

**REACHING THE FRUITFUL YEARS: LONG TERM MINISTRY
RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CONVENTION OF ATLANTIC BAPTIST
CHURCHES**

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the memory of my father, Rev Joseph L. Knowles (1923-2002), and my grandfather Rev. Dr. Myron O. Brinton (1901-1994) who spent their entire ministry careers laboring for their master in the churches of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches. Fruitful ministry resulted from their depth of commitment and their love for the Lord and His people.

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ABSTRACT

Long term ministry is too often the exception, rather than the norm. Ministries that could last several years end up lasting just a few years due to unmet expectations and the inability to resolve conflict. In this work, the author contends that long term ministry is valuable. Ministries lasting ten years or more are normally based on mutual trust between pastor and congregation. The depth of relationship brings trust and stability to a church unknown in shorter pastorates.

The literature supports this both in religious and secular fields. Those entering ministry need to be well prepared for the rigors of relationship building, making themselves vulnerable and open, while still maintaining a level of trust and professionalism.

The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches is comprised of over 500 churches and is benefitting greatly from the dedicated service of pastors who are daring to pay the price of long term service. Their insights were a primary source of research in determining what relational factors are paramount in the building of a marathon ministry.

Consulted also, were the executive and regional ministers who from their perspectives add much as they consult with search committees, pastors, and congregations in crisis. They serve on the front lines of ministry, and understand well the pressures that go along with building a significant relational ministry.

Several theological themes were discussed under the heading of the struggle between the sin led life and the Spirit led life. Such subjects as submission, partnership and shepherding were viewed through these lenses. This aided greatly in discerning the primary issues facing churches and pastors as they pursue significant ministry together.

As a result of the research, this study should assist the CABC in ministering more effectively to its pastors and churches, most specifically in the recommendations to search committees and in providing guidelines to pastors and leadership boards in careful and proper treatment of each other.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

Pastor John has been serving at First Church for 2 years. He and his family are facing the stress of a new pastorate. Somehow his dreams of changing the world and the realities of ministry in the trenches are converging and the trench work is winning the day. He is deeply loved by many in the congregation, however, his inexperience in ministry shows through. He is sincere, yet his business background, which includes readiness for change, having clear and concise strategies, and being a mover and shaker, do not sit well in this blue collar, small town congregation.

John feels that he is at odds with the leadership at every turn. Not only does he feel the stress of conflicting ideas among the generations, but his most intense critics are those who are key financial supporters, but refuse to change. He is a good preacher and capable leader, but a significant portion of the church does not like the new ideas. He has formed good friendships within the fellowship, many of whom share his frustrations. They encourage him to stand his ground.

It is causing him to become angry and irritable at home and his family is bearing the scars of a strained ministry. He tries to keep his motives and attitudes in check, but the situation is moving toward a breaking point. He is getting to the point of doubting whether God has truly called him to the ministry at all. He is losing ground on the home front.

Pastor Jim is a solo pastor in a medium size church. He has filled this position for nearly twenty years. He has had one other pastorate, a position as a youth pastor for a five year period in another city.

When Jim came to this position, he had no thought that he would be there for so long.

Of course, like many other pastors, he thought that God would call to, then call away after a respectable period of time. The years have passed one by one, and each year has brought more challenges, but also more blessings. This church is not a collection of

members, but a family. Jim and his wife and family are involved in deep relationships. Over the years their family have grown up in the schools, community programs, and church ministries and have strong roots. Although not without its share of concerns, there is a deep and abiding conviction that the love between pastor and people is mutual.

Jim has seen modest growth in the church. He has had dissenters and irritants in the pew, yet he has persevered. He has had numerous calls to other places, yet has felt convicted to stay for the long haul. He feels that he really did not settle into productive ministry until he got beyond the initial years of relationship building. Trust levels are high and respect is deep. The sheep want to do all they can to keep their shepherd feeling content.

These stories may be fictional, yet they express a truth in many congregations of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches. Meaningful long term ministry is highly valued. The literature has indicated that healthy long term ministries produce healthy congregations. Robert Kemper writes, “Long pastorates usually signal that a congregation is stable and has a strong sense of identity. It also shows that a congregation has the ability to remain faithful over the long run.” (Bratcher, Kemper, and Scott, 1991: 99)

Joseph Umidi writes that, “Research shows that the most effective and enriching church ministries are those led by pastors who have invested at least six years in the same church community.” (Umidi, 2000: 13) Ludwig in his study states emphatically, “At the end of our analysis, the bottom line of it all is really the one advantage that outlasts, outweighs, and outshines all the disadvantages - long-term pastorates tend to lead to healthier congregations.” (Ludwig, 2002: 16)

Longevity may be the goal and prayer of leaders in churches, yet rarely becomes the reality. The reality appears to be that pastorates are not moving beyond the preliminary years of building bonds of trust. Christian researcher, George Barna, who regularly surveys hundreds of churches and pastors indicates that “during the past two decades, the

average tenure of senior pastors has dropped to about 4 years from 7.” He explains why this is so alarming:

This is alarming for several reasons: in user friendly churches, the pastor stays for a prolonged period of time, a pastor creating a strong relational network within the congregation is minimized by a short tenure, many pastors experience their most productive years between 3 and 15, and revolving doors produce less trust. (Barna, 1993: 36-37)

Researcher and author, H.B. London, concurs that longer pastorates should be the reality, but are not, therefore fruitful ministry is minimized. “The typical pastor has his greatest ministry impact at a church in years 5 through 14 of his pastorate; unfortunately, the average pastor only lasts 5 years at a church. (London and Wiseman, 2003: 34)

In his book “In it for the Long Haul”, author Glenn Ludwig concludes from his research that, “One of America’s major Protestant denominations has reported that the average pastorate is now about five years. My experience suggests that, in a good pastoral setting and relationship, a five-year pastorate should be at its prime.” (Ludwig, 2002: Ix)

If indeed five years or less seems to be the average tenure, it appears that the majority of pastors and churches are missing out on the most fruitful ministry possible. While stating this at the outset, this does not mean that effective ministry does not occur in shorter term ministries, but research indicates that the most effective ministry appears to take place beyond those initial years of relationship building. The research further concludes that these years typically do not come until one has been in a given church for at least five years. Ludwig affirms this, “In discussing this topic for many years with clergy of different denominations, it is the consensus that something happens in a pastor-

ate between five and seven years of service. Certainly the evidence is anecdotal, but worthy of reflection nonetheless.” (Ludwig, 2002: 7)

He continues,

After seven years of faithful, dedicated, and consistent ministry, noticeable things begin to happen. By now, the pitch and tone of the congregation has been influenced by the pastor’s style. The leadership of the church should begin to reflect the priorities and passions of a working relationship with the pastor. A style of leadership has been imprinted. The ‘dues’ have been paid.
(Ludwig, 2002: 8)

Significant ministry takes place beyond the average length of tenure. Given the fact that pastorates exceeding ten years are rare, for the purposes of this study, longevity will be defined as ten years or longer. The rewards of a long pastorate are many, impacting the staff, the congregation, the surrounding community and can be a source of encouragement to other churches. These pastorates are defined primarily by deep and meaningful relationships. Trust, stability, and depth are the markers for these churches and pastors.

Ludwig states, “Trust is neither quickly learned nor thoughtlessly given; it requires some serious ‘living together’ in the ministry of the church.” (Ludwig, 2002: Viii)

He further reinforces this point by saying,

Trust is rarely established in any meaningful depth when folks believe their pastor will be ‘here today and gone tomorrow.’ It is not built very successfully when congregants believe that their pastor sees them and the parish as a ‘stepping stone’ to something better, bigger, richer, or more challenging. ... I am firmly convinced that when a new pastor begins, there must be a sense that this shepherd is entering into this ministry with them ‘for the long haul.’
(Ludwig, 2002: viii)

Familiarity brings a level of comfort that cannot be attained by a short pastorate. Over a lengthy period, a sense of belonging, of involvement is experienced. The pastor in a long term pastorate has entered into many major transitions in the lives of the parishioners. Wayne Oates supports through his writing, the fact that relationships deepen through the various rites of passage that one goes through in life and in the context of pastoral ministry.

The longer a pastor has served at the church, the less likely she is to be an outsider. A long-tenured pastor has performed the weddings of many couples, conducted the funerals of their parents, baptized their children, stood with some of them when they became unemployed or went into bankruptcy. (Oates, 1994: 36)

Pastors, like any other person were created in the image of God, which includes both the capacity and desire to be known and loved in the context of relationships. Many pastors, longing for deep and meaningful relationships, find themselves instead overwhelmed with the demands of a ministry with unattainable expectations. Longevity is far more the exception than the rule. Just because a pastor stays for an extended period, does not always indicate growth and stability. Personal, even selfish reasons may exist in the life of the pastor and his/her family or the congregation may like the security and familiarity of a certain style yet need a new leader to take the congregation to the future under God.

The research has indicated that relationships are the defining factor.

Ministry is about relationships: God and God's people; pastor and people; pastor and God. The long haul brings that clearly into focus and affords us the privilege of following God's call to be among God's people and to be about the proclamation of peace, reconciliation, and hope - a message this world desperately needs to hear. (Ludwig, 2002: 93)

In those contexts where pastor and congregation share their lives together in community, resolving their differences and striving under God to achieve His desired future for that

body of believers, there is a bond which is meaningful and can be sustained over the long haul.

Those pastors and congregations who are not healthy spiritually and relationally are known for their abuses toward one another. They are also known for internal conflict which leads to strife, leading to shorter term ministries, barriers to the community, and stagnation and decline. Healthy, God-honoring relationships are needed now more than ever. Conflicts between pastors and congregations are nothing new, but have grown to epic proportions in recent years. Constant demands, decreased respect for the pastoral portfolio, and unreasonable expectations make the pastoral ministry a less than desirable career alternative. Instead of pointing fingers, pastors and churches need to face the issues head on, and deal with problems constructively, so that there might be lasting, productive pastorates and that the witness in the community might go forth unhindered.

Ministry has always had its challenges. However, even the role of the pastor is looked at differently today. Pastoral Ministry writers, H. B. London and Neil Wiseman highlight some of the modern day stresses in their book Your Pastor is an Endangered Species. They suggest that Pastors live in a world that never stops. They dwell in a world of unfinished tyranny, where they can't know something is completely finished. Pastors live in a world of guilt about their families and pastors reside in a world of decreasing approval where they are ranked 56th of 100 of admired professionals. (London and Wiseman, 1996: 31-32)

Senior and founding Pastor of Saddleback Church, trainer of pastors, and example of longevity, Rick Warren writes: "Today the pastoral ministry is a hundred times more complex than it was just a generation ago. Even in the best circumstances, ministry is incredibly difficult." (Warren, 1995: 20)

The fact that ministry is difficult is due in large part to increasing demands of time as well as the expectations that lead to these demands. While rank on the professional

scale may have decreased, the expectations of church members have not. Christian researcher George Barna explains.

Many churches make a grievous mistake: They expect their pastor to be the master of all trades. The expectations set for most pastors doom them to failure before they begin their work. These unrealistic expectations help to explain why pastoral burnout has grown to dangerous proportions. Our research has even shown that among a dozen types of professionals, pastors are the most frustrated of the lot, typically feeling guilt, stress and disappointment due to their inability to fulfil the demands placed upon them by their flocks. Our time management study among pastors indicated that the typical pastor juggles an extraordinary number of major tasks (16) during an average week. The result of this burden is that many pastors do a mediocre job in most of these tasks, to the chagrin of the pastor and congregation alike. (Barna, 1998:37)

Conflict happens among congregants and, due to expectations and weakness, there will be the potential for chaos at times. Churches and pastors must learn to process these situations and find loving and reasonable solutions. If not, pastors will usually find themselves moving on or find the work increasingly difficult. Church members will also resent pastors and some will leave to show their disapproval.

David Hansen writes,

When a church and its parishioners are easy to love, the admonition seems superfluous. Every pastor wants to love his or her church. But not all churches are easy to love, and not all pastors find love easy, and the two have uncanny ways of finding each other. So most of us pastors need to learn how to love our church. We need to learn to love our church because

it is hard to love and because we are hard to love, and if we don't figure out how to love our church, it's curtains for our call to pastoral work. (Hansen, 1998: 18)

Because of the Spirit of God present and active, conflicts should be manageable and sorted through. True spiritual fruit should be obvious as both parties come to reasonable and peaceful conclusions, giving up rights and tendencies to dominate one another. When this happens, healthy relationships within the church will flourish. David Hansen admonishes pastors in his book The Power of Loving Your Church,

If we learn to like the church we serve, we can learn to like the people of the church for the sake of the church. Our personal friendships within the church must be kept in plumb with our friendship with the church. This keeps us working on the difficult relationships that we would not pursue except for the sake of the church. (Hansen, 1998: 91)

When churches and pastors learn to communicate their expectations more effectively and truly follow through on their particular responsibilities toward each other, God is praised, the church is strengthened, and the witness is strong to a community. When calling is doubted and the will of God not sought out, sin is allowed to run rampant. The people do not love and respect each other, short pastorates abound, families are in jeopardy, pastors can dry up spiritually and the witness to the community is hindered.

Therefore, it was assumed by this author that short pastorates are in large part due to unreasonable expectations and unresolved conflict, and that long pastorates are more likely when mutual affection is experienced in the pastor/church relationship. When the pastor and congregation are walking in step with the Spirit of God, spiritual fruit will result. This spiritual walk and resulting fruit bring forth longer, harmonious pastorates.

Statement of the Problem:

Long term pastorates do not happen by accident. There are many factors at play, not the least of which is the loving interface of pastor and people. A loving, proactive atmosphere is desirable where pastor and people serve each other and mutual encourage-

ment flows freely. Unfortunately, this is hindered by sinful attitudes and actions causing needless conflicts. A gracious, positive relationship can be experienced when Spirit led pastors and congregations come together to do effective ministry. This is only possible as God works in the hearts of pastor and people to bring forth fruit that will last.

So, what characterizes the ministry of long term pastorates? What factors are unique? In order to better understand the pathway to longevity, answers were sought to such questions as:

1. To what extent do relationships between pastors and key leaders in the church impact longevity?
2. How do relationships change during long term ministry? How does this impact growth, conflict resolution and overall church health?
3. How do conflicts, personalities and other issues hinder longevity?
4. How do pastors seek to enhance relationships in ministry?

Context and Limitations of the study:

This thesis project focused on longevity in the solo pastorate within the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, henceforth known as the Convention or the CABC. The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches is made up of over five hundred churches in the Atlantic Provinces in Canada, namely New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. It services over two hundred pastors, operates a seminary for training of pastors and church leaders, and facilitates mission and ministry for its churches.

It employs 7 regional ministers, under the supervision of the Executive Minister. The Regional Ministers are the primary point people for linking up pastors and congregations for the purpose of ministry. They work with search committees, forward resumes, scrutinize potential candidates for ministry in cooperation with the Convention owned Seminary, and with the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education.

The thesis drew upon the collective wisdom of these staff members as well as pastors who have proven that longevity is not only possible, but desirable. Their experience

and insight brought clarity on the matter of what relational factors have added to the blessing and security of a long pastorate. This helpful research aided in the contribution toward outlining a quality of life or best practices document which will become available to pastors and churches of the CABC.

What I studied:

I looked at current factors regarding longevity. I did not examine past sociological factors but current realities.

I studied the characteristics by interviewing a select group of pastors in the CABC. However, as added resources I interviewed “experts” beyond the CABC to gain insights and used books to research the larger issue and gain understanding into the issue of clergy longevity on the whole.

I studied various resources which take the broader issue into account, but focused the majority of my research on the CABC.

I focused primarily on the relational viewpoint of longevity rather than the other viewpoints.

What I did not study:

I did not study the issue as it relates to other specific denominations.

I did not study other issues pertaining to longevity that did not directly relate to interpersonal relationships.

I did not do a comparison study with other professional fields.

I did not directly include lay leadership in my research. The study revolved around the perspective of clergy alone.

Definitions, Goals and Benefits of the study:

Long term ministry is defined by various standards. Many authors would suggest that a seven year pastorate would be long, certainly longer than average. For the purpose

of this study, longevity was defined as ten years. This would be widely accepted as long term.

This qualitative exploratory study was important for various reasons. It gave feedback through interviews of long term pastors. It drew from the expertise of denominational staff who work with various pastoral settings. It drew from experts in the field through interviews to give outside perspective concerning the issues that clergy and churches are facing.

This project looked at key factors contributing to longer pastorates, what blessings are a result of this type of ministry and why it is still a desirable and attainable goal. It focused in particular on how healthy relationships between the pastor, key leaders, and the congregation as a whole impact the ministry for the long haul, deal effectively with conflict, and provide healing and growth.

Given the findings of the above, this study will benefit the CABC greatly, not only in understanding the issues of clergy more comprehensively, but understanding the various processes both theologically and practically. This should aid the CABC in being more consistent, thorough, and gracious in its approach to students entering the ministry, pastors in current ministries, and churches who are relating to current or future pastoral staff.

This important study should be productive for pastors, their families, church leaders and denominational officials. Although it went in depth with a relatively small sample, that sample will nonetheless give valuable data from credible sources. The interviews of these proven veterans gave them an opportunity to speak to the process and served as an effective tool for the working group set up by the CABC to look at the issue of healthy pastors and churches.

Denominational officials had valuable input to give, given the fact that they have engaged in practical ministry with churches and pastors who have committed sin against

one another resulting in a strained relationship. They also play the roles of coach and supporters to those in long term ministry. They gave important information and perspective from a practical viewpoint to provide clear and workable guidelines. It appears that the timing was perfect for this type of study since the working group appointed by the CABC is in the midst of implementing a strategy to strengthen our pastorates. A document outlining best practices is to be written in the near future, and some of the research from this project acted as a resource for it. This author was selected to be part of the process.

This study on pastoral longevity, like the actual subject matter, will live on into the future beyond its term through ongoing documentation of issues, strategies and recommendations through the Best Practices Document. It was the goal of all involved that churches and their leadership might attain new levels of health in the future.

Future Chapters:

Chapter 2: Review of literature

This chapter looks at both quantitative and qualitative research. From those who do quantitative research, such as George Barna and Joseph Umidi (a former CABC pastor), the evidence suggests that long pastorates are desirable but barriers exist. Even at the seminary level, pastors are ill prepared to face the pressures that life in ministry demand. It seems that fewer are entering ministry because of increased expectations and inadequate financial remuneration in many settings. From the perspective of the pastor, expectations are unreasonable.

One can also deduce helpful insights from the qualitative, subjective research from ministry practitioners. Authors such as Rick Warren, Bratcher, Kemper, and Scott, and Craig Larson give qualitative support through their writings to the value of long stays in ministry.

Other authors discuss the harder side of ministry where perseverance must be experienced in the midst of pain and conflict. Preston refers to “playing hurt” in pastoral ministry. Other authors write specifically about church conflict such as Haugk. Bixby also writes concerning church conflict and those “antagonists” in the congregation, applying it to the tenure of pastors.

Author Marshall Shelley refers to these kinds of people as “dragons”. The authors do not conclude that it is the fault of the congregation alone. Indeed, the pastor himself/herself can bring concerns, sins, and insecurities to the calling too.

The literature concluded the following: long pastorates are desirable for both Pastors and churches. They create an environment in which deep relationships can flourish and life changing friendships are cultivated. These are the springboard for effective witness and ministry. In the midst of their sin and insecurity, however, pastors and churches find themselves in conflict which lessens their chances at experiencing long ministries together. Long pastorates should be encouraged and the conflicts, personalities, and other issues that prevent this should be of first priority for the individuals, churches, and denominations.

Chapter 3: Theological Framework

A closer look at the aforementioned issues raised many theological discussions which will be dealt with by contrasting the struggle of Sin versus the Spirit controlled life.

Sin: How does the sinful nature affect the inner workings of the church, the family of a pastor and even the personal inner life of the pastor? If sin permeates our being, to the very core, how is that evidenced in the relationships pastors have with others in their lives?

Holy Spirit: How does a Spirit controlled pastor and congregation operate? How does a Spirit controlled person live out his/her roles in relationship?

Shepherding: Several Bible passages address the metaphor of God as a shepherd to His people, as well as the pastoral role explained in terms of shepherding. What are the Biblical implications for one called by God to take care of the flock of God?

Partnership: God has used His people to partner together to accomplish His purposes. Examples of this include missionary journeys by the Apostle Paul and his associates. How does the Bible outline issues of unity in our ministry and the carrying out of common ministry and mandate?

Calling: How has God called His people for acts of service and ministry? How do other factors affect the superintending of God and His assignments given to His children?

Church responsibility toward leadership: Under the heading of Ecclesiology, the Scriptures outline responsibilities of those who work with Pastors in the context of a congregation.

Theology of submission: What does submission look like regarding Christ and His church?

Conflict Resolution: What do the Scriptures say about healthy conflict resolution? What Biblical examples might speak loudly and authoritatively to modern day hotbeds of controversy?

Chapter 4: Methodology

This qualitative exploratory work was done for the purpose of further work, namely providing a document for pastors and churches that will provide an impetus toward healthier church-pastor relations. This study focused its attention on the wisdom gleaned from pastoral ministry resources as well as other valuable sources. It was important to see it through two lenses: an internal lens and an external lens. Internal lenses looked at the following:

Since this study involved happenings in the CABC primarily, it was most beneficial to draw from its main players. In the CABC there are currently 7 Regional Ministers. They are called in to deal with pastoral conflict with churches, counsel pastors in personal difficulty, are trained mediators on behalf of the CABC, and help churches in the process of finding new pastoral staff. They are the front line people for the convention in handling expectations of search committees and attempting to bring resolution of church conflict. They are on the front lines of ministry to individuals, families and churches in crisis as a result of conflict and unmet expectations. Questions were prepared for a detailed interview to help indicate the major factors and elaborate on the issues pertaining to longevity or lack thereof. They were also valuable resources in evaluating our current processes and made recommendations regarding ministries designed to strengthen the relationships pastors are engaged in. Information was also available from a survey commissioned by a Pastoral Retreat Center Committee in recent years. It had important information dealing with pastoral issues.

In addition to the above mentioned quantitative and qualitative research, were additional in depth interviews of six CABC pastors who have served in their present churches for ten years or more. It was helpful to understand the factors that have been present which have led to lengthy pastorates, focusing on the quality of their relationships with the congregation. Why are they committed to long term ministry? What have these pastors overcome to endure through the years? What have been the benefits of a longer stay? Input was sought out concerning how we might seek as a denomination to encourage longer, healthier pastorates with the goal in mind to minimize serious conflict and promote more godly relationships within these churches.

An in depth interview was conducted with the Executive Minister of the CABC. Although a step removed from the congregational workings, the regional ministers are accountable to him and he has oversight of all CABC ministries and has significant wis-

dom and experience to add to the discussion. He is involved at the ground level of examination for ordination. He is the major visionary and leader of the denomination and has a very important perspective.

It was the hope through this interview to get a better understanding of the goals of the denomination in this current directive of fostering healthier communities of faith and strengthening the leadership of the churches. The methodology also focused on external sources to bring some objectivity to the process of prescribing changes to our relationships. To gain a more objective point of view, an interview was arranged with H. B. London regarding this issue. He and his department at Focus on the Family are doing significant work regarding pastoral ministry and give a good oversight to pastoral issues through publications and tape resources. They have also set up foundational ministries for church leaders to support their clergy and their families.

As an objective source, it added to the discussion under the umbrella of ministry rather than a subjective geographic viewpoint. From their research, they shed light upon pastoral and church practices and more specifically, offered recommendations to us to help produce and foster an improved relationship as it pertains to pastors and the churches of the CABC.

Modest financial support was available from the CABC through the office of the executive minister to allow for greater efficiency in attaining interview results. Cooperation was guaranteed from the Executive Minister to make the overall process as effective as possible, both to aid in the completion of this project and to the benefit of the CABC. The study moved along at an efficient pace due to the availability of person resources. The regional ministers and the Executive Minister were easily accessible and outside interviewees were agreeable as well.

Chapter 5: Display of Data

Chapter five concentrates on the data collected in the surveys with pastors, resource persons and denominational personnel. A summary of the characteristics present will be documented.

Chapter 6: Final Outcomes

This chapter is a wrap up where the data is interpreted and recommendations for further study are made, based on the research. The important findings supported by several quotes from the practitioners themselves provide the platform for future work within the body of Christ as it is expressed in the CABC.

Chapter 2: Review of literature

In the study of ministry longevity, many resources are available. These outline key factors, challenges, and primary stressors which impact longevity in this generation. Such subjects as expectations, conflict, healthy church development, and pastoral identity emerge in the literature. These help the reader understand the world of the pastor and the perspective he/she brings to the role and responsibilities as pastor. The literature allows for differing perspectives to surface. The themes that arise in the study of pastoral longevity also come up in the study of longevity in other professions. In a review of the literature, the following conclusions can be made:

From those who do quantitative research, the evidence suggests that even at the seminary level, pastors are ill prepared to face the pressures that life in ministry demand.

“The evidence is compelling that many seminaries are not preparing men and women for the job that the typical church expects them to perform.” (Barna, 1993: 26).

Even in the process of preparation, pressures mount as financial burdens grow. This creates stress before pastors enter into their first field of service. According to some studies, it seems that fewer are entering ministry because of inadequate financial remuneration in many settings required to relieve them of debt and maintain an adequate level of security.

The high cost of theological education also means that many smaller congregations can no longer afford to pay the salary required by a seminary-trained, younger pastor with heavy financial commitments to repay loans as well as support a family. As many mid-sized congregations with multiple staff people encounter increasing financial pressures in maintaining their programs, there are fewer openings for pastors trained with specialist concentrations in particular areas of ministry. (Gibbs, 2000: 95)

If this is not enough pressure to withstand, writers in the field suggest that this is only the beginning of stresses in ministry. Little do candidates know of the waiting realities of ministry, particularly as it pertains to interpersonal relationships and the conflicts that can occur. Rediger suggests, “It would be helpful if seminaries could prepare pastors for the tough realities of the local church. It should be obvious by now that pastors need to learn self-management and survival tactics.” (Rediger, 1997: 15) Blackaby concurs, noting the high cost of leadership which seminaries may leave uncovered in their curriculum.

People who cannot handle criticism need not apply for leadership positions. Being criticized, second-guessed, and having one's motives questioned are unpleasant but inevitable aspects of leadership. Great leaders are not immune to criticism; in fact, the criticism they receive is sometimes the most venomous. It is impossible

for leaders to avoid being censured. If leaders take decisive action, they are open to critique for being too reactionary. If they cautiously refrain from taking action, they are chastised for their indecisiveness. (Blackaby, 2001: 247)

Without a doubt the greatest frustrations in ministry for both pastor and people revolve around unmet expectations. Barna concludes that from the perspective of the pastor, expectations are unreasonable.

Many pastors are doomed from the day they join a congregation because the congregation's expectations are unachievable by any human being. No matter how skilled, how loving, how intelligent or how experienced the pastor might be, the people of the church expect too much too quickly for the pastor to have much chance of succeeding in their eyes. (Barna, 1993: 154)

The culture has created its own expectations of pastors. Warren suggests, "Today the pastoral ministry is a hundred times more complex than it was just a generation ago. Even in the best circumstances, ministry is incredibly difficult." (Warren, 1995: 20)

While it is hard to substantiate his subjective stance, there is agreement with other authors concerning the changing dynamics of ministry.

Where once the pastor was a respected professional of the community, the role has been devalued in media, due in large part to fallen leaders who peddle religion for selfish gain. According to Barna, Pastors reside in a world of decreasing approval. Ranked 56th of 100 of admired professionals. (Barna, 1993: 32) He further "draws attention to the growing uncertainty regarding the role of pastors in society and to the increasingly unrealistic expectations placed on them. He believes that being a pastor these days may be the single most thankless task in America." (Gibbs, 2000: 103)

The world in which the Pastor of today is called to minister in is increasingly complex. Secularization and the onset of unprecedented change in the world has profound effects on the church. Eugene Peterson comments,

The adult, like the adolescent, is confronted with a new world every week or so and doesn't feel that he or she can cope. When this adult enters the church, he or she looks at the pastor and supposes that the minister, at least, has feet on the ground and understands where things are. People look at the pastor as the person with competence in things that have to do with God cast him or her in the role of expert." (Peterson, 1989: 123)

Barna contends that the climate of the world creeps into the fabric of church life. Pastors serve

in a me-centered world where more and more members are apathetic. (Barna, 1993: 32) The church has also imposed unrealistic regulations on ministers. The literature suggests that Pastors are expected to deliver. "... The church's expectations of ordained ministers are exceedingly high." (Harbaugh, 1984: 72)

Harbaugh continues, "One common source of stress is the desire of most pastors to please and be accepted by others." (Harbaugh, 1984: 44) Inexperienced Pastors quickly face reality when they realize that parishioners have expectations of them. Their visions and dreams of fruitful ministry come up against the trench work of plodding service for Christ, lived out in the context of relationships. In the midst of this, are demanding people who make comparisons and draw false conclusions, even questioning the motives of the anointed of God. "Most pastors go into the pastorate with dreams of being able to do it all. That dream matches perfectly with the increasing demands of the congregation." (Dobson, Gordon, and McBurney, 1994: 102)

H.B. London and Neil Wiseman in their research conclude, "Too many congregations have assumed or even been taught that the pastor is responsible for every facet of a church's ministry. Working under these expectations, if the church flounders, who gets blamed? The pastor, of course! Even on the best ministry team, the buck ultimately stops with the pastor." (London and Wiseman, 2002: 24) Rediger concurs concerning the struggles between pastors and parishioners. The pastoral role now includes an unfocused and expanded range of duties.

The congregation expects the pastor to be in charge of nearly everything (except activities that the powerbrokers want to control). Being 'in charge' here means not only seeing that the activities get done, but also that

everyone interested in them is happy with them. (Rediger, 1997: 23)

But being a Pastor is not just what you do but who you are. “To be a pastor is more than fulfilling a job or doing well in an occupation; it is a way of life. It is a lofty vocation, a high calling that most people will never experience.” (London and Wiseman, 2000: 21) However, these expectations weigh heavy upon pastors individually.

George Barna in his surveys reports,

Many churches make a grievous mistake: They expect their pastor to be the master of all trades. The expectations set for most pastors doom them to failure before they begin their work. These unrealistic expectations help to explain why pastoral burnout has grown to dangerous proportions. Our research has even shown that among a dozen types of professionals, pastors are the most frustrated of the lot, typically feeling guilt, stress and disappointment due to their inability to fulfil the demands placed upon them by their flocks. Our time management study among pastors indicated that the typical pastor juggles an extraordinary number of major tasks (16) during an average week. The result of this burden is that many pastors do a mediocre job in most of these tasks, to the chagrin of the pastor and congregation alike. (Barna, 1999: 37)

He further states that “Pastors live in a world that never stops, where the light never goes out, and where the average work week is between fifty five and seventy five hours. Pastors dwell in a world of unfinished tyranny, where they can’t shut the door, walk out of the office, or know something is completely finished.” (Barna, 1993: 31-32)

Jane Rubietta in her book How To Keep the Pastor You Love states that there are 4 words which characterize how ministers feel - isolation, loneliness, insecurity, and inade-

quacy - (Rubietta, 2002: 19) Under that umbrella, she states these stunning statistics: 80% of pastors thought about quitting in the past 3 months, 80% of clergy spouses suffer with depression, 85% of pastors spend two or less evenings home per week, and 70% work for than 60 hours. (Rubietta, 2002: 20, 77) She concludes that “Morale in the pastorate, it appears, is scraping bottom and Pastors feel underappreciated, under affirmed, and overworked.” (Rubietta, 2002: 20, 65)

Barna in Today's Pastors, agrees with Rubietta. In essence, he is saying that there are many “battle weary” pastors who had expectations, albeit many of them unrealistic, shattered by realities in the local parish. They now experience more that physical stress, but spiritual discouragement and question of call altogether.

The data have shown that many pastors feel overwhelmed by the demands of the job and have become discouraged because lay members refuse to shoulder their share of the ministry responsibility. Consequently, the personal development of pastors suffers. For instance, 4 out of 10 pastors doubt that their present church experience is significantly deepening their relationship with Christ. It is tough to serve as the spiritual leader of a group, seeking to motivate people to grow in spiritual depth, when you are not making serious strides in your own spiritual life. (Barna, 1993: 59)

He further states,

Ministry is tough work, and thousands of pastors bear the scars to prove it.

Although many lay members idealize the work of the clergy, the harsh reality is that despite the best efforts of these learned individuals and regardless of the high and holy nature of the calling, pastoring a church is more burdensome than most people realize. (Barna, 1993: 63)

Harbaugh agrees,

Many of these expectations are things a person can do, and most of them take a great deal of time to do. The open-endedness of parish demands and the busyness of the pastor can tempt pastors to continue going through the motions long past the time when they need to stop and be personally refreshed. In other words, self-denial, taken to the extreme, leaves little

room for healthy self-care. When this happens not as the exception but as a way of life, the person is lost in the role. It is likely that a pastor's spouse or family, if he or she has one, will notice this even before the pastor, but after a time there will be some symptom of this person-role disease that shows up in the way the pastor physically feels, or thinks, or emotionally feels, or relates. (Harbaugh, 1984: 73)

Not only does the church and pastor feel the frustration of unmet expectations, but the spillover of this frustration affects the home and marriage dynamics. The Pastor and his/her family are expected to model Christlikeness in every way. In many ways they are set up on a pedestal and must be super-human. "Every church needs a whole pastor preaching from its pulpit. And every church needs a beautiful model of Christian marriage and family lived out in front of its people." (London and Wiseman, 1996: 28) While London and Wiseman state the ideal, they also acknowledge the reality. "More than 90 percent of all clergy couples feel the pressure to be an ideal role model, yet their families are in many cases dysfunctional and unhappy." (London and Wiseman, 1996: Preface)

This has many facets, one of which is time pressures. Pastors live in a world of guilt about their families due to time restraints. (Barna, 1993: 32)

London and Wiseman state,

The pastor has an incredibly significant and difficult job. The implications and ramifications of his responsibilities at church are more extensive than most parishioners realize. A strong church is the first line of defense for healthy families; and healthy families are the building blocks of stable communities. But there's a complicating catch. The pastor, in addition to carrying this heavy responsibility for the church and society, usually has a family of his own at home. All too often time spent in ministry equals time away from spouse and kids. If family stability isn't attacked and eroded at one end of the scale, it seems it will be at the other! This is a serious and delicate situation. And caught in the middle of it all, trying (frantically, sometimes) to keep both ends of the candle burning, is that person we know as the professional minister - a human being like the rest of us, who increasingly finds himself working against a legion of obsta-

cles, unrealistic expectations and stresses and strains unique to this position in the world. (London and Wiseman, 2002: 9)

Taking into consideration the expectations to perform many functions and the tremendous stress this puts on the home, Barna adds,

With these dynamics, clergy mates often feel like ministry widows and widowers. Adding to the strain, while bearing much of the burden of child rearing, homemaking and working, the spouse is also the minister's principal cheerleader and counselor. Further, the clergy mate carries much of the emotional and practical burden of making ends meet. (Barna, 1993: 77)

Because of the load that the pastor carries, in many cases more than he/she expected and in many cases one which is unreasonable, pastors are tempted to drop out of ministry, are experiencing family stress, spiritual fatigue and are missing out on the ultimate joy and fulfillment that God intended in the abundant Christian life and in ministry for Him. London and Wiseman from their research conclude that,

The risks in ministry are greater than ever. Pastors are working harder in a world that's more corrupt. They wonder why their parishioners expect them to squander energy on trivial matters when evil threatens to wreck the human race. Fatigue shows in the eyes of pastors. This struggle takes a terrible toll, as pastors wrestle with crammed calendars, hectic homes, splintered dreams, starved intimacy and shriveled purpose. Some quit in utter hopelessness. Others lapse into passivity. And many of the rest just hold on by their fingernails. (London and Wiseman, 2003: 15)

Because of these stressors, long term ministry may be abandoned. Financial and family pressures are wearing down these leaders. Mixed with personal feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, pastors will look for another field of service or quit altogether. The church and the pastor must come to grips with their expectations and seek to work through reasonable working guidelines leading to longer, fruitful ministry.

Church researcher George Barna also suggests that "during the past two decades, the average tenure of senior pastors has dropped to about 4 years from 7. This is alarm-

ing for several reasons: in user friendly churches, the pastor stays for a prolonged period of time. A pastor creating a strong relational network within the congregation is minimized by a short tenure. Many pastors experience their most productive years between 3 and 15, and revolving doors produce less trust. (Barna, 1993: 36-37)

The Barna Research Group also finds that the short tenure of pastors alarming for two reasons. Not only do we seem to be losing many pastors, but research indicates that the most effective churches are those in which the pastor stays for a long time. Kennon Callahan agrees with this observation, suggesting that any pastorate of less than seven years is 'cost-ineffective'. A church's effectiveness in evangelism also appears to be linked to pastoral longevity. (McIntosh and Edmondson, 1998: 7)

London and Wiseman in their research agree that significant ministry usually does not occur until well into the pastorate. "The typical pastor has his greatest ministry impact at a church in years 5 through 14 of his pastorate; unfortunately, the average pastor only lasts 5 years at a church. (London and Wiseman, 2003: 34) The research of author Joe Umidi supports this as he reports that "Research shows that the most effective and enriching church ministries are those led by pastors who have invested at least six years in the same church community." (Umidi, 2000: 13)

So, why do pastors move on? Are there valid reasons? Moore suggests in his book Opening the Clergy Parachute,

Valid reasons for seeking a new call: the church's needs have changed, renewal of ministry 'Some denominational environments seem to accelerate the time between transitions so that averages of two to four years are the norm. The stresses and cost to congregations and clergy of such rapid deployment are readily apparent.' Career advancement, family concerns, church conflict 'In general, leaving would tend to be indicated, if: the level and extent of the conflict is widespread; it involves the core leadership of the congregation in conflict with you, not just a fringe group within the church; the effect on the church would tend to be extremely damaging if you stayed; and finally, neither you nor your family possess the emotional

resources to weather an extended period of conflict and unrest in the church' (Moore, 1995: 23)

One can also deduce helpful insights from the qualitative, subjective research from ministry practitioners such as long term pastor and author, Rick Warren who writes of the benefits of long term pastorates,

Healthy, large churches are led by pastors who have been there a long time. ... A long pastorate does not guarantee a church will grow, but changing pastors every few years guarantees a church won't grow. ... the longevity of the leadership is a critical factor for the health and growth of a church family. Long pastorates make deep, trusting, and caring relationships possible. Without those kinds of relationships, a pastor won't accomplish much of lasting value. (Warren, 1995: 31)

Other ministry practitioners agree that "Long pastorates usually signal that a congregation is stable and has a strong sense of identity. It also shows that a congregation has the ability to remain faithful over the long run." (Bratcher, Kemper, and Scott, 1991: 99) The Alban Institute in their research have concluded similar findings. "At the end of our analysis, the bottom line of it all is really the one advantage that outlasts, outweighs, and outshines all the disadvantages - long-term pastorates tend to lead to healthier congregations." (Ludwig, 2002: 16)

They further state,

Although primarily addressing the issue of staffing for large churches, church consultant Lyle Schaller raises the issues of a long pastorate for congregational growth: 'While there is no evidence to prove that either long pastorates or expansion of the program staff will produce numerical growth in a church, there is very persuasive evidence that suggests it is rare to find a growing congregation that has sustained its growth over a long period of time that has not had the benefits of both long pastorates and an adequate program staff.' (Ludwig, 2002: 82)

Robert White in an article entitled "How Long Should the Pastor Stay?" writes concerning the unique dynamics of a lengthy pastorate. "Pastors who have remained with one congregation for a long-term ministry testify to experiences of depth and inti-

macy similar to that of married couples.” (White, 2003: 29) Dennis Renick agrees, “There are many joys and rewards in a long pastorate.

Among them are these: it provides continuity in one’s work; it is a real joy to watch Christians grow and mature spiritually; and it enables one to see long-range plans come to fruition.” (Renick, 1977: 16)

The church herself can create a climate in which a pastor would want to stay. In a supportive setting where mutual love is expressed, pastors can feel affirmed and reciprocate that devotion freely. Ludwig, from his work with the Alban Institute concludes,

A congregation that knows the value of a long-term pastorate will seek to create a climate where honesty, growth, challenge, and support are evident. I would also contend that this should be a place where fun is valued, where laughs are heard regularly, where the joy of life is experienced, and where people feel safe in being the persons God created in God’s image. The church is the place where gifts are recognized, encouraged, and used for the sake of others. It is, or at least it should be, a place where people learn about forgiveness and reconciliation, two of the most important gifts the church gives the world. All of this maintains a climate where a pastor would want to stay, grow, and serve. (Ludwig, 2002: 86)

The key factors that emerge from the literature focus on trust and stability in relationships. As a Pastor walks with people in the parish, depth emerges and history develops. Wayne Oates states, “The longer a pastor has served at the church, the less likely she is to be an outsider. A long-tenured pastor has performed the weddings of many couples, conducted the funerals of their parents, baptized their children, stood with some of them when they became unemployed or went into bankruptcy.” (Oates, 1994: 36)

In an article by James Bridges concerning the Assemblies of God churches, he highlights the importance of the social stability of the pastor. He states, “A Pastor who understands the age, characteristics, and needs of the people to whom he ministers will enhance his ability to give servant-leadership to the church. (Bridges, 2004) He also

highlights the problems that result from a lack thereof. He says, “Having a proper relationship with the people to whom we minister requires that we have emotional stability. Emotional instability manifests itself in many ways, such as explosive temperament or an inferiority complex.” (Bridges, 2004)

Relationships with the congregation then are extremely important. They enable a pastor to go the distance in ministry. This happens over time as trust deepens. Pastor and people know each other’s needs and share each other’s lives. David Hansen refers to it as being “bound to the congregation.” (Hansen, 1998: 61) Marshall Shelley highlights the foundational elements of ministry as “personal relationships, mutual respect, and trust.” (Shelley, 1985: 100) London and Wiseman in The Heart of a Great Pastor summarize the relationship with the phrase “welcoming a congregation into his heart and loving them as his extended family.” (London, 1994: 27)

Apparently something significant takes place beyond the average tenure. There are turning points in ministry which can propel the ministry forward. These points rarely come in a shorter term pastorate. Ludwig says,

In discussing this topic for many years with clergy of different denominations, it is the consensus that something happens in a pastorate between five and seven years of service. Certainly the evidence is anecdotal, but worthy of reflection nonetheless. ... After seven years of faithful, dedicated, and consistent ministry, noticeable things begin to happen. By now, the pitch and tone of the congregation has been influenced by the pastor’s style. The leadership of the church should begin to reflect the priorities and passions of a working relationship with the pastor. A style of leadership has been imprinted. The ‘dues’ have been paid. (Ludwig, 2002: 7-8)

The phenomenon of longevity is also found in other professions such as education, business, industry, and environmental health. Becky Bobeck writes concerning teacher resiliency which is “the ability to adjust to varied situations and increase one’s competence in the face of adverse conditions.” (Bobek, 2002: 202) From her research she concludes that development is dependent on “significant relationships, personal ownership, accomplishment, and humor.” (Bobek, 2002: 204)

John Zink in an article entitled “Loyalty Pays Off”, writes of the value of long term employees, investors and customers to the strength and success of a business. He says that employees bring experience and expertise and perform functions that new employees would struggle with. (Zink, 1996: 3) Marsh Faber concludes that the careers of engineers are extended by “competence, experience, good communication skills, a healthy team attitude, and focus on lifelong learning, and an entrepreneurial spirit.” (Faber, 1999: 29) Nelson Fabian in writing concerning environmental health, speaks of the challenges to keeping professionals in the field. “More is being asked of us while less is being invested in upgrading the workforce to meet those needs. And as these trends play against each other, frustrated professionals leave our field.” (Fabian, 2001: 62) The secular literature representing various disciplines affirms similar traits to those pastors need to reach longevity.

Not every long term ministry is successful and positive. In his book The Pastor and the People, Schaller writes,

... approximately three-fourths of the pastors who serve the same congregation for over twenty years leave a legacy that greatly handicaps their successors. This legacy also often involves a loyalty to the beloved pastor rather than to Christ and his church, an orientation to the past rather than to the present, and, most serious of all, a definition of purpose that has increasingly emphasized survival and a ministry to the members. (Schaller, 1986: 26)

Another cause may be due to the fact that relationships are more “professional” than “personal”. The pastor has drifted from the congregation or has failed to get close in the first place.

A healthy, loving relationship between the pastor and the congregation is not the only thing that matters in a church, but nothing else matters much without it. Sadly, a congregational environment that treasures soul friends now seems at a low tide in many churches. This is most evident in groups of believers who talk most often about love, fellowship and community

but fail to demonstrate it. Although they preach frequently about love and fellowship, many contemporary pastors do not view developing soul friendships with fellow believers as an important or enabling part of their work. Many want to keep parishioners at a professional arm's length as a physician does with patients or a lawyer with clients or a supermarket manager with customers. (London and Wiseman, 1994: 144)

To remain in a congregation for a long period of time, requires perseverance from the Pastor. "Unless you have been a Pastor, you cannot really understand how ministry can be beautiful and painful at the same time. When it is good, it is wonderful; when it is bad, it can be terrible. But it is the call and sense of God's unmistakable presence that keeps us from running away." (London and Wiseman, 2002: 11-12)

It is essential that this sense of call leads to a widening in the scope of personal acceptance of the people by the pastor. David Hansen writes, "When Christ wants to love a congregation, he establishes his beachhead in the heart of the pastor." (Hansen, 1998: 49) He continues,

When we enter a pastoral relationship with a congregation, whatever else is involved in the contract, we bind ourselves to that congregation in and with the bond that God has with them. Perhaps the greatest spiritual issue between a pastor and a congregation is whether a bond is formed between them or not; that is, whether they can show one another hesed. (Hansen, 1998: 61)

It is one thing to affirm a love out of responsibility or duty, but for lasting, significant ministry to take place, entering into significant service relationships must be primary. Hansen has much to offer in this regard in his book The Power of Loving Your Church.

When a church and its parishioners are easy to love, the admonition seems superfluous. Every pastor wants to love his or her church. But not all churches are easy to love, and not all pastors find love easy, and the two have uncanny ways of finding each other. So most of us pastors need to learn how to love our church. We need to learn to love our church because it is hard to love and because we are hard to love, and if we don't figure

out how to love our church, it's curtains for our call to pastoral work.
(Hansen, 1998: 18)

As he says, correct beliefs must be matched with godly behavior in leadership. This kind of leadership, this partnership can be a shining example of a Church community that learns to partner for the long haul with desired results.

We may be able to theologize correctly about God's good will for a people we do not like, but we cannot lead real people toward God's good will unless we like them. They do not need to like us. That is the painful paradox of pastoral work. Many times our people will not like us precisely in the area where we are doing our job correctly. But we must see and affirm the image of God in them; we must take pleasure in their presence. People will follow us into God's good future if they see his love for them in our eyes. The power of pastoral leadership is deliberately, stubbornly, and consistently liking people who do not necessarily like us. That means liking people who are not nice and who are not nice to us. Liking people who hate our guts is one of the great agape sacrifices of pastoral ministry. It is one of the hardest things any of us is called to do. (Hansen, 1998: 90)

Relationships, as stated previously bring conflict and a Pastor must learn to work through these times of struggles and trial.

Though conflict rips out our hearts, God gives us his power to do his work. That strips us of pride and self-sufficiency - there are times when I press forward in my service to him out of total weakness, moving solely on God's power. With Christ we are never devoid of hope, never left to our own strength. God never abandons us. Our weakness, wounds, and brokenness are opportunities to experience Christ's power and presence through us. (Preston, 1999: 40)

Author and Pastor, Craig Larson, wrestles with the need but also the struggle of pastoral perseverance,

In many ways the conflicts that call for my perseverance are defining moments in my ministry. They are passages that either lead me to a higher plane in Christ or shove me headlong down the stairs. They promote ei-

ther godliness or bitterness; they reveal to me more of God or more of my sinful self. In my experience they have done a measure of both, but over time the positive has significantly outweighed the negative. With God's help, I can overcome evil with good. (Larson, 1998: 77-78)

Gary Preston writes of this issue and uses the term of "playing hurt" as it applies to pastoral ministry. "That is how we live our lives. We don't know the details of the end of our stories either. We are called upon to live faithfully without knowing how our story will conclude. Applied to ministry, we are called to play hurt without knowing when or if we will feel better." (Preston, 1999: 37) He further states,

Church conflicts leave scars from which some never fully recover. A battered soul doesn't heal quickly, yet most of us have to put food on the table - every day we go to the work that causes us pain. To stay in pastoral work means to play hurt in pastoral work. We are often called to preach, pray, teach, visit, counsel, marry, and bury with wounded hearts. (Preston, 1999: 36)

Building on the theme of expectations and perseverance, it becomes obvious that the literature spends a great deal of time on the subject of conflict and controversy in local churches. Conflict catches some pastors off guard. Perhaps they are too idealistic, or have not been adequately prepared in seminary for the rigors of ministry.

Conflict in the church often surprises us. Occasionally those most surprised are pastors themselves. Some enter ministry with naive idealism and are caught off guard by the vehemence of church conflicts. They feel wounded when they are the focus of such behavior. Yet conflict in the church should not surprise us. In church, emotional issues are close to the surface. Worship ceremonies, small-group experiences, and pastoral care often bring denied, hidden, submerged, or repressed feelings to the surface. Little wonder that matters may explode in unexpected ways. (Boers, 1999: 2)

Dobson, Leas and Shelley give this reminder,

The body of Christ is composed of people who have two natures. While we can rejoice that Christians have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, there remains within each believer the pull of the old self. At any given moment an individual can be following the influence of the Spirit or fol-

lowing the selfish, sometimes ugly behavior of the old self. If you're going to survive in the ministry, you have to have a healthy understanding of human depravity. (Dobson, Leas, and Shelley, 1992: 52)

Author Lloyd Rediger feels that treatment of pastors is a serious problem in churches today.

Abuse of pastors by congregations and the breaking down of pastors due to inadequate support are now tragic realities. This worst-case scenario for the church, one that is increasing in epidemic proportions, is not a misinterpretation by a few disconnected clergy. Rather, it is a phenomenon that is verified by both research and experience. (Rediger, 1997: 1)

Authors write specifically about church conflict such as Haugk, Bixby, Rediger, and Shelley. Haugk contends that there are those who "wantonly, selfishly, and destructively attack others. In a congregation, that can mean repeated disruption of boards, committees, and the entire congregation. Antagonism leaves in its wake not only incidental damage, but often deep and extensive destruction." (Haugk, 1988: 21) Those people within churches can

... crush your spirit, diminish your sense of personhood and self-worth, and even threaten your attachment to the church. You may have a spectrum of feelings ranging from anger, frustration, confusion, and depression to fatigue, tension, and total discouragement. These feelings might lead you to wonder, 'What am I doing here? Should I leave or stay?' (Haugk, 1988: 173)

He breaks down antagonists into various levels of severity.

Hard core antagonists are seriously disturbed individuals. ... Hard core antagonists tend to have incredible tenacity and an unbelievable desire to make trouble ... Major antagonists possess the capability of reasoning with their opponents but decline to exercise it. ... major antagonists have a character or personality disorder. They carry a great deal of hostility coupled with an overwhelming drive for power. Moderate antagonists have personality problems, but their problems are not as severe as those of hard core antagonists or major antagonists. (Haugk, 1988: 27-29)

He affirms the seriousness of their behavior and that resolution is not likely when evil people are at work within a congregation.

Healthy resolution of church conflict requires that those involved value one another as human beings, put forth the effort required to understand opposing points of view, and mutually agree that the god of the congregation is paramount. Unfortunately, antagonists do none of these consistently. Antagonists are malevolent in intent, and therefore are evil. (Haugk, 1988: 36)

Haugk gives his readers counsel when facing this kind of attack.

When negative emotions wreak havoc with your life and giving up seems like the best of bad alternatives, I have three words of advice: Hang in there! I encourage you not to resign prematurely, or for church members, not to leave too quickly. I know too many pastors and church leaders who precipitously resigned because of an antagonist when it was neither necessary nor helpful. Resigning prematurely, or leaving, can hinder God's mission and ministry in your congregation. (Haugk, 1988: 174)

There are ramifications for stepping back prematurely.

For pastors and other church professionals, however, resigning also threatens loss of income and frequently necessitates moving to a new location. Resignation can also mean changes for the church professional's family - children uprooted, spouses' careers disrupted, good friendships ended. The decision to resign is never reached lightly. (Haugk, 1988: 176)

Bixby also writes concerning church conflict and extends the previous premise, applying it to the tenure of pastors. "The Problem is not that pastors are leaving. The problem is that pastors leave prematurely because of the unrequested, undesirable influence of a few individuals." (Bixby, 2002: 15) Bixby contends that usually the problems lies with just a few persons and centers on issues of misplaced trust and failure to communicate. "Whatever the issue, it often seems that a few individuals are given enough power to get rid of their pastors or to make life within their church so miserable that these

pastors want to leave.” (Bixby, 2002: 15) Thus someone must take the blame and usually it is the pastor.

We can all come up with a million and one reasons why mistrust exists in our particular churches. It is easy to point fingers and create scapegoats, but all we really do is identify the symptoms of more systemic problems. Systematically, most churches today have been set up for disaster, and when disaster strikes, everyone struggles to find someone to blame. The blame often falls on the pastor. Some churches go through pastors every two to three years because of the ‘blame game.’ (Bixby, 2002: 28)

Author Marshall Shelley refers to these kinds of people as “dragons”. He says that “they can drain you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.” (Shelley, 1985: 9) He adds that these “dragons” are not always easily spotted.

Within the church, they are often sincere, well-meaning saints, but they leave ulcers, strained relationships, and hard feelings in their wake. They don’t consider themselves difficult people. They don’t sit up nights thinking of ways to be nasty. Often they are pillars of the community - talented, strong personalities, deservedly respected - but for some reason, they undermine the ministry of the church. They are not naturally rebellious or pathological; they are loyal church members, convinced they’re serving God, but they wind up doing more harm than good. They can drive pastors crazy ... or out of the church. Some dragons are openly critical. They are the ones who accuse you of being too spiritual, not spiritual enough, too dominant, too laid back, too narrow, too loose, too structured, too disorganized, or ulterior in your motives. (Shelley, 1985: 12)

He speaks of the toll it takes on the pastor in dealing with these sorts of people. “If you are involved in the leadership of a local church, you know effective ministry demands your time, creativity, patience, and effort. Working with people can drain you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.” (Shelley, 1985: 9) The Pastor and

people must cultivate a community of trust, otherwise the ministry will be suspect. The pastor will feel like he/she is being monitored and the congregation will feel driven rather than led.

If pastors and their boards don't trust each other, the church will be unhealthy, and chances are, the pastor's tenure will be brief and unpleasant. Some boards don't allow a pastor to win their trust; they see it as their job to 'keep the pastor in line.' Unless the relationship changes, that ministry is doomed. A relationship of trust must be attempted, even when it doesn't come naturally. Sometimes this relationship takes time - several years, perhaps, as certain members move off the board and new blood takes their place. Always, however, the initiative for trying to develop trust lies with the pastor. (Shelley, 1985: 98-99)

Shelley advises pastors in how to deal with these dragons in the congregation and in leadership. "Criticisms can't be ignored, nor should they be allowed to set the direction for the church. Every pastor walks that delicate line between steering and being steered by the congregation. As they weigh the criticisms, most ministers occasionally wonder, am I being followed or chased?" (Shelley, 1985: 115) He further adds,

Personal relationships, mutual respect, and trust are the foundation of a strong working relationship between pastor and board. But there are other important elements to keep dragons from emerging within the board. Churches that emphasize these elements not only develop strong, ministering boards but find attacks by outside dragons are easier to handle. (Shelley, 1985: 100)

Rediger in his book Clergy Killers, asserts that there are a variety of levels of antagonism in the church, even among the clergy which lead to conflict and ultimately a parting of the ways in some cases. He defines clergy killers in this way, "Clergy killers are people who intentionally target pastors for serious injury or destruction. We must dis-

tinguish them from ‘normal’ persons who disagree with the pastor, injure her or him inadvertently, or even oppose some pastoral project or issue.” (Rediger, 1997: 8)

In a given congregation, it is usually only a few who are able to wreak havoc and cause pain.

Generally there are only a few (perhaps only one or two) clergy killers in a given congregation or agency, but they are deadly, and they have expandable influence that typically attracts people with common gripes, frustrations, or misguided agendas. Such often unwitting cohorts can produce a numbing fear in pastor and congregation that hordes of people are organized against them, and that resistance to their agenda will only bring personal injury to the resisters. In reality, however, only the clergy killer is deadly. (Rediger, 1997: 8)

Conflict gone bad can result in the unfortunate situation of forced terminations. Joe Umidi, in his book Confirming the Pastoral Call writes, “It’s no secret that far too many churches and Christian ministries have earned horrendous reputations for unfairly terminating staff members or - worse yet - inflicting upon them painful pressure to resign.” (Umidi, 2000: 13) In this book he cites a study by John C. LaRue. In that study, LaRue found that 1/4 of pastors have been forced out. “The shocking part of this phenomenon is that 62% of the ousted pastors were forced out by churches that had already done this to one or more pastors in the past. ... They have contributed to the development of a ‘victim’ mentality among a significant number of wounded leaders and their families.” (Umidi, 2000: 14)

He continues,

Although a majority of the pastors in the survey were terminated for biblically sound reasons, such as moral or financial compromise, a significant minority (43%) were forced out by conflict with a small but influential faction within the congregation, or by one or two members of the church’s governing board. According to LaRue, it typically took only seven to ten people to push the pastor out the door. A significant number of leaders were fired simply because their style conflicted with some small power clique. The majority of these pastors felt that the church’s leaders

had been deliberately dishonest during the interview process about the history of such conflict patterns within the church. (Umidi, 2000: 14)

According to Ron Susek, there are serious implications for churches who abuse pastors. "... The church, likewise, will be remembered for its treatment of those who have committed themselves to Christ's service. It is not a small issue to be known as one who deserts or disturbs spiritual leaders." (Susek, 1999: 191)

However, the authors consulted for the purpose of this study do not conclude that it is the fault of the congregation alone. Indeed, the pastor himself/herself can bring concerns, sins, and insecurities to the calling too. As Rediger states, the opposite of the clergy killers themselves are those clergy who kill their congregations. He breaks it down into two categories, evil and harmful clergy.

Evil clergy are a rarity, but they certainly exist. Just as lay people may ally themselves with evil, consciously or subconsciously, so may a clergy person. However, it is relatively rare to encounter an evil clergy person because most denominations have training and evaluation processes that adequately screen out evil practitioners. (Rediger, 1997: 105)

"Harmful clergy are the largest category of killer clergy. They are simply harmful or toxic to a congregation. The harmful ones are those who cause more harm than good in their attempts at ministry. They may be sincerely mistaken, immaturely self-serving, or professionally incompetent." (Rediger, 1997: 107)

London and Wiseman in their studies make similar conclusions.

Some research done on smaller churches implies that dual factors keep congregations from growing. The first factor is an overly controlling pastor. In this case, the church cannot add more members or new programs because his span of control has already reached its limit. The second factor is the power grip of a lay leader who refuses to allow anything in the church without his or her domination. Sadly, many pastors who most resent lay power controllers act in similar ways when they come into positions of power themselves. (London and Wiseman, 2002: 126)

One reason many pastors become so exhausted by the demands of ministry is that they enter ministry with little basis for it other than ‘meeting people’s needs.’ Willimon says,

That is dangerous in a society of omnivorous desire, where people, not knowing which desires are worth fulfilling, merely grab at everything. The pastor’s ministry ends in fatigue and resentment at having given one’s life for a bunch of selfish people who have no other purpose in their lives than the fulfillment of an unexamined, inexhaustible set of false ‘needs.’ (Willimon, 2002: 60)

It is necessary for Pastors to keep short accounts and display a blameless character, despite being manipulated, or worse, controlled or maligned by parishioners. “Forgiveness can be tricky for pastors in relationships with those in the church. Since relationships form the heart of ministry, complications can arise out of those relationships. From our perspective, these troubling people hamper our plans, resist at the wrong time or act immaturely.” (London and Wiseman, 2002: 83-84)

It is essential for pastors to re-examine their role as persons first. Willimon concludes, “Some say that pastors get into trouble when they forget that they are persons among other persons, when they lose sight of their humanity with all their human strengths and weaknesses.” (Willimon, 2002: 91) Gary Harbaugh concurs, “Pastors are persons. Most of the problems pastors experience in the parish are not caused by the pastor forgetting he or she is a pastor. Most difficulties pastors face in the parish arise when the pastor forgets that he or she is a person.” (Harbaugh, 1984: 9)

This “person” must, in order to effectively minister for the long haul, develop character that will be lived out in the context of loving relationships in the church and community. As Hansen suggests, it must be more than vocation, but a life lived in summons to the call of God. “The pastoral ministry cannot be employer driven, trend driven or task driven. Pastoral ministry must be following Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ called me to this work, and following Him must be integral to realizing his calling.” (Hansen,

1994: 20) Guinness, in his book, The Call, puts it this way, “We are not primarily called to do something or go somewhere; we are called to someone. We are not called first to special work but to God. The key to answering the call is to be devoted to no one and to nothing above God himself.” (Guinness, 1998: 43)

It is essential, suggests Ludwig to have fresh encounters with God to grow this character within. ... the freshness for ministry is not about length of service. To be sure, ruts can develop on any well-traveled road. But sameness, routine, ruttedness can occur in any relationship when people don't pay attention to what God's fresh voice is calling them to be and do. The church going stale is a function and loss of energy and focus, so that we continue to sit in the same wagon, going down the same road, while singing the same melody and not going anywhere in particular. (Ludwig, 2002: 9)

Blackaby and Brandt agree. “Nothing is more vital to a pastor's care of the flock than his own personal inner life.” (Blackaby and Brandt, 1997: 123)

Others agree,

Pastors, however, often make their ministries miserable or delightful. Too often, a pastor's brief tenure may be due to his being too aggressive, presenting too many expansive proposals in a brief span, not sensing that the leaders are unable to digest all the new ideas. In addition, pastors must have a sustained daily relationship with God, or else they will not have sufficient discernment and resolve to live by the Bible. Prayer will help keep them to stay true to Christ in His Word and provide them with spiritual strength, modulation, and momentum to meet a long list of responsibilities facing them each day and week. (Gilmore, 2002: 36)

Failure to do this will result in conflict, diminished effectiveness and a shorter pastorate.

Without soundness of character, a pastor's credibility is seriously threatened. I would contend that a pastor who lacks integrity will not have the emotional and psychological maturity to survive over the long haul. When lack of integrity is exposed, any trust that had been developed between a pastor and a congregation is seriously threatened. And when trust does not exist, the opportunities for future ministry will be limited. (Ludwig, 2002: 24)

Author Steve Macchia concurs in his book Becoming a Healthy Church, “We have come to recognize that if a church is to be healthy and vital, it needs to be led by a pastor and leadership team who are themselves pursuing health in their personal lives and in their shared leadership capacity. Only then will a local church become the vibrant, healthy entity God intends.” (Macchia, 1999: 16)

The literature seems to conclude the following: long pastorates are desirable for both Pastors and churches. They create an environment in which deep relationships can flourish and life changing friendships are cultivated. These are the springboard for effective witness and ministry. In the midst of their sin and insecurity, however, pastors and churches find themselves in conflict which lessens their chances at experiencing long ministries together. Long pastorates should be encouraged and the conflicts, personalities, and other issues that prevent this should be of first priority for the individuals, churches, and denominations.

These findings from the literature are helpful in that they provide a framework for discerning major issues facing churches and pastors. They add weight to assumptions made as they reveal quantitative evidence from significant research. They provide a foundation for churches and pastors to build upon when desirous of healthy ministry. They give anecdotal evidence which will help pastor and church member alike to pursue those virtues which will lead to meaningful partnerships. Along with a variety of sources in the field of ministry, a theological foundation is needed to address similar issues. To this we turn our attention in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Theological Framework

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the key theological themes that emerge in this discussion of pastoral longevity. Based on the assumptions made prior to this study on longevity, the central findings in the interviews and the issues coming out in the literature review, the following themes have surfaced: shepherding, calling, conflict resolution, partnership, and submission. These will be treated by contrasting the sin controlled life and the Spirit controlled life as they pertain to each subject. As individuals are controlled by the Spirit of God rather than sinful attitudes and actions, communities of faith of which they are a part will thrive to the glory of God.

Before these particular topics are discussed, it is important to outline sin controlled versus Spirit controlled living. First, the theme of sin finds itself coming out time and again in various ways in the pastor/church relationship. The key questions are - How does the sinful nature affect the inner workings of the church and the personal inner life of the pastor? If sin permeates our being, to the very core, how is that evidenced in the relationships pastors have with others in their lives?

When Adam and Eve sinned, punishment fell upon them. They were banished from the garden, conflict was present from that point on. Sin had permeated the very core of their being (Genesis 3:10-23). They were in essence, totally depraved. Immediately, sin was evident in their offspring Cain and Abel, as Cain murdered his brother in a fit of jealousy (Genesis 4:1-17). From that point on, sin has affected every person and every relationship. Sin has woven its way into the very fabric of our lives; our conversations, our thoughts, our motives, our actions.

Baptist theologian Millard Erickson writes, “We all were involved in Adam’s sin, and thus receive both the corrupted nature that was his after the fall, and the guilt and condemnation that attach to his sin.” (Erickson, 1985: 639) Due to that sin, persons are estranged from God, the Holy and perfect Creator. Instead of being united to the Father, they are alienated (Colossians 1:21) and in need of forgiveness and grace. This sin nature is common to all races, and affects both genders. All persons stand in need of the touch of God (Romans 3:23).

Although this paper is written primarily from a reformed viewpoint and refers in particular to a Baptist context, it is valuable to consult other evangelical theologians who influence pastors and congregants within the CABC. Other non-reformed theologians offer helpful insights into the discussion of sin. In A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology, it states,

The nature of original sin is seen by Arminius primarily as deprivation rather than depravation. Actual sins committed by the individuals are the result of the deprivation that issues from original sin. He feels that if our first parents had lived obediently within the covenant given by God, the gifts of eternal life and fellowship would have been given to all their posterity. (Carter, 1983: 263)

Those of a reformed viewpoint would contend that sin has affected the very core of the being of every person. The human intellect, feelings, and will have been altered and therefore the person is incapable of changing his/her moral condition. While a more Arminian approach would contend that persons are affected by original sin, and need redemption, there is a differentiation. Calvinists suggest that the guilt of Adam is imputed. Each person is under the wrath of God because of the sin of Adam. Arminians believe their sin is inherited and face the consequences of the sin of Adam. Arminians suggest that prevenient grace which absolves people of Adam’s guilt is made possible through the death of Christ and is experienced by genuine faith and repentance. (Carter, 1983: 268)

Sin as it relates to the leader, namely the pastor of a local congregation comes out in various ways. The pastor, due to his/her own guilt, insecurity, or lack of self control may be a poor leader. The tendency to dominate and control can greatly hinder relationships and any hope of a long term positive ministry. Harris, in his book Stress, Power, and Ministry writes,

When pastors become self-enclosed - silent about their own personal battles in life, unable to ask for help from the laity, consumed by work, pre-occupied by their own religious values, closed against conflicting expectations of laity, constrained by fear of criticism - they cannot establish the relationships of mutual accessibility and candor necessary for the tasks of parish life. (Harris, 1977: 75)

Erickson, in Christian Theology, refers to the natural desires as outlined by John in 1 John 2:16. First, Pastors and congregants have a desire to enjoy things. This may manifest itself in inappropriate physical desires which can destroy credibility and ministry.

Second, he highlights that sin is also a desire to obtain things. At its root, this comes from a selfish heart. For the Pastor, this can manifest itself with a desire to pursue a higher standard of living, possibly at the expense of his/her congregants. This desire can overshadow desire to serve God and His people. Likewise, congregational members may love money more than God and the pastor may find himself/herself struggling to draw members from that allure.

Third, Erickson in sharing the Apostle John's outline mentions that there is a desire to do things, to achieve. For pastors this can manifest itself in seeking approval from people rather than God. It can drive them to "move up the ministry ladder" and work out their own call rather than discerning the timing and call of God. It can cause a church and pastor to build their own empire rather than building the kingdom of God. Ultimately, the lordship of Christ in the individual and church come into question. (Erickson, 1985: 597)

Examples of these desires are vivid in the lives of Samson, David, Peter, and Paul. Samson, although not a pastor, was a spiritual leader. Due to his loss of integrity through yielding to temptation, Samson lost his platform for leadership. God removed his strength and his ability to effectively lead the people of his day. He reaped demise and physical death due to the loss of character (Judges 16).

The story of King David vividly portrays leadership that is blessed by God, as well as the consequences which can result from loss of integrity. Although God's chosen leader; one after His own heart who was a military genius, he struggled with sin. In a moment of weakness, he sinned against God (2 Samuel 11). His desire to enjoy an inappropriate relationship was his downfall.

Leaders in any time, with varying degrees of responsibility must maintain a deep sense of commitment to God. Victory over temptation for the leader, in this case David, is found solely in the power and deliverance of God. Through the prophet Nathan, David the leader was exposed and faced the consequences of his actions (2 Samuel 12).

In the New Testament, there are examples of sinful attitudes and actions manifesting themselves in leaders. This is a constant battle as evidenced in scripture by Peter who expressed great faith and aspirations, but succumbed to the temptation to deny his allegiance to Jesus. His faith and experience with the Son of God was more fragile than he realized and the sinful nature, manifesting itself in fear won out (Mark 14:66-72). He longed for the approval of people, more than standing up in the hour of temptation. One commentator remarks, "Few stories in the Gospels evoke such pathos as the account of Peter denying his master three times. The story itself is marked by dramatic escalation in the intensity of Peter's denials.

He does not simply deny Jesus; he finally curses him." (Evans, 2003: 495-496)

Another New Testament example of the struggle with sin in the life of the leader is found in Paul. He who was an apostle of great devotion and zeal, was mindful of his

weakness. Although he could boast of many victories for the sake of Christ, he knew that sin was present and could be visible, if not for the controlling work of the Spirit of God (Romans 7).

Clergy may give appearance of quality character, but the struggle remains. If they succumb to temptation, their sin is exposed and future leadership opportunities hampered or eliminated. Every pastoral leader must realize that even though he/she is called by God and a congregation, the sinful nature must be denied and subdued. This stems from the root of sin in the human heart as expressed within the heart of the leader or as he/she has experienced it from a congregation.

A leader may be gifted in many ways, but this in fact may be his/her downfall due to misplaced pride. Any leader because of this sinful nature within must continually commit him/herself to God. H. B. London and Neil Wiseman state, “Without love for Christ and people, ministry easily turns into uncontrolled ego gratification and a grasping need for prominence and control.” (London and Wiseman, 1994: 118)

In contrast, the person regenerated by the Spirit of God has a new nature. This same Spirit who was active in creation, filled the lives of Old Testament for special service, and was sent by Jesus to teach, comfort, and empower, is the Spirit who resides in the life of the believer. Anders Nygren writes, “There is indeed a distinction between the natural man, who is carnally minded, and the Christian, who is spiritually minded.” (Nygren, 1949: 313) Nygren outlines the radical change that has taken place within the human heart. “Before we knew Christ we walked according to the flesh. Such is the ordinary, natural life of man.” (Nygren, 1949: 321) He makes a clear distinction between the person who walks according to his/her sinful desires and the one who lives and walks by the Spirit.

... either we are carnal and walk according to the flesh - and that is death;
or we are ‘in Christ,’ we are spiritual and walk according to the Spirit -
and that is life. He who is carnal has his mind, his thoughts, his desire and

constant yearning directed to that which belongs to 'the flesh.' His every thought is conditioned by his own carnal self. In everything he seeks only his own. He has thought and interest for nothing but the selfish, carnal life. He strives only for that which can please himself. He does not concern himself about God and His will. ... But on the contrary, the Christian's mind and heart are directed to the things of the Spirit. He no longer lives for himself, but Christ lives in him; and though he still lives in the flesh, he nevertheless lives 'by faith in the Son of God. ... Thus a thoroughgoing change has taken place in his whole existence: he is no longer carnally minded, but spiritually minded. (Nygren, 1949: 321)

Commentator Leon Morris agrees, "Before we came to know Christ we were continually defeated by sin. When we came to know him and to receive the indwelling Holy Spirit we were able to attain a standard we could never reach in our own strength." (Morris, 1988: 304) Because of the work of the Spirit of God in the heart of the individual, everything can be changed including human interaction in relationships. "This powerful, victorious Spirit which indwells believers, and can keep their sinful natures nailed upon the cross, is like a seed planted in the soil of the believer's life. If cultivated and nourished, this seed will grow into a lovely fruitful tree ..." (Green, 1985: 106)

This process is known as sanctification. Erickson, in his theological writings on the subject of the Holy Spirit includes, "The Holy Spirit also works sanctification in the life of the believer. By sanctification is meant the continued transformation of moral and spiritual character so that the life of the believer actually comes to mirror the standing which he or she already has in God's sight." (Erickson, 1985: 875) Those from other traditions highlight a doctrine of perfection where a Christian is no longer under the reins of sin. The struggle ceases to exist.

Among other Scriptures, Romans chapter seven outlines the contrast of these two natures. In contrast to the sinful desires of the flesh, the people of God can display Spirit led living. Although there is constant tension, there can be victory as the Christian lives in obedience and surrender to the Spirit. Cranfield states, "The daily, hourly putting to

death of the schemings and enterprises of the sinful flesh by means of the Spirit is a matter of being led, directed, impelled, controlled by the Spirit.” (Cranfield, 1985: 186)

Leon Morris adds, “Over against the life in the flesh of which he has been speaking Paul sets life in the Spirit, life of a different quality, life made possible only because the Spirit of God has come to live in believers. ... The Spirit is not an occasional visitor; he takes up residence in God’s people.” (Morris, 1988: 308)

Theologian David Smith in his book, With Willful Intent: A Theology of Sin states, “As we grow spiritually, the flesh is more and more controlled. Both flesh and Spirit coexist, nonetheless, and the strife between the two can be bitter and unrelenting.” (Smith, 1994: 399)

While some may consider it an unusual phenomena, the Scriptures and theologians who study them carefully assert that the Spirit led life should be the norm for operating under the Lordship of Christ. ”The presence of the Spirit in believers is not an interesting extra to be seen in a few unusual people. It is the normal and necessary feature of being a Christian at all.” (Morris, 1988: 309) He continues “... the work of the Spirit is not an option or an extra for the advanced Christian. Being led by the Spirit is a mark of all God’s people.” (Morris, 1988: 313) This has been true of the people of God since the birth of the church in the book of Acts.

... the first Christians were aware that the Spirit of the Messiah had come to indwell them. Hardly surprising, then, that with this Spirit of their Master making them into sons of God, they should be conscious of the closest ties with other members of the family. In this family, seen as one Body indwelt by one Spirit, there was no place for distinctions of wealth or station, sex or nationality; no room for pride in education or religious privilege. After all, not one of them had anything to boast about. (Green, 1985: 122)

If a person is controlled by Spirit, this will be displayed in how they relate, including the church context. Therefore, a pastor and a congregation must cultivate a lov-

ing, accepting, affirming context in which to operate. This will lead to healthy long term relationships of value. Matthew Black states,

Hence in every member of it, possessing the Spirit of God, Christ was in some measure present and active, since the man was a member of His body. ... Thus the community might be indifferently regarded as constituted by the Spirit of God, or by Christ as a 'corporate personality'; and the individual as possessed by the Spirit of God, or by Christ dwelling in His member. (Black, 1973: 111)

The first theme, that of shepherding appears in the literature and is the most common metaphor in scripture for the pastoral office. Several Bible passages address the metaphor of God as a shepherd to His people, as well as the pastoral role explained in terms of shepherding.

One author states: "The shepherd metaphor shows up more than five hundred times in Scripture, across both Old and New Testaments. Without question, the dominant biblical model for spiritual leadership is shepherd and flock." (Anderson, 1997: 12) A key question to reflect upon is: What are the Biblical implications for one called by God to take care of the flock of God?

In the Old Testament, Moses was called from shepherding to lead the people of God from slavery. Likewise, King David knew humble beginnings as a shepherd boy. He could later refer to the Lord as his shepherd (Psalm 23:1).

The Lord God refers to His people as His flock. The prophets affirmed their role from God in correcting and caring for the people of God. Isaiah the prophet writes "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young." (Isaiah 40:11) Elsewhere, in a discourse concerning the suffering Savior in chapter 53, he refers to the sinful condition of humanity as sheep going astray when he writes: "We all like sheep have gone astray."

Again, sin affects not only the lives of individuals, but the responsibilities they carry out and the recipients of their ministry. The prophet Jeremiah refers to bad shep-

herds, the shepherds of Judah who did not care for the flock under their care. God says about them: “My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray and caused them to roam on the mountains. They wandered over mountain and hill and forgot their own resting place.” (Jeremiah 50:6) Likewise the prophet Ezekiel writes of the plight of poor shepherds who abuse their role as leaders. “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? ... You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered.” (Ezekiel 34:2, 4-5)

Shepherds can be abusive when controlled by this sin nature. They can abuse the sheep and take advantage of position. Those who do this are not carrying out the responsibility according to the Biblical mandate. They lack the discipline and grace needed to be a spiritual guide. It appears, however, that shepherds can be exemplary through their care of and conduct with the sheep. A great trust and responsibility has been given to shepherds to take care of the people of God. It is a trust given by the chief shepherd, God Himself. Jesus is the perfect example of shepherd leadership.

When Jesus Christ came, He left heaven and His place of honor and became both a shepherd and a lamb. John the Baptist, at the baptism of Jesus declared Him the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) This metaphor would also be used by the eyewitness Peter who wrote in his epistle that Christ was “a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Peter 1:19) Several references in the book of Revelation refer to the significance of Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb and how His people will declare His praise. (Revelation 5:12, 7:14, 14:4, 17:14, 19:9, 21:23)

Jesus refers to Himself as a shepherd as well, not an abusive one, but a caring, loving one. He contrasts the role of the thief who wants to rob, and the hired hand who has no personal interest in the sheep. He called Himself the Good Shepherd whose voice

the sheep would follow. He was so good, so caring, that He would give His very life to protect His own. Rather than steal, He would give the sheep good pasture, security and abundance. Instead of no interest in them, He would know them all by name and show a personal interest in each one. (John 10) He is elsewhere referred to as the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) and the Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20).

Jesus told a story to illustrate the personal care He has for each individual sheep. Jesus told a story about a lost sheep in Luke 15. In it He declares how infinitely precious one sheep, one life is to God. While ninety-nine were safe and sound, in no danger, the shepherd searched for that one that was lost. God the Shepherd was indeed the ideal shepherd for all Shepherds to model after.

When Jesus commissioned His followers into leadership with His church, inherent within that call was the notion of being a shepherd to His people. Peter, the one who denied the Lord on the eve of His death was reinstated, forgiven, and given a trust by Jesus to feed His sheep upon the three fold promise of his love. (John 21) Peter became a leader, spokesman, and missionary to the Gentiles. Because of the imagery planted within His heart from watching and listening to Jesus, He was able to be an effective minister to the church. Because of his knowledge of the Old Testament teachings, this picture of God as a Shepherd to His people was clear. His challenge through His writing was “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care ... eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.” (1 Peter 5:2-4) The congregation was entrusted to the shepherd (pastor) from God.

The Apostle Paul gave a similar challenge to the leadership in Ephesus as he wrote: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own

blood.” (Acts 20:28) There was no mistaking that this leader, knowledgeable in the Law and Prophets had understood the primary way God ministered to His people.

As one thinks about modern application, it may seem out of date to consider this shepherding image. Recognizing that the recipients of the words of Jesus, the Apostles, and prophets were familiar with this notion of Shepherding, makes perfect sense. However, the modern world and even the church are not as familiar with this metaphor. How then can it be applicable and even advisable to use it?

While it may not have the connection theoretically to modern times, the principles and pictures are still primary ones that leaders should follow. The best image for a Pastor is still shepherd. Since Jesus is that perfect example, it is important that a leader model after Him. “Jesus, the Chief Shepherd is our model: he is the archetype, the blueprint, for the way modern, Christian leadership gets done.” (Anderson, 1997: 17) A leader will be most effective when he/she learns the skills and responsibilities of shepherding.

Those responsibilities are shared from a heart after God. As mentioned, the character and self care of the pastor are essential to being an effective shepherd. The leader leads from the overflow of his/her own heart. The care needed is not simply generated due to responsibility, but is genuine. The shepherd is led by the Shepherd of his/her soul first and foremost, to lead the flock of God to abundance and blessing. The shepherd will lovingly and willingly feed the sheep and give his/her life for the sake of the flock. He/She will be the protector, guarding against error and those who may want to steal or kill. “Biblical shepherds are those who live among the sheep; serve the sheep; feed, water, and protect the sheep; touch and talk to the sheep - even lay down their lives for the sheep.” (Anderson, 1997: 22)

In contrast to this, a shepherd who is ineffective will lose the responsibility. A serious detriment to long term ministry is an incompetent shepherd. As a sinful shepherd

abandons his/her responsibilities for caring for the sheep as Jesus modeled, the sheep (congregation) will feel abandoned and left to face predators unprotected.

The second theme that will be addressed with these two concepts in mind is calling. As this is considered, it is imperative to ask such questions as - How has God called His people for acts of service and ministry? How do other factors affect the superintending of God and His assignments given to His children?

The theme of call is prevalent throughout the Bible. Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldeans. This involved packing up his family and belongings and going to unknown territory. The promise of God for a glorious future was enough to motivate Abraham to follow (Genesis 12). God was true to His promise and blessed Abraham and His descendants.

Joseph, one of Abraham's descendants was set apart by God and blessed by him despite much adversity orchestrated primarily by his own family. The sense of being called or favored by God through the blessing of his father and others, brought prosperity (Genesis 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 50).

Others in the Old Testament received an unforgettable call such as Moses, who heard from God while observing a burning bush (Exodus 3). David was an unlikely candidate for leadership, when compared to his older, stronger brothers, but God, through Samuel declared that he was chosen of God to be a mighty ruler (1 Samuel 16).

Other Old Testament leaders who had special calls were Jonah the prophet who through a series of circumstances, disobeyed, then obeyed the call of God to preach to the Ninevites (Jonah 1-4). Because of his sin which led him to flee in the opposite direction, Jonah experienced many hardships. Isaiah, in the midst of a national crisis, caught a glimpse of God. As he heard of the need for someone to go to serve, he responded with willingness (Isaiah 6).

Calling is a central theme in the New Testament in the life of Jesus and His followers. Jesus was sent from the Father with a mission to rescue fallen humanity (Philippians 2). He was clear on why He had come. This was evidenced several times as He moved toward the culmination of His ministry as found in the cross and resurrection. He could teach and do miracles in such a way that others followed Him. They knew He was sent from God. He declared with assurance that He was the promised Messiah and was led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Jesus modeled what Spirit anointing was about (Luke 4).

Jesus' call to His followers was costly, demanding all. It was no half hearted decision to take up the cross. Jesus made it hard to follow, making all other devotions fade into the background (Luke 9:23ff.) As Evans states, "Jesus' summons would have struck a somber, if not macabre note in the ears of his audience." (Evans, 2003: 325)

His commands were clear. They were called for a purpose - to go and do the will of the Father (Luke 9, 10). This commission was left with them upon His ascension. These apostles who had walked and talked with Him; learned what the Kingdom of God was truly about were now entrusted with leadership in the church (Matthew 28, Acts 1). As commentator Ajith Fernando says, "Their primary concern should not be the political power that will come with the restoration of Israel's kingdom. It should be the spiritual power that will come with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which will enable them to be witnesses 'to the ends of the earth.'" (Fernando, 1998: 52).

These apostles carried on leadership functions and their call to mission drove them to uncharted territory. Jesus made it clear to them that with the presence of the Spirit would come power for ministry. Their willingness also led them to give their very lives in martyrdom. At the heart of their activities was an overarching call to follow and direct the church to do the same.

One of the greatest leaders in the church, the Apostle Paul, received an unmistakable call while on the way to Damascus to persecute Christians. Blinded to his personal need for salvation through sin, now this Apostle was confronted and blinded by the light of the presence of God (Acts 9). From that point, he could look back to that pivotal event in his life when God arrested his mind and heart and put him on a course that would change the world. His religious zeal was misplaced because of sin and was displayed in the murder of believers in Christ. Now that zeal was properly carried out in the name of a religion that was Spirit directed and led.

It is that call that must be central not only to ministry in general which will sustain one through trials of ministry and life, but a particular call to a congregation must be clear and discerned carefully under the direction of the Spirit of God. Pastor and congregation must realize that a partnership in this way is more than convenient hiring, but a God sought plan which is discerned through effort and waiting upon God with an attitude of complete yieldedness to God.

It is possible that many pastors are hasty in accepting calls. Later they regret their decisions and actually pave the way for the demise of a ministry. Pastors enter the ministry ill prepared for its pressures and challenges. They may not truly grasp all the spiritual, emotional, and physical resources needed for the role. Instead, they give in to the desires of the flesh by seeking to obtain things, status, position and power.

A third major theme that comes through is partnership. God has used His people to partner together to accomplish His purposes throughout history. Examples of this include missionary journeys by the Apostle Paul and his associates. The key question is - How does the Bible outline issues of unity in our ministry and the carrying out of common ministry and mandate?

Partnership is evident through the Scripture. A primary example in the Old Testament is how Moses relied on others to help in his work. From the begin-

ning, Moses felt inadequate to lead the people of God out of Egypt. He had several reasons why this could not be done under his leadership. For each reason, God declared that His abilities were greater than the inabilities of Moses. Aaron was called upon to be a spokesman and partner for Moses. This would add support and make up for any inadequacies felt by Moses in his tasks. (Exodus 3, 4)

When the responsibilities became too great for Moses to handle, it was necessary for him to delegate responsibility and share the leadership role. Abundance of needs prevailed among the children of Israel. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law counseled him to find a way to utilize the gifts in others so that he might avoid burnout and better use his leadership skills. (Exodus 18)

Of course, a pastor who succumbs to evil temptations may want to control people and situations, but if a pastor is to maximize his/her effectiveness and engage in long term healthy relationships, equipping and delegating will be essential. A Spirit led leader will recognize the gifts present in others to maximize ministry. As trust deepens, people will be more likely to follow out of a deep sense of partnership and willingness. A proven track record over a period of years will aid in moving forward toward a common vision.

One can read in the Gospels of the way Jesus approached ministry. He drew others to Him to partner for the sake of the Kingdom. He would train them, eventually releasing them to carry out His plan for reaching the world. Again, this was done in the context of relationship. Although Jesus did not have a long term ministry, any barriers were broken down by His uniqueness and authority.

He was entirely trustworthy and his authority was greater than any these disciples had ever experienced.

The ministry of Jesus was one of building bridges. He broke down walls and stereotypes by reaching out to women, sinners, and Gentiles. Though accused and slan-

dered, He knew that His message was for all to experience and share. Later, His disciples would recognize this and teach it as well. A prime example of this is where Peter has a vision of the sheet let down from heaven which indicated to him of the inclusiveness of the gospel (Acts 10).

As Pastors seek to build meaningful relationships and move toward marathon ministry, there will have to be a breaking down of barriers. The Spirit of God brings about spiritual unity, but pastor and people will need to foster a loving environment such that unity is maintained. The pastor, in following the example of Jesus must aspire to embrace diversity and draw differing views and methods together to accomplish a goal. This is best done in the long haul where pastor and congregation trust one another.

Perhaps one of the greatest examples of partnership between church leadership and congregation resided within the fellowship at Antioch in the book of Acts. It was from this church that the three missionary journeys of Paul were launched. This church was planted there after the scatterings were brought about by persecution. The church was growing rapidly through conversion of the Greeks. Barnabas was summoned from Jerusalem to give leadership to this congregation.

He engaged in team ministry by going for Saul. For a year this team taught and ministered in Antioch. This was a time when the faith grew larger and deeper in these lives. A commitment to generosity for the sake of mission was established. (Acts 11)

That this young church gave a gift to the 'mother' church in Jerusalem shows how the missionary spirit had caught on so soon in a church that would be the mother church of Gentile missions (vv. 29-30). What a quick reversal of missionary roles! The mother church in Jerusalem sends the gospel, and the daughter church in Antioch sends money to the mother church. (Fernando, 1998: 351)

This spiritually sensitive church commissioned this missionary team for service (Acts 13). Fernando comments,

The sending-off ceremony with the laying on of hands was ‘an act of blessing in which the church associated itself with them and commended them to the grace of God (14:26).’ Thus, it was more a commissioning to a specific task than an ordaining to ministry. It is not surprising that at the end of the mission, Paul and Barnabas returned to the church in Antioch and gave a report of what happened (14:26-27). There must have been much more work to be done in Antioch. But God asked the church to release their key leaders for missions. To their credit the church did so, with no apparent hesitation. That is how important missions and obedience to the Spirit were. (Fernando, 1998: 374)

When they returned, there was a sharp disagreement concerning the young upstart missionary, John Mark. Since Paul felt he was not helpful due to his desertion along the way, there was a parting of the ways. Barnabas and John Mark partnered for the gospel and Paul chose a new team for service. Again the church sent Paul off with their blessing and support. This picture of respect and partnership is still a moving example which acts as a motivating and inspiring example for churches and missionary enterprises today. After this journey, Paul returned again, only to return to missionary service to the Gentiles.

Along the way, during his ministry, Paul raised support through partner churches such as Philippi and Thessalonica. He challenged them to give in faith and thanked them over and over for their generosity to enable him to carry out his work.

Although very different in many ways, long term ministry in the local church must have as its backbone, a desire to partner together and support one another in the kingdom work. This involves adequate financial support which keeps pastors free to pursue ministry without undue worry or anxiety. They support one called by God to serve the church.

It is essential, if churches and pastors are to move toward longer ministries, that a clear partnership be displayed. Churches and pastors are called to partner with God. The ministry that one enters into is not done alone or in vain. It is for the glory of and sake of Christ who calls. In the wisdom and plan of God, He has made it clear that ministry is

best carried out in the context of team. These fitting examples illustrate for modern day churches what it means to be equipped and led by the Spirit of God to carry out meaningful ministry.

In keeping with the theme of partnership, it is important to outline the basis for Church responsibility toward leadership. The Scriptures outline responsibilities of those who work with Pastors in the context of a congregation. The Scriptures say that “the Elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ... the worker deserves his wages.” (1 Timothy 5:17-18)

Paul, writes elsewhere that the church should “respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) Whereas ambition, connections, personality or other self seeking motivations may gain position for persons in the church, those who are truly called and appointed by the congregation deserve honor. “... Paul is calling for proper recognition and appreciation.” (Holmes, 1998: 178)

Greenfield in his book, The Wounded Minister, emphasizes the respect that was evident in the first century Church, “The authority of the apostles and pastors was one of an earned respect for their position in the church. It involved a conviction on the part of the congregation that the authority of these leaders had been delegated by the Head of the church, Jesus Christ.” (Greenfield, 2001: 73) He continues,

The early Christians generally recognized pastoral authority as delegated leadership from the Lord and believed that he would hold these pastors accountable for any failure to lead the church aright. For deacons or some official board of laymen to treat their pastor or other ministers on staff as second-class hirelings is totally foreign to the New Testament. God expects a church’s lay leadership to respect and follow the leadership of their

pastor; otherwise how can he be considered a leader? (Greenfield, 2001: 73-74)

Richard Foster in his book The Challenge of a Disciplined Life, writes,

In the Christian fellowship some serve by leading, others serve by following, and all serve by compassionate caring. Authoritative leadership is essential in the community of faith. It is easy to forget this when we see leadership abused. When we witness people jockeying for position and clamoring for status and using their power to put others into bondage, we are tempted to throw up our hands and try to do away with leadership altogether. But an infantile anarchy in church life is no better than an oppressive dictatorship. (Foster, 1985: 234-235)

What can happen in the church is that sin enters into relationships and power struggles take over. Instead of a sense of partnership with God and His appointed servant, the congregation, or certain groups or individuals within it resist and seek to control the pastor, even drive him/her out of the church.

With so much influence from the business world upon churches, it seems that pastors can be hired, and fired if necessary. Underlying this is lack of clarity and respect for calling upon the life of a pastor and in particular to a local church. “Whatever the issue, it often seems that a few individuals are given enough power to get rid of their pastors or to make life within their church so miserable that these pastors want to leave.” (Bixby, 2002: 15)

To have effective ministry in the long haul, a congregation must encourage and respect the pastor as the chosen instrument of God, appointed to the ministry. This can be done through prayer, encouraging words and tangible expressions of love. If disrespect comes through in undermining and resistance, it will discourage a pastor and more than likely produce a shorter pastorate. If a call to partnership is truly from God, designed, anointed and appointed by Him, mutual respect should prevail.

Another helpful theme that surfaced is submission. A key question is - What does submission look like regarding Christ and His church? Paul in writing to the Philippians says that Christ “humbled Himself.” (Philippians 2: 7-8) Jesus, the Son of God and Head of the Church submitted Himself to the will of the Father and came to earth to die for the sins of the world. He has now been exalted to the highest place. (Philippians 2:9-11)

The individual believer in submission to this same Lord should desire what He desires. One thing that God desires is that His people live in relationship and fellowship with Him and His people. Jesus’ command was to love each other. It would be the distinguishing mark of the disciple. (John 13:34-35) The Apostle Paul also promoted unity and living in relationship with each other. (Romans 12:16, 14:19, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Colossians 3:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:13) Likewise the Apostle Peter stresses the need to form bonds of trust and love. (1 Peter 3:8,11)

Paul, in Ephesians 5 speaks of the way relationships work best - in marriage, in servant/master relationships. He says under the inspiration of the Spirit that true joy and fulfillment is found in mutual respect and submission. Each one must submit to Christ as Lord, but each person must submit to the other in service.

In the greatest display of servanthood, Jesus in John 13, on the eve of His death, stooped to wash the dirty, tired feet of His disciples. It was fitting in the culture of His day for the servant to do the bidding of the Master, including this menial task. However, Jesus submitting to the will of the Father became a servant and took up a basin and towel. In doing so, He set for these eventual church leaders an example of the correct posture of leadership. It is when someone stoops to serve, that he/she finds true meaning in leadership. Jesus turned the tables of leadership with this act.

Jesus contrasted the abusive leadership of the rulers of the Gentiles to the servant leadership that His disciples were to exhibit. (Matthew 20:25-28). Forbes writes,

Power means insistence on what we want for no other reason than that we want it; it means making other people follow us despite their own wishes. Power is assumed, insensitive, dehumanizing, and ultimately destructive. Authority, on the other hand, is positive, and usually involves a conferred right within strictly controlled bounds. (Forbes, 1983: 87)

Jesus further rebuked the disciples as they argued over who was the greatest in the kingdom by placing a child in their midst. (Luke 9:46-48) The sin of pride manifested itself in the desire to achieve position and power, even in the family and kingdom of God. Erickson says, "It (the church) has been placed in the world to serve its Lord and the world, not to be exalted and have its own needs and desires satisfied." (Erickson, 1985: 1067).

Following His example, they were to be servants. Foster comments, "Leadership therefore is an office of servanthood. Those who take up the mantle of leadership do so for the sake of others, not for their own sake. Their concern is to meet the needs of people, not to advance their own reputations." (Foster, 1985: 235) The church in following the example of Jesus must minister to people, not expecting others to do things for them in return.

Looking back to that event would change the way these followers of Jesus did leadership. They would not lord it over their flock, but be willing to risk shame and abuse for the sake of Christ. The first disciples in their immaturity requested titles and position, but did experience hardship through suffering and even death. They served as an example in word and deed of what it meant to be a good soldier and servant of Jesus.

The exhortation in the New Testament, and one that rings through to today is that in the context of trusting relationships, one must assume a role of servant. The church would be a transformed institution, truly functioning as a body and family, as it was intended, if this were more evident and prominent.

The modern church would do well to take to heart the admonition to “put others needs before your own.” The “one another” statements of the New Testament help to move the focus off the individual and on to the body. It roots out selfishness and pride and encourages strong relationships that truly honor God. True submission does not mean taking advantage, but having such humility and care that the needs of others are put first.

This kind of relationship dynamic will be counter cultural and will transform a church, its leadership, and the society around them. A church will function as a healthy Biblically based community of faith. This will create a climate for long term ministry based on trust, love, admiration and respect.

The final theme that surfaces in the literature and interviews is conflict. Sin affects not only the individual, but shows itself to be strong in every relationship of life, including the local church context. The key questions are - What do the Scriptures say about healthy conflict resolution? What Biblical examples might speak loudly and authoritatively to modern day hotbeds of controversy?

The Old Testament contains many examples of the destructive power of sin within the ranks of the people of God. None is as vivid as the accounts of the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses en route from Egypt to their destination of the promised land. Moses, the spiritual leader, accompanied by Aaron sought to lead the people of God to a preferable future, a land that would be the inheritance promised by God. Although God delivered his people from the hands of Pharaoh and four hundred years of bondage, the people, through sinful attitudes and actions resisted the leadership of Moses. They turned to other gods and even desired life in Egypt. The promise and provision of God did not seem to sustain these sin-laden people. (Exodus 12, 13, 32). Due to their disobedience and doubt, a generation was lost, prohibited from entering the land flowing with milk and honey (Numbers 14).

The New Testament contains examples of sin within the fellowship. The Jerusalem church was filled with enthusiastic followers, yet some because of their sinful attitudes and actions caused dissension and were judged, even by death (Acts 5:1-11). Evans comments, "Perhaps Luke used the example to bring both fear among the Christian community stressing the importance of honesty before the Lord and possibly to remind Christians of an earlier negative example (Achan) in which the people of God suffered through the deceit of one individual (Joshua 7:1-26)" (Evans, 2004: 44) Fernando draws this back to the failure to connect that sense of call to the daily practice of faith. "One reason why the dangers of this are not seen is that we have ceased to insist on the way of the cross as the only way for a Christian to live. Countless Christians have forsaken the path of the cross." (Fernando, 1998: 202-203)

Paul, in addressing the churches of the first century confronted such sin as immorality (Corinth), disunity (Philippi), and legalism (Galatia). The first century churches mentioned in Revelation were chastised by Jesus Himself for their sin manifested in a variety of ways (Revelation 2, 3). Individual members, such as Demas and Diotrophes were labeled by Paul as having sin which the church should be aware of.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray for forgiveness and be forgiving of others. He exemplified this as He hung upon the cross, forgiving those who put Him to death. One who fails to forgive retains a bitter spirit and contributes to division within the church. Jesus called peacemakers, happy. The Apostle Paul was known for encouraging the churches to maintain unity. He addressed the congregation at Philippi and encouraged Euodia and Syntyche to work together. Paul himself while on a missionary journey with Barnabas and John Mark, experienced conflict. This led to him breaking away from this team. Though there was estrangement for a time, later in ministry, Paul requested the services of John Mark. This conflict was resolved. Paul not only wrote and embraced resolution in theory, he practiced it.

Sin still affects the church of Christ as both leadership and membership duel over such things as power struggles, unmet and unrealistic expectations, unkind words, and motives which may seem spiritual but are actually carnal. If healthy relationships between pastor and people are a defining factor in long term pastorates, it stands to reason that sin is the primary way in which relationships between pastors and congregations break down.

Jesus, in Matthew 15:19 and Luke 12:13-15 outlines for His followers, and in turn to the modern day church where the source of conflicts lie. It is out of a sinful heart that evil proceeds. As Sande states, "These passages describe the root of conflict: unmet desires in our hearts. When we want something and feel that we will not be satisfied unless we get it, that desire starts to control us." (Sande, 2004: 102)

Wherever there are people, there is conflict - in friendships, in marriages, and in churches. It would seem that the one place conflict would and should not exist is among the people of God. In fact, this catches newer Christians and some pastors off guard. Ideals are unmet and reality sets in, sometimes leading to great discouragement. However, conflict is not always unhealthy. It can be very healthy and helpful in the life of a congregation. Sande writes, "When handled properly, disagreements in these areas can stimulate productive dialogue, encourage creativity, promote helpful change, and generally make life more interesting." (Sande, 2004: 30)

In loving, constructive ways conflict resolution can be a great testimony to the grace and power of Jesus Christ in the life of a believer and in the local church. If ministries are to move to long term, healthy conflict resolution is necessary. The Bible is not silent when it comes to resolution of conflict. In Matthew 18, Jesus outlines a procedure for conflict resolution. First, one should go to the one in question and share the concern. If that person refuses to listen, it should be done with a witness. If that does not bring

resolution, the whole congregation should become involved. Evans comments on the need to put away pride and follow this exhortation of Jesus.

“Teaching on humility, avoiding offense, and restoring the lost now moves into teaching dealing with an errant brother or sister, who perhaps is resistant to correction. Proper process is taught, as well as the willingness to forgive, repeatedly if necessary.” (Evans, 2004: 343)

Too often in the local church, steps are missed. People refuse to confront out of fear or pride and the process is sabotaged. Sins such as gossip and slander are circulated and hurt feelings are experienced. When a pastor and people refuse to resolve conflict, it can lead to forced termination and hurt feelings. Sande writes, “Instead of resolving differences in a distinctively biblical fashion, they often react to conflict with the same avoidance, manipulation, and control that characterize the world.” (Sande, 2004: 14)

Much of ministry is spent in human interaction. With that comes conflict resolution, either between pastor and staff, pastor and congregation, congregational members or among staff. Congregations must work toward not only supporting the pastor overall but recognize the tremendous price that comes from ministry in this way. It is taxing upon the pastor, his/her ministry, and family dynamics.

A pastor must rely upon the grace of God to help in the process. He/she must be an agent of healing. Too often pastors create their own trouble in conflict because of dominant characteristics stemming from insecurity. Leadership is a privilege and must be exercised in humility and service. It must stem from a blameless character. Long term ministry usually leads to healthier pastors and congregations. Each pastor and parishioner must realize his/her own sin and seek to bring that under the control of God. This would lead to peace and unity within the congregation and dispel power struggles which often lead to shorter term ministries and hurt feelings.

In summary, the scripture contrasts the sin controlled life and the Spirit controlled life. The true church of Jesus Christ is made up of those who have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. Although there remains a constant battle with the old sinful nature, the Christian has the resources available to live a life that pleases God. Likewise, the church community and the pastoral leaders of it can be led by the Spirit to glorify God.

Several themes raised in the interviews and literature are all affected by these central themes of Scripture. The primary picture God gives of leadership in the Bible is that of shepherd. In both Old and New Testaments the people of God are called the flock of God or His sheep. Leaders are referred to as Shepherds. Their role is to care for the sheep, following the perfect example of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. In the context of the church, it is essential that the gathered congregation see themselves as partnering with God and with one another. Instead of asserting roles and titles each one should recognize their uniqueness in the family of God and exercise their gifts with diligence, seeking to be an example of Christian character made possible by the control of the Spirit.

Pastors have a call from God which is from within, yet expresses itself in service to the church. This calling sustains a pastor when he/she finds the ministry challenging. God is faithful and will sustain one called into the ministry. As that calling is lived out in a local congregation, the body has responsibilities toward leadership. They are to respect those called by God to lead. This is a scriptural mandate to be obeyed by each congregation.

Practically speaking, each person within can exercise this respect through prayer, support and ensuring that the resources are present to support the ministry adequately.

The pastor should live in such a way as to receive the respect and not act unjustly so as to promote a climate of disrespect. The pastor must submit to the Lordship of

Christ and to His people. Congregations must submit to their leadership. As this mutual submission is displayed it will lead to a healthy functioning community.

Conflicts will arise due to sin and the failure to submit. As they do, leadership and congregation alike must follow the Scriptural teaching to resolve such to the glory of God. Conflict is inevitable and inescapable but can be healthy in the life of the church and can be a powerful witness to the surrounding community. When this is sustained over the period of many years ministry can be enjoyable, enabling many deep and trusting relationships.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

To better understand what characterizes the ministry of long term pastorates, a qualitative, exploratory study was undertaken. To better understand exactly what took place, it is important to know what is involved in a qualitative study. What is it that qualitative researchers seek to do? Author Sharran Merriam, in her book Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Educations writes, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world." (Merriam, 1998: 7).

Michael Quinn Patton in his book, Utilization-Focused Evaluation adds, “The emphasis is on appropriateness and credibility - measures, samples, and comparisons that are appropriate and credible to address key evaluation issues.” (Patton, 1986: 180)

Certain qualities are present in qualitative research according to Merriam. She lists five primary ways that data is collected. First, it is necessary to get the perspective of the participant, not the researcher. This first hand information is the centrepiece of the research. This particular study on longevity in the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches relied solely on the perspectives of those interviewed.

Second, the researcher is the primary data collector. Instead of the use of inventories and questionnaires, the data is mediated through the researcher. In this study, all data was collected by the author of this study. Third, qualitative research involves fieldwork. The fieldwork in this study involved arranging meetings with the interviewees and scheduling adequate time to cover the questions. Usually, this took sixty to ninety minutes each. Some travel was involved, but availability was good and distances were relatively short.

The fourth characteristic that Merriam mentions is that the research depends on an inductive approach. Merriam writes, “... this type of research builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than tests existing theory.” (Merriam, 1998: 7) She further suggests that the researcher is not gathering data to match predetermined ideas, but rather looks for themes, categories and the like which comes from the data. (Merriam, 1998: 7-8) Patton adds, that “gathering qualitative data is an alternative that not only employs different methods but also asks different questions.” (Patton, 1986: 191) He says that the researcher tries to make sense of the scenario without bringing his/her presuppositions to the interviews. (Patton, 1986: 195) The data then becomes the central piece in the research project. The weight of the data allows the researcher to make more general commentary on the issue at hand.

In contrast to quantitative studies that are large and precise and which focus on facts and figures, empiricism, predictions, and confirmations, qualitative studies deal

more with hypotheses. The goal is to “hope to find a theory that explains their data.” (Merriam, 1998:7)

Finally, qualitative studies by their nature are richly descriptive. Rather than focusing on numbers, the keys are words and pictures. (Merriam, 1998: 6-8). With a small sample, it was possible to go into more depth. Although there were more pastors who could have been interviewed, the length of interview and depth of questioning would have been seriously diminished.

This qualitative approach was chosen because it brought out personal highlights from pastors themselves. The interviews were set up to draw them out and at various points, the responses were intensely personal. This added weight and credibility to the answers.

These were not second hand hypotheses, but living examples of the content, able to speak directly of ministry in the CABC context. Personal reflections were essential to the goal of this project, therefore a survey targeting larger numbers of pastors was insufficient.

Using an internal lense approach, highly structured interviews were held with the Executive and Regional Ministers of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches and six CABC pastors practicing longevity. The interviews were taped and transcribed allowing for maximum preservation of material for analysis.

The CABC employs seven regional ministers, under the supervision of the Executive Minister. The Regional Ministers are on the front lines of ministry, facilitating search processes for churches. This includes meeting with search committees and forwarding resumes. They also work with the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education in scrutinizing potential candidates for ministry and are observers at the annual examining council for ordination. Collectively, they have a clear picture of the work of the churches and pastors of the convention.

These denominational officials had valuable input to give, given the fact that they have significant ministry experience themselves, and are often called in to mediate conflict in churches. They also hear the concerns of pastors and are called in to give insight and support. While this part of their ministry is stressful and time consuming, it can be very productive, bringing reconciliation. These ministers serve as mentors and coaches to many entering and already engaged in ministry. Their support is invaluable to many.

An in depth interview was conducted with the Executive Minister of the CABC. A seasoned pastor himself, he oversees the work of the regional ministers. He also has oversight of all CABC ministries and has significant wisdom and experience to add to the discussion. He is involved at the ground level of scrutiny of ministerial candidates and examination for ordination. He works closely with the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education in setting criteria for those entering the field and determining acceptable practices for those already involved in pastoral ministry. He is called in to deal with disciplinary situations of pastors and churches. He is the major visionary and leader of the denomination and has a very important perspective.

Questions were prepared for a detailed interview to help indicate the major factors and to elaborate on the issues pertaining to longevity or lack thereof. Although the questions were prepared in advance, follow up questions were asked to draw out more in depth answers that would help in the discussion.

These denominational officials were asked what they have concluded are the average stays in pastoral ministries within the CABC. The literature suggests that pastors do not really begin to see lasting fruit until one has been in a given church for at least five to six years. Are CABC tenures in line with North American averages? Are churches and the convention as a whole affected negatively because there are short stays? Are the length of stays increasing or decreasing? Another question asked was why

pastors do not stay longer. In this, the primary interest was subjective in nature, focusing in on what they had witnessed. This made the question personal. What kinds of things in the pastor himself/herself or in the church contributed to short stays? Was it primarily conflict? Are there factors in pastors themselves which contribute to shorter stays such as their own inability to relate? Have they been inadequately trained for ministry? Are the expectations too much today?

Is it primarily financial? Do pastors just move on to get a higher salary?

Moving to the positive side of marathon ministry, there are many benefits to having a pastor in a church for an extended period. The leaders were asked what they felt were the positive effects of this. This was asked so that comparison might be done with the literature, to see if this was really the case in the Atlantic context. A major question to consider was: was there a conflict between theory and practice?

Ministries that are long term are not always positive. Some pastors may hang on too long because new doors of service do not materialize or family comfort supercedes the objective assessment of the ministry of the church or even the call of God. Assuming there are negative effects, the executive and regional ministers were asked to comment on how a ministry loses momentum with time.

Pastors themselves can help ministries move to long term. These pastoral leaders, with their wealth of experience have seen the barriers and blessings of ministry. Therefore, they are well aware of what qualities are present when a ministry goes a long distance. Do pastors have certain spiritual qualities? Do these pastors not dry up as easily as others who stay in the short term? Are they more capable of withstanding moral failure or unresolved conflict that can lead to a hasty exit? Are those with strong emotional ability better able to withstand pressure, burnout, and depression that come with the expectations of ministry? Are pastors who have good, ongoing training able to keep moving forward with their congregations? Do pastors who have good people and conflict

resolution skills tend to last longer? Can a church with a poor record in relating to pastors move to a long term relationship?

An ongoing discussion has been happening within the CABC with regard to strengthening pastors, their ministries and their families. According to a survey done in recent years, many pastors are discouraged and lonely. At least half have seriously considered leaving the ministry. Given these findings, it was asked of these ministers - How do you think we can move toward better pastor-church relationships in our convention? What can the seminary do in its preparation? What can pastors do personally? How should churches treat their pastors while they are actively engaged in the ministry?

It is the conviction and assumption of this author that too many ministries are cut short because of abuses suffered at the hands of clergy and congregation alike. Some pastors in their insecurity and sin are not leading and shepherding out of godly character and manifesting servant leadership. They are bringing conflict upon themselves. The congregation, highly influenced by the business world, can mistreat pastors with an understanding of hiring rather than calling. They have unrealistic expectations of pastors and fail to treat them with honor and respect as the appointed leader of God for that local body.

Due to the conflicts that arise in congregations of all shapes and sizes, denominational personnel like these men are called in to mediate. This being the case, another question asked was - how do you counsel pastors in handling antagonists in the church? Antagonists, as described in the literature are more than disgruntled parishioners who complain over trivial matters. They are hard core disrupters in the life of the fellowship. Instead of striving for unity, they seek to drive wedges in relationships. In some cases they force out a pastor, otherwise accepted by the church body.

The question was further pushed in this way - are there times when you encourage a pastor to go? When is it appropriate to walk away? What are the determining factors

on whether a pastor should try to work out a minor dispute and stand his/her ground or whether it is time to move on? Is there a “line in the sand” that these veterans have found in ministry? Is it ever wise to walk away? When is it justified?

Building on a previous question, it was asked on these men - what would improve pastor - church relationships in the convention in the following areas: In the call process?

During the pastorate? In terminating a relationship? Although it was addressed previously, it gave another opportunity for these denominational personnel to comment on how the expectations of pastors and churches could be carried out more proactively. Since they are so closely tied with preparation of pastors and the calling process of churches, they are well equipped to comment.

Again, during the pastorate, there is need for mutual appreciation and encouragement. From their many observations of what has worked and what has not, the executive and regional ministers could remark on how churches cannot only avoid poor relationships but have desirable ones, ones that will go on for several years which can result in significant fruit.

Churches also need to understand how to effectively deal with terminations. With significant numbers of forced terminations, and the rise of court cases affecting churches in North America, there is a need for churches to understand what they can and cannot do. Likewise, pastors must know what lies within the bounds of reason as a spiritual leader and representative of the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ. Other ministries end with resignations, that come about as a result of decline and pressure upon the pastor as a result. These are not ideal, but in most cases a pastor is able to move on to another assignment.

Not all ministries end because of stressed relationships. Some pastors die while in ministry service, creating a set of circumstances that is hard for churches to deal with. Other churches see pastors move on in the prime of their ministries. Still other churches

see their pastor retire. With all of these changes, traumatic in varying degrees, come adjustments. These regional ministers under the guidance of the executive minister can respond with wisdom as well as refer churches and pastors to resources that can help in the transition.

A key discussion that the CABC needs to entertain is - what resources are in place for ministries in transition? Is the denomination engaging in too much crisis management? Is this reactive ministry the best use of our time and resources? Has it led to decline in many of our churches? Should the regional ministers be tougher on their assessment of pastors and churches? Should seminars and literature be available which will address problems before they arise? Will the information get to the correct people?

There is a great temptation to create an “us and them” scenario in churches where church leaders criticize their pastors and pastors malign their flock instead of loving them. In some way this needs to be addressed by the leadership of the CABC. Models of good long term, healthy ministries may be rare, but need to be heralded throughout the region to encourage, and possibly rebuke individuals who prevent it from happening.

These interviews drawing upon the collective wisdom of these staff members was invaluable. Their years of experience and insight helped immensely in determining what relational factors have added to the blessing and security of a long pastorate and what has prevented such from taking place.

In addition to the interviews with denominational leaders, were additional in depth interviews of six CABC pastors who have served in their present churches for ten years or more. Other than longevity, there were additional factors which led to the securing of this particular sample. For example, since most of the churches in the CABC are rural, it was important to have that significant portion represented through their pastoral leadership. Four of the six pastors interviewed serve in rural settings. Although their

particular churches in some cases are larger than many, they still represent the dynamics of rural ministry. The other two pastors serve in a more urban setting.

Of the churches represented, one would be considered smaller than average, four would be considered medium sized churches by CABC standards and one would be considered large. One of the pastors is in his first pastorate with the others ranging in levels of ministry assignments and experiences.. Each individual brought their own personality style. Although a formal analysis was not done, their uniqueness surfaced during the interview process. One other consideration was age differences. Though there was not a great deal of diversity, there was some that lent itself toward a more dynamic result. There was only one known female Pastor who fit into this category but she was not consulted for this study. There was a variety of personal connections, ranging from casual acquaintance to a deeper level of relationship.

It was helpful to understand the factors that have been present which have led to lengthy pastorates, focusing in on the quality of their relationships with the congregation. Why are they committed to long term ministry? What have they overcome to endure through the years? What have been the benefits of a longer stay? Input was sought out concerning how the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches might encourage longer, healthier pastorates with the goal in mind to minimize serious conflict and promote more godly relationships within these churches.

Pastors were asked - when you arrived at your current church, how long did you expect to stay? The reason this was asked was quite simple. Do pastors go into a ministry expecting to stay long term? Did they aspire to long term ministry? Does longevity just “happen” or is it intentional? Were their mentors long term pastors? Regarding their fields of service - are there circumstances that warrant long term approaches? Would another short term ministry be a detriment to the church and its future? Was there a sense from God that a long stay was in sight?

It was important to discern what these experienced pastors felt were the key factors impacting how long most pastors stay at one church. This was asked generally, but because of their personal experience and calling, it was personal. This general question enabled pastors to step back and assess long term ministry as a discipline, as an art, as a vocation. Of primary concern was - would their answers support or contradict the literature? Are there unique factors in Atlantic Canada that might affect pastors having shorter pastorates such as salary levels, quality of economic development of communities and the impact upon congregations, isolation factors, and size of assignments?

As a natural follow up, they were asked what the key factors have been for them personally. Since every church context was different, it was impossible to predict this ahead of time. There are common denominators because ministries and people are so alike. However, individual congregations have their own dynamics. Some pastors themselves set a tone in leadership that encourages long term relationships. Some churches are up front in the call that they want a pastor for the long haul and support that practically.

It was important to establish how they felt concerning relationships in the congregation. Do relationships between pastors and key leaders impact longevity? If so, how? Who are the key support people for the pastor? The premise of the study is that relationships are central to longevity. Would this assumption fall down at the hands of the practitioners themselves? Are boards and key leaders primarily responsible for the health and encouragement of the pastor? Can a pastor survive or thrive in a situation where he/she is not closely connected to the leadership? In a scenario where a congregation is divided, can a pastor implement change without the leadership on board? Is board approval and support, the defining factor? Does support have to come from the board? What if some in the key leadership cannot be trusted or are against the pastor? Does the pastor rely on wise saints who do not have formal roles within? Does the pastor have to look outside

the church in order to gain support? Is it possible to have a long term ministry and not receive support from key leaders?

Assuming that in order to maintain a long term ministry, boundaries must be set up and significant landmark decisions must be made and victories won, it was asked of these pastors - how can a pastor maintain healthy relationships in the ministry of the church? This was asked to discern what was appropriate in the role of pastor. How much investment in relationships is made? Is the pastor performing a role or functions, or is he/she entering into the lives of the parishioners? Building on this, the question was asked - should pastors have the freedom to “open up” to parishioners? With whom and to what degree should transparency occur? Transparency is a touchy issue among pastors. The “fishbowl” existence is not healthy or desirable, yet with public life comes a level of criticism. The tendency among pastors and their families is to put on a front and to promote a secrecy that is foreign to church members who live in a “real world”. Their home may be their only source of solace amid the pressures. Pastors can create a dichotomy when they constantly hear problems and cares of congregants while failing to appear “real” to their listeners. Then again, pastors may not trust their parishioners due to bad experiences in previous assignments. They may feel that to be transparent could backfire and they could bring harm to their career and family reputation if information was shared. This creates a tension. Is it reasonable to think that meaningful friendships can emerge when the leader him/herself holds back? Is the price too high? Is the relationship too artificial?

Alluding back to boundaries, it was asked of these leaders, how are relational boundaries determined? In other words, what do they set up in order to maintain a level of professionalism and blameless character? Do they talk about certain subjects but refuse to admit failures and sins? Are marriage and family issues kept private? Do money issues get discussed with church folk? Are parishioners insulted, or uncomfortable when

pastors will not open up? Do pastors take particular care in relating to people of the opposite sex? Do pastor make distinctions between those in leadership and those not in leadership when sharing personal and professional information? Do they seek protection by church leadership when dealing with antagonists and demanding people within the fellowship?

These pastors were asked - how have healthy relationships impacted your own ministry and life? There are many blessings that come from relationships. The support from a congregation can be wonderful, especially in the long term where such depth of trust has been established.

In fact, the relationships may actually be the major barrier in bringing a ministry to a close. The pastor and/or people do not want to let go. Was this the case for them?

In determining the strategy and priorities of the pastor as professional and person, the following questions were asked: what kind of specific relationships do you try to cultivate? Why? This was asked to grasp what the priorities were of the pastor. Who does he/she want in their corner? Are there ulterior motives in “winning over” certain individuals or groups of persons? What kind of support is needed, particularly in a long haul ministry? Are all relationships pursued for the right reasons? Can adequate support be gained solely in the local church? What outside relationships are important in strengthening the life of the pastor? How much does the pastoral person need relationships from within and without?

In a long term ministry, there is an advantage of history. One can look back upon a myriad of experiences and determine certain things which cannot otherwise be determined by a short stay. For instance, a pastor can see how history has unfolded in the congregation during his/her time. What have been the most productive years? Have you seen stages or cycles, or has it been marked by steady growth or steady decline? How have your relationships changed? How do you think your stay has had a positive impact?

Of course, the goal in any ministry is to see growth and success, however, many pastors do not stay long enough to see the fruit of their labor. The most productive years never arrive because the trust has not been gained to implement deep and lasting change. In some instances, the deepest sense of fulfillment is early on or at a point partway through, and the final season is marked by decline. Others have ups and downs, but the ministry keeps moving ahead, motivating them to stay put and not seek greener pastures. In the long haul, with the coming and going of many people, relationships are bound to change. What is most important to this study is not that the relationships change, but how the relationships change. The quality should grow if a mutually satisfying relationship occurs.

Every congregation experiences relational differences. Wherever people are present, there is the potential for conflict. Assuming that each pastor had experienced some level of conflict through their tenure, the questions were asked: What has been your strategy to resolve conflict? Have you established certain principles and practices to enable you to stay so long? How have relationship conflicts influenced the length of your pastoral tenures? The purpose for these questions was to determine if solid pastoral leadership in long standing ministry differs from short term leadership pertaining to relational dynamics. For instance, do good conflict resolution skills help in establishing a long pastorate? How do these skills and strategies impact longevity? If pastors are poor communicators and lack skills in dealing with differences, can they still succeed if they have a good team around them? What personal qualities and professional skills have enabled them to persevere through the landmark disagreements, when others might have moved on?

A wealth of information was gained from these shepherds. Wanting to gain as much insight as possible from their collective richness of experience, the following question was asked - reflecting on your ministry, what are the key lessons you have learned?

This question is helpful in averting mistakes and pitfalls in leadership and to aspire to follow the example of persons who have found that a long ministry journey can be both challenging and enjoyable.

Throughout the interview, highlights and low points surfaced. As a summary question, having them look back upon at least ten years of ministry, which for most has occurred in the prime of their lives and careers, the following was asked - what have been your greatest joys and greatest disappointments? Ministry does not come without cost. Longevity brings its share of blessings, most of which occur in relationships. Likewise, our greatest disappointments center not always on loss of income or dreams, without being tied to the people involved in those scenarios. With such a wealth of stories, these ministers could share out of depth. Their stories were personal and meaningful.

A question pertaining to stages and cycles was asked, mainly to ascertain what the tone of the ministry has been like. The next question asked, focused in on new challenges that came about specifically because of a long tenure. It was the assumption of this author that things could not stay the same for long. Would it be tough to stay? Why? Were they afraid that they would lose support? Would people grow weary of them? Would they disobey the call of God to a new field of service because they were comfortable in their current setting? Were they more concerned with their personal and family comfort than missing the timing of God?

A sense of call and timing is central to ministry. In an effort to understand their discernment strategies, they were asked - why do you continue to stay? Do these pastors stay because they could never see themselves anywhere else? Do they stay because of family factors? Would they be willing to move on and leave all they had built up in order to go to a new field of service?

These interviews raise several important issues including the role of the denomination in ministering to pastors and their families, the role of seminaries in adequately

preparing ministers for service, the role of pastors as shepherds to their people, the responsibilities of church leadership toward the pastor, the importance of clear expectations in beginning a ministry and during the ministry, how to appropriately bring closure to a ministry, the importance of call to the pastor and church, the need for pastors to find relational support in the ministry, and how to resolve conflict in the church setting.

This important study should be productive for pastors, their families, church leaders and denominational officials. Although it went in depth with a relatively small sample, that sample gave valuable data from credible sources. The interviews of these proven veterans gave them an opportunity to speak to the process and served as an effective tool for the working group set up by the CABC to look at the issue of healthy pastors and churches.

This qualitative exploratory work was done for the purpose of further work, namely providing a document for pastors and churches that will provide an impetus toward healthier church-pastor relations. This study focused its attention on the wisdom gleaned from pastoral ministry resources as well as other valuable sources.

The methodology also focused on external sources to bring some objectivity to the process of prescribing changes to our relationships. To gain a more objective point of view, a shorter interview was arranged with H. B. London regarding this issue. Since distance prohibited a face to face contact, a thirty minute phone conversation was held, utilizing several questions used in the other interviews. He and his department at Focus on the Family are doing significant research regarding pastoral ministry and give a good oversight to pastoral issues through publications and tape resources. They have also set up foundational ministries for church leaders to support their clergy and their families.

His books, many of which have been co-authored by Neil Wiseman, were important resources in the compilation of this study. He speaks from a wealth of pastoral experience and networks with many denominational leaders and pastors of local churches.

As an objective source, the interview with London added to the discussion under the umbrella of ministry rather than a subjective geographic viewpoint. From the research at Focus on the Family, they shed light upon pastoral and church practices and more specifically, offered recommendations to us to help produce and foster an improved relationship as it pertains to pastors and the churches of the CABC.

The next chapter will give details of the data analysis. As Patton writes, Qualitative data consist of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories. The detailed descriptions, direct quotations, and case documentation of qualitative methods are raw data from the empirical world. The data are collected as open-ended narrative without attempting to fit institutional activities or peoples' experiences into predetermined, standardized categories such as the response choices that comprise typical questionnaires or tests. (Patton, 1986: 187)

The data collection was carried out as thoroughly as possible and every effort was made to gain detailed information according to the perspective of the interviewee. Information from the interviews was taped and transcribed, allowing for remembrance of key data. Analysis was carried out of the information using a content analysis approach. Merriam comments,

In one sense, all qualitative data analysis is content analysis in that it is the content of interviews, field notes, and documents and documents that is analyzed. Although this content can be analyzed qualitatively for themes

and recurring patterns of meaning, content analysis historically has been very quantitative in nature. (Merriam, 1998: 160)

In quoting Manning and Cullman-Swan, she sheds further light of the process on content analysis. It is, according to them, “a quantitatively oriented technique by which standardized measurements are applied to metrically define units and these are used to characterize and compare documents.” (Merriam, 1998: 160)

Comparisons were made between interviews, using the following approach: notes were made highlighting key words or phrases which made it easier to categorize the data, the four research questions became the parameters for organizing the outcomes, key data was placed under one of the four research questions, and themes that emerged within the research questions were supported by direct quotes from the pastors and denominational staff.

This approach, though tedious at times was helpful in affirming the central ideas and also raising divergent opinions. The data collected, and particularly the intensity associated with it, was gathered with interest and care and left me with a greater awareness of the issues concerning long term ministries. This, when compared to the literature, confirmed frequent central themes which are prevalent in long term ministry in the CABC.

In the securing of information through interviews, modest financial support was available from the CABC through the office of the Executive Minister to allow for greater efficiency in attaining results. Cooperation was guaranteed from the Executive Minister to make the overall process as effective as possible, both to aid in the completion of this project and to the benefit of the CABC. The study moved along at an efficient pace due to the availability of person resources. The regional ministers and the executive minister were easily accessible and outside interviewees were agreeable as well.

Chapter 5 - Display of Data

In our study of longevity to this point we have looked at what different authors writing on the subject feel the primary indicators are concerning long term ministry. These themes were studied in light of theology. They tied in closely with the major theological discussion on the tension of sin led versus Spirit led ministry and its relevance to various subjects such as calling, submission, and shepherding. The qualitative method of collecting the data reinforced these major subjects. In comparing and contrasting the various in depth interview transcripts, we can clearly deduce that these ministry veterans have a deep heart for their particular roles and responsibilities. The themes that emerged from the interviews in many ways mirrored those surfacing in chapters two and

three. The following chapter will now bring the subject to a deeper and more personal level. Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches pastors and denominational leaders responded to the interview questions and with their verbatim responses, gave the reader a front row seat to their ministry successes and struggles. A table, outlining particular data concerning the participants is located at the conclusion of this chapter providing the reader with the opportunity to discover the particular demographics of those surveyed.

Several interesting findings surfaced during the in depth interviews with the denominational staff of the CABC, the six pastors and with H.B. London. The content analysis approach allowed for comparison of the data, highlighting frequent themes that surfaced. In order to most effectively organize the data, the approach taken was to place the appropriate material under the categories represented by the four research questions. Once these were identified, the emerging data was subsequently divided into themes. To protect the identity of the interviewees, the pastors were numbered one to six and the denominational sources one to eight.

The first research question that was central to this discussion of longevity was: To what extent do relationships between pastors and key leaders in the church impact longevity? All of the interviewees said that relationships are key within a church. If there was a breakdown of relationship with the leadership, the ministry was in trouble. The key themes for this research question were relationships, particularly with leadership, clearly articulating expectations, and the need for regular evaluation.

Nothing fuels ministry like the power of relationships. One pastor shared the priority that relationships play among the general congregation over time. “You try to know them and be able to study what they want, what they don’t want.” (Pastor #1, p.1) It is incumbent upon the pastor to set the tone, the example in establishing relationships that will be God-honoring and fruitful. As one regional minister put it, “I think a pastor has a key role to create an atmosphere of grace.” (Denominational #6, p. 12)

He continued, "... we champion one another and we stand in the gap where there is weaknesses. When you cultivate that kind of environment as a pastor it will go a long way, it is not always going to carry the day and make up for all your deficiencies, but it will go a long way." (Denominational #6, p.12) As another denominational leader stated, "Churches have their own culture, their own personality and all their unique personalities and everything else, but I think it's the pastor as the leader who has got to take the responsibility to work within that church." (Denominational #8, p. 8)

The pastor cannot remove himself/herself from the church family. He/she must learn to walk with the congregation and commit to those disciplines and habits that contribute to the building of bonds of trust and stability within the local fellowship of the church. This will involve "taking oneself off the pedestal, asking for assistance, regularly reviewing mission, expressing love to each other." (Denominational #6, p. 10-11) This will open lines of communication and aid in making the church more inviting toward those outside. One regional minister put it like this,

So when you come alongside with your pain and disappointment, come also with your strength, come with your comfort to provide safety for them - make church a safe place, make the pastor a safe place, and when they can say to one another in the church, in the community, it doesn't matter whether you've messed up your life, you can count on our pastor. (Denominational #7, p. 13)

There is no other context in which pastors will have more intense opportunity for relationship than among the leadership of the church. All of the pastors had people in lay leadership roles within their churches. Some leaders were appointed, others led through influence while not holding a particular office. All pastors worked with deacons, some with a small number, others with several involved in that ministry.

One pastor shared of the importance of this group. “The leadership of the church and those who are in key positions of the church, they will have the opportunity to know you and when they are interested in what you are doing , they don’t want to lose you because they have already built trust with you, and trust is the key factor I see.” (Pastor #1, p. 1)

However, as one experienced denominational leader warned,

I think we need some help in our convention around the role of the pastor and we also need to help churches around the role of what does it mean to be a board, what can we be doing, what is our role with our pastor and how do we support our pastor and family? What is the best way to do that? (Denominational #8, p. 6)

Some of those interviewed offered helpful suggestions from their personal experiences and observations about the importance of building an effective team.

... leading a church is not a solo activity. ... you have to take the initiative to constantly cultivate a genuine caring, encouraging environment, you know let’s learn together, let’s help one another, let’s encourage one another. There are seasons where I think I do that better than others, but there is no question that it has to happen, because every time we face a difficult season you have to lean on each other, and if you haven’t taken time to build those key relationships with those key leadership you’re dead in the water. (Pastor #2, p. 7)

This same pastor mentions two key ingredients in the building of a cohesive team, “I think if you can play together you will stay together and I think if you can pray together

you will stay together and I think those are two critical things. If I can't pray with you and I can't play with you, our relationships are in jeopardy." (Pastor #2, p. 8)

Again, the role of pastor is key in building and leading a leadership team that will carry out their role effectively, particularly if it is to do this over the long haul in ministry. The pastor will have to cultivate strong lines of communication and trust. Two of the denominational personnel interviewed underscored the importance of this. "If a pastor doesn't have support today and sticks himself out on a limb it is going to get chopped off. You really have to bring around you some strong support and people have to be genuinely behind you in the ministry you're doing and the steps you are taking." (Denominational #3, p. 5)

Another commented,

There is a real need for the pastor to always be making the congregation aware of what he is about and I think it's very important for him to communicate with his leadership team what he's about. ... My relationship with that leadership team was built on them knowing what I was about - communication. ... The leadership team needs to assist the pastor in ensuring that the larger body knows that their pastor is about the things they have engaged him in and they need to celebrate the pastor for being engaged in those things. (Denominational #4, p. 9)

Sometimes the problems in the church reflect the disunity among the leadership.

One pastor, through his years of ministry noted the following,

If you have a leadership team and you are not together, sometimes you settle, and sometimes it is very abrupt and you see in relation to leadership, you just gain the sense they are not together and that sense of purpose in what you are doing starts to deteriorate rather quickly. But if you are willing to work together on it, then work is achieved. (Pastor #3, p. 1)

As another pastor stated, leaders may be self appointed, but nonetheless require a level of relationship and cooperation. The data seemed to indicate that smaller and rural churches were affected more by this phenomena, though it was common to all.

At the same time your key leaders, whether they be voted in, or if they are traditional leaders in a small church, if you have bad relationships with them, you are not going to last. If you have good relationships, or they are up and down, and if they are willing to work through the difficult times, then it is fine. Sometimes it can be just one family, or one key leader.

(Pastor #5, p. 2)

So, it appears from the data, which is supported by the literature, that the pastor himself/herself must lead effectively but refrain from controlling. When a lay leader or pastor seeks to sinfully manipulate others, the ministry suffers. A veteran of eighteen years in his church, this pastor made the following observation, "I am convinced that the biggest cause of churches not growing is strong willed leadership. That strong willed leadership may have a passion for serving that church, but they in their controlling of others will not assume responsibility in leadership; one backs off." (Pastor #6, p. 3)

So, it is essential to foster a loving, supportive environment in which pastor and congregation, and particularly the leaders can show mutual encouragement. This will aid in the growth and stability of the work. One pastor of eighteen years shared of his joys in ministry, as his leadership came alongside him. "They come alongside and they ... poured some encouragement back into me, ... they helped me." (Pastor #3, p. 11) Another veteran of ten years in the same church agrees that appreciation goes a long way in building a positive, healthy environment. "(You need) a nucleus of people and not necessarily just the deacons, but a nucleus of people that you feel good being with and make you feel good about your ministry, that are always affirming you and can hold you ac-

countable without dragging you through the mud, just a group within the church that boost you ...” (Pastor #2, p. 1)

One of the regional ministers stated that lack of support is a serious problem. “We need to take better care of pastors. One of the voids in our system is our failure to get close to the pastors and help one another.” (Denominational #7, p. 6) Several of the denominational staff agree with the pastors that there should be more of a concerted effort to lift up pastoral leadership. “There needs to be a more deliberate emphasis placed on evidences of appreciation, emphasizing the place and importance of relationships between pastor and congregation.” (Denominational #1, p. 10)

Another stated,

I think it is highly appropriate for God and the pastor to be engaging in the affirmation process that says, yes this is where you want me. I think it is highly appropriate for the pastor and the congregation or its leadership to be always talking about - is it appropriate for you to be here in this place and always asking the question how do we make it more powerful, how do we make it work better? (Denominational #4, p. 9)

This involves open and loving communication of love and appreciation. “Appreciation goes a long way. And it works both ways. I think that some of the most effective pastors I have seen are the ones who have really demonstrated love to their congregations by telling them how much they appreciate them.” (Denominational #5, p. 9)

Clear expectations should be present from the earliest point on. All of the denominational leaders commented on the process whereby churches select pastors. One of them summed it up like this, “I think we need to work harder and smarter on placement.” (Denominational #3, p. 5) They gave opinions on the failings and fallacies and offered suggestions for how it might be improved.

The church itself may have a low view of pastoral calling and selection to a particular ministry. As one staff member warned,

... there is too often the lack of integrity on the part of the pulpit committee in their process. There are pulpit committees that are very open and eager and desirous of proceeding in a God honoring way, setting aside their own agendas and determining with the congregation where the church is at, who the church needs at this point in terms of the strengths and gifts of the person. ... But in too many cases there is an agenda and there can be an overreaction depending on how the ministry has gone with the outgoing pastor, the pastor who has already left. (Denominational #1, p. 8)

He advised from his years in pastoral and denominational ministry that the process needs to come back to a sense of call. "There needs to be more of an emphasis placed upon the seeking of the Lord's leading, following His agenda, setting aside the personal ones." (Denominational #1, p. 9)

One regional minister expressed his frustrations with the infiltration of business practices which he feels are undermining a spiritual sense of call to a church. "One of the terms I have to consistently challenge in pulpit committees is a committee that is determined they are going to 'hire' a pastor. I forever call to their attention that these people are actual persons who are to serve with you and they are not being hired to work for you." (Denominational #2, p. 11) Another agreed,

We have a secretive process and I think the secretive process has damaging elements to it. ... We put people in the position to potentially sin and I think that's wrong. ... we treat this as a business model ... we are engaging a CEO and so it becomes an economic issue, it becomes a ministry management issue rather than - we are engaging somebody who is going to

become part and parcel of the family ... we're adopting you into our family and setting you aside for ministry. (Denominational #4, p. 8)

Selecting the right pastor for a given congregation takes spiritual insight and hard work said these veterans in ministry. Too often though, the churches rush to fill positions and do not carry out the hard work that will improve the process. "They (churches) don't want to do the hard work of identifying who they are. They don't want to look at the demographics ... the church definitely needs to have some work done in terms of understanding who they are at the present time but also in their context." (Denominational #8, p. 12)

Since much of their work is with search or pulpit committees, they have a first hand view of the benefits and problems of the CAB system of matching pastors and congregations. The background work by committees representing their churches is essential in discerning the right match. "I think we need to move on to improving the selection or the search process for the congregation. I think as regional ministers we need to play a significant role in that. ... we need to make sure we have the right gifts to match the right congregation." (Denominational #6, p. 6)

Another one agreed,

Churches need to take seriously looking at their values and their vision and understanding the values and vision and mission of their church. ... And secondly, for pastors to understand that and to feel whether or not they can fit into this situation. ... Churches need to really think seriously about pastor profile, what they are looking for in a pastor, what really are the gifts that they need. What does their church look like and what does their community look like? They really need to work at these. (Denominational #3, p. 7)

Doing this should help promote more healthy partnerships where significant mission and ministry and take place. The goal should not be to “hire” for a position, but to seek the will of God to produce a setting where His will may be carried out.

I think helping the church and helping the pastor understand the true mission of the church is important. I think these things we can move towards.

Every time I am out in a church or working with a pulpit committee doing a workshop with them I want to be getting them to ask the question and the words I use are - why has God called us here for this place and for this time? Really getting after the fact that it is not about having their conveniences met, preferences satisfied. And I think the more you can get a church to rally around a central mission and then have a pastor who is there able to lead them in fulfilling that mission, the better. (Denominational #6, p. 6)

Once pastor and congregation come to a place of agreement, this should be clearly articulated. This will help alleviate misunderstanding at a later date, said these leaders.

I think that many ministers that accept a call and don't worry much about the details until a crisis comes are challenged as to why they aren't doing enough visitation or something else. Then we realize we don't have any documentation to back up the focus of our ministry. On the other hand, if I do have documentation, it still has to be interpreted. (Denominational #2, p. 10)

Another was very emphatic, “I want a detailed job description so I can understand your expectations properly and your appointment letter should have all the employment outlined so there are no conflict issues within a year.” (Denominational #7, p. 6)

Of course, one of the primary items to be negotiated is the salary package which one leader suggests needs to be more clearly discussed. “I think we have to talk very openly without embarrassment over finances because some people think that's unspiritual

for a pastor to talk about finances. .. The whole financial package is a representation of how you are valued. ...” (Denominational #8, p. 12)

H. B. London from his experience and knowledge of many ministry settings encouraged the signing of a contract, not just for financial reasons though.

The contract should not just deal with remuneration or honorarium or days off or that kind of thing, but it needs to be a contract of support that the local congregation would not tolerate gossip or backbiting, that these kinds of things will be handled by the board of deacons, that the pastor is not the lightning rod to every problem. (London p. 5)

One regional minister was encouraged by the gains made in the search process from his vantage point.

I know that even since I have been in this position, I have noticed a change in our regional ministry approach dealing with search committees. We put together a much more extensive working booklet for a pulpit committee when they are in the process and really trying to help the pulpit committees define what they see is the role of the pastor, and the expectations of the pastor, and the expectations that go beyond the job descriptions, things that are unwritten but expected, and helping them flesh them out and understand them. (Denominational #5 p. 5)

Another made very practical and innovative suggestions that would help eliminate the secrecy of the process. “I plead for an open process ... the moment a pastor feels the Lord is leading him away, he should tell his deacons or key leadership and he should ask them to pray with him and should ask them to prepare to respond to God’s call in commissioning him or re-embracing him in the ministry - one or the other.” (Denominational #4, p. 8)

From the outset, the expectations need to be clearly stated to both pastor and congregation.

They may be the visionary people that get put on the pulpit committee, but it comes back to the expectations of the pastor coming into a situation.

They often find out what the pulpit committee was dreaming about is not what the deacons board was dreaming about or the board of management.

So you get the sense of having to negotiate expectations and I think the role of expectations, the role of the pastor, what the pastor is bringing into that situation and what the people are expecting. (Denominational #8, p. 1)

Even though a church and pastor go to great lengths to produce clear boundaries, ministry and its relational dynamics sometimes reveal new expectations.

The reality is that different pastors require different things and some personalities very much require everything in writing and all of the dots in place and all of the t's crossed, and others are very happy just to accept whatever comes. Many cases they just ride the waves as they come in.

That works well and good until you hit the spot where certain expectations are not fulfilled and you were not even aware that they were expectations so you are up against some conflict in that setting. (Denominational #2, p. 10)

It is essential, said some of these leaders to communicate and clarify the boundaries in ministry from time to time. "We need to be very up front and honest and speak into each other's expectations to determine whether they are realistic or not, but having determined what expectations are realistic, the second step is how are we measuring up to each other's expectations." (Denominational #1, p. 6) Another agrees that communication is essential. "I think communication has to happen more and more ...we are going to sit down and talk about what your

expectations of the pastor are and what the pastor's expectations of you." (Denominational #3, p. 8)

This will take trust and a "drawing out" with both parties.

I think expectations tend to be hidden and not that obvious, so people have ideas about how their pastor should respond to them but they never let the pastor know, their expectations are hidden and so I think people's expectations need to be up front so the issue is where do we find out about those expectations and it seems to me we find out about those expectations in the casual conversations which end up being relationship building conversations that we have with one another. Right at the present time, the pastor who has the greatest conflict is the pastor who doesn't know his people. He has not become a friend to his people - they don't know him. (Denominational #4, p. 6)

One effective way to share established and changing expectations is through regular evaluation. One leader stated that this should be clear from the outset. "Annual review of ministry both for the pastor and also with the church to say where are we headed. It's something that should be built in." (Denominational #8, p. 14)

All of the CABC staff felt that this, if carried out correctly could be useful. It could not be an evaluation of the pastor only, which may be based on criticisms, but of the responsibilities clearly set out by the congregations and of the church themselves in their roles and responsibilities. This enables the pastor and church to press forward through various changing seasons of ministry.

If you are going to evaluate somebody then you had better know on what basis that evaluation is taking place. Which means that before you do the evaluation you have to have agreed in terms of the ministry, so that I am not all of a sudden being compelled to relate as a pastor to an evaluation

process that has no basis on what I was asked to do. So I think if we are going to structure that into our process then we need to start with terms of reference in terms of the ministry and then state when the evaluation is going to take place and on what basis it is going to be conducted and also what the impact is. (Denominational #2, p. 11)

The second research question was “How do relationships change during long term ministry? How does this impact growth, conflict resolution and overall church health?” All of the pastors and denominational staff of the CABC underscored the fact that long term pastorates yield a sense of trust and stability that are not as present with short term pastorates. Beyond the initial time of working through expectations, the church and pastor that settle in to long term partnership can experience a deep sense of community. This aids in the resolution of conflict since the pastor has proven that he/she is interested in working through the processes with the people.

Becoming involved in the community is also very important. The denominational staff particularly highlighted their observations of pastors and churches who had made a significant impact upon the community. Since eighty percent of the CABC churches are rural, and a pastor would be more visible in a smaller context, it would seem that most of the examples would come from that context.

What sustains churches over the long haul is their ability to press forward into the future with confidence, processing change and making adjustments to see the ministry go forward. While there may be times of steady growth or cycles of growth and plateau, in order to be effective in the long haul, a pastoral leader must be able to understand and know the most effective route for the church to take. Both pastors and CABC staff affirmed this fact, stating that a lack of hope and a failure to make changes spelled plateau and decline for the churches of the CABC.

Words such as relationships, trust, and stability came out over and over again in the interviews. A pastor commented on the experience he has had. “... you are able to

trust each other.” (Pastor #1, p. 1) He went on to say how that was possible, making mention of the ways he cultivated and encouraged relationship outside the official work of the church. “... we go hunting together, we go fishing together, we find things in yard sales together and that really brings a healthy closeness to both of us, ... they had the opportunity to know me.” (Pastor #1, p. 3)

One regional minister in his observations of a female pastor in his region commented, “She is a person who has a passion for people and she has walked with these folk both through good times and some very difficult times and has chosen to not give up. She has made a commitment to ministry there and has stuck with it through thick and thin.” (Denominational #2, p. 2) Another regional minister summed up the value of marathon ministry this way, “... it is relationship for sure, that is the strength in longevity of ministry.” (Denominational #5, p. 3)

Although this was a common theme, one pastor in particular commented on it as far as an ideal, but his experience was much different due in large part to his own scars in ministry from previous pastorates. “I think sometimes one of the problems with a long pastorate is that you do not make friends.” (Pastor #5, p. 5)

Long term ministry brings a sense of stability to a church. H. B. London commented, “I think the pastor that has a somewhat peaceful longevity of five to seven years gives the whole congregation a sense of release and relief.” (London, p. 2) This relief brings a good sense of pride to the church, particularly if they have been used to short term and/or unfruitful ministry. One pastor has experienced just that.

I think staying has given the church a sense of stability and also it has given the church a sense that they can keep a pastor longer than 3 years. I think those two things are important for the life of the church, that if I was to drop dead tomorrow

that they know that they could probably get a pastor because the reputation of the church in the community and I think the denomination has changed. (Pastor #5, p. 9)

Building a stable ministry that lasts for ten years or more indicates a deep level of respect. Regional ministers have observed this in effective partnerships.

Another benefit is that it usually demonstrates that you have been able to build a sense of respect in relation to the people. And that has come because you have been willing to work through the problem areas and have been willing to take time to patiently work with people. And to recognize that you don't always have the answers and that sometimes things are going to go unanswered, possibly forever, who knows. But that doesn't mean that we can't work together. I think also of the fact that in the longer time one has usually been able to demonstrate that they can agree to disagree agreeably. (Denominational #2, p. 5)

This respect will translate itself over into support for the minister. " ... they supported their pastor in decision making, they were willing to go with him into situations, and defend him and help him and be behind him and beside him. I think it makes the pastor more bold, but as soon as the pastor gets out on his own, he's in major trouble." (Denominational #3, p. 6)

The pastor not only has a ministry in the parish, but in many cases, he/she is pastor to the community at large. This was noted as a very positive outcome in long term ministries in the CABC. Two regional ministers commented particularly about the benefits to the pastor by getting involved in the community and the wider work of the gospel. "I have seen where interests in community or community events has been helpful in the long term for a pastor who has stayed with that congregation. ... also to think that a pastor

who works with other pastors, in the context of the local community ... to have a long term ministry.” (Denominational #2, p. 7)

Another regional minister made these comments,

I think one benefit that I see pastors have in our area in terms of ministry is community, availability. They’re trusted in the community, they’ve earned a trust in community that makes their church an option to come to because they know this person, he’s been here awhile and he’s stable and there’s just been an element of trust develop. I think that within the context of the congregation itself, those ministries have a tendency to be enormously stable, leadership has been developed, when the pastor comes and asks them to do things, they know they’re being asked and they’ll get support. (Denominational #4, p. 1-2)

This kind of leadership can turn around a negative perception that the community has of a church. With a “revolving door” sense of ministry, a church has a negative influence on the community. One regional minister shared these sobering revelations, “Stability builds confidence in the congregation, it also builds confidence in the community. It’s been surprising over the years to hear the kinds of comments many church people make when pastors come and go. They almost seem to expect it. ... those people over there can’t keep a pastor. ... it ruins the witness.” (Denominational #7, p. 2)

However, there can be a very powerful witness that comes about as a result of a positive image of both pastor and congregation ministering in the context of their community.

I think one of the main benefits is the increase of trust there, confidence on the part of the congregation and the pastor, and of course vice versa also, that translate into more of a responsiveness on the part of the people to leadership because they have a deep relational bond with an increased

number of people, I sense that as pastors stay longer they become more involved usually in the life of their particular community. They seem to have a higher respect in the regard of community leaders and so on and get involved there. That has an effect in terms of people being brought into the church the pastor is leader of. (Denominational #1, p. 2)

Another staff person shares how this translates into effective ministry. “I think long term allows a pastor to really get to know the community - that in turn translates into the kinds of programs that are going to have real meaning and real effect both inside and outside the church.” (Denominational #7, p. 3)

Long term ministry contributes to overall health as the pastor intersects with many people and as new converts come into the local body. Without exception, each pastor commented that their greatest joy in ministry was to see lives changed. As these lives are changed, one by one, family by family, the church is strengthened.

One pastor after several years in the same church could say,

I don't think there's anything like the relationship you have when someone sees you as their spiritual kind of father or big brother. When you realize that without a doubt, God specifically used you in bringing this person to Christ and then nurturing them in Christ and then pushing them out to do something for the first time, asking them to pray for the first time in public at a Bible Study or Prayer meeting and watching them almost faint when you ask them. - just those kinds of connections - you can't orchestrate those kinds of relationships. (Pastor #3, p. 7)

Over the long haul, it is imperative to keep the ministry moving on. Harmful effects of long term ministry such as plateau, and an unhealthy familiarity hindered growth. These were prominent on the minds of both groups interviewed. Because deep and meaningful relationship are formed, changes can be made more easily. The congregation believes in the pastor for the most part and the pastor has established that he/she is committed to process. “Staying in one place so long will help you and it will help the church

too because they have built a closeness with you. When you try to change into a new phase they will be able to adapt to the new changes.” (Pastor #1, p. 7) Denominational staff agree with the insights of this pastor.

I think what it promotes is church stability, and deeper relationships and greater commitment on the part of the people. I see every single one of those things happening, also greater ability to change. The longer you are there, the more credibility you have and the more changes you can do; changes in the structure, changes in how ministry is done, changes in tradition. (Denominational #3, p. 3)

“You can move people, I think, a lot easier over a longer period of time than you can in the short term, as long as there’s a sense of direction. It’s not a mundane thing or just going through the same seasons of the year or doing maintenance kinds of ministry but as long as there’s an ongoing goal setting happening. ...” (Denominational #8, p. 2) One of the pastors cautioned, “Make changes subtly not aggressively ... I think over the long period of ministry you can do that. You have earned the trust to be able to do that.” (Pastor #5, p. 14)

Both parties must be committed to the ministry and this long term partnership. “I think staying that long it speaks to a congregation about the fact that things can remain fresh, in pastor/people relationship. If there is a want and willingness on both parts to stick to it in the long haul.” (Pastor #4, p. 5)

The theme of vision or having a sense of hope was very prevalent in the interviews. It appeared that to lose hope was to lose the ministry platform altogether. One pastor made it clear that this was a major factor in how long pastors stay at one church. “...vision - every conversation, every plan becomes hugely significant.” (Pastor #2, p. 1) He put it very plainly, “If you don’t feel there is hope for this local church, that this local church that there is a new day coming, that God is going to use this little local church in a significant way, to touch lives, it’s over for you.” (Pastor #2, p. 2)

What has sustained him over the long term has been the ability to press on and look forward amid changes in the congregation and opportunities to go elsewhere. He has maintained a deep sense of hope for his current setting of ministry.

I can look back now and say at my best moments as a pastor and leading this church it was when in a very pragmatic way we said, what would God have us do right now, where is God at work right now. And we would grab that and do it. But it was just a matter of seeing what opportunities were right in front of us to be missional and sticking with it to see where that would take us. (Pastor #2, p. 4)

Pastors interviewed were energized with the sense that their congregations gained hope. “I don’t want to miss anything that’s going on here, I just want to stick around and see what is going to happen because I could see immediate results for the gifts I brought into this situation and I just love it when people gain hope. And have a sense of pride in their church.” (Pastor #3, p.2) Another pastor, assessing some of his contributions in his current pastorate commented, “I think I have given them a positive image of themselves.” (Pastor #5, p. 9)

Two of the regional ministers added helpful comments concerning their observations of the CABC ministries. One person in evaluating three long term ministries in the CABC commented, “There was a sense of vision that they hung on to, they always had a sense of vision, these three people, of where they would like to see the church go, where they felt the Lord was leading the church.” (Denominational #5, p. 2)

The strength of a long term ministry is based on trust, stability, relationships which are able to help in the carrying out of a God-given vision, involving changes which will move the church along to greater health and effectiveness. It is essential, commented a regional minister, to make mission the primary focus. “I think we’re a bunch of lonely people facilitating very active programs when what we need to be is a bunch of embrac-

ing people who are engaged together with some kind of mission and to show the people we bring into our life that they are going to be cared for and nurtured.” (Denominational #4, p. 6)

Bringing a long term ministry to a positive conclusion is no easy task. After years of trust building in the church and community, the news hits congregations hard in many instances. Retirements are the least traumatic, with forced terminations and untimely death being among the most painful. There are helpful ways for pastors and congregations to move on nobly. A time of release and grief is appropriate. One regional minister from his experience noted,

With the normal resignation and moving on to another church, I think the pastor needs to reaffirm his people that he is not moving on because he doesn't like them, or that he is tired of them, but that it is a real sense of God's call. We have encouraged the churches to celebrate as they are going through this grieving process of losing a pastor that they have loved. ...
(Denominational #5, p. 10)

The pastor himself/herself has a responsibility to know when the time has come to move on. Sometimes in an effort to hang on in security, a pastor overstays. As one regional minister put it, “They are carrying on as a chaplain but they are not fulfilling their call there and they need to step aside and let someone else follow them and turn the page.” (Denominational #1, p. 7)

A pleasant parting of the ways is dependent on accenting the positive. One regional minister emphasized the importance of this. “Go out positively, preach positively ... speak well of your successor, encourage them to seek the Lord's will.” (Denominational #3, p. 9) Another suggested the importance of the congregation and people growing past differences in such a way that appreciation can prevail. “There should be a time of appreciation for what he has done. I think there needs to be time to facilitate as much

healing as you can between pastor and people even after he has resigned and they know he is going.

There needs to be some reconciliation so the pastor doesn't leave the congregation and neither side is happy with the other." (Denominational #5, p. 10)

Pastors themselves can have a very large influence on the way a ministry concludes. A pastor who has enjoyed a fruitful ministry can promote healthy closure and begin to move the congregation along in the process of writing the next chapter of ministry. A regional minister noted, "One of the comments I have made to pastors is even though you have given notice of your resignation, you are still the pastor among these people, therefore you still have responsibility to continue your ministry among them. But you do need to be helping them realize that your ministry is going to conclude." (Denominational #2, p. 12)

One of the best ways for churches and pastors to bring this kind of closure, where the positive is highlighted and unmet expectations are shared is in an open debriefing session, otherwise known as an exit interview. Several of the denominational personnel highlighted this.

I think we need to have a debriefing experience before a pastor leaves a congregation. That is something on the whole that is quite foreign to us, but I think that if we intentionally entered into something like that, not to dredge up stuff of the past that we want to forget at this point, but to simply go back and to review and evaluate the hand of God and ways in which we can each profit from our experiences as pastor and people and move forward beyond that point. (Denominational #1, p. 11)

While it was seen as something necessary and potentially very positive to gain understanding and bring proper closure, it was not a common practice according to the regional ministers.

The third research question is “How do conflicts, personalities and other issues hinder longevity?” All pastors had a conflict resolution strategy which enabled them to remain so long in their pastorate. They had a firm grip on the realities of the root of conflict and how destructive personalities can bring about the demise of a ministry if not properly treated.

Another issue that hinders longevity according to those interviewed was the lack on the part of the pastor to keep spiritual vitality and the lack of the pastor and church to enable continuing education opportunities to happen. Both pastors and denominational leadership acknowledged the reality of conflict in every church. One pastor put it this way,

We are dealing with broken, sinful people and you are dealing with yourself as a broken, sinful person and I think you have to say no matter how saintly I am dealing with a person, or no matter how long a person has been a saint or how new a Christian that person is, or they are just a seeker or what not, people are coming in with all their dysfunctions, all of their hurt, all of their pain and as you bring people together and help them encounter God by honestly also starting to encounter others and themselves, there is going to be conflict. It amazes me at times when I talk to pastors is that they get surprised at conflict. I go, buddy, you are in a war, it's like a soldier standing up and saying - is it something I said? I mean, you are in a war, you expect bullets, you expect pain, you expect bombs to go off, you expect landmines. (Pastor #2, p. 2)

Another pastor said it is essential to examine the root of conflict. “I believe that conflict is not all that bad. The first thing that I'm going to look at is the root of the conflict and then tackle it head on.” (Pastor #1, p. 5)

Many times, several acknowledged, the pastor is the main problem and instigator of conflict. This may be due to their own selfishness and pride coming through. As one

regional minister stated, "...pastors want full control." (Denominational #7, p. 1) This may come out in refusing to build relationships and getting close to the people. "Right at the present time, the pastor who has the greatest conflict is the pastor who doesn't know his people. He has not become the friend of his people - they don't know him." (Denominational #4, p. 6)

One regional minister has observed pastors taking on more of a leadership role and coming into direct conflict with those who may disagree or worse. "I don't think our churches are used to that type of style. So then there is a conflict there and I think that as a result of that what often happens is a pastor hits a wall. And as soon as he hits a wall he bounces back and tries again and gets frustrated and the people are frustrated and there is conflict." (Denominational #3, p. 1)

Another put it this way, "The pastor does not understand the dynamics of how to create change in his congregation. So he does things that inflame situations and just antagonize the antagonists rather than understanding the dynamics of change and working with people to help accompany change and the impatience of people." (Denominational #5, p. 7)

But the responsibilities do not lie solely with the pastor. As one veteran of ministry puts it, "I think there is a demonic element in the church where people just needle at the small things because they want control." (Denominational #4, p. 7) The literature identifies these people as antagonists or dragons. The pastors and CABC leadership were asked about their impact upon the ministry. One pastor commented on the constant battles that take place in the regular routines of ministry.

If you get a few of those people and they don't support you, the longevity probably isn't going to be there if you constantly have to go up against some of those key leaders in the church. The funny thing is some of the people who have the power aren't necessarily key leaders ... as new people

started coming, the old guard didn't have the same power as it had before, and when you're there long enough, you see that happen. (Pastor #3, p. 3)

One of the regional ministers in counseling pastors regarding these problem people said, "Encourage them to ascertain whether these people are antagonists who have no leadership in the church and the church accepts them for who they are - a grumbler, a critic." (Denominational #5, p. 7)

Another regional minister picked up on this very theme, Some churches are dysfunctional or they have trouble makers entrenched in leadership and sometimes it wouldn't matter who was there and how great their leadership was, on one hand it would be very, very difficult to have a healthy long term ministry. ... there are issues sometimes in congregations that just wear pastors down. (Denominational #6, p. 2)

One regional minister suggested that tough love is needed in some settings. He argued that the church leadership has to come down harder on those who seek to manipulate and divide. "I think some times you have to be discerning that there are evil people. And I think that there has to be an agreement that they have to leave. There has to be an agreement between at least the leadership team." (Denominational #3, p. 6) One of the pastors shared how this was a part of his conflict resolution process.

I have done that when someone says I really cannot support you, I have said well you have got two things, you can either support the ministry or you can sit on the sidelines or you can find another church where you can support it. ... I think one of things that I have learned is that I have tried not to cave out of everybody's need or want to have something happen or should this, should that, I try to lead where I believe God is leading the church. And if not everybody is willing to follow, well that is going to happen. (Pastor #5, p. 3, 11)

There of course is a wrestling in the heart of the pastor to know when this is appropriate.

I think that conflicts I try to handle as head on as I can, with the understanding that people are still going to be upset, people may still want to leave. There are a couple of situations in this church, though, where I have avoided it because of the overall health of the church. I know if we were to go head to head it would be a lose-lose situation. ... there are times I have to ask myself the tough question, is this really worth the battle? (Pastor #5, p. 12)

One regional minister had an opposing view on those who cause trouble in CABC churches, he thought, "...there are really no antagonists in the church there are just those who are grace builders, who require more grace than others. ... how we see them has a lot to do with how we respond to them." (Denominational #1, p. 6) Other regional ministers felt that it was best and wisest to try to resolve such situations.

So the reality is that if we are going to be in pastoral ministry we are going to have that type of person. And so I guess my offer to a pastor who identifies such a person is that we need to sit down with that person and we need to understand who that person is and they need to understand who we are. We need to try to determine where they are coming from, because there is usually a reason why they are that type of person that they are and similarly, hopefully through a dialogue session give opportunity for determining how we can coach them differently. If we try and fail, then it might be appropriate to consider going on, but if we try we are more likely to succeed. (Denominational #2, p. 8)

Other comments and questions on this approach included, "...can you enfold them?" (Denominational #6 p. 7) "Find a way to make your enemies your friends." (Denominational #7, p. 9 "... seek out antagonists, spend time with them" (Denominational #8, p. 11) "(there is a) need to maintain your own capacity to love the dragon or dragons and teach the congregation to do the same." (Denominational #7, p. 8)

What has been the particular strategy of these spiritual leaders to resolve conflict? Many have committed themselves to the Biblical process outlined by Christ Himself. “I would follow the principle of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 18. Personally I would go to that person and then try to iron out our misunderstanding.” (Pastor #1, p. 6) Another veteran of long term ministry concurs,

Address it as quickly as possible, as personally as possible, and always with the goal of restoration. If it involves a person, deal with it with one person. ... we are into strong restoration. We see someone who has got their nose out of joint or someone who is starting to talk and bad mouth, then the deacons or I are usually able to pick up on it very quickly and we try to find out what the problem is.... I could give you a number of instances where getting our facts straight and going to the individual up front, lovingly has had a marvelous response. (Pastor #6, p. 1)

While not mentioning the exact wording, another pastor commented on the need to manage conflict at appropriate levels.

So that's been my strategy and it seems some weeks all you're doing is putting out these stupid little fires over pathetic issues that really have nothing to do with ministry. ... you have to deal with it before it gets out of control. I try to keep the circle small, once it gets out into the big circle like if it's an issue with my leaders, I deal with it with my leaders, I don't bring in experts from the deacons or something like that unless I really feel I'm jeopardizing my own ministry. But I found that if you can keep the circle small, once it gets out into the church body, you've lost it. It's really hard to bring back and I don't believe the pulpit should be the place that you make your political statements. (Pastor #3, p. 9)

The reality is that pastors will face conflict. As one regional minister warns the pastors under his care,

You are going to run into conflict at the end of your second year and certainly by the third year. Because you have gotten over the so called honeymoon stage and people are having to deal with you as a person and you are having to deal with people as people, and there inevitably around that time is going to be some conflict. So I tell pastors, you are going to experience some turbulence and you might as well realize it and what I fear is that pastors, around this point, say this isn't what Christians are supposed to be and so there is a decision not to stay and work through the process. So that contributes to a short ministry. Another is the pastor who begins to realize there is conflict and realize that it is something that he or she is not used to dealing with and fails to seek the counsel of anyone else who conceivably could be a help to them and so I find as a regional minister, a lot of times I'm being called into a situation far too late. When the tension has reached a level where they are really in crisis instead of just mad at each other. (Denominational # 2, p. 3)

Pastors cannot shy away from conflict. These pastors and denominational leaders from their varied experiences knew all too well that conflict must be managed wisely. "My concern is that unless a pastor is willing to endeavor to address the issues at hand, which means addressing the people at hand, nothing is going to change." (Denominational #2, p. 9) It is a risk that must be undertaken to enable growth and sustained life to a congregation. "Going to people is hard work, it's a big risk. We don't know how they are going to respond to us." (Denominational #7, p. 2)

Some pastors have wisely consulted their leadership, namely the deacons of the church to handle troublesome situations. In a personal story, a pastor related how the deacons stepped up and relieved him of the trouble of a conflict. A family was spreading dissension and negativity. He gave it to the deacons, they did their homework and confronted the situation. (Pastor #3, p. 2) In doing so, the pastor set a precedent that led to shared resolution of problems from that point on. He commented, "I don't want people

to think the only one who can fix problems around here is the pastor and now we're seeing fruits of that." (Pastor #3, p. 10)

Another pastor did not always rely on his official leadership board but also on other wise Christians who could help diffuse problems. He had grown to trust their judgement over his long tenure. "I have tapped into some people in the fellowship who I would deem as key leaders with an excellent pulse on things and immediately attempt to mediate or deal with the conflict, try to see it for what it is and look at it and bring these people into the conflict and attempt to deal with it." (Pastor #4, p. 6)

The denominational staff agreed that a team approach to conflict resolution is wise.

I think a pastor in our context has to work very strongly with his board, and a pastor is wise if he seeks advice. It is difficult today to always do the right thing in a conflict because sometimes you don't see all of the angles and it is always good to get other opinions. ... I think pastors that have learned how to successfully handle it go to their boards, go to their regional minister, go to friends in the ministry and get different counsel and I think that helps improve conflicts. (Denominational #3, p. 5)

Others agree, "...keep deacons informed, act on their behalf, needs to be the church responding to this individual." (Denominational #6, p. 8)

There can be indicators that regardless of personal and team approaches to conflict, the situation is not going to change. Interviewees were asked what the indicators are of the end of a ministry. When is a ministry not redeemable? The prevailing response was that when a pastor loses the faith of the people, he/she should move on. Denominational leadership responded this way, "We need to separate the applause of people from whether or not people are still responding to our leadership as pastors." (Denominational

#1, p. 7) “I would ask the pastor if he feels he can get up out of the trench that he is in and come alongside that individual. ... we need to get out of our trench and walk alongside them and put our arm on their back and build a relationship. ... Is this something you can recover from?” (Denominational #6, p. 7-8)

Another issue, according to those surveyed is the lack of pastors staying fresh in ministry due to the neglect of spiritual self care and the neglect of their professional care. One regional minister said there is a “... need to stay fresh.” (Denominational #4, p. 3) A lack of freshness can spell the end of a ministry for a pastor. “I think there can be a price for a pastor staying too long as well, for them they can easily stagnate, and find themselves in a rut, stay where it is too comfortable for them and not kind of stretching and growing.” (Denominational #6, p. 3)

H. B. London commented on how many pastors lose that freshness and fail to remain in a pastorate or even in ministry in general. “So many pastors don’t make the most of their mornings. They don’t study, they don’t pray, they don’t research, so as a result they dry up ... and as a result of that pastors grow weary in well doing and many of them quit.” (London, p. 4)

He further comments on the need for pastors to stay fresh vocationally. “I think that every pastor needs to be given at least one or two opportunities a year for self education, to go to a conference or some activity where they will be given new life and new breath and new enthusiasm to go on.” (London, p. 4) Several CABC staff persons agreed with his recommendation. “... continued education, broadening their own horizons.” (Denominational #5, p. 3) Another commented, “I think being teachable. I think for one thing, keeping yourself open.” (Denominational #6, p. 3) “... (the pastor has a) need for continuing education, cannot rest on theological education only, ... keep yourself sharp, ... keep growing, ... need for personal and pastoral identity - must be easy in themselves.” (Denominational #8, p. 3)

Longevity, according to these ministry leaders, is hindered when conflict is mishandled, pastors cannot gain the confidence of the leadership and general congregation, and the pastor fails to stay fresh and growing personally and professionally.

The fourth research question was “How do pastors seek to enhance relationships in ministry?” Fostering relationship requires risk, vulnerability. To truly enter into deep relationships in the pastorate is to risk reputation and position. The answer to this research question was found in subjects such as transparency, the negatives of it, the realities of seeking to be transparent, and the balance needed in order to pursue meaningful, appropriate relationships in long term ministry. People in general have a desire for relationships. Pastors are no different. They want to open up and show they are human. “I know for me, I try to be as real as I can yet I also know that people still want me to be their pastor. They want to have the sense of - lead me, be my spiritual guide or mentor. If you have doubts then it’s all over for me.” (Pastor #2. p. 9) This same pastor continues with this idea by saying that motives must be kept in check in order to be truly authentic. So on one level I struggle with that because I understand the need for strength from leadership. That’s sometimes the way we serve our people - we don’t just share our vulnerabilities, because ... we’re just sharing our fears. ... I see the importance of trying to be authentic and if anything I think all you have to ask yourself is this - when you’re pushing yourself to be authentic, I think you have to ask yourself why you’re doing it. (Pastor #2, p. 9.)

Some pastors have taken the risk and reaped negative consequences. One pastor shared how he learned the hard way that you cannot talk about your wife and family (Pastor #1, p. 2). Another commented on broken confidences, “I think one of the things that

has really been difficult for me in ministry is broken confidences. So when you do share sometimes that can really come back to bite you if there is a breach of confidentiality. And it's happened to me" (Pastor #4, p. 2). One pastor in an effort to open up in a former church, had the situation backfire on him.

If you can find somebody that you can really, really trust but as you know, information is power and that can translate itself into the church. I remember one time opening myself up in a service in my former church. I was going through a difficult time, in fact I was having difficulty in whether to stay or go. And I had one lady come to me and she said - how dare you share emotionally with our congregation, you had no business telling us you are going through a difficult time. Since then I have protected myself and my congregations from that kind of intimacy. I think you can share and you can share too much. There are people who want you to be their pastor but they don't want you to be their friend. (Pastor #5, p. 6)

Another negative result of building trusting relationships in the congregation is the area of jealousy or favoritism. "... (there is a) danger - people start to get jealous." (Pastor #3, P. 5) Another stated, "I wouldn't be transparent and that is deliberate." (Pastor #4, p. 2) A regional minister offered a suggestion on that subject, "... be friends with the whole congregation." (Denominational #7, p. 8)

Some pastors are afraid to open up to their struggles, whether sinful or not because of the risk of discipline by the local body or by the CABC. One regional minister noted that we have a need for a better process whereby we enfold rather than punish.

I think people need to know that there is a vulnerability with your network and that you encourage it by being vulnerable with your small network and then where appropriate you are vulnerable with your congregation -

the larger network. The reason why we find it difficult to happen is that our structures are all punitive. When someone messes up in ministry, what's the first thing we do? We take away everything that could possibly keep them whole. Even if that is the requirement and we need to do that, what are the pathways to getting back? We don't have any pathways to get back. There is no redemptive process. Yet, the whole thing that Jesus did was take broken people and redeem them. So the very practices that we have in some ways are the denial of the very message we preach. (Denominational #4, p. 12)

The reality is that when you are in a church for a considerable time, people look past those initial problems and you are able to come to a mutual appreciation and understanding of both strengths and weaknesses. "... the longer you live in a church the more real people are going to know you anyway." (Pastor #2, p. 9) Actual longevity can lend itself greatly to depth of relationship said one pastor, "I think the longer you journey with someone obviously the opportunity to go to deeper levels of intimacy are going to occur. So I think time plays a critical factor." (Pastor #2, p. 10) As pastor, key leadership, and general congregation grow together, there should be a coming together and understanding of roles and needs. "I don't know if people understand that as much but I don't think the church is ever going to understand the pressures on a pastor unless the pastor is willing to share within that leadership team something of what is happening in his life on a regular basis." (Denominational #8, p. 7)

The key, said many of those interviewed, was found in balance of professional role and personal need for relationship. "You have to keep your professional distance. ... keeping a distance between you and the people you shepherd and lead, and yet never letting go of them." (Pastor #3, p. 4) "... maintain a God honoring balance there in terms of

running some risk of being vulnerable, of course, but at the same time not so exposing themselves with all of their warts and wrinkles that members of the congregation tend to lose maybe not respect for, but confidence in.” (Denominational #1, p. 3)

I’m not for bearing all, but I really feel you have to be transparent in the sense of where you are frustrated or where you are struggling. I think you have to be wise in how you are transparent. I think you can go overboard in that but I still think there needs to be a humanness about the pastor. He has to be human, he can’t be starchy. (Denominational #3, p. 4)

Longevity apparently becomes the outpouring of a pastor’s heart in the ministry of the church he/she has been clearly called to serve. With supportive leadership, clear expectations, regular evaluation of the ministry, a healthy partnership can develop and bear fruit in the long term. This can impact the church and the community at large in many ways. It is important for the minister to be real, to be spiritually fresh, to be professionally prepared, with a strong sense of vision and hope to lead the congregation toward a future of blessing. Change becomes easier when a sense of trust and stability prevail, conflicts become pathways to growth, and ultimately the church grows in maturity and hearts are won to Jesus Christ.

My personal passion to see spiritual growth and maturity in the churches of this convention, centers largely around this discussion of longevity . The thought provoking responses have opened a door that must be pursued. The literature provides a foundation; the theological discussion contrasts what leadership and being led truly means; the interviews provide a particular and practical framework; and the recommendations outline a pathway to meaningful ministry.

Chapter six reveals the value of this study for the present and future health of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches.

Chapter 6 - Final Outcomes

Long term ministry has become not only a reality but a joy to those pastors who have paid the price to reach it. It is a commitment that is not easily attained, as some leave too soon because of unresolved issues or wanting to move on to a more “exciting” field of service. Others feel they genuinely hear the call of God to move on after a short time. One thing is for certain, there is a quality of relationships not reached unless a pastor dares to stay for an extended period of time. Whether this is planned from the beginning or becomes a reality after settling in, it becomes a catalyst for deep and meaningful leadership and ministry. It strengthens both the pastor and the people.

Studying longevity in the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches and its implication for the pastors, churches and communities of the Atlantic region was valuable in-

deed. The research addressed many previously held assumptions, raised new questions, and could open the door for other interesting discussions. The findings from the literature and interviews conducted helped determine what characterizes the ministry of long term pastorates. In particular, answers to four research questions were found:

1. To what extent do relationships between pastors and key leaders in the church impact longevity?
2. How do relationships change during long term ministry? How does this impact growth, conflict resolution and overall church health?
3. How do conflicts, personalities and other issues hinder longevity?
4. How do pastors seek to enhance relationships in ministry?

The first subject of discussion, centered on relationships with key leadership. This revealed many interesting findings. It was clear that relationships are indeed the determining factor as to whether or not a ministry goes forward. The lack of key relationships lead to destructive behavior, lack of trust to move ahead, and many times a premature departure of pastors and church members.

The research indicated that ministry falls down when there is not mutual trust and sharing. Trust can be established from the early stages of a call process as a search committee, representing the church, clearly articulate their expectations of the role of pastor. Barna in his research commented that expectations begin even before the pastorate begins in some cases. These should be clearly stated, including the financial considerations, and not altered without mutual consent. Failure to do this results in broken trust and unhealthy relationships. Expectations, as Eugene Peterson writes, vary among the parishioners and may be in direct contrast to that of the pastor. The church, as they search for a godly leader of a parish must commit themselves to a process of self-discovery, ascertaining their goals, values, dreams, and thoughts on what the pastor is called to do. If a congregation fails at this step, it will only lead to other breaches in trust along the way

in ministry. Likewise, the pastor must prepare himself/herself for a new challenge and not idealize it as over and above another one. As some authors suggest, there are noble reasons for seeking a move to a new place. However, there are many family and personal dynamics associated with leaving and moving on to a new field of service such as grief, adjusting to new schools and community, and forging new friendships.

It is a time to set parameters and test those boundaries among a new flock. Author Joe Umidi, among others have done significant research and offer helpful insights.

Over time, a ministry is strengthened as the pastor finds comfort and ease in sharing leadership struggles with his/her board. At the same time the key leaders are able to advise and encourage the pastor in the role assigned him/her. There is a closeness that develops over time as pastors tend to trust leadership with more of the ministry. The leadership should back the pastor and follow his/her lead. A break of trust in leadership usually leads to broken trust within the church community.

It is wise, suggests the literature and practitioners, to engage in supportive evaluations. Every pastor and leadership board needs affirmation, likewise constructive feedback of the ministry is beneficial so that previously agreed upon goals and values might be reached. Conflict arises as expectations are assumed and not clearly articulated and revisited.

What does this mean for the CABC churches, pastors, and denominational staff? Churches need a better understanding of Biblical partnership and a clearer understanding of the pastoral roles and responsibilities. There may be mis-perceptions of what the pastor is called to do. With the influence of business principles and practices upon the church, there is a move by some to refer to calling as “hiring” and to see the solution to ineffective ministry as “firing.” Churches must re-examine their responsibilities to the anointed and appointed leaders in the church and be held accountable for that. This

would lead to stronger ministries at the beginning, during, and while completing a partnership.

As pastors are encouraged to share their unique pressures and responsibilities, and as church leaders and congregations grasp these, there will exist a more supportive atmosphere based on mutual understanding and encouragement. A pastor who feels well supported will not experience the stress alone and would be more inclined to stay longer. Likewise, a congregation who feels loved and affirmed by their pastor would be less inclined to put significant pressure on him/her to move on after a short time in ministry among them.

There are implications for the pastor as well. The pastor must set the example in truly seeking the will of God in answering a call. Sinful attitudes can prevail if one wants to move on from a hard situation or seek to acquire the status of a larger church or a higher standard of living. Spirit led calling applies as much to the pastor as to the congregation. The pastor should clearly articulate the expectations he/she has of the leadership and congregation. As one denominational staff person suggested, the vows of induction should be regularly reviewed. The pastor is to recognize the high calling received from God and not abuse the congregation under his/her care. As respect is shown from the pastor, it will spill over into how he/she pursues relationships with the congregation and the leadership, in particular.

During the ministry, the pastor must seek to carry out all duties in submission to God and for the benefit of the church in community. This means that he must lead as a servant, and model appropriate methods for resolution of problems. Bringing a ministry to a close is done with the understanding that it is to be carried out with grace and dignity.

The CABC can be a great source of support in this regard as well. Consistent support and education by resource people can be a help to lead the churches toward

stronger, long term ministries. There is a proactive approach needed which could head off relational problems at a later time. During the pastorate, both pastor and congregation should seek ways to involve regional ministers to address smaller issues, so they will not become divisive in the congregation. As smaller problems are overcome, the partnership will be strengthened and the trust will deepen.

The interviews and literature suggest that those ministries that come to a close, can do so with appropriate closure. This involves as some regional ministers say, with an appropriate time of grieving, mending fences, helping to transition to a new pastor, preaching positively, and hearing from the congregation how their ministry has made a difference. It is not a time to retaliate or burn bridges and return hurt feelings. An exit interview would help greatly in bringing appropriate closure.

A pastor may realize he/she has to cease ministering in a given situation. Although this is difficult to recognize, it is most evident say the regional ministers when the platform for ministry has been lost, when the pastor is unable to gain the confidence of the people. London and Wiseman describe this as “the pastor having his span of control reaching its limit.” (London and Wiseman, 2000: 126) This becomes most evident when pastors come into conflict with their congregation and loyalties are put to the test.

When a pastor fails to discern the timing of a ministry, and continue to stay beyond their time of peak effectiveness, this can seriously hamper a ministry. Lyle Schaller comments that “approximately seventy-five percent of pastors who serve the same congregation for over twenty years leave a legacy that greatly handicaps their successors.” (Schaller, 1973: 26) The main reasons that it becomes a detriment are because of loyalty to a former leader and an orientation to the past with survival as the primary goal.

The second research question concerns itself with the changing face of relationships over time in ministry. Growth, conflict, and church health are impacted over the long haul and were addressed in the literature and through the interviews.

Several times, the main benefit of longevity was identified as trust and stability. Although not every long term pastorate is built on the best relationship principles and practices, something takes place over the long term that cannot happen in a short ministry. There is a depth that occurs in relationship as pastor and people walk through the key events of life. Pastors in a long term relationship have the joy and responsibility of witnessing the significant rites of passage of several generations. This endears a pastor to a congregation over time. When individuals have shared their personal history in confidence with the pastor, it is done in vulnerability, trusting in his/her ability to keep the confidence, be God's representative in that situation, and minister through word and presence.

Trust is very important as churches consider making changes to achieve a better future under God. In situations where trust has not been established, the congregation will doubt and sinful attitudes of complaint will lead to undermining the ministry. Length of ministry can lead to a deep sense of stability which calms the fear and anxiety of those who have endured less stable ministry in the past and who may be facing other significant changes outside the church.

This trust comes about says Bixby when the leadership and congregation make major decisions together. From the outset the role of pastors and boards have to be clear. Shelley reminds his readers that the leadership must not see their role as "keeping the pastor in line", but of partnership, and this takes time. It must be developed outside of corporate worship. As one veteran of eighteen years shared, he seeks to play and to pray with his leadership. Kouzes and Posner, writing primarily to a business audience outline necessary qualities for any leader, including pastors. They write, "Encouraging the heart strengthens trust between leaders and constituents, a relationship that is absolutely critical to getting extraordinary things done in organizations." (Kouzes and Posner, 2003: 59)

They assert that as both parties get to know one another, credibility is gained and a positive role model is found in pastoral leadership.

Stability of the church is a witness to the community who often see the church calling a new pastor every few years. The church is elevated in the fact that they establish that they can not only keep a pastor but have a healthy partnership. The church that is concerned for their reputation in the community must see a healthy long term pastorate as a positive stepping stone to building meaningful connections with their community around them. Particularly in small communities, failure to do this may be a major deterrent in people coming under the influence of the church.

The pastors interviewed who have all benefitted from healthy long term ministries have all maintained a sense of hope and vision. These pastors realized that they must do more than maintain the ministry. Regional ministers commented that ministries that were healthy over a longer period learned to keep moving forward. There are negative examples of ministers who have stayed past the time of fruitful ministry due to other factors such as nearing retirement, transitions in family, and spousal employment.

As one stays for an extended for an extended period, one is able to better discern what amount of energy is to be expended for each person and situation. A person new to ministry in general and in new church lacks the understanding of the people and their uniqueness. A pastor who has labored alongside a congregation for years knows better how to handle the various personalities and the conflicts they cause or get involved with.

What does all of this mean? First, the benefits of longevity need to be communicated so churches and pastors understand that it is desirable to stay in a place under the right kinds of circumstances. Too often pastors and congregations are frustrated with situations which could be changed if the correct methods were employed. In frustration, pastors and congregations part too soon, hindering ministry.

As partnerships lengthen and vision is cast, shared, and owned, congregations can emphasize hope and move ahead. This will give a church the ability to see beyond the mundane tasks that occupy the daily running of a ministry. When this happens, the small conflicts will exist but not overwhelm the leadership and hinder the ministry to the community.

The pastor must assume the role of leader or learn to share that with the key influencers in the congregation. A failure to enlist those who can help propel the ministry forward will result in serious conflict from which the pastor may not recover. The pastor must realize that, given the particular situation, it may take many years and several attempts to make the needed changes in pursuit of the vision. Too many pastors exit a particular church in frustration before they see the fruit of their hard work.

The third research question was “how do conflicts, personalities and other issues hinder longevity?” This was a major theme throughout the research process. It was significant in the study of the literature, the emerging theological themes and the interviews which were conducted. Relationships contain conflict. Although it would seem reasonable to assume that the church, as the redeemed people of God, would not have conflict within, this is not the case.

Due to the power and presence of sin in the world and in the life of each individual, the church is affected to varying degrees. The literature suggests that there are evil people within the fellowship. They may not be regenerate or else so controlled by a sinful attitude that they cause conflict or add to it. For true resolution and conflict to be diminished, the Spirit controlled life must be the norm for pastor and people. Issues present such as pride, control, political maneuvering, and excessive anger must be replaced by attitudes of peacemaking, submission, and servanthood. Conflicts are caused by uncontrolled sinful desires which can cause significant disruption within the church. Those who have been able to weather these problems have had a healthy sense of where

conflict comes from and how to deal with it. The pastor and church must have a clear sense of the struggle between sin and the spirit. Several authors write of sinful behavior in the church, referring to those controlled or at least seriously affected by sin as dragons, antagonists, and clergy killers. The goal of each pastor and leadership within a church is to be led by God and taught in such a way as to produce behavior that is healthy and righteous. When this does not happen and members seek to cause division rather than support the pastoral leadership, it is vital that the church leadership show support and exercise appropriate disciplinary measure according to the scriptural mandate.

Each pastor interviewed had a strategy to resolve conflict, formally or informally within his church. The regional ministers encouraged pastors to deal with conflict head on so that there might be peaceful resolution to problems that surface and that significant ministry might not be overshadowed by unloving words or deeds.

Situations where pastors have not recovered from church division at various levels have revolved around the fact that they have not been able to recover from personal attack on their leadership. Denominational personnel suggested that pastors need to develop a “thicker skin” to deal with ministry challenges and along with their leadership, exercise tough love with congregants. The need for communication is vital to healthy conflict resolution. A major discussion regarding long term ministry revolved around the pastor keeping fresh. This was expressed in two facets. The first area of need is for the pastor to keep spiritually fresh. To fail to do this affects preaching and teaching ability, as well as relational ability. It is harder to continue under the control of the Spirit if regular disciplines which grow the spiritual life are neglected, even in the name of ministry.

It is also important for pastors to keep vocationally fresh. It was noted that since so many of the churches in the CABC are small, rural churches, there are in many cases, insufficient resources available to provide for these opportunities. The executive and re-

gional ministers underscored how important it was for the pastor to grow and bring new and fresh ideas to the congregation.

There is significant meaning and relevance for the church given these findings. Spiritual freshness sets a tone of submission in the congregation. True fruit in fellowship and service comes from God. Any barrier to this is as a result of sin. As a pastor maintains a deep relationship with God, this will overflow into the pastorate and into the various roles he/she carries out. Vocational freshness will breathe new life and vision into the church and give the church and pastor loftier goals to aspire to.

Conflicts do arise and hinder longevity when there is not a suitable strategy to resolve them. In instances where dominant, sinful attitudes and actions prevail, a pastor may opt for a new field of service rather than deal with the issues at hand. Especially when the leadership does not come to the aid of the pastor, the problem may escalate such that he/she may not recover from it.

There is a significant need in the seminary and churches for clear teaching on conflict. Since it is such a significant issue in life and ministry, it must be addressed. Pastors must learn to find a safe place of sharing. This can take place in the context of shared leadership in a congregation. However, an outside source such as a fellow pastor or regional minister can be a wonderful source of support. Churches must realize their responsibility to pastors, in supporting them through times of adversity. In times of personal disagreement, pastors must seek the wisdom of appointed leaders and form a united front to deal with problems. Pastors must not run from conflict, but with honesty and sincerity confront it.

The final research question dealt with how pastors enhance relationships in ministry. Because of hurt and pride, there is a tendency to refrain from opening up to the congregation.

All pastors suggested that a professional distance must be kept even though the congregation does come to know you better over the long haul. Some have tried to be vulnerable but have not been received well. In a few cases, pastors interviewed for the purpose of this study, stated they had been “burned” because of broken confidences. Most were able to find solace in their leadership boards, but some found confidantes outside their church context altogether. In time, pastors become more “real” to their congregations, faults and weaknesses can be overlooked, and a mutual understanding and appreciation can develop. When this kind of understanding prevails, a supportive, loving environment can strongly encourage long term stays.

Pastors shy away from being vulnerable since it can be interpreted as favoritism and a sense of jealousy may develop in the congregation. Other have felt the sting of a betrayed trust. This has made them hesitant to open up to parishioners. As one pastor shared, “knowledge is power.” Pastors may feel that personal information may be used in such a way as to undermine their ministry.

What does this mean for a church and pastor? For the church, it should mean encouragement of vulnerability but not a demand for it. The congregation needs to come to a better understanding of the unique pressures of pastoral ministry, both individually and as a family. Again, clear expectations throughout a ministry can aid in this learning curve. A church will struggle with this vulnerability if they continue to place the pastor on a pedestal.

The pastor him/herself must not abuse the openness of the congregation by sharing inappropriate information which would lead to a diminished viewpoint of the pastoral office. The pastor must be discerning of the amount of information which should be shared to both endear him/herself to the church but not bring shame to the ministry or the family.

Given the findings in the research, both from literature and interviews, there are several implications for pastors, churches, and the CABC as it oversees the work of the churches. Pastors must lead godly lives fueled by personal and corporate disciplines. Out of this must come a ministry of love and transparency which deals openly and honestly with conflict. Pastors must be trained in other disciplines so as to lead the church forward, implementing change, and casting a vision which will instill a spirit of hope.

Churches must understand their role in the calling of and supporting of pastoral leadership. As they commit themselves to a ministry of partnership, churches will experience fruit and blessing. This will involve a deeper sense of appreciation for the pastor as a person and the role he/she is called to carry out. As conflicts arise, the church leadership must act as a resource and sounding board for the pastor. As these kinds of partnerships are forged, ministries will lengthen, churches will be strengthened, and communities will be positively impacted.

This study will benefit the CABC greatly in understanding the issues the clergy are facing and encouraging lengthy tenures which should lead to stronger churches. It will benefit the churches by offering suggestions to improving relationships and solving long standing issues within. It will benefit the pastors by encouraging them to pursue long term partnerships and by becoming more healthy personally and vocationally. This should aid the convention owned seminary, Acadia Divinity College as students are prepared for Christian leadership. Several areas have been identified which could be better addressed in the preparation stages which would help offset conflict at a later point.

This study will also aid in the process of implementing a strategy, undertaken by the CABC to strengthen pastors and their families. Hearing from pastors and denominational leaders as well as a leader of a significant international ministry gave valuable data from credible sources and served as an effective tool for the working group set up by the CABC to look at the issue of healthy pastors and churches. This study will aid in the

compilation of and implementation of the Best Practices Document. It was assumed that long pastorates of ten years or more lead to deep and lasting relationships and stronger churches. This assumption was proved to be true, however there were some notable exceptions which were troubling. One pastor commented he had developed no strong friendships in his particular church and when the day came to leave, that he would probably not keep in touch with anyone. It was assumed that there would be a higher degree of vulnerability achieved, however all affirmed that there were still problems with sharing even after a significant time period in the same church.

Several recommendations are in order which would help in the pursuit of stronger ministries. First, there is a greater need to stress issues of leadership in the preparation stage. A mandatory course in leadership in seminary preparation which deals with such issues as vision casting, team building and conflict resolution is greatly needed. Many pastors are in need of knowledge in this area. In the absence of skilled pastoral leadership, the responsibility is delegated. This will only cause problems for pastors in their ministries. A failure to build a healthy team around them will lead to internal conflict and struggle for power. A failure to cast vision will lead to stagnant ministry and a demise of several churches in the CABC.

Another course that should be taught in more depth is in the discipline of ministerial ethics. This should include how to function in entertaining a call, during a ministry, and in bringing a ministry to a close. If new and existing pastors had a clearer picture of the expectations and if they were held accountable, a number of ministries might turn out differently.

As candidates are interviewed by the churches to be licensed, associations, the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education, the seminary, and the examining council for ordination, there must be a more concerted effort to draw out and correct deficiencies in character, personality, and knowledge so candidates can be better equipped to minister

in the churches. This proactive approach should address some dysfunction that has existed which has led to unhealthy matches and divided churches.

Pastoral candidates should have a healthy sense of call and understand the implications of moving into a pastorate. This is more than vocation, but a high calling which must be carried out with all sincerity of heart and due diligence. As students are given this mandate and screening, it will mean disqualifying some and also taking more time to better develop others. This investment will be a wise one indeed and will pay off in the long haul.

Another recommendation is that churches must be made aware of their responsibilities to their pastor. Seminars or recommended reading would be a start for pulpit committees and leadership boards in between pastors. As well, those churches who desire during a partnership to improve their support networks could be made aware of resources. This would heighten awareness of the responsibilities to provide for adequate financial support, time and resources for continuing education, and better understand the lifestyle that many pastors live.

Not only would it be helpful for churches to better understand how to minister to their pastor, but learn such dynamics themselves such as the roots and resolution of conflict, understanding their role in the community, defining mission, vision, values, and target group. This would alleviate unmet expectations and give clearer parameters for evaluation when the ministry is underway.

Several recommendations are fitting for the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches. The convention has made gains in restructuring for more effective ministry, and in commissioning a survey and pursuing a subsequent best practices document. However, there are other approaches that could prove helpful. One way the convention could extend its influence is by relieving the executive and regional ministers of some of

their responsibilities. At present these persons are intended to initiate ministry across the convention as well as maintain the various agencies.

What is happening on many fronts is that they provide more of a reactive ministry. They are called in to respond after the damage is already done. Perhaps if under the umbrella of a “pastoral ministry” department, there could be additional staff employed or volunteer resource people recruited to handle conflict mediation, placement of pastors, or to personally support the pastors and their families. An untapped resource in the convention are the recently retired pastors who have significant experience to offer. This could free up the regional ministers to handle training responsibilities and be equippers of the pastors, addressing the continuing education and freshness voids that exist.

A place of retreat for pastors and their families has been researched and this is still an important ministry for the pastors of the CABC. Pastors need times of rest and refreshment if they are to continue in their churches for long term ministry. Sabbaticals, retreats, family time and other considerations should be seen as normal and desired for both pastor and congregation.

CABC could make resources available which would address some of the concerns raised in this study, namely a handbook for search processes including exercises which would better match church and pastor. The convention could also sponsor events at modest cost to allow for continuing education and provide scholarships for those from smaller churches. Seminars and resource lists would also be a benefit to pastors and churches. Through various methods of technology, the CABC could communicate proper policies and procedures for ministry within the CABC and give positive examples of fruitful longer term ministries that exhibit growth, health, and vision.

Several subjects could be pursued for further studies including the call process in the CABC - what is involved and how it compares to other denominations, financial compensation in the CABC - mainly a comparison to other conventions and if there are

unique challenges facing pastors in the CABC, highlighting a model for ministry to pastors - addressing some of the issues surfacing from this study.

Several lessons have been learned. First, long term ministries should be the norm, rather than the exception. We should be moving in this direction to better strengthen the churches of the CABC. There is a better opportunity for a strong denominational influence in Atlantic Canada if there are model partnerships that last for a significant time. Another lesson learned was the need for healthy conflict resolution. Conflict should come as no surprise and cannot be ignored. Those leadership teams who constructively deal with issues, seem to come out stronger.

This study was also personally rewarding, not only to gain insight but because I was stretched in my assumptions. Through disciplined study the issues became more personal and reflective. The challenge was also present as struggles were shared in the interviews. Many struggles are common to all pastors but some experience unique circumstances because of powerful people and it appeared that in some settings it was incredibly difficult to stand up to certain power brokers. As I reflected on the literature, theological themes, and interviews, I was challenged to make foundational differences in my ministry.

The central lessons were personal in their application as I seek to be a “long haul” pastor and put into practice what I believe is the ideal and preferred.

The pastorate is not a sprint for short term runners, but is a marathon with many twists, turns, and quitting points. It is a place of constant battle with ourselves and our deficiencies and others who battle their sinful nature. Conflicts, as they surface in the church, bring out the best and worst in people. However, the church is to be a place of family, of relationship where openness, trust, stability, and reconciliation prevail. This is best portrayed in long term pastorates when pastor and people learn to live together in

mutual understanding and support. This is a powerful example to a community in which the church is placed. It serves as a statement of teamwork, partnership, and unity amid diversity. It speaks also of transparency and vulnerability, the “stuff” of which strong and deep relationships are made.

As one pastor commented, “I have concluded that short term ministries are a waste of time.” While this may seem like too strong a statement, it does reflect his thoughts on the personal benefit he and many others have found after significant years in the same ministry. Long term ministry is too often seen as the exception, not the norm. What would happen in the CABC if those called to ministry were more thoroughly prepared through additional training in practical ministry? What would happen if pastors were better equipped to face the challenges by keeping themselves spiritually fresh? What would happen if pastors were regularly equipped by continuing education? What would happen if pastors found safe places to share their joys and sorrows? What would happen if pastors regularly communicated their heartfelt thanks and love to their congregation?

These are not the only important questions to ask. What would happen if churches took more care in their call process and saw a prospective pastor as one called by God, directed by the Spirit to become part of the family? What if he/she was viewed as more than one hired but truly appointed by God for an indefinite period to be a spiritual leader? What if the church communicated clearly their expectations and desired to compensate the pastor generously, making available the resources to be the best that he/she could be? What if the congregation prompted by the leadership were to communicate regularly their love and appreciation for their pastor? What if the church was committed to resolving their conflicts in a God-honoring way and offered support to the pastor and discipline to those requiring it?

The answer to all of these questions can be found in the fact that long term partnerships of ten years or more lead to meaningful relationships which are fulfilling to both pastor and people. As this is evident in the long haul it becomes a powerful demonstration to communities. If these ideals were realized in churches in the CABC, the churches would become stronger and the convention would thrive in its ministries and influence.

Today, more pastor Jim's, as described in chapter 1, are needed; those who love and are loved, who support and are supported, and who teach and are taught. When those pastors and church journey toward longevity; and do it in submission to the will of God and to each other, they will reach fruitful years indeed.

Appendix A - Interview Log

| Date | Category | Comments |
|------------|-------------------|--|
| October 27 | Pastor #1 | Fair feedback, need to sharpen up questions and go deeper, cultural differences |
| October 27 | Regional Minister | Well prepared, good experience and insights, challenged my thoughts on reviews of pastors |
| October 29 | Pastor #2 | Excellent interview, very good insights as to what makes a ministry go the distance, "edgy" comments, made me think |
| October 29 | Pastor #3 | Neat insights, plans to bring a long term ministry to a close in the near future. Good to get that perspective on closure. He had helpful comments on conflict resolution. |

| | | |
|-------------|--------------------|--|
| October 29 | Pastor #4 | Has had a good ministry despite personal pain. Has received significant ministry as well as given it. Good thoughts. |
| October 30 | Executive Minister | Good handle on denominational dynamics. Shared personal stories which helped as well as made good suggestions regarding ministry to pastors. |
| November 9 | Regional Minister | Worthwhile time. He really brought out the idea of church as family and highlighted the whole idea of partnership |
| November 9 | Regional Minister | Good insights, however the tape was difficult to transcribe. He seems to have heart in standing by pastors in trouble |
| November 10 | Pastor #5 | Good insights on conflict and staying power. He has faced some difficulties in ministry and has persevered. I was surprised and concerned about the lack of personal connection to the flock |
| November 12 | Regional Minister | Very methodical, level headed approach. A little more reserved in his approach |
| December 1 | Regional Minister | Concern for rural pastorates and the ability to produce long term ministries. He is concerned for building up these pastors who find it difficult to re-fuel in ministry. |

| | | |
|-------------|-------------------|---|
| December 2 | Regional Minister | Good insights into what makes a ministry go the distance. I enjoyed our conversation |
| December 3 | Regional Minister | A wealth of experience. Nearing the end of his formal career, he has a lot to reflect on and to pass on. |
| December 7 | Pastor #6 | Comment before interview - I've concluded that short term stays are a waste of time! This was a great time over the phone - appreciated his views on conflict resolution and building a strong family ministry. The church is committed to building a long term ministry environment |
| December 16 | H. B. London | Very grateful he took time to reflect on ministry issues. His wealth of experience and broader perspective helped a great deal in the data collection |

Appendix B - Data - Interviewees

| | Age | Time in Ministry | # of Pastorates | Time in Current Position | Yes | Married |
|-----------|------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Pastor #1 | 50-60 | 20+ | 5 | 10-15 | Yes | Yes |
| Pastor #2 | 40-50 | 16-20 | 1 | 16-20 | Yes | Yes |
| Pastor #3 | 40-50 | 20+ | 5+ | 10-15 | Yes | No |
| Pastor #4 | 50-60 | 20+ | 3 | 16-20 | Yes | Yes |
| Pastor #5 | 50-60 | 20+ | 3 | 10-15 | Yes | Yes |
| Pastor #6 | 50-60 | 20+ | 3 | 16-20 | Yes | Yes |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------|-----|----|-----|-----|
| Denominational Rep. #1 | 60-70 | 20+ | 5 | 5-9 | Yes |
| | | | | | Yes |
| Denominational Rep. #2 | 50-60 | 20+ | 3 | 0-5 | Yes |
| | | | | | Yes |
| Denominational Rep. #3 | 50-60 | 20+ | 5 | 5-9 | Yes |
| | | | | | Yes |
| Denominational Rep. #4 | 50-60 | 20+ | 5+ | 0-5 | Yes |
| | | | | | Yes |
| Denominational Rep. #5 | 50-60 | 20+ | 5+ | 0-5 | Yes |
| | | | | | Yes |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------|-------|---|-----|-----|
| Denominational Rep. #6 | 40-50 | 16-20 | 2 | 0-5 | Yes |
| | | | | | Yes |
| Denominational Rep. #7 | 40-50 | 10-15 | 2 | 0-5 | Yes |
| | | | | | Yes |
| Denominational Rep. #8 | 50-60 | 20+ | 3 | 5-9 | Yes |
| | | | | | Yes |

Appendix C - Interview Questions - Pastors

1. When you arrived at your current church, how long did you expect to stay? Why?
2. What do you feel are the key factors impacting how long most pastors stay at one church?
3. What have they been for you personally?
4. Would you say that relationships between pastors and key leaders impact longevity? If so, how? Who are the key support people for the pastor?
5. How can a pastor maintain healthy relationships in the ministry of the church?
6. Should pastors have the freedom to “open up” to parishioners? With whom and to what degree should transparency occur?
7. How are relational boundaries determined?
8. How have healthy relationships impacted your own ministry and life?

9. What kind of specific relationships do you try to cultivate? Why?
10. What have been your most productive years? Have you seen stages or cycles, or has it been marked by steady growth or steady decline? How have your relationships changed? How do you think your stay has had a positive impact?
11. What has been your strategy to resolve conflict? Have you established certain principles and practices to enable you to stay so long? How have relationship conflicts influenced the length of your pastoral tenures?
12. Reflecting on your ministry, what are the key lessons you have learned?
13. What have been your greatest joys and greatest disappointments?
14. As your tenure has lengthened, what new concerns have developed?
15. Why do you continue to stay?

Appendix D - Executive & Regional Ministers

What have you concluded are the average stays?

What are the main reasons pastors don't stay longer? What have you witnessed?

What have been the benefits of long term ministry?

What have been the negative effects of long term ministry?

How have pastors contributed to long term ministry?

How do you think we can move toward better pastor-church relationships in our convention?

How do you counsel pastors in handling antagonists in the church?

What would improve pastor - church relationships in the convention in the following areas:

1. In the call process?
2. During the pastorate?
3. In terminating a relationship?

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Vita

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