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Tyndale University

Developing Leadership Team Vision for the Oakville Community at the
Oakville Adventist Company Through Appreciative Inquiry

A Research Portfolio
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry
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By

Dean Ann-Marie Lashington

Toronto, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Oakville Adventist Company (OSDA) was a congregation that had not been growing and had no active presence in the community of Oakville. To help address these concerns, a leadership retreat was designed and implemented that used Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a process to help the leadership team develop a clear vision for outreach to the community of Oakville. There were seven leaders who participated, and the outcomes of the retreat were analyzed. The project was aimed at facilitating the development of leadership team vision for the residents living in this community. Using AI processes, the leadership team looked at the vision for the Oakville community, developed a vision statement and committed to designing ways to serve the community needs. Findings from the research project indicated that participants developed a vision and a mindset to explore new possibilities to make an impact on the Oakville community.

DEDICATION

This portfolio is dedicated to my family of origin; my parents (Stanford Lashington and Joan Lashington), my siblings (Garfield Lashington, Kadian Lashington and Jovayne Lashington). My father, Mr. Stanford Lashington taught me the value of hard work, determination, and ambition. I owe my high self-esteem, love for learning and resilience to my father. My desire to make my father proud has been my drive. Thank you, Daddy! I also want to dedicate this document to my nuclear family which includes my husband and three sons (Zavian, LeVar, and Kieron). My family has inspired my commitment to ministry and has been a motivation cheering me on when the journey got challenging.

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God Most High, who am I to acknowledge you? Indeed, the nations of the earth are “less than nothing” compared to you, great and eternal God. Yet, as I reflect on who deserves my praise and acknowledgement, who deserves my praise more than you God? This course of study (DMin) was your idea Most High God. It is you that gives “wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding” (Daniel 2:20). Thank you, God, for the gift of leadership, knowledge, skill, resources, wisdom and understanding. In the words of SDA Hymnal number 4.

Praise my soul the king of heaven, To His feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, who like thee His praise should
sing? Praise Him, praise Him, Allelujah, Praise the everlasting King.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OR ACRONYMS

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
AR	Action Research
COVID	Corona Virus
DMin	Doctor of Ministry
DMML	Doctor of Ministry Major Leadership
4D	Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny/Deliver
OSDA	Oakville Adventist Company (Congregation)
QEW	Queen Elizabeth Way
REB	Research Ethics Board
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
SOS	Signs of Safety
USA	United States of America
US	United States

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research portfolio is to integrate into a comprehensive whole, elements, and insights from an analysis of my ministry context that informed my choice of a field research project. A particular goal of the research project was to explore the benefits of utilizing an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process with the leadership team at the Oakville Adventist Company (OSDA) in order to develop a clear vision for the future. The portfolio highlights the usefulness of the research findings to me as a leader, to my ministry context and perhaps to other ministry contexts.

Summary of Chapters

This first introductory chapter to the portfolio provides a summary of the contents of each chapter and key highlights. Chapter Two presents my personal and ministry context and what led me to do my research on leadership team development and to use Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperidder 2005) as a research methodology and as a process for intervening. My ministry context was the Oakville Adventist Company (OSDA) where I was part of the pastoral team. The OSDA was a company of believers that was regarded by the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventist churches as a “company” rather than a “church” due to the small number of members. OSDA could have achieved the

status of being a “church” only when membership increased from the 33 members recorded at the time it was officially organized in 2015. Church records indicated that OSDA had been in steady decline since its founding, and this was a criterion for possible dissolution of the OSDA company of believers.

An analysis of the context of OSDA is presented in Chapter Two. The OSDA congregation was struggling to survive and to make an impact on the external community in which it was situated. The membership was in decline. There had been high turnover in the leadership team, making it necessary to bring in leaders from outside OSDA. I was one of those imported leaders. I accepted the challenge of leading a change in OSDA’s trajectory from a company of believers likely to be dissolved towards the possibility of flourishing. In light of OSDA’s landscape, I used an AI process as a method to uncover OSDA’s potential and to help the leadership team develop a clear and future-oriented vision. AI was attractive to me because of its focus on strengths and positivity.

Chapter Two also includes an analysis of my personal context and how it too informed my choice of research topic and methodology. In this chapter, I divided my personal context into four boundary seasons (Palmer 1999) of summer, winter, spring and fall in that order. I described how the summer and winter seasons of my personal context prepared me for my current ministry through obedience and integrity checks (Clinton 2012). At the time of my DMin studies and research, I saw myself in the spring season of both my personal and ministry contexts. This was a time of potential, opportunities for re-birth, growth, and possibilities. This season of new beginnings seemed to align with concepts

and principles of AI that I found attractive, particularly the 4 D cycle of Discovery, Dreaming, Design, Delivery (Cooperrider 2005). The fall season of my personal and ministry contexts was still in the future at the time of this portfolio writing. The fall season was envisioned as a season of legacy leaving and finishing well, achieving the destiny of purpose fulfilled.

Chapter Three discusses my philosophy of Christian leadership and the journey I took to get to my philosophy of Christian leadership destination. I used Burns' (2014) metaphor of a leadership river to describe my journey towards a Christ-centered philosophy of leadership. I argue that leadership is a gift from God (Damazio 1988) and I provide extensive biblical references and reflect on their relevance to my philosophy of leadership and my ministry context. An important insight was the need for me to lead from the inside out. Above all, chapter three puts into focus the needs of OSDA for the sacrificial care of leaders who emulate the philosophy, practice, and principles of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30-36). This chapter describes how my philosophy of Christian leadership influenced my research topic, methodology and response.

Chapter Four presents the field research project. It shows how the research project arose from the contextual analysis of a company of believers that was failing to thrive and lacked a clear vision for the future among the leadership team. I chose to do the research with the leadership team because "no generation can rise above the level of its leadership" (Damazio 1988, III). One way I believed the leadership team could develop a clear vision was through a leadership retreat that utilized Appreciative Inquiry processes (AI) (Cooperrider

2005). The focus of the leadership team retreat was the creation of vision clarity geared toward OSDA having an impact on the community. The research project included individual interviews, focus group interviews, and participant observation of the leadership retreat. This chapter discusses the project methodology, the parameters of the research, the steps taken to ensure the ethical conduct of research and accountability to the Research Ethics Board (REB). The chapter also describes how risks of harm were mitigated as well as the potential benefits of the research to participants, different stakeholders, and the community. It describes the data collection methods used to assess the outcomes of the retreat. The research findings, data analysis, interpretations, and conclusions are presented, as well as implications for further research and possible application to other settings.

Chapter Five is the concluding chapter of the research portfolio and includes reflections on the implications of key findings and next steps. It is framed within the AI theme of dreaming and my dreams for a positive, strength-based way forward for the development of a leadership team vision at OSDA for the external community. Chapter five records key learnings and insights gained through the action research project and portfolio integration process.

Definition of Key Terms

Company

A Company is a group of believers in the Ontario Seventh-day Adventist Conference that have not reached the number of members sufficient to be considered a church. The Company is expected by the local conference of SDA churches to focus on evangelism and the baptising of people so as to increase membership. “Church members who are part of small groups or house groups may form the nucleus of a new company” (SDA Church Manual 2015, 37). Groups with Company status may gain “Church” status with an increase in membership.

Community

Community refers to the geographical residential community of Oakville in which OSDA is situated.

Evangelism

Evangelism means telling people of the need for true worship, Sabbath keeping and the soon coming of Jesus Christ and their need to respond to these truths.

Church Board

Every SDA church must have a functioning board whose members have been elected during a church business meeting. Its chief concern is having an

active discipleship plan in place, which includes both the spiritual nurture of the church and the work of planning and fostering evangelism (SDA Church manual 2015, 129). The senior pastor is the chairperson of the board.

Pastor

The senior pastor is paid by Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Pastors paid by the Ontario Conference are not allowed to have any other source of income. Volunteer pastors may have other sources of income outside of the church and are often referred to as elders.

Elder

An elder is an individual that has been identified as having the spiritual maturity and dedication to join with the pastor in the leadership of the congregation. According to the SDA church manual, “In the absence of a pastor, elders are the spiritual leaders of the church and ...conduct the services of the church and minister” (SDA Church manual 2015, 73). In the context of this research, elders, in partnership with the pastors, lead the church.

Officer

An officer is a member of the church, voted to lead in a ministry of the church. Officers are chosen by a nominating committee that meets every year or every 2 years. Officers head different ministries and are accountable to their elders. The elder of each ministry oversees the work of the officers assigned to those ministries.

Failure to Thrive

Failure to thrive in the context of an SDA church means the company of believers is not growing in terms of spiritual health, membership, or ministries. This may result in the dissolution of the Company or church.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

AI is a positive strength-based approach to organizational development and change. It involves affirming and exploring one's current situation or context through questioning. It encourages openness to seeing new potentials and possibilities. AI inverts the change management process by looking at organizations as being able to meet their challenges through vital connections including relationship building, partnerships, alliances, and "ever-expanding webs of knowledge and action that are capable of harnessing the power of combinations of strengths" (Cooperrider 2005, 1).

Mission

In this research project, the word mission refers to the Great Commission as well as finding out where God is at work in our community and joining him there. The Seventh-day Adventist church values church growth based on growth in membership through baptisms and membership transfers and sees this numerical increase in membership as achieving mission.

Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

The Seventh-day Adventist church is one body divided into geographical divisions. In Ontario, over 150 local churches form the Ontario Conference of SDA churches. “The mission of the Ontario Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to proclaim the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ...” (Ontario Conference Directory, 1999).

Seventh-day Adventist

A Seventh-day Adventist is a follower of Jesus Christ, who keeps the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as the Sabbath and looks toward the second coming of Jesus Christ. Seventh-day Adventists believe in the Protestant Reformation (Authority of the Bible (Sola Scripture), Justification by Faith, Priesthood of Believers) and the Spirit of Prophecy. The mission of the SDA is anchored in the Great Commission. Seventh-day Adventists pride themselves with being charged by God to preach the last day “Three Angels” message of Revelation 14:6-12. This is an eschatological passage calling people back to true worship of the Creator. The Seventh-day Adventist church is one body divided into geographical divisions. In Ontario, over 150 local churches form the Ontario Conference of SDA churches. “The mission of the Ontario Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to proclaim the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ by portraying His character through unconditional service, worship, nurture and discipling” (Ontario Conference Directory, 1999).

Conclusion

The focus of my DMin studies was on ministry leadership. I have come to understand the vocation of pastoral ministry as a work that involves the sending of leaders into challenging situations for the sake of the spreading of the gospel. According to Damazio (1988), God sent Jesus (Isaiah 61: 1-2) and Jesus sent the disciples (Matthew 28: 18-20). Paul sent Timothy, and Timothy sent others (Damazio 1988). In addition, according to “the law of reproduction in leadership” (Damazio 1988, 205), several patriarchs, prophets, and ministry leaders like Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37), Moses in Exodus, Jeremiah, and Paul (2 Timothy 4: 7-8) were sent to challenging situations that required faith, prayer, the Holy Spirit and “patient endurance” (Revelation 3:10). I believed I was sent by the Almighty God to a challenging ministry context when I accepted the call in 2020 to be part of the pastoral team at Oakville Adventist Company (OSDA). This portfolio pulls together much of what I have learned about leading well in this context.

CHAPTER 2: MINISTRY CONTEXT

Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of my personal and ministry context. It includes my reflection on the biblical and theological framework for my ministry. With regard to my personal context, I have divided my life journey into four seasonal metaphors (Palmer 1999): summer, winter, spring, fall. Although this is not the natural order of seasons, it is the way my life unfolded. The summer season was my childhood when I was mostly happy and carefree. The summer season of my life ended when I got married and subsequently divorced. This was my winter season. Winter in my life was harsh and cold, and I wondered sometimes if the sun would ever shine again. After the winter season came spring, when God gave me second chances at many life opportunities including career change and the formation of new relationships. I saw myself in the spring season of my life during my DMin studies. Fall is yet to come, with the promise of harvest. Through all the seasons of my life, God was faithful. One of my favorite hymns was “Great is Thy Faithfulness” and I reflected on how my life experiences resonated with the words of the hymn, “summer and winter and springtime and harvest.” Reflection on this hymn reminded me that great was God’s faithfulness through all my life experiences, including being sent to the challenging ministry context of OSDA.

This chapter also analyzes my ministry context, the Oakville Seventh-day Company where I served on the pastoral team as lead elder. OSDA was a group of believers that was struggling to survive. OSDA had unsuccessfully tried to increase their membership over a seven-year period from 2015 to 2022. Instead of an increase in membership, OSDA experienced a loss in membership by 82 percent between 2015 and 2020, with six members attending regularly in December 2020. The loss of membership continued post COVID to four members attending OSDA regularly. This loss in membership and decline meant the company was eligible for consideration of dissolution and loss of the company status that OSDA held. The Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventist churches had the authority to consider the dissolving of companies and churches due to loss of members or disciplinary matters (SDA Church manual 2015, 40).

OSDA was officially formed in 2015. Despite the decline, the remaining members have shown a determination to keep the church active and autonomous. They are proud to be called founding members and have indicated through conversations their determination that the OSDA continue to exist. However, based on my assessment, OSDA had not met its developmental milestones and could be described as a “failure to thrive” company. The term failure to thrive is a medical term from my experience as a clinical hospital social work practitioner on the neo-natal intensive care unit (NICU) at McMaster Hospital between 2004 and 2010. Failure to thrive was used to describe children who were not healthy and growing and were below the weight and height of their peers. With a history of high turnover in leadership and poor interpersonal relationships, OSDA’s

struggles intensified during the COVID 19 pandemic to almost a grinding halt. It was during this period that I was sent there by God to minister. As I accepted the challenge, and engaged in analysis of the ministry context, I saw that there was a need for change and a renewed leadership vision.

Contextual Overview

In 2020 I was asked to serve at OSDA, a company that was facing challenges growing, thriving and being relevant to the community. I realized that my ministry context called for a compassionate leader because of the complexity of the needs of the congregation. I saw the importance of understanding the context of the congregation as well as the context of the community to be able to meet their needs. This was particularly true in a context of cross-cultural ministry as was the case in my ministry context where the congregation and the people in the community were from different social locations.

An analysis of my ministry context led me to reflect on the kind of leader I desired to be and caused me to reflect on the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7). The physical, emotional, and spiritual condition of the members of my congregation reminded me of this parable. As I looked at leadership, I termed this story the parable of the “Good Shepherd.” This was because I believed the parable had to do with the condition of the lost sheep, but it had more to do with the condition of the heart of the shepherd who did all for the sheep and took his responsibility very seriously. The term sheep has often been used to describe the people of a church. Metaphorically the members of the OSDA company of believers may be described as sheep who are hurt, broken, traumatized, weak and

lost. This was based on reports from Zoom interviews with six members. The people appeared to have lost confidence in the company's leadership and each other. They had lost connection with one another and a sense of belonging, and above all, had lost focus as to why the church existed. It appeared to me they had lost connection with each other and the community as the body of Christ.

My project aimed at facilitating the healing and health of the membership through the development of a leadership team vision. Through the leadership team, it was my desire to develop a leadership team vision for the community. Like the Good Shepherd, the leadership team would love, search for, call for, build relationships with the community, and rejoice with members as they reconnected to God, each other, and the mission of the church to show love to all.

The Oakville geographic area in which OSDA was situated, was growing through residential developments. There were opportunities for church growth. The one other SDA church in the Town of Oakville was not seen as being able to manage the population explosion in the area. In addition, the members indicated through conversations that they saw themselves as a family. I observed that despite the challenges, there were varying degrees of connectedness that could be enhanced. I had the vision that OSDA could thrive and flourish if healing was facilitated. I learned through talking with the members that the experience of brokenness was pervasive throughout OSDA. The leadership had struggled for years, the ministries were non-functioning, the members experienced broken heartedness and relationships vertically and horizontally were in disrepair. Some members appeared to be traumatized and indicated they could not even attend

meetings. The members indicated that their experience with other churches of the same denomination was one of rejection. OSDA appeared unhealthy, and many leaders had suggested that the church be closed permanently. I believed the OSDA company of believers could benefit from a leader who had the strength of positivity. Positivity was one of my top five strengths as per the *Strength Finder* (Clifton 2018). It was my desire to use my strength of positivity to promote and facilitate healing on all levels of this ministry context.

I could identify with the people I was called to lead, since I also experienced brokenness, isolation, marginalization, and trauma in the winter season of my life. As described below, the winter season of my life equipped me for service and ministry. The Craig Groeschel podcasts helped me by emphasizing that I needed to figure out what kind of leader I would like to be before I identified what goals I would like to achieve (Groeschel 2019). I concluded that my ministry context required a leader that was like the Good Shepherd in the parable of the lost sheep. This conclusion helped me mentally process what kind of leadership philosophy best suited my calling and practise, as described in Chapter 3.

Personal Context/Family of Origin Context

God called me to ministry as a child and then again as an adult. I responded with varying degrees of positivity to his call at different times in my life. I was the first of four children born to Mr. Stanford Lashington and Mrs. Joan Lashington in Jamaica, West Indies. The name my parents gave me was an important part of my self-understanding. According to the Webster's dictionary,

the name “Dean” means leader (Webster 1989, 176). Dean is an English masculine given name derived from the Greek word (*dekanos*) which means “monk or dignitary in charge of 10 others” (“Dean (given name)” 2023, par. 1). A Dean is the leader of people, hence terms like Dean of Faculty (Collins Dictionary 2003, 159). I saw myself as a leader. I was assertive and had high expectations of myself. I believed that God chose my name and chose me to be a strong leader. This has informed my resilience and the setting and attainment of high goals in life.

At 10 years of age while sitting in Sunday school, God spoke to me about committing my life to serve God and keeping God’s commandments. It was during this time God spoke to me about the Sabbath rhythm. My personal and family of origin context prepared me for the ministry I have today since I was the leader of my sibling group and was encouraged by my parents to aim for excellence as I set the pace and bar for my peers and relatives. I established timelines and saw the hand of God leading me on a journey to where I currently serve. It was also important to reflect on my personal and family of origin context to see how it impacted my ministry in the church and community.

Reflections on Personal Context (Life Seasons)

Clinton (1993) speaks about phases of leadership development. I chose to describe these life phrases using the metaphor of seasons. My life and ministry leadership journey can be divided into four seasons (Palmer 1999, 95). The first season (foundations) was the summer season which lasted 16 years. This summer season was light, and happy. Reflecting on the foundations of my call to

leadership, I experienced feelings of happiness, recalling days of outings, circuses, amusement parks, balloons, toys, fun, ferries wheels and fairs. I had few cares and it felt as if there was no worry. During the summer season of my life, my father taught me to be proud of my names and my potential. Spiritually, during the summer season of my life and leadership, my mother played a major role. At bedtime she would read to me the Holy Bible. I became aware of my love for God and call to spiritual things during the summer season of my life. I was off to a great start in my foundations.

Season 2 of my life and ministry leadership journey was my winter season. This season in my young adulthood lasted longer than twelve years. This season was cold, dark, and painful. There were ashes, mourning, confusion, dishonor, and despair. I suffered the emotional trauma of divorce. Many relationships died due to the divorce. I had a wilderness experience. It was a time of stillness, solitude, as I settled in a secret place. The Individual Spiritual Retreat held in 2020 as part of the DMin requirement reminded me of that lonely time and during the retreat I reflected on the winter seasons. Sherbino (2015) inspired me as I wrote the following poem. I wrote “Alone with God” during an Individual Spiritual Retreat in 2020:

Alone with God like Moses, Joseph, Saul, and Elijah.
Alone with God by the confusion of the burning bush
Alone with God in the dark pit of uncertainty
Alone with God amid the darkness of doubt
Alone with God to hear God speak.
Alone with God to trust God’s plan.
Alone with God to experience reflection.
Alone with God by the refreshing brook Cherith
Forced there by brethren, people, situation, circumstance- Alone with God
renews.

Alone with God to rest a while, to get direction, to get instruction, for meditation.

Alone with God: - presses that “reset” button.

“Then the word of the Lord came...saying ... Arise, go...” Renewed.
(Dean Lashington, 2020)

Season 2, the winter season, was my preparation phase, learning to depend on God and working hard. Yet even in the winter season of my preparation, there were many beautiful instances such as graduating from my Master’s degree and enjoying raising my young sons.

Season 3 of my life and ministry was like the spring season. As I wrote this portfolio, I was in the spring season of life and ministry. This season was about contributing and “being” (Groeschel, 2019); being a leader rather than doing as a leader. This season had new beginnings. This season shaped my vision for ministry with the summary phrase “ready, set, go and grow.” In this season, I heard the Lord say trust me, lean in and grow. My motto was: “His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Ps 34: 1), and I learned to praise God in all things. My ministerial philosophy became: “But first let’s consult the Lord...As the Lord lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak” (2 Chronicles 18: 4 & 13). I discovered the importance of putting God first in all things and the joy in willingly answering God’s call. I believed that doing God would be my purpose fulfilled.

Season 4 of my life and ministry will be the autumn/ fall season (finishing well and investing) which is yet to come as I move towards my legacy. This fall season will be where I reach “the promised land” (Barton 2008, 214) of God’s purpose. This is where I hear the Lord say lean in to the present and future. Store

up resources, write some books, write some poems, record your sermons and your thoughts for resources for other ministry leaders. Here you will have “beauty for ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of despair” (Isaiah 61:3). This will be my favourite season. In the autumn/ fall season of my life I will “Let go and let God,” recognizing that like the child singing evangelist Benson Ken sings:

He’s got time and seasons in His hand,
He calls for Light out of darkness,
You don’t need me to be the God you are,
But you have chosen me (Ken, 2019).

I will now go into detail about what I heard the Lord saying to me and how the Lord led me during the seasons of Summer, Winter, Spring and Fall of my life and ministry leadership journey.

Season 1 Summer - My Past Foundations (Values)

From my early foundations, I showed that my top strengths included being a high achiever. This was endorsed by the *Strength Finder 2.0* (Clifton 2018) which indicated one of my top five strengths to be Achiever in the “Executing” (Clifton 2018) *strength* theme. I was the head of the class for every grade in primary school, I was the Girl Guide Cookie winner in 1972 and the National Essay Competition winner in 1977. These achievements all occurred before the age of 12 years. As a child, my father worked to support the family. He was in management and had status at work. My home was of Christian faith, but my parents were not regular church attendees. They were Anglican and United and would attend church on occasion. From a child, I was interested in religious

matters and always wanted to serve God in ministry. I think ministry leadership was my destiny and it was God who pre-determined my Christian leadership journey. God has put things, people, and circumstances in place to carry me on the journey.

At 10 years old, I had an intuitive call while sitting quietly in the Anglican church. Quietness and solitude gave me energy and inspiration. This was indicative of my preference for introversion. I focussed on my inner world, getting energy through reflection on the Ten Commandments. I had a change of denomination as a teenager from Anglican to SDA, moving forward with or without the support of friends and family as is typical of “thinkers” in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI). Like an INTJ, I rocked the boat and moved away from harmony, to pursue what I thought to be right. According to Dr. Janyne Peek – Emsick (2020), people with a personality preference for INTJ are not afraid to rock the boat.

Gifted in oral presentations, I excelled in church programs and services. My friends, some from my foundational years, endorsed that ministry leadership was my destiny. I experienced a strong sense of calling that made me determined. I was energized by my own internal world of thoughts and ideas. My first source of inspiration had come from solitude, stillness, and silence.

As part of the DMin program, I was privileged to have a coaching session with Dr. Janine Peek-Emsick. Dr. Peek-Emsick was also one of my course lecturers. According to Dr. Peek-Emsick, 75 % of Americans had a personality preference of extraversion (Peek-Emsick 2020). My reaction to that was one of

contentment, as I do not mind being different from the majority and welcome that difference. Reflection played a vital role in the dyadic therapeutic counselling sessions that were also part of the DMin program. The influence of my family of origin was evident in those sessions, with the love of my father playing the role of motivator. Reflection revealed I had many deep relationships. I was intentional about honouring my mother and my father. As part of the DMin requirement, I engaged in six personal development meetings to debrief my assessments and teachings from the program. The dyadic relationship between me and the counsellor was helpful in allowing patterns of behaviour to emerge. I became more self-aware in my ministry context and purposeful in building on my already existing strengths and working to strengthen weaknesses.

Season 2 Winter and the Wilderness Experience – Preparation (Becoming)

“When every other voice is hushed and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God” (White E.G., 1905, 363)

The winter season of my life provided integrity checks for the purposes of faith and character development. The times were harsh and lonely. My wilderness experience was a preparation for growth in faith and humility. In 1988 I married a minister of religion. In 1996 we emigrated to Canada. In 2000 after three children, we separated and subsequently divorced. The marriage itself was described as a bitter experience by my girlfriend. That was her perspective, and I would say she was right. It was a terribly bitter cold experience, much like bitterly cold winter. Boundary events during this season of winter included the marriage, the birth of the children and divorce. The divorce was a big disgrace and extremely traumatic.

Like Moses, I fled to the wilderness and was alone with God. This was my crucible experience. In 2001 due to shame, disgrace and the need for peace and stillness, I left the city in which I lived. I changed marital status, house, work, church, social network and physical location and I settled into a wilderness state for years. Friends had deserted me, not wanting to be part of the shame and disgrace. It was a lonely time between 1999 and 2006. It was a cold, dark and long time, like winter. I went from preaching and teaching the Bible at church, and leading the children's choir, to just being alone with my own three children at home. The phone did not ring, and no one invited us for lunch or dinner. It was a time and season to remain faithful to God regardless. Initially that wilderness experience did not make sense.

However, because of this experience, I was intrigued when reading *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Barton 2008). It helped me put into context my wilderness experience. Moses' journey from Egypt was not just physical, it was spiritual as well. Moses' journey shows that we too can take a "spiritual journey" from spiritual bondage towards freedom in Christ, and that the process may not be understood but God will journey with us (Barton 2008, 95). As I looked at the life of Moses, I was thrilled that "every single thing that didn't make sense when it happened... too harsh... too random... too shameful, now finds its place in the storyline that brought us here" (Barton 2008, 74). This was also true in my ministry, since initially I had serious objections to being called to ministry. Things did not make sense to me. I questioned why would I marry into ministry, to experience a

divorce and then be called to ministry again? I spent seven years in the wilderness, learning and developing. There were challenges and crucibles of financial crisis, isolation and faith checks with incidents that strengthened my faith as a leader. It was a time of growth in intimacy with God where I stopped arguing with God about going into ministry in obedience to his call.

After graduating with my theology degree in 2019, a friend called to say she saw my pastoral graduation picture and cried. She said that ministry was what I had wanted to do all my life and that is why I married that minister, since in her opinion, I was ministering through him. She said she was glad I got the courage to answer God's call on my own and to minister as my own self. I appreciated her comments because identifying vocations can also come from affirmations of others (Palmer 1999).

Nouwen's book, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (Nouwen 1993), showed me that God can use broken, flawed people to teach the benefits of vulnerability in ministry to God's glory. God could use me even when I am flawed and broken, like He used other flawed and broken great leaders. Yet even in winter, there is beauty. During this season, I did a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree graduating with high honours. In 2004, I was placed with the Ontario Legislature as an advanced standing Master of Social Work student in the Community, Policy, Planning and Organization stream at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada. I was the only successful candidate for the MSW Advanced standing stream for the 2004 to 2005 academic year. I was able to do this while working at the hospital as a grief counsellor, being a single parent

with three sons under the age of 12 years. It required hard work and persistence. While doing that Master of Social Work degree (2004), I started my days at 2:00 AM and would attend classes 90 minutes away from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, without breaks, eating during class time, while parenting by phone when at school. I was able to complete a degree in 10 months that normally takes the average student 2 years to complete. In 2004 I started working at McMaster hospital on weekends as a clinical social worker/ grief counsellor on the women's health unit. On the team were social workers and chaplains. Interestingly, during this time there were budget cuts, and the chaplains were laid off. The clinical manager approached me and asked if I could play the role of chaplain in the times of death and dying. She indicated that there had been meetings, and the social workers and the clinical team believed that I was the best fit for meeting the spiritual needs of the patients. For years, I played both the role of clinical social worker, grief counsellor and chaplain. At the hospital, my peers indicated that I was good at meeting the patients' spiritual needs, more so than any other need. They reported that I was inspired and inspiring as I helped patients plan for funerals and last rites in the face of grief and loss. This testimony of my hospital colleagues also supported me in hearing the voice of my vocation in ministry, saying "this is the way, walk in it."

I was persistent and relentless with studying and learning (further evidence of my top 5 strengths). I had no social life and happily so. Interestingly, in the MBTI assessment for Persistence, I received a score of "10" in five categories. In makes decisions, I received a score of "6" in four categories and takes initiative

and does what needs to be done without being asked, I received a score of “9” by 4 categories of respondents. This suggested that although the context of my ministry may appear daunting and discouraging, because of my personality preference I was likely to stick with it, to make needed decisions and to take initiative as needed to help bring the church to a healthy and thriving place. I saw now how my MBTI preference of INTJ was aligned with my abilities and academic and professional accomplishments during the winter period of my life. I also attributed this success largely to my MBTI preference for Judging. I was aware that I approached the outside world in an organized and orderly manner and tended to make decisions quickly. My approach to the outside world was a 96% preference for judging versus perceiving. I was aware that I was very systematic and worked well with schedules and details of planning. The beauty in this winter season was that I was able to raise my children by myself, accomplish personal and professional goals and heard the voice of God calling me to minister.

Coaching and counselling sessions were helpful in getting me to reframe crucible experiences in the journey to and through ministry leadership. I reframed my crucible experience from a chequered past to God providing me opportunity for courage. This for me was priceless. That was exactly what it was - an opportunity to do what was right. That reframing was valuable in dealing with unresolved conflict and perceptions of my wilderness experience. Focussing on my *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI) personality preference (INTJ), the counselling sessions allowed for cognitive exploration, provided clarity, and brought insight into my functioning. The method of reframing was used to shift

perception in areas of my development that I struggled with and promoted emotional healing. I understood and was grateful for my strengths such as positivity. I understood that my positivity had been the pivot for my resilience, tenacity, and hope. I was aware of my strength of passion, the excellence of my administrative leadership gift, my desire to plan and fill my schedule and the need to care for myself. The dyadic therapeutic relationship gave me the gift of reframing my crucible experience to see the glory of God shining through. Life crises have taught me how to trust God's leading and to minister through pain. I gave all my life experiences to God to be used for his glory.

According to the *Strength Finder* (Clifton 2018), included in my top five strengths were that I was a learner and an intellectual. I was not surprised at being in a doctoral program since I enjoyed learning. I did well at learning and was described as a high achiever, generally being at the top of the class since childhood foundations. I had demonstrated being strategic and making sense out of complexity. This helped in my ministry context where I spoke publicly several times per week to the congregation. I was aware of the challenges of ministry. I was also more compassionate because of my wilderness experience to people experiencing hurt and pain from losses including broken relationships. I had grown from condemning people who got divorced to being divorced. My faith had also grown to see what God could do when you had nowhere else to turn and totally trusted him. Due to my experiences in the winter season, I understood more fully passages of hope and comfort as I was called on to give hope and comfort. I was drawn to ministries of compassion and to be a blessing to people

who were marginalized and experienced brokenness. I was aware of my intolerance towards gender inequality in ministry. Despite past suffering, I was filled with hope that I could share with the people in OSDA and the community.

Season 3 Spring - Present – Contribution and Life Maturing

This spring season of my life represented for me a new beginning- a time to learn, grow, go, re-invent, and reframe. This spring season was welcomed after the dark, lonely period of winter. The spring season of my life opened new opportunities for ministry like a flower unfolding. I had been in the spring season of my life and ministry since 2008. Called from a marriage that ended, God created, according to Dr. Peek-Emsick, “leadership out of brokenness” (Peek-Emsick 2020). In 2008 God gave me a new home. In 2010 God gave me a new marriage. In 2010 God gave me a new employer. New friendships have emerged during this spring season. In 2014 God gave me a new opportunity for ministry growth. In September 2014, I answered “yes” to the new call to gospel ministry. I decided to go ahead and pursue ministry and let God equip “the called” (Romans 8:28) and opened the doors of opportunity for service. This step was consistent with my INTJ personality preference and my positivity in my *Strength finder*. Making this move was instrumental in strengthening my faith. At home, my family strongly encouraged me to focus on ministry as “this was where her passion lies.”

I reflected on the *360 Respondent Feedback* assessment I took as part of the DMin program. I received my lowest score as it pertains to emotional – social responses. I was expecting that since my crucible experience left some scarring. I

was anxious of the word “emotion,” feeling that that my emotional state may pose risk to successful ministry. I was concerned that I may not pass the test of being an emotionally healthy leader. However, my professor Dr. Peek-Emsick provided support in saying that “emotions are not good or bad, they just are. Jesus experienced a range of emotions; emotions can serve a distinct purpose” (Peek-Emsick 2020). That was very liberating to hear and reflect on. While I was on the personal spiritual retreat, noted above, I reflected on areas in leadership I needed to work on. These include impatience with others, holding grudges, being unforgiving and resisting the temptation to be selfish. This was the most challenging section of my personal spiritual retreat. I was grateful for the access to professional development coaching and counselling sessions in the DMin program. During the dyadic support counselling sessions, I was able to unpack the emotional impact of that wilderness experience of my journey, as well as to work on other areas that needed strengthening. My leadership coach (Dr. Peek-Emsick) stated that INTJ leaders tend to “fly at 30,000 feet” (Peek-Emsick 2020) and are also interested at the ground level when it comes to drilling down for details. The analogy of a seagull was enlightening. This insight made me more conscious and self aware when seeking information from direct reports. I experienced the outside world in an organized, well-planned, and orderly manner and could make decisions quickly. Upon reflection, this ability was invaluable in my personal and professional life as I faced many pivotal decision-making opportunities on my journey in ministry. I was passionate and according to the *Strength Finder*, this was one of my strengths. However, this could also cause

tension as the passion may be experienced as curt or harsh. For me, learning to reframe my crucible experience was an opportunity God used to grow my courage. I was courageous. The reframing exercise was valuable in helping me deal with that unresolved conflict and perception of my wilderness experience. As indicated above, reframing shifted my perception in areas of my development that I struggled with and promoted emotional healing.

As I engaged in deep reflection and the clues as to what my vocation should be, I realized that like Moses, it took me 40 years to put the clues together. This was because, as Palmer pointed out in *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for The Voice of Vocation* (Palmer 1999), I was driven by “ought” and “distortions of culture” rather than “by a sense of true self” (Palmer 1999, 22). When I had the courage to go into ministry after trying business and then social work, I lived “divided no more.” I found the Quaker teachings (e.g., Palmer, 1999) really inspiring and they provided me insights into the practises of a group I always wanted to know more about. I believed we are involved in a great controversy of good and evil and we lived and functioned within the context of conflict. My tendency, as described by one of my sons, was as a bloomer, meaning I am hopeful and see the positive side of life. As I reflected, it appeared my son was confirming the *Strength Finder* assessment that I had a positive approach to life, full of hope, even when things are challenging, Areas I wanted to work on, however, were spiritual direction, leadership coaching and self awareness which are all in the same cluster of the *360 Respondent Feedback*. This cluster included working on “maintaining personal health and fitness, receiving constructive

feedback without reacting defensively, staying calm and effective during crisis and demonstrating a willingness to change an opinion” (*360 Respondent Feedback*). In the dyadic counselling sessions, the *360 Respondent Feedback* was the basis for setting goals to work toward over the six sessions. The goals that were born out of issues raised in my assessments were:

1. Seeking and utilizing constructive criticism to enhance ministry.
2. How do I tell people I love them but still maintain personal boundaries?
3. Go for a walk at least 2 times per week (self-care)

As a female ministry leader with a personality preference for “thinking” i.e., making decisions using logical analysis to achieve objectivity (*360 Respondent Feedback*), I found it challenging to be expected to be loving and kind, to find a balance of tough versus tender. That insight clarified a lot in terms of my past decision making and aligned with my need for a gift of courage. I determined that spring was a good season to start going for contemplative walks because of the newness that spring brings. It was a time to re-discover the benefits of Sabbath rhythm and to embrace it as the ultimate reset. Yet even in the spring of my life and ministry, there were painful, pruning experiences.

Season 4 Fall (Autumn)- The Future Finishing Well

Reaching God’s purpose for me was my goal. This was to choose to live in a manner that freed me to do whatever for God, whenever. This was a time for me to produce change, leave a legacy, and lead out of being rather than out of doing (Groeschel 2019). This was my destiny, that strong sense of calling that

made me relentless. I envisioned that this season of life and leadership was to be colourful like Fall as I cool down and enjoy the “beauty for ashes” (Isaiah 61:3).

Let Your Life Speak: Listening for The Voice of Vocation (Palmer 1999) is a book that I will constantly refer to when I need to remember that humility, humiliation, and weakness are all part of wholeness (Palmer 1999). There are many examples of people who have gone through great darkness and yet emerged to find and lead people to light. The book was for me a useful resource in finding my “true self” (Palmer 1999, 68). In season 4, which is about leaving legacy, I planned to share this book with my children as they try to find their authenticity. The book has led me to suggest to my children that they acknowledge their nature, strengths, potentials, limitations, and liabilities so that their service will be linked to their “authentic selfhood” (Palmer 1999, 60).

During the personal spiritual retreat required in the DMin program, I reflected on the church leadership. I considered how spiritual practises such as a personal retreat could be incorporated into the lives of the leaders to help them reflect on leadership, the needs of the church as well as work-life balance. The individual spiritual retreat was a Spirit-filled experience for me where God spoke, and I listened and was renewed. I wanted to pass that on to others.

The counselling sessions I took as part of the DMin program set me on the path to leadership development. The telling of “my story” through appropriate filters allowed for discernment. I was able to separate valid criticism (God’s construction of good work in and through me) from invalid criticism (Satan’s attacks to de-construct God’s good work in and through me). I showed that I

could be courageous and maintain positivity in disorienting times in ministry. My crucible experience was the opportunity to be courageous and I pray will continue to be used to help others with bravery.

I settled on the kind of leader I wanted to become in the future using Craig Groeschel's Leadership Podcasts, "*Six Steps to Your Best Year of Leadership, Parts 1 and 2*" (Groeschel 2019). The podcasts encouraged me to have "who" goals instead of "do" goals, adding small disciplines, to be done consistently that lead to "big results over time." According to Groeschel, continued growth as a leader starts with small steps today (Groeschel 2019), The preference to fill my schedule left me exhausted and so I learned to be intentional about work-life balance and down time. I remembered that when it came to being too busy, "no one is doing this to me and because of this, I have the power to change" (Peek-Emsick, 2020).

My Approach to Leadership Development at OSDA

Relating my personal context to my ministry context, I was determined to be intentional in my approach to leadership and to focus on the positives in people and the organization through Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider 2005). The model of Appreciative Inquiry was a possible way to address the many issues in OSDA, which were all related, according to Family Systems Theory (Murray-Haynes 2020). This was because not only were the people related, so were the issues. AI theory states that "organizations are centers of human relatedness, first and foremost, and relationships thrive where there is an appreciative eye and when people see the best in one another, share their dreams and ultimate concerns

in affirming ways, and are connected in full voice to create not just new worlds but better worlds” (Cooperrider 2005, 61). According to Patton et. al (2007), studies of systems change show that things may get worse before they get better and I prepared for ups and downs, avoided taking success or failure as personal responsibility and determined to “keep my eyes on the stars while I stay grounded” (Patton et al. 2007, 186). My positive focus included highlighting people’s attributes, gifts, talents, and approaches to being as well as getting things done. I determined to employ the discipline of appreciative inquiry (AI) at every opportunity. It celebrated good work and small victories of the people in the organization, including the leadership team. It also included using commendations and highlighting small accomplishments towards continuous improvements.

My ministry context required much positivity. As positivity was one of my identified strengths, I determined to put a positive spin to any feedback or comments that I received, gave a listening ear and was courageous in re-directing to positivity through coaching and mentoring. I showed more compassion towards people by taking a genuine interest in their struggles.

Connecting My Personal and Ministry Context (Historical)

For your shame ye shall have double; and for dishonor they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore, in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them.
(Isaiah 61:7)

I have always wanted to help people and serve humanity on a more personal and spiritual level. However, in Jamaica in the 1980s, there was little support for women to enter the gospel ministry. This was a barrier to women in

ministry and so I went into social work as the next best option to ministry. The field of social work I saw as my “side job” with church ministry being my primary vocation. This job informed my intention to begin a Ph.D. in spiritual care and psychotherapy, as I thought this would allow me to integrate the practice of social work with spirituality and ministry.

As noted above, in September 2014 I answered “yes” to a call to gospel ministry. My intention at the time was to do a Ph.D. in spiritual care and psychotherapy at the Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) and the Lutheran Seminary. While pursuing qualifying courses towards a Ph.D., I was impressed and inspired to focus on theology. In addition, I experienced more motivation and passion in the theology classes than any other subject area. Although I had started taking theology courses at the WLU, my then senior pastor suggested that due to the passion I had for God’s word and ministry, it may be more useful to me if I focus on full-time ministry studies rather than social work. He recognized my gift of preaching and teaching God’s word and strongly suggested that I develop these ministry skills. I then decided to leave WLU and from 2016 to 2019, I attended the Oakwood University Seventh-Day Adventist Seminary, Huntsville, Alabama. There was a lot of backlash on this decision due to my denomination’s position on women in ministry, even though between 2014 to 2016 I was part of the pastoral team at a certain church. I was a leader in church administration. From 2016 to 2018, I also had been an ordained elder to the family life, seniors, and Bible study ministries at that local church. I was the ordained elder of senior’s ministry even though not yet a senior in age I was also a leader in ministry planning. I began to

get preaching appointments throughout the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and discovered that I was a gifted preacher. In 2016, I conducted my first evangelistic series at my local church as a conference lay preacher. All these experiences served to confirm my gifts for ministry.

The most significant and happiest day of my life was May 2019 when I graduated as a theology major (ministerial) from Oakwood University Seventh - day Adventist Seminary. I graduated with a master's degree in Pastoral Studies. Several of my colleagues and friends endorsed my courage to finally study theology as they indicated this was what I was called to do all along. This type of ministry affirmation has been ongoing from family, friends, and church members. My proudest moment was this graduation. From the graduating class of 2019 school of religion, I was chosen to lead the graduation commencement service in Bible Study.

As a member of the pastoral team at my congregation, my skills for church administration had grown. I believed in investing all the talents that God gave me. In the DMin program, I continued my ministerial training and develop my skills in ministry. My mission was to be a “reproduction” (Damazio 1988, 204) of Christ's mission, bearing the same characteristics. Jesus engaged the people by understanding and speaking to their contexts and situations. I did the same as I reproduced Jesus' mission and partner with Jesus Christ in mission in my own ministry context. According to *The Making of a Leader* by Frank Damazio, “A servant becomes like his master. A worshipper comes to resemble his object of worship. A son grows into the image of his father” (Damazio 1988, 204). The

image of God must be reproduced in me through mission. The Father God loves to meet needs, Jesus meets the needs of people, leaders must meet the needs of people.

Richard Osmer in *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Osmer 2008), recommends the analysis of alternate theories to help in the interpretation of situations and contexts. Osmer (2008) proposes that interpretation of situations directly informs intervention strategies and as such, knowledge of situations should be sought. How the leader interprets will directly impact the functioning and care of the leader (Osmer 2008). Theology is not just about God in the human context, theology is about people and God's relation to and interaction with them. This principle connected to my ministry context as I sought to deeply understand the context of OSDA and build relationships to meet the needs of people in the same way as Jesus did. I was committed to reflect the image of God in ministering in my local ministry context in building relationships.

When I made the decision to go to OSDA, some pastors in the denomination were wondering, like the prophet Ezekiel, "can these dry bones live" (Ezekiel 37: 1-10)? As noted above, I accepted the responsibility of leading the OSDA company of believers at a time of great disrepair in the leadership and congregation. After reflecting on God's word considering my personal and ministry context, I believed the "dry bones" at OSDA could live "not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:1).

Analysis of The National Context (Canada)

According to *Everyday Theology* (Vanhoozer et al. 2007), we live in a pluralistic society. The “west” is now a mission field. *Everyday Theology* asked questions such as “How does one evangelize cultures that have already received the gospel only to revise or reject it?” (Vanhoozer et al. 2007, 8). The town of Oakville begged this question since residents in Oakville could be assumed to have some familiarity with Christianity. Canada has two official languages, English and French, and most residents in Oakville spoke English in their homes. Thus, language barriers were not a major obstacle as OSDA endeavored to reach the geographic residential community. At the time of writing, Canada was in a post- pandemic era with the resumption of in person gatherings and the lifting of mask mandates. OSDA had a hybrid system of worship that included both in-person and virtual worship services. OSDA was therefore well positioned for outward focus and reaching the community.

Local Context

Oakville has a diversity of cultures. According to a Statistics Canada report (Statistics Canada 2016), the average household income is higher than any other area in Ontario. The residential developments continued to grow as people continued to move into Oakville. The residents had access to Oakville Transit. There is train service from the city of Windsor to the province of Quebec. Oakville was easy to travel to. The Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) highway, which connects Canada to the United States, and the 407 Electronic Toll Route both run

through Oakville. As a result, it was easy for church members who live outside of Oakville to get to church for services or community outreach activities. Oakville was considered part of the GTA. Aside from the OSDA, there was another SDA church in Oakville, yet I believed OSDA was unique since it bears the name of the city in which it is situated. The members of the OSDA lived in Mississauga and Oakville and were of Caribbean heritage. Most of the congregation was female and retired. There were few youths.

Ministry Context and Neighbourhood Analysis

In November 2020, I was appointed to “help” at the OSDA after the mass resignation of officers. I was made a member of their board while maintaining my responsibilities at another church. In December 2020 I was assigned the new responsibility as “Lead Elder” of the OSDA. Some believed that the Oakville congregation should be amalgamated with another thriving church and others believed that the OSDA should close. Attendance had dropped to less than 10 percent of members. My official assignment to OSDA was January 1st, 2021. There were no children there and the youth were not engaged. In conversation, a few members indicated that it was rigidity and lack of willingness of a handful of seniors to adapt to changes that was negatively affecting the health of the company of believers.

Founding members have expressed that they were aging and going away to nursing homes or dying without seeing OSDA grow and thrive. They were experiencing shattered dreams, disorientation, grief, and loss for what they thought OSDA would be at the seven-year mark. In addressing these concerns, I

drew on King (2016). Giving people an opportunity to tell their story was a way to address their concerns. This was because the majority of OSDA congregation constituted a majority population at church, but in the external geographic community, they were an oppressed, marginalized minority group that wanted the comfort of worshipping where they felt accepted. They often spoke of the slights and put downs they experienced as elderly people of African – Caribbean heritage.

Everyday Theology (Vanhoozer et al., 2007) has helped to equip me for this challenge. The authors promote practising a “reflective and practical task of living each day as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ” (Vanhoozer et al., 2007, 7). They indicate that “studying culture is part and parcel of theological training” (Vanhoozer et al. 2007, 8) and talk about the gospel transforming culture and culture also transforming the gospel. As a result, Christians must “negotiate” carefully “cultural byways.” *Everyday Theology* teaches Christians to get their “theological layout of the cultural land.” We are to become conscious of the territory in which we already live. We must know the world to which we are ministering. In applying the principles of Vanhoozer et al. (2007) to my ministry context, I learned that we as the leadership at OSDA should be culturally literate and be aware of the everyday environment in the community. We should shape our outreach strategies to suit the needs in the community. I was concerned about whether the members of OSDA were aware of what was happening around us. There needed to be an assessment of the ministry context (Vanhoozer et al. 2007). It would be beneficial if OSDA attempted to make sense of their surroundings and

environment. Our faith should seek to understand everyday life in the community, and this would inform the vision, mission, and purpose of OSDA. The members of the OSDA were not focussed on community outreach. The congregation appeared to be inwardly focussed. It would have been beneficial if OSDA learned to read the eschatological signs of the times as well as the culture of the community. OSDA's mission to spread the gospel required cultural literacy. As OSDA and I became culturally literate, we were better able to meet the needs of the community as we fulfilled our mission.

Qualitative Inquiry

As part of my responsibility at the OSDA, I spoke with the church members to build relationships and bridges that were broken as well as to get an idea of what the priority of the leadership team should be. My talking to the members was informal, yet in some ways it could also fit the description of participant research in that these conversations informed my analysis of the needs of the congregants and the community in general. Qualitative inquiry with human participants necessitated a thorough assessment of my ministry context. It would be challenging to do a proper assessment of context without conversing with the people who knew the history and who were directly impacted by any decisions.

To assess the context, a sample of six church members was chosen and were spoken with. Each person was called on the phone and asked to share their experience at OSDA. They were asked the same open-ended question about OSDA and their time there. The question was “tell me about the Oakville SDA church and what do you see needs to be done for the church to thrive”. The

members were encouraged to tell their stories through unscripted conversations. I took notes as the members spoke and at times sought clarification throughout the dialogue. I then looked for patterns in the responses to come to a common conclusion.

Qualitative Interview Responses/Storytelling

Allowing people to tell their stories is part of my ministry. The six interviewees were spoken to, and they told their story. The recurring patterns from these interviews were conflictual relationships between the members and the leaders including pastors, a history of emotional pain, negativity, and a need for reconciliation. One member said, “As far as growth is concerned, it is stagnant” and that the church “needs to have a heart transplant”.

A Respectful Assessment of this Particular Context

The verbalized experiences of the members were used to inform the broader assessment of this context. The Seventh-day Adventist denomination used to call our church a movement (the Advent Movement), yet OSDA appeared to be irrelevant to the surrounding community and wider society. Growth in membership had been in decline. I doubt that the community would miss the OSDA if it disappeared overnight. OSDA members seemed more like consumers than a “royal priesthood” with the concept of the priesthood of believers being a foreign notion. Though we claimed to take the great commission seriously, we appeared to be a program driven, elitist group of cliques that preached to and entertained ourselves. I believed the sacred responsibility was ours to spread the

good news of Jesus Christ not just to people in the city of Oakville, but to every person that passed through Oakville. Bureaucracy and red tape, and meetings about meetings, appeared to have disabled the movement in companies like the OSDA.

This could be partly because the community in which the OSDA was situated did not understand OSDA or the culture of the people that attended OSDA. I also believed OSDA did not understand the cultures of the people who lived in the geographic communities. Our faith needed to seek understanding of the cultures in which OSDA was located. The apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost was able to speak to diverse people from different cultures. “The events of Pentecost, which mark the formal and public beginning of the church, involved a number of supernatural phenomena...one was speaking in tongues (different languages) specifically for the purpose of communicating with the people gathered from all over the Roman Empire...languages from various lands...the Greek language that was common to all people gathered throughout the Roman world” (Maxwell 2002, 1814). I kept wondering what could be done to study the cultures that surrounded OSDA. Getting the gospel from inside the building to outside the walls of a church building was a challenging task in this pluralistic society. According to Vanhoozer et al. (2007), this was because the gospel gets worked out differently in different settings. The authors indicated that different cultures may shape the gospel and the delivery of the gospel. OSDA membership growth strategy needed to be conscious of the diversity of cultures in which we were situated.

Diversity also shapes how our faith is practised and packaged. My commitment to be a cultural agent seemed like a daunting task. However, I was aware that “faith seeking understanding” (Vanhoozer et al. 2007, 17) was a solution to the challenge as we were purposeful in building relationships and bridges between groups in the OSDA and the geographic residential community. Lack of “faith seeking understanding” was a factor in OSDA’s struggle to survive. I wondered if OSDA’s apathetic attitude, from an eschatological perspective, was a sign of the end of time. From the practical strategy perspective, leaders of the OSDA needed to read the “theological lay of the cultural land” (Vanhoozer et al. 2007, 7) and know more “about the world to which we are ministering” (Vanhoozer et al. 2007, 8). I believed we needed a process of expanding our culturally responsive service models to better meet the needs of our region's diverse communities. OSDA needed to get to know other people’s perspective on life, what makes for “a good life” and use this to achieve the great commission. We needed to ask if we could find God in popular culture, remembering that God worked outside the church as well as inside the church. “Common grace” was a term that the authors use in *Everyday Theology* (Vanhoozer et al. 2007). I have wondered how we were to embody our faith in everyday life in the city of Oakville. In my assessment, the OSDA may have been more effective if it embraced diversity, equity, and inclusion within the community. We could strengthen relationships, raise awareness, and dispel myths about Christians and the gospel with new approaches.

Internal Relationship Context (Systems Theory and Church Relationships)

OSDA and its relationships were complex since “diversity and variety are at the heart of complexity” (Mitleton-Kelly 2003, 3). There was complete disrepair of some ministries including the music ministry. People had been hurt and harsh words spoken. Due to their past experiences of unstable leadership, the OSDA members were worried that the new leadership team could leave without warning. There was much pain, emotion, and anxiety among the members. According to Peter Steinke, “Anxiety is emotional pain. It is a given in a relationship system” (Steinke 2006, 67). The members of OSDA appeared to be anxious people. This was shown in yelling and aggressive behaviour and the mistrust I had observed. After reading (Steinke 2006), I was aware that the individuals in any system who were most likely to be triangulated were those who were in the responsible position or the vulnerable position. Steinke made the distinction between a family and a system that operates like a family system. He indicated that the church was not a family since families are committed and intense and “their relationships repeatedly reinforced and deeply patterned” (Steinke 2006, xvi). OSDA as an emotional unit had similar emotional processes as a family. OSDA was like a family system and as such Bowen’s Family Systems Theory (Steinke 2006) was relevant. Systems theory created a shift in my awareness. It restructured how I thought about people’s behaviours and made me more tolerant of people’s challenges. By rethinking human interactions, we gain access to new ways of living with one another (Steinke 2006). This shift in

perception and thinking helped me as I sought to understand how to be helpful to people to whom I ministered.

Matters relating to family systems concepts were present in the congregations at different and overlapping levels. As a result, family systems theory was applicable. According to White (2011, 3),

...the eight interrelated concepts of Bowen family systems theory: differentiation of self, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, triangles, sibling position, emotional cut-off, and emotional process in society. The theory facilitates observation of human behavior and functioning at multiple levels, including individuals in the context of the relationship systems to which they belong, the members in relationship to each other, and the systems overall. Learning and using Bowen theory effectively are correlated with the capacity to observe one's own emotional functioning in the relationship systems to which one belongs or is associated (White 2011, 3).

The OSDA company of believers was multigenerational and interdependent with several generations of families. This added to the complexity of the congregation since complicated systems tend to be interdependent (Miller 2007). OSDA interactions confirmed that the company of believers functioned as an emotional system. The leadership had been unstable due to the movement of leaders coming and going through transfers and personal development opportunities. This instability may have caused much anxiety. The pastoral team had been there for less than two years. "In the church family, acute anxiety may mount when there are budgetary difficulties, a loss of a pastor, a building program, an influx of new members, or significant change in lay leadership" (Steinke 2006, 22). Some members were very emotional when they give reports or tell their stories and there had been a lot of triangulations. Anxiety threw

OSDA into a state of emotional survival. “We are less capable of hearing and seeing without coloring what we observe to fit our feelings... the more undifferentiated or emotionally stuck together people are, the more triangles appear” (Steinke 2006, 33). However, the entire leadership team, including myself, was part of the situation that needed to be responded to since “we are all part of the system we are hoping to change” (Patton, et al. 2007, 50).

Systems Theory and OSDA

Systems theories helped me to understand the dynamics at play in my ministry context and what strategies needed to be implemented. At the very least, systems theories helped improve my understanding of the factors to be considered as I strove to understand the congregational emotional systems and apply these theories to effect positive change. I also learned that strategic, effective communication was important in complex adaptive systems, knowing what to say and how to react to what is said (Miller 2007).

Systems Theory was the starting point of the appreciative inquiry process. “At the center of the cycle is affirmative topic choice. It is the starting point and the most strategic aspect of any AI process. Selecting affirmative topics is an opportunity for members of an organization to set a strategic course for the future. AI topics become an organization’s agenda for learning, knowledge sharing, and action” (Cooperrider 2005, 9).

I felt like I was compelled as a leader to promote the health of the leadership and ultimately the health of OSDA. This informed my choice of research topic because, “In the face of crisis, we can’t just endlessly report that

the situation is complex and we're studying what to do. We have to act!" (Patton et al. 2007, 86). I decided to use Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as the leadership theory to guide me with this challenge. "A truly revolutionary method of change management, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) emphasizes inquiry into strengths, rather than focusing exclusively on fixing weaknesses" (Cooperrider, 2005). While reviewing the systems theories, it occurred to me that while Complex Adaptive Systems Theory and Family Systems Theory gave possible background to the situation, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) gave a possible solution. Being strengths-focussed and using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to build relationships was a way to help OSDA grow and thrive despite emotional baggage and emotional cut-offs. AI assumed that every organization and community had many untapped and rich accounts of positivity in what people talked about as past, present, and future capacities, or the positive core. AI linked the "knowledge and energy of this core directly to an organization or a community's change agenda, and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized" (Cooperrider 2005, 8). I was on a path to value and recognize the strengths and potentials of the organization, focussing on successes rather than failures and harnessing the combinations of strengths.

Following Cooperider (2005), the 4D cycle of AI provided a road map through mobilizing the church to articulate strengths, creating a clear result-oriented vision in relation to the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20), creating possibilities that can be realized when the church focusses on "the positive core" (Cooperider 2005, 8) and affirming the capability of the church as a whole while

focussing on hope (Cooperrider 2005, 16). Even with all this, I agreed with the Bible that there was nothing new under the heavens, for Appreciative Inquiry may be summed up theologically in this passage: “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8). I was motivated by recognizing that my “audience of significance” was God (Dickens et al. 2015, 37).

My Sociogram

The sociogram was another tool that helped me with the understanding of relationships in OSDA company of believers. The OSDA was governed by a church board with the senior pastor being the chairperson. The senior pastor was paid from the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Ordained elders and ministry leaders joined the pastor in the leadership of the church. Elders, even though they could be trained pastors, were unpaid, their services voluntary, and were elected by the membership. They engaged in bi-vocational ministry, where they had regular day jobs. Paid pastors were not allowed to have any other source of income. Each elder was assigned to a particular ministry in OSDA. In the absence of paid pastors, it was the elders who led the church. The church prided itself with being democratic. Decisions were made in consultation and based on a popular vote at varying levels. My portfolio included responsibilities for all elders and ministries. I thought a sociogram would be an easy-to-understand pictorial representation of OSDA’s relationships. I created a

sociogram for my relationships in OSDA in 2021 and reviewed and revised it in 2022 as the dynamics of relationships changed (Appendix O).

To develop a sociogram, I started by building relationships through conversations. The sociogram was an excellent tool in identifying the lines of communication, frequency of communication and influence-makers. The sociogram provided the graphic presentation that I wanted of the relationships with the leadership team of the OSDA. Reflecting on the sociogram of OSDA (Appendix O), I saw a strong symbiotic relationship with all the leaders and ministries. I was relieved to see no conflictual relationships in the pastoral team. I saw this as my opportunity to keep leadership relationships healthy. The sociogram was valuable in looking at the present dynamics of the other relationships within the leadership and the church because it required critical reflective thinking. The sociogram showed what lines of communication needed to be strengthened and what communication issues needed to be addressed. It also reminded me of matters of accountability in the governance structure of the church. The sociogram mapped the emotional dynamics and was a useful tool in determining the inclusivity of the leadership. This understanding was helpful in creating a positive leadership culture and healthy relationships within the leadership and the church. My use of the sociogram increased my understanding of group behaviours in the church. I was able to use the sociogram to see where I needed to focus, pointing out relationships that needed to be strengthened or repaired and to be intentional about having open communication lines between people.

Analysis of Issue/Statement of the Problem: Leadership in Crisis

Between 2019 and 2020, the OSDA experienced mass resignations of officers. The survival of the company of believers was threatened. When I accepted the position of Lead Elder in December 2020, there were no church services (largely due to COVID restrictions), The Communion (Lord's Supper) had not been held for over a year, there was no phone, no church directory, and no website. There was no leadership team and no virtual presence online. The members were scattered going to various services at other churches. It was like between the years 2000 to 2020, the church had "been robbed, beaten and left for dead," with religious leaders passing by on the other side, as in the parable of the man who fell among thieves in the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37). Meetings were at times hostile with the members literally shouting at each other. People would tell other people to "calm down," others would say "I can't calm down," some would suggest that "you need to take a moment and pray" and another would respond, "why don't you pray for me because I can't pray," and all this was happening in a planning meeting with leaders. Yet I could hear the hurt in the members' voice, and I could see the need for healing and belonging.

I had a vision for the OSDA to be a thriving fellowship serving in God's mission to all people and any person in Oakville and beyond. I wondered what was destroying healthy relationships in the church. Through conversations with church members, I was aware that there was strife, conflict, rigidity of thought and disunity within the church and the leadership team. There was injustice in the church and the leaders turned a "blind eye" to it as they did in the days of Eli. In

(1 Samuel 1-3), Eli was High Priest and Israel's religious and judicial leader. Eli turned a blind eye to injustice in the leadership team of his "church" because of the relationship with his sons (who were also priests). An example of injustice was the physical assault of one member by another that was not addressed by the leadership team. In my view, the leadership team had been too laid back. It was almost like they were afraid of the church members who, by the way, had a history of negative reporting to the Conference. When I thought of the leadership team of OSDA, I also thought of King Saul who said he did wrong for fear of the people. "Then Saul admitted to Samuel, "Yes, I have sinned. I have disobeyed your instructions. I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded" (1 Samuel 15:24). I longed to be a leader influencing the whole organization to centrally focus on the organization's mission, values and vision and find the concept of servant leadership attractive.

The OSDA was like a family; however, it appeared that some members were more closely connected than others. In the words of one member, some members were like "second cousins" rather than the desired brother or sister. Other members believed they had been adopted into the family and joined after many traditions, bonding and norms have been established. Some acted as if they owned OSDA. As noted above, I would describe OSDA as chronically anxious. Steinke writes, "Chronically anxious church families may have small groups splinter off periodically. Or the family stays intact but is submissive to a small but manipulative power group" (Steinke 2006, 2). In the OSDA some members reported that founding members were sometimes territorial. Some members even

refused to give out the phone numbers for sick members, saying all we needed to do was to pray for them. There were occasional visitors to the church, however it appeared that historically, new additions to the church family were not always respected and were viewed as disposable. Although it seemed on the surface that people were related and connected, several people reported that this was not really the case. There were many different levels of connectedness. There were many people in OSDA who stopped attending suddenly and remained distanced. This could be understood through the application of complex adaptive systems theory. “A complex adaptive system is a collection of individuals with freedom to act in ways that are not always totally predictable and whose actions are interconnected so that one person’s actions change the context for other people” (Dickens et al. 2015, 85). The situation was that at OSDA, many “anxious people speak harsh words or cut themselves off from others through silence” (Steinke 2006, 47). In my view, this was a good time to have a “shift in perception from complexity as an obstacle to complexity as opportunity” (Patton et al. 2007, p ix), because according to Complex Adaptive Theory, complexity offers the possibility of transformation and reminds us that “complexity theory leads us to recognize that we are part of the system we are trying to change” (Patton et al. 2007, 50).

According to Bowen’s Family Systems Theory (Titleman 2008), and given that the system was emotional, it was important that I become “a more differentiated self.” “A differentiated self” is “one who can maintain emotional objectivity, while in the midst of an emotional system in turmoil, yet at the same time actively relate to key people in the system” (Steinke 2006, 75). This insight

was therapeutic for me as I controlled my own emotional reactivity in the situation. I have had several ideas about how to find solutions to the issue of members not wanting to serve, however, I moved strategically since “its one thing to have an idea; it’s another thing to be responsible for actually nurturing that idea and bringing it forward in a responsible way” (Patton et al. 2007, 168).

My DMin. studies helped me serve OSDA by providing me with knowledge and insight as it pertained to practical theology. I have come to understand the importance of using an action and reflection cycle in my leadership of the OSDA. My research project (Chapter 4) used an AI process to develop an OSDA leadership vision for connecting with the community. The research showed me the benefits of AI in deepening a sense of connectedness within the OSDA leadership team. The action research project was aimed at clarifying vision and deepening a sense of cohesion between the members of the leadership team, while attending to the culture of OSDA and the community.

My hope was that the action research project might help the OSDA company of believers see the value and possibilities for a positive turn around and result in vision clarity for the leadership team. I designed an AI process in the form of a retreat with the leadership team to explore the strengths of OSDA in order that they might be able to build on these strengths for the benefit of the community.

Developing Leadership

Arising from this assessment of my personal and ministry context, I determined that the most important focus for my action research project was about facilitating healing in the congregation, and I believed this would most likely be accomplished through the development of the leadership team. The experiences of the congregation needed to be addressed by the leadership team and healing fostered. This was the specific idea I had in serving OSDA, because for any or all ministries (including leadership team) to function well, the congregation needed to be healthy. Through consultation with the leadership team, we dreamed of anchoring our vision, mission, and values in Isaiah 58 and 61, where the broken hearted are made whole and the bruised healed. As a result of my studies, I wanted to use a strengths-focussed approach to the needs of my congregation, specifically, to use Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as an engagement tool and Family Systems Theory (Titleman 2008) to inform my understanding of the relationship dynamics in the congregation. It was my commitment to use the awareness of my MBTI personality preference (INTJ) as well as other self – awareness tools to help achieve the desired outcomes for the congregation.

Strategy / Opportunity

To further assess the context of the OSDA and to help shape my research project, I developed a SWOT analysis.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few committed leaders/ teachers • Openness to collaboration • Desire for church flourishing • Allow for participation of members on social media through WhatsApp. • Open to services of OSDA to community residents • Ministry leaders have vision for growth, team - work, collaboration. • Drive by and curb side pick up available for communion packages. • A handful of members see the church as a family and their church family. • Hospitality/social ministry is thriving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of technological competence • Attendance low at ZOOM meetings • Low profile due to negative reputation • Decreased mission emphasis. • Behind in “paperless” advancement • Many ministries are not functioning. • Reports of strife, disunity/infighting, negativity, and rigidity. • Continuing to do things the same way. • Tradition highly regarded. • Fear and distrust • Members highly anxious at times aggressive • Very few children and youth • Multiple resignations
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing leaders by coaching and mentoring/ Identifying new leaders • Leadership development process • Development of a new ministry called Information Technology Ministry • Connect the OSDA with the larger conference program. • Development of vision and mission • Creativity in community outreach • Participating in community events • Evangelism focusses through virtual presence and phone and mail. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secularization of Society • Competing sensationalized media • Resignations and burn-out. • Many members are seniors and seniors are not technologically competent. • Competition with other churches • Loss of interest in church, isolation • Children and Youth are not involved. • People’s priorities out of order • Lack of connection

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of the D. Min project to practically help the church. 	
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Based on my assessment of the ministry context, I believed there was a need for renewed vision and vision clarity for the leadership team at OSDA. I thus designed a research project that used Appreciative Inquiry as both a methodology and a process to see if AI would be instrumental in achieving the goal of vision clarity for the leadership and the development of a strategic plan as it relates to the community in which the church was located. The Action Research utilized the 4-D Cycle (Cooperrider 2005) of Discovery, Dream, Design and Deliver to realize the leadership vision for the community. The venue for this AI process was a leadership retreat (see Chapter 4).

Force Field Analysis Diagram

Out of this SWOT analysis was born my concept of a renewal of leadership team in OSDA. I also used a force field analysis (Lewin, 1946) to help in understanding what would be needed to effect change. The restraining forces were the range of influences and circumstances that were keeping the status quo the way it is (Lewin 1946). I learned that to create change, driving forces needed to be strengthened or added and restraining forces needed to be weakened or eliminated. Change required unbalancing the equilibrium. We could also change some restraining forces into driving forces. The following model was adapted from Kurt Lewin (Lewin, 1946) to reflect the driving and restraining forces in OSDA. According to Lewin, three steps are needed to achieve change towards a vision or goal in an organizational change context. These are to:

1. **Unfreeze** – the organization has to unfreeze the Driving and Restraining forces that hold it in a state of quasi-equilibrium.
2. **Change** – an imbalance is introduced to the forces so change can take place (increase the Drivers, reduce the Restraints, or do both)
3. **Refreeze** – once the change is complete, the forces are brought back to quasi-equilibrium and the state is refrozen” (Lewin 1946,111).

Table 1a: Force Field Analysis – Present state to be Unfrozen

Driving Forces (Working in the direction of change)		Status Quo (Equilibrium)		Restraining Forces (Counter progress towards goals)
Internal compass to minister from a spiritual center	→	B	←	Church’s apathy/ people’s priority out of order
Need for new ways/ technology	→	A	←	Hostility / Criticism to change
Public Opinion	→	L	←	Old Values
Support from Conference to keep the church alive and thriving	→	A	←	Lack of Trust/ misunderstanding/Rigidity of thought and practice
New leaders and new visions	→	N	←	Competition among members
Some members see the church as their support and family	→	C	←	Fear of failure/ fear of technology
Younger more progressive thinking pastors/elders	→	E	←	Decreased mission emphasis
Educating the people regarding right living- fruit of the Spirit				No female Pastors or Elders as part of congregation preference.
NO CHANGE	←		→	CHANGE

Force Field Analysis – Desired State for Change

To achieve the desired state for change there needed to be no change in the driving forces. The restraining forces were to be weakened for change to be

affected. The FFA was useful in getting me to reflect on the desired state and what were the most effective ways to get to the desired state of leadership vision, vision clarity and connection with the community. The FFA led me to conclude that OSDA needed leadership vision and a strategic plan, leadership training and the building of leadership cohesion. Reflections on the FFA created action items in the Action Plan (See Appendix P). I was also focussed on the need for balance as the leadership team tried to counter restraining forces with the driving forces to attain goals. The FFA was also instrumental in the development of my Action Research project and the use of AI process as an intervention model.

Conclusion

I believed that God called me to leadership, even from childhood. I held leadership positions in school, church, and geographic community in the summer season of my life in the 1970's and 1980s. I have been exposed to different denominations, countries and cultures and therefore have an inclusive perspective regarding meeting the spiritual and wholistic needs of different people. My personality assessment indicated that I was an achiever with positivity as a strength. This has largely been due to a stable family life, with my father being a positive role model who encouraged excellence and ambition. I also attributed the influence of my father to my resilience during challenging times, like the winter season of my life that was painful, dark, lonely, and cold. I demonstrated commitment to God and courage during the winter phase of my life, during which period God allowed integrity checks and pruning in my life. My calling to ministry was evident in the giftedness that God has blessed me with. As a learner,

I continued to invest the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) to serve God, his church, and my fellow human beings.

During the spring season of my life, as I led at OSDA, my challenging ministry context helped to strengthen my faith and tenacity. It also provided opportunities to be like Jesus Christ as I led a marginalized and wounded group of people back to increasing health and a refocus on mission. I did this with Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a method of engagement as well as a process of questioning. Focussing on the leadership team, God gave me the opportunity to help renew the OSDA leadership team's vision for the church and external community through an AI focused leadership retreat. My goal was to lead like Jesus, lead for Jesus, lead to Jesus and lead with Jesus (Brown 2022).

When I was called to the OSDA, my vision was to see it be a place in which the OSDA company of believers showed the fruit of the spirit, where people in the community were healed, blessed, and comforted, where diversity, equity, and inclusion were demonstrated, and most of all, to be a company of believers where Jesus Christ's mission was the center and focus. I was committed to serving as Jesus did by breaking yokes, lifting heavy burdens, healing the hopeless heart, and blessing the broken (Isaiah 58: 6-8 and Isaiah 61:1-3). Unfortunately, this desired vision was not always manifested in OSDA. Change proved to be slow, and I faced much resistance. As described in this chapter, tools like the Sociogram, SWOT analysis and FFA were useful in assessing the context of OSDA and highlighting the areas for improvement and growth. AI proved to be a useful process and a lens for building on the strengths of OSDA and providing

hope. While driving forces included a vision of new ways of doing things to connect with the community, restraining forces were evident in apathy, hostility, rigidity, fear, and competitiveness among the members. I realized that developing and implementing a clear philosophy of Christian leadership would be important to serve well in my context. As discussed in the next chapter, my Christian leadership philosophy was Christ – centered leadership, and in my opinion, it was the best Christian leadership philosophy for my context. My assessment is that only as I emulated Jesus Christ would I grow as a leader at OSDA. The development of my philosophy of Christian Leadership is discussed at length in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

Introduction

Chapter three presents my philosophy of Christian leadership, my journey to that destination and its relevance to my ministry context. In this chapter, I show how I journeyed along a leadership river (Burns 2014) that changed as the landscape and context changed. This chapter starts off with definitions of leadership and an exploration of leadership theories. It shows the different elements of different theories of leadership, what makes them distinct, and what resonated with me. After examining the leadership philosophies of servant-leadership, transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and the futuristic eclectic leadership, I landed at Christ-centered leadership as my operative philosophy. The chapter presents my personal leadership journey, drawing on information regarding my family of origin and even my name as indicators of God's action in doing transforming work in developing me as a leader. In this chapter, I summarize my philosophy of Christian leadership and explain why I think the elements of this philosophy best describes my conviction and practise of leadership.

This chapter also provides the biblical foundation for my philosophy of Christian leadership and its relevance to my ministry context. I looked at biblical

leaders such as Saul, Eli, Paul, and Christ. I concluded that my aspiration is to be a leader like Jesus Christ before the cross, and a leader like the apostle Paul after the cross. The chapter speaks extensively about Paul's leadership, because I see the leadership of Paul in the book of 1 Thessalonians as the Biblical authority on leadership after Jesus Christ. I believe it is the role of the Christian leader (shepherd) to provide care and sound doctrine to the people (sheep). Paul fulfilled his duty in this regard and his leadership was relevant to the people's experiences.

As described in the previous chapter, my congregation (OSDA) needs healing, bringing in from the margin and encouragement that only the Good Samaritan exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ gives. This parable of the Good Samaritan is metaphorically used in this chapter to describe my approach to caring for a marginalized church. The chapter ends with exploring the way forward, with my leadership philosophy as the framework for my leadership development and responsibility.

Leadership Theories

According to Northouse, leadership is a process that involves influence in a group context to achieve a goal (Northouse 2018). This definition infers togetherness and is relationship based with a goal in mind. Northouse (2018) traces theories of leadership back from the 1900s to present. These theories include Domination (1900 to 1929), Trait (1930's), Behavioural (1940's), Situational (1950's), Behaviour that Influences (1960's), Goal oriented (1970's) Transformational (1980's), and leadership as a process that influences from 1990 to present (Northouse 2018). All models and theories of leadership have strengths

and weakness in their application. Some theories of leadership, such as the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), have elements of discrimination and lack moral integrity. According to (Northouse 2018), LMX is a leadership philosophy where the leaders show favoritism to a member in exchange for favours and special treatment that other members of the group are not receiving. Christian leadership, however, holds moral integrity as one of its tenets. There are various philosophies of Christian leadership including transformational servant leadership and authentic leadership which have an “explicit moral dimension” (Northouse 2018, 208). These theories were particularly attractive to me as I journeyed towards my philosophy of Christian leadership. I resonated with the definition of Christian leadership as “a person with God-given capacity and God-given responsibility to influence specific groups of God’s people toward his purposes for the group” (Clinton 2012, 52-53).

I have been on a long and winding journey to establish my philosophy of Christian leadership. From the commencement of the journey, I knew that the destination of my philosophy of Christian leadership would be Bible based, authentic, transformational, and reflecting the type of leadership that Jesus Christ modelled. This is because I view Jesus Christ as the “leader of leaders” (Arrow Leadership, Leadership Development Training Manual 2021, 6) and strive to emulate the ideology, style, character, and philosophy of Jesus Christ within the parameters of my ministry context. I considered what philosophy of Christian leadership Jesus Christ would say he held. I concluded that Jesus Christ, being God, could only emulate himself, just as he could only swear by himself (Gen

22:16), since there is none greater (Hebrews 6:13). I have highlighted servant-leadership, transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and Christ-centered leadership in this chapter as important models I considered in developing my philosophy of leadership.

Based on my examination of these various theories, I determined that Christ-centered leadership encapsulates my philosophy of Christian leadership. This leadership philosophy includes all other authentic, altruistic, and morally upright philosophies as components of a Christ-centered philosophy. This Christ-centered philosophy may be described as inclusive and eclectic, taking elements from other leadership philosophies to make one.

Definitions of Leadership

According to Northouse (2018), leadership is a process and is about relationships. Leadership is a complex process that is multidimensional and multilayered. People define leadership differently depending on the person. How a person defines leadership will determine how they practise leadership.

Northouse defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2018, 5). My understanding of leadership is drawn primarily from this definition. The common goal for me is mission and the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20.

My understanding of a Christ-centered leadership philosophy is leadership by Jesus, like Jesus, for Jesus and to Jesus (Arrow Leadership, Leadership Development Training Manual 2021,6). It encompasses moral and practical

components for effective leadership aimed at influencing people towards the building up of the kingdom of God.

Peter Northouse, in his book *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (2018) describes different approaches and theories of leadership and how relevant they are to different situations. He looks at different leadership approaches and theories over the past 100 years and states that “leadership will continue to have different meanings for different people. The bottom line is that leadership is a complex concept for which definition may be long in flux” (Northouse 2018, 4).

Northouse examines ways to conceptualize leadership, including as a power relationship, as a transformational process or from a skills perspective (Northouse, 2018).

I was intrigued by Robert Greenleaf’s book *The Servant as Leader* (1970) on servant-leadership and spent much time in reflection. At one time, I was sure that my philosophy of Christian leadership was servant –leadership. Later, I determined that it is not Greenleaf’s work on servant leadership that has most influenced my philosophy on leadership. Rather, my philosophy is Christ-centered leadership, which includes servant leadership but also encompasses transformational leadership that is from Jesus Christ (Logos the Living and Eternal Word) and his example in Scriptures. Jesus Christ’s example is for me the source and independent variable, with Greenleaf’s work being a manifestation of a leadership theory and practise that Jesus had already taught and exemplified. In other words, servant-leadership in practise is not new. The term may have been emphasized in the writings of Greenleaf (1970), but the practise of servant-

leadership existed from the time of Jesus Christ. Christian leaders should have Christ-like values, virtues and characteristics that are necessary to function effectively as servants of Jesus Christ, effectively lead change, and dismantle oppressive systems in the face of current injustices in the world. According to King (2016), Christian leaders must meet the needs of others who are God's people.

I struggled with whether my philosophy of Christian leadership was transformational. This is because I desired transformation of my present ministry context where much change was needed, but I recognized it would be challenging to measure and evaluate how much transformation was taking place because of my leadership, or to assess the speed of the transformation process and the long-term outcome of my efforts towards transformation. Most importantly, I know I am a creature of inadequacy and insufficiency and am totally dependent on God: "not that we are sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5). As I reflected on my leadership philosophy, and thought to myself "who can I transform?" I realized that all transformation to positive change must be done by the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit is critical to the transformation process I have envisioned for the church. It is the Holy Spirit that transforms, and I am just an agent of the transformational power of God through the Holy Spirit. Northouse states that, "Transformational leaders are recognized as change agents" (Northouse 2018, 192). God, however, is the ultimate change agent.

In addition, from Northouse's description of authentic leadership, it appears to be part and parcel of transformational leadership. Northouse (2018) indicates that authentic leadership is a developmental process where the leader is self aware and has an "internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency" (Northouse 2018, 203). Based on this definition of authentic leadership, I believed that the authentic leadership model could also be included as part of my leadership philosophy because "similar to transformational and servant leadership, authentic leadership has an implicit moral dimension" (Northouse 2018, 208). I initially thought that transformation would be that of the church members and fellow pastors on the team, but as I continued my reading and reflection, I realized that I as leader also am going through transformation and need ongoing transformation at various levels.

Now at the conclusion of my program of studies, I have realized that my philosophy is Christ-centered leadership more than all the others. I felt convicted that I am first and foremost a Christ-centered leader. Christ-centered leadership is my overarching philosophy and under this umbrella, and as part of being a Christ-centered leader, I am a servant leader, a transformational leader, and an authentic leader. This chapter thus focuses on my Christ-centered leadership philosophy. It looks at my personal ministry leadership journey and my context and describes why I came to believe my Christ-centered philosophy of leadership is well-suited for my present ministry context.

Leaders have a responsibility to lead or govern their own behaviors in humility and service. I thus have learned that personal leadership is my primary

leadership responsibility. I must walk the talk with deep spiritual intimacy, Godly character, vibrant relationships, and significant service. How I lead myself is critical. Being in the image of God my father, I must cultivate a Godly character of service and humility. If leaders do not lead themselves well, they may be “spiritually snatched, scorched, or choked” (Brown 2015, 17). According to Northouse (2018), the followers and I are in this together. “Transformational leadership is concerned with improving performance of followers and developing followers to their fullest potential” (Northouse 2018, 169).

The Journey – Emergence of My Leadership Philosophy

My philosophy of Christian leadership emerged over time, particularly as I went through the DMin program and reflected on the readings and class discussions. As noted above, I started out believing that my leadership philosophy must be servant-leadership since Jesus Christ was the greatest leader and referred to Himself as a servant. In addition, Jesus Christ promoted servanthood to lead. Early in my program of studies, I reflected on Christian leadership and wrote that Christian leadership is transformative and based on high moral standards, with service being only a part of transformative leadership. I was ambivalent about whether my philosophy was that of transformational leadership, wondering if I could achieve transformational leadership since I myself needed transformation. Transformational leadership is about mobilizing people and resources for the mutual benefit of both leaders and followers. I knew that both servant-leadership (my initial choice) and transformational leadership were both part of Christian

leadership but was conflicted about which of the two philosophies best aligned with my approach to Christian leadership.

As I contemplated the different leadership philosophies, approaches, and theories, all of them kept taking me back to the throne of God. As I reasoned through my philosophy of Christian leadership, I did my own personal variation of a leadership river based on inspiration from Burns (2014) and Northouse (2018), as I journeyed to a Christ-centered leadership philosophy (See Appendix L).

All the tributaries in my version of a leadership river came from and ended up back with God as source. The only leadership theory that did not flow back to God in my diagram of a leadership river (Appendix Q) was the leader-member exchange (LMX). This is because while the leader-member exchange endorses the value of relationships, which is a strength of the theory, the LMX theory is criticized for promoting favouritism and partiality. Jesus Christ has shown that He is not partial, nor does He show favouritism as stated in Romans 2:11. Even then, the source of this leader-member exchange leadership is still God. I see the leader-member exchange theory as a distortion of what God intended as ideal and has shown through Jesus Christ and the Christ-centered leadership model.

As indicated, initially my desire was to be a Christian leader through servant leadership that was transformative and of high moral standards, based on, and anchored in, the word of God. I have now changed from servant-leadership and transformational leadership to Christ-centered leadership philosophy as my primary leadership philosophy.

As depicted in my leadership river (Appendix Q), my Christ-centered leadership philosophy considers all leadership as coming from God (Father, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit). The Holy Spirit is included as the Holy Spirit is equally a leader as the Father and Son. The Holy Spirit is a foreground figure rather than a background figure in the plan of creation, mission, and salvation. It was the Holy Spirit that was “hovering over the face of the waters” in Genesis 1:2. The three arrows coming from the throne of God on the north end of the diagram represent the Trinity of Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. I was intentional in putting the word Trinity at all four sides of my journey to a Christ – centered leadership philosophy. This is because God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are one leader, united in purpose and yet three leaders in their own function as one God. This is the mystery of the Trinity (three in one). The work and leadership of one member of the Trinity complements the work and leadership of the other as they lead through community with one another. The Trinity emulates team leadership and shared leadership. Jesus Christ who was with God from the beginning and created all things (John 1) and said, “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). In confirmation of the oneness, Jesus said, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30). The “28 Fundamental Beliefs” of the Seventh-day Adventist church (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2015) reflect my beliefs about the oneness of God as follows:

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension yet known through His self-revelation. God, who is love, is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Gen. 1:26) (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2015, 3).

I thus understand Christ-centered leadership as reflecting what is in the mind and heart of a triune God (1 Samuel 2:35). My leadership flows from the Trinity as they pour into me the traits, skills, behaviours, and situations that will foster and construct the leader they want in me. This includes servant leadership and authentic, adaptive, and transformational leadership. Jesus Christ is centered, and I see Christ-centered leadership as producing servant, transformational, and adaptive leadership, sensitivity to gender and culture, team leadership and authentic leadership that influences the achievement of mission.

My leadership philosophy has been shaped by my personal ministry context as described in Chapter 2. My journey to formal professional ministry leadership commenced in 1990, when I chose a career of service to others over economic gain. After training and experience in the business sector, I changed careers and pursued a degree in science and social work. I have been a leader in the field of social work since 1994. I went into social work because I thought it was the closest thing to ministry at a time when it was not popular for women to go into pastoral ministry. I wanted to be like Jesus Christ and thought that Christ exemplified sacrificial care of others. I admired the ministry of Jesus Christ among people and desired to emulate Christ even then. As previously noted, I completed my Master of Social Work degree in the advanced standing stream (ten months) in 2005, as a single parent (surviving divorce) with three young sons. I had the Master of Social Work (MSW) designation and the Registered Social Worker (RSW) designation, but I was not fulfilled. For me it was not enough to be a social worker and I was not content. Some concerns have been expressed in

the literature that many pastors become like social workers, neglecting the spiritual to care for the psychological only. Purves (2004) for example is critical regarding pastors who act like social workers and psychologists, neglecting the salvific part of their calling. Purves describes disciplines such as social work and psychology as “auxiliary disciplines” (Purves 2004, 5). I share the same sentiment. In *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Purves 2004), pastors are cautioned against believing that the work of the pastor replaces the work of God and reminded that Jesus Christ must be the driving force in all ministry endeavours. In addition, Purves indicates that many pastors have become social workers by “a lack of attention to eschatology...[that] has ill equipped pastoral work to deal with forsakenness, death, and deadly systems of the world” (Purves 2004,146).

I was experiencing the same sentiment even before reading Purves (2004) as I reflected on my purpose in life and my calling to serve. I did not want to just be a social worker. In September 2014, I answered “yes” to a call to Gospel Ministry. In 2019 I completed my Master of Pastoral Studies and answered a call to ministry leadership. I see the responsibility of my ministry leadership as a privilege. I believe I am accountable to the Creator, my fellowman and myself to use this privilege for the wholistic growth and development of others. It is therefore important that the quality of my leadership is the highest possible, through education, dedication, commitment, and humility. This is why I pursued education from Tyndale University’s DMin program to equip me for this service.

I look forward to continuing this chapter of my ministerial life and focus with eager anticipation of any challenges that may arise. I have faith that as I pursue Christ-centered leadership, I will become the leader God has called me to be. I believe I will be successful because like Joseph (Genesis 39:23), the Lord is with me. The DMin program has been an excellent investment of time, resources, and energy in self development to achieve my calling to Christ-centered leadership. My Christ-centered leadership philosophy is characterized by the values of empathy, understanding, kindness, tolerance, and listening and will help me personify the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). My service to God and others is to be written on the canvass of love according to I Corinthians 13. This is where my passion lies. Honouring Jesus' command is very important to me personally. As I embark on the journey of Christ-centered leadership, I say to Jesus Christ the Creator:

If you ask me for an offering, I'd give it.
If you wanted sacrifice I would obey,
But my life is all I have, and I will live it, dedicated to the honour of your name.
Gladly will I bow down as your servant,
Gladly I will wait for your command,
I commit my trust to you for you deserve it,
I delight within the guidance of your hand.
Here I am and I long to do your will,
Here I am I follow your command,
Here I am until my calling is fulfilled, Here I am. (Chapman, 2016)

As I continue to implement the philosophy of Christ-centered leadership, I aspire to the highest standards of moral and ethical conduct as I refocus the

church on mission. The currency of leadership is to trust Jesus Christ as leader and model His behaviour in the face of changing culture.

As noted above, as I journeyed toward my leadership philosophy, I kept changing the words and names to describe my philosophy of Christian leadership. At one point, I concluded that my philosophy of Christian leadership had to be eclectic, pulling from a multitude of different philosophies, and that my model was futuristic, born out of my indecision about what was my philosophy of Christian leadership. As I now reflect on my Christ-centered leadership philosophy, I see it as being about service (Isaiah 58: 6-9; Isaiah 61:1-3; Matthew 25: 34-46; Luke 4) as well as about thinking theologically. It is about using my call and giftedness to transform, mobilize and train people (other leaders) for the work of mission/ministry. It is to be an equipper of others for the edification of the church (body of Christ), as together we accomplish mission.

The Jesus Christ-centered method (Brown 2015) is where I anchor my practical theology methodology. I believe there is no practical theology without the example of Jesus Christ as outlined in the Bible. The practical theology methodology integrates the development of my faith, my experiences, theological thinking, theological action (practical theology) and my theological reflections. I hold to Jesus Christ's philosophy of leadership and people development. Jesus Christ was practical and led through relationship building, conversations, and shared leadership. He was personable and practised daily routines with His ministry partners. His leadership was transformational and practical as He served. Personally, I acknowledge that I need to identify with the people while

persevering and showing commitment. I need to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit teaching love as the greatest spiritual gift. I desire to be bold in the spirit and rebuke people when necessary. My goal is to form ministry teams to foster an environment of friendship and be devoted to people as I journey with them in ministry.

My Philosophy of Christian Leadership

After much struggle and reflection, I landed at Christ-centered leadership as my operative philosophy of Christian leadership. As indicated, my personal leadership journey was shaped by my family of origin, life experiences, and even my name (which means leader). At the end of my journey, my destination was Christ-centered leadership because Jesus Christ's ministry was a ministry of compassion as he interacted with and met the needs of wounded people who had experienced oppression and marginalization. I named my ministry philosophy as Christ-centered as it embodies compassion as the nucleus or bud from which flowers attitudes and practices consistent with that modelled by Jesus Christ. Furthermore, my ministry context required a leadership philosophy seasoned with courage (internal strength), compassion (external action) and resourcefulness (vertical and horizontal partnerships).

I have depicted my model of Christian Leadership in the diagram below. It shows God (Father, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit) as inside me and my philosophy of leadership. This in turn allows for courage, compassion, and resourcefulness to flower and to be manifested in conceptual, human, and technical skills of leadership. In my model, the completion and the perfection of Christ's influence

are shown with the use of circles that depict flowering in leadership from the inside out. It is a relational model centered in the triune God.

Model of My Philosophy of Christian Leadership - Christ Centered Leadership

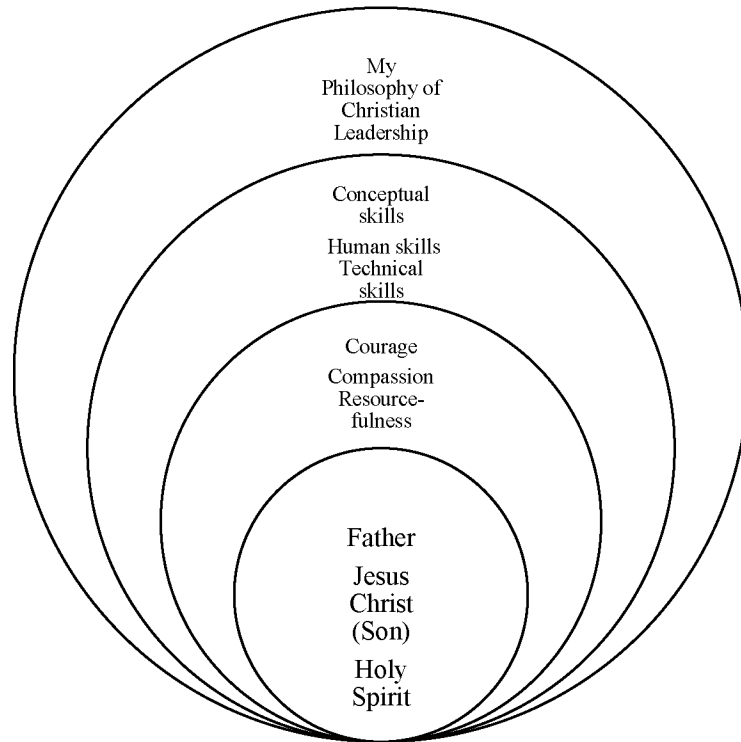


Figure 1. Model of My Philosophy of Christian Leadership

I also chose the Christ-centered model as it had eschatological implications for the return of Jesus Christ (The Good Samaritan) and because of my denomination's emphasis the Second Advent. The desire to emulate Jesus Christ was my internal motivation. I desired to emulate Christ in ministry with compassion as Jesus Christ led with compassion.

Christ-centered leadership means that Jesus Christ, as part of the Trinity, is the first and the last and the Alpha and Omega in my Christian leadership philosophy. While other leadership philosophies are also useful, altruistic, moral and have proven to be effective and even transformational, Jesus Christ's model is

the ideal. I dare say there is no model of Christian leadership superior to Christ-centered leadership. Leadership is God's (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) idea, His initiative; He made it and is the originator of Christian leadership. Other models of Christian leadership are by-products of Christ-centered leadership. The leadership of Jesus Christ is authentic, adaptive, team-oriented, and gender and culture sensitive. Jesus Christ's model of leadership encompasses various traits, skills, and other behavioural approaches in different situations. Jesus Christ has shown that He is, was and will be an unsurpassed leader to serve and transform individuals and groups at various levels and in various capacities, including spiritual transformation. Jesus Christ led and is still leading individuals, groups, and communities. As I reflect on Christian leadership philosophies, I am confident that no one can improve upon Jesus Christ's leadership model. Jesus Christ modelled all good leadership qualities for "every good and perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). In my opinion, a Christ-centered leadership philosophy is superior. Even the term "Christian Leadership" has Christ as the source of this type of leadership.

In the following sections, I will further explain why I have settled on Christ-centered leadership as my Christian leadership philosophy.

Biblical Texts and Theological Foundation

Though it went through an emergence, there were some aspects of my leadership philosophy that I kept constant. One of them is that Christian leadership must be held accountable to biblical standards of morality that are cross cultural and relevant to every person. Christian leadership transforms the

individual and organization based on biblical standards as leaders navigate and adapt to a complex and changing world. Burns (2014) said that Christian leadership theory is informed by the morality of the Bible. For Christian leaders, sanctification is a lifelong journey with the Bible being central. Leaders and followers are raised to a plane of higher motivation and morality when the leadership is Christ-centered and transformational.

According to the Burns (2014), there are five influences of leadership theory. These are the Word (Logos/Christ), business management, the industrial revolution, political science, and Christ as “the basis for moral leadership” (Burns 2014, 94). All truth comes from God, the truth of leadership is from the Word (Logos/Christ). According to Burns (2014), all the truths contained in the various theories of leadership (political science, business management, etc.) have its source from God. I agree with Burns (2014) about the concept of leadership and that all leadership in general comes from God.

As an avid consultant of the Scriptures, focussing my philosophy of Christian leadership on Christ-centered leadership is an engaging and favourite pastime. The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 continues to be my motivation. I would describe it as the current that makes my leadership river flow. As such, the foundation of my leadership philosophy is heavily biblical in nature. The centrality of Scripture applies to my leadership philosophy of Christ-centered leadership. I am accountable to God for high moral standards based on the Bible. God’s moral laws (Ten Commandments) contained in the Bible point out sin and provide direction. The power of the Bible is central to my mission and my

reflection as the Holy Spirit inspires and guides me. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). I believe I should instruct by example as well as by using the word of God. In my ministry context, my congregation needs to be nurtured, healed, brought in from the margin and cared for while refocussing on “a burning sense of mission” (Fernando 2002, 82). The theological foundation for my Christ-centered leadership philosophy is:

And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called "benefactors". But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves...yet I am among you as the One who serves. (Luke 22: 25-26)

According to Damazio (1988), leadership supports the law of reproduction in that if we look to Jesus Christ, our leadership is reproduced into the image of Christ’s leadership. Jesus Christ’s leadership created change and questioned cultural norms. He was clear that the hierarchal and authoritarian nature of Gentile leadership was different and even opposite to the leadership he expected of his followers. Jesus Christ led through relationship building, conversations, and shared leadership. He was personable and practiced daily routines with his ministry partners (the disciples). His leadership was shared partnership. Jesus Christ shared ministry with his followers through relationship and I must do the same.

In keeping with Burns (2014), my desire is to create Christian leadership that will be transformative and of high moral standard based on and anchored in

the Word of God (Bible). It is noteworthy that, as in Burns (2014), I have used the word Logos intentionally to mean Jesus Christ, as distinct from the Bible (the written word) that testifies of Logos (Christ).

The action of Jesus Christ (Christopraxis) cannot be separated from Scripture because the Bible testifies of Jesus Christ, beginning at Moses (Genesis) through to Revelation. My Christian leadership philosophy of Christ-centered leadership is guided by the Bible. Jesus and the Bible testify of each other and have equal place in the center of mission and practical theology. The resurrected Jesus Christ (having the deepest relationship with God) centralizes the scriptures: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all scripture the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27), as He reveals Himself and His mission. I believe the Bible/Word is central to mission. The Bible cannot be and should not be removed from the center of any Christian Leadership theory. The Bible is the God-breathed revelation of Jesus Christ that shows God to be the transparent leader of his mission. “In *Revelation* we find as announced... the ideology of transparencies and transparent leadership” (Bell 2014, 229). As it relates to Christopraxis, “surely the Lord will do nothing, without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). Jesus Christ reveals through the written word (Bible) in the actions of Jesus Christ (Logos) the living and eternal Word.

As I reflected on my philosophy of Christian leadership (Christ-centered), I affirmed anew that Christian leaders are leaders are guided by the Bible. My

example of Jesus Christ's leadership is all contained in the pages of the Bible. The Bible is my reference point.

Biblical Relevance to My Ministry Context

The following biblical passages have been relevant to the operationalizing of my ministry philosophy: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all scripture the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:27)." It is all about Jesus Christ, whether scripture or ministry or mission or service.

I have also been struck by how God, through Isaiah, reminded Israel of the role of social justice in salvation (Isaiah 58: 6-8). Isaiah was not the only prophet that was a social justice activist. Other prophets instituted social mechanisms to ensure the oppressed and less fortunate were cared for. They held the wealthy and privileged accountable for protection and liberation of the marginalized and disadvantaged. As noted by Walton et al. (2013):

The prophets called on the Israelites to police their own society and to purge the institutions and the systems of injustices inherent in them... the prophets held the leadership and the wealthy classes accountable for preservation of justice for all levels of society as had been stipulated in the covenant... righteousness and justice went together in the ancient world and went beyond the functioning of the court system. They were carried out by means of social legislation and social reforms that would proactively care for the weak and protect them. They were characterized by kindness and mercy, and they led to peace, equity and personal freedom, and an end to oppression through exploitation (Walton et. al. 2013, 278).

This stood out for me as my church context appeared to put so much emphasis on formal education, even among officers of the local church. This lends itself to an elitist approach to leadership that can be unjust, damaging and

not effective for spiritual health. As a member of the pastoral staff, I must remember that God can use all kinds of people. I thus gave the seniors of OSDA the opportunity to lead out in services, using kind words to encourage them, focussing on the positives, and acknowledging their spiritual gifts and contributions. Jesus Christ did the same when He was on earth. The Good Samaritan story exemplifies the value of all people and is a rebuke to religiously pious who by acts of omission or commission, “pass by on the other side” and do not accept social, economic, and spiritual responsibility for the condition of other. In *Evangelical Practical Theology* (Anderson, 2001), Ray Anderson indicates that the central source for mission (practical theology) is Christopraxis. As I critically reflected on this concept, it occurred to me that Jesus was the good leader as well as the good neighbor. I showed love in practical ways by verbally affirming people in OSDA while seizing opportunities to learn from them, putting their needs above my own. I believed caring for the less fortunate was an eschatological criterion for eternal life as stated in Isaiah 58 and Luke 4. With faith, inspiration and motivation rooted in the commission to serve others and to act justly, I desired to emulate Jesus Christ with a leadership philosophy of compassion, healing, and restoration. I continued this journey to fulfill the commission found in Isaiah 58 and Isaiah 61 that encourages service to humankind as true religion. I wanted to be a leader that addresses social injustice. I wanted to be a just leader doing what the Lord requires which is to “act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with ... God” (Micah 6:8).

David, as leader, has taught me that good leadership is about humility, dependence on God and trusting God. Leaders must also be brave and courageous. When I thought of what not to do as a leader, I considered King Saul who said he did wrong for fear of the people: “Then Saul admitted to Samuel. “Yes, I have sinned. I have disobeyed your instructions. I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded” (I Samuel 15:24). Rather than Christ-centered leadership where accountability to God mattered, Saul seemed to have engaged in self-centered leadership. Saul put his needs to be safe above the need to act with integrity and right doing. Because of fear, Saul compromised accountability to God. If God was at the center of King Saul’s leadership philosophy, he would have led with confidence and courage following God as God led him. For King Saul his “audience of significance “(Nelson and Dickens 2015, 37) was his followers and himself. I wanted my “audience of significance” (Nelson and Dickens 2015, 37) to be God in the person of Jesus Christ. As stated by Heifetz and Linsky (2017), leaders should stay the course despite conflict and criticism since their purpose and initiative is greater than themselves. This is my goal.

If I were to choose a biblical leader outside of Jesus Christ to emulate it would be the apostle, Paul. Paul preached “Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2) and was filled with zeal for mission, passion for ministry. He was schooled in the school of the prophets and was a successful leader despite opposition within and without the church and community. I believed Paul demonstrated a Christ-centered leadership philosophy as he nurtured the people and achieved mission. Whenever I thought of an excellent reference to leadership

in the Bible apart from Jesus Christ, I thought of the apostle Paul after the cross as the authority on Christian leadership.

Paul gave thanks to God and told the people that he was praying for them (1 Thessalonians 1:2). Paul also encouraged the people to please God rather than men and to be bold as they spread the gospel. In the middle of the letter, Paul offered a prayer for the people in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonica 3:11-13). Paul talked about remembering and celebrating the good work and past achievement (1 Thessalonians 1:3-8, 5:11,3:6-7) of the people. He gave positive encouragement and commendations for faith and good works. He demonstrated sincerity of communication and appreciation.

It can be said that God is the audience of significance in 1 Thessalonians 2:4. Paul keeps goal-focussed (1 Thessalonians 1:10, 2:12, 4:1). Paul gave constant endorsement that the Thessalonians' faith has gone forth with success. He told them how proud he was of them. Paul believed in the priesthood of believers. Paul planted the church and sent the members out to share the gospel, thereby growing the church in his absence through total member involvement. Paul endorsed that spreading the word of the Lord everywhere was the duty of all newly converted. Paul built relationships. He was nurturing and expressed love and care (1 Thessalonians 2:8, 11). Paul used the metaphor of a breastfeeding mother and the tenderness she has towards her baby to describe his affection towards the people. Paul appealed to their emotional memory as he encouraged reminiscing about victories and time spent together. Paul used words with positive emotional overtones to describe the relationship with the church at Thessalonica.

Paul asked that the people also show love and care to each other, to live respectfully in love. Paul acknowledged hardships, challenges, and struggles within the context of persecution (1 Thessalonians 2:14, 3:4). He reminded them that they received the word with great affliction. Paul acknowledged the reality of life that sufferings and persecution were happening (1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2:14-15, 3:3-4). Christians were being killed in Thessalonica and so his teaching about what happens after we die was relevant to the current situation and context. Paul also gave his own story and his own testimony about how he was treated in Philippi. Paul's testimony served as an instrument of encouragement.

Paul delegated when he was not the best person for the job. For example, Paul sent Timothy as this was the best course of action based on the situation. He coached, mentored, and used creativity, thinking outside the box in his ministry approach. Paul was a sender, following in the footsteps of God who sent Jesus and Jesus who sent the disciples. Paul sent Timothy (1 Thessalonians 3:2) with a good reference indicating that Timothy was "our brother and minister of God, and a fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ" (1 Thessalonians 3:1). Paul provided Timothy with the opportunity to be autonomous and to show his giftedness and commitment to God's cause. Paul gave Timothy the opportunity to show leadership.

Paul worked in a ministry team of three, with himself, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy. Paul was inclusive and stated that all three people were writing the letter, even though it may have been he alone was doing the writing. Paul demonstrated commitment (1 Thessalonians 3:5) to giving feedback. Paul

reported back (feedback) to the people, indicating in his letter how they were growing in the faith. In sending Timothy back, Paul showed that he believed in follow-up and feedback. Paul provided practical suggestions (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 6, 9, 11) as he took an interest in the spiritual development of people and encouraged them to live a holy life. Paul's counsels were relevant to the people and the times. Paul demonstrated concern and care (1 Thessalonians 2:11, 3:13, 4:1). 1 Thessalonians showed that Paul was interested in all aspects of the people's development. Paul provided teachings on the basics of Christian living and expressed that he wished for them a robust Christian life. Paul did not want them to be ignorant (1 Thessalonians 4:13) but to have a proper understanding of the doctrine of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Paul gave Timothy the opportunity to show leadership in ministry and to show that Paul's mentoring of the people and Timothy was effective.

Paul was an authentic servant of Jesus Christ and the people. Paul exemplified effective leadership practices, anchored in Christ-centered leadership philosophy. This was evident in his interactions with church members, the public, colleagues like Timothy and self-leadership. Paul engaged in succession planning, coaching, and mentoring. He was encouraging, delegated and had an optimistic outlook giving hope to people. His Christ-centered ministry resulted in transformation of people's hearts and lives. The impacts of Paul's leadership outlived him for hundreds of years.

The book of 1 Thessalonians and the example of Paul has been very important to my journey towards a philosophy of Christ-centered leadership. I

saw Paul as my mentor and reference his writings as a resource in church administration, church discipline, preaching, relationships and other pertinent attributes of my ministry leadership. I have emulated Paul's leadership style by giving thanks to God always and acknowledging and appreciating the contributions of people to ministry. This also aligned with the AI process of focusing on strengths that I endeavored to use to change OSDA's trajectory for better. I have tried to express and show love, value what is best, and affirm others as gifted by God for the growth of the kingdom of God. This affirmation of others was also characteristic of the AI model. I taught the Bible and was outward focussed on mission. I emulated Paul by seeking to grow leaders such as Timothy and gave them autonomy to function in leadership roles. I acknowledged the realities of the situation and the challenges individuals faced personally and as a group. I sought to be strength focussed and encouraging. I also wanted to be practical as I counseled and set an example for Godly living. I engaged in much prayer for the Holy Spirit's guidance. I ended my messages with hope, comforting people with God's words. The AI process in my field research project was also about restoration and hope.

Leading From the Inside Out

The following scripture formed part of my personal statement that carried me through at least three universities and seminaries over the past eight years:

Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you
break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that
you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the

naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' (Isaiah 58:6-9 NKJV)

This is the prophetic word of Jesus Christ through the prophet Isaiah. With faith, inspiration and motivation rooted in love for Jesus Christ, the commission to serve others, and the Great Commission, I desired to emulate Jesus Christ with a ministry of compassion, healing, and restoration. As I embarked on theological studies at three different seminaries, my motto was “service to mankind above service to self.” This was my internal motivation. As noted, there were external conditions that influenced my leadership model and philosophy as God created and developed a leader in and from me. My leadership development was a work of God to replicate Himself and His leadership in me.

Applying My Philosophy to My Ministry Context

As stated in Chapter Two, my ministry context was being a member of the pastoral team of a small company of believers in Oakville, Ontario. This OSDA company was dying after many years of challenges and was described as a “failure to thrive” church. The congregation was largely retired women of Caribbean heritage. The mission of the church had slipped and there was much hurt in the church. There had been conflict within the ministries and the leadership team. In September 2020 there was mass resignations of pastors, elders, and ministry leaders. As a trained pastor, I was asked to come from another church to serve as lead elder of the OSDA. This was an alternative to

closing the OSDA permanently. This was the context in which I lived out my Christ-centered leadership philosophy.

Caring For the Wounded At OSDA

My congregation needed a lot of care and a lot of change. I saw the change as necessary because I saw the congregation as marginalized, downtrodden, and wounded. My congregation, made up mostly of seniors, were further marginalized because of lack of technological competence. King (2016) mentions several prophets who cared for the poor and marginalized. King's writings encouraged me to "see people as God sees them" (King 2016, 60), and to gather the congregation from the margins. Like King (2016), I believed the Almighty God suffers with them and was with them in their marginalized state. I had a vision that God would lift my congregation, and this required me to bring them hope, courage, and solidarity. Jesus Christ has made provision for their healing because He is compassionate.

I could see an appetite for new ways of doing things from the new leaders, to refocus on mission and to re-build relationships with each other and the external community. I resonated with the point made by Dickens et al. (2015) "an unpredictable world requires an organizational system that gives primary value to the relationships" (Dickens et al. 2015, 65) and that "healthy and effective organizations have servant leaders" (Dickens et al. 2015, 28). These concepts from *Leading in Disorienting Times: Navigating Church and Organizational Change* (Dickens et al., 2015) were important in forming my philosophy of leadership. These were disorienting times at the OSDA company of believers.

In my efforts to help develop leadership vision at OSDA, I demonstrated Christ-centered leadership by “motivating followers to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the team, organization, or community” (Northouse 2018, 179).

If I were to choose a Greek word to describe my philosophy of Christian leadership, the word would be “*episcopo*” meaning overseer. The illustration of overseeing the flock resonated with me as I saw ministry leadership as a responsibility to shepherd the flock. This required accountability to self and God, while I “shepherd the church” according to Luke 15:3-7. The shepherd feeds, frees, seeks, protects, provides for, cares for, plans for, comforts, nurtures, and considers the needs of the sheep. For me, God’s sheep were not just people in the church but also people in the geographic community. Some sheep were lost and needed to be found and nurtured, their broken hearts healed. Some needed to be liberated from addiction, marginalization, injustices, and oppression in all its forms; prisoners needed to be visited and the good news of Jesus Christ told to them. When I was engaged in activities (practical theology) that responded to social injustice and situations of oppression and other people’s need, I knew the Spirit of the Lord was on me:

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1-3)

The *Shape of Practical Theology* (Anderson 2001) makes constant reference to Isaiah 58 and 61 and resonates with my calling. Isaiah 58 and 61 were the framework for my ministry. Osmer (2008) indicated that the structure of practical theology is task focussed. This was comforting to me as I had been described by others as task focussed in response to challenges. There was a need for pragmatic tasks, even as I thought and reflected on theology. I have concluded that “thinking theology” feeds “doing theology” which in turn feeds “thinking theology” and the cycle continues. This was because I thought, then I did (practical), and I thought again (reflect) and did again. I thought the two concepts were symbiotic and interdependent. Both were needed in this disorienting time riddled with social injustice and oppression. As stated in scripture, “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:26).

Practical Theology and Christ-Centered Leadership

Vanhoozer et al. (2007) indicated in *Everyday Theology* that there is no difference between practical theology and any other theology of the mission of the church. Practical theology is biblical and affects all areas of life, otherwise what would be the point of any theology that is not practical theology. I agreed with Vanhoozer et al. (2007) about the importance of ensuring the practicality of my leadership philosophy. As my faith sought understanding (Vanhoozer et al. 2007), I needed to figure out where God was at work and partner with Him.

Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation (Purves, 2004) promotes union with Christ in ministry where ministry belongs to Jesus Christ and where a minister or pastor is a participant in that ministry. This

resonated with my ministry philosophy. Purves (2004) named Jesus Christ as the center and focus of all ministries. According to Purves, “It is not Jesus who needs proclamation, but proclamation needs Jesus” (Purves 2004, 160). Ministry is presented as an “act of God” (Purves 2004, xvi), with Jesus Christ being the act of love, grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and atonement. As I reflected on my leadership philosophy, I agreed with Purves (2004) that “it is not Jesus Christ who needs pastoral work; it is pastoral work that needs Jesus” (Purves 2004, 10). Jesus Christ is the foundation for all doctrine and teachings of the church.

Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation (Purves 2004)

puts Jesus Christ as number one and at center of all ministries and acts of mission. This was the reason I was drawn to Purves (2004). Even as I thought of service and the alignment of serving to my leadership philosophy, grace is personified in the person of Jesus Christ and “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is the mission of God to serve” (Purves 2004, 33). Jesus Christ is grace in action. It was my desire to give a complete account of Jesus Christ as I led. Purves said that the account of Jesus’ ministry “is no complete account... without including... teachings concerning the kingdom of God and a reflection on His resurrection and his coming again” (Purves 2004, 128). I believed that I should focus on the second coming of Jesus Christ and that I am called to teach people about eschatological events. That is the reason I am a Seventh-day Adventist because I believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ. The task of my ministry leadership should include eschatology since Jesus Christ’s teachings included teachings about the coming of the kingdom of God and that He will come again. I also believed that Jesus Christ

should be first, front, and center of all I do. Purves (2004) endorses what I had in my heart, that I needed to lead, live, and teach doctrines and practises rooted in Jesus Christ. I was committed to giving attention to eschatology in my ministry and to balancing my messages about a God who was, is, and is to come. I did not want to fall into the trap of just caring for people and building relationships within the geographical residential community without eschatological focus.

Practical Theology – Symbiotic Relationships in Christ-Centered Leadership

According to Northouse (2018), leadership is ultimately about relationships. As God builds relationship with me, He partners with me in leadership. The concept that “God does ministry and not us” (Purves 2004, 45) relieved much burden for me, especially since in truth, ministry is what Jesus Christ does and “we share in His ministry in which He ministers the things of God” (Purves 2004, 45). As I engaged in practical theology, accepted the gift of leadership from God, and committed to using the gift the way Jesus Christ did, then I did have to worry about transformation for that would be a natural by product of Christ-centered leadership. Even hermeneutics in which I prided myself may have been viewed as the interpretation of Jesus Christ. The following passage supports this reasoning: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all scripture the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). This scripture passage confirms that “the constant factor in hermeneutics is Jesus. I agree that Christian hermeneutics must move between the poles of the cross and the future of Jesus” (Purves 2004, 138).

Application of Christ-Centered Leadership Philosophy to My Present

Ministry Context

As I reflected on my ministry context, words such as pain, hurt, anger, fear, and rejection came to mind. The people needed the tender loving care of their leader to heal. They needed to be healthy before they could share and impart to the external community. The OSDA was a marginalized group within that community and even within their own denominational church system. Due to the pain, brokenness, and rejection the members had experienced, I decided to look at stories of marginalization to see how Jesus Christ led and to see examples of other leaders in these stories to guide me as leader of OSDA. As I reflected on my context the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son (Luke 15), and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) came to mind when I thought about my ministry context. As a result of the negativity OSDA had experienced, many were lost. Some members were seen as lost sheep for they had left fellowshiping at OSDA, and no one knew where to find them. Some members were scattered physically and emotionally. Some members were like lost coins; they were still attending church but were disengaged, hidden from light, and disconnected from the other members. I recognized that as a leader, I was to take the initiative to go and find them, pull them in from the margins that existed without and within OSDA. Some were like lost sons, especially the youth, who had as it were gone to “a far country.” Only the Holy Spirit could bring them back. OSDA was grieving the loss of what was and what could have been. They needed the comfort that the

Holy Spirit gives and peace from the Prince of Peace. The spirit of fear needed to be replaced with love.

OSDA also reminded me of the man who fell among thieves in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Like the Good Samaritan, I needed to apply the same values, characteristics, traits, and leadership qualities to the situation in my ministry context. The virtues of the Good Samaritan were evident in Christ-centered leadership. I believed that emulating Jesus Christ's leadership approach through a Christ-centered leadership philosophy was effective in healing the broken hearted and liberating those who were oppressed. A Christ-centered leadership philosophy was my best option to meet my congregation where they were in the margins. My reasoning was that the people needed first to be nurtured to health as they were transformed by the process. The Good Samaritan served as my model of applied practical theology. As I looked at the parable, the foundation and topic being discussed in Luke 10 was love to one's neighbour. The Good Samaritan took initiative as a leader with humility, planning skills and delegation as a technique to manage the situation. The Good Samaritan, like me, was on a journey. However, that did not prevent him from showing compassion. He fulfilled Isaiah 58 and Isaiah 61 and his actions lifted up others. He used his resources to help and bless others. He led the man that fell among thieves to health, wholeness, and safety. In doing so, he placed himself and his own comfort and convenience at risk, since when he placed the wounded man on his beast, he likely had to walk beside. I believe that Christ-centered leadership was about walking beside the wounded as I lifted them up. The Good Samaritan is an

exemplary leader as he took a risk when the leadership opportunity presented itself. He acted. I also lead like Jesus as I lead people to him. I believed this is what was needed in my ministry context.

All of these parables were spoken by Jesus Christ. He spoke to his listeners out of the abundance of his heart, since “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt 12:34). The essence of my Christ-centered leadership philosophy could be found in the parables and strategies of Christ in his dealings with people who experience marginalization and oppression.

Envisioning the Way Forward At OSDA

The way forward for this congregation was not clear, especially considering the impact of post covid-19 pandemic. According to *Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed* (Patton 2007), church leaders need to have a paradigm shift in the way they think and look at challenges to see them as opportunities. As a leader, I was adventurous, inventive, and comfortable with courting uncertainty, since this was a time for possibilities, opportunities, and transformation. Patton (2007) discusses how taking risks and building faith and courage comes as vision is established.

The OSDA members tended to blame the condition of the church on poor leadership and leadership turnover. Based on the article *Building Leaders at Every Level: A Leadership Pipeline* (Drotter 2001), leaders are at various levels in the leadership pipeline. Leaders must be intentional about attaining the next level in the leadership pipeline as they grow to lead like Jesus. Succession planning from within the organization is essential to organizational survival. Drotter (2001)

describes the ideal situation of building and maintaining “a pipeline of skilled, prepared leaders from within the company” (Drotter 2001). Without this preparation, there will be a crisis in leadership and a crisis in the organization. There was a crisis in OSDA. I learned from reading Drotter’s article that I need to be intentional about growing and developing leaders. One evidence that OSDA was not doing well was that it had to import most of its leadership team from the outside. Drotter (2001) said having to hire an outsider shows that an organization has not sufficiently developed leadership and effective succession planning to meet their challenges (Drotter 2001). According to Drotter (2001), the leadership pipeline helps in succession planning, identifying people ready to take on leadership responsibilities (Drotter 2001) in the future. As poor leadership was named as one of the causes of OSDA’s decline and failure to thrive, my focus was on leadership team development and in particular the development of a leadership team vision for the community. In my assessment, there was a need for the development of the leadership team and for clarity in leadership team vision as part of team leadership methodology. For this reason, I decided to focus my action-research project on developing the leadership team through a leadership team retreat using AI process (See Chapter 4).

Christ - Centered Leadership and the Accomplishment of Mission

As noted above, a Christ-centered leadership philosophy includes team leadership as part of its leadership principles. My vision was for the leadership team of OSDA to grow in competencies, call, character, and confidence. The OSDA leadership team needed strong and reliable support as leadership skills

were developed. I agreed with Northouse that “Leadership skills can be acquired, and leaders can be trained to develop them” (Northouse 2018, 44). The target group for ministry investment was the OSDA leadership team, made up of pastors and elders. This leadership team was chosen as they are the decision-makers and influencers. The long-term goal of the leadership strategy was to initiate adaptive change, to refocus the congregation on mission, to develop leadership team vision to be able to initiate succession planning. This involved relationship building and leadership team development training.

Jesus Christ exemplifies a leader who was able to train and equip marginalized people for a successful and sustainable work in ministry. Jesus Christ invested into twelve disciples who were marginalized, built relationship with them, met their needs, and sent them out to reproduce what he had shown them about making disciples, while keeping their focus of God’s kingdom and his second coming. Jesus Christ gave his disciples responsibility while giving them hope. With Christ as my example, my focus was to invest in developing the leadership team. The needs of the people of OSDA and the ministry context suggested to me that the Christ-centered leadership philosophy was appropriate and helpful. As stated earlier, my reason for choosing a Christ-centered leadership philosophy over servant leadership was that Jesus Christ did not always play the role of servant-leader. Depending on the situation and context, Jesus Christ was a teacher (rabbi), friend, doctor, healer, preacher, and counsellor. Context and culture determined whether Jesus Christ exemplified the role of servant-leader. For example, I believed that Jesus Christ could have

hardly been called a servant-leader at the time when he drove the money changers out of the temple (Matthew 21:12).

Based on my ministry context, my review of the literature, and my reflection on scripture, I was most comfortable with the Christ-centered leadership philosophy. My reasoning was that it was all inclusive, adaptable to any situation, versatile, altruistic and of high moral and ethical values.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described how the emergence of my Christian leadership philosophy was a journey. The journey landed me at identifying Christ-centered leadership as my leadership philosophy. I chose Christ-centered leadership because I believed Jesus Christ to be the leaders of leaders, that leadership originated with Him, and that dysfunctional leadership could be seen as distortions of God's ideal for leaders. I argued that the Jesus Christ's model of leadership was all encompassing of all the virtues and positive elements of other altruistic leadership philosophies. As I reflected on the impact of Jesus Christ's leadership, I realized how the impact of His leadership has positively influenced leaders and followers for thousands of years. I noticed that Christ's leadership transformed the lives of many peoples, as individuals and groups, and provided an example of cross-cultural ministry. Jesus Christ was personable and engaged in succession planning, met people's needs in community and presented people with healing, comfort and hope.

The leadership skills of compassion and caring exemplified by Jesus Christ were needed in my ministry context (described in Chapter 2). I was

inspired to meet the needs of my congregation and the community when I viewed OSDA as comparable to the man who fell among thieves in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30-36). I was persuaded that I should exemplify the same mannerism, attitude, and sacrificial love towards my wounded, marginalized company of believers as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30-36). In this parable the Good Samaritan may be seen as a leader who took initiative, had vision for something better and invested in the health and wellbeing of the other. It cost him time, talent, treasury resources and even placed him at risk of physical harm. This example inspired me to act, even in dismal situations and invest in lifting others. The parable motivated me in caring for the people of OSDA and bringing them in from the margin.

I decided that as part of implementing my leadership philosophy, a first step in lifting up OSDA was to focus on OSDA's leadership team, and in particular, in developing leadership vision. A combination of factors led me to this conclusion. These factors included people telling their stories, observation, and assessment of OSDA functioning (see Chapter 2), and an analysis of church records. My first step in investment in the leadership team of OSDA was the design and implementation of a research project that focussed on the OSDA leadership team, as described in the following chapter. I discovered that leadership team vision was lacking at OSDA, and this affected the delivery of mission, contributed to OSDA decline and led to having little impact on the external community. I learned that OSDA was out of focus about the reason for its existence. On a positive note, OSDA was poised for new and exciting things to

happen with the importation of new leaders with new energy and new ideas. My project research involved these new leaders as participants.

Chapter 4 presents the action research project that arose from the needs identified in my assessment of my ministry context (Chapter 2) and was consistent with my philosophy of leadership as outlined in this chapter. My research project assessed findings from a leadership team retreat I designed and led using an AI process as an engagement tool. The goal of the AI process was to develop a leadership team vision for the external community. My Christ-centered leadership philosophy was a motivation in applying AI to the OSDA reality with a view to helping change its declining trajectory. I will discuss the findings and implications of the research in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FIELD MINISTRY RESEARCH PROJECT

Introduction

Oakville Adventist Company (OSDA) had experienced a steady decline in membership and church attendance since 2015 and had no active presence in the surrounding community. The congregation was on the verge of dissolution. The congregation and leadership team desired to see church growth through an increase in membership by baptisms or membership transfer. Connecting to people in the Oakville community through relationship building and partnerships with community agencies was seen as a possible solution to the problem, but there was no clear vision or plan for outreach to the community of Oakville. To address this concern, a leadership team retreat was designed and implemented using an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process as an engagement and an intervention tool. The AI process of Discovery, Dream, Design and Deliver was used to engage the seven members of the leadership team in developing a clear vision for outreach to the community. Evaluative data was collected, pre and post the retreat, through questionnaires, individual and group interviews and participant observation. The findings revealed that the AI process was instrumental in the creation of vision clarity and the formulation of a vision statement that was subsequently accepted by the congregation. The AI process also fostered leadership team cohesion as the participants co-created and owned the vision statement. The AI process was

effective in the development of a positive mindset among participants for the future.

Statement of the Problem

In December 2020, as I accepted the responsibility as lead elder at Oakville Adventist Company (OSDA), I spoke with six members to rebuild relationships and bridges that were broken, as well as to get an idea of what the priorities of the leadership team should be focussed on. These conversations and stories of the participants informed my analysis of needs of the congregants and of the geographic residential community in general. In 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic, there were no in person church services. The membership had dwindled from thirty-three in 2015 to less than six members (utilizing three zoom devices). The church had failed to thrive. In January 2021, OSDA imported six new leaders including myself from another church (since there were no leaders at OSDA). These new leaders formed part of the participant group for the research. (This is different from the six people (members) originally in OSDA). The research project was focused on the new leadership (five new imported leaders plus two that were members appointed to leadership in January 2021) and the need to develop a vision for the Oakville community. This was done using an AI process.

Getting an accurate picture of the problem was important in determining the needs of OSDA. Based on the findings from a pre-questionnaire prior to the retreat, participants identified concerns to be church decline and lack of growth, rigidity and stuckness, OSDA's irrelevance and disconnection with the

community, as well as conflict and poor interpersonal relationships. Conflict and poor interpersonal relationships were identified as the second most important concern, with the need to evangelize the community being first. This was communicated to the participants at the retreat. The participants wanted to focus on the way forward in achieving the Great Commission in our surrounding community and beyond.

As the OSDA group was only at “company” status, church growth was necessary for OSDA to achieve the status of a “church” as defined by the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventist churches. Groups, companies, or churches that do not achieve or maintain membership at a certain level may be dissolved by the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventist churches. According to the Seventh-day Adventist church manual,

Where a number of isolated believers reside near one another or where they belong to a small group, house church, or church planting core group, they should consider forming a company of believers for fellowship, worship, and mission with the objective of growing into an organized church or multiplying house churches in that geographical area. Company status is approved by vote of the conference committee, which, should it become necessary, may subsequently dissolve the company.” (SDA Church manual 2015, 37)

Within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, a group, a company of believers or church may be dissolved due to loss of membership (SDA Church manual 2015, 40). In 2020 OSDA had lost 82 percent of its membership since its official recognition as a company of believers in 2015. This was a problem for OSDA because,

Church status is not necessarily perpetual. A church may be dissolved or expelled from the sisterhood of churches for the following reasons: 1. Loss of Members—Occasionally, despite

efforts to preserve a church, so many members are lost by moving away or by death or by apostasy that the existence of the church is threatened. Under such circumstances the conference committee should recommend possible dissolution of the church. (SDA 2015, 40).

The field research project served the church by providing insight as it pertains to leadership development and in particular, the development of leadership team vision. This project was an opportunity to hear the voices of leaders, to be inclusive in ensuring dialogue and in getting a multiplicity of perspectives on what the needs of OSDA were and how to address them. I was intentional in hearing the voices and connecting “personal stories with God’s story and the congregation’s story” (Sensing 2011, xxi). OSDA may be seen as not fulfilling the reason for its existence. During the retreat, the leadership team saw the possibility that OSDA could be missional and serve the Oakville community to bring comfort, healing, and blessing. This was based on Isaiah 61:1 and Isaiah 58. However, on the Kotter’s Readiness for Change grid (Herbert and Klatt 2000, 145-146), OSDA scored 23 whereas on the readiness index, if a score “is of 19 or above you will have considerable difficulty implementing change. It will require time and effort to build support and reduce the barriers to change” (Herbert and Klatt 2000, 145-146). The idea of a retreat setting was based on Dr. Brian Craig’s contention (Craig, 2020), that what people needed from their leaders was to create an atmosphere of trust, show compassion, stability and to create hope by inspiring vision. Vision clarity was the focus of the intervention. This was because we needed vision clarity before the leaders could be united and

committed to implementing the vision. The leaders indicated that as a leadership team, they did not have a clear vision for the external community.

Response or Innovation

Transformational change using an AI process was viewed part of the answer to the situation. Being strength-focussed, AI was a way to build relationships and support church growth and thriving because AI does not focus on the things that are wrong with OSDA, but on the strengths we could work on. AI assumes that every organization (church) and community has many untapped and rich accounts of past, present, and future capacities that form “the positive core” (Cooperridder 2005, 11). The research participants identified and valued the strengths and potentials of OSDA. Our focus was on successes rather than failures and harnessing the combinations of strengths. According to Cooperridder, (2005, 39), the cycle of AI - Discover (strengths), Dream (higher purpose), Design (possibilities), Deliver (strengthen system) - provides a road map to help mobilize organizations to articulate strengths and create possibilities that can be realized by focussing on the “positive core” (Cooperridder 2005, 11) and affirming the capability of the church as a whole by focussing on hope” (Cooperridder 2005). Stakeholders in the change process are any person or group that would be affected by change in OSDA. Those who would be considered stakeholders of OASD included the research participants, the members of the OSDA in general, the youth of the church as a group, the church leadership team as a unit, members of the leadership team as individuals, the pastors, the Ontario Conference of SDA, the residential community in which OSDA is situated, and me.

The participants determined that they as a leadership team could establish vision and bring the people back to focus. Though AI is strengths-based and not typically used to identify problems, it was helpful prior to the AI Discovery phase to define the problem and assess needs in order to be informed as innovation was created. To define the real needs, Lencioni (2012), said that organizations need to answer the six central questions (“Why do we exist? ...how do we behave? ...what do we do? ...how will we succeed? ...what is important, right now? ...who must do what?” (Lencioni 2012, 77) to allow for any transformative change to take place. Answering these questions was done using a pre-questionnaire as shown in Appendix C. According to Lencioni (2012), the first discipline to creating a healthy organization is to create a cohesive leadership team. This principle was part of the AI process used at the retreat.

My project was about the development of leadership vision for the Oakville community using the AI 4D Model (Discovery, Dream, Design, Deliver). AI fits well with churches because it aligns with biblical principles of goodness, restoration, and hope. Part of AI is waking people up to what might be. The AI model focusses on “What is working well?” (Turnell et al 1999) and the good in the situation as a starting point. AI is a component of the strength-based Child Welfare Signs of Safety (SOS) model (Turnell et al 1999). In addition, according to Dr. Narry Santos (Santos, 2021) and my own literature search, there was not much Canadian literature about changing the trajectory of declining churches through the use of the AI model. My research project presented an opportunity to show the benefits of an AI process in the Canadian context.

As Goes the Leader, So Goes the Church – Leadership Responsibility

Lencioni (2012) and Nelson (2008) point to the need for a realization of why the church exists. According to Nelson (2008), a missional church is a movement, and the church should be reimagined as a force in the community. The church could find out where God is at work in the surrounding community and join in God's activity. "Leadership in borderland churches reflects an understanding of the church existing for others... borderland churches know their neighbours, their politicians, and their neighbouring businesses. They share in the community activities and are recognized by the agencies that work there" (Nelson 2008, 39). I saw that OSDA likewise could share in community activities and have initiatives to love and know the community, and in turn, help the community to know OSDA. "When we lose that passionate love... we also lose the radical purpose of our existence" (Nelson 2008, 44). According to Nelson, if the church has lost its passionate purpose, "all that is left is a desire to survive" (Nelson 2008, 44). The church needs to work on regaining focus of "the who, what, how and why of God's intended purpose" (Nelson 2008, 46). This resonated with me. I recognized that church growth and the re-focussing of the OSDA on vision and mission was the responsibility of the leadership team, since based on a review of the minutes of leadership meetings, it was the leadership team that determined to what areas church resources were allocated. The research findings from the evaluation of the retreat (described below) revealed that OSDA leadership endorsed that the church exists for others and that connection with the Oakville community was vital in being missional.

Nelson (2008) promotes partnerships with community agencies. In keeping with this premise, the OSDA leadership team articulated a dream during the AI intervention that OSDA would form partnerships with hospitals, nursing homes and schools and other organizations. The participants discussed involvement in civic events as well as environmental projects. The questionnaire responses indicated that OSDA had a determination to grow and continue to exist, despite the challenges.

The Big Picture

The research project was designed to explore how effective AI would be in helping the leadership team of OSDA develop a vision for the geographic community in which the church was situated. This was done through a leadership retreat that I designed and led using AI process.

A pre-questionnaire was provided to seven participants before the retreat (Appendix C). The pre-questionnaire was to get information from participants about the areas for focus at OSDA. The data gathered from the pre-questionnaire showed that participants believed the current leadership was working well, that evangelism of the external community needed focus, and that there was concern about church growth/ decline, poor church relations and interpersonal conflict within OSDA.

The AI process used at the retreat produced a large amount of data about what OSDA had to celebrate, the strengths to build on, what could be done in the external community to bless the residents, and designs for what needed to be done. The data showed that the participants wanted to engage community around

the OSDA and to be involved in community projects with partners and in civic ceremonies and events. They identified strengths of hospitality, resilience, a desire to exist and knowledge of the geographic community. The AI process produced an abundance of data. An important outcome of the retreat was a statement of the leadership team vision for the community in which the church was situated.

Participant observation data revealed that the AI process was energizing for the group. Several benefits of the AI process emerged that will be discussed later in this chapter.

A post-questionnaire was given after the AI retreat (Appendix E). Participants were encouraged to take the questionnaire, reflect on the AI process, and complete and return the questionnaire. The data produced by the post-questionnaire was sparse, but nevertheless indicated that the participants owned the statement about leadership vision that they created at the AI retreat and were optimistic about using this statement of vision to make an impact in the surrounding community as they endeavored to fulfill their mission.

Evaluation the Outcomes of the Project

The AI process at the leadership retreat was an engagement tool to develop leadership vision for the external community. Findings from the retreat showed a change in participants' attitude from apprehension to the embracing of possibilities. One way to determine whether the new vision resulted in any tangible change was whether OASD participated in at least one community event in the months following the retreat. One example of community engagement that

occurred was the laying of the wreath for Remembrance Day service in Oakville and being recognized by the mayor of Oakville, Mayor Rob Burton, in November 2022. A picture of this successful engagement of OASD with the community was included on the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2023 calendar. For the OSDA, the research provided recommendations as to how to address the failure to thrive state.

Research Project Supervision, Permission, and Access

I secured permission from Tyndale's Research and Ethics Board (REB) at Tyndale University to conduct the research. I also secured permission from the leadership of OSDA. Getting permission to conduct the research required a discussion with the senior pastor and the pastoral team. I was accountable to the church, the senior pastor (one of the new leaders and a research participant), the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and Almighty God for the research and the use of research findings. Nelson (2008), Dickens et al. (2015) and Patton et al. (2007) provided suggestions on how to keep churches relevant in the external community. I had a responsibility to ensure that the research would benefit OSDA and the community. The research was conducted with care, concern and respect for the people and the church. As there needed to be transparency of motive and intent, participants were informed of their rights and responsibilities and my role as a student researcher.

Results

The analysis of findings from the leadership retreat indicated that the AI process was effective in creating a spirit of hope, possibilities, and optimism. Results suggested that the use of the AI leadership retreat was a positive intervention that enabled the leadership team to identify strengths and create a clear vision for impacting the external community. Participants reported that the AI process was unifying and inspiring.

Context Summary

OSDA started in 2001 as a break off from another SDA church also situated in Oakville. However, OSDA was officially recognized by the Ontario Conference of SDA only in 2015 as a Company, pending church status based on an increase in membership. The other church started with people of European decent, however the church was growing more diverse. The OSDA rented the facilities they used for worship. The church building rented by OSDA was situated in a community where most residents were of European descent. The OSDA, however, was largely made up of people of Caribbean decent with mostly retired women. People had left the OSDA to go to other churches due to dissatisfaction with the worship practices of the leadership of the OSDA. Historically the leadership team has tended to be top down with the same individuals sitting on several decision-making committees.

OSDA was organized with 33 recorded members. However, there was a steady decline in membership and church attendance over the ensuing seven

years. Regular members at the weekly church services totalled about 10 persons post COVID. There were usually more visitors than members in attendance. This varied from week to week. After the COVID 19 pandemic, OSDA had a hybrid worship service with both in person and virtual options. Zoom participants generally numbered about 15 devices. Attendance fluctuated from week to week with a steady turnover of visitors. I was the first female leader at the OSDA.

It was challenging for the senior pastor (who also led another congregation) to find elders from outside of OSDA to volunteer to serve there. Several elders were asked but declined. I was asked after the senior pastor received several refusals. However, when asked, I saw the assignment as a divine commission as said, “I will go”. I was appointed to help at OSDA following the mass resignation of officers. My official start was January 1st, 2021. I started at OSDA along with five other new leaders taken from another church, making a total of six new leaders from outside OSDA.

Field and Scope - Boundaries and Constraints of the Project

The seven participants in the research project comprised the total number of all pastors and elders of OSDA, except me. I was the eighth person of the team of leaders. Participants were not excluded based on sex, race, religion, or socio-economic grouping. This researcher recruited participants. The social location of the researcher is African-Caribbean-Canadian female. The researcher is unilingual, speaking only English. The research excluded people who do not speak English fluently. The research did “take place in the field” (Anastas 1999). The respondents were pastors and elders of OSDA. Pastors and elders are on

different levels in the governance structure of the SDA church with the pastors having more power and authority.

Data Collection Process

Data was collected in the following ways:

- A pre-questionnaire conducted through individual, private interviews.
- Group interview as part of the AI process at the retreat
- Participant Observation at the retreat
- Post-questionnaire after the AI process at the retreat

A formal letter, outlining the project proposal and the risks and benefits of the research to the participants and the church, was sent by email to all participants. I developed formal consent forms for participants (Appendix B). The senior pastor and the leadership team needed to be informed about all relevant aspects of the research, since the research findings may affect them and my understanding of ministry and my role as a leader in the church and conference. Data was collected through a review of board meeting minutes, participant observation, questionnaires, and interviews. There were seven individual interviews as well as a group interview. Questionnaires were both self-completed questionnaires and through oral responses. Interviews were interactive, and although they were structured by the questionnaire, they allowed for flexibility. My questioning aimed at finding out what I did not know or clarifying what I knew.

This section discusses the method of research and the basis for the actions used to gain information. The introductory letters (Appendix A) and consent

forms (Appendix B) were sent to the church leadership and introduced the researcher, the research questions and the role and purpose of the research. The letter assured confidentiality. Ethical and consent issues were discussed with participants. The letter gave the anticipated commencement date of the study and the anticipated duration. These dates were flexible to accommodate the desires of the participants. Telephone calls and electronic mail as well as follow up letters were sent to leaders outlining the research objectives and soliciting assistance in selecting the participants. The questions (Appendix C) were open-ended. Each interview lasted about one and a half hours. Participants' requests for anonymity were respected.

Ministry Ethics and Approved Consent

The participants did not experience any physical harm. The consent form clearly informed the participants of the aim and purpose of the research project as well as how the findings could be used and any possible consequences of participating. The place, time and pace of the interview was participant driven. There were no familial or financial relationships with any potential participants. The participants were not compensated for participating in the research.

Participants were informed about the benefits and risks associated with the research. Permission was secured from participants before note taking or Zoom recording took place. Participants were told that their responses may be used in the decision-making regarding ministry and administrative policy development.

The question of anonymity was discussed, and the wishes of the participants were honored. Some participants were proud to identify themselves

and showed this by writing their names on their questionnaire even though they were informed that it was not necessary. Participants were agreeable to photos being taken of them at the leadership retreat. Photos were taken and shared with the church at large on the WhatsApp member's chat. The photos are also public on the OSDA Facebook page. Participants were informed of their right to refuse to participate, their right to withdraw at any time, and assured that they would have access to the research findings. Providing confidentiality for the individual interviews was by using letters of the participants' names and afterwards assigning a number to each participant. Anonymity was not totally possible during the group interview since all participants were talking together.

The researcher was a stakeholder and had an interest in the development of the leadership of OSDA. I had a personal stake in OSDA because many of my DMin projects and assignments were based on my leadership role in OSDA and because of my desire to see needed change implemented and sustained. As much as is possible, therefore, I was objective, professional, and ethical as I did this research project explaining every step of participants rights and my responsibility.

Though some OSDA members had expressed resistance to female leadership, I had the support of the senior pastor and the associate pastor, and this resistance did not affect the research. In addition, the church board voted to have the research project take place.

Minimal risks for the participants included emotional and psychological triggering. Anxiety and pain were triggered in some participants as they spoke about not feeling a sense of belonging at OSDA. In this research project there was

potential for transient and temporary harm due to emotional vulnerability of participants. There were temporary emotional reactions in the interviews. The risks were mitigated by reassurance and validation of the participants' experiences. The research, however, was beneficial, and the benefits outweighed the risks. Personal reflection, participant observation and sensitivity to emotional responses of the participants was required. Respect for the participants was communicated and shown. Their rights were communicated. The participants were assured of some say in any changes that could happen at OSDA as result of the research.

AI created room to explore what people still valued at OSDA and allowed best practices to inspire life giving attitudes in OSDA. Through the research project using AI principles, leaders were provided opportunity to be committed to designing and moving forward with a renewed vision. AI encouraged people with their giftedness and provided the opportunity for engagement. The AI process put into motion a vision of how OSDA could touch the external geographic/residential community of Oakville with its strengths in a creative manner.

The data collected was stored on my personal computer that is password protected and only accessible by me. Participants were informed that the information being collected could be used for future research into failure to thrive and turn around churches.

Designing Action

This research project explored what was happening, why it was happening and what could be done about it. Both quantitative and qualitative data were

collected through prequestionnaire (Appendix C) and post questionnaires (Appendix E) and a group interview at a retreat. The group of leaders together decided what they wanted to achieve in the external community, and they determined their vision statement for the community. The first two questions in the prequestionnaire were influenced by a model in Child Welfare called the Signs of Safety (SOS) Model developed in Australia and New Zealand by Andrew Turnell and Steve Edwards (1999). According to Turnell and Edwards (1999), SOS is a strength-based model of child welfare that focuses on partnerships, strengths, and balances risk with signs of safety in the assessment of child abuse and neglect. The Signs of Safety (SOS) model demonstrates AI principles as part of its tenets. The first questionnaire was administered on an individual basis prior to the retreat (Appendix C). At the retreat, a summary of the pre-retreat questionnaire responses was provided. The retreat program (Appendix F) was presented including the reason for the retreat, reviewing consent matters, and presenting pre-retreat questionnaire findings,

At the AI retreat, there was a process in which the group focussed on what can be, future possibilities, being innovative and designing what should be. This was an AI process as I facilitated the discovery, dreaming, design and delivery sessions. Participants were asked to engage in a group discussion starting with discovery of the strengths of OSDA. They were asked to identify “the best of what has been” (Cooperrider 2005, 16). The responses were recorded on a flip chart for all participants to see and reflect on. Then the participants were asked to dream what OSDA might be in the community. This involved developing a

leadership team vision in relation to the strengths and potentials for community involvement. The third thing participants were asked to do at the retreat was to design and or identify an achievable (deliverable) activity that OSDA could participate in within the community. The fourth activity for the group interaction at the retreat was the development of action plan for the work of OSDA in our community. After this group interview (AI process) at the retreat, the second questionnaire was administered, and I analyzed and interpreted the responses.

Methods

Richard Osmer's 4 tasks model of practical theology provided a framework for the questions for interviews. The questions, "what is going on? why is it going on? what ought to be going on? How might we respond?" (Osmer 2008, 4) informed the questions in the first questionnaire. AI was another method of soliciting information through the appreciative interview that looked at strengths and possibilities. The (Cooperrider 2005) 4 D cycle of AI explored discovery (what gives life?), dream (what might be?), design (what should be?) and destiny (How to empower and improvise) was used at the retreat. The AI questions were paraphrased into questioning that the participants could understand. I explored positive contributions and looked on possibilities during the group interview process. AI informed the discussion in this focus group as well as the post questionnaire after the AI intervention. I also conducted a review of administrative records such as meeting minutes as part of document research to see what the membership and attendance had been from 2015 to 2022.

Questionnaires and Interviews

The prequestionnaire was completed individually by the participants and followed-up through face-to-face in-depth interviews. The questions allowed participants to describe the situation in their own words. There was one group interview at the retreat which made it convenient for the participants. The participants had talked about scheduling challenges in being available for the individual interviews and they saw the leadership retreat as a good venue to come together. As the research was on the development of a leadership team vision through the use of AI, the aspect of leadership development on which the group focussed was leadership team vision. After the AI process and group interview, participants were given the post- questionnaire to complete and return to me.

The use of Zoom platform for the pre-questionnaire individual interviews was useful in helping with engagement of the participants and for capturing verbal data, including not just words but tone of voice, pace of speech and the like (Anastas 1999). For the group interview, two participants were on Zoom while the other five including the note taker were in person. Ethically, the permission of the participants was secured prior to any equipment being used in the interview. There was note taking by the researcher. Notes will be destroyed after seven years. Participant-observation was also part of the data collection methodology. The researcher observed the participants at the retreat. This allowed the researcher to observe relationships and group dynamics. It helped check the consistency about what people said and did. As a participant observer, the researcher gathered information using her senses.

Phases and Timetable

The research had four phases lasting from January 2022 to December 2022. The phases and timetable for the research project can be seen in Appendix N.

Findings, Outcomes, and Interpretations

Individual and group interviews were open-ended, not scripted. One thing I noticed in the group interview was that participants deferred to the senior pastor. I observed that the senior pastor's contributions to the discussion tended to be more heavily weighted than anyone else's. For example, when the senior pastor asked that the AI Deliver phase of the retreat (described below) be rescheduled for another time, other participants instantly agreed. The Deliver stage was still pending when the research project ended. I thought that perhaps the governance structure of the OSDA was a likely reason for this dynamic in the group interview.

Data analysis (see data analysis chart in Appendix L) included looking for patterns and common themes in answers and stories of participants. For the questionnaires, the frequency of answers was counted and collated. I first reflected on the whole project, before tightening conclusions (Sensing 2011, 196/213). As Sensing (2011, 213) suggested, I re-examined conclusions to make sure I was capturing what the data said.

The outcomes of the pre-questionnaire informed discussion of possibilities for OSDA arising from the leadership vision for the community of Oakville. The

patterns found in the pre-questionnaire responses were reviewed and guided the focus group discussion as well as informed the development of the leadership vision. AI proved to be a viable tool to address the problems of poor growth, poor interpersonal relationships, and church decline by focusing on hope, leadership cohesion, giving positive energy and building relationships among the leadership team. For OSDA, the research project provided recommendations as to how to address the failure to thrive state and created life and vitality in the church through a renewed vision for the external community.

The research project was entitled “Developing Leadership Vision for the Oakville Community at the Oakville Adventist Company Through Appreciative Inquiry (AI).” As noted, the participants were the pastors and elders of OSDA. The pastors and elders formed the leadership team. Five of the seven participants were male and two were female. Two participants were retired, one participant was in their fifties, two participants in their forties, one participant in his thirties and one participant in his twenties. Five of seven participants had less than two years attending OSDA, and two participants had attended OSDA for two or more years. The leadership team was relatively new to OSDA and all the participants at the leadership retreat were new to the leadership team. This allowed for the flow of new and different ideas in the AI-Dream phase. In addition, five out of seven participants did not have firsthand experience of the historical conflict that existed at OSDA. In the data collection, the participants were assigned numerical identification to ensure anonymity.

Coding was used to analyse the data to get meaning and find common themes. Coding helped me organize and group data that “look alike” (Saldana 2021, 13) or “feel alike” so I could get meanings. In analysing the data, I highlighted words and short phrases. I looked at whether there was a theme and the essence of what emerged (Saldana 2021). If something occurred more than twice, I coded it as a pattern due to the repetition. “In Vivo Code” which “is taken directly from what the participant himself says” (Saldana 2021,7) was also used, and a code which named the last drilled down theme was given. Codes were put into categories. The categories were based on frequency of occurrences that were put into themes based on patterns. I had a column in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for researcher comments (Saldana 2021, 33). I pre-coded by “circling, highlighting, bolding, underlining, or coloring rich or significant participant quotes or passages” (Saldana 2021, 30). I looked at the passage to decipher its core meaning (decoding), then determined its appropriate code and labelled it (encoding). The purpose was to find interpretive patterns as per Saldana (2021, 9). Coding is interpretive Saldana (2021, 7) and my coding was based on my background (cultural heritage and personal context), interests (church growth and leadership development), social, theological (focussed on helping the marginalized), and physical location (female, Caribbean-Canadian, educated, professional) as well as my experience within the SDA church context. I was able to understand the nuances of the respondents’ statements because I am from that same cultural heritage. I was a participant observer within the ministry context.

As per Saldana (2021) my coding was done manually on sheets of paper and in a researcher notebook before being put into a Microsoft Excel worksheet (see Appendix G) on my personal computer. There was a margin for researcher comments both in the manual coding and the Microsoft Excel worksheet. Saldana (2021, 28) suggested that novices like me code everything. I tried that, however things may have gotten inadvertently missed in the coding of my participants observation data because there was so much information to capture, while facilitating the AI process.

For the individual interviews, I coded one participant's responses at a time and did a comparison and contrast of other participant's responses to see what was alike and what was different. I looked for similarities or divergence of thoughts expressed in their responses to comparable questions. The prequestionnaire was given to the participants to complete in writing individually and returned to me. After receipt of the completed written prequestionnaire, I then had a verbal interview with each participant using the same prequestionnaire questions. Though the first interview was based on previously written answers to questions, I found that the written answers to the questions were more limited in expression than the verbal answers during the face-to-face interview. For example, in participant number 4's private interview, the person mentioned "how we talk to one another, it can be catastrophic." Participant number 4 however, did not write this on the questionnaire, indicating that written responses to questionnaire may not sufficiently capture people's sentiments.

Data Collected from Individual Interviews (Pre-Questionnaire)

Regarding OSDA’s condition there were 30 documented responses that were grouped into six themes. Themes that emerged from the interviews (Table 2) were the need for positive leadership (three occurrences), lack of growth or church decline (five occurrences), rigidity and an unwillingness to embrace change (three occurrences). The need for evangelistic focus (Great Commission) was the most common theme with nine occurrences and lack of community engagement was a theme with four occurrences. Poor church relationships were the second most common theme with six occurrences. Appendix H contains a graphical presentation these findings.

The following table presents a summary of participant responses were from the pre-questionnaire that was given to the participants prior to the interview and administered July to August 2022.

Table 2: Participants Focus at OSDA and Vision for Oakville Community
Themes from Pre-Questionnaire

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Leadership	3
Decline/lack of growth	5
Rigidity/ stuckness	3
Great Commission (evangelism)	9
Irrelevance/ Disconnection	4
Conflict/ Poor Relationships	6
Total	30

This table shows the top three concerns were evangelizing the Oakville community, conflictual interpersonal relationships, and church decline/lack of growth. The responses showed most of the participants believed OSDA should

focus on impacting the Oakville community and delivering on the great commission. Next in the line of priorities, OSDA should focus on conflict and poor interpersonal relationships and thirdly the decline and lack of growth of OSDA.

Leadership in this context meant the pastors and elders of the OSDA. Decline and lack of growth referred to the fact that OSDA had not increased the number of baptized members on the church records since its inception and had experienced more than 80 percent loss in members attending OSDA regularly from 2015 to 2022. Rigidity and stuckness referred to OSDA's functioning in the same manner with little change to activities. The Great Commission is based on Matthew 28:18-20 and was the reason for OSDA's existence. OSDA's progress in achieving the Great Commission could be measured in the number of baptisms and number of members' attendance weekly. Reports of these numbers are relayed regularly to the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. OSDA was tasked by the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to focus on evangelism. The participants' responses included concerns about irrelevance and disconnection from the surrounding community in that OSDA was not active or seen in the residential community.

Table 2a gives a summary of word groupings from the pre-questionnaire responses to the six questions asked. These words and phrases were color-coded and placed in the Microsoft Excel sheets as part of documentation of raw data. This took place before the AI process at the retreat. Word groupings were based

on repetitions, patterns and essence which were placed in categories and then in themes. Color-coded words phrases or themes are as follows:

Red meant the Great Commission or evangelistic focus, blue meant decline, dying church or lack of growth, green meant leadership, orange meant a focus on OSDA internal relationships, purple meant stuckness or rigidity, and yellow meant lack of visibility or community impact. All other words or themes are in automatic black colour.

Table 2a: Pre- Questionnaire Word Patterns, Categories and Themes

Participants' Words and Phrases or Essence	Categories	Themes
1. What is working well? Role of Leadership, Leadership Vision, Financial Resources, Resource Availability, A church (connectedness) exists, connection, worship opportunity. Worship Experience, Worship Services Worship Experience Leadership Guidance, church positions, giftedness, COVID 19 Impacts, OSDA fellowship, Worship format Prayer ministry, Fellowship meals (Hospitality)	Leadership and worship experience	Leadership
2. What is not working well? Church culture, Resistance to Change Rigidity of Cultures	Lack of growth, lack of community impact, poor conflictual relationships, rigidity,	Decline / lack of growth
	Resistance to change	Rigidity/ stuckness

<p>Lack of growth Lack of members and lack of motivation Conflict between type of worship, Lack of Clarity, Communication issues Lack of impact on the community, Lack of impact on community. Church decline, Fellowship Church relationships, Conflict resolution techniques, Anxious emotionally charged people. Lack of Growth,</p>		
<p>3. What is your understanding of the vision of OSDA in residential community? Spiritual Focus, narrative of the Great Commission Humankind is multi-faceted and has many aspects. Spiritual Focus, narrative of the Great Commission. (Times 4).</p>	Great Commission and evangelism	Great Commission
<p>4. What are you most concerned about at OSDA? Church relationships, spiritual disciplines and practise, Leadership vision. OSDA doesn't do community outreach Dying church, Lack of Growth, lack of motivation Church relationships, Church identity Issues, Church decline</p>	Lack of growth, lack of leadership vision, visibility in the community, church decline.	Irrelevance/ Disconnection
	Church relationships	Conflict/ poor relationships

<p>Church Relationships, Ageing church, Worship technology. Lack of Growth, Church decline</p>		
<p>5. What is your vision about how OSDA can thrive in community? Narrative of the Great Commission. Church relevance, Reason for Existence Narrative of the Great Commission Media promotions, worship technology. Narrative of the Great Commission Increase community presence Narrative of the Great Commission Reason for Existence, Role of the Church, Church relationships, Be of service and help. Presence in the community and connecting with people in the community. Impact in community.</p>	<p>Great Commission and evangelism Meeting the needs in the residential community. Community presence and visibility.</p>	<p>Great Commission</p>
<p>6. How do we move forward and press on in the residential community? Narrative of the Great Commission Active Mission, Operationalizing Mission Need for Fellowship, Giftedness Narrative of the Great Commission</p>	<p>Great Commission and church relationships.</p>	

<p>Church Relationships, work on unity. Retired seniors’ membership, Humankind is multi-faceted and has many aspects. Church relationships Try new things. Merge old with new. Church relationships - get together and confess sins.</p>		
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Vision for the Oakville Community

Given the strong theme about evangelism and fulfilling the Great Commission in the external community, and the focus of the project on leadership vision, the participants’ comments about their vision for this community were informative. Participant number 1’s idea of the vision was the following “The vision of the church in the community is to make disciples of Jesus Christ and to share the gospel of His coming so that we all can be ready.” In articulating his understanding of the vision of OSDA church, this participant had primary focus on the spiritual aspect of the residential community, and the Great Commission with little emphasis on the other social, emotional, mental, and physical aspects of humans.

Participant number 2 expressed clear vision and used the word “vision” four times in the interview by saying:

The vision of the church in the community is to point people to the peace, joy and rest they can find in Christ. This includes bringing relief to their physical, social & spiritual needs, while empowering and educating them to live a fulfilling and purposeful life in the will of Christ.

Participant number 3 expressed concern that OSDA does not do community outreach. This person confessed not knowing if OSDA did any community outreach. Participant number 3 said “my vision would be to reach out to the community. Make ourselves known...”

Participant number 4 also spoke about the idea of "stuckness" and the need for change and a new vision.

I would not say “not working well” but area for improving is to leave room for the implantation of new, and refreshing vision, and ideas. In other words, try new things. A church can not grow if we are doing the same thing over and over expecting to get different result.

Participant number 4 was heavily spiritually focussed on the Great Commission as the narrative. The person’s vision for OSDA was “the vision of the church is to take the everlasting gospel to the community and the world at large.” Participant number 4 indicated that the vision was for OSDA to thrive in Oakville community: “My vision about how OSDA can thrive in the community is to increase community presence and share the good news of salvation to persons within the community.” Participant number 5 talked about a vision for the residential community in these words: “The vision of the church is to share your faith with others giving them an opportunity to accept Christ.” In the interview, participant number 6 said “To me the vision of the church is to make friends and to share Jesus with them.”

Participant number 7 spoke about a vision for the community by saying “To see the membership grow – having our presence on experience. Make it our priority to make impact. For us to grow up in Christ more and it is seen and will

make a difference. God is not silent.” When asked about vision and how OSDA can thrive in community, participant number 7 said:

Visitation about members, but to be seen and our presence felt Our presence needs to be felt maybe if we wore T-Shirts on Sabbaths so the community can know we are there. . .

The essence was there needed to be connection with the community.

Participant number 7 also had vision for how OSDA could thrive in community, as follows:

We should model the Early Church – when Jesus said to them, you stay here in Jerusalem till the Comforter comes – Holy Spirit to be poured out in their lives. We should get together, confess sins, and get things right; so, the Holy Spirit can be poured out – We can’t shy away from trying new things and new ideas, new strategy to do things. We need to try new things and ways to do things. Merge the old with the new.

The data revealed that the participants visions were focussed on the Oakville residential community and evangelizing that community of Oakville. Six out of seven participants expressed a desire to evangelize the Oakville residential community using words and phrases such as “disciples,” “share the gospel,” “people to Christ,” “take the gospel,” “salvation”, “share faith,” “give opportunity to accept Christ” and “share Jesus.” One talked about a vision of being visible and relevant in the community. The participants demonstrated openness to new things and new ways to engage with the external Oakville residential community to realize this vision.

With regard to data analysis, I found In Vivo coding very helpful in capturing the thoughts and intended meanings of the participants. In Vivo coding of data from interview with participant number 1 included phrases such as

"members are stuck," "make disciples of Jesus Christ," "share the gospel," "being loving, caring and compassionate church to each other", "seeking the needs of individuals in the community and attending to those needs," "making disciples". The essence of these statements was that OSDA should be mission focussed in carrying out the Great Commission and serving the people in the Oakville geographic residential community.

In Vivo coding from the interview with participant number 2 included phrases such as "out of touch," "insular; "bringing relief to their physical, social and spiritual needs", "point people to peace, joy, and rest...in Christ," "we have to be very present and visible so people are not indifferent or ignorant to or about us," "our presence can begin to be felt." The essence was one of relevance in the residential community and visibility in that community. In Vivo coding from the interview with participant number 3 includes phrases such as "sermons are great," "to educate people in God's way," "message of hope to deliver," "making sure they know God's name in the community," "OSDA doesn't do community outreach," "powerful message." The essence was that OSDA needs to do evangelism and outreach. In Vivo coding from the interview with participant number 4 includes phrases such as "faithful leadership," "try new things," "take the everlasting gospel to the community," "share the good news of salvation", "increase community presence. "The essence was that OSDA is blessed with good leadership and should evangelize and make impact in the Oakville geographical residential community.

Data Analysis

The following is my data analysis as it relates to findings.

Findings about what was working well included that participant number 1 was proud of the work of leadership. He believed the leadership at OSDA was working well. Participant number 1 said “Leadership is coming together plans and vision to strengthen the church and empower and motivate the laity to do missions.” When the participants spoke of leadership, they referred to new leadership that started since 2021. Other participants spoke about the positives of this new leadership team which included them and about leadership initiatives that had been in effect for less than two years. Participant number 4 indicated that the leadership team presented good Bible study and sermons. This person’s response about what was working well is “Sabbath school ministry. Sermons are great.” Participant number 5 indicated experiencing supportive leadership at OSDA:

The availability of ministry opportunities is in abundance. There have been several offices that one can choose from. Also, in a sense the flexibility of the lead pastor for the church allows you to put into practice skills that one is competent in and or will like to grow.

Participant number 4 agreed that there was good leadership at OSDA and endorsed fellowship among members as did participants number 5 and 7:

Mutual submission as church members is obedient to their leaders, godly unity among the body of believers, faithful leadership, and commitment among each membership of the church, and, sweet and engaging fellowship and church services are well planned and executed to give honor and praises to God.

Participant number 6 also spoke about fellowship as working well at OSDA.

Participant number 6 said “Having fellowship together. Having our different

services and meetings virtually, especially during the lock down." This participant and participant number 7 indicated that fellowship and hospitality were ministries to be valued at OSDA since they were working well. Participant 7 spoke of what was working well by saying:

Prayer department is working well – OSDA doesn't have a lot of members, but people will pray for you. They are committed to praying for you. Do see things happening. There is a lot of older folks who are more into God. They like to have food and cook. They like get togethers ...but things have changed. Before COVID there was a lot of members, but since COVID I haven't seen them. They used to have more young people too....

Participant number 7 spoke about prayer ministry and hospitality which are internal ministries as working well. Participant number 2 said what was working well was "The believers are maintaining community by meeting online each week to worship and share in their faith experience."

As I sought to identify a specific problem or issue to be addressed through AI process, I asked the participants to express their concerns about challenges that OSDA faced. This was done by the question "What is not working well?" The responses from this question formed the basis for identifying what needed to change. A problem needed to be identified prior to the AI process and Discovery stage. Data from the pre-questionnaire was shared with the participants at the retreat.

When the participants spoke of challenges, they spoke of all challenges stuckness and used words like ingrained, church culture and death when he spoke of concerns about OSDA. Participant number 1 remarked:

The church is ingrained in a culture that does not foster growth and which will lead to the death the church. The foundation members are stuck in the

foundation and there has not been any intentional building up of the ministry over the years.

The idea of “stuckness” is used by (Terry 1993, 84). OSDA could be described as experiencing stuckness around issues of power, mission and meaning. Participant number 1 was concerned that OSDA was not as spiritual as it could be in lifestyle and people may need to be re-introduced to Jesus Christ and the principles of Godly living. To this researcher, participant number 1’s responses were focussed on the trajectory for OSDA. Participant number 1 expressed concern about the level of spirituality of the church and said:

I am most concerned that the members should embrace this vision of making disciples, this can be achieved by being a loving, caring, and compassionate church to each other and the community. I am concerned that the members need to know Jesus and to live the life of Jesus in their homes, church and in the community.

Participant number 1 indicated that OSDA needed to be more visible in seeking the needs of individuals in the geographic residential community and attending to those needs.

Categories are broad groupings of words, phrases, or essence, while themes are more refined and specific within the categories. For example, within the category of church relationships was the theme of poor interpersonal relationships and conflict. Categories derived from Participant number 1’s interview included evangelism, mission of the church, church relationships. Themes from these categories were rigidity, unwillingness to change, interpersonal conflicts and lack of visibility in the community. The essence of his statements was that OSDA should try new ideas that are mission focussed in carrying out the Great Commission and serving the people in community.

Participant number 2 also indicated that it was imperative to get involved in the geographic residential community, research the needs of the demographic community, and use that to become relevant to them. He commented “We are not engaging the community effectively, this probably because we are very insular in our way of thinking and church culture, and this sometimes causes us to be out of touch with the lives of the people to which we are to minister.” This statement by Participant number 2 may be regarded as a key finding. Similarly, according to participant number 2, OSDA must be very present and visible. Lack of visibility was a repetitive theme for participants number 2, 3, 4 and 7. The sense was that the external geographic residential community was indifferent to OSDA and ignorant of OSDA’s presence, the irrelevance of OSDA to the residential community and the lack of impact. Participant number 2 demonstrated openness to possibilities, objective and strength-focused and offering practical solutions, innovative ideas to make OSDA technologically competent and attractive to youth. This person spoke about OSDA having a few committed visionary leaders. Participant number 2 demonstrated understanding of variety in human needs and spoke about the importance of building relationships in the community.

Participant number 2 said:

It is imperative that we get involved in the community, research what are the needs of the demographic and use that as a means to become relevant to them. We have to be very present and visible, so people are not indifferent or ignorant to or about us.

This person was concerned about the absence of youth and young adults in OSDA’s membership and leadership and expressed concerns about when asked

how OSDA could thrive in the external community. Participant number 2 presented as having vision about connecting with Oakville community leaders and said:

We will need to do a lot of grassroots work to engage with our community, including door to door canvassing, meeting with community and political leaders, business owners and key residents so that our presence can begin to be felt.

Two participants acknowledged that people in the external community have more than just the spiritual aspect to their lives. From participant number 2's interview responses the categories were evangelism, leadership, visibility, lack of impact in the geographic residential community, OSDA relationships, vision, rigidity, unwillingness to change, OSDA decline, and poor growth. Themes in participant number 1's interview responses were rigidity, an unwillingness to change, the need for vision, lack of relevance and lack of visibility. The narrative in both participant number 1 and 2's answers connect to the Great Commission and evangelism since visibility, impact on geographic residential community, vision and OSDA decline, and church growth are related to achieving mission and the reason for OSDA's existence.

Participant number 3 focussed on evangelism and the Great Commission. This person's responses were general and not specific to OSDA. Participant number 3 had evangelism as his priority and suggested that OSDA's role should be the following:

To educate people in God's way to create the harmony in community in making sure they know God's name in community. Socialize in a spiritual way. To help the community because communities are going through a tough time. People in homes, frustrated. Message of hope to deliver to them and that's a blessing for the community.

Participant number 3 suggested that technology be used to spread the gospel to the geographic residential community of Oakville:

My vision would be to reach out to the community. Make ourselves known, using phone calls, flyers, postings- posting an ad to the You Tube channels they watch in the community. Which channel they watch, short, powerful message and play it on the phones. At least we get to reach them on YouTube because everyone watches You Tube nowadays... very short powerful message. That Jesus is God is not enough, something to cause them to ask themselves questions... am I caring about the things that are important in life. Send message so they can think about their spiritual well being – will give importance to things they understand and not to things they do not understand.

The need for visibility was a repetitive theme for participants number 1, 2 and 3. They spoke about the need for OSDA to be visible in the geographical residential community. The essence was that OSDA needed to be in connection with the external community to be able to spread the good news of salvation. Like participant number 1, participant number 3 focused on the evangelism of the people in the geographical residential community. The categories from the responses of participant number 3 were evangelism, presence, external community impact. Themes that emerged from participant number 3's interview responses were evangelism, visibility, and the Great Commission.

Participant number 4 emphasized that communication among members, and between members and leaders, needed improvement. Participant number 4 spoke about some members attacking new ideas and called for respect. (Participant number 4 repeatedly used the word attack during the interview). Most participants spoke about conflict in the private interviews, however omitted reference to conflict from the written questionnaire responses. The idea of

stuckness that participant number 1 identified was repeated by participant number 4 in the words “doing things over and over expecting to get different results.” Participant number 4 expressed the idea that OSDA was out of touch with reality by saying that OSDA was doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

The categories identified from participant number 4’s interview responses were rigidity and unwillingness to change, vision, evangelism, church relationships, conflict, and hostility. Themes from these categories were stuckness, interpersonal conflict, the need to try new things.

Like participants number 1 and 3, participant number 4 also had a major focus on the spiritual aspect of the people in the external community. Participant number 4 showed disconnection to OSDA and the external Oakville community. Participant number 4 also indicated that moving forward he had no concerns and said, “I do not see anything of great concern currently.” This statement was a contradiction to what participant number 4 had previously stated. I included it in the data because that was his response to the question, “What are you most concerned about regarding OSDA?” As OSDA was a struggling church and experiencing a severe drop in membership and attendance, this ambiguity was hard to interpret.

Participant number 5 believed the burden of the work was on two leaders. Participant number 5 was concerned about the aging membership, lack of human capital, that the founding members were often confused about why people were not coming to OSDA, why OSDA members were missing, why OSDA was

joining with other churches for some ministries, why Zoom had to continue and members did not come back to OSDA, disunity, confusion about the name of the church and concern that there was no church growth over the years.

Lack of members. Those who are there are few. Added to that the current membership are mainly seniors who are experiencing challenges with ageing. Due to their challenges, it makes it impossible for them to achieve much. Also, some of the members' concept of church administration is outdated and it appears that they are stuck in their ways making it difficult to redirect their vision. Also there appears to be an issue with motivating the members.

Participant number 5 indicated that the members' concept of the church administration needed review and renewal. This participant was the one of five participants who had a focus on the spiritual aspect of the people in the residential geographic community.

A theme from participant number 5's interview was that of relevance and the church's ability to meet the needs of the community. Five of seven participants talked about the relevance of OSDA to the external community. Unlike participant number 4, participant number 5 had many concerns about OSDA including lack of members. Like participants number 1 and 4, participant number talked about "stuckness" at OSDA. This was a recurring theme in the individual interviews of the research project. The categories that were highlighted from the interview with participant number 5 were leadership, evangelism, church relationships, human resources. The themes that emerged were rigidity, stuckness and an unwillingness to change, a need to change, aging congregation. In Vivo coding from the interview with participant number 5 included phrases such as, "they are stuck in their ways making it difficult to redirect their vision" "share

your faith with other... accept Christ," "lack of members," "those who are there are few," "mainly seniors," "assess the current needs."

There were many long pauses and sighing during the interview with participant number 6. The researcher contemplated ending the interview prematurely because participant number 6 presented as worried, anxious, and deeply concerned. This was evidenced by the person's head being down throughout the entire interview and little eye contact was made. Participant number 6 engaged in conversation by asking questions. Participant number 6 spoke about complainers not understanding.

According to this participant, founding members sometimes mixed-up information and there was evidence of misunderstanding on many issues. Participant number 6's questionnaire response acknowledged that humans have a spiritual and social aspect. This person was one of participants whose initial vision for the external community was focused on spreading the gospel as per the Great Commission. Participant number 6's concern with the OSDA church was lack of unity, lack of growth and the discrepancy about whether the group should use the word "church" as part of its legal name. In Vivo coding from interview with participant number 6 included phrases "lack of reverence," "vision of the church is to make friends and to share Jesus with them," "concern with...unity, growth, ...church title," "spending more time together...getting to know each other." The essence was that OSDA was lack of unity and lack of growth. Lack was a word repeated several times by participants 5 and 6 indicating a tendency to speak in negative terms.

Participant number 7 is the only participant that talked about open conflict at OSDA church and commented:

What 's not working well is the struggle between the pastors and the members... one lady was in tears, disagreements, conflict, and the conflict is not handled in a good manner. Visitation is not working well. People need to go out and visit and touch base with them. ... People in the community don't know we are there. Community doesn't know we are there; we need to connect with the community.

Other participants were silent on the topic of open conflict and poor interpersonal relationships among church members, even though the findings from the pre-questionnaire showed conflict and poor interpersonal relationship as the second most prevalent theme to be prioritized by the leadership team.

Participant number 7 had long pauses in speaking about lack of togetherness, members not feeling loved or that they mattered. Participant number 7 spoke about the work of the Holy Spirit and that a new thing needed to be done. The need for newness was repeated several times during the interview. Participant number 7 also had a focus of the spiritual aspect of humans in the external community. Participant number 7 indicated a lack of clarity about how OSDA could have influence or had an impact in the external community. Like participant number 6, participant number 7 also talked about a lack of togetherness and disunity at OSDA. Lack of external community connection, lack of togetherness and disunity was a prevalent theme throughout the interviews in the research project. Categories that emerged from the interview with participant number 7 were a lack of willingness to change, conflict, need for vision and no external geographic community impact and presence. Themes were stuckness, poor church relationships, need for change, need for newness. The idea of need for visibility

and presence was repeated. This theme of the need for visibility in the community was also evident in the responses of participants number 1, 2, 3 and 7. Participant number 7 said "... to be seen and our presence felt Our presence needs to be felt ...". Five of seven research participants expressed that OSDA needed to be more visible and have a presence in the geographic residential community.

In Vivo coding of phrases from interview with participant number 7 were highlighted such as "people in tears," "community don't know we are there," "we need to connect with the community," "we can't shy away from new things," "Holy Spirit to be poured out in our lives." The essence was poor church relationships. From the data analysis using In Vivo coding came the idea that OSDA may find the embrace of innovative ideas towards serving the community useful. There was an expressed need to be relevant, visible in the community and achieve community impact and mission. Lack of visibility was a recurring theme. The perception of irrelevance inspired discussion about the need for leadership vision for the geographic residential community at the retreat.

Reflection on Data Collected from Participant Observations

My observation was that the experience of the retreat and AI intervention was positively received by all research participants. The constructive interaction and group cohesion were evident. There was a light and energized mood as evidenced by active participation, spontaneous dialogue, asking and answering questions. Time was given for individual story telling and eating together. The meals showed the cultural sensitivity and cultural knowledge of the researcher about the culture and preference of the participants. This allowed for feelings of

familiarity and comfort as well as created space for dialogue. I as the participant observer was energized and encouraged as participants voiced that they experienced hope. In reading and analyzing the responses of the participants in the post-questionnaire after the retreat and AI process, I was motivated by the positive words used by the participants. I saw this as the psychological effects of hearing positive, strength-based terms.

Leadership Retreat and AI Process

Data was collected through an AI process at the leadership retreat through the group interview and participant observation. The OSDA leadership retreat was held on August 21st, 2022, in Oakville at a local community center. The seven participants were the same people that were interviewed prior to the retreat. All except one attended the retreat. However, the number of attendees remained at seven including the minute taker who was not part of the original seven.

I welcomed the participants and presented the AI 4D model as per Cooperrider (2005). I spoke about positivity and strengths of OSDA and that we were using the AI model as an intervention to develop vision and improve the trajectory of OSDA. I explained each phase of the AI process in detail. The entire day was framed in the spirit of positivity and positivity guided and informed the words and activities for the day. The AI 4D cycle was written at the bottom of the agenda for ease of reference. An AI success story was presented about another church that had used AI in their planning session. The AI story inspired positivity and commanded attention. This was evidenced by the spirited involvement of the

participants in the retreat. At the beginning of the retreat, I explained that based on the success story, to make OSDA a healthy congregation, there needs to be effective communication, growth opportunities to serve others and effective leadership. I chose this AI success story because like OSDA, the church that is the subject of this success story also faced the challenge of decline. The AI success story was also used to catch the participants' attention and inspire them to participate. After the AI success story, I did a presentation on the Discovery phase of AI. Flip charts were used to diagram and document the information shared. The flip charts were then put on the walls so that participants could refer to and reflect on the information as the focus group interview was conducted. Questions to the group were framed using wording and phrases that align with the principles of AI. I also steered the discussion towards whatever things were honest, just, fair, pure, lovely, virtuous, praiseworthy or of good report based on (Philippians 4:8). The exercise was collaborative with people taking turns writing on the chart as the group answered questions while going through the 4D cycle of AI.

Discovery Phase of the AI Process

During the AI Discovery stage, the group of participants highlighted strengths and things to be celebrated at OSDA. Questions asked of participants were as follows:

- What do you appreciate about what has been?
- What do you appreciate about the best of what has been?

The following table shows word groupings for the AI Discovery phase. These words and phrases were written on flip charts as part of the group interview.

Word groupings were based on patterns which were placed in categories and then in themes.

Table 3: AI Discovery Word Patterns, Categories and Themes

Word Groupings	Words and Phrases	Words and Phrases	Words and Phrases
1.	Dedication	Members pool money	Experience in community
2.	Ambition to grow	Members have empathy to each other	Knowledge of residential community
3.	Desire to grow	Members sharing with each other	Information about residential community
4.	Determined to exist	Members will give to each other	Knowledge of geographic community
5.	Relentless	Members will lend money to each other	History of living in the residential community to build from
6.	Resilience		
Patterns identified in responses	Resilience/Desire to Be	Hospitality /Empathy	Knowledge of Geographic Community
Categories	Existential Matters	Evidence of Positive Relationships	Geographic Residential Community
Themes	Resilience	Hospitality	Knowledge of Geographic Residential Community

There were three major themes that emerged. The following table represents what participants expressed as part of the AI Discovery phase. These themes were uncovered as part of the AI intervention at the leadership retreat.

Table 3a: AI-DISCOVERY Phase Themes

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Hospitality	5
Resilience	6
Knowledge of Geographic Community	5
Total	16

As the participants spoke about Discovery (appreciating and valuing what is), empathy and hospitality, a desire to grow or resilience and having a history or knowledge of the external geographic community was repeated at least five times. Other areas that could be celebrated were faith, still having a presence, the location of OSDA and dedication. Please see Appendix H and Appendix I for a pictorial and graphic presentation of the data from the AI Discovery phase, as well as a word cloud showing the participants responses.

Responses from the group interview identified the strength of OSDA as:

1. Empathy and Hospitality

Showing empathy to each other was identified as a strength, as demonstrated through caring, sharing, and lending to each other. This caring and sharing was to be extended to the external community as OSDA sought to connect with the community to meet their needs with empathy and kindness. Empathy was identified five times and may be described as multiple occurrences to create a pattern from which a major theme has emerged.

2. Desire to Grow and Resilience

Another major theme based on the repetition of words or ideas was a desire to grow and the determination of the members to continue existing as OSDA, maintaining a sense of identity and autonomy. This determination to exist has resulted in OSDA maintaining a presence in Oakville despite their challenges. This theme was repeated six times. Please see Appendix H for a graphic presentation of the findings.

3. Knowledge of History and the Community

Another theme that was celebrated was that OSDA has history to build from and knowledge of the Oakville geographical community. This idea was repeated by several different leaders five times during the focus group interview. This was another repetitive pattern and that emerged from the analysis. Hope was expressed that OSDA would use their history and knowledge of the geographical community to be more visible as they sought to share and care with community residents.

Dream Phase of AI Process

AI includes asking questions to name strengths to affect change. In this sense it can be seen as an assessment tool to identify and assess strengths. The idea is that every organization has gifts just as every person has gifts, and AI is a good resource to unearth what these gifts are. As discussed above, the leadership team of OSDA saw the need for clarity of vision for the external community to move things forward and effect change. The Dream phase of the AI process

discussed the question of how we could bless the community with our strengths.

The questions that were asked were as follows:

- How can we build on our strengths?
- How do we bless the people in the Oakville community?

There were 20 documented responses during the dream stage (indicating repetition). The responses were ministry to lonely people, youth outreach, youth empowerment, needs assessment, needs survey, scan environment, back to school project, community/ environmental projects, connection, fellowship, empathy, OSDA out of four walls, engage in community, visit nursing home, partnership with community organization, visitation, health and physical wellness, partnership with hospital, visit hospital, random visitation, and BBQ. The repetition of themes throughout the Dream phase was visitation (four times), health, and wellness (five times), seniors' emphasis (four times) and youth emphasis (seven times). The Dream phase was aimed at encouraging participants to imagine what might be. These included visitations in the eternal community, helping in the health and wellness of seniors in the external community, seniors' ministry development and youth ministry development.

1. Visitation

Through In Vivo analysis of repetitive phrases, I found that the leaders of OSDA dreamed of engaging with the community through youth and senior's ministry. They dreamed of visiting nursing homes and hospitals to share and care with people in the geographic community.

2. Health and Wellness

The participants dreamed of engaging with the external community through health and wellness fairs. They dreamed of building on their strengths of empathy, fellowship, and hospitality. These dreams were seen by the OSDA leadership as part of achieving the Great Commission.

3. Senior's Ministry

The participants expressed their dreams of partnering with the hospital and promoting health and wellness for seniors. They spoke about the development of a seniors' loneliness ministry and a postcard ministry.

4. Youth Ministry

There was an absence of youth in OSDA. Participants expressed a longing to engage with the external geographic community and this was the essence of this section of the group interview. The participants spoke of doing an environmental scan to see where the needs in the community were and to engage the youth in community environmental projects. This included wearing T-Shirts and getting outside of the walls of OSDA to provide creative service as OSDA dreams of being a center of influence in community. The participants dreamed of having a shared vision as a leadership team to all be consensus as to their mission.

The following table shows word groupings for the AI Dream phase. These words and phrases were written on flip charts as part of the group interview. Word groupings were based on patterns which were placed in categories and then in themes. In addition to the patterns, categories and themes reflected in Table 4 and Table 4a, the participants spoke about doing an environmental scan to get a

needs assessment of the residential community so that OSDA could have a shared vision and initiate a community environment project to get OSDA “out of the four walls” and engaging with the geographic residential community.

Table 4: AI Dream Phase Word Patterns, Categories and Themes

Word Groupings	Words and Phrases	Words and Phrases	Words and Phrases	Words and Phrases
1.	Random visitation	Physical wellness	Seniors to be engaged	Youth outreach
2.	Visit hospital	Health ministry	Educate seniors in OSDA	Youth empowerment
3.	Visitation	Partnership with hospital	Post card ministry	Youth project
4.	Visit nursing homes	Hospital	Loneliness ministry/ Grief ministry	Youth emphasis
5.		Physical /mental wellness for seniors		T-Shirts worn in community to appeal to youth
6.				Youth
7.				Back to school project for youth
Patterns identified in Responses	Visibility/ Impact in Community	Health Message	Aging Population	OSDA’s Need for youth
Categories	Residential community visits	Physical and mental wellness	Senior’s needs	Reaching youth in residential community
Themes	Visitation	Health/ Wellness	Senior’s Ministry	Youth Ministry

The following table represents data collected and what participants expressed as part of the AI Dream phase. These themes were uncovered as part of the AI process at the leadership retreat.

Table 4a: AI Dream Phase Themes

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Visitation	4
Health/ Wellness	5
Senior’s Ministry	4
Youth Ministry	7
Total	20

As part of data analysis after the retreat I developed four leadership vision models for OSDA. The leadership team was aware of my development of these models. From the dream phase, I developed a graphic representation of an OSDA leadership model from the findings of the AI Dream phase (see below). The OSDA Leadership Vision Model II shows the AI – 4D Cycle- Dreaming Phase. The model was developed after the retreat as part of a summary of my analysis. In this leadership vision model, dreams may appear disconnected and even unrelated, yet they all surround the Great Commission. The Great Commission is therefore the center of the model. The participants desired a shared vision of leadership for the community that would lead to presence in the residential community and opportunities to evangelize the geographic residential community.



Figure 2: OSDA Leadership Team Vision Model II AI 4D Cycle-Dreaming Phase

Findings indicated that the participants dreamed of having a shared vision to engage with the external community. They dreamed of health and wellness, senior’s visitation and youth ministries being developed. This was to be done with the great commission at the center of OSDA’s ministries. The participants’ responses demonstrated a desire to engage with the community of Oakville.

Design Phase of AI Process

The question asked during the design phase was:

- What are the initiatives that might be?

The Design phase of the group interview showed thirteen occurrences of words and phrases that suggest connection to the community. How to realize the dreams identified in the Dream phase included OSDA being connected to, and understanding life in, the external community of Oakville. This was the most frequent sentiment expressed during the group interview and the retreat. From 24 documented and colour-coded responses, the words community and people were grouped and occurred thirteen times, the words flourish, grow, and strive were grouped and occurred five times, the words God’s will and hope were grouped and occurred three times, the words connect and connecting were grouped and occurred three times and the words meeting needs occurred three times. It was the participants themselves that determined what words were to be grouped together based on similarity of meanings and essence of what they were trying to communicate.

The following table shows word groupings for the AI Design phase. These words and phrases were written on flip charts as part of the group interview that took place during the AI process at the retreat. Word groupings were based on patterns which were placed in categories and then in themes.

Table 5: AI Design Phase Word Patterns, Categories and Themes

Word Groupings	Words and Phrases	Words and Phrases	Words and Phrases	Words and Phrases
1.	Connection in residential community	Belong	Communicate God’s will to the residential community	Focus on people and their needs

2.	Connection in hospitals	Flourish	A Place of hope and delivery for the residential community.	A church for all people
3.	Corporate connection	Grow	Proclaiming the everlasting gospel guided by the Three Angel's message of Revelation 14.	Connecting to the people of the Oakville residential community through technology.
4.	Civil connection	Strive		
5.	Religious connections in community	People to grow		
6.	Correspondence with people in residential community			
7.	Going door to door in residential community			
8.	Joint			
9.	Relevant			
10.	Community partnerships			
11.	Cultural relevance			
12.	OSDA to be Relevant to residential community			
13.	Relevant and contemporary			
Patterns identified in responses	Impact in community/ Visibility	Vision for OSDA	Great Commission and Mission of OSDA	People and Service
Categories	Community Connection	Church Flourishing	Evangelism	Serving people
Themes	Geographic residential	Strive/grow	God's will / Hope	Meeting the needs of

	community connection			community residents
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The following table represents themes uncovered as part of the AI Design phase at the leadership team retreat.

Table 5a: AI Design Phase Themes

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Geographic Residential Community Connection	13
Strive/ Grow	5
God's Will/ Hope	3
Meeting Needs of community residents	3
Total	24

The findings showed that 13 out of 24 responses in the design phase of the leadership visioning retreat focussed on connecting with the external community, having community impact and relevance and being visible in that geographic community. Please see below for a graphical representation of the data collected during the group interview about the leadership vision for the community of Oakville. The OSDA Leadership Team Vision Model III, AI - 4D Cycle Design Phase was still to be put in concrete terms for designing actions. This was to be done in conjunction with the development of a mission statement and action plan during the Deliver phase of the AI 4D cycle. The model showed the aspirations and dreams of community impact, relevance, visibility, connecting with community and meeting the needs of the community still distant and compartmentalized in boxes. As OSDA looked towards the action plan (Deliver/Destiny), the connection to the surrounding community was to be

evidenced by participation and attendance at cultural events held in the community. Coming together with other community partners like the veterans' legion, hospitals or schools was a theme in both the dream and design phase of the AI process. The model is a graphic presentation of the summary of my analysis of findings.

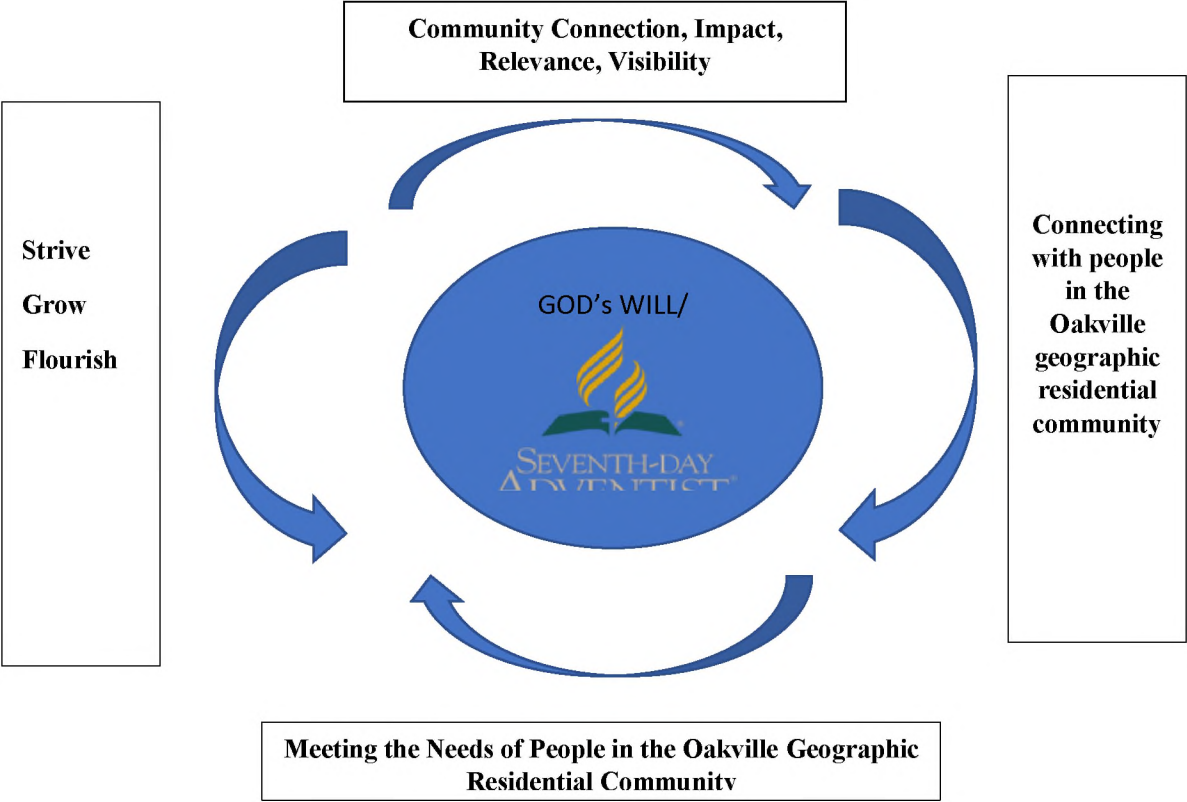


Figure 3: OSDA Leadership Team Vision Model III AI - 4D Cycle- Design Phase

The four blue arrows represent a flurry of activity around OSDA, while the reality of the situation is that the dreams are yet unrealized.

Deliver Phase of the AI Process

The Delivery stage focussed primarily on the development of the leadership team vision. Other aspects of the Deliver stage, such as a clear action plan, did not materialize on the day of the AI retreat because of time constraints. During the group interview, one participant indicated that developing an action plan would take much time because we first needed a vision and then from the vision, a mission statement, and from the mission would come the action plan. The suggestion was made that for the retreat, the group would focus only on developing and articulating leadership vision. The group agreed to focus only on the development of the vision and scheduled future meetings for the development of mission and action plan. The participants decided to build on what was discussed in the Discover, Dream and Design phases of the process. As the group spoke about the leadership vision, the words “community” and “people” were grouped and used ten times, the words “flourish”, “grow” and “strive” were grouped and used five times, the words “God’s will” and “hope” were grouped and used three times, the words “connecting” and “communicating” were grouped and used three times. The word and essence of “meeting the needs of community residents” was used three times.

The participants came up with the following to describe their vision for the geographic residential community of Oakville: *OSDA will be “a centre of influence that connects with the community to meet their needs so that they can strive, grow and flourish in God’s will.”*

Based on the data, I developed a graph of OSDA Leadership Team Vision Model IV (AI – 4D Cycle- Delivery Phase) to facilitate future discussion (see below). This model is made of solid lines with solid connections between community impact, relevance, and visibility, meeting the needs in the Oakville community and engaging with this community. These themes were strongly connected to OSDA striving, growing, and flourishing. The model showed God's will and hope at the center of this connection, for this is the nucleus of OSDA's existence. The Seventh-day Adventist logo is outside of the model purposefully. This was because the model was not focussed on a specific denomination but on meeting the needs of all community people regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic grouping, sexual orientation, religious persuasion, or heritage. This model shows OSDA at the stage where it was striving to experience growth and flourishing. The model shows that striving, growing, and flourishing are connected to meeting the needs of the community, connecting with people in Oakville to realize community impact, relevance, and visibility.

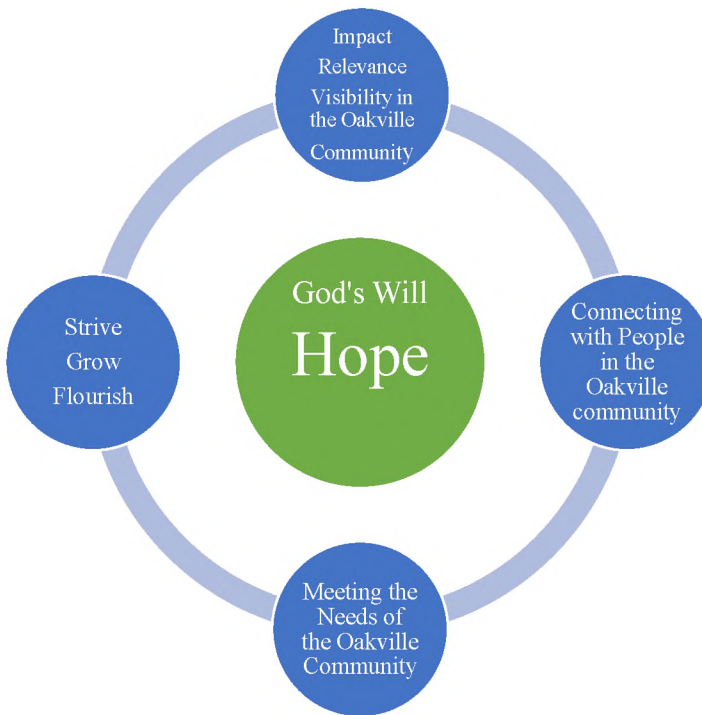


Figure 4: OSDA Leadership Team Vision Model IV (AI – 4D Cycle-Delivery Phase)

Vision Creation

Research participants took turns writing on the flip charts and pasting the flip chart on the walls for all to see throughout the day. Some research participants volunteered to put words spoken into pictures. Discussions were vibrant, celebratory, and spirited. One participant expressed feelings of honour to be included in this “momentous occasion” for OSDA at its first-ever leadership retreat. The group interview discussed how OSDA could impact the community. One way the participants showed that they owned the process was by doing the writing for the group.

After the retreat and AI process, all research participants gave a score 10 out of 10 (see post-questionnaire in Appendix E) for clarity of vision. Though some leaders were unclear of the vision for the external community prior to the AI process, all research participants were clear about OSDA's vision for the external community after the AI process as evidenced by the data on the post-questionnaire. The leadership team vision was written by one of the participants on a flip chart while I quietly observed the process. As noted above, the following words were written by the participant as the groups' idea for their vision for the residential community:

“A centre of influence that connects with the community to meet their needs so that they can strive, grow and flourish in God's will.”

The research participants said that “putting things on paper allowed the vision to be clear” and that the retreat and AI process was a “great planning session and analytical thinking.” The creation of the leadership vision for the external geographic residential community was done in a collaborative manner. It could be said that the leadership team (research participants) co-created change. According to Alan Grill (my self-awareness ministry coach) regarding co-creating change, “God's kingdom rule is He makes us co-creators for change and improvement...to implement change in a positive and collaborative way” (Grill, July 21st, 2022). The participants agreed that developing the vision was where to start. The leadership team vision would be presented to the congregation at OSDA as a recommendation. The mission statement to evolve from the leadership team

vision which was viewed by participants as starting a “new thing” at OSDA and moving forward from stuckness.

Cohesion and Coming Together

I observed that the research participants came together as they each voiced the OSDA’s vision for external community from their perspective. The participants wrote down their individual impressions, and from all these dreams of what could be, and through the joint effort of looking for and identifying key words, phrases, essence and intent, the research participants were guided by the researcher into grouping their responses based on meanings. Research participants took turns highlighting words, phrases, and paragraphs from data. This was done around the circle several times (people were sitting facing each other). During the grouping and coding process, one research participant took the words and phrases and voiced the sentiment of what was being said. People yelled out, “That’s it, that’s it!” and the words that reflected their idea of the vision were used to develop the vision. This was the process through which the research participants produced a vision statement to reach the community. The final leadership vision statement evolved from the meanings that came out of the group discussion.

As part of the AI process, people were honoured for their contributions. This in turn appeared to motivate more participation. I observed that the group coding exercise was vibrant and uplifting. There was much energy, movement, hustle, and bustle in the room as research participants made suggestions, shouted answers to questions, wrote on flip charts and used highlighters to highlight words

that were significant. The research participants were observed to be excited and elated with the newly developed vision. My observation was that the AI process was successful in creating hope. The new leadership team vision was written down and the participants took pictures of it. There was another celebration meal after the AI process. A positive outcome of the retreat and AI process was the creation of the OSDA leadership team vision for the community. As noted above, the vision is that OSDA will be “A center of influence that connects with the community to meet their needs so that they can strive, grow and flourish in God’s will.”

Outcomes of the AI Retreat

Based on the data from the post-questionnaire, the participants’ response to the AI retreat was positive, described in their or own words as “wonderful,” “mind-blowing,” “encouraging,” “amazing,” “very good,” “edifying,” “uplifting,” “refreshing” and “a good experience.” Participants indicated most frequently that the AI retreat was beneficial because it allowed for the creation of a clear vision. When asked about the benefit of the retreat, the word “vision” was repeated in various forms. Participants spoke about vision, the development of vision, and the leadership vision as resulting from the retreat and the AI intervention. After AI retreat, in the postquestionnaire, all participants indicated that they were “very confident” that the leadership team could move OSDA from having no or vague vision for the external community to realizing impactful vision for the community. This reflected a spirit of optimism that the created vision could be a launching pad for OSDA’s engagement with the community.

Data Collected from the Post- Questionnaire (after AI Retreat)

The post questionnaire was completed individually after the AI retreat. This questionnaire was given to the participants to take away and return at their convenience. Four out of seven participants completed the questionnaire right there and handed them to me. One participant emailed me the completed responses within one week of the AI retreat. Not all questionnaires were returned. The answers were short and not as detailed as the answers in the pre-questionnaire.

From the data collected, when asked what the leadership vision for the Oakville community was, all except one participant correctly wrote on the post-questionnaire “A center of influence that connects with the community to meet their needs so that they may strive, grow and flourish in God’s will.” Three of the seven participants wrote that developing a vision for OSDA was part of the benefits of the AI retreat. Participant number 1 said the AI retreat produced “Effective leadership vision.” Participant number 2, added that the AI retreat allowed the “opportunity to reflect, analyse, play and envision.” This participant described the AI retreat as “edifying, productive and insightful” and a “great planning session.” Participant number 7 indicated that AI retreat was “engaging,” and resulted in a sense of belonging. One of the benefits indicated was that the participant “learned the process of developing vision.”

All participants indicated they were clear about the leadership team vision for the external community, which was different from their responses before the AI retreat. The AI retreat resulted in a oneness of vision for the participants

instead of a variety of different visions for the community prior to the AI retreat. The leadership team vision created by the participants at the AI Retreat was inclusive of different ways of engaging with the external community.

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of the research was to explore the effectiveness of using an AI process to build a leadership team vision for the surrounding community. I designed an intervention in the form of a retreat for the leadership team that utilized an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process. The goal of the AI retreat was to identify existing strengths on which to build and to unify the leadership team around a clear vision for impacting the Oakville community.

I concluded that the AI process was effective in providing the opportunity for participants to share and participate in the process of envisioning change. Use of AI was a way to address the concerns of the participant group and consider possible solutions. The AI process had the benefit of allowing the OSDA leadership team to celebrate achievements, reframe negativity, offer a new image of a possible future, and to articulate a clear leadership team vision for future impact in the external community. The AI process allowed the participants to discover what good was being done by OSDA. Findings showed that the AI retreat put the leadership team in a positive mindset to explore the future with hope. The Great Commission was the primary focus of the leadership team. The participants were also focussed on meeting the needs of the external community. They had a desire to grow and be resilient. They said that they would build on

knowledge of the geographic community and their gifts of empathy and hospitality to achieve their leadership team vision.

Changes Toward Positive, Healthy Relationships

Poor interpersonal relationships had been identified as barriers to the achievement of the Great Commission. This was to be mitigated by the positive energy and engagement demonstrated in the Discovery phase of the AI retreat, where strengths were highlighted and celebrated, helped counter negativity by the strengths-based emphasis and positivity.

Answering The Existential Question

OSDA needed to answer the question of why it existed. There needed to be a collective understanding among leaders about the leadership team vision, mission, and purpose of OSDA. After the AI leadership retreat, the participants reported seeing the leadership team vision as foundational to the development of an action plan and achieving mission. The themes of relevance, visibility and impact on the external geographical community were identified as things to be addressed in the action plan as part of the AI Deliver phase which was futuristic.

The Way Forward

The findings identified the participants 'concerns about OSDA's stuckness, lack of visibility and lack of external community impact. As a result of the positive response to the AI process at the retreat, I was hopeful that participants would be able to infuse and permeate AI's strengths-focused

positivity throughout the congregation. Robert Terry's (1993) understanding of stuckness as involving issues of power, mission and meaning has caused me to think that it may be useful for OSDA to consider using an AI-informed process to focus on these challenges. The leadership team said they wanted to meet the needs of people in the external community and had a longing to engage with community. They had the vision of being more visible in the community by engaging in visitation and partnering with health and wellness ministry, senior's ministry, and youth ministry to meet the needs of the community.

Solution Focused and Leadership Accountability

As I reflected on participants' responses about the congregation's perceived lack of openness to new ways and new people and their reports of ongoing interpersonal conflict, my assessment was that a sense of safety and support may be missing, and this demands accountability of leadership.

Though the AI process, the leadership team came together in the creation of a vision statement. As important in my view, the AI process allowed for reflection and creation of direction and focus for the leadership team in a safe and positive environment. The AI process created a statement that could in the future form the foundation for a clear action plan and strategy. It was valuable and an excellent start towards an upward trajectory of OSDA and has the potential to advance ministry both within and outside OSDA.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This portfolio integrates key insights, findings, and lessons learned in my Doctor of Ministry program in Ministry Leadership, with specific reference to my own ministry context of the Oakville Seventh-day Adventist company (OSDA). The portfolio includes three main sections: an analysis of my personal and ministry context; my philosophy of leadership; and a field research project that explored the benefits of using an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process to develop an OSDA leadership team vision for the community of Oakville. The OSDA was a struggling company of believers, in danger of closing, with an imported leadership team that had yet to develop a clear vision for outreach and influence on the external community. The research findings indicated that the AI process utilized at a leadership retreat was an effective engagement and leadership development strategy that built cohesion of the OSDA leadership team and created a vision that promised to set the company on an upward trajectory towards positivity and realizing successes. Following Cooperrider's model (2005), the AI intervention helped the leadership team identify strengths and successes, discover, celebrate, and value what is best, dream of possibilities, design actions, and consider ways to deliver on mission. The research findings could potentially help other struggling churches by providing an AI framework for developing strategies that could foster growth and thriving.

The contextual analysis revealed that change was required at OSDA, and I learned that change is slow and needs to be supported by the people. My Christ-centered philosophy of Christian leadership was instrumental in strengthening my commitment and patient endurance at OSDA since “Effective Christian leaders are to be faithful with patient endurance and be loyal to God’s word and mission ... in an environment that needs changing” (King 2016, 65). I believe my assignment to OSDA was from God as part of His sending me to lift the wounded and marginalized. My Christ-centered Christian leadership philosophy pivoted me to accept the opportunity to care for the marginalized. My ministry context allowed me to live out my deep commitment for serving humankind which is rooted in Isaiah 58 and Isaiah 61. It appeared that this was what was required at OSDA to develop the leadership team.

Research Project Conclusions

AI was an asset-based approach that was used in my research to develop a leadership team vision. I can say that using an AI process with a leadership team was an incredibly positive intervention. The leaders owned the leadership team vision that they developed together. The rest of the congregation voted to accept the created vision statement after the research was completed.

The participants engaged in grouping and coding themes. The AI process deepened a sense of community and cohesion within the leadership team. AI created clarity of vision and a sharpened focus. AI was a useful process that had the participants coming up with the wording for the OSDA leadership team vision for

the external community. In light of this, I conclude that AI was an effective strategy to help create hope for the future.

Through the project I learned a lot about the research process, and I learned that when we say that participants can withdraw at any time, we need to take this possibility into consideration. I learned that I needed to work on the project “in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2) because one never knows when there will be a family or church crisis that will take your time and attention. I kept working steadily, submitted the work once completed and moved along to the next learning or assignment. I had a researcher notebook with me and wrote down ideas in a notebook that was always handy.

I learned that scheduling interviews and group activities were challenging when working with volunteers. The date of the retreat was changed several times due to scheduling conflicts.

The leadership retreat was celebratory in alignment with AI principles and at the end the group had developed a leadership team vision for the neighbouring community. As part of the AI process, the retreat agenda included a success story that was presented by one of the elders. The story set the tone for a positive emotional mindset. I learned that the people must be included in the journey of change and the journey to change. Change must take place at their readiness pace. Left up to me, I would have developed the vision, mission, and action plan all at the retreat. However, the participants moved at a much slower pace, but left the retreat feeling quite satisfied with the accomplishment of just the vision being

established as a group effort. The retreat was a first for OSDA and was celebratory in keeping with the AI framework.

I learned that documenting during participant observation was challenging. I felt I was not able to do it effectively. I just made jottings, then did the case noting within 24 hours of the participant observation at the retreat. I learned that it takes practise to be able to observe, participate and document at the same time.

Saldana (2021) became a reference manual for me in terms of data analysis. Computer literacy and knowledge of Microsoft excel was useful as I coded enormous amounts of raw data. Colour-coding was extremely helpful and fun. I coded so many ways that I now see coding as an enjoyable pastime as I consulted with Saldana (2021) intermittently.

I realized that I had been working on the research project over three years. I prayed that Daniel's God, the revealer of secrets and interpreter of dreams (Daniel 2), would help me interpret the data and inspire me with meanings that emerged. I learned total dependence on Almighty God to help me with this part of the research project. I learned that diligence is required to meet the requirements of the Doctor of Ministry program. I learned that it was wise to work ahead. This was because although I vowed to not take any more speaking appointments during a period, I ended up agreeing to speak in several emergency situations. In reflection, I have not yet learned how to say "no" when people are grieving or crying on the other end of the phone line. I am not even sure if that learning is appropriate for ministry.

I also learned about the possibility of human error when I was inadvertently attributed a statement to the wrong participant during the coding. I had to go back to the interview notes and the raw data to ensure accuracy. I learned that care must be taken when quoting anyone particularly in research. I also learned that I need to be proactive and make appointments ahead of time for professional services as it relates to academic writing.

I learned that field research is labour intensive particularly when coding is being done manually. Research requires discipline, strategic planning, commitment, dedication, and perseverance. Each time I reviewed the data from my research, new thoughts, themes, and meanings emerged. I learned that data analysis is shaped by the preferences, experiences, culture, and social location of the researcher. As the researcher, I needed to be aware that I looked through lenses tinted by my experiences.

The development of an action plan at the leadership retreat did not materialize as I expected. This goal was too ambitious and, upon reflection, taught me many lessons about vision casting, the influence of leadership, the rights of participants and group dynamics. Though I wanted to develop the action plan at the retreat, the participants indicated they wanted to wait to develop the action plan until after the development of not just vision but also mission.

A New Thing

I believe the AI process could be used with the congregation to help transform the people and the OSDA negative group culture. However, this would require buy-in not just from the leadership team but throughout the congregation.

The AI process would need to be strategic, and consistent. This would require courage, commitment, and leadership team cohesion as they focus on change. As a result of the AI process at the retreat, there was hope that God would do a “new thing” at OSDA. It was my hope that the leadership team retreat with the AI process would become a regular occurrence. Starting with the leadership team was prudent and strategic. The leaders that attended the leadership retreat showed a willingness to embrace change and a vision for the community. In my view, this was a first and vital step towards changing the trajectory of OSDA. The stated vision could form the foundation for the development of the action plan (as part of the AI Deliver stage) as OSDA strives to be relevant, visible, and have impact on the neighbouring community.

As part of the AI process, the new leaders dreamed of being relevant and visible in the community, meeting the various needs of the community, not just the spiritual needs. The AI process produced optimism that the new leadership vision would lead to a positive outcome for the company of believers as OSDA members. I see OSDA as having much promise for the future if AI principles of focussing on strengths and positive stories were incorporated in our interactions and worship services. Sermons, messages, theme songs and benedictions could focus on things that are lovely, just, right, admirable and of good report (Philippians 4:8-9).

The leadership retreat could be instituted as an annual planning session at OSDA using AI. The leadership vision that was created at the retreat was presented to the church board on September 28th, 2022. The senior pastor

presented to the board the highlights of the leadership retreat and the AI process, the benefits of positivity and gave thanks for the vision. In January 2023, the congregation celebrated the new leadership team vision with prayer and thanksgiving, perpetuating positivity and building mission on the strengths and giftedness of the people. OSDA may find it useful to organize subsequent leadership team meetings to develop the mission and action plan for future.

Key Insights - Lessons Learned by the Researcher

I learned that a research project can lead to further research in the future as research findings feed curiosity. Findings from my research project have provided topics for future research. For example, I was particularly curious to know where the people who left OSDA went and ended up. These people may have been missing from OSDA, but I wondered if they saw themselves not as missing but as ensuring safety for themselves and their families during the pandemic. Many of these people did not return calls, emails, or any attempts to invite them to return, even for a visit. I was curious about their experiences, whether they were attending church at all, if they still considered themselves believers, or if they were receiving any spiritual nurturance. I was curious about whether they were participating in corporate worship, receiving fellowship or discipleship and from where. This curiosity could be a subsequent research project. My curiosity, and my experience with this research project, has fuelled the fire for subsequent research.

The process of this present research has unearthed other areas for service that needed to be explored and addressed. There needed to be healing individually and as a group so that the impact on the community could be positive.

From the research project and from my DMin studies in general, I learned the importance of paying attention to the development of leaders and investing time and resources in leadership team vision clarity. I learned the value of my Christ-centered philosophy of Christian leadership in challenging situations. I learned the importance of inspiring leaders at OSDA to see themselves as having value to offer the surrounding community. I learned the value of AI principles and processes in facilitating healing among wounded people and companies of believers (churches) by focusing on strengths and successes.

The research process revealed that people tend to be more expressive in-person interviews than on written surveys. If I had to do the research again, I would use only the interviews based on the pre-questionnaire questions before the retreat because this produced richer data. I learned by using the AI process that stuckness was not always a barrier to vision creation, neither was conflict or poor interpersonal relationships. However, I also learned that not all participants may continue to the end of the research (for example, one participant exercised the right to withdraw on the day of the retreat). It was encouraging to me to witness how the participants that remained to the end used their own words in crafting the vision statement. This supported and confirmed my desire to “let go and let God” as I move forward in ministry.

The research findings demonstrate that the AI intervention achieved its purpose of fostering vision clarity among the leadership team and showed that a positive impact on leadership team cohesion. Clarity and renewal of leadership team vision was a needed foundation for fostering positive change in OSDA's trajectory. Without an articulated statement of vision, leaders' concepts of vision differed widely. The AI Process created a vision statement that would form the foundation for a future mission statement and action plan. Vision creation was a collective process, and the leaders united around the shared vision after the retreat. AI also produced a deepened sense of belonging. AI was an engagement and intervention tool that was like a wind in their sails. It allowed for participants' ownership of the leadership team vision.

The Action Plan was not realized during the retreat as it was too ambitious in the limited timeframe. The AI-Deliver phase will be scheduled at the next leadership team meeting so that the AI process can be completed. It is possible that the congregation could be included in this phase. This will have to be discussed and a decision made by the leadership team. Involving the congregation may be a step in ensuring buy-in to any initiatives that will come out of the action plan. AI will inform the process by which planning takes place at OSDA for the near future. It is a useful process at different planning levels. In addition, other churches have expressed an interest in my research and the use of the AI process with their own leadership team. Already I am seeing some unexpected small changes in terms of community connection. The AI process has allowed participants to focus on hope for the future as per the Deliver Model IV.

Dreaming of OSDA's Future

The AI process presented a new image of a potential future for the congregation and built optimism for a good outcome. I have learned that with volunteers, you can't make people do anything and you need to rely on the Holy Spirit. Activities such as the leadership team retreat and AI process were instrumental in bringing the leaders together as they collectively discussed and planned how to realize positive impact and visibility in the surrounding community. My hope is that OSDA will look for where God is at work and join in God's activity. AI proved to be an avenue of hope and allowed me to bring faith and the omnipotence of God into focus. My dream for OSDA was that God Himself would design and deliver positive change at OSDA through the leadership team that participated in the AI process. I dreamed there would be transformation, individually and as a group, through the embrace of change. I dreamed that there would be healing and restoration of the broken relationships at OSDA. I dreamed that OSDA would be seen as a safe place. I dreamed that OSDA would be visible in the community of Oakville and effectively minister in a diverse and changing context. I dreamed that developing leadership team vision for the community surrounding the Oakville Adventist Company would be the first step in realizing community impact and achieving mission.

In conclusion, I can say that after the AI process, I saw some unexpected, small, yet significant change in OSDA's connection and visibility in the community. As one example, in November 2022, OSDA laid a wreath for the Remembrance Day ceremony in Oakville. The recognition of OSDA by the

Mayor of Oakville, and the picture of the event used on the Ontario SDA Conference 2023 calendar, was one demonstration that that OSDA was taking steps to realize their leadership team vision of creating impact, connection, and visibility in the Oakville community.

On personal note, the DMin and the research project has confirmed for me God's faithfulness and leading in my life and ministry. I have new appreciation for the hymn "Great is Thy Faithfulness" as I realized that it embodies the sequence of my life seasons and the foundation of my Christ-centered leadership philosophy. Like AI, I see the hymn as strengths focused, "Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow." This captures my personal, ministry and research journey. I thank the God Most High for giving "wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding" (Daniel 2:20). In the words of SDA Hymnal number 100.

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father.
There is no shadow of turning with Thee.
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.
Great is Thy faithfulness.
Great is Thy faithfulness.
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me
Summer and winter and springtime and harvest
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness.
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love
Great is Thy faithfulness (Chisholm, 1923).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Information Letter

Letter Regarding Research Taking Place at Oakville Seventh-day Adventist church by Pastor Dean Lashington on the subject of

Developing Leadership Vision for the Community around the Oakville SDA Church Through Appreciative Inquiry
and request for your consent in participating in this research project.

Oakville Seventh-day Adventist (OSDA) church would like to move forward and have a positive impact on the community of Oakville. There is a need for the development of leadership vision at OSDA for the Oakville community as we build on our strengths and what we have achieved over the past 7 years. To facilitate a “turn-around” of OSDA’s trajectory, I (Pastor Dean Lashington) am proposing the design and implementation of a tool called Appreciative Inquiry (AI), specifically to develop leadership vision at OSDA for the community. The goal of this research project and intervention is for the leadership to have clear vision about the work OSDA would like to do in the community and to strengthen the commitment to this leadership vision in the Oakville community. I am hopeful to assist the church and Ontario Conference in developing a vision for the community and reversing the decline at Oakville SDA church. I am hopeful that this research will make Oakville SDA church have a vision for the community of Oakville.

I invite you to join with me as we use Appreciative Inquiry (AI) a leadership theory to guide us with this challenge. “A truly revolutionary method of change management, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) emphasizes inquiry into strengths, rather than focusing exclusively on fixing weaknesses (Cooperrider, 2005).” Appreciative Inquiry (AI) gives a possible solution to lack of leadership vision for the community.

Being strength-focussed and using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to develop leadership vision at OSDA is the way to ensure that the church thrives. AI assumes that the church and community has many untapped and rich accounts of the positivity and what people talk about as past, present, and future capacities, or “the positive core.” AI links the “knowledge and energy of this core directly to an organization or a community’s change agenda, and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized” (Cooperrider 2005). You are encouraged to journey with me on a path to value and recognize the strengths and potentials of the Oakville SDA church. Focussing on successes rather than failures and harnessing the combinations of strengths. According to Cooperider (2005), “The 4D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry” provides a road map through mobilizing the church to articulate strengths, creating a clear result-oriented vision in relation to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), creating possibilities that can be realized when the church focusses on “the positive core”

and “affirming the capability of the church on a whole focussing on hope” (Cooperrider, 2005). I will obtain data from present leaders (pastors, elders) and will conduct an extensive literature review. Feedback on the research proposal and format will also be sought from the present leaders. This research will be conducted under the supervision of the Senior Pastor (Pastor Mark Ewen) as well as my Research-Project Advisor Dr. Narry Santos, Track Coordinator: Dr. Michael Krause. Program Director: Dr. Mark Chapman from the Doctor of Ministry Department at Tyndale University and Seminary in Toronto.

The Tyndale University Research Ethics Board approved the project on May 13th, 2022. This project will conform to all requirements of Canadian ethical guidelines as outlined in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* and the *Tyndale Research Ethics Policy*.

I encourage you to participate in the interviews to help us discover information which will assist in the development of a leadership vision at OSDA for the community of Oakville. The Oakville SDA pastors and elders will be interviewed for this purpose. At least two weeks notice will be given in advance of the interviews. There will be two interview sessions. One will be individually, and the other will be conducted at a leadership development retreat. Confidentiality of all information shared will be guaranteed and all data will be stored confidentially. You will be invited to share as much – or as little – as you feel comfortable. Total anonymity in this research study may not be possible due to the small scale of the study and the collegial nature of our congregation, so please do not agree to participate in this research if you are concerned about remaining anonymous. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you will be free to opt-out of the study at any time without consequence. You are not waiving any legal rights if you choose to participate in this research. The research information may be used for future research. The interviews will begin July 15th, 2022, and end September 30th, 2022. The entire process will take 3 months. The research project will conclude on November 30th, 2022. The research proposal findings will be presented to the faculty at Tyndale Seminary early in January 2023. If you have any questions, please direct them to me, Pastor Dean Lashington, at
or (I am the only person who can access this email account). If you have any concerns about this research, please contact our Senior Pastor, Pastor Mark Ewen. You may also direct any questions or concerns about the ethical nature of this study to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at Tyndale Seminary at reb@tyndale.ca.

Thank you for considering participation in this research as we work together to develop leadership vision for the community at the Oakville SDA church. Blessings all yours with 10,000 besides,

Pastor Dean Lashington

Pastor/ Student Researcher

APPENDIX B: Research Project Consent Form

Project Research Proposal Consent

Title: Developing Leadership Vision for the Community Through Appreciative Inquiry at the Oakville SDA Church

Name (please print):

1. I have read the above Letter of Information outlining the purpose and details of this research project and have had an opportunity to ask any relative questions.

2. I understand that I will be participating in a study that involves sharing information about my experience with or at Oakville SDA church. I will be asked to answer questions about my experience.

3. I understand that the present leaders (pastors and elders) will be participating.

4. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without consequence. I am not waiving any legal rights by participating in this study.
I understand that every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the data now and in the future. The data may also be published in professional journals or presented at conferences, but any such presentations will be of general findings and will never breach individual confidentiality. Should I be interested, I am entitled to a copy of the findings.

I consent to the information and research findings being used to inform further research.

5. I understand that due to the small scale of the study and the collegial relationship with the congregation that complete anonymity may not be possible, but confidence will always be respected.

6. I am aware that if I have any questions about study participation, they may be directed to Pastor Dean Lashington at _____ or _____). Any concerns about this project can be directed to our Pastor Mark

Ewen Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board, reb@tyndale.ca.

I have read the above statements and freely consent to participate in this study through my involvement in the leadership team of OSDA: YES ___ NO ___

I agree to be interviewed by Pastor Dean Lashington as part of her research: YES ___ NO ___

Signature : _____ Date : _____

APPENDIX C : Research Instruments (Pre-Questionnaire)

Richard Osmer's (2008, 4) four tasks model of practical theology is helpful for thinking through how my understanding of what needs to happen in my ministry context and will be applied to practical action as part of action research and provides a model of what a framework for the research project could be:

1. The descriptive-empirical task (context)
 - a. What is going on?
2. The interpretive task (reflection)
 - a. Why is this going on?
3. The normative task (theology)
 - a. What ought to be going on?
4. The pragmatic task (action)
 - a. How might we respond?

In using the descriptive-empirical from Osmer (2008) the suggested questions for participants are below. This is to assess the needs of a church that has decreased attendance and membership to be shared with the church and the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

PART 1 (To be given to participants prior to the interview)

Administered July - August 2022

Questions for Present Leaders of Oakville Seventh-day Adventist (OSDA)

Participants Name:

Age Group:

21-30	41 – 50	61- 70	
31- 40	51 – 60	71-80	81 - 90

Sex: Male Female

Role at Oakville SDA

Church _____

Length of Time in Role?

Interviewer's Name:

Date of Meeting: _____

Location of Meeting:

1. What is working well?
2. What's not working well?
3. What is your understanding of the vision of the church in community?
4. What are you most concerned about regarding OSDA?
5. What is your vision about how OSDA can thrive in community?
6. How do we move forward and press on in the community?

APPENDIX D: AI Retreat Group Interview Questions

Use of AI to Develop Leadership Vision at OSDA for the Community

1. Discover (Appreciating and valuing the best of What Is),
2. Dream (Envisioning What Might Be)
3. Design (Determining What Should Be)
4. Destiny/ Deliver (Innovating/ Initiating What Will Be)

The questions in this questionnaire are connected to the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process in that the questions encourage self – reflection of leaders. The questions encourage exploration in appreciating and valuing what is best at OSDA. The questions allow for “dreaming” as per (Cooperrider (2005) and stimulates possibilities for vision and lays the foundation for future action in and with the community. The questions may initiate a vision and strategy to move forward with action in the community.

AI Retreat Questions:

1. What do you appreciate about what has been? (Discovery Phase)
2. What do you appreciate about the best of what has been? (Discovery Phase)
3. How can we build on our strengths? (Dream Phase)
4. How do we bless the people in the Oakville community? (Dream Phase)
5. What are the initiatives that might be? (Dream Phase)
6. How do we carry it out? (Design Phase)

7. How do we develop an action plan going forward as we press on? (Deliver Phase)

APPENDIX E: Post Questionnaire (Completed after AI Retreat) Part 2

Questions to Ask Present Leaders at the end of the OSDA Leadership Retreat

Participant Name:

Position:

Length of

Service _____

Age Group:

21-30 41 – 50 61- 70

31- 40 51 – 60 71-80 81 - 90

Sex: Male Female

Date and location of interview:

1. What was your experience at the retreat?
2. What benefit did you gain from the retreat?
3. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is very clear, how clear were you about OSDA vision for the community prior to the initiation of this research project?
4. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is very clear, how clear are you about OSDA vision for the community?

5. If there is a change in scaling, what has caused your change in scaling?
6. What is the leadership vision for the community?
7. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is very clear, how invested are you to OSDA vision for the community?
8. As a member of the leadership team, how confident are you we can move OSDA from no vision or vague vision in the community to realizing impactful vision for the community?
Please indicate by circling your answer:
Very Doubtful, Doubtful, Neutral, Confident, Very Confident



APPENDIX F: Retreat Program Outline

Oakville Seventh-day Adventist Church

OAKVILLE SDA CHURCH LEADERSHIP RETREAT

AGENDA

AUGUST 21st, 2022

1. Welcome
2. Prayer and Devotion
3. Attendance /Regrets
4. Appreciative Inquiry Overview
5. AI Success Story
6. Celebrating possibilities, Appreciating, Valuing.
7. Envisioning what should be, innovating what will be
8. Part 2 – Individual Questionnaire and Focus Group
9. Closing Remarks
10. Closing Prayer

LUNCH and WE PRESS ON

Today we will look at strengths and best practices in OSDA and the community. We will look at indicators of life, what is worth valuing. We will DISCOVER appreciate what has been and the best of what is, highlighting strengths that we can use to touch our community.

DREAM what might be- How do we bless the people in the Oakville community?

DESIGN – how can we carry it out?

DESTINY/ DELIVER – Develop an action plan going forward as we press on.

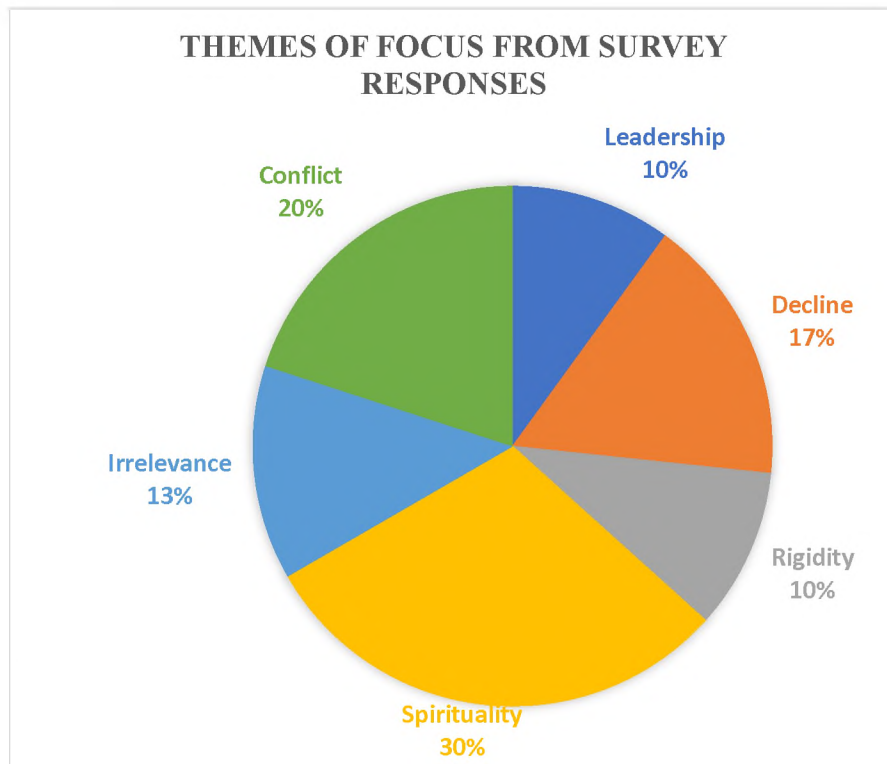
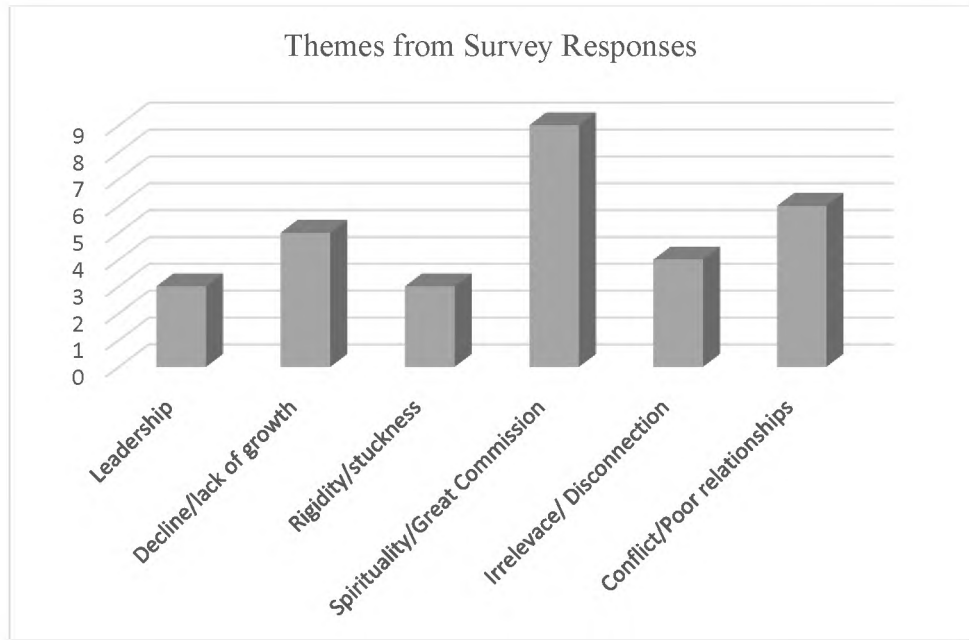
APPENDIX G: Microsoft Excel Sheet (Example of Interview Raw Data)

The following Microsoft Excel Sheet is an example of how the raw data was sorted and stored. The first few columns showed the demographic information for each participant. The demographic information was followed by a column for researcher comments. After which the verbatim responses of the participant were captured. Subsequent columns displayed word coding, In Vivo coding, categories, themes, and patterns. The rows had the participants pseudo name as well as the questions from the questionnaires.

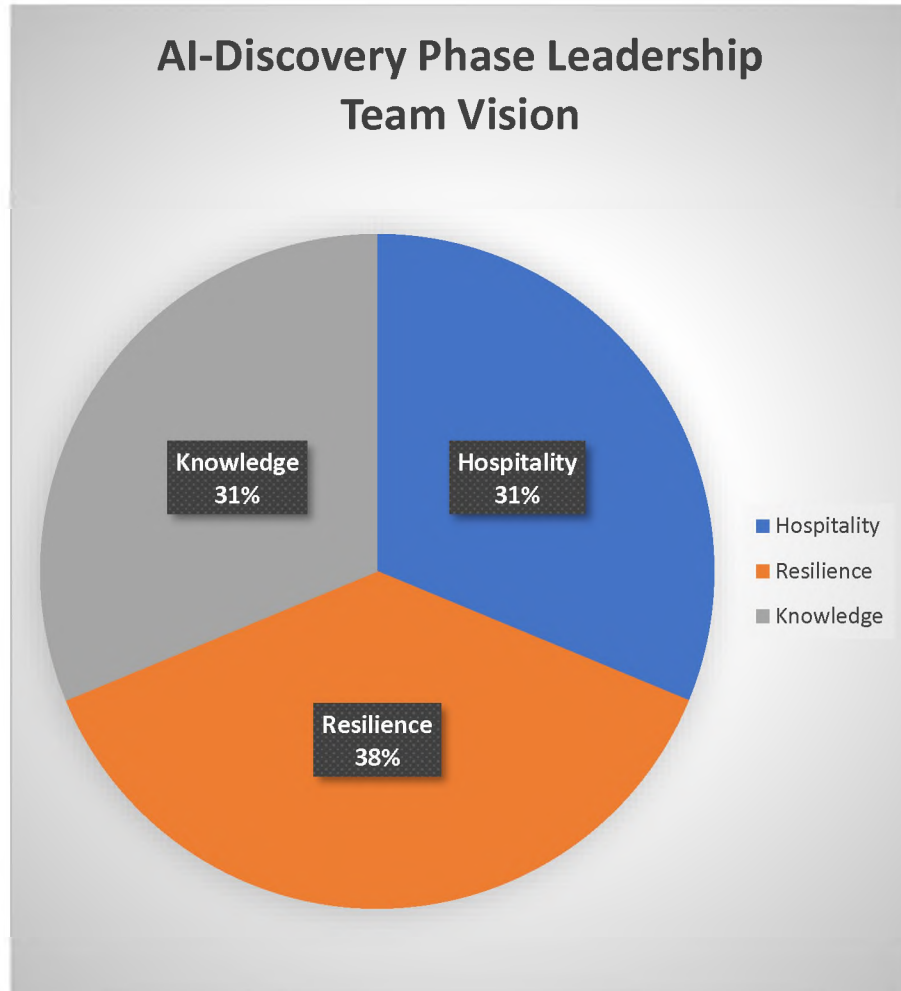
Participant	Age	Sex	Race	Ethnicity	Researcher Comments	RAW DATA	Word Code	In Vivo Code	Final Code
EMMK (Participant 1)	39	M	NI	Latino/Hispanic	Researcher Comments: Interviewer noted that the participant expressed a strong sense of community and a desire to see the church thrive in the future.	Participant expressed an optimistic attitude about the future of the church and the community. He mentioned that he had been involved in various church activities and was looking forward to seeing the church grow and prosper in the future.	Leadership		
What is working well?						The word "grateful" gives the message of appreciation and thanksgiving.		"Members are great"	
What is not working well?						The word "grateful" gives the message of appreciation and thanksgiving.		"Members are great"	
What is your understanding of the vision of the church in community?						Special focus on the spiritual aspect of the community for members of the church. Social, emotional, mental and physical aspects of members.		"Members are great"	
What are you most concerned about regarding OSDA?						Reference of the OSDA and the reason for election. They might be the community, not just spiritual needs.		"Members are great"	
What is your vision about how OSDA can thrive in community?						Reference of the OSDA and the reason for election. They might be the community, not just spiritual needs.		"Members are great"	
How do we move forward and press on in community?						Participant expressed an optimistic attitude about the future of the church and the community. He mentioned that he had been involved in various church activities and was looking forward to seeing the church grow and prosper in the future.		"Members are great"	

	5	H	I	J	K	L	M
	RAW DATA	Void Code	In vivo Code	Final Code	Categories	Themes	Patterns
4	On for the Community at the Dakinville SDA Church, Texas						
5	EARCH PROJECT DMMML 0943 - July 15th - August 31st						
6							
7							
8							
9	EMMK (Participant 1)						
10	What is working well? Leadership is coming together plans and vision to strengthen the church and empower and motivate the lay to do missions. Financial structure is coming well we are in the black, no outstanding debts. Which speaks of well what want to accomplish in the future and the resources needed for that.	Leadership			Role of Leadership, Leadership Vision, Financial Resources, Resource Availability	Leadership	
11	What is not working well? The church is ingrained in a culture that does not foster growth and which will lead to the death of the church. The foundation members are stuck in the foundation and there has not been any intentional building up of the ministry over the years.	Stuck	"members are stuck"		Church culture, Resistance to Change	Lack of growth, Church decline, Stuckness	
12	What is your understanding of the vision of the church? The vision of the church in the community is to make disciples of Jesus Christ and to share the gospel of His coming so that we all can be ready.		"make disciples of Jesus Christ", "Share the gospel"		Spiritual Focus, Grand narrative of the Great Commission	Spiritual Focus	
13	What are you most concerned about regarding OSDA? I am most concerned that the members should embrace this vision of making disciples, this can be achieved by being a loving, caring, and compassionate church to each other and the community I am concerned that the members need to know Jesus and to live the life of Jesus in their homes, church and in	Visible	"being loving, caring and compassionate church to each other"		Church relationships: spiritual disciplines and practice, Leadership vision	Church relationships, Leadership vision	
14	What is your vision about how OSDA can thrive in community? We can thrive by being visible in seeking the needs of individuals in the community and attending to those needs. e.g. if there is a death in a family the church would step to provide hope, comfort and services.	Visible	"seeking the needs of individuals in the community and attending to those needs"				
15	How do we move forward and press on in community? We move forward by making Jesus our central focus and following His teachings of making disciples of all men. We press on by realizing that the work belongs to God and we are His servants and so the success of the work is assured because Jesus never fails.		"making disciples"		Grand narrative of the Great Commission	Spiritual Focus	
16							

APPENDIX H: Graphs and Charts



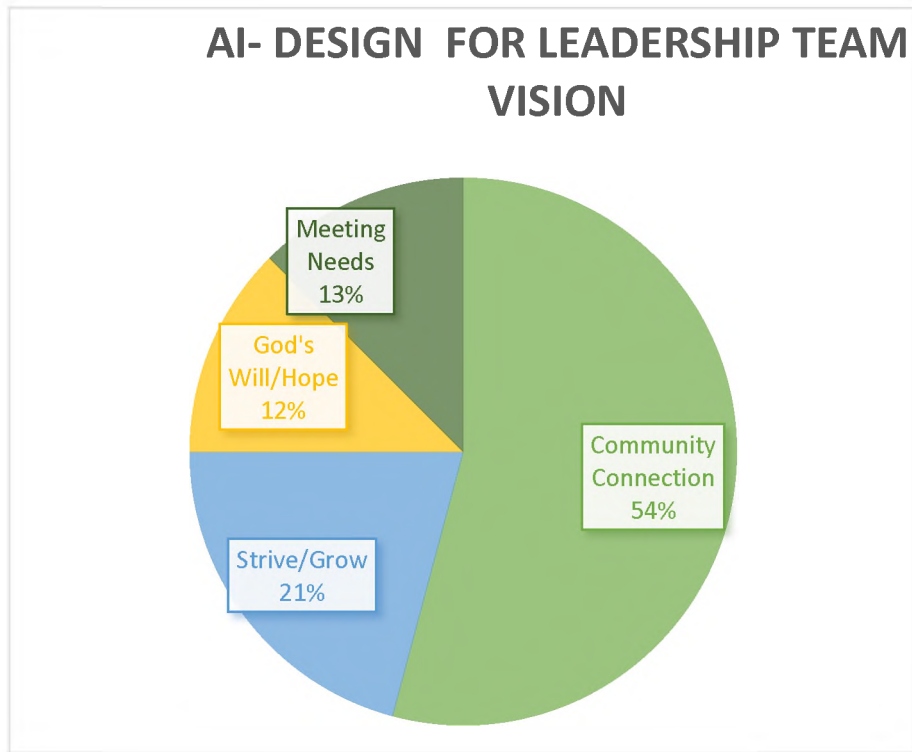
APPENDIX I: Graph of Themes AI – Discovery Phase



APPENDIX J: AI Dream Phase



APPENDIX K: AI Design Phase



APPENDIX L: Data Analysis Chart

This data analysis chart shows the method of data collection, the period during which the data was collected and how the data was analyzed. The chart references research resource materials that informed my data analysis methods. Each resource is colour coded to highlight the extent to which the resource influenced my approach to data analysis.

Research Questions	Method to Collect Data	When Will Data Be Collected	How Will Data Be Analysed
<p>Private Interviews</p> <p>1. What is working well?</p> <p>2. What's not working well?</p> <p>3. What is your understanding of the vision of the church in community?</p> <p>4. What are you most concerned about regarding OSDA?</p>	<p><u>Bell et al (2018)</u> Interviews are adaptable because I can follow up with participants' ideas, responses, motives, and feelings. Responses can be clarified and developed. In small projects I will only be able to interview a small number of people (p. 210).</p> <p>Stringer (2014) Methods include: Interviews Questionnaires Documents Records and reports Surveys Research literature (p. 105). Explore experience to get clear</p>	<p>July 15th – August 31st, 2022</p> <p>Stringer (2014) Carefully record details of interviews in field notes or tape recordings (p. 110). Member check is reading back the notes as soon as possible to check for accuracy. Recordings allow for</p>	<p>Sensing (2011) Interpretation begins the first day of information gathering (p. 194).</p> <p><u>Bell et al (2018)</u> <u>Manual methods of data analysis are better than computerized data analysis in small time-limited projects (p. 143).</u> <u>Code using headings (p. 247).</u> Determine how frequently I will record data (p. 248).</p> <p>Stringer (2014) 1. Collate information for each question 2. Identify significant results. 3. Focus on events that have a</p>

<p>5. What is your vision about how OSDA can thrive in community?</p> <p>6. How do we move forward and press on in the community?</p>	<p>understanding of the issue to construct solution to the problem (p. 101).</p> <p>1. Gathering information about participants experiences and perspectives (p. 101).</p> <p>2. Questions for interviews and questionnaires to be free of researcher bias (p. 102).</p> <p>Interviews are: Opportunities to be descriptive using their own words, informal conversations (p. 105).</p> <p>Bell et al (2018) social media like Facebook, zoom or WhatsApp are powerful for communication and may be used to connect with participants, organizations (p. 163).</p> <p>Stringer (2014) Research should: start with general questions, no judgement or criticism embedded in the questions. (p. 106).</p>	<p>detail and accuracy (p. 110).</p> <p>Transcribe recordings as soon as possible after interview (p. 110).</p> <p>Immediately store tapes and transcripts safely and confidentially (p. 110).</p>	<p>marked impact or lasting impact (p. 120).</p> <p>Distilling and organizing, Categorizing and coding:</p> <p>1. Identifying units of meaning and organization into categories that summarize experiences/ perspectives.</p> <p>2. Select key experiences and unpack them (p. 139).</p> <p>Categorizing and coding significant features and elements.</p> <p>I will focus on meanings in the participant's world (p. 139).</p> <p>1. Code using headings</p> <p>2. Apply verbatim principle.</p> <p>3. Identify diverse perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonality and • Divergence (p. 140) • Review data, unitize the data, group categorize and code. • Identify themes, organize a
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	<p>Cooperrider (2005), Discovery - Structured guided interview opportunities for sharing good news stories (p. 5). AI topics are written into questions.</p> <p>Stringer (2014) Field notes: Verbatim principle Record precisely what is said, use respondents' language, terms, concepts (p. 110). I will not summarize. Get permission to take notes, have respondent check for accuracy.</p>		<p>category system (p. 141).</p> <p>Cooperrider (2005) Reflection on interview highlights from the individual 1:1 guided interview and the focussed group interviews. Researcher reflection on biases.</p> <p>Sensing (2011) There are three types of interpretation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Literal reading – gathering quotes, looking at the sequence of interactions. Highlighting words / phrases, gestures (p. 197). 2. Interpretative reading – select and organize the document according to implied or inferred meanings (p. 196). 3. Reflexive reading – considers the researcher's personal feelings and understanding of the data (p. 196). <p>Sensing (2011) Categorizing – words, phrases, events (p. 203).</p>
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			<p>Systematic overview of data to have a comprehensive overview of its scope (p. 203). I am aware that re-categorization may be necessary (p. 203). “A narrative description will explain the relationship between categories” (Chapman 2022, 7 DMML 0943 Syllabus).</p>
<p>Leadership Retreat (Participant Observation Focussed Group Interviews)</p>	<p>1. Focus groups interview 2. Participant observation</p> <p>Cooperrider (2005) <u>Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is the tool for engagement</u> (p. 33). AI is Action Research (AR). Appreciative interview that asks questions about experiences, valuing what gives life to the organization at its best (p. 14). <u>Every question is positive</u> (p. 25-26). Appreciative focus with story telling (p. 5), stories of</p>	<p>September 18th, 2022</p> <p>Bell et al (2018) Observation can show characteristics of groups and individuals that I cannot find out by other means (p. 243).</p> <p>Bell et al (2018) Bias: In participant observation I (the researcher) should be aware of bias. It can yield valuable data</p>	<p><u>Bell et al (2018) Develop an observation chart</u> (p. 252). For interpreting and categorizing, I will <u>start with broad categories</u> (p. 262). I only have one shot at observation so I cannot record too many different aspects of behavior (p. 252).</p> <p>Cooperrider (2005) Focussing and searching for the best in people and the church (p. 8), through systematic discovery of what gives life to the organization or a community when it</p>

	<p>success (p. 3). 1:1 guided interview.</p> <p>Stringer (2014) Participant observation Is ethnographic (p. 113). Elements of observation are places, people, objects, acts, activities, events, purposes, time, feelings (p. 114).</p> <p>Cooperrider (2005) Dream/ envisioning of what might be. <u>What is the community calling us to become?</u> Cooperrider (2005) Open ended questions (p. 5); <u>positive questions that strengthen a system's capacity to anticipate and heighten positive potential (p. 8).</u></p> <p>Bell et al (2018) <u>Careful note taking can be a time saver (p. 6). Get into the habit of making detailed notes. Notes from an interview are taken with the view to address the research question or topic.</u></p>	<p>and the researcher can <u>observe changes over time.</u></p> <p>Bell et al (2018) unstructured observation is not recommended (p. 244).</p> <p>Cooperrider et al (2005) Dream of creating a clear result – oriented vision (p. 16). Focussed group conversations .</p> <p>Inquiry – conversation about the positive core e.g., achievements , positive emotions, visions of positive, organizational wisdom, core competencies , visions of possibility, leadership capabilities, visions of possibility, leadership capabilities,</p>	<p>is most effective (p. 8). Identifying unrecognized resources (p. 8). Positive core analysis (p. 11).</p> <p>Cooperrider (2005) AI is for the articulation of vision through Design (determining what should be) (p.13). Dialoguing through focussed group to determine what should be (p.13). <u>Interpreting from a positive stance; looking for affirmative themes (p. 17).</u> Cooperrider (2005) Appreciation is drawing our eyes towards life; interview stories and insights get put into constructive use (p. 27). <u>Positive core incorporation (p. 39).</u></p> <p><u>Bell et al (2018) Participant observation allows the researcher to share in the experiences of participants (p. 35).</u></p> <p>Sensing (2011) Identifying silence.</p>
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	<p>(p. 213).</p> <p>Cooperrider et al (2005) AI is affirming past and present; strengths; success potentials. Discover by asking questions to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities (p. 7).</p> <p><u>Bell et al (2018) I will not consult notes during a meeting or observation of a group (p. 246).</u> Observe and record as objectively as possible (p. 246). Observation is useful in discovering if people are true to their professions about behavior (p. 243).</p> <p><u>Bell et al (2018) social media is useful in research designing and used to administer surveys, interview participants, and do observation (p. 143).</u></p> <p>References must include page number (p. 96).</p>	<p>lived values, alliances and partnerships and relational resources. (p. 9).</p>	<p>omissions, gaps (p. 201). Pattern analysis - Avoid seeking precise measurements (p. 195). Look for what people experienced, people's reactions, behaviour changes, organizational impact (p. 70). Secondary analysis looks for uncategorized themes and activities (p. 202).</p> <p>Cooperrider (2005) Action research cycle and a collaborative process of Discovery, Dreaming, Design and Destiny (p. 39). “A narrative description will explain the relationship between categories” (Chapman 2022, 7 DMML 0943 Syllabus).</p>
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<p>Questions after AI Application</p> <p>7. What was your experience at the retreat?</p> <p>8. What benefit did you gain from the retreat?</p> <p>9. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is very clear, how clear were you about OSDA vision for the community prior to the initiation of this research project?</p> <p>10. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is very clear, how clear are you about OSDA vision for the community?</p> <p>11. If there is a change in scaling, what has caused your change in scaling?</p>	<p>Stringer (2014) Focus groups are group interviews (p. 111).</p> <p>Bell et al. (2018) Guided or focussed interviews ensures that all topics are covered (p. 214).</p> <p>AI to enable dialogue as we appreciate, valuing the best of what is.</p> <p>Sensing (2011) Researcher's angle (p. 76). Use thick description/ detailed (p. 195). Develop code book, questionnaires, or forms to track (p. 208).</p>	<p>September 18th – 25th, 2022</p> <p>Sensing (2011) <u>Code as soon as possible. Code within 24 hours</u> (p. 203).</p> <p>Sensing (2011) <u>First, I will reflect on the whole project before tightening conclusions</u> (p. 196/ p. 213).</p>	<p>Sensing (2011) Let the data speak for itself (p. 197). Convergence or Divergence Did intervention accomplish the purpose of the project (p. 70/ p. 203)? I will do systematic examination of effectiveness; empirical examination of effectiveness (p. 70). Thoughtful analysis (p. 203).</p> <p><u>Sensing (2011) Coding, indexing, labelling, tagging</u> (p. 203). <u>Formulating themes, patterns, categories</u> (p. 199/203). <u>Apply code to appropriate places; use the margins</u> (p. 204). <u>Record code in an index</u> (p. 204). <u>Cross reference in coding</u> (p. 204). Use index to retrieve data (p. 204). Grouping- cluster related topics (p. 204). Count/ give number value to occurrences of various events, ideas, themes (p. 209).</p>
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<p>12. What is the leadership vision for the community?</p> <p>13. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is very clear, how invested are you to OSDA vision for the community ?</p> <p>14. As a member of the leadership team, how confident are you we can move OSDA from no vision or vague vision in the community to realizing impactful vision for the community ?</p> <p>Please indicate by circling your answer:</p>			<p>Sensing (2011) I am prepared to redefine and discard codes (p. 203).</p> <p>Exercise caution, recall limitations, use tentative language in offering conclusions (p. 195).</p> <p>Sensing (2011) Re-examine conclusions (p. 213).</p> <p>Describe how you will choose the documents to be analysed (p. 196).</p> <p>Another set of eyes helpful (p. 197).</p> <p>Store and protect data carefully (p. 203). Construct a table of results/ findings (p. 209).</p> <p>The table will be an excel worksheet.</p> <p>Stringer (2014) Develop a report framework to communicate outcomes (p. 143).</p> <p>Sensing (2011) Qualitative methods are used for evaluation (p. 70). Become familiar with the data – understand context.</p>
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<p>Very Doubtful, Doubtful, Neutral, Confident, Very Confident.</p>			
<p>Approaches to Data Analysis Saldana 2021)</p> <p>Approaches to Data Analysis (Saldana 2021) Continued.</p>	<p>Methods</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interviews (p. 29) 2. Participant Observation 3. Focus group Interview. 4. Pre-Coding (p. 30) <p>“Interview transcripts, participant observation, field notes... open ended survey responses... (Saldana 2021, 5). Notebook for note taking. Audio recording Reflections on methods</p> <p>Participant observation (p. 9).</p> <p><u>Coding Cycles:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. 1st coding cycle (p. 6) 6. 2nd coding cycle 7. 3rd coding cycle 8. 4th coding cycle 9. 5th coding cycle 	<p>When?</p> <p>July 15th – August 31st, 2022 September 18th, 2022 September 18th-25th, 2022 July 15th – August 31st, 2022</p> <p><u>As soon as I collect data, I will start coding (p. 31).</u></p> <p><u>Dates of Coding Cycles:</u> September 1st, 2022 September 8th, 2022 September 15th, 2022 September 18th, 2022 September 19th, 2022 September 26th, 2022</p>	<p>How Will Data Be Analysed</p> <p><u>Interview and Survey</u> As per Saldana (2021, 31) Raw data is to be given preliminary coding and jottings. There will also be “In Vivo Code” (Saldana 2021,7) and a final code. The coding will be put into categories. The categories will be put into themes, patterns, and researcher comments (p.33). I would like to pre-code by “Circling, highlighting, holding, underlining, or coloring rich or significant participant quotes or passages...” (Saldana 2021, 30).</p> <p><u>Participant Observation</u></p>

	<p>10. 6th coding cycle 11. 7th coding cycle</p> <p>I will be coding. According to Saldana (2021) “coding is just one way of analysing data” (Saldana 2021, 5). I will code words, short phrases, “single word to a full paragraph” (p. 5).</p> <p>The coding will be done in cycles; the first cycle is taking things apart and the second cycle is putting things together (p. 6). Coding is a “cyclical act” (Saldana 2021, 12). As outlined above, I will be using 7 cycles for “<u>pattern detection, categorization, theme... theory building</u>” (Saldana 2021, 6).</p> <p>I will look at what is it all about? Whether there is a theme, what is the essence or focus and what emerges (p.7) If something occurs more than twice, I will regard</p>	<p>September 30th, 2022</p> <p>Coding will be done within 24 hours from the collection of the data. This is my personal goal. I will jot down “preliminary or phrases for codes” (p.31) immediately as they occur.</p>	<p>These will be put onto an excel spread sheets. <u>Participant anonymity</u> will be honoured by using the 1st and last letters of the last name followed by the 1st and last letters of the last name e.g., John Brown will be BNJN.</p> <p>Headings for the spread sheet will include age, sex, Ethnicity, time at OSDA, participant action, Observer comments.</p> <p><u>Focus Group Interviews</u></p> <p>“<u>In-Vivo Codes</u>” (p. 35) on coloured sticky papers to be lumped and scrutinized.</p> <p>The order of my coding will be: <u>Data-Code-Category-Themes-Theory</u> (p.18). Coding will allow me to organize the themes or patterns into categories (p. 13). I will group together data which “look alike” (p. 13) or “feel alike” to</p>
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	<p>this as a pattern for 8].</p> <p>Researchers with smaller data sets may be needing three to ten major codes (p. 45).</p> <p>I will be using 7 major codes. As a 1st time researcher, I should code on a hard copy print out first (p.45).</p> <p>I will be coding manually on a hard copy first and then transfer to an excel spread sheet. Tools include Microsoft excel and “manual transcript” (p. 27).</p> <p>In the field notes, I will leave a margin for my comments (p.28), with double space format (p.28).</p> <p>I will be using analytical lens and filters based on my personal context (p. 10-11).</p> <p>I will code everything.</p> <p>According to Saldana (2021, 28), novices like me should code everything.</p> <p>Coding is Interpretive (p. 7.)</p> <p>My coding will be based on my background,</p>		<p>get meanings and “discern possible relationships” (Saldana 2021, 15).</p> <p>Meticulous attention to language, images, and deep reflection (p. 15).</p> <p>Texts are to be separated into short paragraphs length units, using coloured markers, whenever the topic or sub-topic changes to show breaks (p. 29).</p> <p>According to Saldana (2021, 31), Regular font - descriptive passages in field notes Bold font – participants comment <i>Italics</i> – observer comment.</p> <p>I will be using underlining and different font sizes to showing change or difference.</p> <p>Saldana (2021) is my preferred practical resource manual for coding.</p>
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	interests, social, theological, and physical location. As per Saldana (2021) I will look at the passage to decipher its core meaning (decoding), then determine its appropriate code and label it (encoding). The purpose is to find interpretive patterns (p. 9).		
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APPENDIX M: Model of AI 4D Cycle Leadership Team Vision

OSDA Leadership Team Vision Model I: AI – 4D Cycle- Discovery Phase

The following are the color-coded words and phrases as documented in the Discovery phase of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) intervention. The words were spoken by the participants, words or phrases with the same colours were placed in the same category. This model shows how the words of the participants were grouped.

Dedication, Pool Money, Ambition to Grow Desire to Grow, Presence / Faith, Experience, Sharing, Intimacy, Will Give, Lend, Determined, Empathy, Relentless, Knowledge of Community, Information, Location, Knowledge of Geographic Community, History to Build From, Resilience.

The following is a word cloud created based on the AI Discovery phase.



The words were spoken during the focus group interview. The participants spoke the words to describe areas of focus for the leadership team. The word cloud was computer generated.

APPENDIX N: Phases and Timetable

Phase	What	When	Duration	How	Who	Evaluation of Outcomes
Phase 1	Title Page and Abstract	Completed				
	Introduction	Completed				
	Response and Definition of Terms	January 2022	1 month		n/a	n/a
	Literature Review	January 2022 to April 30 th , 2022	4 months		n/a	Reading Summaries
	Context and Needs Assessment	May 1, 2022	4 months	Unscripted conversations	Church board. Church clerk	Consultation of historical church documents
Phase 2	Supervision, Permission and Access	February 2022	3 months to April 30 th , 2022	Email and Virtual zoom meetings	REB, Senior Pastor	Yes
	Identification of Sample	June 2022	1 month	Determining the number of participants from each category of respondents	Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor, Church Board	Final number of respondents determined-completed
	Consent and Introduction letter Design	July 2022	1 month	Email, Mail, fax	Participants/ Leadership Team	Completed
	Development of Tools (Survey or questionnaires)	July 2022	1 month			Completed
Phase 3	Contacting participants	July 2022	3 months	Telephone, WhatsApp, Zoom	Participants/ Leadership Team	Completed
	Administering Questionnaire s/ Surveys	July 2022	August 2022	In person, Zoom meetings. Telephone	Participants/ Leadership Team	Documentati on Completed
	Conducting Focus Groups	August 2022	Sept 2022	Retreat Zoom meetings, Use of AI	Participants/ Leadership Team	Completed
	Evaluation / Interpretation of Responses	Oct 2022	Oct 2022	Looking for patterns and common themes in answers and stories of	Researcher/ Participants	Completed. Church policy is amended, and practise is adjusted

				participants. For the surveys and questionnaire, the frequency of answers will be counted and collated.		because of the research. Further research is initiated.
Phase 4	Documentation of Findings	Oct 2022	Oct 2022	Written report and dictated report findings		Completed. Leaders have a vision and vision clarity. Completed
	Reporting Back/ Feedback	November 2022	Dec 2022	Meetings and Retreats	Church board meeting, providing copy of the written research to Ontario Conference of SDA.	To be completed.

APPENDIX O: Sociogram

Key showing
Lines of
communication
and channels of
influence.

Strong →

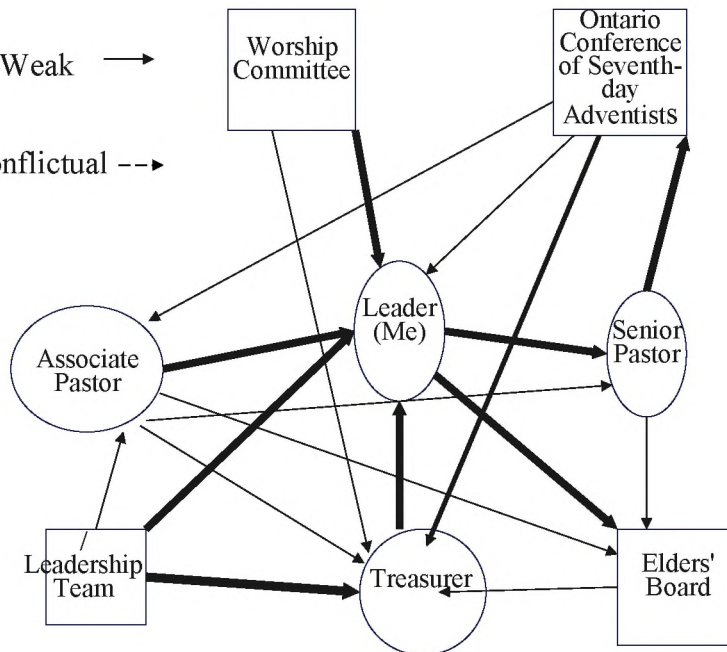
Moderate →

Weak →

Conflictual - ->

○ Person

□ Groups



March 22,
2021

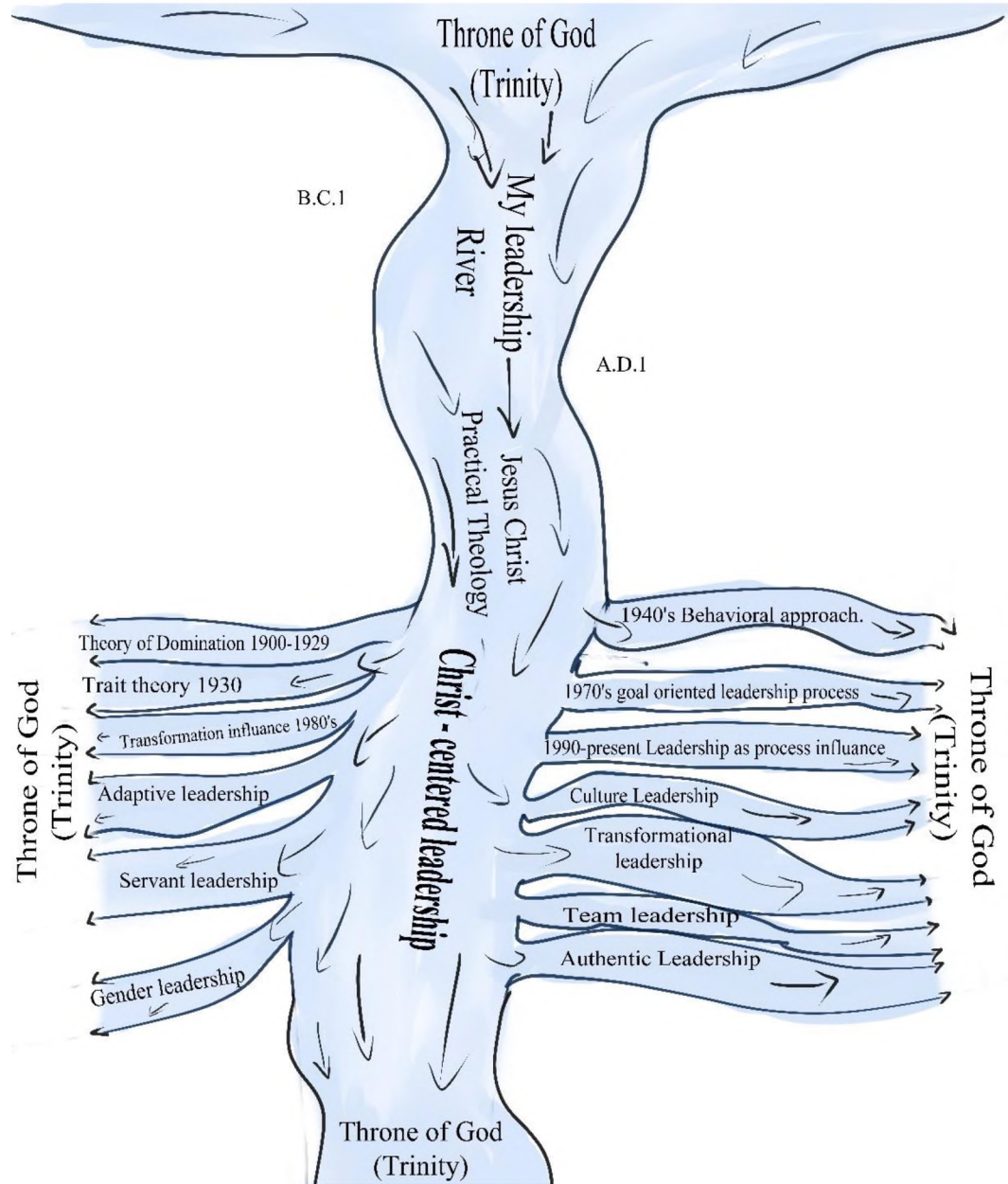
APPENDIX P: Force Field Analysis

Desired Action Plan based on Force Field Analysis (FFA). The following model was adapted from the Kurt Lewin to reflect the driving and restraining forces required to effect positive change in OSDA.

Force Field Analysis – Present state to be Unfrozen.

Driving Forces (Working in the direction of change)		Status Quo (Equilibrium)		Restraining Forces (Counter progress towards goals)
Internal compass to minister from a spiritual center	→	B	←	Church’s apathy/ people’s priority out of order
Need for new ways/ technology	→	A	←	Hostility / Criticism to change
Public Opinion	→	L	←	Old Values
Support from Conference to keep the church alive and thriving	→	A	←	Lack of Trust/ misunderstanding/Rigidity of thought and practice
New leaders and new visions	→	N	←	Competition among members
Some members see the church as their support and family	→	C	←	Fear of failure/ fear of technology
Younger more progressive thinking pastors/elders	→	E	←	Decreased mission emphasis
Educating the people regarding right living- fruit of the Spirit				No female Pastors or Elders
NO CHANGE	←		→	CHANGE

APPENDIX Q: Leadership River



My Christ-Centered Leadership Philosophy River based on Burns (2014, 95).

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