had not followed the well-intentioned format to be used for the prayer. In that moment however all that I saw was my father looking at me and telling me it was not good enough and that my performance in this act of prayer had failed. The resulting anger and aggression that my advisor willingly and graciously received from me was cathartic in achieving and receiving the spiritual freedom I recognized as a result of my Arrow Leadership experience.

It was under his tutelage that I finally came to an acute understanding of the dangers of leaving my historic performance mentality unconfessed before God and realizing that performance thinking and need for approval flew in the face of God's grace. I was also lovingly guided in forgiving my father for his unwitting contribution to my proclivity towards performance.

At about the time this Arrow Leadership journey was starting, I was also sensing objectively that my time in leadership at Dutton/Iona Station Baptist Churches was coming to a healthy and timely completion. In the spring of 2009, I was called by Queensway Baptist Church in Brantford, Ontario to become their lead pastor. The relationship with the congregation was a blessing through to the conclusion of my pastorate there in spring 2020.

Queensway Baptist Church was also very supportive of an invitation I received from a mission agency in 2017 asking me to come to Nicaragua as a visiting instructor on Christian Leadership principles for local pastors and church leaders. This was a whole new experience of cross-cultural ministry for me. I was humbled and blessed to be entrusted by Threefold Ministries with this measure of pastoral influence. I eventually travelled to Nicaragua on two separate occasions

as an instructor with the more recent trip having been in October 2019. Indeed, as I heard in Izmir, travelling to a different part of the world was just the beginning of this journey!

Finally, in the fall of 2017, a divine stirring took place within me. Because of my undiagnosed mental unwellness during the time I was studying for my first degree, that whole educational experience was thoroughly unpleasant for me. So unpleasant that I did not even attend the graduation ceremonies. The degree was a necessity for denominational accreditation and as such, simply a means to end in my thinking. Due to my undiagnosed mental illness, I had not been my best self then and had no desire to ever return to formal degree-related studies.

But God prompted me to explore the possibility of attaining a doctorate in ministry at Tyndale University. An advertisement for the program had appeared, unsolicited in my Facebook feed and I clicked on it with the express purpose of reminding myself why I would never embark on such an academic endeavour. Nevertheless, I found myself drawn to the concept. For the previous ten plus years my wife had repeatedly told me that despite my protestations, I would one day pursue further education. Surprisingly, the ability to pursue this degree in a manner that is designed to edify my pastoral ministry and not compete with it (or rob time from it) became attractive to me. That there was an entire track dedicated to Christian Leadership, a topic that has become my passion was and is quite exciting to me as well. I am eager to see how the culmination of this work in the spring of 2021 contributes to the legacy of my pastoral leadership within God's Kingdom. The opportunity presented through preparing this final portfolio and to spend dedicated time researching a topic that is of great personal importance to

me is another tremendous benefit to this stage of my leadership and personal development. Choosing the particular research element that I did seems to have sprung up from that deep place within me that longs for healthy, communal learning and mutually supportive relationships between people, pastors and congregations.

This brings me to the most current events in my faith development story.

I Just Wasn't Made for These Times

The heading of this section also serves as the sub-title for this entire chapter. In this song, the singer reflects on the way that his imagination and personality are so unique that they are often misunderstood. This has been my own experience as well. Perhaps this is why personal mentoring and inter-church associating is such an important issue to me. My own sense of social and familial disconnection early in life and the resulting impact on me might be predominant among the reasons that healthy connections with and between others is such a passion for me.

Two of the four main assessment tools in the “Formation of The Leader” class at Tyndale University were the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (or MBTI) and the Gallup organization’s StrengthsFinder instrument (Rath 2013). Completing these measuring instruments was enlightening, informative and affirming especially the MBTI which identified me as being INTJ.

A person with a determined INTJ personality is described by this assessment instrument as being:

1. Introverted socially as opposed to Extroverted.

2. Intuitive in information gathering as opposed to Observant.
3. Thinking through matters objectively as opposed to being driven by Feeling.
4. Judging which relies on set rules for decision-making rather than the more relative approach of those known as Perceivers.

Understanding these personality traits and especially those which applied directly to me helped put many of the events recorded in the previous sections into a healthier, informative context. The “I” and “J” in my personality type were almost foregone conclusions once I understood their qualities. I have learned to manage my extremely introverted nature. I cannot concretely decide, however, if my introversion score was this high my whole life or something that has markedly increased since understanding my mental health challenges. Certainly, both depression and anxiety frequently keep me searching for quiet restorative times so perhaps it is related.

I believe both the “N” and “T” personality traits compliment my introverted typology as they seem to be informed naturally by my admittedly reserved and quiet nature. As one who watches, listens and learns in nearly all settings, I am convinced I have become better equipped in my information gathering and have developed a growing confidence in tackling matters objectively rather than subjectively. I do however admit to having a measure of difficulty accepting evidence of my being a “T” rather than an “F” in my MBTI identification. A single conversation with my professor in that course however, clarified this. After having received my results I was certain that it was incorrect and that I was thoroughly people-centred and therefore more of an “F” than a “T.”

When the professor asked me why, I explained that ensuring the wellbeing of people ensures the wellbeing of the organization and therefore the effectiveness of the ministry. She pointed out that my thoughts were primarily about the organization with its systems and processes and only secondarily about how the health of individuals themselves contributed to that. I was evidently not as people-centred as I first thought! Inattention to how my personality is presented and how I impact others through the various dimensions of my personality type could also compromise my witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this reason above all others, I must consciously continue to work in a self-aware manner to manage both the dominant and the non-dominant sides of my personality appropriately whether it is in my personal or my leadership life.

While these first three elements of my personality have likely developed incrementally over time, the “J” identification is assuredly something that I am certain has been part of my personality for my whole life. This makes sense to me as I reflect on a lifetime of moving effortlessly and determinedly from season to season with little nostalgia, hanging-on or backward glances. Closure and moving forward to the next stage or step of life seems to come easy to me and I have always reached very easy conclusions to the various seasons of my life with minimal regret. I distinctly recall at the conclusion of the final band practice of my grade twelve year returning my instrument to the shelf and not even taking my saxophone reeds with me. I knew that this part of my life was over, and I was perfectly fine with that. Moving forward into new chapters and new challenges comes second nature to me and the embracing of new life chapters has also come easily as I have moved from hobby to hobby, home to home, career to career and

even church to church throughout my entire nearly fifty-two year lifespan. On the downside, due to the insight gained through this assessment tool, I can now better appreciate how this “J” trait has inadvertently meant I have shunned people whom I was previously in relationship with when the terms of our relationship changed for some reason. While it is true that there is a season for everything, I fear my personality may have hastened the changing of those relational seasons as I moved too quickly toward closure and hurriedly moved onward. This is sobering to consider.

With regards to the StrengthsFinder34 assessment, my top five strengths begin with “Responsibility,” which means I take psychological ownership of what I say I will do and am committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty. My second strength is identified as “Connectedness” in which people like me believe there are few coincidences in life and that almost every event has meaning. My third strength is “Belief,” which means I have certain core values that are unchanging and that I derive a defined purpose for my life out of these values. My fourth strength is “Restorative,” which suggests a heightened ability in dealing with problems and at figuring out what is wrong in a situation and then resolving it. The final strength identified is “Learner,” which is defined as having a great desire to learn and a want to continuously improve. In this sense it is the process of learning, rather than the outcome that most excites me and to take that conviction even further, it is from the application of that learning that I gain the most satisfaction. My belief about inter-church relations and the very connectedness that I value have, in my view, largely informed and driven my

DMin research and my desire to see these traits among associating CBOQ congregations.

Reviewing these five traits, I have little questions or doubts about the accuracy of this assessment. For example, it is a strong sense of responsibility that drove me to be a better example to my wife and children and to leave my original career. This same strength saw me step forward to take responsibility for the leadership of a group of teens (when no one else seemingly would) and later to lead the Deacons of that church in a time of spiritual conflict. It is also this strength that can be seen in the protective and defensive nature that I bring forward in the face of threats to the marginalized, hurting and vulnerable that are connected to my congregations and in my personal life.

For its part connectedness might best be seen in the pattern of thinking that led me to a career in radio broadcasting. This trait also lends itself in a significant way to my conviction that working together with others accomplishes far more than my working alone which is why I long to see ministry unity and partnership not only within our churches but also among our churches. This is why through my research project I am inviting practical action from a variety of churches that would contribute positively to inter-church relationships.

The strength known as belief manifests itself in my life in my need to play by the rules and respect the processes and structures in place (at least as I understand them) and have those around me upholding the same principles and values. Recognizing and naming the core values that drive me has become a tool which I have recently begun employing in my interpersonal interactions with others. This new awareness helps me identify and name those impulses and

reactions within me when engaging someone holding a differing worldview or belief from my own. It is no doubt a strength but as with every strength, left unmanaged it can also have a destructive side which provides me with ongoing reasons for continual reflection and soul-searching.

I can also see the way that both the restorative and learner traits work collaboratively within me as I can perceive not only the problems and tensions in a situation but can then formulate thoughtful solutions to those problems. Perhaps it is the deep-seated desire for all parties in each setting or situation to work together with agreement and purpose despite holding differing opinions that drives me to seek out community-based solutions to what I perceive to be community-based challenges specifically within the Baptist Associations to which I am professionally and personally connected.

Finally, I was affirmed by the results of a third assessment tool—a 360-degree feedback report—which indicated consistent strengths in the category of “Leadership Competencies.” It is one thing to consider myself a competent leader, it is quite another thing to have others affirm it. I appreciated the feedback and was also not surprised that I consistently scored myself significantly lower throughout the assessment than did my selected participants.

I was also grateful for a much-needed area of growth in the area of “Emotional-Social Responses.” Regrettably, how I act and react in a variety of social or emotional situations such as times of conflict, debate, high emotion, or key decision-making is unhealthy. The responses from my peers revealed that I am consistently perceived in these situations as being impatient, too quick to respond when in disagreement; taking an abrupt tone with those with whom I am

upset or who are upset with me, and taking conflict too personally. In short, these responses were not what I expected.

That these responses could possibly be accurate in their depiction of the way in which I am perceived by those with and to whom I minister was very troubling. And yet in reflecting honestly and prayerfully about my emotional-social responses, I realized quickly that I had two clear choices before me. First, I could reject these comments and consider their content to be unavoidable parts of my personality that I have no control over, or second, accept this feedback and seek to be the best version of myself that I can be. I rejected the first option because I knew full well that all the people who answered this extensive assessment tool did so to assist me in growing personally, professionally and spiritually. For that reason, I have embraced option two and plan to include these comments in my mental health counselling appointments in order to root out systematically the basis of my behaviours. In terms of mere management strategies, I have developed a personal mental filter so to speak in order to screen, identify and monitor my attitudes and behaviours when differences of opinion arise. I have already seen positive progress and will explain more in the next section as I explore what my leadership future could look like.

Current Ministry Context

I'm Waiting for The Day

The lyrics in the song which serves as the heading for this section reveals that the singer feels strongly about certain ideas and beliefs but also knows that the ideal time to pursue those ideas hasn't come yet.

At the time of this writing, my ministry context was senior pastor of an urban congregation called Queensway Baptist Church. More specifically the Association being examined in this research portfolio is known as the Oxford-Brant Association of Baptist Churches. The Association is named for the two neighbouring regional counties within which the member churches reside. This is the Association within which my pastoral placement was located.

From a personal standpoint I have been accredited with the CBOQ for eighteen years and have been both preaching and pastoring in the convention for twenty years. In 2005 I was ordained to congregational ministry within CBOQ at the call of Dutton Baptist Church at an event conducted by the Elgin Association of Baptist Churches where I was serving at the time. Having been a member of two different Baptist Associations I have made it a practice not simply to criticize from the sidelines but rather to be an active part of seeking solutions to increase the effectiveness of shared gospel-centred partnerships between associating churches. This involvement has included holding various Association Executive positions and being an active part of multiple unsuccessful attempts at revising and restructuring those formal Associations. As this research portfolio deals directly with the ministry realities facing my own Association context, it is worth



Figure 1 Current Composition of Oxford Brant Association

examining challenges and realities currently faced by the member churches of the Oxford-Brant Association of Baptist Churches and how my personal faith journey has prepared me to help bring about God-glorifying solutions. As the infographic seen in Figure 1. states, member churches of Oxford-Brant county are challenged by a lack of congregational attendance and participation which creates a cyclic dilemma, often resulting in a self-reinforcing downward spiral.

For example, low attendance for Sunday school creates, by extension, a lack of volunteers, which in turn, creates a shortage of programming opportunities. A shortage of programming opportunities affects the potential for increased

attendance in those programs, which then reinforces the original challenge to volunteers and resources. This problematic cycle is seen in many ways in these primarily small, rural churches and impacts related issues such as budgeting, staffing, building maintenance and upgrades, and use of technology.

Related to the above challenges are those connected to the increased consumerism in today's churches. By consumerism I am referring to the attitude toward worship and church involvement that is predominantly evidenced in the Western church context and is centred around personal satisfaction. Whether a demand for better children's programming, a church volleyball team or more women's events, when the religious product being offered by any one church does not meet the satisfaction of the religious consumer's perceived needs they go elsewhere. Frequently that individual will respond to their own dissatisfaction by simply shopping around for another congregation who will satisfy those felt-needs. Author David Wells suggests that American evangelicals are permitting consumerism to restructure their faith to the degree that the "God of mercy becomes a god at our mercy!" (1994, 114). This reality creates the temptation in ministry to focus on putting on a better show than the church down the street to accommodate attendees which in turn reduces the gospel to being a commodity. This is an all too real temptation among church leaders, in the end, also places the imperative message of the gospel of Christ in a secondary or tertiary priority position. As a recovering performer and shameless self-promoter, I have had to buck this trend in the church and actively resist the temptations to lead in ways that draw attention to the church or me rather than on Christ Jesus.

As previously identified, Baptist Associations were formed for the purposes of sharing resources, offering support and mutual encouragement between theologically like-minded congregations. Ironically these historic principles do not appear to be actively valued nor widely employed in today's CBOQ Associations in ways that could combat the trends referenced above.

Here Today

I chose this song title as a heading for this section due to its depiction of the passing of time and the way that, to the singer, those things that are present today seem to disappear all too quickly.

While certainly not a new problem to the church, this congregational rivalry on Sundays remains a very real predicament. Forty or fifty years ago the existence of the Lord's Day Act in Canada meant that few social activities could or would take place on Sundays. This reality contributed in no small part to the historic high attendance many churches enjoyed in the 1950's and 1960's as legally, there was little else competing for that precious time (Reimer and Wilkinson 2015, 15). By the time that act was officially abolished in 1985, Sunday had ceased to enjoy an exclusive place in the weekly calendar. Now such options as grocery shopping, attending sports activities, entertainment facilities or fulfilling employment obligations make Sunday worship attendance just one option among many. The predictability of attendance that the church once knew has given way to the redefining of regular church attendance from twice every Sunday to just twice per month (Lifeway Research 2020).

Finally, as this portfolio is being assembled, there is one enormous unknown that the local Oxford-Brant Baptist Church faces and that is the fallout related to COVID-19. While some congregations were able to pivot toward creative solutions such as an increased online presence during the prescribed season of social distancing, many others in the Association did not or more to the point, could not. It is plausible that the previously mentioned challenges have conspired to make congregational recovery questionable for numerous member churches throughout the CBOQ Congregations in which attendance and offering had been barely passable before COVID-19 now face a massive threat to their continued existence.

Conclusion

I feel equipped to ask these and many other questions in a way that perhaps many church attendees cannot. As my spiritual autobiography detailed, I was not raised in the church and so was not brought up to respect without question Baptist traditions. As one who came to faith in adulthood, I feel today as though I can better and more objectively see both the beauty as well as the cracks and faults in the church that many have forgotten were even there. I am not claiming to be all-knowing or the final voice on inter-church associating, it is simply that my faith journey has given me a perspective on the identity, purpose and mission of the church that many do not have. It lets me, on one hand, be critical of her flaws and blemishes while on the other hand still being deeply in love with her as the redeemed and beloved bride of Christ.

Finally, I trust that by having read this chapter, the reader can, through the revelation of my spiritual autobiography, understand better my own spiritual development as well as those elements that have helped form my Philosophy of Ministry found in Chapter III and guided my research project detailed in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER III

A DEVELOPING PHILOSOPHY OF LEADERSHIP

There is, as my spiritual autobiography in Chapter II attests, an historical pattern of on-the-job learning during my personal and professional development. In this chapter, I intend to examine the origins of this educational conviction which was shaped within a non-Christian home. I also will explore how I have come, as an adult and Christian leader, to understand the theological basis for this leadership philosophy. This will include exegeting its scriptural imperative and by articulating the way it is uniquely seen in the methods I employ when striving to develop leaders.

Part One: The Emergence of an Empowering and Equipping Leadership Philosophy

The at-home schooling provided by my mother surpassed that which was being offered in the formal school setting and resulted in my advancement one full grade from kindergarten directly to grade two. Later, I entered the radio broadcasting industry with no formal training or education and instead was encouraged by my employer to figure it out on the job while being coached along by various radio veterans on staff. I am a visual and experiential learner who places enormous formative value on hands-on instruction through being witness to the work of others. John Stott suggests we can be “shaped more by culture than

by Christ” (2016, 113) which perhaps explains how these traits became deeply rooted as my own philosophy of leadership developed even before I was aware of the need for Christ in my life.

My initial forays into volunteer Christian ministry first as youth leader and later as Deacon involved no specific training either but afforded many practical opportunities for learning through simply doing it. Professionally speaking, I had become a regular preacher/leader in a church after just six months of seminary studies which meant a whole lot of figuring out of ministry while on the job. Truly, the first nine years of professional ministry were replete with daily on-the-job experiences of success and failure thereby providing life lessons. The commonality of all these life experiences was the equipping and empowerment afforded to me, the reflexive choice to lean into those more experienced than myself and the chance in it all to reflect and learn important lessons in real-time. This hands-on manner of training and education with its integrative nature and resultant sense of personal and professional accomplishment is in fact what attracted me to the DMin program at Tyndale University.

Scriptural Basis

As I grew in knowledge and understanding of the Bible and as my philosophy of Christian Leadership developed, I was drawn to the scriptural events of Luke 10:1-24. In this passage, Jesus empowers seventy-two of his disciples (how the consensus on this number emerged will be examined later) into the mission field. This commission was evidently for the express purpose of having those disciples apply the Kingdom principles with which they had been

equipped by Jesus over several years while allowing these lessons to move from theoretical concepts to practical activity. Despite Scott Rodin's assertion that a Jesus-centred leadership model is "too simplistic and worse obfuscates Jesus' real mission" (as quoted by Burns, Shoup, and Simmons 2014, 92), Jesus-centred leadership has become foundational in my philosophy of leadership. This will be exegeted fully within this chapter.

I find this passage to be relevant in an examination of Baptist Associations due to its depiction of Kingdom-advancing efforts, ministry partnerships between invested people and the way that Jesus training of the disciples was intended to prepare them for future ministry events in which they would partner together. One can also see other scriptural precedents for ministry partnerships among believers. The depiction within the gospels of the way that ministry took place from within a network of houses is one example. The healing of Peter's mother-in-law in Luke 4 highlights the sort of shared ministry activity that happened when believers gathered together in one another's homes. The apparent connectedness of the churches named in Revelation 2 and 3 also displays the overlapping and shared ministries that these churches shared due to geography and shared convictions surrounding Jesus Messiah.

Compositional History of The Text

Authorship of the Gospel of Luke has since the second century been traditionally attributed to the physician Luke who was a ministry companion of the Apostle Paul. Several New Testament passages including Colossians 4:14 and

2 Timothy 4:11 record Paul's thankful regard for Luke. Less well attested regarding authorship matters for this Gospel is the suggestion that the Gospel bearing Luke's name was in fact written by a Syrian from Antioch. The majority opinion leans toward the associate of Paul mentioned in scripture which I accept as well. With authorship attributed to the same writer as the Book of Acts, this Gospel's composition is generally agreed to be circa 85 AD although some sources add or subtract as much as ten years or more (Brown 2015, 226). The earlier composition date could possibly explain why Luke makes no mention of the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD. It is conceivable that the event had not yet taken place.

Given the content and style of this writing, the author is evidently an educated Greek-speaker, who knew the scriptures in Greek but was not an actual eyewitness to Jesus' ministry. It is possible that the author was a convert to Judaism before becoming a Christian but was not a Palestinian convert. Such a description would certainly include Luke the ministry associate of Paul the Apostle (Brown 2015, 226).

Bock, despite accepting Lukan authorship and the passage's unity, nevertheless observed that its structure is "complex and confused" (1996, 986). Some of this confusion enters the discussion when trying to determine Luke's primary source material. As this passage from Luke 10 parallels that which is recorded in Matthew 10 and 11 but with different content surrounding the return of the disciples following their evangelistic endeavour, one must ask from where did Luke's information derive? As one who subscribes to Markan priority for his Gospel and considering the non-Markan material recorded in Luke's Gospel, I am

forced to wonder how much of Luke's writing depended on Mark's earlier account of Jesus commissioning his disciples. In addition, I remain curious as to how much of Luke's source material relied on other written accounts such as the "Q" document and how much relied on verbal accounts of eyewitnesses which were passed along to him. These questions have remained debated points among international scholars for generations and while important to mention and consider here, will not be solvable within the context and scope of this portfolio.

Genre and Structure

The Gospel that bears his name, broadly resembles the other Synoptic Gospels in structure, character and style. The Gospel genre was a unique creation of Christian writers, determined partly by the realities of Jesus' life and partly by the necessities of the Christian mission. In this sense Luke's Gospel joins the books of Matthew and Mark in being a focussed biography or historical narrative concentrating on the words and works of Jesus in his public ministry, especially those details associated with his death and resurrection. One source I consulted suggested that this book belongs to the biographical tradition of antiquity and should be filed as a "Hellenistic biography" due to its inherent claim of being written about an historical figure (Theissen and Merz 1998, 103).

Structurally, the verses being observed here in chapter 10 of Luke's Gospel are comprised of several different and distinct sections. These sections or movements closely mirror the four stages of my personal philosophy of leadership have undoubtedly impacted me and as such will be expounded upon later in this chapter. The chronological placement of these four sections and their synoptic

parallels within the geographic and historic ministry of Jesus is difficult to assert concretely and many possible combinations exist when it comes to ordering the content. Despite this chronological challenge, Bock has titled each of the four sections anyway as follows: Instructions, Woes, Return and Thanksgiving (1996, 986). I am attracted to and am guided by this formatting and as such will observe each section in more detail in a later portion of this chapter.

Historical Context

I am indebted to Martin Marty's book *The Christian World* for a clear depiction of the historical, cultural and social background of the Gospel of Luke. His description of the life setting for these events with thorough details and vivid imagery was most helpful in aiding my understanding of the text and its place within the world where the recorded events originally occurred (2009, 11).

Historical Background

In terms of geography the events within this passage take place in the region known informally if not imprecisely today as the holy land. This is the very land that was promised to Abraham the recognized grandfather of the nation of Israel and later granted to his Israelite descendants many centuries later. At the time of this biblical occurrence, the region of Judea beyond the Jordan fell within what was commonly referred to as "Roman and Herodian Palestine" (Tomasino 2003, 275).

The political climate surrounding this biblical passage is a complex web of rule, royalty and reticence. At the time of Jesus' ministry and the commissioning

of Jesus' disciples, the supreme ruler of the land was Emperor Caesar of Rome. The promised land once belonging to the nation of Israel had, over time, fallen into the hands of Rome and had become part of the Roman empire as so-called "provinces" (Tomasino 2003, 246). As a result, at the time of the Luke 10 events, the Hebrew people were living under foreign occupation with direct local authority placed in the hands of local Roman governors or procurators. The Roman empire installed these representatives to oversee the conquered land, maintain order and stamp out any hint of insurrection that would threaten the *Pax Romana* (Roman peace).

While the Roman occupation was an everyday reality for the land once owned by the nation of Israel, there remained in nominal power over the Jewish people themselves King Herod of Judea. The Herodians were a royal family of oppressors whose jealousy of anything or anyone that threatened their power went back to the time of the birth of Jesus and even farther. The Herodians as a result, figure prominently in the historical and political context of the story of Christianity itself.

Power also resided in the ranking Jewish social collective known as the Sanhedrin. This was the Jewish Council of seventy men charged with acting as the local arbiters of justice and order (Tomasino 2003, 205). The Sanhedrin operated with deference to Rome while at the same time remaining under the cultural rule of the Herodians and was therefore reticent to say or do anything that might risk their prized social standing and cultural authority. For all their social and religious power however, there were limits to the authority under which the Sanhedrin operated. As is observed in the events directly following the betrayal

and arrest of Jesus and which are recorded in the Gospels, it becomes clear to the reader that the Sanhedrin was not permitted for example to sentence a person to death. Such a judgment needed to come from the ruling royalty or ruler which explains the actions that eventually led Jesus to the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate.

Cultural Background

Religion

The centre of Jewish religious life, as had been the case for generations, was the Temple of Jerusalem. In the surrounding locales however, the synagogue served as the place where religious teaching, instruction and devotion would have been lived out. Daily life for the Jewish citizenry was governed by the rabbinic understanding of the Laws of God as recorded in the Torah whose writing is attributed to Moses. Such intricate understanding of the law was finely detailed in every way. To cite an extreme example this included the number of steps one could take on the Sabbath before it would be considered work and therefore a violation of the sabbath rest commandment. Expectation that the anointed Messiah would come and rescue the oppressed people of Israel ran high in this atmosphere of persecution and the virtual exile the people faced in their own homes as well as in their hometown (Tomasino 2003, 300).

The recognized religious leaders in the temple, synagogue and Sanhedrin would have included the high priest, local rabbis and religious sects such as the Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots. These socially high-ranking members of the Jewish citizenry were constantly engaged in a grand scheme of appeasement

toward every layer of political governance previously mentioned. For these reasons they were reticent to do or even allow anything that would be upsetting to their Roman occupiers. At the same time, while presenting a reverence for the laws of God, they also showed great deference to the royal family of Herodians. It takes very little imagination to appreciate the way that Jesus' radical message of justice and peace in the name of God threatened to upend the delicate and self-serving balance upon which the Jewish religious leaders depended.

Ethnically

While Jerusalem was a hub for Jewish life, one should not assume the city was monocultural. By virtue of the previously mentioned political and cultural realities underpinning the life and ministry of Jesus, it is obvious that there was a collision of multiple ethnic cultures informing everyday life for the first century Judean resident. Every day the typical Jew would be engaging with his/her own people in his/her mother tongue. Jews would also, out of necessity, be engaging their Roman occupiers in whatever Latin they knew. An additional literary demand involved communicating with the still-growing Hellenistic community within Jerusalem. It is also clear from the words of Jesus himself such as those recorded in Mark 5:41—"Taking her by the hand he said to her, 'Talitha cumi,' which means, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise'"—that Aramaic was also a language in regular use in the region surrounding Jerusalem at that time.

One of the more obvious historical and biblical events which points directly to the multi-cultural reality at that time is seen in the details recorded in John 19:20. It is in this scene where the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate after

having condemned Jesus to death by crucifixion, orders a sign be hung on the cross over Jesus and that the message of the sign be written in three different languages: “Aramaic, Latin and Greek” (John 19:20 ESV). Such a step was perhaps designed to communicate the desired message “THE KING OF THE JEWS” (John 19:20 ESV) to as many people as possible taking into consideration the main languages spoken by the typical person living in and around Jerusalem.

Social Background

While not what would later become known in cultures such as Southeast Asia, Pakistan or Nepal as a caste system, first century Judea most certainly had categories or strata of people whose inherent social position dictated the treatment they received in the greater community. In the period surrounding the events of Luke 10, this would be true for tax collectors who were often Jewish citizens themselves collecting tribute for Rome and therefore seen as traitors to their own people. In addition, other marginalized individuals would have included prostitutes, the diseased and the physically or mentally disabled. Notably it was to all of these and more with which Jesus’ intentionally socialized and to which he ministered.

Another significant element of Jesus’ radical message of justice was seen in his treatment of women and children. Socially, women and children were little more than appendages in the life of a man. Jesus’ teachings brought an unapologetic heightening of social stature to those accustomed to being marginalized even in their own homes and unaccustomed to being shown respect and being granted social value.

Literary Context and Canonical Placement

The Gospel that bears Luke's name is a member of the synoptic Gospels which also included the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. Luke provides a third perspective on the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth that aids the reader in achieving a more rounded view and vantage point. While the Gospel of John is also numbered among the New Testament Gospels, with its content being ninety-two per cent unique material when compared with the content of the synoptic Gospels, it stands uniquely independent. At the same time, even with its inherent uniqueness, I believe it plainly testifies to the gospel truth of Jesus as being the long-awaited Christ of God.

Luke's own declaration at the opening of his gospel that what follows is an "orderly account ... that you may know with certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:3 ESV) explains well the intended accuracy and chronology of the events that he then proceeds to record. *The Interpreter's Bible* breaks Luke's Gospel up into seven sections all based around various stages of Jesus' own life and ministry from details of his birth to the events regarding his ultimate resurrection from the dead. For its part the passage under examination in this paper is included in the section titled "On the Journey to Jerusalem" (Buttrick, Bowie, and Knox 1952, 8:24). On the other hand the *New International Version Study Bible* divides Luke's book into three geographically determined sections with the events in Galilee being recorded in 4:14-9:50; the events in Judea and Perea from 9:51-19:27 and the final week in Jerusalem from 19:28-24:53. In both of these sources, the passage under examination falls into the section encompassing Luke 9:51 to Luke 19:27.

It is in this section of teaching and preparation for the events still to come in Jerusalem where Jesus, knowing his time on earth is comparatively short, determinedly preparing his followers for what was to come. One means of that preparation is observable in the details of Luke 10:1-24. Within Luke's orderly retelling of the good news of Jesus and during a period leading up to Jesus' final arrival in Jerusalem the reader encounters the Lord enacting his own manner of empowering leadership development and one which has shaped my own Philosophy of Ministry.

Literary Analysis of the Text

Contributors to *The Interpreter's Bible* identify the style of Luke's Gospel as "non-literary Greek" (Buttrick, Bowie, and Knox 1952, 8:3). Such a category encompasses writings that are typically short and to the point, and do not use a lot of figurative language like imagery and metaphor. These writings usually contain detailed facts and figures and universally have a main idea, a purpose, and an intended audience. These descriptors certainly match Luke's Gospel, its style and declared intent.

In terms of the writing style, these same commentators point out that the language of Luke's Gospel demonstrates an outstanding command of the Greek language which is also intentionally geographically and culturally sensitive in nature. Bock for example suggests that in a more Jewish setting such as within Jerusalem itself, Luke is seen to use more Semitic language while his references to Paul were delivered in a more Hellenistic context (1996, 6).

To examine the passage more specifically as a means of literary analysis, I have chosen to follow the four sections by Bock referenced earlier in this paper. These sections of Luke 10:1-24 are once again: Instructions, Woes, Return and Thanksgiving (1996, 986).

Section One: Instructions: 10:1-12

After having journeyed with his disciples for many months during which time he has been preparing them for the time when they would preach the nearness of God's Kingdom themselves, the time had finally come. Before dispatching the seventy-two, Jesus offers some final instructions beginning with directions regarding prayer. Here Jesus positions the work the disciples are about to undertake in its proper place which is under the headship of God. By instructing the disciples to pray to the Lord God to "send out workers into the harvest field" (v. 2). Jesus is plainly providing a stark reminder to the disciples about whose work they are undertaking and who they are being sent out to represent. In this way, before a single step is taken, Jesus offers instructions to first pray and then "go" (v. 3).

Instructions regarding reception

Beginning in verse 5 Jesus presents some instructions to the disciples about how to respond to those whom they will encounter on this missionary journey. The Lord instructs the seventy-two to bless each home they enter and accept whatever hospitality is offered. At the same time and in return, the disciples are instructed to bless the people in the towns they will visit through

communicating the nearness of the Kingdom of God and healing the sick. In these directives Jesus also prepares the disciples for those certain times when they would not be made welcome by those they met.

Instructions regarding rejection

In his final words of instruction to the seventy-two, Jesus advises them with regards to the inevitable rejection that they will receive to the Kingdom message they were to bring. In verse 10 Jesus tells the disciples—should they enter a town and not be welcomed—they should then continue to another location but not without first having at least expressed the hopeful message of the nearness of God's Kingdom. Jesus knows the price that rejecting the hope of God brings and expresses these thoughts through the pronouncement of woe on several cities in the Galilean region that had previously rejected God's invitation and hope.

Section Two: Woes: 10:13-16

Woe on Chorazin and Bethsaida

Little is known about the city of Chorazin but Darrell Bock suggests that it's grouping with Bethsaida and the subsequent woe pronounced on Capernaum indicate they were geographically near to one another—perhaps less than eight kilometres apart (1996, 1003). The point of their mention by the Lord however has less to do with geography than it does with the rejection he found in all three cities in response to his work. By referencing the Old Testament cities of Tyre

and Sidon, Jesus is equating Chorazin and Bethsaida with two of the most egregious acts of rejection toward God contained in the scriptures.

Woe on Capernaum

Capernaum had served as the centre of Jesus' ministry in the region of Galilee. In this sense that city had seen and experienced much of Jesus' divine power at work. Yet citizens seemed to have largely rejected the invitation into God's Kingdom as evidenced by Jesus' powerful words of condemnation here.

Section Three: Return: 10:17-20

Joy of the disciples at their authority

An unspecified amount of time passes between the departure of the disciples in verse 16 and their return in verse 17. During this unstated period, Jesus' own activity is not recorded nor are the specifics of the work of the disciples. The collective return of the seventy-two includes a firsthand report about the mission field and harvest and is accompanied by great joy and happiness as they jointly share their perceived successes. The disciples are bubbling over with delight as they describe the spiritual authority they had wielded while away from Jesus.

Jesus' response about the greater honour

In reply to the enthusiastic debriefing that the disciples share with Jesus, the Lord takes the opportunity to use their perceived successes as a teaching point.

To remind his followers of appropriate priorities while serving in God's Kingdom, he states plainly to them that success is not measured by interactions with hell but rather with the promise of heaven.

Section Four: Thanksgiving

To the Father

As this event concludes, Luke records Jesus drawing this mentoring session to a close in the same way he had begun it, with prayer. Jesus first offers a thankful prayer to God the Father for all that he has revealed to the disciples through this missionary journey. Jesus further praises God for his decision not to use the wise of the world for this mission but rather those who are young and immature of faith.

Blessing on the disciples

As he completes this time of real time instruction, Jesus pronounces a blessing on the seventy-two. He commends them for what they have seen and experienced and reminds them of the great blessing God has given them through having allowed them this real-time opportunity to be part of the harvest on behalf of God the Father.

Application for Leadership Development

Main Themes and Theological Message

While demonstrating a brilliant model for leadership development, Luke 10:1-24 does so while stressing the primacy of mission within the Kingdom of God. While encouraging dependence upon God, Jesus allows his disciples to understand firsthand what it means to be part of God's planned harvest. In the course of this teaching, the Lord also allows the disciples to experience how great in size the harvest is and how many more workers are needed (Bock 1996, 992).

Jesus does not ensure or guarantee success in the mission on which he sends the seventy-two. It is just the opposite; in fact, as he plainly prepares them and their message to be rejected. In so doing Jesus reminds them of both the gravity of the task they are undertaking as well as the gravity of declining that divine message.

Upon their return Jesus includes further teaching for his disciples seemingly as a means of grounding their recent experiences. His intention appears to be that the Kingdom message be kept accurate while at the same time ensuring the disciples definition of was success based upon God's actions and not their own.

Theological Implications and Application

It seems evident to me, as author Steve Addison suggests, Jesus taught, as was Jewish tradition at the time, through the rhetorical device of repetition (2012, 47). Indeed, by the events of Luke 10, the disciples had already heard approximately three years of firsthand teaching from Jesus in a variety of

geographic settings and contexts. By the time the seventy-two are dispatched here, they would almost certainly have been familiar with his lessons, parables and sayings and yet Jesus did not assume at all that they had grasped his deeper meaning and message after hearing it the first or even second time. It was obviously insufficient for the Lord simply to assume or hope that his disciples picked up the hopeful message about God's Kingdom the first time he shared that critical information with them. For this reason, the Gospels reveal multiple ways in which he repeated that message through word and deed. This intentional transfer of vital data is in keeping with Brad Lomenick's concept of "passing the baton (2015, 203). This becomes especially obvious following the death of John the Baptist whose own primary message focused upon the nearness of the Kingdom of God.

The Jewish tradition of teaching and being taught through memorization and repetitive action was clearly at work here. This principle is easily seen in Jesus' model of leadership development with his disciples where he shares a concept thoroughly and repeatedly and encourages his students to experience the weight of the message themselves in a practical sense. Afterwards Jesus would debrief their subsequent experiences and perceptions and then correct or affirm their convictions and understandings before commissioning them to do it all over again. In short, he prioritized repetition and hands-on learning. These two vital elements have been formative in my own leadership development philosophy.

The method of being sent out to experience learning in real-time and then debriefing the experience (as seen in Luke 10) can also be seen in the sending out of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch (see Acts 13). The church leaders employed

Jesus' method of leadership development as they lay hands on these two, sent them out together and then later received back from them the firsthand report of what they had experienced in the course of sharing the gospel of Jesus.

It is most specifically the concept of shared ministry demonstrated in this event that connects it most directly to my personal philosophy of leadership. In addition, the shared exploration by the disciples who were, by design, sent out in pairs, informs the convictions surrounding Baptist Associations that prompted the research component of this portfolio.

Summary

I believe this examination of the Luke 10:1-24 passage and the evidence of its rootedness in Christian discipleship since the earliest days of the Christian church has been one that exposes its inherent truth properly while also demonstrating reasons for my having based my own personal philosophy of Christian leadership on it.

Relation to Transformational Leadership Philosophy

As identified and explored in detail in the prior sections of this chapter, my preferred method of leadership development and practical theology of leadership is deeply rooted in the events found in Luke 10:1-24. Initially in researching leadership theories, I saw numerous overlaps between this biblical event and several acceptable models of leadership development. There were for example the tenets of Path-Goal theory.

Peter Northouse describes Path-Goal theory as putting “much of the onus on leaders in terms of designing and facilitating a healthy and productive work environment to propel followers toward success” (2018, 117). Based on their definition, R. J. Banks, B. M. Ledbetter, D. C. Greenhalgh, W. Dyrness, R. Johnston, and M. De Pree (2016, 13) seem to posit that Path-Goal leadership though not a perfect match in any sense, compliments in many ways the specific events surrounding the sending out of the seventy-two disciples to which I have referred.

I was also encouraged by fellow students in this course to see the relation to Servant Leadership in this biblical passage depicting Jesus’ way of leadership development. Servant Leadership as a concept was originally put forward by Robert Greenleaf and was based on his extensive observation of corporate management practices (Banks et al. 2016, 13). That this model of leadership reverberates within Christian circles is in no small part because of many of Jesus’ own words and actions such as those in Mark 10:43-45 when he washed the feet of the disciples and declared that he came not to seek to be served but rather to be a servant to all. Certainly many authors like Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges in their work *Lead Like Jesus* argue strenuously that the “greatest leadership role model of all time” is the Servant Leadership model embodied and perfected by Jesus Christ (2008, 34). In the same vein one contemporary proponent of the Servant Leadership model whose associated practice and life example was raised in our class was Henri Nouwen.

In the book *In The Name of Jesus*, Nouwen says the following about his view of Christian leadership in the future: “It is not a leadership of power and

control, but a leadership of powerlessness and humility in which the suffering servant of God, Jesus Christ is made manifest” (1989, 92). If one looked only at Nouwen’s very humble example of leadership as well as his correct observation that Jesus sent out his followers in pairs (1989, 15) one might conclude this to be the precise model best matched with the practices of our Lord. After carefully reviewing Northouse and his considered handling of the Servant Leadership model however, I rejected it as being the theory best matched to the biblical events of Luke 10:1-24.

Northouse describes Servant Leadership as “an approach focusing on leadership from the point of view of the leader and his or her behaviors.” He goes on to say, “servant leaders put followers first, empower them and help them develop their full personal capacities” (Northouse 2018, 227). As my previous exegesis of the Luke 10 event concluded, I fail to see where at any point Jesus, the recognized leader, was focused on himself. Neither do I see that his main concern was that the disciples were somehow being personally developed to their fullest individual capacities. I maintain that Jesus is concerned chiefly with the reality that the Kingdom of God was near and that many had not heard the Good News yet. For this reason, Jesus’ primary leadership development purpose was seemingly aimed at facilitating the sharing of that good news to a world that despite having no other legitimate hope, would be hostile towards it.

Author James Lawrence finds the concept of servanthood and Christian leadership inextricable. By examining the events of Luke 22, Lawrence concludes that Jesus is instructing his disciples on the key reality that any leadership offered in his name must be marked in large part by servanthood (2004, 32). I cannot

legitimately argue against this assertion altogether but neither do I accept it conclusively as the final word on the leadership model most associated with the ministry of Jesus Christ. Although many tenets of Servant Leadership are inarguably seen repeatedly in the life and ministry of Jesus, nonetheless I remained unconvinced that this model was the one best associated with my own philosophy of Christian leadership.

In the end, and despite the similarities and considerations of the above-mentioned leadership theories, I still see a much sounder alignment between the biblical precedent seen in Luke 10 and its subsequent Kingdom impact with the leadership model known as Transformational Leadership.

Transformational Leadership

Precise definitions of this leadership theory vary from source to source. In *Transforming Leadership*, Leighton Ford describes Jesus as “the transforming leader” (1993, 30). For its part, Max DePree’s definition of leadership includes, in no small part, the critical qualification that “leaders are responsible for future leadership,” which strongly points to the need for transformation in today’s followers to become tomorrow’s leaders (1989, 14). Bernard Bass and Ronald Riggio claim that this leadership theory involves “those who ... help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers’ needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization” (2006, 3).

Finally, I examined Skip Bell’s definition of the biblical theology of leadership which states “Christian leadership is the transforming relational

process of a serving community sharing a common God-inspired vision and purpose” (2014, 389). Bell further says this process is seen when “people freely associate for the transformation of society, church, family and the individual” (2014, 389). This highly relational element of Jesus’ leadership style is also explored succinctly by Boyd Bailey in *Learning to Lead Like Jesus* (2018, 81). Through the eleven leadership traits of Jesus he identifies, he ably points out the manner in which those who seek to lead as Jesus did should seek to incorporate healthy relationships in their own leadership lives.

When examining the complexities of Transformational Leadership and noting the many working definitions that exist and by examining the commonalities in these varied definitions, one reality is certain. At bare minimum that Transformational Leadership is at its root, a leadership approach that intentionally causes change in both individuals and the social systems in which the leadership functions. To take this thought further, when a leader applies the principles of Transformational Leadership correctly it can create valuable and positive change in the followers while still focusing on the primary end objective of developing those same followers into leaders within their particular context or society.

It is perhaps important here for purposes of clarification to communicate the difference between Transformational Leadership and Transactional Leadership. Transactional Leadership according to Northouse focuses on the exchange that takes place between leader and follower. This might for example involve a leader offering a promotion to the follower who best follows the leader’s desires and instructions. One of the simpler examples Northouse provides

is the transaction within the typical classroom where the teacher or leader provides a grade to the student or follower for the successful completion of work. In contrast Northouse states that Transformational Leadership is not so much about exchange as it is about connections between leader and follower. Examples offered include the life and legacy of Gandhi as well as others who sought to change the core values and related actions of the people which they were leading (Northouse 2018, 164).

Although he was not directly addressing Transformational Leadership Theory per se, it was once again Skip Bell who eventually connected the dots for me regarding this theory when he pointed out that “Jesus’ service was relational and process oriented directed toward the transformation of those who would plant the Christian Church” (2014, 360). Transformational Leadership has been characterized as including an idealized and influential leader who offers inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration of those who are being developed themselves into leaders (Northouse 2018, 169). I believe we see exactly these traits in these early verses of Luke 10.

Transformational Leadership Excesses and Deficiencies

It is also important before going forward on this subject to examine and admit to the most obvious excesses and deficiencies of the equipping/empowering basis of the Transformational Leadership paradigm that I argue for here. Among the excesses of this model is that its requirement of a charismatic, visionary leader has an intuitive appeal. Unchecked and unmanaged this can create emotionally-driven followers rather than values-driven leaders. The charismatic leader within this model who does not exhibit a healthy measure of self-awareness risks seeing

leadership development as the mere copying or duplicating of the leader's own thinking and practice. The fact that this leadership development model is a progression or procedure which Gervase R. Bushe terms "experience" (2011, 93) is also attractive towards the process of transformation. Its focus on the needs and uniqueness of the followers is also important, but this can just as easily become a deficiency which I explore next.

When I turn to deficiencies of Transformational Leadership there are several that immediately present themselves. One major weakness in this theory is the extent to which it relies on the charismatic, influential leader for success. In the wrong hands and with the wrong motivations, this leadership model can easily be abused to become autocratic while creating a sort of cult of personality. Similarly, if the leadership process is unduly dependent on the traits and character of the recognized leader and is not centred around the values and vision being expressed by the leader for the good of the followers, it comes at the expense of the societal transformation truly being sought.

Summary

As articulated previously, I disagree with those who suggest that Luke 10 primarily displays Servant Leadership. In contrast I am in agreement with Nelson and Dickens and see Transformational Leadership very much as a biblically sound model of leadership development and evident in the passage under examination (2015, 93). Despite the similarities and considerations of other legitimate leadership theories, and after fully exegeting this biblical passage, I still see not just a possible redemption of Transformational Leadership for leadership development in a ministry context but I also see a more sturdy alignment between

Luke 10:1-24 and Transformational Leadership than with any other theory examined.

It is within the research portion of this portfolio that I make an argument for the need for transformation of the Association structure within CBOQ I believe such a transformation can only be led through a model of Transformational Leadership that encourages and promotes the value of inter-church relationship to the degree that I am convinced it should be.

Applying this Scripturally Rooted Personal Leadership Philosophy

It is true as the scriptures declare that there is “nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9) and that includes my Philosophy of Christian Leadership. What I recognize as the paradigm most biblical and practical in my own ministry context is in no way unique or revolutionary. In fact, this model has many similarities to other existing leadership development theories being practiced today. These include Mike Breen’s “3DM” (three dimensional ministry) model where he identifies “Kairos Moments” where God’s will and plans for a person or group of people is revealed sometimes in positive events and sometimes negative (2011, 56). According to Breen this revelation is developed through a systematic six-step process of observing, reflecting, discussing, planning, accounting and acting which ultimately leads to a further cycle of the six procedures.

Another similar theory to my own is the “practice-theory-practice” position of Don S. Browning. In his brief reference to this theory, Browning suggests practical theology to be better seen as what he terms “theology on the

go” (as quoted by Ward 2017, 169) where reflection and the associated learning that goes with it takes place between initial actions and their subsequent reactions. This happens according to Browning in real time and as part of a cyclical method of practical theology not unlike the corporate thinking behind continuous quality improvement.

In *What Jesus Started*, Steve Addison explores a circular four-step means of discipleship that involves a continuous loop of learning. This process begins with connecting with the workers (to use the language of Luke 10), sharing the message with them, training them up to both own and share that message, gathering again with them to discuss and debrief before starting the “loop” all over again (2012, 236).

Finally I acknowledge the example of learning developed by Laura Joplin and included by David Livermore in *Cultural Intelligence* (2009, 199–206). This method includes five vital stages Joplin posits to be necessary in the process of learning and therefore vital to effective leadership. The first stage for Joplin is “Focus” in which the emphasis is placed on the proposed lesson to be learned. This is followed with “Action-Reflection” where the learner experiences the lesson and, in some manner, “tries it out” for him/herself. Third comes the “Support-Feedback” stage which involves the teacher or leader speaking into the learning process as it’s happening for the purposes of challenging such things as methods or even attitudes. Then Joplin suggests a fourth stage called “Debrief.” This differs from the “Support-Feedback” stage in that it takes place when the learning experience has concluded. In other words, if step three looks at what is happening, step four looks at what has happened. Finally comes stage five which

Joplin refers to as “Learning Transfer.” Simply put, this is where the lessons learned via the previous four stages are integrated into the student’s lives and become part of their everyday rhythms and routines.

While I see value in all of the models just described, my own philosophy of Transformational Leadership as seen within my own practical theology, is a four-step practice that I have rooted in Luke 10:1-24. It involves the following progression:

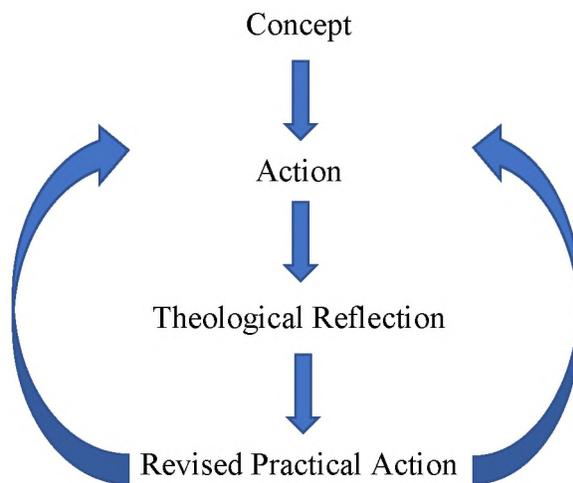


Figure 2 My Personal Four-Part Leadership Development Process

Concept

This step is the foundational one upon which the entire rest of the process rests. In many ways this starting point looks like that place in which Path-Goal Theory starts in that a destination or purpose is necessarily depicted and articulated before anything else happens. This is the place in the process where the questions of what, why and how must be clearly expressed by the leader as well as understood by the student or follower before any practical application of

the concept is undertaken. This might involve purposely exploring such matters as the nature of the vision or value the leader wishes both to communicate and impart to follower, why this value or vision is significant (culturally, personally or even spiritually) for the follower to grasp, and the means by which will the vision or value will be pursued. These realities and more must be communicated in both word and action to those being developed as leaders before any possible action takes place.

In the biblical precedent for this philosophy of Christian Leadership the concept being imparted by Jesus in Luke 10 might best be summarized as “the kingdom of God is near” (NIV v. 9). As their recognized teacher and leader, Jesus had to ensure that his disciples understood the message and concepts at hand and understood as much as they were able, what it meant and how they were expected to communicate that message to those they would encounter on their journeys.

Action

After concepts, and objectives have been communicated and (hopefully) understood in Transformational Leadership Theory, the follower is to pursue them tangibly. In Luke 10 Jesus ushers in the “Action” phase of his leadership development plan with the single word “go” (v. 3). With this imperative along with additional words of caution and reminder, he sent his disciples out onto the mission field for what was an unspecified period of real-time learning and concept application. This unrecorded period falls between verses 16 and 17 provided opportunity for the disciples to apply the previously seen and taught concepts that Jesus was asking them to undertake relative to the Kingdom of God. This is also the empowerment element that is vital to successful Transformational Leadership.

Theological Reflection

Following the return of the disciples from their respective ministry assignments, Jesus spends intentional time debriefing them and reflecting with them on their just-concluded period of practical application (Luke 10:18). This personal and relational approach to leadership development is also an integral part of Transformational Leadership. The disciples had already begun to see the change in themselves and reflect upon the results of that brief internship from which they had just returned. Jesus, as their leader, reinforces that change of perception and understanding with the intent that this new perspective (now being held by the disciples) would be permanent.

Revised Practical Action

In this my fourth step of practical theology, I see a crucial activity within Transformational Leadership that will seek to embed the previous reflections into future practice. This is simply another way of promoting the profound truth that learning from practical application should always lead to the revision of any assumptions or actions that prove contrary or counter-productive to the originally stated objectives and goals.

Part Two: A Case Study Applying This Philosophy of Ministry to the State of
Inter-Church Relationships in the Churches of the Oxford-Brant Association
Belonging to the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec

Introduction

As this Philosophy of Leadership chapter attests, I have a strong conviction toward partnerships and shared ministry whether as individuals or as entire congregations. For this reason, the Baptist ideal of people and churches associating together for the express purpose of enhanced and increasingly effective ministry is not only attractive but to me it is an absolute. Sadly, this conviction is not endorsed or supported even by those who have historically aligned with Baptist life and thought. I find it baffling that congregations once established on the principle of shared ministry and mutual support are, based on my personal experience and observations, no longer broadly seeing value in that conviction; in contrast many seem to be finding greater or equal value in not associating with other congregations. The research project detailed in Chapter IV is my attempt at addressing that reality through the lens of my philosophy of ministry. It is also a means once again to envision associating churches thriving thanks to the congregational partnerships they are enjoying.

Background and Overview

The principle of CBOQ churches associating together for ministry, encouragement and edifying communication goes back hundreds of years in the history of our tradition. After twenty years of participation in CBOQ life, I have witnessed increased ambivalence directed at the governance level of our

convention known as Association. As evidenced by the task force report referenced in Chapter I, this has been recognized at the highest levels of governance in our convention with little forthcoming in the way of vision or answers. Perhaps the concept of geographically clustered churches is a dead notion. Is it possible that technology, culture, transportation and shifting theological alliances have eclipsed the historic reasons for and benefits of Associations? Through my research which sought to integrate and apply my own Philosophy of Leadership here, I hoped to discover answers to what I perceived as an ongoing conundrum.

Step One: Concept

Simply put, the concept of shared ministry, pooled resources and mutual encouragement has been bedrock in the history and tradition of Baptist churches since their inception. As one who is convinced, as the scriptures testify in Ecclesiastes—“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil” (4:9 ESV)—our churches may benefit from rediscovering this trust and discovering new expressions of this ancient principle. I believe it remains true that congregations humbly associating and serving together in ministry significantly increases Kingdom effectiveness at the local church level.

Step Two: Action

Whereas I am convinced there remains significant merit to continuing to foster these concepts, I have witnessed and participated in multiple unsuccessful attempts at renewal and re-visioning of the Association ideal. As a result, I accept that something yet untried might provide the solution. There was no shortage of

audible concern and complaint about the fruitlessness or even necessity of associating together as CBOQ churches including in Oxford-Brant. In that light my invitation for those congregations to work together via my research toward possible shared solutions and fresh expressions of associating is my own best effort to address those concerns and criticisms.

Step Three: Reflection

As stated, I have been a member of two different Baptist Associations over twenty years in pastoral ministry and have seen moderate attempts to reposition Associations into a more relevant ministry resource to member churches. In every case, success if seen at all has been temporary before an almost determined return to what can only be described as intentional mediocrity. In other words, associating together for ministry is not working successfully and in fact is no longer as effective as it once was. Oddly, participation and appreciation of the importance of associating is at an all-time low in the member churches and, yet, those same churches continue to stick firmly and perhaps frighteningly to what they know and have always done.

Worse than not embracing change is what I term the toleration of change so long as someone else shoulders the workload and responsibility. A real-time example of this was seen in my former church where the Oxford-Brant pastors would gather monthly for a lunchtime ministerial. The church where I was lead pastor played host to this gathering for many years and was responsible for everything related to the gathering including the menu. The associate pastor and I could no longer manage all the work of preparing the setting and atmosphere for inter-church associating and asked the other churches to share the workload for a

while. No one did. The ministerial lunch stopped happening. After approximately twelve months I floated an idea to restart the ministerial with a much more intentional focus and purpose including continuing education and heightened focus on prayer. There was a great outward response to this concept until I invited the Association pastors to share responsibility for the content and execution of this new model for ministerial associating. No one did and as a result it never got off the ground.

Step Four: Revised Actions

The twenty years I have spent on committees, task forces and leadership teams seeking to maximize ministry efforts among associated congregations has not seen a marked contribution to the positive renewal of inter-church relating and that is nowhere more true than within the Oxford-Brant churches of CBOQ. Seeking support from Annual Meeting delegates has not, as earlier outlined, achieved this. Simply opening the floor for input and solutions from Association clergy has not concretely addressed these challenges either.

Reflecting on the concept itself and the requisite action needed to further inter-church relationships between CBOQ congregations and applying my Philosophy of Leadership suggests that some form of revised action is required. Rather than declaring solutions that don't receive broad understanding or renew the Association model through new structures and constitutions without consensus, a new course of action is needed.

Conclusion

In this chapter I set out to communicate the personal origin, theological basis for and practical implementation of my Philosophy of Christian Leadership. The following chapter records my attempt at applying this philosophy toward addressing the shortcomings depicted above in the area of inter-church relations within the CBOQ. Unlike past repeated attempts at finding solutions to our failing state of inter-church relationships, it is my hope that any eventual plan arising from my Action Research Project (detailed in Chapter IV) will bring about a different outcome. With data analyzed and presented to an Appreciative Inquiry-based focus group of CBOQ pastors and with next steps having been established by that invested group of Oxford-Brant clergy, perhaps it will finally provide a model and a setting for increasingly effective Kingdom ministry that can be undertaken and enjoyed among the various congregations.

CHAPTER IV

MY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Introduction

This research project examined the perceived value and necessity for inter-church relationships among churches located in the Oxford-Brant Association of Baptist Churches and belonging to the CBOQ. The voluntary historic clustering of theologically like-minded churches located in geographic proximity to one another for the purposes of ministry support, partnership and increased communication has been organizationally enshrined in the structure and practice of Baptist churches for at least four hundred years. The research objective that drove this research asked whether or not the historic practice of Baptist churches joining together for mutual support and encouragement is seen by the churches themselves, specifically those located in the Oxford-Brant Association, to be necessary or productive for the ministry of the local church in 2020. In this chapter I will detail findings stemming from this question.

The requisite methodological approach for this study utilized the principles of Participatory Action Research. Three representatives from each of the sixteen CBOQ churches in the Oxford-Brant Association were invited to be research participants. Since the presence of COVID-19 made personal interviews impossible, each participant was asked to complete a ten-question online survey

using the SurveyMonkey platform. Further data were generated later in the research process via an Appreciative Inquiry style focus group comprised of CBOQ pastors from the Oxford-Brant Association. This invited group which had the potential to number twelve pastors, was encouraged to respond from their own experience and emotion to the analyzed results of the online survey. In the end, four pastors comprised the Appreciative Inquiry style focus group.

Key research findings suggested:

1. A lukewarm, dispassionate comfort by congregants with the existing, historic organizational structure of their local church, the wider Association and with CBOQ convention of churches itself.
2. A sense that congregants felt ill-equipped both spiritually and practically for ministry in the local church.
3. A sense of discouragement in ministry at the local church level despite belonging to an established network of churches ostensibly meant to encourage and support one another.

Context

This Action Research Project exclusively involved the participation of both clergy and lay leaders in Oxford-Brant member churches with the exception of four clergy who lead churches in other CBOQ Associations. Those four additional participants were utilized to compare and contrast the responses from Oxford-Brant.

The Oxford-Brant Association of Baptist Churches included sixteen local congregations located in two different geographic counties in southwestern

Ontario. The average age of congregations in this particular Association of churches is 165 years old. Of the seven Oxford-Brant churches who were willing to be represented in the research data and based purely on the physical location of their church buildings, three would be classified as city churches and four would be considered rural.

Survey respondents representing these churches were comprised of both males and females though I did not quantitatively seek to identify the percentages of each. I was however able to determine through self-disclosure by the survey respondents that 26% of all respondents self-identified as being between the ages of thirty and forty-five. Thirteen per cent were between the ages of forty-six and fifty-nine and 60% self-identified as being over the age of sixty. Combined, participating church leaders indicated having been active in their respective local congregations an average of twenty-one years. This average includes the tenures of both pastors and laypeople alike.

Relative to the research question being explored through this data, it is worth noting that at the time of survey completion, 48% of respondents indicated a personal satisfaction with the current level of inter-church relations involving their congregation. Conversely the remaining participants (representing 52% of respondents) were not satisfied with the current level of inter-church relations involving their congregations. This statistical division (nearly fifty-fifty) was realized through a survey question soliciting a yes or no answer as to the respondent's personal satisfaction with the present level of inter-church relations. The resulting answers, and ultimate conclusions to which the data lead, comprise Chapter V of this portfolio.

Models

Background from Scripture and Tradition

The theological framework around which this research centres was rooted in the Scriptures and then centuries later became ingrained in Canadian Baptist tradition. The scriptural foundation for its original inclusion within Baptist polity was, I initially felt, best seen through several biblical events. The first involved Jesus, just prior to his ascension, charging the disciples with what has become known as The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The second scriptural precedent is that scene also involving Jesus Christ wherein he miraculously feeds 5,000 men and many more people with a mere five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:13-21). It was my initial conviction that Jesus' process of breaking the crowd of people into smaller clusters for the purposes of a more efficient means of service was a helpful metaphor for today's Canadian Baptist Associations. As I outline below, I have since concluded that this scriptural precedent is not as aligned with Baptist history as I had originally concluded.

As was already mentioned in Chapter 3, the model of house churches that were essentially networking together in ministry as depicted in Luke 4 and Revelation 2 and 3 are also informative when examining inter-church associating. The example of the way in which resources were shared and encouragement was offered among close-knit gatherings of believers would seem to provide a more accurate precedent for the true reasoning behind the formation of Baptist Associations. Sadly, this was a realization that arose once my research analysis was already complete and was not made part of the research process.

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus commands his disciples, upon his pending departure, to put into action all the things that they saw and heard while studying under him for the previous three or more years. Specifically, the Lord calls on his followers to look outward; to go into the world with the Good News on their lips. They are given authority in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and are called to teach, baptize and make new disciples of Jesus. Christ's promise is that his disciples won't be doing this all alone; he will be with them all the way. This succinct commission is filled with visible and measurable acts of ministry that are meant to be evidenced as an outworking of Christian community. When I reference efficient or inefficient ministry at the local church level in this portfolio, it is the principle of outwardly expressing the love of God behind these and other Spirit-led tasks which I hold up as a measurement of effective or ineffective ministry. It is humble obedience to this commission, which I strongly believe Christian believers through healthy inter-church relationships, have the potential to best incarnate.

A second scriptural incident which I considered as illustrative for Baptist history and practice points to what I first saw as Jesus' design for efficient ministry within larger groups of people. All four Gospels (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15) include the miraculous scene where 5,000 men are fed efficiently and satisfactorily. Mark's particular record seemed best to describe what I saw as Jesus' facilitation of efficient ministry among such a great crowd of people. In verse 39, Jesus instructs the mass of people to gather in smaller groups of fifty or one hundred. From an organizational vantage point I was originally seeing this structuring of the people as a means to provide for an

orderly distribution of food as well as an opportunity to share resources within each comparatively smaller cluster while at the same time also providing for a smaller more intimate means of blessing and serving one another. As this chapter will record, this scriptural illustration did not in the end turn out to be as helpful to my research as it seemed to me at first glance. This biblical event for example nowhere implies that the smaller clusters of people grouped together by Jesus for the meal that day had any future shared activity for which they were being prepared which was foundational in the establishment of Baptist Associations. In the end I concluded that this biblical imperative did not in any marked fashion aid my research efforts to determine whether or not an intentional relationship among congregations remains relevant or necessary to the people of the Oxford-Brant Association of Baptist Churches.

Research Resources

This section references the research resources that were of the greatest help during my Action Research Project. As depicted in Figure 3, these core texts can be grouped into three connected categories that when overlapped, form a Venn diagram of their collective contribution to my research. As depicted in the diagram, category one encompassed those resources that informed my understanding of the essential practices of academic research itself. Category two included resources that reinforced my knowledge of Canadian Baptist history and polity. Finally, category three involved resources specific to understanding my preferred philosophy of Christian leadership and framework for its application.



Figure 3 Overlapping Categories of Textual Resources Used In This Research

Category One: Best Practices in DMin Research

Within category one which I refer to as offering “best practices for DMin research,” it was Tim Sensing’s book *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* that informed a significant portion of my high-level planning and execution. For example, Sensing’s statements regarding Purposive Samples (2011, 83) were instrumental in guiding the manner in which I selected research participants for my project. He provided such reminders as ensuring participants have a vested interest and are generally knowledgeable regarding the research topic, having participants chosen by someone else, including deviant cases to identify potential outliers in my research and ensuring participants represent the typical case relative to my research.

When it came to the Appreciative Inquiry-based focus group element of my research, Mark Lau Branson’s *Memories, Hopes and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry, Missional Engagement and Congregational Change* afforded me a helpful framework through his five Core Processes (2016, 25). As Branson suggests, these core processes have the dual benefit of clarifying and

guiding the required movements in the Appreciative Inquiry style process while at the same time allowing flexibility in exercising the process. That ability to be flexible in the focus group stage was crucial in light of the limitations presented by COVID-19 and the requirement for the focus group to take place in a virtual setting.

In terms of the coding phase, I am indebted to Johnny Saldana's book *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Specifically, it was Saldana's identification and explanations of both values coding (2016, 131) and evaluation coding (2016, 140) that were fundamental in approaching and understanding how best to align my data for maximum categorization, understanding and interpretation.

Data reflection and analysis was largely guided by chapter five of Ernest T. Stringer's *Action Research 4th edition*. In this chapter, Stringer walks the reader through the data analysis stage of the research and does so in a manner which, for a first time researcher like myself, was invaluable in both its language accessibility and potential for application (2014, 135).

Category Two: Canadian Baptist History and Polity

The resources included in what I refer to as Category Two, informed my understanding and application of existing Canadian Baptist History and Polity. I am especially indebted to the authors of three extraordinarily helpful resources. *Baptist Life and Thought: A Source Book* by William H. Brackney was particularly informative in examining Baptist origins in Europe, the subsequent migration to America and eventual exodus to Maritime Canada where the establishment of Canadian Baptist Churches began (1998, 474).

Harry A. Renfree's *Heritage and Horizon: The Baptist Story in Canada* has become a highly referenced standard when examining the Canadian Baptist historical context. Indeed this resource provided extremely helpful content relative to the Canadian Baptist experience and the founding of the Baptist Convention to which I and the churches surveyed in my research belong (1988, 166).

Maring and Hudson's *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice* was also highly useful in examining Canadian Baptist life and thought. I was particularly grateful for its well-presented content surrounding matters such as doctrinal distinctives and organizational intentions and most especially for its clear explanation of the creation and purposes for Baptist Associations (1991, 174)

Category Three: Principles and Philosophies of Christian Leadership

Category Three consisted of two key resources focused on the principles and philosophies of Christian Leadership. *Leadership Theory and Practice* by Peter G. Northouse strongly aided me in identifying the philosophy of leadership under which I have come to operate. This model is known as Transformational leadership (2018, 163). That realization was also undergirded by Skip Bell's *Servants and Friends: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* which affirmed me and my own leadership philosophy in the same manner as Northouse (2014, 360).

Methodology and Methods

This section includes a description and rationale for the approach adopted to accomplish this project. It begins with a brief depiction of the research setting

and the participants who engaged in the research which is offered here in addition to the Context section found earlier in this chapter. This look at the field of research is followed by an explanation of the scope (i.e., limits and boundaries) of the project. The methodological approach which utilized the principles of Participatory Action Research is summarized, together with a discussion of the research tools in this case the online survey and focus group gathering used to amass the data. A timetable is provided to outline the specific dates and actions of the various phases of the project and this section concludes with a consideration of ethics in ministry-based research.

Field

Invited participants in this research project derived from the sixteen congregations that comprise the geographically determined cluster of congregations known as the Oxford-Brant Association of Baptist Churches. In addition, for purposes of comparing and contrasting responses, there were four participants from four different CBOQ Associations outside of Oxford-Brant. The criteria for inclusion as well as the timeline for planning and the process of execution are all included in this chapter.

Scope

The scope of the research was limited to exploring in what ways active, local church participants view and value inter-church relationships with other congregations. A significant constraining factor in the research was the voluntary nature of my invitation to research participants. With three people from each of

the sixteen congregations within Oxford-Brant having been invited to participate along with four individuals from other Associations within CBOQ, the possible number of survey participants was fifty-two. The actual number of individuals who chose to complete the survey was twenty-three people which represented those four participants from outside Oxford-Brant and just nineteen people from seven local congregations from within. In an effort to avoid any perception that this research was merely a critique of current Baptist polity, the principle of inter-church relationships among congregations and the ways in which these relationships contributed to effective and productive ministry at the local church level was the honest and repeated rationale given to participants as their input was solicited. Many potential respondents for their own reasons (which were not disclosed to me) opted out of participating. This possible weakness in the research pool sampling was perhaps an indication of the lack of desire to work together as Oxford-Brant CBOQ churches which I chose to perceive as simply another clear reason why my research was important and timely.

Apart from three quantitative survey questions regarding the participant's age, the name of their congregation and the length of time they have served within that congregation, the remaining questions were exclusively qualitative. Seven survey questions asked participants to provide experience-based opinion and insight specific to their own local church contexts.

The primary delimiting boundary was the fact that I deliberately chose not to use the language of the current organizational structure of CBOQ ("Associations"); instead, I spoke only of inter-church relationships. I made this decision as an attempt to avoid the research being treated inadvertently as an

assessment or judgment of existing Baptist polity. I focused as much as possible on simply observing and collecting data regarding the manner in which local congregations either share or do not share in ministry. To summarize, I did not want the research to be seen not as an anti-Association project but rather as a pro-associating project intended to elevate the importance of inter-church ministry.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this project is based upon the principles of Participatory Action Research. This means of research was earlier defined in this portfolio by Ernest T. Stringer, but Tim Sensing defines this form of research perhaps even more succinctly. He defines this methodology as being collaboratively utilized with other people with the simple goal being “to solve a specific problem” (2011, 52). As my research objective was to explore whether or not “the historic practice of Baptist churches joining together for mutual support and encouragement is seen by the churches themselves, specifically those located in the Oxford-Brant Association, to be necessary or productive for the ministry of the local church in 2020,” this methodology seemed most productive. The reason for this approach is that it inherently seeks out community input to determine next steps and/or solutions. As I intend to make clear in this chapter, this approach to solution-based action also married itself extraordinarily well with historic Canadian Baptist polity and practice.

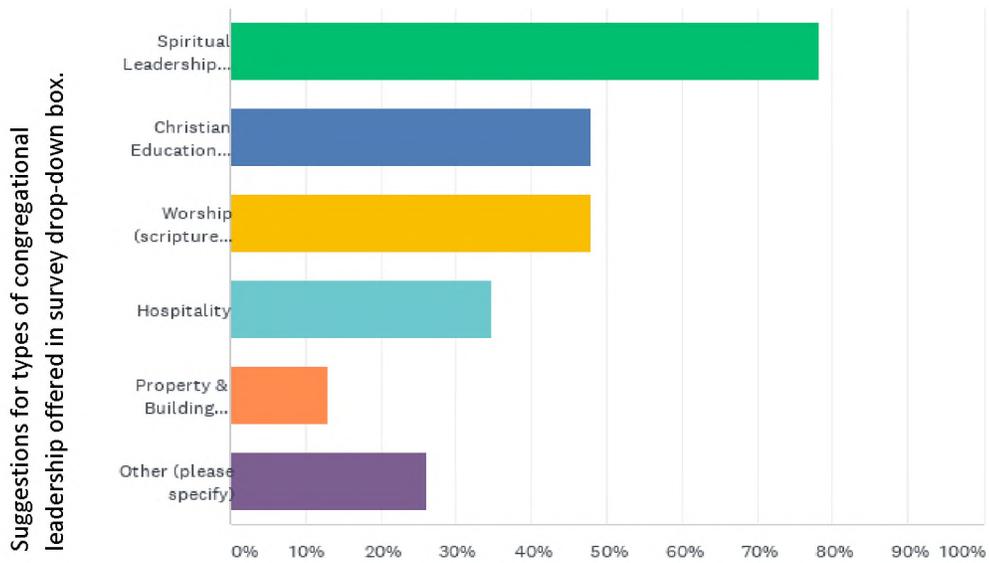
Research commenced in mid-June 2020 with an initial contact with the pastors of the sixteen Oxford-Brant congregations via email and informing them of this research project and soliciting their assistance in recruiting lay leader

participation from within their congregations. This provided a broader scope of experience and opinion from within the church community as, in accordance with the principles of Participatory Action Research, I sought their help in finding plausible solutions to the problem the research was examining. If each congregation's pastor and two lay leaders participated in the research along with the addition of four invitees mentioned previously, that would provide fifty-two potential data sources. Beyond the pastor themselves, the criteria for inclusion of two additional lay people was:

1. They are actively involved in the ministry of the local church. For the variety of church leadership roles represented by the survey respondents see Figure Four.

2. They had a minimum understanding of the challenges and opportunities that inter-church relationships with other congregations might afford the local church.

3. They are not related to anyone else participating in the research. It is indispensable that volunteers do not share the same convictions on the topic as those selecting them. Since the pastor would not see the survey questions ahead of time, there was no way for them to predetermine their opinions on the issues being raised and then select people who aligned with those opinions.



Percentage of respondents identifying with these methods of congregational serving.

Figure 4 Leadership Roles Self-Identified by Participants

A second informal email communication was sent to the pastors about two weeks later explaining the research again, plus repeating my call for assistance in recruiting participants. The email also advised them that the online SurveyMonkey survey would commence on July 10, 2020. On that date a formal invitation was sent out to the sixteen churches (and four additional participants) with full instructions, a weblink for logging in and completing the online survey, and the reminder that it needed to be completed by noon on July 31, 2020. On July 17, 2020 a second formal email went out to the sixteen churches thanking those who had already participated and reminding those who had not that there was still time before the intake of data concluded on July 31, 2020.

Once my SurveyMonkey was closed, the data was collected and downloaded to my personal computer for analysis. The first step in that analysis was to assign reference numbers to each of the twenty-three survey participants.

That information was then entered into a Table that also recorded the limited information I had collected on each participant such as their age bracket and home congregation. From there I began the process of studying and noting what patterns and themes might have appeared. This included noticing what churches were represented and age demographics were represented as well as any tabulations or mathematical calculations that were quantitatively deemed helpful in the analysis stage.

With the principal means of data collection being the ten-question online survey, I also utilized feedback from a focus group comprised of CBOQ Association pastors and using the principles of Appreciative Inquiry style. The survey (Appendix One) consisted of three quantitative and seven qualitative questions focused on shared ministry from the vantage point of local church leaders. Each of the qualitative questions featured a dropdown box with potential answers the respondents could give to each question, but it always included a fillable text box for any content or responses not reflected in the dropdown box suggestions.

Once the assignment of reference numbers was complete, the next phase was to begin the process of coding the data. Ultimately, I created forty-one different codes that were connected to specific words or concepts found in respondents' answers as well as codes for concepts and words which I expected to see reflected in those same survey answers but were not. Examples of codes developed from survey answers included words and phrases such as "spiritual encouragement," "ministry execution," and "hope." Codes developed but not largely reflected in survey answers included "prayer," "God," and "Jesus."

Those forty-one different codes were then imported into another separate Table for the purposes of calculating the frequency with which those codes appeared in the survey data. This then led to the process of studying the coded data to gain different perspectives and potential meanings followed by grouping them together in a variety of ways to see what patterns and themes would emerge.

As I worked with them, those forty-one codes began to fall naturally into nine broad groupings of commonality or affinity. These categories included themes such as “Practical tools,” “Baptist Polity,” and “working together.” With those nine different classifications now assembled, and through the processes suggested by Saldana (2016, 131–140) I began to see how the respective codes could be further understood. This deeper understanding and interpretation evolved after grouping the categories and their respective codes into four overarching lenses through which to examine them closer. Those lenses utilized to view the resulting research data were: 1) core-values, 2) lessons from the “Feeding of the 5,000” (as seen in Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15), 3) the Great Commission and 4) Baptist origins and polity. It was enlightening to see specific questions within the survey, in an unplanned way, inform each lens specifically.

Core Values Lens

The core values lens was a means with which to see and understand what it was that each representative church valued most highly and ultimately whether or not inter-church relating among congregations was a positive contributor to those self-defined core values. It was specifically question four: “To what do you credit your church’s ongoing ministry success?” and question nine: “Are you

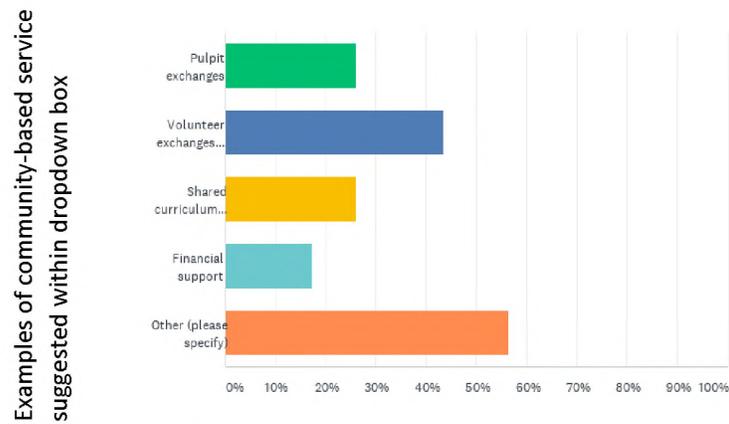
satisfied with the current level of inter-church relationship your church has with nearby Baptist (or other) congregations?” that spoke most directly to this theme. Eventual data codes such as “hope,” “faith,” “tradition,” “leadership,” and “family” conveyed respondents’ conviction on these, as well as other personal and congregational, core values.

Feeding of the Five Thousand Lens

As previously declared in this chapter, the “Feeding of Five Thousand” lens turned out to be a much less useful model to apply to the data. For the purpose of my research I wanted to see if the CBOQ’s long-time tradition of forming congregational clusters makes ministry in 2020 more effective and streamlined in the way I originally observed it in these and other scriptures. In the case of this lens, analysis of survey question six “Including CBOQ churches, in what way(s) does your church associate with or share ministry with other local churches?” and question seven “With which of the following does your church engage in ministry?” were employed as a means to reveal participant convictions. Figure Five depicts the majority of responses to question six, which looked at resources shared between church congregations. The open text box for respondents to include other means of inter-church relations returned responses such as “Association involvement,” “CBOQ pastor’s ministerial,” and reference

to special shared services such as on Good Friday and Easter gatherings. Survey answers submitted in the “Other” category by the respondents went beyond those

Q6 Including CBOQ churches, in what way(s) does your church associate with or share ministry with other local churches? (please choose all that apply)



Percentage of respondents who selected each example provided.

Figure 5 Primary Means of Shared Inter-church Ministry within Survey Participant’s Congregation

ministries historically and traditionally supported by Canadian Baptists to include church and para-church organizations such as Youth for Christ, The Salvation Army, Compassion Canada and Galcom Canada.

Survey question seven was a more mission-based question meant to look at ministry partnerships and relationships beyond the congregational context. As Figure Six depicts, the most common shared mission among respondents was CBM or “Canadian Baptist Ministries.” This stands to reason as it is the long-

standing missional body overseen by Conventions of churches including CBOQ

Among the open text “Other” box responses were several insightful contributions.

Q7 With which of the following does your church engage in ministry? (please choose all that apply)

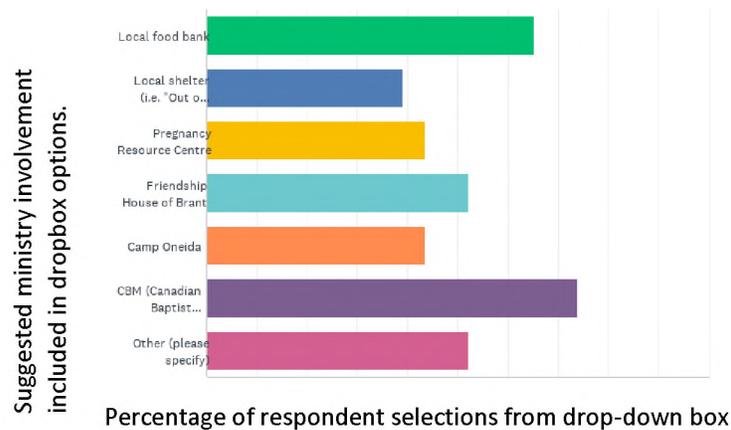


Figure 6 Indicated Means of Shared Ministry Outside of The Local Church Setting

The most astute in my observation was the recognized need for “training for ministry online, especially during COVID-19, but moving forward beyond the pandemic as well.” While these responses were informative, this lens I concluded did not provide the ministry clarity and direct alignment with Baptist life and thought that I hoped that it would.

Great Commission Lens

The third lens through which I studied the data was one that I termed the Great Commission lens. In Matthew 28 the Lord Jesus sends his followers out into the world with a specific set of tasks and divine expectations. This lens sought to observe the means in which the respondent churches were in fact obeying the command and how that obedience to the Great Commission was

augmented (or not) through inter-church associating. I determined the survey questions that most informed analysis through this lens were questions five and seven. Question seven inquired about ministry activity taking place outside the local congregation (see Figure Six) while question five asked “What practical tools might your church be lacking that would better your success in achieving its mission?” As Figure Seven displays, the declared need for “more volunteers” along with “volunteer training” and “evangelism training” were the most selected choices. This is not all that surprising given the documented decades-long decline in church membership and attendance. CBOQ churches have not escaped this diminishing trend.

Baptist Origins and Polity Lens

Q5 What practical tools might your church be lacking that would better your success in achieving its mission? (please choose all that apply)

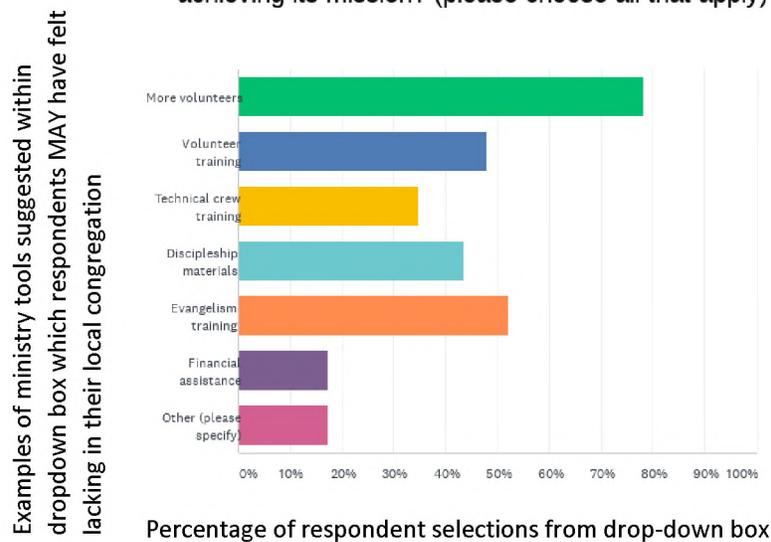


Figure 7 Tools Identified By Participants as Lacking in Their Congregations and as Such Seen as Negatively Impacting Ministry

Finally, there was the Baptist origins and Baptist polity lens. This lens took into consideration the original necessities and purposes for Baptist

Associations with an eye toward determining whether or not the churches being studied were still requiring these purposes. Secondly this lens explored how important “doing church well” was to the local churches represented in the research and the way in which inter-church relating was, or was not, contributing to their respective definitions of ministry success. I felt that the already utilized question seven: “With which of the following does your church engage in ministry?” was again helpful in this lens as was survey question eight: “Is there anything else you would like to share about the value of the interactions your church has with other congregations/agencies in your region?” Question eight also differed from the previous questions in that it was a totally open-text answer that included no suggestions or promptings. I felt that providing this unguided opportunity for survey participants to comment openly about their personal convictions, thoughts and ideals would offer insight not otherwise gleaned by the prior survey questions. The “Findings” segment of this chapter includes evidence that this was in fact the case. Due to the restrictions imposed by the social realities of COVID-19, the focus group element of my research was undertaken virtually via the Zoom platform. This focus group examined key results and trends from the data once preliminary interpretation had been completed. Specifically, I was seeking pastoral reactions to those findings (Appendix Three) as well as soliciting ideas and next step concepts from them as a means of positively responding to the data findings with participant-determined action steps in keeping with the principles of Participatory Action Research.

Ethics in Ministry Based Research

In my original application to the Tyndale Research Ethics Board (REB), which was approved on March 19, 2019, the single ethical consideration that I declared at that time was the position of power I held over one of the proposed survey participants. Specifically, this person was an associate pastor in the congregation where I served at the time as lead pastor. In my original application, I expressed the way that I intended this potential ethical conflict to be managed responsibly and appropriately for the sake of the research participant himself. As it turned out my pastoral tenure concluded in the interval between my original proposal and the commencement of my research, which meant I no longer had a position of authority over anyone taking part in the research. As a consequence, that previously declared ethical consideration was now no longer a consideration whatsoever and therefore required no special considerations or management.

My original application to the Tyndale REB also included a series of ten survey questions as well as the proposed line of questioning I intended to bring to the focus group portion of my research. Subsequent to that approval and with the help and guidance of Dr. Mark Chapman, the planned survey questions were refined and wording better crafted. These revisions to the phrasing of the ten survey questions were then made part of the actual research phase of this project. Although the field, scope and methodology had not changed from that which was previously approved, Dr. Narry Santos wisely suggested in August 2020 (in his role as Dr. Chapman's sabbatical replacement), that I should communicate these minor deviations to the REB for the sake of transparency (which I did on August 5, 2020). The Tyndale REB replied on September 1, 2020 stating that a new

research ethics application was not necessary. The REB asked only that I submit the new wording for the research survey questions so they might have them on file (which I did the same day).

Findings, Interpretation and Outcome

In this section I outline the results of my research, explain my understanding of what these findings mean, and consider their implications for existing and future inter-church ministry between churches in the Oxford-Brant Association belonging to Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec.

Findings

Quantitative examination of survey participation indicated that there was representation from seven of the sixteen Oxford-Brant Association churches as well as the four additional participants from outside the Association. In total that meant twenty-three pastors and lay-people completed the research survey and provided the data to be subsequently analyzed. The heading shown on Table One indicates the assignment of a respondent identification number and indications of his/her congregational affiliation, the length of time he/she has been affiliated with that congregation and his/her age demographic. The four shaded entries seen in the Table indicate those participants from outside the Oxford-Brant Association. The reader should take note that this is the only personal information collected from participants during this research. No names or any other information that might reveal or disclose participant identification was solicited in any way. The footer in Table One records the totals and/or numeric averages of all participant data recorded.

Table 1 Quantitative Data Related to Survey Participants

Respondent Number	Church Affiliation	Years in Current Church	Age – 19-29	Age – 30-45	Age - 46-59	Age - 60-75+
1	Drumbo Baptist	40				X
2	Springford Baptist	74				X
3	Drumbo Baptist	15				X
4	Queensway Baptist	32				X
5	Drumbo Baptist	6.5				X
6	Springford Baptist	6				X
7	Queensway Baptist	8		X		
8	Springford Baptist	13			X	
9	Thornhill Baptist	1			X	
10	FBC Woodstock	52				X
11	Jerseyville Baptist	23				X
12	Burgessville Baptist	36				X
13	FBC Tillsonburg	15				X
14	Burgessville Baptist	60				X
15	Burgessville Baptist	2		X		
16	FBC Tillsonburg	15				X
17	FBC Tillsonburg	13		X		
18	Jerseyville Baptist	9		X		
19	Westview Baptist	5			X	
20	FBC Woodstock	16				X
21	FBC Woodstock	1		X		
22	Priory Park	16		X		
23	First Yarmouth	30				X
Respondents = 23	Number of Congregations = 11	Average = 20.24 yrs.	Reprents = 0%	Represents = 26.10%	Represents = 13.04%	Represents = 60.87%
<i>Respondent Number</i>	<i>Church Affiliation</i>	<i>Years in Current Church</i>	<i>Age – 19-29</i>	<i>Age – 30-45</i>	<i>Age - 46-59</i>	<i>Age - 60-75+</i>

Question eight resulted in numerous enlightening responses regarding inter-church relations. For example:

- “We are a congregation of app. 25 over 70 yrs. old, difficult to really carry on with programs.”
- “We are a community minded church. We open our church up to current issues in life. We don’t back down from these issues.”
- “Our congregation is older and ‘tired’. They are pleased to be part of the CBOQ but do not have much energy for involvement beyond the congregation.”
- “...send(ing) Sunday messages from our pastor to friends and families.”
- “There is value in thinking beyond ourselves and there is strength in what we can accomplish together. There is also blessing and inspiration in sharing mission opportunities.”
- “We also participate in the Christmas place and other branches of outreach along with the other churches in the city. We take our turn at hosting the World Day of Prayer services.”
- “If we host a fundraiser local churches are very supportive as we are with them.”
- “Building relationships in the community and surrounding area is a vital aspect of evangelism and ministry.”
- “Pooling our resources has been beneficial to all involved. Enabled the churches to provide a united front in our community. Working

together even though we have differences sets a standard that hopefully others will follow.”

- “We do not really have an extensive relationship with other congregations.”
- “Other people’s points of view. Sharing our faith in Jesus as the only way to heaven.”
- “We partner with two other local congregations for Good Friday. One is from our Association, the other is from a different denomination.”
- “Association involvement has been helpful. Training events hosted by the Association and the Association's work supporting pastor and helping them build relationships has been helpful. The local ministerial has been a wonderful support and resource as well. The CBOQ has provided many helpful resources and information for our church ministries.”

Interpretation

For my process of interpreting the resulting survey data, I again looked to pare-down the themes and patterns that emerged through the previously explained four lenses. I settled upon a simplistic means of examining the data results deeper which I came to call “UP,” “IN,” and “OUT.” Each of these processes will be expanded upon in the paragraphs that follow but in summary can be understood as follows:

The process of looking “UP” with the resulting data was a matter of observing in what ways the actions, reactions and convictions of the respondents related to or referenced the Holy Trinity when reflecting upon ministry in their

local congregation. The lens that I erroneously felt would be helpful here was the “Feeding of the Five Thousand” lens previously referenced. This lens despite my earlier convictions did not lend itself effectively to an observation of inter-church relations since there is no indication that the manner with which Jesus fed the people was intended to foster ongoing, long-term partnerships among the people.

Looking “IN” involved observation of the ways in which the actions, reactions and convictions of the survey respondents related to or referenced looking inwardly at the purpose, identity and declared priorities of the local church itself. This was largely seen through the Baptist history/Baptist polity lens as well as the core value lens mentioned earlier.

Finally, the process of looking “OUT” sought to observe in what ways the responses of the survey participants reflected an active and intentional element of looking at the world outside the church for the purposes of engaging that world with the Gospel of Jesus. I used the Great Commission lens to aid in seeing how the various respondent answers were rooted in some way to the Matthew 28 directive from Jesus.

UP

I purposely did not include the Trinity itself, nor any individual member of the Trinity by name, nor even the main biblical means of interaction with the Trinity within the dropdown options in any of the survey questions. I felt that when a question probed reasons for a participant’s ministry success, God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit were leading answers of the sort one might expect in the proverbial Sunday school class where the cliché suggests that the answer to every question is Jesus. I did however leave an open text “Other” box for those

respondents who felt led to point to the Trinity, or any of its members as key to perceived ministry success at local church level—the data showed that few did.

Table 2 References in the Data to Corporate Dependence on the Trinity for Ministry Success

Word or Concept	Code Number Assigned	Frequency of Appearance in Data
God	35	2
Prayer	36	1
Worship	41	1
Jesus	39	2
Spirit (Holy)	40	0

The data results reflected in Table Two record the number of times each Trinity-related answer was referenced in respondent replies. It is important to note that in all cases code numbers were assigned to the various words and phrases as they appeared. There was no established list of codes before beginning the data interpretation phase. This should explain why certain codes that seem to have a natural affinity with one another are not numerically grouped together (Appendix Two). In the above table, each row includes the term in question, the coding number attached to it during the analysis phase, and the number of times that term was referenced (or alluded to) in respondent replies. As the most right-hand column suggests, there was little, or no reference to the Trinity, any member of the Trinity, or the biblical means of engaging with the Trinity such as prayer and worship.

The apparent lack of automatic acknowledgement of the roles of Father, Son and Holy Spirit would seem to suggest that discussing, referencing or commenting on one's personal relationship with God or his active role in the life of the local church are not instinctive to the survey participants simply because they actively attend and serve in a local church. This possibility does not however conclusively prove or even suggest a total non-appearance of personal faith within participants, only that in the absence of deliberate prompting, acknowledgement of the role of the Trinity in church life is not reflexive for those who were surveyed for this research. This observation was raised as a point of discussion in the subsequent Appreciative Inquiry-based session and will be referenced among the conclusions of this portfolio.

IN

The category I have entitled "IN" is itself comprised of numerous sub-categories emanating from the codes applied to the answers given by survey respondents. These sub-categories include coding related to values and emotions attached to life in the local church, leadership in the local church, specific elements of Baptist polity and practice, the concept of local churches working together, practical tools seen as necessary in the local church and finally ministry execution itself.

Any term matching an established code that appeared fifteen or more times in the aggregated survey results has been shown in a bold-faced font in the following three Tables. In doing this, several notable patterns appeared via the data analysis.

Table 3 Values and Emotions in The Local Church Related to Matters of Baptist Polity and Practice

Word or Concept	Code Number Assigned	Frequency of Appearance in Data
Inferiority/Hopelessness	3	3
Hope	37	2
Faith	13	2
Family (figurative)	34	5
Tradition	27	7
Leadership	11	0
Pastoral leadership	23	27
Lay leadership	32	2
Church tradition (denominationalism)	15	23
Convention (CBOQ)	29	21
Association	33	23
Faith in Action	9	16
Ministry execution	19	34
Church building	22	6
Printed materials	25	7
Tangible/Visible resources	21	0
Finances	10	24
Family (blood)	12	2
Church people (inward)	14	5
Independence	1	2
Attraction	6	0
Human resources	5	30
Multiculturalism	7	1
Fellowship	30	4
Support	31	8
"Sharing"	28	34
Spiritual encouragement	4	6

"Host"	38	1
Ecumenicalism	8	23
Word or Concept	Code Number	Frequency in Data

To reiterate what I have previously stated, I purposely did not use the terms “Association” or “Convention” as prompts for any potential answers in the dropboxes but did make room for such answers via the open text “Other” box. This again was my attempt to focus on inter-church relationships themselves as opposed to an assessment of the effectiveness of the existing Association structure. With that said, and as the table records, without explicit use of those organizational terms, there were still many references and allusions to church tradition as well as prevailing common elements of Baptist denominational and Associational life.

There were also significant references to the execution of ministry. The codes for “faith in action” and “ministry execution” were commonly referenced in the respondent’s answers. Much of the ministry execution concepts connected to various forms of “human resource” needs in the local church (i.e., volunteers and volunteer training). More pointedly, the data reflected that more volunteers as well as increased finances were identified most often as being necessary for ministry success. The trends (included in the above Table) suggest that participants clearly understand the hands-on part of ministry even if their local church does have sufficient volunteers. As reflected previously in the “UP” category, as the church looks inward, discussing, referencing or commenting on one’s personal relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit was not an automatic

thing for the typical local church adherent taking part in this research. In addition, the data did not prove conclusively that ministry programs being considered or done are God-led or Spirit-filled callings unique to a specific ministry context. The data only confirmed that there was an acknowledgement by participants that congregational life is one of volunteer action.

The concept of “sharing” ministry among local congregations was of interest to most respondents. The code “sharing” was in fact an *en vivo* code meaning the word itself as well as variations on it (share, shared) were specifically utilized by respondents and tabulated accordingly. It’s clear this was not meant to apply exclusively to shared ministry among Baptist churches as working together cross-denominationally, or ecumenically was specifically testified to as being important in the respondent’s local church experience. This position was highlighted even by those survey participants who also admitted that they are not presently doing, working or sharing in ministry with other CBOQ churches, or any other churches.

Similar to what was seen in the “UP” category, as with previously mentioned matters of the personal practice of faith, congregational lay leadership as an outworking of one’s own faith or spiritual gifting was not front of mind for survey respondents. The roles and responsibilities of pastoral leaders in achieving ministry success (as the respondents themselves might define it) was however frequently highlighted.

Structurally speaking, the participants’ answers reflect an awareness of the existing denominational framework to which their church belongs even though their local churches are not choosing to lean into that structure of inter-church

relationships. It is also unclear from the data whether or not the present organizational configuration for inter-church relating among CBOQ Baptist congregations is affording relevant and useful opportunities in such a way that local congregations feel compelled to act on this conviction. All of this is underlined by evidence in the data suggesting that inter-church relationships are seen as important to the majority of respondents both denominationally and ecumenically. There is at minimum in this data tacit acknowledgement that Christians working together as parts of the body is how (biblically-speaking), it is supposed to be.

When participants talked about leadership, they were almost exclusively thinking of pastoral leadership and did not elevate lay leadership to the same importance or automatic regard. This is not to suggest that participants are patently unwilling to shoulder their share of leadership in the local church only that they are more concerned with attracting and then assigning ministry responsibilities to others than with developing and empowering congregational leaders from within the body themselves.

OUT

As with the previous two categories, any term matching an established code that appeared fifteen or more times in the aggregated survey results has been shown in a bold-faced font in the Tables included here. In doing this, several notable patterns appeared via the data analysis.

Table 4 Indications of Outward-Facing Ministry Within Survey Responses

Word or Concept	Code Number Assigned	Frequency of Appearance in Data
Surrounding community (outward)	20	49
Incarnation	26	14
Outreach	16	6
"Local"	24	33
Discipleship	17	11
Evangelism	18	15
Mission	2	51

It was encouraging to see through the analysis process, the declared interest and spiritual concern for the world outside of the local congregation. Codes that measured such concerns as the “surrounding community” and those that are “local” to the congregation itself were seen especially frequently. At the same time there was even more reference to “mission” and “evangelism” although the working definitions being applied by the survey respondents for each of these concepts was unclear. In terms of the frequency of its use, the key means of referencing “mission” for the survey participants was through acknowledging involvement with and support of Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM) the main missions arm for CBOQ member churches.

The frequency of mentioning the local community and evangelistic responsibilities of the local congregation suggest a significant sense of compassion and concern for the neighbours. The data does not conclusively prove however that there exists a universal understanding of what the local church is, or

it's mission, or how believers can determine the best means of blessing their neighbour. Similarly, the information in Table Four should not be used to conclude that discipleship is not valued by participants despite the numeric lack of verbal indications regarding personal faith. Once again as was earlier noted regarding matters such as the Trinity and such biblical values of hope and faith, it suggests only that these doctrinal matters were not in the forefront of the participant's mind.

This "UP," "IN," and "OUT" process led to the formation of three main observable findings connected to my research question:

1. The responses as relayed above as well as the omissions noted, suggest a heightened sense of discouragement at the local church level (i.e., the stated need for volunteers, finances, and pastoral leadership).
2. The designated and professed spiritual leaders within the Oxford-Brant churches belonging to CBOQ do not seem to express through their responses a sense of being equipped both spiritually and practically. Training for ministry was seen as highly valued and good pastoral leadership, more people attending (and even more vitally serving) along with more money are all seen as critical to future ministry success. Key doctrines and convictions of the Christian faith were scarcely offered by participants when asked about critical tools and resources for successful ministry.
3. Respondents reflected a significant familiarity (leaning more toward dispassionate comfort) with the existing, historic organizational structure of the local church, Association and CBOQ itself.

In addition to the series of Appreciative Inquiry-based questions intended for use at a planned focus group meeting of CBOQ pastors (Appendix Three), these three streams of inquiry from the survey data findings were also made part of a focus group discussion with the pastors of Oxford-Brant Association on September 19, 2020. The focus group itself was comprised of just four out of a possible twelve pastors from the Association. This numeric level of participation was itself in keeping with the research results and subsequent conclusions.

Outcome

Using the experience and some of the emotion-based principles of Appreciative Inquiry, the focus group offered several, helpful insights and next-step actions. Due to existing Baptist polity, none of these next steps can be unilaterally imposed on any Association church which is a fact alluded to in the focus group comments and insights themselves. The following comments from focus group participants stood out as they reflected on the three findings from the survey data:

“I think that things would really be improved by knowing each other better ... some of that happens with pastors maybe there’s some awareness there but knowing our churches knowing what’s going on in our churches, being able to pray for each other, I think those things are really vital.” “L” – focus group participant

“I think it’s difficult to ask pastors to be the ones to carry this (i.e. the improvement of inter-church relations) ... I think we’re called to our congregations and so our first thing is to our congregations ... pastors will already create the connections that are meaningful to them (personally).” “R” – focus group participant

“I’ve enjoyed equipping opportunities where pastors and key church leaders can come together ... maybe that can be the genesis for something (improved inter-church relations) because I can see the “why?” in that ... we’re

getting together to be equipped specifically and to encourage each other on a specific issue then you can take it back to your church and apply it to enrich your own local congregation. For me THAT's a meaningful connection.” “S” – focus group participant

“One of the things that we haven't explored is “where is God in this?” and I am wondering “what is it that God would intend to happen and what might that require of us to enter into in order for there to be something really God-pleasing (among churches)?” “L” – focus group participant

As the focus group members mulled over the research findings presented to them and filtered those findings through their own personal and professional experiences as Canadian Baptists, the following actions were agreed upon in principle:

1. Create reasons and opportunities to connect together as churches separate from simply transacting business at an Annual General Meeting or other official setting.
2. Provide and promote more reasons for gathering beyond relational development and encouragement.
3. Provide training/educational elements useful for church ministries more often at Association meetings.
4. Incorporate prayer, worship and scriptural study more often at Association meetings as the means to explore the question “where is God in this?” (i.e., in this conflict, this discouragement, daily church life, these successes).

Unclear from these four conclusions is who or how would these or any other next steps be implemented.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This research portfolio has attempted to examine critically and soundly the present-day relevance of inter-church relationships to the Oxford-Brant Association of (CBOQ) Baptist Churches. In this portfolio, I have scrutinized to what degree the shared history among these churches remains a necessity and a benefit toward effective local ministry to their respective surrounding communities.

The original research question asked: “Is the historic practice of Baptist churches joining together for mutual support and encouragement seen by the churches themselves, specifically those located in the Oxford-Brant Association, to be necessary or productive for the ministry of the local church in 2020?” The data shows that when the question was broadly asked in this research, the resulting answers were, at best, mixed.

While inter-church relationships are seen through the data as productive and necessary for some, they are not regarded as essential for everyone. This reality is evidenced by the near fifty-fifty split in satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the current level of inter-church relationships as well as those respondents reporting no inter-church associating with their church.

While inter-church relationships are seen as productive and necessary, such benefits are left up to clergy alone to embrace (or not embrace) this value for themselves. This is evidenced in part by the non-participation in this research of nine Oxford-Brant Association churches either currently without clergy, or whose clergy are working a limited number of contracted hours.

While inter-church relationships are seen as productive and necessary, there is no perceived practical and applicable take-away directly benefiting the ongoing ministry of the local congregation. This is evidenced by the frequent reference in both the survey responses and the focus group for the need of various means of leadership training.

Even for those who see inter-church relationships as productive and necessary, sadly it appears that our historic structures, traditions and Baptist processes are, ironically, not allowing churches to spend increased time seeking the will of God together. This is evidenced by most survey responses reflecting an understanding of what tools are helpful to church operations but an overwhelming lack of obvious references to the church's biblical mandate.

The survey data reflected that fifty-two per cent of survey participants are dissatisfied with the current level of inter-church relations involving their own local congregations. While absolute reasons for this dissatisfaction cannot be concretely arrived at through the data collected, the results of this research display an apparent philosophical and theological divide in the belief and practices of churches who, due to their voluntary affiliation, are ostensibly historically like-minded. The next steps offered by the focus group seem to support those figures in that they offer principles rooted in the research. These findings lean towards the

necessity of increased inter-church involvement while at the same time respecting Baptist polity which prevents any proposals or solutions from being imposed on the member churches. The question as to whether or not this research has elicited any practical answers to the problem identified as the original research objective remains unanswered.

I have recently moved to a new Canadian province to a church that belongs to a different Association than where this research occurred. Were I to undertake this research again in this new context, there are several matters which, as a result of the creation of this portfolio, I have become aware of that might possibly lead to different results than those found in Oxford-Brant.

The first matter involves my own assumptions on the topic. I assumed that the people of Oxford-Brant would actively pursue better inter-church relations upon seeing the research outcome. I now realize that I innately assumed that simply showing the resulting data to the member churches and their congregations would spark a latent interest in renewed inter-church relations. Further to this I assumed that there existed a marked, if unspoken, desire for a different state of church relations than the fifty-fifty split eventually confirmed through the data exists. These assumptions all were proven wrong by the research and its subsequent outcomes.

Related to my assumed desire for communal change was my conviction that a Transformational Leadership model, when eventually employed by invested church leaders, would result in an excited revolution in thought and practice among the Oxford-Brant member churches. This assumption too was wrong. I

shared my research findings in a public presentation on October 15, 2020 hosted by the Oxford-Brant Association of Baptist Churches itself. There were approximately thirty voting delegates at that meeting who heard a full report on the doctoral-level research that was centred on their own Association. When the presentation concluded, just two people asked questions or requested clarification on any of the content presented. Once again, this lack of palpable engagement with the content seemed to bear out my inherent conclusion all over again while at the same time highlighting my wrong-headed assumptions.

I am also forced to consider whether or not some of the principles of Appreciative Inquiry, when done through a virtual medium like Zoom, were the best tool for the focus group portion of my research. Once again, my assumption was that by utilizing this tool I could access a wide variety of experience, passion and firsthand knowledge from pastors representing the width and breadth of the Association in a manner that was convenient to them. As it turned out, just three people participated in this portion of my research and, as a result, I cannot say with confidence that utilizing some of the principles of Appreciative Inquiry as I did served my research well through the virtual medium I used.

The matter of methodology and the use of technology goes deeper than this and is yet another issue that I now see should be looked upon critically were I to employ this same research question in my new Association. If I were to undertake this research in my new ministry context, I would use less of what became impersonal technology and instead employ an increased portion of face-to-face interviews. My anonymous online survey followed up by a Zoom-based focus group, which was then followed up by a Zoom-based Association Annual

meeting, were in hindsight far less than ideal forums for a clear exchange of thought. Ironically it also meant that this research on building healthier relationships was taking place in a time of government-ordered isolation in response to COVID-19. So, while I cannot control the advent of a global pandemic in the future, and had no ability for including face-to-face interviews in my present research, I would, as much as possible, strive to make the process of data collection far more individual in nature. Such interviews will rely foundationally on my having actively and intentionally developed those personal and professional relationships in advance of undertaking the research.

I am also wondering at this stage if my personal history as a constant voice of critique regarding Associational health might have worked against me in the data collection phase. I have through my ongoing attempts to address the effectiveness and relevance of Associations gained somewhat of a reputation over the years for my position. Historically I have challenged Association Constitutions, Nominating procedures, financial handling and the content and efficacy of Association annual meetings. I cannot say for certain that survey participation was less than expected due to the fact that I was the researcher. I do remain curious however as to what the numeric participation might have been if the research invitations had gone out on behalf of the recognized Association Executive instead of me.

Related to this thought is a question concerning my conscious decision not to tie the research directly to the familiar entity known as Association. Instead I chose to use the term inter-church relations throughout the research, and I wonder if that term might have been too vague or subjective for the participants. It might

very well be that if I had simply used the accepted and proper name of our collection of churches, the participants might have had more clarity and conviction in their responses than was evident with regard to inter-church relating.

Finally, as previously stated, the attempt to see inter-church ministry through the biblical lens of the Feeding of the 5,000 fell flat. The motivation behind the actions I was observing in the text did not, upon reflection, align well and therefore, as I discovered, its inclusion was not directly comparable nor applicable in this research. In this portfolio I identified other scriptural imperatives that were in much better alignment with my research and were I to undertake this project again, I would utilize those passages instead.

While the unsatisfactory answer to my original research question remains discouraging, it does not mean that lessons were not learned. The writing of my spiritual autobiography for example gave me an opportunity to reflect on my Christian development and the importance that mentors, partners and peers have played in my faith journey. My experience has demonstrated the imperative to me of having others alongside for the purposes of encouragement and support in my Christian development. This has led to me seeing great value for an entire local congregation to experience the same blessing both individually and corporately with other like-minded churches.

I was particularly stimulated in the writing of that chapter once I began to realize that the various phases of development in my life fell with accuracy under headings taken directly from the titles of songs found on my favourite record album. This manner of organizing my thoughts and faith progression truly

brought together my secular upbringing and my Christian salvation in my mid-twenties while wrapping the story in a musical blanket that continues to be a source of comfort to me even today.

My philosophy of leadership chapter provided me, for the first time, the ability to put a name and biblical basis to the convictions that I have developed regarding discipleship and pastoral leadership in the church. The recognition through this research to see lives transformed by Jesus was most helpful. It allowed me to understand more clearly the great sense of frustration and grief that I feel when such transformation does not seem to be present or even sought by fellow believers. Knowing that all spiritual growth and discipleship success is dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit, my desire to foster an atmosphere in the church where this can happen unobstructed, is something I must continually lay before God.

Conducting the research project itself was a steep and significant time of growth for me. Never having conducted any form of formal research prior to this DMin requirement meant that I did not know what to expect from the process. This was actually a strength because it forced me to be methodical and thoughtful in the process. It meant confronting my own limitations when it came to academic writing but also accepting that, despite my protestations about further academic study, I am able to succeed at this level of study. In fact, based solely on the grades I earned throughout this degree program, I have exceeded even my most optimistic hopes regarding my academic abilities.

Regarding academics, I believe with this portfolio, I have completed a research document which clearly confirms the presence and reality of ministry in

the Oxford-Brant Association. No longer do the member CBOQ churches in that region have to wonder about the relative relational health of their Association, the data reflects that qualitative mediocre measurement plainly. The research also provides potential next steps should this constituency of CBOQ churches wish to address the current state of relational health among its member churches. I further believe that this research and its findings are not anomalies within the Oxford-Brant Association but other CBOQ Associations could also become informed, educated and perhaps even encouraged regarding whatever state of relational health they are experiencing among their own member congregations.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: RESEARCH PROJECT SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Which age range best describes you? **(4 checkboxes labelled: 19-29, 30-45, 46-59, 60-75+)**
2. Which CBOQ church do you attend? **(OPEN TEXT ANSWER)**
3. How many years have you been part of the Baptist church where you worship? **(OPEN TEXT ANSWER)**
4. What roles or duties have you in the past or do you now perform in your local Baptist church? **(DROPDOWN BOX: Spiritual Leadership [Elders, Deacons], Christian Education [Sunday School, Youth Group, Small Group Leader] Worship [scripture reader, music, technical, usher] Hospitality, Property & Building Maintenance, OTHER [a fillable space] – INSTRUCTION: “Choose all that apply.”)**
5. To what do you credit your church’s ongoing ministry success? **(DROPDOWN BOX: our building, our neighbourhood, our reputation in the community, our pastoral leadership, our Baptist history, faithful donors, OTHER [a fillable space] – INSTRUCTION: “Choose all that apply.”)**
6. What practical tools might your church be lacking that would better your success in achieving its mission? **(DROPDOWN BOX: more volunteers, volunteer training, technical training, discipleship materials, evangelism training, financial assistance, OTHER [a fillable space] – INSTRUCTION: “Choose all that apply.”)**
7. In what way(s) does your church associate with or share ministry with any other local Baptist Churches? **(DROPDOWN BOX: Pulpit exchanges, volunteer exchanges, shared curriculum and printed materials, financial support, OTHER [a fillable space] – INSTRUCTION: “Choose all that apply.”)**
8. With which of the following does your church engage in ministry? **(DROPDOWN BOX: Local food bank, local shelter [i.e. Out of The Cold], Pregnancy resource Centre, Friendship House, Camp Oneida, CBM or another mission agency, OTHER [a fillable space] – INSTRUCTION: “Choose all that apply.”)**
9. Is there anything else you would like to share about the value of the interactions your church has with other congregations/agencies in your region? **(OPEN TEXT ANSWER)**

10. Are you satisfied with the current level of inter-church relationship your church has with local Baptist (or other) congregations? **(YES OR NO ANSWER).**

APPENDIX TWO: DATA CODES ESTABLISHED DURING RESEARCH

Code	Code Number	# of Appearances in data
Inferiority/ Hopelessness	3	3
Hope	37	2
Faith	13	2
Family (figurative)	34	5
Tradition	27	7
Church tradition (denominationalism)	15	23
Convention (CBOQ)29		21
Association	33	23
Discipleship	17	11
Evangelism	18	15
God	35	2
Prayer	36	1
Worship	41	1
Mission	2	51
Jesus	39	2
Spirit (Holy)	40	0
Faith in Action	9	16
Ministry execution	19	34
Surrounding community (outward)	20	49
Incarnation	26	14
Outreach	16	6
"Local"	24	33
Church building	22	6
printed materials	25	7
Tangible/Visible resources	21	0
Finances	10	24
Leadership	11	0
Pastoral leadership	23	27
Lay leadership	32	2
Human resources	5	30
Multi-culturalism	7	1
Fellowship	30	4
Support	31	8
"Sharing"	28	34
Spiritual encouragement	4	6
"Host"	38	1
Ecumenicalism	8	23
Family (blood)	12	2
Church people		

(inward)	14	5
Independence	1	2
Attraction	6	0

APPENDIX THREE: FORMAT FOR FOCUS GROUP (FGD)

9am FGD begins

- I will provide an overview in the next 60 minutes including the importance of today's content to the final report and assure the participants there will not be a survey to complete this morning only open discussion on the material being presented.
- I will ask permission to video or audio record the discussion for transcription purposes only.
- I will make clear the purpose of the research project is NOT to deride the existing Association model but rather to examine the value to our churches of any form of inter-church relationships or "associating."
- I will then present both the research survey questions and their analyzed results.
- I will highlight any themes and trends from above survey results while being cautious not to editorialize or sway the subsequent discussion.
- I will then ask the probe, follow-up and exit questions shown below.
- When all questions have been asked and all FGD answers given, I will conclude the FGD.

11am FGD is dismissed

Focus Group Discussion Questions:

Probe Questions:

- Do you agree with themes and trends that were pointed out from the research this morning? Why or why not?
- How has your church benefitted most recently from associating with other churches?
- How familiar are you with the workings of our current Baptist Associations?
- How often do you attend Association-related events?

Follow-Up Questions:

- What are your favourite and least favorite aspects of associating with other churches?
- What are your favourite and least favourite aspects of Association?
- What influences whether or not you associate with another church congregation?
- What influences whether or not your congregants associate with another church congregation?
- If we were to narrow the reason or purpose for inter-church associating down to one single criteria, which one factor would you choose and why?

Exit Question:

- Is there anything else you'd like to say about inter-church relationships or other church-to church associating involving your congregation?

APPENDIX FOUR: THE FUTURE OF ASSOCIATIONS MISSIONAL TEAM REPORT TO THE BOARD

September 2016

Introduction

In November of 2014 the CBOQ Board voted to create a Future of Associations Missional Team (FAMT) with a mandate to provide the board with a full range of options concerning the future of Associations, from existing without them to revitalizing them. The Board of Directors identified Associations as one of five ministry partners that it would review as part of the CBOQ's 2015-2017 Strategic Plan. The goal is to strengthen relationships between CBOQ and its Associations in a manner that enables/empowers CBOQ and Associations to fulfill their respective mission and vision. Currently, the CBOQ relates with 16 Associations of varying degrees of commitment and associating among churches.

Using the report provided by the Associations Review Advisory Team, and the purpose of Associations drawn from our CBOQ By-law, which reads that Associations are to be “**the primary means of strengthening fellowship and mission among Local Churches**”, the FAMT set out to provide those options and fulfill the board's mandate. After four meetings, team members Deane Proctor, Frank Fedyk, Melody Currier and Tim McCoy have drafted a glossary of terms, three options for the future of associations to be considered by the board, and suggested questions about next steps.

Glossary

What follows is a glossary of many of the terms used in the accompanying report. This glossary of terms as well as the definitions have been prepared by the “Future of Associations Missional Team” at the request of the CBOQ Board. The definitions provided for each individual term are not intended to provide legally binding definitions nor do we expect these definitions will satisfy every theological position or the personal conviction of every reader. These definitions are intended to aid the reader's understanding of how the missional team utilizes each term throughout the report.

Association (noun)—the entity or level of governance originally established via voluntary regional collections of like-minded Baptist Churches as they sought to pool resources and efforts toward a collective Kingdom mission.

Associating (verb)—the action whereby our churches naturally, organically and voluntarily choose to come together as partners/friends/allies for the purposes of undertaking specific fellowship, ministry and mission together.

Fellowship (noun)—a voluntary community of like-minded people or churches who gather together to commune socially, spiritually and around a common interest or purpose.

Fellowship (verb)—the action whereby a voluntary community of like-minded people/churches gather together to commune socially, spiritually and around a common interest or purpose.

Mission—the active, tangible ministry actions and activities springing from an individual and/or corporate scriptural understanding of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the subsequent, inherent obedient expectations of Christ's church.

Relationship—a clearly-defined connection, association, or involvement between like-minded people/churches who gather together to commune socially, spiritually and around a common interest or purpose.

Participate/Participating—the voluntary fellowship or mission activity that springs from a clearly-defined connection, association, or involvement between like-minded people/churches who have agreed to commune socially, spiritually and around a common interest or purpose.

Member—an individual or church who has agreed or covenanted into a clearly-defined connection, association, or involvement with other like-minded people or churches. Participation in such a covenant is meant to provide clear expectations and obligations emanating from a voluntary decision to commune socially, spiritually and around a common interest or purpose.

Membership—the status of a member (individual or church) who has agreed or covenanted into a clearly-defined connection, association, or involvement with other like-minded people or churches. Participation in such a covenant is meant to provide clear expectations and obligations emanating from a voluntary decision to commune socially, spiritually and around a common interest or purpose.

Ordination—the act or ceremony within a local congregation whereby an individual is officially affirmed and “set apart” for Christian ministry during which the title of “Reverend” is bestowed.

New Church—any new or existing congregation or fellowship that has agreed or covenanted into a new, clearly-defined connection, association, or involvement with other like-minded churches. Participation in such a covenant is meant to provide clear expectations and obligations emanating from a voluntary decision to commune socially, spiritually and around a common interest or purpose.

CBOQ—The duly elected, governing body known legally as “Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec. “This body is enabled and empowered by voluntary regional collections of like-minded Baptist Churches known as Associations which are voluntarily comprised of like-minded churches seeking to pool resources and efforts toward a collective Kingdom mission.

Convention—The model of governance employed by voluntary regional collections of like-minded Baptist Churches known as Associations which are voluntarily comprised of like-minded churches seeking to pool resources and efforts toward a collective Kingdom mission. This model is built upon the autonomous nature of the local, member church and can be commonly referred to as a “grassroots” style of governance as opposed to the hierarchical, “top-down” nature of a presbyterial governance model.

Option 1: Dissolve Association structure as it relates to CBOQ

Option 1 removes the requirements Associations currently have without our operating structure. It allows churches within Associations to continue to voluntarily associate without it being a requirement. Many procedural tasks Associations currently perform on behalf of/with CBOQ would be handled by

CBOQ staff. Key procedural tasks to be addressed include ordination, accreditation and new churches.

Pros	Cons
Finances allocated as “dues” can be redirected into other ministries.	Intentional gatherings for fellowshiping are no longer part of an intentional annual calendar.
Natural missional affinities among Churches can flourish and/or continue outside of any perceived “structure”	Creates ownership questions for camps (Oneida etc.)
Natural social/fellowship affinities among churches can flourish and/or continue outside of any perceived “structure”	Raises polity questions about how we continue to value an historic “bottom-up” ecclesiology while promoting an increasingly centralized process
Ministerials could take on additional significance as THE place for church leaders to come for mutual support and encouragement instead of being the “add-on” to Association life that they are now.	Possible loss of Baptist identity in regions
Creates more dependence on CBOQ for support, assistance, inspiration, education, missional opportunities, resources	Creates more dependence on CBOQ for support, assistance, inspiration, education, missional opportunities, resources
Local community among ecumenical/affinity groups/networks will emerge	Just because the current Association model is no longer relevant nor capable of serving the needs and expectations of member churches and leaders doesn’t mean a form for “associating” amongst CBOQ churches shouldn’t be supported and nurtured by CBOQ
Frees up resources (human and financial) to direct to ministry rather than Association operational expenses.	Don’t throw out the “baby” with the bath water. If the goal is to strengthen the partnership/relationship between CBOQ and its Associations dissolution of Associations will loosen the bond between CBOQ churches and between CBOQ HQ and local churches. Is it possible to identify/discern the way forward and a new governance model to enable churches in a region/geographic area to

	“associate” to advance the Kingdom message and to encourage fellowship and ministry partnerships?
Associations no longer the “first contact” for “help” when a CBOQ member church seeking assistance (calling a pastor; conflict resolution, etc.)	Some traditional Baptist churches may claim CBOQ is abandoning its Baptist roots and history.
Not all Associations have full-time nor dedicated resources to coordinate and lead Association ministries and responsibilities.	Some may claim dissolving Associations doesn’t fix the problem of how to encourage and foster local

Option 2: Remain at status quo

Option 2 keeps us functioning as we currently do with regard to CBOQ and Associations

Pros	Cons
Some Associations are attempting to re-new or re-envision their purpose	More about the past than the future
Joint missional ventures (camps or youth networks)	2014 survey suggests many pastor do not recognize the Association as playing a significant role in strengthening fellowship and mission in their church
Deep history of Associations	Resources and relationships Associations have provided in the past are now available through other avenues
Fellowship	16 different ways that churches become members of an Association, and, ultimately, CBOQ
Pastoral support	Lack of finances to support Associations
Ordination / credentials system	Newer churches don’t feel/understand the relevance of the Associations
Lack of clarity between differences of CBOQ and Associations	
Widening theological positions impacting desire to work together	

Option 3: A new model

As in Option 1, this option dissolves the Association structure as it relates to CBOQ, but it also includes CBOQ encouraging and supporting its churches to

“associate” in order to identify defined and executed ministries together. Such associating would be voluntary.

Pros	Cons
Maintains part of our deep history of Associations	Some Associations will not survive
Frees up Associations from CBOQ imposed expectations and responsibilities (sponsorship of new churches for membership; accreditation)	With no reason to “associate” CBOQ churches and leaders may question why is there a CBOQ?
Individual CBOQ churches can “associate” to define and execute locally discerned ministry and partnerships – such as youth/family camping ministries; Vacation Bible School/Summer camp ministries; men/women/family workshops, training and fellowship; local and international missions, etc.	Could lead to rethink of what it means to be a CBOQ church? What does it mean to be a Baptist church?
Reduce financial and human burden on Associations structures to “associate”	May not be sufficient ministries identified to foster CBOQ local churches to associate
Creates more dependency of CBOQ churches on CBOQ for support.	
Clusters would not necessarily be “assigned” geographically (but could be for maximum efficiency)	
Clusters (churches with existing or newly recognized affinities) can undertake mission and fellowship as they feel led by God to do (NOT as sanctioned or endorsed by “The Association”)	

Conclusion and Questions for the Board

Significant cultural, demographic and economic change has occurred since “Associations” were first envisioned and created over 125 years ago. In turn, the roles and responsibilities of Associations to resource/support Association churches has evolved and changed to respond to the discerned missions of member churches and desire for mutual fellowship and ministry. Moreover, the relationship between Associations and CBOQ HQ has evolved to reflect new realities, diversity, culture and needs. Until 2003 CBOQ staffed and funded area Ministers who worked side-by-side with Association leaders/churches to fulfill administrative and ministry duties (such as sponsorship of new churches,

accreditation, regional workshops, etc.). Area ministers were abolished as a cost-saving measure and Associations were left to choose how to resource and structure governance models in 17 geographic defined Association regions.

At the same time, federal regulatory requirements have increased such that all charities are under increased scrutiny and strict reporting requirements. Most CBOQ churches have been incorporated as non-for-profit organizations and are required to compile with government-imposed governance requirements (elected officers, annual meeting of members, annual reports, audit of financials, etc.). Registration and compliance with Revenue Canada Agency CRA) is also required to receipt donations and expend funds for charitable purposes.

Over the last two plus decades “birthing” of new CBOQ churches has been primarily supported by a “parenting” CBOQ church rather than as a plant by an Association or the CBOQ office. Given that the growth in Canada’s population is projected to continue to rely on new Canadians - who choose to settle primarily in cities/urban centres - it is most likely “new” CBOQ churches will continue to be concentrated in urban areas of Southern Ontario and along the Quebec City - Windsor corridor.

To assist the Board as it prays and discerns the way forward the following comments are offered:

1. Status Quo (Option 2) is not sustainable over the long-term. One of 17 Associations has disbanded (2015) and many CBOQ churches (facing their own human and financial challenges) question why Associations exist and see them as resource takers rather than resource providers. Similarly, federal and/or provincial regulations have placed demands on Associations to have governance structures that create additional demands for limited resources. The CRA also requires all charitable organization to register and report to maintain their charitable status. The lack of purpose/mission/volunteers will continue to be challenges for Associations and their churches.

2. Option 1 -Dissolving Associations is the simplest to implement from an operational perspective but will likely be the most politically demanding as it would force a “rethink”, discernment and explanation of what CBOQ is and how it fulfills the Great Commission to make disciples and “birth” churches in communities across Ontario and Quebec. If Associations are no longer a resource and instrument to fulfill the mission/vision of the CBOQ, is there a reason for a CBOQ?

3. Option 3 -is a “modified” Option 1 -as CBOQ headquarters would “assist” (nature of support and resources to be defined) those Associations and churches who discern they wish to “associate.” Few Associations have clarity of mission/purpose/ministry that captures the hearts and souls of its member churches. Would Associations thrive or survive in this model?

Questions for the Board

1. Is there a need for an organizational structure (e.g. “Associations”) to support CBOQ churches to “associate” and accomplish the Great Commission?

2. Is there a need for a church to be an “Association church” to be a member of the CBOQ?
3. Should CBOQ continue to maintain the existing Association structure or develop a new Association model?
4. Is now the time to engage in a dialogue with CBOQ churches on the nature and role of Associations?
5. Are the three options representative of the range of appropriate organizational structures for CBOQ churches to “associate” and accomplish their mission?
6. Are there other options that the Missional Team/Board should explore/develop?
7. Should any new Association structure reflect the demographic shift that the vast majority of Canadian now live in urban/city centres? That is, create a unique structure that encourages urban churches to associate while establishing a different organizational model to support rural churches across the two provinces to associate?
8. What does the Board envision as next steps?
9. When and how should the Missional/Board engage Associations?

APPENDIX FIVE: REPORT TO THE BOARD FUTURE OF ASSOCIATIONS DECEMBER 2018

A mandate was given to the Future of Associations Missional team in 2014 which stated, “provide the board with a full range of options concerning the future of Associations”. In 2016 the Missional team provided 3 options which included:

Option 1 – dissolve the Association structure

Option 2 – remain status quo

Option 3 – “dissolving the Association structure... CBOQ encouraging and supporting its churches to associate... would be voluntary.” Elsewhere Option 3 is described as “a modified Option 1”.

In 2016, the board voted to adopt Option 3 and send the document back to the missional team taking into consideration what the staff and CBOQ support in the new hybrid model. No further action was taken by the missional team at that time.

During a conference call on December 6 between Wayne, Bob, Dallas, Melody and Ev, it became very apparent that dissolving Associations is very problematic. One of the things not previously highlighted was the legal costs and implications of dissolving Associations. Also, the board cannot unilaterally dissolve associations as “Associations are established by local churches in consultation with the CBOQ board and other Associations” – CBOQ by-laws. Staff have requested a clarification of the mandate from the board.

It is recommended that the board consider tasking either CBOQ staff or a new missional team with the following mandate:

“To develop a reformed model of Associations with input from the Associations which upholds the duties and responsibilities of the Associations as outlined in the CBOQ by-laws while taking into consideration the problems and difficulties the Associations face under the current model and the diversity that exists among the Associations with the understanding that this reformed model must be approved by the Associations prior to its implementation.”

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