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Retaining Second Career Pastors in Recognized Ministry

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This research is a product of the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program at George Fox University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

RETAINING SECOND CAREER PASTORS IN RECOGNIZED MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

All Christians are called into ministry through their commitment to Christ and baptism. Some are called into church- or denominationally-recognized pastoral ministry. A traditional way for those called into pastoral ministry would be to follow an educational path of higher education and, upon completion of their studies, entrance into pastoral ministry. There also exists a less traditional path that includes careers and occupations not recognized as church or denominational pastoral ministry. Those who follow this less traditional path will be referred to as a 'second-career pastor'.

During the transition from a non-ministry career into church- or denominationally-recognized pastoral ministry, many challenges arise for the second-career pastor. This transition not only affects one's profession but all aspects of a person's life. This transition mirrors the effect of baptism on the second-career pastor's life: it is a death to their old life and a rebirth into another.

The end of one career and the beginning of service as clergy is accompanied by the expectations of both the individual and the organization she is called to serve. Second-career pastors enter into ministry with years of relevant life experiences learned in their former occupations, giving them expectations of how organizations and the individuals in them should function. These expectations can both help and hinder their pastoral ministry. Since the ability to manage these expectations is critical to the vitality and longevity of a pastorate, the ideal time to begin an assessment of these expectations is during the transition from the former career into church- or denominationally-recognized pastoral ministry.

This dissertation is designed to help the second-career pastor's new life be pleasing to God and life-giving to the individual. It attempts to do this by helping these pastors recognize and manage both their own expectations of ministry as well as the expectations of those they have been called to serve. It is recommended that in managing expectations individuals make a thorough assessment of their call and those calling them, and continue to get to know the congregation, the place, the culture, and the way that they interact within the ministry setting.

To my colleagues in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the members of First Christian Church (DOC) in Clarkston, WA, First Christian Church (DOC) in Bardstown, WA and Red Rock Christian Church (DOC) in Boise, ID. And to my family and friends.

Within the universal Body of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is identifiable by its testimony, tradition, name, institutions, and relationships. Across national boundaries, this church expresses itself in covenantal relationships in congregations, Regions, and General ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), bound by God's covenant of love. Each expression is characterized by its integrity, self-governance, authority, rights, and responsibilities, yet they relate to each other in a covenantal manner, to the end that all expressions will seek God's will and be faithful to God's mission.

—Paragraph 2 of “The Design of the Christian Church” (Disciples of Christ), revised
2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xii
GLOSSARY	xiii
CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM	1
Pete	1
The Author's Story.....	4
Introduction	5
The Crux of the Problem.....	6
Alternate Applications.....	12
Second-Career Pastors.....	15
The Non-Traditional Path.....	17
Conclusion.....	22
CHAPTER TWO: THE CALL.....	24
Sergeant Pete Answering the Call.....	24
A Disciple of Christ's Understanding of Call	26
Ordination.....	31
Answering God's Call.....	32
Belonging	36
The Dangers of Answering.....	38

Conclusion	42
CHAPTER THREE: EXPECTATIONS	44
Pastor Pete	44
Introduction	48
God’s Expectations	51
The Pastor’s Expectations	55
The Congregation’s Expectations	63
Managing the Pastor’s Own Expectations	69
Communication is a Vital Ingredient.....	76
Conclusion	78
CHAPTER FOUR: THE TRANSITION	80
Brand New Pastor Pete Finding His Way.....	80
‘Transition’ Defined.....	84
A Transition Into a New Life	86
The Signs and Symbols Experienced Before the Transition.....	88
The Process and Place.....	92
Obstacles During Transition.....	93
Conclusion.....	97
CHAPTER FIVE: A NEW LIFE.....	100
Settled Pastor Pete	100
The Apostle Peter: A Second-Career Pastor	101

Simon Peter, The Galilean Fishermen	103
Jesus' Expectations v. Peter's.....	107
Peter the Apostle and the Expectation of the New Pastor.....	110
Peter the Evangelist and the Expectation of the Experienced Pastor	112
Peter the Leader and the Expectation of the Senior Pastor	114
Conclusion.....	116

**CHAPTER SIX: HOW TO GIVE YOUR LIFE IN SERVICE
WITHOUT DYING..... 119**

From Sergeant Pete to Pastor Pete	119
Introduction	122
Should You Leave Your Job and Enter Ministry?.....	122
Can I Be One of Them?.....	125
Take It Slow, Build a Community	128
Rehab Your Leadership Style.....	132
Entering Wonderland	134
Starting Out or Giving Up.....	140
Consider What You Are Called to Do	142
Remaining a Whole Person in Ministry	145
What Happens When I Do Not Look Alike?.....	147
What Should a Second-Career Pastor Know?	149
Conclusion.....	153
Suggestions for Further Research	154

BIBLIOGRAPHY 156

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GLOSSARY

called by God. For the purposes of this dissertation, to be ‘called by God’ is to be called into the service of God, God’s people, and God’s creation by sharing the gospel and participating in a life-giving relationship with the Creator.^{1,2}

meta-narraphor. The grand, overarching narraphor of God and creation.

micro-narraphor. The narraphor of an individual life.

ministry. Ministry is the act of serving God by serving others.

narraphor. An extended metaphor created “when we combine images/metaphors with narrative (story).³

pastor. An individual who has accepted a call from God and reflects the role of the Good Shepherd (John 10:11–16) by serving in an “office with multiple functions, such as: to preach and teach, administer the sacraments/ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and ... provide moral oversight within the congregation, but not from outside it.”⁴

recognized vocational pastoral ministry. A specific ministry, paid or unpaid, that is done in a specific place and time by ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers who have been set apart by God and recognized by their church, to serve in specific tasks and/or places.⁵ Whenever the term ministry is used in this dissertation it is implied to refer to recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

second-career pastor. An individual who follows a non-traditional path into located church ministry by way of leaving an occupation that was not a church or denominationally recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

sign. Anything which stands for something else such as, words, images, sounds, gestures and objects.

¹ Stephen Sprinkle, *Ordination: Celebrating the Gift of Ministry* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 13.

² 1 Peter 2:9.

³ Leonard Sweet, *Giving Blood: A Fresh Paradigm for Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 37.

⁴ Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 2009, 7. <https://disciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/TFPCOM-Final.pdf>.

⁵ William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 17.

symbol. Something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance. For instance, a visible sign of an invisible act.

transition. When a person moves from one career to another.

transitioner. Any person moving from one career to another.

vocational. The tasks undertaken by a pastor on behalf of God and the community of faith she or he serves.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM: PASTORS ARE LEAVING TOO QUICKLY

Argh! Have you ever started a journey, knowing the destination, only to end up lost?

Pete

Pete was born into a family that belonged to a church. His birth was difficult for his mother. It involved the loss of a fraternal twin and while his mother was in trauma she pleaded with God to help her safely deliver at least one of her babies. A few years before she died, she told Pete that she had promised him to God if he survived his birth. Pete was glad she did not tell him this when he was a child because her story haunted him since he heard it.

Pete was not a model child, teenager, or young adult. He was baptized when he was told to be baptized; he had a vague memory of wanting to and being excited about it, but it was nothing particularly earth shattering. Looking back, he realized he had retained the title of 'Christian' but failed to live out his Christian call. He served in the military for twenty-three years, the first twelve years of which he generally misplaced the moral compass his parents and his church gave him. After fifteen years in the military Pete, now older and wiser, started to look for his moral compass again. He started to regularly attend worship with his church and was asked to serve his congregation in multiple ways. He began by organizing a church softball team, then helping with youth group, then serving as a deacon, participating on committees, and finally engaging as an elder of the church. All of these opportunities to serve led him closer to God and helped him find purpose in serving God as well as his country. Pete retired from the military and prepared

to begin his second career as a pastor. He completed five years of prayer and discernment, which convinced him that God was calling him into recognized vocational ministry.

His path into ministry was cleared of important obstacles such as objections from his wife and the financial burden of relocating his family in order to attend a seminary. He was encouraged to pursue ministry by his pastor. He received the endorsement of his church, his wife was supportive, and he applied and was accepted into a respected, historic seminary. While in seminary, as part of his field education, he served a church as the associate pastor for youth and families and was mentored by the senior pastor of the church. He was allowed to experience all the life of the church offered. He did well in both his seminary classes and the church he served. He graduated early and was called to a small church in a small town, which was a circumstance that appealed to Pete.

Nothing could stop Pete from serving God as a pastor for the rest of his life. He was profoundly grateful to receive affirmation of his call and hard work. He felt overflowing with new knowledge of God and the Christian scriptures. Pete was excited about the methods he was taught to teach the gospel and lead a church. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and gifted with a passion for Christ that seemed unquenchable. Pete started talking to everyone and anyone who would listen to him about his church, about God, and Jesus, God's only son. He was on fire. He was called unanimously by his church. It was a glorious time.

Unfortunately, that seemed like the last moment of consensus in his ministry. Immediately after his installation service, people young and old started to put him off and avoid him. No one seemed as committed and as passionate as Pete. Every new idea

seemed to be appreciated, but nothing was taken to heart by the congregants. Almost any proposal could gain approval but no one would find the time to implement them, and they neither expected nor wanted Pete to. Pete, having been in the military, took the congregation's assent to be permission to do and so he did. Pete found himself doing things alone, being criticized, questioned, and ignored. He was too autocratic, people failed to attend new services, they intentionally undermined new programs, they threatened to leave the church, and they left. They wrote letters and made calls to complain to the Denomination's national office, the middle judicatory, and his regional church.

Church members were quick to give him the reasons his ideas would not work at the little church in the small town. Everyone agreed that changing worship, singing new songs, having Sunday school and Bible study were great ideas, but no one came. Elders complained about the rapidity of change and wondered why they could not attract new members like themselves. Pete changed things too fast, did too much, and worked too hard at all the wrong things. Approved building repairs and remodels were not done, no one knew how to proceed after approval, and it seemed everyone quit their church jobs. The congregation sat back and watched to see what Pete would do and how long he would last. One congregant told him that he would not last more than two years, and an elder said he would be surprised if he made it five.

Pete's fire started to go out, the God who called him into ministry now seemed uninterested in Pete or his ministry. Pete wondered, "How does one stay in a church and love people who do not love him back? How does a pastor even stay in ministry when it is clear that I do not have the gifts I thought I have?" Pete felt his faith weakening; he had

moments when he just wanted to quit. He even thought about leaving ministry and organized religion behind; anything would be better than being a pastor.

The Author's Story

'Pete' was this author's nickname from his father. The above story is a 'narraphor,' a reflection on the metaphor of this author's call and a narrative about his early ministry experience as a second career pastor. The surprise and euphoria of being called by God to serve in recognized vocational pastoral ministry is often countered by the resistance of the church, a group of people also called to serve, with whom the minister is called to work alongside.

This paper is informed by the author's personal experience of being a second-career pastor. This includes leaving a career where the author had gained a recognized level of competency and had in many ways built his identity upon his involvement in it and learned all he knew of how organizations and systems worked from it. The transition was complicated, painful, and exhilarating. The anticipation of where God was going to lead was exciting. It was the experience of dying to one life and being born into another, similar to conversion and baptism into the Body of Christ. This author also relies upon his experience of the transition from one career to another and how his expectations of what serving God in recognized vocational pastoral ministry would be, compared to how he experienced the early days of his settled ministry and the expectations of his congregation.

Introduction

As pastors are leaving the ministry, the current recruitment of new pastors is not replacing them. The traditional path into recognized ministry is unable to satisfy the need because fewer younger people are pursuing vocational ministry. However, another source of new pastors is becoming more prevalent. Older individuals with experiences in non-ministry occupations and careers are increasingly willing to answer a call to ministry after having worked outside of ministry for a number of years. These people will be referred to as second-career pastors.

The problem is the lack of longevity of new pastors entering into ministry, particularly second-career pastors meaning, those who are transitioning from a non-ministry occupation into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. A premise of this dissertation is that a longer pastorate, one that lasts five to fifteen years, is generally preferable to a pastorate that is under five years. It is acknowledged that exceptions to this abound. However, a longer pastorate allows for an individual to become more a part of the fabric of the congregation and community in which the recognized vocational pastoral ministry exists. It is assumed that serving in a specific location longer enables pastors to become more aware of the context of their ministry position and more intimate with the particularities of the recognized vocational pastoral ministry in which they serve.

A question remains as to whether or not being a second-career pastor increases or decreases the longevity of a pastorate. However, it might be that being a second-career pastor enables an individual to be more resilient. In his introduction to the Barna Group's report, "The State of Pastors," David Kinnamon, shares: "Resilient pastors develop the inner resources and supportive relationships that enable them to prioritize their own

spiritual, emotional and physical needs; to view challenges realistically; to learn from their mistakes; to consider alternative perspectives and new processes; and to expect that God is at work even in adverse situations.”¹

In this dissertation, it is assumed that the statistical numbers are similar for all pastors whether they are second-career or not. This assumption is necessary because there are no records kept currently on the distinction between first and second-career pastors. Only recently has there been a distinction made between second-career pastors and those who followed a traditional path into ministry.

The Crux of the Problem

The problem addressed in this dissertation is the large percentage of second-career pastors who after having been called by God, affirmed by their community of faith and trained to their denominational standards leave recognized vocational pastoral ministry after only a relatively short time in a particular ministry setting. This problem is documented by The Alban Institute and a number of other congregation research organizations which “have discovered that not only do over fifty percent of pastors leave their congregations in the first five years of ministry, but many leave the ministry, and many of those leave the church altogether”² after an unpleasant experience with a local congregation or in another type of ministry position. Within the Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of the sixty-eight pastors who served churches

¹ David Kinnaman, *Introduction to The State of Pastors* (N.p.: Barna Group, 2017), 9.

² Robert A. Harris, *Entering Wonderland: A Toolkit for Pastors New to a Church* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), loc. 71, Kindle.

between 2007 and 2017, the average length of their pastorates was 5.6 years.³ At First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Clarkston, WA, the average length of the pastorate is 3.5 years in the 120-year history of the congregation.

Another premise of this dissertation is that much of the most life-giving ministry between a pastor and a congregation is done after they have been together more than five years, even though there has been a traditional perspective that three-to-five years is an ideal time frame for a local pastorate. Consequently, this dissertation addresses the problem of how to lengthen and strengthen a recognized vocational ministry, specifically that of a second-career pastor. A primary reason for shortened recognized vocational ministries is unrealistic expectations by both the called second-career pastor and the calling congregation.

Unrealistic expectations and, most importantly, the lack of awareness of God's expectations for the particular recognized vocational pastoral ministry are significant contributors to the demise of promising pastorates: "Spiritual leadership never has been easy. Throughout history, neither spiritual leaders nor the spiritually led have always been happy about the way the arrangement works."⁴ The Barna Group, in their work "The State of Pastors," however, found "The good news is, the vast majority of pastors are personally content and spiritually motivated toward growth and transformation, yet almost every pastor needs greater support in some way from the community of faith."⁵

³ *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (Indianapolis, IN: The Office of the General Minister and President, 2007–2017).

⁴ Travis Collins, *For Ministers About to Start... Or About to Give Up* (Columbia, SC: TCP Books, 2014), xxxi.

⁵ Barna Group, *The State of Pastors*, 10.

Yet, “80 percent of seminary and Bible school graduates who enter the ministry will leave the ministry within the first five years”⁶ The Barna Group also found that, “Most pastors start early on their path to ministry. More than half sense their calling between ages fourteen and twenty-one. Overall, 85% of pastors attended church as a child and 8 in 10 were part of youth ministry.”⁷ Not all persons who sensed their call early were able to act upon that call for a variety of reasons but eventually entered recognized ministry later in life as second-career pastors. Even so, “only one out of ten local church ministers will retire from that role.”⁸ The Barna Group discovered that “A sense of calling deepens with time and experience. Two-thirds say they feel even more confident about their calling today than when they first entered ministry.”⁹ In other words, it would be beneficial to the church if a second-career pastor were able to stay longer in recognized vocational pastoral ministry and specifically in particular ministry settings.

A good way to alleviate this problem is to encourage realistic expectations on the part of second-career pastors during their transition into a new ministry context. Furthermore, this dissertation proposes that the experiences carried forward into ministry from a previous career have a positive and negative impact the pastorate.

There are few statistics specifically on the ministry experience of second-career pastors; in general, the statistics on pastors in general apply to them. Personal acquaintances and the experiences of the NWRCC Commission on Ministry would

⁶ Collins, 2.

⁷ Barna Group, 11.

⁸ Collins, 3.

⁹ Barna Group, 10.

support the anecdotal evidence that appears to support a claim that an ever-increasing number of pastors are second-career and therefore transitioning into recognized ministry later in life. This is further supported as Barna reports, “As a cohort of leaders, pastors are getting older. As other careers woo millennials and older generations struggle to hand the baton to younger pastors, the median age of pastors has risen from 44 to 54 over the last 25 years.”¹⁰ As this has caused the average age of pastors in general to rise it has also given rise to an increasing percentage of second-career pastors. Barna also reports that, “The percentage of ‘second career clergy’ has been increasing over the past two decades, more pastors are coming to ministry later in life, having first pursued a non-ministry career.”¹¹ This finding then leads to an obvious conclusion, that a person entering recognized vocational pastoral ministry at a later age will have fewer years to be engaged in ministry. This then makes it even more crucial that a second-career pastor is able to thrive in ministry for as long as possible. This is needed because “people are describing the current situation with words like epic proportions, scourge, and plague.”¹² There is clearly a problem of clergy retention. The frequency that pastors leave the ministry within the first five years makes providing and maintaining the necessary numbers of pastors exceedingly difficult. On a more positive note however, in their 2017 “State of the Pastor” report, the Barna Group noted, “For the most part, pastors present a positive picture.”¹³ If this is the case, then why do so many leave early?

¹⁰ Barna Group, 10.

¹¹ Ibid., 15.

¹² Collins, loc. 212, Kindle.

¹³ Barna Group, 16.

It seems the transition into and the first few years in a ministry context are part of the winnowing process of God's servants, an intentional part of God's plan of ministerial formation. There is a marked difference between pastors who are within their first five years of recognized vocational pastoral ministry and those who have served in ministry beyond that point. This difference could account for the difference in the retention rates of all pastors and the findings of the Barna Group that asked pastors to describe themselves. Barna found "The most common self-descriptions by pastors include having a good overall quality of life (91%), ranking spiritual well-being as excellent or good (88%) and being in good emotional and mental health (85%). About three-quarters of pastors frequently feel motivated to be a better leader (73%)."¹⁴ If these statistics hold true, the cause of the rapid loss of pastors reported by the Alban Institute and others could be attributed to the broadness of their respondents. There must be a marked difference in the attitudes and experiences of pastors in their first five years of ministry and those who have stayed in ministry for more than five to ten years. It has been found that, "twenty eight percent say they have been forcefully terminated. Thirty Three percent say that being in ministry is an outright hazard to their family and seventy five percent report severe stress."¹⁵ Barna also reports,

Analysis shows that many are dealing with some level of risk. More than one-third of pastors are at high or medium risk of burnout. Two in five tally high or medium on the risk metric for relational problems. While only one in twenty is at high risk of spiritual difficulties, giving the impression that this is a non-issue for most pastors, an unexpected six in ten fall into the medium risk category, suggesting there are currents worthy of notice just below the placid spiritual surface.¹⁶

¹⁴ Barna Group, 17.

¹⁵ Collins, loc. 229, Kindle.

¹⁶ Ibid.

This appears to indicate that pastors who have stayed in ministry have learned to cope with the difficulties of recognized vocational pastoral ministry and are not in immediate peril of leaving the ministry. Every pastor has to continuously deal with some level of risk. The more experienced second-career pastor should be better able to work through these issues than their traditional counterparts.

Further study specifically on second-career pastors and their longevity in ministry should be done. However, second-career pastors bring unique experiences into ministry, gained from their previous occupations and increased life experiences. These unique experiences have provided a broader base of interpersonal interactions that are available to draw upon when in recognized ministry. These experiences coupled with the cumulative experiences of the calling congregation create a different situation for the second-career pastor than for the pastor who followed a traditional course into ministry. Whether or not these unique experiences extend pastoral longevity or shorten it has yet to be determined. However, the purpose of this dissertation is to show that it is possible to positively enhance a ministry through developing realistic expectations and life-giving practices during a transitional period with the goal of assisting second-career pastors in engaging in long, meaningful, and life-giving pastorates. This dissertation can also apply to people engaged in a wide variety of volunteer ministries, para-church ministry, missionaries, bi-vocational ministers, unpaid lay ministers, bible teachers, lay leaders and most directly to everyone who entered recognized vocational pastoral ministry as a first career.

Alternate Applications

The group that this dissertation would apply to the most directly, other than second-career pastors, would be those individuals who enter ministry as a first career. This would include those who received a bachelors degree in a field of religious study and entered into a recognized vocational ministry directly after graduating from a Bible College or other institution of higher education. It would also apply to anyone entering ministry without formal ministerial education. Within denominations that are congregationally based and/or Independent churches the education requirements for someone called to be a pastor vary widely. For instance, the Southern Baptist Convention states that, “some cooperating churches may require seminary training from an SBC seminary prior to ordination, while others may not; such a requirement is entirely up to the church.”¹⁷ Regardless of educational level or ordination requirements the insights in this dissertation would apply to anyone engaging in ministry as a pastor. The primary difference between them and the second-career pastor being the amount of non-ministry work and the amount of life experience acquired prior to entering vocational ministry.

This would also include bi-vocational pastors, meaning those individuals serving a community of faith as its pastor and also engaged in a non-ministry occupation for pay and benefits. These individuals in what could be viewed as a more traditional situation for pastors in that, “[f]ull-time vocational ministry (American-style) is not normal (less than 200 years old),”¹⁸ would benefit from the information and approaches offered. The

¹⁷ Southern Baptist Convention. *Frequently Asked Questions*. March 2, 2019, <http://www.sbc.net/faqs.asp>.

¹⁸ Hugh Halter, *BIVO: A Modern-Day Guide for Bi-Vocational Saints, Leveraging all of Life into One Calling* (Littleton, CO: Missio Publishing, 2013), Loc 209, Kindle.

obvious difference is that this dissertation assumes a level of engagement for the second-career pastor that is often more single focused toward the ministry setting than is possible for a bi-vocational pastor.

Missionaries could also benefit from the insights offered. Specifically, how to engage the cultural context they are entering and the spiritual disciplines that will undergird their work in a mission field. Missionaries will experience much of the same obstacles during their transition from their former life context into their new context of missionary work as second-career pastors do. They will also need to be able to read the signs that God provides during their transition and their time in the field and just like second-career pastors, “the view toward the other is not one of hostility and distance but one of hospitality, welcome, respect, consideration and love.”¹⁹ A significant difference between missionaries and second-career pastors would be the total immersion into a foreign culture the missionary experiences, which is deeper than that most second-career pastors will experience as they engage the more familiar culture of their homeland. This, however, is less of a factor when the missionaries serve within their own culture.

Individuals called to leadership within parachurch organizations such as college campus chaplaincy, Young Life or Campus Crusade for Christ would also benefit from this dissertation as they will experience a transition into the parachurch organization they are called to serve in, just as a second-career pastor does in entering a recognized vocational pastoral ministry. Often those who accept a leadership role in these organizations are less prepared for them than a second-career pastor entering

¹⁹ Alan Robert Pence, *Something Went Wrong? / Right!: Real Studies of Leadership in Cross-cultural Ministry* (Houston, TX: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights, 2012), loc. 164, Kindle.

congregational ministry. “One thing that is common for those thrust into these roles is that they often receive little or no education or mentoring for it,”²⁰ unlike second-career pastors who are generally much better prepared to enter ministry. The individuals serving in parachurch organizations would be well served to engage in spiritual disciplines, collegial relationships and mentoring just as the second-career pastor is. The largest difference between the two would be the length of time they would serve a particular individual or family. The parachurch organizations named are focused upon a particular demographic for a short duration of time. Whereas one of the intents of this dissertation is to lengthen a second-career pastors time in a particular ministry setting serving an intergenerational demographic.

More broadly this dissertation would benefit and applies to all baptized believers who are endeavoring to live out the call they received in their baptisms to be part of a royal priesthood.²¹ They are called to ministry by God to serve within their families and social circles and so, “we are called to be stewards of God’s love, serving those whom we lead by helping them reach their maximum potential. As we are blessed, so we are to bless others.”²² Everything in this dissertation applies to all believers except the idea of transition. Unlike the second-career pastor, not all believers transition into their ministry context because they already exist within it and have a marked advantage over the pastor who transitions into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry context because they are indigenous to the context and the second-career pastor is not.

²⁰ Pence, loc. 124, Kindle.

²¹ 1 Peter 2:9

²² Christina T. Accornero, “Living Into the Call,” in *Next Steps to Ministry: Entering a Life in Christian Ministry*, ed. David Markle (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2007), 125.

The nature of any dissertation is to be narrowly focused and not an exhaustive discussion of all the possible applications of the work. This dissertation primarily addresses the second-career pastor and their call into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry. It does apply to a wide variety of situations in which individuals endeavor to serve God and others. In every new endeavor for God there is a call, a transition and practices that will help to strengthen and lengthen the time of service in the particular ministry.

Second-Career Pastors

Second-career pastors are becoming more common in recognized ministry. In 2017, The Barna Group, reported that the average age of ministers has risen by a decade since the 1990s. Now the “the average age is 54. Only one in seven pastors is under 40, and half are over 55. The percentage of church leaders 65 and older has nearly tripled, meaning there are now more pastors in the oldest age bracket than there are leaders younger than 40.”²³ There are many factors influencing this rise in average age. People are living longer, millennials are choosing other ways to serve than recognized vocational pastoral ministry, an increasing number of people are entering ministry at an older age after having pursued other occupations, and pastors are able to stay in ministry to an older age. Ministry and those involved in it have changed, “radical changes in our society over the past fifty years have fundamentally redefined the very nature of what it means to be in

²³ “Leaders and Pastors,” *The Aging of America’s Pastors*, Barna Group, March 1, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/aging-americas-pastors/>.

ministry.”²⁴ A result of this is the entry of increasing numbers of second-career individuals into ministry.

The factor that directly concerns this dissertation is the rising numbers of second-career pastors entering recognized vocational ministry. Again Barna reports, “More specific to church ministry, the percentage of ‘second-career clergy’ has been increasing over the past two decades, particularly in non-mainline churches and historically Black congregations; more pastors are coming to ministry later in life, having first pursued a non-ministry career.”²⁵ Two other factors influencing the rise in age of clergy is the financial uncertainty of older clergy that they can afford to leave ministry and the lack of younger people entering recognized or vocational ministry. The first factor was exacerbated by the economic crisis of 2008 which, “impacted pension plans, 401(k)s and home values, and many ‘senior’ senior pastors are not yet financially prepared to forego a regular paycheck.”²⁶ Meanwhile, younger people do not consider recognized ministry as a viable financial path or one that is as socially attractive as it once was. There are not enough young people following a traditional path into recognized vocational pastoral ministry forcing churches to look to older individuals to fill their ministry needs, which in turn exacerbates the lack of attractiveness to younger people. It is reported that finding future pastors is a significant challenge for all Christian churches: “two out of three current pastors believe identifying suitable candidates is becoming more difficult (69%),

²⁴ Sheri S. Ferguson, “Clergy Compassion Fatigue,” *Family Therapy Magazine*, March/April 2007, 16.

²⁵ “Leaders and Pastors.”

²⁶ Ibid.

even though a majority believes their church is doing what it takes (69%).”²⁷ It follows then that an ever-increasing number of pastors being called to serve the local church for the first time are older second-career individuals.

The Non-Traditional Path

Although God has called all Christians into ministry through their commitment to Christ and their baptisms, only some are called into church or denominationally recognized vocational pastoral ministry. In the past, there was a common traditional way in the protestant mainline church for those called to enter into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. The individual would hear a call from God at some point in the teenage years, often during a camp or revival meeting. They would then complete their high school graduation requirements and graduate from high school. Upon graduation, they would enroll in a four-year college - preferably one supported by their denomination - and complete a course of study that included at least some religious education. After receiving a bachelor’s degree in religious studies, they would then go on to enter a denominationally recognized seminary, and, after three or four more years of rigorous study, they would be awarded a master’s degree in divinity. After the successful pursuit of their higher education and completion of their studies, an individual could reasonably expect to enter into pastoral ministry in their late twenties, well educated, and sometimes thousands of dollars in debt - without any guarantee of full-time employment or meaningful work.

²⁷ “Leaders and Pastors.”

In contrast, second-career pastors, having not received God's call or having chosen not to heed it at a younger age, enter ministry with years of relevant life-experiences learned in their former occupations and the years that they have lived. Their theological training is often a mixture of formal education at denominational institutions, similar to that received by those who took a more traditional path into recognized vocational pastoral ministry as a first career, on-line courses, continuing education courses, or seminars attended over the course of several years. In the Protestant mainline tradition, all of those who receive ordination have to complete a seminary education, and those who are licensed or commissioned have to demonstrate competency in core areas of theology and church polity. These education opportunities often take years longer to complete than what is referred to as the 'traditional path' above.

These experiences give the second-career pastor a tremendous amount of experience that is not available to those who enter ministry by following the traditional path described previously. These experiences also give the second-career pastor expectations of how organizations and the individuals in them should act and function. These expectations can help and hinder their pastoral ministry. On one hand, second-career pastors' experiences prepare them for unusual circumstances and help them overcome obstacles. For instance, when dealing with building maintenance issues, a second-career pastor is more likely to have had experience with repair or engaging with contractors and job bids than a less experienced pastor. In addition, a second-career pastor might have learned how to interact with a wider variety of people and personal circumstances. On the other hand, their past experiences can also help introduce negative and unhelpful behaviors and norms learned in non-ministry settings. For instance,

“positions which bring particularly painful past experiences to the surface or which present you with an opportunity to grind an ax are best avoided.”²⁸ An example of which might be the overly aggressive male or female congregant who triggers the pastor’s fight or flight response or the crisis they react too quickly to without the benefit of prayer and guidance. Second-career pastors may avoid positions that do this because of their experience in the workplace. However, their experiences in the workplace might increase the number of painful past experiences to be avoided or the frequency of issues to dwell upon, thus limiting their ability to thrive in recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

The ability to manage expectations is critical to the vitality and longevity of a pastorate. The symbol ‘manage’ is an understandable term used to denote the activity of organizing, directing, and planning. All activity needs to be managed, and it is commonly expected that second-career pastors have the ability to manage their attitudes and activity. This is not to say that a second-career pastor serves without dependence on God, but rather recognition that everyone in a recognized vocational pastoral ministry has to manage his or her ministry.

The ideal time to begin assessment and management of expectations is during the transition from the former career into church or denominationally recognized vocational pastoral ministry. In his book *Entering Wonderland: A Toolkit for Pastors New to a Church*, Robert Harris states that the reason for a short pastorate, barring any clergy misconduct, is usually a difference between the new pastor’s expectations and the congregation’s: “A mismatch between their sense of where the congregation needed to go

²⁸ David Markle, *Next Steps to Ministry: Entering a Life in Christian Ministry* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2007), 110.

and that of various persons within the church created tensions the pastor could not overcome.”²⁹ The willingness to establish realistic and helpful expectations, while at the same time being open to new experiences that do not conform to their expectations, is important. The successful melding of the second-career pastor’s expectations and that of the congregation they are called to serve is one result of managing expectations during the transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

During the transition from a non-ministry career into church or denominationally recognized vocational pastoral ministry, many challenges arise for the second-career pastor. Transition not only affects one’s profession but all aspects of a person’s life. For a second-career pastor, this transition mirrors the effect of their initial baptism into the Body of Christ, a death to their old life and a rebirth into another, becoming a new person without forgetting the old. Their accumulated experiences should be assessed during their transition in order to allow their experiences to help rather than hinder the transition.

A small survey was conducted for this dissertation in order to identify some of the obstacles experienced during a transition from a non-ministry career into church or denominationally recognized vocational pastoral ministry by engaging individuals who have entered some form of recognized vocational pastoral ministry or who have considered entering the ministry and have either given up on the journey or have not successfully completed it. The focus survey solicited answers to the following question: “What have been the professional and personal obstacles, impediments, closed doors, etc. you have experienced in entering the ministry?” The answers to this question were varied but not surprising.

²⁹ Harris, loc. 36, Kindle.

For almost all female respondents, their gender proved to be a barrier to successfully answering God's call into ordained or recognized vocational ministry. The inertia in the church, meaning the unwillingness of people to constructively implement change as opposed to the apathetic fatalism that accompanies most inevitable change, was noted as an obstacle. For several individuals, their perceived immaturity, based upon age or education, was another obstacle. In some way or another, several were affected by the financial realities of pursuing recognized vocational pastoral ministry. For some respondents, this proved an impassable obstacle, and for others, it was just another hurdle to jump. Health issues also proved to be an impediment, as well as age and the perception of ability based upon it. One respondent experienced war first-hand, and that experience called into question his call, faith, and ability to serve God in a recognized vocational pastoral ministry capacity, primarily after having experienced man's inhumanity to man and his inability as a chaplain to answer the questions of evil. After his experiences, he also began to question his denomination's stances on social issues. Another person mentioned a reluctance to enter into a patriarchal system, and still another mentioned his negative experience with church politics and administration.

In addition to specific obstacles, there were more general reasons mentioned that interfered with a person answering a call to recognized vocational pastoral ministry. The reasons given were a willingness to forgive and tolerate disagreeable people, preach, pray, and study regularly. It also became clear that a denomination's and/or church's committee on ministry or governing body that regulates and oversees the ministry for the organization was an obstacle through which a person seeking recognized vocational pastoral ministry had to get past. It should also be noted that there were also those who

could recall no significant obstacles in their path toward recognized vocational pastoral ministry or they were given great assistance in overcoming the obstacles they faced to a degree that rendered the impediment no obstacle at all. During a transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry from a non-ministry occupation, many issues can arise. Many of the issues that arise are common to many second-career pastors, but the specific combination of issues is unique to each individual, and still, each person entering ministry as a second-career has to recognize and answer God's call.

Conclusion

Although all Christians are called into the ministry in their baptisms, not all are called into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry, or a specific task and place. A second-career pastor, whether ordained, licensed, or commissioned is called and set apart by God to a specific task that is recognized by their church. A second-career pastor is any individual who first pursued a non-ministry career prior to entering a recognized vocational pastoral ministry at a designated location or in a specific ministry area. Their path into ministry, although similar to traditional pastors, was engaged in later in life, after gaining significant life experiences. This dissertation is designed to help the second-career pastor's new life be pleasing to God and life giving to them. It attempts to do this by helping them recognize and manage both their own expectations of ministry as well as the expectations of those they have been called to serve. It encourages them to do this during their transition into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry setting. It will do this by exploring God's call into ordained or recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

The Bible is filled with call narratives. From Adam to Jesus' original twelve disciples, God called a variety of individuals into service in specific tasks, at specific

times. The next chapter discusses how God calls an individual into recognized vocational pastoral ministry, and how that call is affirmed and experienced by the second-career pastor. It will discuss ordination or licensing, answering God's call, belonging, and the danger of answering. All in all, this is an effort to help a second-career pastor entering a new recognized vocational pastoral ministry, experience a vital, God-pleasing, new life in ministry.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CALL

*Hello?
Hi! This is God, I've got a job for you.*

Sergeant Pete Answering the Call

Sergeant Pete came home from the Gulf War emotionally exhausted and spiritually dead. He arrived back at his duty station in the States to a hero's welcome, but no one he felt close to was there to meet him when he got off the plane. None of his family made the trip to welcome him safely back. He was alone, abandoned by God and everyone else. He had answered his nation's call and the reward was isolation and depression. He was allowed to take leave and he chose to stay at his base rather than go home. He partied for thirty days straight. It was good to be a hero, He hit the lowest point in his life. That time caused him to realize that he had left God behind and lived his life ignoring everything he was raised to believe.

Pete was taught that he should be following Christ as one called by Jesus and baptized into the body of Christ. Pete knew that to follow Christ meant to live a Christ-like life, but he had given that up and only followed his own desires in all that he did. Coincidentally, his enlistment ended three months after he returned to the States and, despite being counseled to remain in the Air Force, Sergeant Pete did not reenlist but rather packed his bags, drove 1,000 miles to pick up his son, and drove another 2,000 miles to his hometown. It was just Pete and his five-year-old son alone in his hometown, in the house where he grew up. His parents had moved, his siblings had families and they did not have much time for him after the welcome home party. Pete was isolated and

alone, hiding out with his little boy, who he lost every school year because of an imposed custody arrangement.

Pete made two choices that changed his life. The first was he joined the Air National Guard after a summer away from the military and went back to doing what he had been doing. He was told he was very good at what he did. He did it because he did not know what else to do. It was not an entirely positive experience for the next thirteen years. He generally just wanted to be done. The thought of doing it for the rest of his life quite literally tasted like eating ashes.

The second choice Pete made was to accept his father's invitation to go back to church. Pete was an exhausted, very angry, and unhappy man who could not quite locate the path back to Jesus or anything else positive in life. Despite this, his church stuck with him, offered him grace, invited him into service, and in time encouraged him to consider recognized vocational pastoral ministry. His father, his pastor and other members of his church began to mentor and coach him in the Christian faith. Sergeant Pete began to remember how to pray, started to study scripture, talked extensively with his pastor, his family, and his friends and was supported as he began to hear God's call to ministry. His pastor willingly mentored him and invited him deeper into God's service. He was introduced to the concept of discernment and entered into discernment of God's call. The signs consistently pointed Pete toward recognized vocational pastoral ministry. His attitude about life started to change, then his circumstances started to change, and God consistently led him by the hand into an abundant life and toward recognized vocational pastoral ministry. In time Sergeant Pete was able to retire from the Air Force and answer

God's call to ministry by enrolling in seminary during his transition between a non-ministry career and his next career in recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

A Disciple of Christ's Understanding of Call

The 'Christian call' is the term that will be used in this dissertation to denote the movement from a previous context into the context of a church or denominationally recognized vocational pastoral ministry. This movement from one context into another will be referred to as a 'transition'. A transition is like traveling along an unfamiliar path. While on this path signs and obstacles appear. The ability to read the signs during the transition into ordained ministry can aid a second-career person responding to God's call into recognized vocational pastoral ministry immensely by helping them stay on the path and avoid obstacles. The assistance of a Christian community is essential in confirming the individual's call into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. The understanding of the narraphor of their life as it entwines with the narraphor of those in their Christian Community and the narraphor that God is writing in creation ensures a faithful, God-inspired, Holy Spirit-led transition into recognized vocational ministry. The ability to read the signs provided by God during the transition along the path to ordination or licensing and involvement in a recognized vocational ministry enables the second-career pastor the ability to fully immerse himself into the meta-narraphor of God and enjoy a faithful, spirit-filled ministry.

God calls every Christian into salvation and service. God's call is less a feeling than an order. God persists in calling until it is obeyed. God's call happens in every Christian's life regardless of whether they enter into church or denominationally

recognized vocational pastoral ministry or not. Without a call from God, no one is really a Christian, let alone called to serve in pastoral ministry: “The initial call to ministry, the one every member of the church shares, is the initial call to be a Christian.”¹ The metaphor of ‘call’ elicits in some the image of a persistent phone call from God, in which the recipient then either chooses to answer or not; however, no metaphor will ever be adequate in describing what awakens in a person when she or he answers the call to Christian ministry. This dissertation focuses strictly on the call of God to recognized, vocational pastoral ministry that is received through the invitation or summons of the community of faith or the institution of the church. This is referred to in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as, “The ‘ecclesiastical call’, which is the invitation or summons of the community of faith or the institution of the church.”² This is a mandatory aspect of the call of an individual into recognized, vocational pastoral ministry. No individual can declare by themselves that they have been called by God without the recognition of a community of faith and be recognized by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or any other mainline denomination. The individual’s call must be confirmed by others.

There is the question of how a person is to know that God has called and it is not just a feeling. Preston Sprinkle writes,

No one in the New Testament ever ‘felt called’ to ministry. Ministry is something that all Christians have been given gifts to engage in. Our obedience to ministry isn’t contingent upon us feeling up for it. No one in the New Testament ever ‘felt called’ to be a pastor.

¹ Stephen Sprinkle, 13.

² Ibid.

They desired to be one (1 Tim 3:1) and others confirmed that they had the gifts and character.³

Trusted counsel by mentors or clergy coaches, study of scripture, prayer, discernment, and the validation of a community of faith are all essential elements in leading or dissuading a person from answering a call. The early teaching from their parents, Sunday school teachers, camp leaders, youth leaders, pastors, and other authority figures within the context of the Christian Church are God's signs and symbols of faith that directly impact the trajectory of those who are being called. Even more importantly than the words spoken is the adherence to the words spoken, the doctrines stated, and the creeds followed by the above-mentioned authority figures. This adherence is important while participating in the life of the church, and it is even more important that they be demonstrated in the entirety of their lives. This is a critical witness to those who are called into ministry.

God's sign to those being called by God are placed by the power and movement of the Holy Spirit, or absence of it, and are supported by the behaviors and demeanor of professing Christians. The incorporation of the tenets of Christianity in the lives of the professing Christians with the most influence in the lives of those who are called is critical for all those who are discerning if God is truly calling them into recognized vocational ministry.⁴ The authority figures' lives reflect the faith that they profess, whether it informs the entirety of their existence or it is compartmentalized, having little

³ Preston Sprinkle, "Theology in the Raw," *Is Feeling Called a Biblical Concept*, October 18, 2014, <https://www.prestonsprinkle.com/blogs/theologyintheraw/2014/10/is-feeling-called-a-biblical-concept?rq=call>.

⁴ Such as: the Greatest Commandment, Matthew 22:36–40; the Golden Rule, Matthew 7:12; and the Beatitudes, Matthew 5:1–11.

impact on the daily life. Their demeanor, whether they act from a place of joy or obligation, if they resent those who they serve, or act as if it is Christ himself that they are serving, is observed through their facial expressions, gestures, and posture. All are God's signs and guides to the person being called, into an ever-deeper relationship with the divine Godhead of the Christian faith.

The art and music that is providentially experienced by those who are being called also serve as God's signs and symbols of the faith that can encourage one to answer. Images and sounds serve to guide one ever closer to God and can affirm a call to recognized vocational ministry. Rowena Loverance stated, "The purpose of Christian art is to deepen our encounter with God. From the tiny to the monumental, from private meditation, to a massive stained-glass window in a great cathedral, the function is the same: to catch the imagination, to open the heart and the mind, so that we may better hear the divine promptings."⁵ Music serves a similar function; any genre of music can serve to strike a chord within those being called into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. These can be used to lead the call towards the Divine, affirming their call to recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

God also reveals signs in other ways, such as symbols. Symbols represent a Christian's relationship with God. Symbols as well as signs serve to call a person into recognized vocational ministry. The affirmation of an individual's community of faith can serve as both an important symbol as well as a sign for those being called into recognized vocational ministry. The confidence to ask a person to serve within the church is a sign and the invitation to leadership a symbol of God's call. The recognition of God's

⁵ Rowena Loverance, *Christian Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 6.

call to an individual by their pastor, family, friends, and community of faith is a critical sign, and the public acknowledgment of it is a symbol. Whether the pastor who is told of the suspected call tries to dissuade the one being called, or if they support and encourage their call, it symbolizes the process of discernment of God's call upon them. If a close friend recognizes the potential in the one being called, or if the friend seems puzzled that the individual could or would be called, it symbolizes the struggle to clearly understand God's call. Whether co-workers meet the announcement of a call into recognized vocational pastoral ministry with derision and amazement or they acknowledge the fitness and the possibility that God might call the person, it symbolizes the nature of the path upon which the called travels during his or her transition. If the Christian family of the one called enthusiastically supports the call or sullenly resigns themselves to it out of fear of God's displeasure, it is a symbol of a sign along the way. All of these reactions, the words that accompany them, and the feelings the reactions engender all symbolize the signs of whether the perceived call is really from God or is a product of something else.

The call is the metaphor that Christians have used that equates to what others would call a transition. A call into recognized vocational pastoral ministry can be a long, drawn out process. Before the call is answered, many decisions have to be made and signs read. It can be either a long frustrating and messy process with many steps forward and backward, or it can be a relatively straight-forward process that is filled with contentment and joyful anticipation of what God has in store for the one called. It will be some combination of joy, expectation, frustration, despair, exhilaration, and a host of other emotions as those being called read the signs symbolized by their interaction with

the world around them as they transition into ordination or licensing and recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

Ordination

‘Ordination’ or ‘licensing’ is the term used to denote the setting a person apart by God for the special task of pastoring or leading a congregation: “Ordination is a rite of the church, rooted in the ministry of the whole people of God. In ordination, the ordained receives a special calling to ministry by God’s gracious action.”⁶ This understanding of ordination or licensing is rooted in the “Protestant teaching called the priesthood of all believers, following 1 Peter 2:9.”⁷ Every baptized believer as a part of the body of Christ accepts the mission God gives the church and implements it in their individual and corporate lives guided by the Holy Spirit, as opposed to the belief that only a select few are permitted to participate in the saving acts of God’s grace as priests of the church. Jesus’ disciples were ordained when he called them: “Come, follow me ... and I’ll show you how to fish for people.”⁸ Disciples of Christ understand that Jesus has called them also to be his students through the action of the Holy Spirit working through the body of Christ and to be sent out as when Jesus sent some ahead of him: “After these things, the Lord commissioned seventy-two others and sent them on ahead in pairs to every city and place he was about to go.”⁹ God continues to call some into a particular ministry in a

⁶ Stephen Sprinkle, 12.

⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁸ Matthew 4:19 (CEB).

⁹ Luke 10:1 (CEB).

particular place, into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry, to serve God by serving, teaching, and leading a community of faith.

The official position of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada is as follows:

As head of his body, the church, Christ calls upon his people to participate in his ministry and thus to make known in the life of the world the reality of God...By baptism all Christians are inducted into the corporate ministry of God's people and by sharing in it fulfill their own callings as servants of Christ...Within the ministry of the whole people of God there is and has been from the beginning a representative ministry called by God and authorized by the church. While all Christians share in the corporate ministry, the term minister particularly describes a person to whom the church entrusts representative responsibility. Through the centuries the Order of Ministry, in various offices, has been responsible to lead in transmitting the Christian tradition from one generation to another, translating and interpreting the Scriptures, proclaiming the gospel of Christ, administering the sacraments, serving to maintain a company of Christians in continuity with the life and faith of the Apostles and acting as pioneers and leaders in the church's reconciling mission to the world.¹⁰

Being ordained or licensed, from this point forward referred to as 'recognized vocational pastoral ministry', is to be given a special task to benefit the entire body of Christ. It is the task of being called to lead, teach, and serve a community of faith.

Answering God's Call

Answering God's call to recognized vocational pastoral ministry is one of the most significant events in a person's life. However, "[l]ots of newly called ministers decide at the outset to serve in some ministry role other than on the staff of an existing church."¹¹ Upon answering God's call to ministry, the changes of reality, and the feeling

¹⁰ Stephen Sprinkle, 14.

¹¹ Collins, loc. 205, Kindle.

of disconnection from the former life, are common experiences of those who are transitioning from a non-ministry career into recognized vocational pastoral ministry either through ordination or licensing. Old priorities and relationships are often replaced or overshadowed by new ones. The exhilaration of the journey can be disconcerting to those who knew the individual before their call and unsettling to the one who is called. These experiences can cause a person to have doubts about accepting the call before she or he ever enter recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

Throughout all of time, God has called individuals to serve. An example of this occurs in the second chapter of Genesis when, “The Lord God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it.”¹² God continued to call people to serve in specific ways throughout the first testament. Abram and Sarai, Moses, David, Gideon, and Jeremiah, to name a few, were called. When God descended and the Word became flesh, Jesus called Peter and the disciples, as well as the Apostle Paul, to serve God: “As Jesus walked alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, because they were fishermen. ‘Come follow me,’ he said, ‘and I’ll show you how to fish for people.’”¹³ For all the biblical characters who were called by God, the call represented a significant event in their lives that changed everything about the lives they were living before their call.

Estle Harlan, a second-career pastor, writes about her call, “I had reached the traditional age of retirement, but I was acting instead on a career transition in later life,

¹² Genesis 2:15 (CEB).

¹³ Matthew 4:18–19 (CEB).

and I was doing so with a sense of calling.”¹⁴ Being a second-career individual gave her the awareness that she would have to prepare during her transition. A second-career pastor can prepare by reflecting on their previous career experiences as a valuable resource and consider how they might assist them in recognized vocational pastoral ministry. Harlan continues in expressing her own transitional experience on entering ministry with these words, “In preparing for this juncture in my life, I had embraced career transition as an act of stewardship ... I viewed the skills of my professional career and my continued energy, acuity, and ability as my treasure. I could transition my treasure into a later life career, one that also represented a personal sense of calling.”¹⁵ This understanding of the experiences a person gained in former occupations as gifts from God allows a second-career pastor to view their life experiences as a valuable resource to be utilized for God’s purposes, rather than discarded as irrelevant.

After God’s call has been accepted, a second-career pastor often discovers a new sense of purpose and becomes aware of a state of eager anticipation to start in ministry. At the same time, a certain amount of trepidation is experienced. A sense of uncertainty for what the future holds enters into the life of those who are called into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry. As one reads the signs, they must realize that not every sign is going to seem positive, but even so may still be affirming God’s call. Answering God’s call involves many people, all of whom have their own understandings and expectations of ministry and the individual called. For example, the childhood pastor’s attitude when

¹⁴ Estle Harlan, “Later Life Career Transitions: Exploration of Factors and Turning Points That Influence Career Transitions in Later Life,” (doctoral diss., George Fox University, 2013), 7.

¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

he makes the statement that the called should do anything else if it is possible, is unexpected. A co-worker or confidant that asks what qualifications the called possesses can be a challenge to the call, but an opportunity to put into words the person's gifts and calling. When the upper judicatory who is supposed to be caring for the called says to stay home and be a good elder, it is a chance to reevaluate what God is calling the second-career individual to do. The fear of financial insecurity and the insertion of instability into current relationships can be signs and perceived impediments to those called and can encourage continued reflection of the call. All of these examples and many other circumstances can have either positive or negative results for the call and the one called. Answering God's call is a time of transition. It can challenge a second-career pastor's sense of self and belonging.

Belonging

For those called by God into recognized vocational pastoral ministry, their sense of self and belonging will be challenged as they enter their new life. Every individual has some sense of belonging. For many people that can be their place of employment. Whether or not that place is a positive or negative experience, it is the place the person identifies with. As the second career person receives a call into recognized vocational pastoral ministry and begins to die to his or her former occupation and career life, a person will start to lose a sense of belonging even while she or he continues to reside in the old context.

As a person begins the journey of dying to an old self context, a new question surfaces: where do I belong now? As a person acknowledges God's claim upon his or her

life, “shaping their thoughts, words, and beliefs to better reflect the Lord’s purposes,”¹⁶ the context begins to change; mentally, emotionally and physically it can become difficult to feel a sense of belonging, especially if all signs don’t seem to be pointing toward ordination or licensing. What is this sense of belonging? Sara Grant, in her dissertation discussing the transition of registered nurses from the private to the public sector, defines it as identification: “They define identification as ‘the perception of oneness with or belonging to an organization.’”¹⁷

Organizational identification has been found to lead to a number of beneficial outcomes important to organizations such as goal achievement, motivation, job satisfaction, a “sense of decision making and decision making consistent with organizational values, and lower intentions to leave.”¹⁸ Depending on the depth of relationship with God and the church, a person answering a call to recognized vocational pastoral ministry might start to feel adrift, however “an appetite for the will of God will fuel a willingness to explore uncharted territory,”¹⁹ which reflects faith in God and a sense of belonging. If their relationship with God and the church is not strong and consistent, they may not have a sense of belonging. This can be particularly true if an ordained, commissioned or licensed person has not been called to a congregation or a recognized ministry position. It can also be surprising how two people from similar

¹⁶ Cynthia Rembert James, “Finding a Placement That Fits,” in *Next Steps to Ministry: Entering a Life in Christian Ministry*, ed. David Markle (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2007), 98.

¹⁷ Sara C. Grant, “Career Transitioning Between the Private and Public/Nonprofit Sectors: An Exploratory Study of Registered Nurses,” (doctoral diss., New York University, 2006), 5.

¹⁸ Grant, 5.

¹⁹ James, 99.

backgrounds and similar contexts can react so differently to the call of God into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. Grant continues, “That even for two people undergoing the same career change, different contrasts will emerge because they are determined in part by what is important to the individual.”²⁰ However, she also contends that contrasts emerge from differences between the old and the new setting and are also determined in part by characteristics of each organization, including organizational culture.

There are also benefits to answering God’s call to recognized vocational pastoral ministry: a new more positive outlook on life and others, a new and better understanding of oneself, a sense of grace received and given, a prevalence of forgiveness, forbearance, and the assurance of a place in the Kingdom of God can be life giving experiences that are the reward of accepting a call into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. It is amazing how many different experiences await the second-career person upon entering into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. Individual experiences vary widely and are heavily influenced by their sense of belonging in the recognized vocational pastoral ministry position as well as its realities. Answering God’s call can also be dangerous.

The Dangers of Answering

There are many areas of consideration for those who have a clear call from God to enter recognized vocational pastoral ministry. There are many facets of the called’s life that will feel pressure because of the change to it. Answering God’s call to recognized vocational pastoral ministry results in discomfort and hardship: “It is not just God’s

²⁰ Grant, 5.

choice of someone that is wonderful and terrible; it is God's choice of me. When it begins to sink into the mind that it is no longer another person who must stretch out on the Word of God, but it is I, myself, who must, sentimentality and fantasy go by the board quickly."²¹ For those who do not have a call recognized and affirmed by others, especially by their community of faith, there is significant danger in pursuing recognized vocational ministry: "Men and women put themselves in peril when they dare to take God's Word on their lips."²² As Willimon has said, "ordained pastoral ministry as a profession is no easy way to earn a living."²³ Feeling called is not enough; the church and those who know the individual the best must recognize the call. The potential damage that can be done to the church as well as the individual when a community of faith does not affirm a person's call is great.

For those who are called, the following are some of the situations that could threaten them, their families, and the vitality of their ministries. God is insistent, and when God calls, career and family decisions may cause a delay in answering. A person with a family and debt, for example, may feel a strong sense of call into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. Once they find out that they will be required to relocate, which generally means relocating their family for a minimum of three years, but often ends up being much longer, the person may find it difficult to follow their call. These can be circumstances such as nearness to retirement, the children's year in school, and a

²¹ Stephen Sprinkle, 104.

²² Ibid.

²³ Willimon, 24.

spouse's career. All of these issues can potentially cause discomfort, hardship, or delay depending on the decisions made by the called individual.

The financial cost of following a call can be a serious and significant issue. The hope that the money will be available from some manifestation of the church to help cover the costs is seldom realized fully, and that can lead to discomfort and difficulty for everyone involved, not just the called. This can also become a burden on any congregation that calls a person to a recognized vocational pastoral ministry context because of the pastor's debt load.

The academic rigor of a seminary education has proven to catch some off guard, and the impractical nature of that education can be another danger. The requirement to learn subjects that appear at first to be purely academic and the lack of actual training in how to lead or administer a church can make the ministry education seem impractical and therefore unnecessary. Dr. Willimon reflects on this when he wrote, "Sometimes seminarians complain that the seminary's expectations of them are too demanding, that the course is too difficult, or that it is placing academic burdens upon them that they cannot bear. Perhaps they feel that their sincerity and their sense of vocation are enough to sustain them in ministry. They are wrong."²⁴ Not even the preparation a person received from their local church, from their life experiences and their sincere engagement with God through scripture and prayer, may be enough, even if the person answering the call may think they are.

Some who feel called into recognized vocational pastoral ministry realize that they may feel called, but that they may not be. They start to realize this because their

²⁴ Willimon, 24.

pastors do not recognize their gifts or encourage them. Their congregations fail to affirm them. The question then arises in their minds, has God called them? They may have misinterpreted what they felt. If God has called them, God who promises to equip the saints for ministry will do so by using the discomfort of not being affirmed as a means to sharpen God's servants and humble them so that they can be equipped.

Another danger is “when features of the job are unanticipated.”²⁵ Who has not entered a new job or a new context in life and not found unanticipated aspects of the new job or context? There is often a perception that everything is going to be better at the new place, it must be better than the current place; and regardless, nothing will occur that cannot be easily adjusted for and handled adequately. For the person entering into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry, this can be an extremely problematic perception. It is almost guaranteed that the person answering the call will find unanticipated features in their new ministry. The unanticipated can be emotionally, spiritually, and physically draining. “Difficulties in accurately forecasting internal reactions or feelings to the new experiences”²⁶ might well be the most difficult issue to cope with. Having clearly received a call from God into recognized vocational pastoral ministry and then called to a particular context, a person thinking themselves well-prepared may find themselves surprised by the intense highs and lows that can accompany the start of a new pastorate. The feelings of elation after receiving affirmation from their pastor, friends, and community of faith cause an almost giddy feeling that a successful ministry undertaking and a recognizable deepening of their relationship with God are guaranteed. However,

²⁵ Grant, 32.

²⁶ Grant, 32.

heartbreaking, inexplicable resistance and failure can follow this feeling of elation. The seemingly unwarranted criticism of those they are called to serve, the failure of faithful efforts, and the pettiness of fellow Christians can make a pastor feel as if he or she is on an unending roller coaster ride in ministry. Despite a pastor's sincere faith and desire to serve God well, "Every Eucharist is profaned by human hands. Every message we preach leaps from our lips with leaden wings. Infinity yawns before ministers and threatens to swallow us up. Yet the mystery that terrifies us also fascinates us, will not let us be, will not let us go, lures us like a moth to the flame for the burning."²⁷ Pastors are called and equipped by God, and it can be demoralizing that despite this, it is inevitable that conflict and unexpected situations will arise in ministry. God has also equipped pastors to discern God's will and read the signs during their ministry.

Conclusion

The ability to read the signs along the way into recognized vocational pastoral ministry can aid the person responding to God's call immensely. The assistance of a Christian Community is essential in confirming the individuals call into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. The understanding of the narraphor of their life as it entwines with the narraphor of those in their Christian Community and the narraphor that God is writing in creation will ensure a faithful, God inspired, Holy Spirit-lead transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. The ability to read the signs and symbols provided by God along the path to ministry will ensure second-career pastors the ability to fully recognize their immersion into the meta-narraphor of God. A second-career

²⁷ Stephen Sprinkle, 105.

pastor's total immersion into God's story and service makes ministry radically different in some ways from other occupations even as similarities exist: "While ministry has characteristics of a profession, it is not a profession that may be chosen by someone from among other provocative ways to live one's life. Ministry is something more. Ministry is a vocation. Ministry chooses us."²⁸ This fact makes it more than a change of occupation for a second-career pastor—it makes it a change of life. A transition into ministry is a transition into a new life and a new way of being.

Now that the call to ministry has been explored and the joys and dangers of answering have been considered, it is assumed that those who continue to read intend to answer God's call to recognized vocational pastoral ministry or at least are still considering it. The next chapter will discuss the expectations that come along with the call. Not only does God have expectations of all those called, but second-career individuals also bring a host of expectations with them on their journey into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. In addition, all those they come into contact with will also have a set of expectations of their own. These expectations are related to how and why a person is called and into what they are called. Also, on a professional level, every ministry location, as well as the individuals belonging to it, have expectations of every pastor that is called to serve at their location. There are both corporate and individual expectations at play in every ministry context. How these can work together for the building up of the body of Christ, and at the same time help the second-career pastor not only survive but thrive beyond all expectations, are questions the next chapter will begin to address.

²⁸ Stephen Sprinkle, 106.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPECTATIONS

Wow, I didn't see that coming!

Pastor Pete

Seminary was an informative, self-reflecting, and life changing experience. Pete was taught intentional self-reflection in clinical pastoral education and in learning about spiritual direction. He was immersed in the Holy Scriptures and led in deep theological exploration. He found both affirmation for his call and challenges to it. While in seminary, he was invited to serve as a student associate minister for youth and families. The Senior Pastor of the church was immediately assigned the task of mentoring Pete. Pete asked the Senior Pastor and other church leaders what they expected him to do. Their initial answer was teaching Sunday school and leading youth group. This sounded straight forward enough and fit into Pete's church experience. Other than that, he was told he could do whatever he wanted. Pete moved to the town where his student church was located, and he and his family joined the church and became involved in the community.

Even as he was enrolled in seminary classes, he began to serve his student church. The first month went fine and then he was asked what his plans for Halloween were. He was caught unprepared as he was unaware that he was responsible for a Halloween party. In quick succession, he was asked about a Christmas program and a youth mission trip, neither of which was mentioned when he was interviewed for the position nor when he inquired about his duties in the role. For Christmas, he was also surprised he was

supposed to ask an older gentleman to be Santa Claus at church as well as organize a Christmas program. Pete asked the senior pastor and elders of the church what he was expected to do and he was consistently told that what he did was up to him. He thought that meant it was up to him—as in there were no expectations for him as the pastor for youth and children, other than what had been expressed in the first days of his ministry. That the congregation's expectations were expressed with little time to implement them surprised Pete.

For a mission trip, he was to pick a place to take the youth for a week and independently make all the arrangements. He was expected to participate fully in the life of the church as well as plan, organize, and lead with very little assistance or guidance from the congregation. Pete felt inadequate to organize a Christmas program, and he was unsure what a youth mission trip had in common with his experience deploying in the military. Pete learned a valuable lesson after those first events were complete. He learned he could ask for help from his wife and the congregation. The Christmas program was different than the congregation was used to, but it was well received. Santa was quite happy to take part, even though he was asked late. The mission trip to Portland, OR to participate in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was a rewarding and community building experience for the youth, adult volunteers, and Pete.

After seminary graduation, Pete was called to serve a small church in a small town in southeast Washington. After six months, Pete felt good about all that was accomplished, however, he no longer had a mentor that was immediately available to him. The sanctuary had a new coat of paint, screens and projectors were installed, the exterior of the building was painted, the roof had new shingles and new children and

youth programs had been initiated. These improvements were not without hardship, but they were done well. Pete was grateful for the trust that the church members gave him to oversee the building improvements and their willingness to participate in the new children and youth programs. The congregation chose to not be heavily involved in the decision-making, but they were willing to help where they could and everyone expressed their pleasure at the capital improvements and new programs.

One of the first things Pete did after moving to his new ministry setting was approach other pastors in town. The pastor across the street started on the same Sunday as Pete and they immediately felt a connection because of this. Pete met other local pastors who welcomed him. Pete and the other pastor's who had welcomed him were able to form a new pastor's prayer group to pray for their community and one another. Pete found new mentors and coaches in a couple of the older and more experienced pastors he became acquainted with in town.

Pete's time as a student pastor helped him tremendously in learning how to interact with a congregation as a pastor. The grace he received as a student pastor encouraged him to try new things and not be afraid of mistakes. Then it was time for the sidewalk next to the church to be replaced because it was a trip hazard for the older church member, a younger man volunteered to take the project on. He chose a date that fit his schedule and asked for volunteers to help him. He measured and arranged for an appropriate amount of concrete to be delivered on a specified date. The day of the project, the young man saw Pastor Pete at the convenience store and told him that it was the day for the project to start. He asked Pete if that was okay and Pete was happy to say yes, but because he had planned to do the project on his day off, he did not think to tell

Pastor Pete, whose help he realized he needed, until he saw him at the convenience store. Pete told him ok but he would not be able to help. The young man acknowledged this and said he was ok doing the project alone, as he had failed in finding any other volunteers. Pete's schedule did not allow him to help the other man break out the old concrete, remove it, or build forms, but the man assured Pete that he did not need his help anyway. The day turned hot, and the younger man worked in the increasing heat until sundown, went home, and passed out with a mild heat exhaustion. This caused his wife to become furious. The man's wife called to complain to her mother who had some influence in the congregation. Her mother called the old property chair, a couple of elders, the chair of the pastoral relations committee and—it seemed—everyone else she knew and then circulated a vicious letter about Pastor Pete with the intent of having him fired, which the younger man's mother-in-law accomplished in the past with a different pastor. The derogatory letter about Pastor Pete was written and given to a select few to read. No telling why the young man did not think to give Pastor Pate fair warning and no grace was offered by the man's wife or mother-in-law. This seemed to reflect a lack of regard for Pastor Pete, his family and ministry. Inevitably, questions were asked and answered by Pastor Pete.

In the end, Pete was found to not have done anything wrong, and he apologized profusely. The elders of the church granted Pete grace and continued to demonstrate their faith in him. The younger man, his wife, children, and mother-in-law though, left the church, clearly expressing their displeasure. Pastor Pete called his father and said, "I thought when I became a pastor everyone would like me." His father replied, "You know better than that." Pastor Pete learned a valuable lesson about the expectations of others.

Clearly, people were not always willing or able to share their assumptions with a new pastor, and yet they still assumed the pastor would know and understand their presumptions. Pastor Pete was a little confused. Fortunately, he had trusted colleagues who acted as mentors and coaches throughout the situation.

Introduction

Along the path of transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry, a host of issues can arise, “Some of these challenges are common to all pastors, regardless of education, gender, ethnicity, or age. However, some are unique to being older and transitioning from a different type of employment,”¹ which is the case for second-career pastors. These problems can be anticipated or not and still cause the transition to be delayed, misdirected, or aborted. It is apparent that for most people who are called by God into ministry it is true, “No story of call and response, if it is a truthful one, is ever straightforwardly linear, a progression from strength to strength. Jesus’ Story was not, and neither are the stories of those who voluntarily follow him”² and many situations are common to all pastors. They “must be ever cognizant that they are involved in a corporate, communal endeavor and are not able to operate solely from their own desires. The interpersonal skills gained from previous work experience often help second career pastors here.”³ These situations, if not handled properly, can end a pastor’s ministry before it even starts or end it prematurely.

¹ Randall C. Nichols, “Pastoral Leadership for the Small Rural Church: The Second Career Pastor,” (doctoral diss., Portland Seminary, 2018), 130.

² Stephen Sprinkle, 118.

³ Nichols, 131.

Familiarity with the culture of the ministry and the ethnicity of those being served is extremely important. Every ministry setting has a unique culture and set of assumptions. These presumptions are influenced by a host of factors including history, traditions, culture, location, and socio-economics. These forces affect everyone entering ministry: “Even those who respond to the call to ministry from advantaged social locations must struggle with the tensions of choice and the political, institutional, and cultural forces that arbitrate so much in all our lives.”⁴ Despite any understanding by a pastor, even a second-career pastor, they can confidently navigate the social setting of their ministry. Additionally, the expectations of God, the assumptions of those called into a ministry context, and the presumptions of those who called them to the recognized vocational pastoral ministry have to be discerned and understood. These expectations have to be addressed, and even though God’s intentions are the most important, within the context of ministry, all the assumptions need to be managed in order to find a balance that is both sustainable and life giving. Second-career pastors bring with them into ministry understandings about life and systems learned in their previous occupations and gained from life experiences. Traditional pastors have not been exposed to the systems and ethos of non-ministry occupations to the depth that those who had a non-ministry career have been.

The assumptions of any pastor can be both an advantage as well as a disadvantage. For instance, he or she might have high expectations of the congregation based on conversations they had while interviewing for a position, only to discover that

⁴ Stephen Sprinkle, 118.

the congregation's willingness to embrace significant change is not as high as was expressed by the congregants involved in the interview process. It has been observed that, "When individuals do not get what they expect they may become frustrated and feel a sense of failure. Also, the more socially desirable, voluntary, and irreversible a transition, the more likely that one will enter with high expectations."⁵ The importance added to ministry because of the recognition of God's call adds increased stress to the second-career pastor who is often operating under a corporate understanding of success and failure, which can lead to burnout, depression, anxiety, and irritability when the reality of their ministry setting does not match their desire to serve faithfully as reflected by quantifiable positive results. One example of this would be, "being the single staff member in a small, rural church while receiving a minimal pay and benefit package all too often drains the emotional well-being of not just the pastor but the pastor's family as well,"⁶ which can lead to the aforementioned problems. The intentions for ministry of the second-career pastor and those who call the second-career pastor are both important. If their presumptions are close from the outset, then a long and fruitful relationship can be the result; if they do not align, it is likely the relationship will end badly and damage both parties. It is clear that, "[l]ong pastorates generally make wonderfully grounded and centered pastors, while a series of short pastorates are often an indication of a pastor who has not had to develop the resources for maturation of ministry."⁷ The ability to operate from realistic expectations is an important quality to have for those called and for those

⁵ Grant, 32.

⁶ Nichols, 20.

⁷ Willimon, 315.

who call them to serve. In this chapter, the assumptions of the second-career pastor and the congregations who call them are discussed. Some of the surprises that might be met when entering into a new relationship with God and a congregation will also be explored, in addition to what it means to work with the hopes of those involved while keeping them realistic and life giving.

God's Expectations

Understanding God's expectations is critical for the second-career pastor. In non-ministry occupations, God's plans for the believer are often not the ones he or she are most focused on. Every profession and occupation are naturally accompanied by unique requirements. For instance, in United States Air Force security forces, it was understood that individuals would report for duty up to thirty minutes prior to their actual designated reporting time in order to complete their equipment issue prior to reporting for duty. Those individuals who worked in offices however did not have to arrive before their reporting time. It appears that there are unwritten rules in every setting, not least of all in ministry, between different ministry contexts. In order for any ministry to be a vital and life-affirming, God's will has to be discerned and pursued. In order to achieve this, second-career pastors have to engage in the intentional deepening of their faith and their relationship with God. A book commissioned by the Church of God (Anderson, IN), offers one way to do this. It is intended for those who have made the commitment to ministry and then seek to grow deeper in their faith and calling. It is a practical guide for vocational ministers. It offers three broad categories through which a second-career pastor can discern God's desire for them which are; being, becoming, and doing.

The category of being “presents a call to be who you are in Christ Jesus.”⁸ This is a practical place in which to start any journey to deepen oneself and discern God’s expectations. A solid understanding of strengths and weaknesses is important to a pastor’s ability to thrive in ministry. Engaging in Clinical Pastoral Education and regularly participating in spiritual direction with a qualified director or being coached by a ministry coach are all good ways to identify a second-career pastor’s strengths and weaknesses. Gregory A. Wiens writes, “Many of the friends who entered ministry with me twenty-five to thirty years ago are now casualties along the ministry roadway. They accepted positions or roles and, very simply, tried to be people they weren’t created to be.”⁹ A second-career pastor who is forced or willingly tries to perform tasks they are unsuited for will often fail. One who fails to understand that God wants them to renew themselves and set appropriate boundaries to protect their needs will fail to thrive in ministry. The goal of ministry is to win the race, not just survive.

God also invites every Christian to continue developing their faith, personal integrity, and willingness to learn. For those called into ministry, “It is essential to our development and growth to be all God has called us to be.”¹⁰ The failure to do so can have a greater impact on themselves and the congregation they are called to serve than if they were never called. God requires a second-career pastor to continue to transform and mature in the ministry: “The life of a Christ follower is an unending experience of life

⁸ Markle, 1.

⁹ Gregory A. Wiens, “Knowing Yourself” in *Next Steps to Ministry: Entering a Life in Christian Ministry*, ed. David Markle (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2007), 4.

¹⁰ Arlo F. Newell and Andy L. Stephenson, “Growing a Teachable Spirit” in *Next Steps to Ministry: Entering a Life in Christian Ministry*, ed. David Markle (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2007), 76.

transformation.”¹¹ God expects second-career pastors to discover their best approach to ministry and then have their call to ministry affirmed by others. God plans that once pastors are affirmed, they will find a place in ministry that fits them and their gifts.

The desire to fulfill God’s expectations requires effective communication. Listening is the most important aspect of communication. This includes listening to God through prayer and scripture reading, listening to others by listening to their stories and empathizing with them, and listening to oneself by honest reflection on one’s own life narrative. This is one of God’s greatest expectations: “Be still and know that I am God.”¹² Listening and then speaking is one of the most important aspects of ministry. Listening does not necessarily lead to agreement, but “agreement is not the goal, understanding is.”¹³ As pastors learn to listen more effectively, they start to better live into their call. Christina T. Accornero writes, “It seems that as I continue to live into the call of God on my life, I find myself seeking God for insights and a deeper understanding of what Paul was saying to the church in Rome.”¹⁴ Christians are to place every aspect of their lives before God as an offering. In doing this, pastors, as well as all Christians, are living into their call and deepening their faith. Pastors are however, called into a more specified offering by virtue of their call and setting apart for recognized vocational pastoral ministry. This then leads them to continue their education by becoming life-long learners.

¹¹ Markle, 79.

¹² Psalm 46:10.

¹³ Rand and Phyllis Michael, “Working with People A case Study in Effective Communication” in *Next Steps to Ministry: Entering a Life in Christian Ministry*, ed. David Markle (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2007), 115.

¹⁴ Accornero, 123.

Listening to God, their congregants, and their own experiences will assist second-career pastors to mature both in faith and ministry.

God also expects every pastor to perform the “basic responsibilities of a life in Christian ministry.”¹⁵ These responsibilities include soul care, equipment for ministry, contextualization of the Gospel, leadership development, organizational management, and support of realistic budgets. When a second-career pastor is called into recognized vocational pastoral ministry, he or she is first called to love the people and to shepherd them. This means to be with them during significant events and transitions in their lives and to provide loving care and support at all times. This love and support can take many forms, not only sharing the gospel in worship, but also in teaching bible study, visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, visiting the prisoner, and all aspects of caring for the least among us—all of which should be done in such a way as to teach and equip the second-career pastor’s congregants for ministry so that they can go and do the same for others.

God also expects pastors to teach their congregations how to apply the gospel to their lives. They are to be humble leaders who are able to withstand criticism and follow God wherever God leads. In his book, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating Our Addiction to Secular Leadership*, Bill Hull adds to this conversation by stating that the Christian Church in the United States has adopted the leadership and management styles of corporations rather than that of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁶ These corporate-style leaders are the ones seen at the helm of many successful organizations and it is the type of leadership

¹⁵ Accornero, 147.

¹⁶ Bill Hull, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating Our Addiction to Secular Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 34.

churches have long been looking for in the hope that they will deliver quantifiable success in the form of more people in attendance, more financial support of ministry, and greater impact on the local community by delivering more souls saved. Hull questions whether this is really the type of leader God expects a Christian pastor to be. He argues that God expects a Christian leader to rehabilitate themselves from such secularization. He suggests that it can be done by correcting the following: their motivation, their idea of how they make their mark, their worldview, how they think of themselves, how far they are willing to go, how much they can take, what they want to get, and their heart to stay in the struggle. In addressing these areas, Hull consistently points the reader back towards the example of Jesus and service to God. He writes, “The challenge for the Christian leader is to find the same balance Jesus found. He had enough ambition to carry out his mission and enough humility to stay in submission to his Father.”¹⁷ Hull states that the goal for every Christian leader should be to please God in all she or he does. In addition, second-career pastors “will only be able to lead in the twenty-first century to the extent that they are in peer-mentoring relationships in learning clusters with other leaders.”¹⁸

The Pastor’s Expectations

A second-career pastor called by God into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry might well expect the community they have been called to serve to appreciate them, even grow fond of them, and often this is the case. However, neither God’s call to ministry nor a congregation’s call to serve ensures everyone’s affection, the absence of

¹⁷ Hull, 34.

¹⁸ Wiens, 14.

significant conflict, or the success of every endeavor. Second-career pastors are as familiar with it as traditional pastors: second-career pastors' experiences give them understandings of how organizations and the individuals in them should function and the realization that no matter how healthy an organization is, disharmony amongst individuals is an ever-present possibility. The hope of being appreciated by everyone in a congregation is unrealistic and ultimately self-destructive. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "The goal of instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith."¹⁹ This advice could also sum up a pastor's goal in any recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

A second-career pastor's assumptions can both help and hinder their pastoral ministry. When their ideas about how organizations should function and the purpose of the organization are at odds with the reality of the situation and the differences in preferences from the congregants, it makes the transition difficult and potentially self-defeating. In her work on transitions, Sara Grant addresses this when she writes: "There are differences that arise from discrepancies between the transitioner's expectations of the future job and the subsequent reality. Such differences can be either positive or negative depending on under met or over met expectations about the job and the organization."²⁰ These result inevitably in unexpected stress and disappointment, which can lead to a shortened pastorate despite God's or anyone else's plans or dreams. How second-career pastors manage the expectations brought with them from their previous

¹⁹ 1 Timothy 1:5 (CEB).

²⁰ Grant, 6.

careers, which could be several and of a wide variety, will determine the type of impact those expectations have upon their time in a recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

One of the most important expectations a second-career pastor will have is the type of leader they are called to be. Bill Hull suggests that a second-career pastor must discern the secular default leadership and management style adopted from the corporate world and its heavily structured organizations.²¹ Pastors in general and, second-career pastors in particular should, expect to adopt a leadership style more like Jesus of Nazareth than a company CEO in contrast to what is generally written about church leadership, “Most leadership literature talks about a right kind of leadership personality. You know the type: big-picture visionaries who serve others and get the best out of people. They suck all the oxygen out of a room when they enter, and their big smiles reveal their white teeth. They are exciting speakers who move their followers to tears or laughter, as desired.”²² This is the leader seen at the helm of many successful organizations and it is the type of leader churches have long been looking for to save their church from disappearing or to produce quantifiable results of success. It is also the type of leader many second-career pastors may expect to be in order to sustain ministry in particular settings and possibly to save their egos. Those not wanting to be this type of leader might well be encouraged to become one, despite their own belief in and understanding of their leadership style. Though not all pastors have the same intentions of how they want to lead, they are similar in that they all maintain their own personal leadership ideals.

²¹ Hull, 16.

²² Ibid.

Pastors anticipate that their role is clearly defined. Upon engaging in a new ministry context, they may assume that the congregation will clearly and honestly express their expectations. This seldom happens completely. Second-career pastors may well be blinded by their own expectations that the organization called the Christian church will work the same as the other organizations they were previously involved with that had differently defined channels of authority and individual roles. For example, the military has a top down hierarchy authority and insists that individuals conform to specific standards of behavior and appearance, an insistence that could be both formally and informally enforced. This assumption would seem to be unrealistic with most congregations and, if it persists, it will lead to frustration and disappointment in the congregation.

Robert Harris, in his book *Entering Wonderland: A Toolkit for Pastors New to a Church*, writes, “I have observed tremendous joy and absolute desolation in the lives of pastors within the first years of service to a congregation.”²³ Harris suggests that the reason for a short pastorate is usually a difference between the new pastor’s expectations and the congregation’s, barring any clergy misconduct. This is a significant problem for God’s church. Problems during an initial ministry context can have devastating impact upon the second-career pastor and can have a deeper and longer-lasting impact on the ministry itself than when similar issues arise later in a ministry setting because hopefully a higher level of trust and cooperation between God, the pastor, and the congregation has been formed over the lengthier time than that which is usually established early in a ministry.

²³ Harris, loc. 33, Kindle.

A second-career pastor entering a church might also have an expectation of community and a sense of purpose. A church as a community can experience a greater or lesser degree of unity, cohesion, and sense of purpose depending on its members. Upon engaging in a new ministry context, the second-career pastor could ask themselves some general questions about the church to apply to their particular recognized vocational pastoral ministry. A few of these questions might be: Has the modern church in the U.S. made it so easy to participate in the body that little, if anything, is actually required of the individual or the family? Should a congregant or her family be expected to fulfill requirements such as participation, service, and study? Has worship been professionalized to the point that the church member is no longer necessary? Do individual church participants have a role in worship? If so, what is it? If they miss worship, does it matter to the body? Does it matter if they attend once they become members of the body of Christ? What is required of a member of the body of Christ?

Sebastian Junger, a war correspondent, in writing about reintegrating military veterans into society, offers some correlations to the integration of a second-career pastor into an unfamiliar setting and their expectation of community. In fact, these observations apply to all members of the body of Christ. Junger talks about what a person needs to feel necessary and secure. This dissertation proposes that there is a correlation between the communal nature of military service during combat and the communal nature of ministry within the comforting bounds of a community of faith and a group of individuals together in seminary, in small groups or even in a setting where individuals spend extensive time together with common purpose. Junger writes in support of this that, “a modern soldier returning from combat goes from a close-knit group that humans evolved for, back into a

society where most people work outside the home, children are educated by strangers, families are isolated from wider communities, and personal gain almost completely eclipses collective good.”²⁴ Many veterans feel a lack of place and purpose when returning home, and it is often the case that many combat veterans want to return to combat because it was there among their fellow unit members that they felt competent, useful, and safe.

A new second-career pastor just accepting a call enters into the new setting with the hope that they will not only be welcomed but that there will be a place for them and, in that place, they will feel a sense of purpose. Like a veteran who returns to our country, when relocating to a new ministry setting, pastors wish to feel competent, necessary, and safe among those who share their goal of serving God. The second-career pastor is hired or placed into a ministry setting with the implication that they are needed. However, if they are viewed simply as a newly installed, replaceable part in a machine, the pastor might quickly start to question their necessity to the ministry or church, especially if the church leaders fail to include them in important decision-making. In the same way, any person engaging a new congregation will feel excluded if there is no place or purpose found for them.

In a similar manner, a second-career pastor could hear in Junger’s book a caution not to do so much or do things so well that the church members start to feel superfluous and unnecessary to the organization. There are parallels in building a church and its unity through shared experiences and honest conversation that builds trust between its new pastor and its members and the way a military unit builds unit cohesion. In a military

²⁴ Sebastian Junger, *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging* (London, UK: 4th Estate, 2016), 92.

unit, resources are shared, and experiences are shared—very little can be kept private when sharing a tent with thirteen others. In a church, if there is an inclination not to share the financial woes with the congregation, to make large important decisions by including only one individual or a small group of individuals, it can lead to a disconnect with the community on the part of those not involved, just as a military veteran returns home to a world in which they are expected to operate alone. In a good military unit and in a solidly functioning church, hardship and sacrifice are to be shared—not discouraged or avoided. This will lead to a closer and tighter community not one that is dying but one that is truly alive. The tougher the decisions are, the more they are shared with more people rather than less. The tougher the decision and the greater the hardship, the more church members are needed to weigh in on the problem. The pastor needs to encourage as many congregants as possible to be involved in the full life of the church. This in turn makes it easier for pastors to learn about those they serve and serve beside. This then will lead to more trust and a more faithful community. A pastor also needs to cultivate collegial relationships and find mentors and coaches, “if a pastor wants to serve effectively in the twenty-first century, then he or she need to build healthy, transparent, and vulnerable relationships with other pastors.”²⁵

How can a new second-career pastor help a congregation not only welcome individuals and families but also make them feel necessary to the body while at the same time maintaining that same feeling? These are important questions in relation to new pastors and their expectations of community in a recognized vocational pastoral ministry setting. Jesus, as the example of leadership, not only led and served but also sent his

²⁵ Wiens, 14.

Apostles out to do the same. If a second-career pastor's expectation is to submit to God, then said pastor can be utilized by God in building a healthy, vibrant, kingdom-building community of faith. In doing this then the pastorate will have great potential to be long and fruitful. If not, then a short and unsatisfying, even painful, pastorate will likely result. Pastors can thrive on meaningful challenges, "Many church leaders appear to thrive on the challenges that come with growth. Conversely, pastors of declining or stagnant churches are much more likely than their colleagues to say their tenure as leader has been a disappointment."²⁶ Declining or stagnant congregations often have new challenges from new ministry but rather struggle with issues that do not seem to have any positive resolution and so they have not been resolved. This then leads a pastor to disappointment in themselves, their church, and, at times, God. A pastor can mitigate this disappointment by staying faithful to this scriptural standard, "So the church's supervisor must be without fault. They should be faithful to their spouse, sober, modest, and honest. They should show hospitality and be skilled at teaching. They shouldn't be addicted to alcohol or a bully. Instead they should be gentle peaceable, and not greedy"²⁷ This will help them in every situation to be without fault and confident in their discernment of God's will, which, in turn will help them to understand the direction the particular church or ministry they are serving needs to go.

The ability to manage these expectations is critical to the vitality and longevity of a pastorate. To 'manage' is an understandable term to denote the activities of organizing, directing, and planning. God tests this every day in second-career pastors: "Through the

²⁶ Barna Group, 25.

²⁷ 1 Timothy 3:2-3 (CEB).

call to ministry, then, God takes the initiative. The spiral of resentment and loss is broken by the reconciling initiative of God who loves, seeks us out, and empowers us to do the work of ministry.”²⁸ To submit to God’s will and trust in God’s call is critical to all ministry but not divorced from doing and decision-making. Obeying implies activity that needs to be managed. God expects us to manage our attitudes and activity. This is not to say that a second-career pastor serves without dependence on God, but recognition that everyone has to make decisions and God expects second-career pastors to do so. The ideal time to begin an assessment of their assumptions is during the transition from the former career into church or denominationally recognized ministry because it is during the transition that it is often easier to reflect upon their presuppositions and change them when necessary. The most important part of this assessment might well be an honest and thorough examination of the second-career pastor’s calling and the congregation’s expectations.

The Congregation’s Expectations

The differences in the expectations of the pastor and the congregation as to the roles and duties of the pastor are one of the principle causes of the short tenures of pastors in churches and in ministry. The root cause is that “Spiritual leadership never has been easy. Throughout history, neither spiritual leaders nor the spiritually led have always been happy about the way the arrangement works.”²⁹ The Apostle Paul encouraged his friend and disciple Timothy with these words of wisdom. “In the same

²⁸ Stephen Sprinkle, 116.

²⁹ Collins, loc. 147, Kindle.

way servants in the church should be dignified... They should hold on to the faith that has been revealed with a clear conscience. They should also be tested and then serve if they are without fault.”³⁰

Second-career pastors, by virtue of having been employed in a career other than recognized vocational pastoral ministry, bring with them understandings and work habits from their previous employment that may or may not translate well into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry vocation. Often second-career pastors have held positions of authority within the organizations they left, and authority generally does not work the same in ministry settings. The church as essentially a volunteer organization holds the authority of the volunteers—the congregation—in tension with the authority of the paid employee—the vocational minister: “It doesn’t operate effectively without unpaid people doing the bulk of the work. And when the volunteers (members) are doing the bulk of the work, it seems the volunteers should make the bulk of the decisions, right? It’s called buy-in.”³¹ In other words, they should have greater authority over the church than the pastor. This is problematic in the fact that groups of people generally desire clear leadership which is often, if not always found, most easily in an individual leader rather than a leadership committee.

However, the volunteers, the flock, desire a leader: “He gave some Apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. His purpose was to equip God’s people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ.”³²

³⁰ 1 Timothy 3:8–10.

³¹ Collins, loc. 147, Kindle.

³² Ephesians 4:11–12 (CEB).

Congregations expect their pastors to be leaders. Leaders like they want. This causes a great amount of tension in recognized vocational pastoral ministry: “The leaders (i.e. vocational ministers) carry the bulk of the responsibility for the effectiveness of the church and ultimately will answer for how they lead it (Heb. 13:17). So, it stands to reason that the ministers should make the bulk of the decisions, right? It’s called good management.”³³ However, there is a significant difference between being a good leader and a good manager. Some managers lead and all leaders manage, but the roles are different and the expectation of the congregation as to whether the priority should be on leadership or management is an area that has to be addressed. This is one of many conversations that a second-career pastor has to have with any congregation calling them. It is true that, “there has rarely been a moment as challenging as the present for those who serve in Christian ministry”³⁴ and this necessitates open and honest dialog between pastors and congregants.

This is just one of many issues that complicate the relationship between second-career pastors and the people to whom they are called to minister: “Legion are the sources of congregational struggles. From Moses and the Israelites to Paul and the Corinthian Christians to all who have served the church since then, this thing called spiritual leadership has been thorny.”³⁵ The Apostle Paul writes to the church in Corinth, “God is the one who establishes us with you in Christ and who anointed us. God also sealed us and gave the Spirit as a down payment in our hearts. I call on God as my

³³ Collins, loc. 147, Kindle.

³⁴ Martin D. Grubbs, “Discovering and Affirming Your Approach to Ministry,” in *Next Steps to Ministry: Entering a Life in Christian Ministry*, ed. David Markle (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2007), 81.

³⁵ Collins, loc. 148, Kindle.

witness-I didn't come again to Corinth because I wanted to spare you. It isn't that we are trying to control your faith, but we are working with you for your happiness, because you stand firm in your faith."³⁶ For the second-career pastor, the acceptance of the new paradigm of being in recognized vocational pastoral ministry instead of their previous career is part of the process of God-led transition from the previous occupation into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry position: "Perspective, training, spiritual attainment, pedigree, obligation, choice, experience, trial by fire, or whatever else we bring to the mix, in the end, it all comes down to God's initiative and election."³⁷ Second-career pastors' acceptance of their call to recognized vocational pastoral ministry is based on God's initiative. This however still requires a second-career pastor to go through a career transition, which is "a process of changing from one set of expected positional behaviors in a social system to another. They have significant consequences. Career transitions are often turning points in the lives of both individuals and organizations, representing new opportunities for both."³⁸

For the second-career pastor who is transitioning, one of the more unsettling and yet common surprises that occurs during the transition is when the second-career pastor's expectations of ministry engage the expectations of the calling congregation and they are not the same. The reality that is created when these different sets of expectations interact is often unexpected and experienced negatively rather than as a challenge to be faced

³⁶ 2 Corinthians 1:21-24.

³⁷ Stephen Sprinkle, 116.

³⁸ Grant, 1.

together. This can result in an early exit from ministry with more damage than benefit done to both the second-career pastor and the congregation.

There are ways by which a second-career pastor might be able to understand the expectations of the congregation they are called to and how those expectations align or not with their own expectations. Being able to understand the congregation's expectations will allow a second-career pastor to not only survive in ministry but to actually thrive in it. The first area of consideration is how to develop realistic expectations by exploring and understanding the reality of the ministry they are called to.

When congregations are looking for a new pastor to serve in their setting, the congregation is in essence courting the prospective new pastor. The congregation dresses itself up and puts its best foot forward. This is not usually an attempt to be deceitful but rather an attempt to make a good first impression. The second-career pastor, having been involved in similar situations while pursuing their previous employment, should be able to recognize the fact that the congregation may never act this well again during their pastorate. The expectation of the congregation however, is for their new pastor to believe that they always act as they first present themselves and that the new pastor will love them and abide by their will. If the new pastor is unaware that congregations do not always act their best, then he or she will eventually be very disappointed when the expectation goes unmet.

Another expectation of a congregation is access to the pastor. Some congregations may expect that the pastor will always be available to any individual congregant at any time. In addition, there is often an expectation that the pastor should attend all important meetings and participate in all important programs and ministries of the church. These

expectations will consume a pastor's time and might well negatively impact their health and other significant relationships with family and friends. Understanding how to take care of themselves while fulfilling their call is an important balance to the congregation's expectations.

Fulfilling the reasonable expectations of a congregation is important for any pastor. The second-career pastor may well be able to draw upon important experience in balancing the congregation's expectations with their own needs, thus helping to ensure a long and fruitful relationship with their congregation. In order to thrive in ministry, a pastor needs to understand the expectations involved and how to read the signs that are posted by God, their congregation, and themselves by recognizing how those signs are symbolized in their ministry context. Intentional Sabbath is a very important way in which to not be consumed by the needs and desires of the congregation.

Understanding the expectations of both themselves and the others involved in the ministry to which they have been called is one of the first and most crucial signs to be read by the second-career pastor. Familiarity with the culture of the ministry and the ethnicity of those being served is extremely important. Every ministry setting has a unique culture and set of expectations. In addition, a person called into a ministry that involves those of a different ethnicity or socio-economic background than the pastor potentially adds unspoken expectations that are difficult to discern without a guide. Examples of potential obstacles include the language used in worship; limitations placed on women, youth, and congregants; the roles of the elders and pastors; the frequency of communion; the pastor's dress and appearance; the level of financial support; participation by the congregants; and the primary direction of the congregation's focus

either externally or internally. Second-career pastors yearn to serve God and share the gospel, but they need to move into a community to be able to see, hear, taste, touch, and smell those living around them in order to truly understand their congregation's experience and potential. In this way, they can develop realistic expectations and thereby build up trust with their congregations and civic context. Understanding a congregation's expectations is important, and it will help the second-career pastor bring their experience fully into the service of their congregation, thereby helping build a vibrant and long pastorate.

Managing the Pastor's Own Expectations

What is meant by managing expectations is not somehow manipulating God or the pastor's congregation, but rather the pastor establishing equilibrium within one's self and his or her life, and leading a congregation to conform it's expectations to God's. This is difficult for the second-career pastor precisely because he or she is second-career. The expectations that are learned in the former occupations are not always valid in a new ministry context. A second-career pastor entering ministry is experiencing a career transition similar to any other career change, with the added aspect of service to God rather than to one's self or the employer. This requires not only a change of situation but a psychological shift called transition. "Unless transition happens, the change won't work...it is the transition that blindsides us and is often the source of our troubles."³⁹ In managing their own expectations, a second-career pastor has to first discern how realistic

³⁹ William Bridges, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press), 2004, loc. 71, Kindle.

their expectations are. A second-career pastor, when faced with the reality that their expectations of ministry and their congregation are not similar, may start to doubt God's call to a particular recognized vocational pastoral ministry or their call to ministry in general. Such situations "may also represent problems such as job dissatisfaction for the transitioner and a management challenge for the transitioner's boss if the transitioner's expectations are not met."⁴⁰ So, a second-career pastor in a new ministry context is tempted to look back with fondness for their previous occupation, and may start to question God's call, the call of the congregation, and the affirmation of their community of faith, which can cause difficulty for all involved.

In *For Ministers About to Start or About to Give Up*, Travis Collins offers a way for second-career pastors to manage their expectations in a God-pleasing way by using Acts 20:28 as a guide.⁴¹ There, Luke reports that Paul lived three tumultuous years in Ephesus, during which he provided for himself and his associates. In Ephesus, several forces opposed Paul and the Way of Christ, including the Jews and the silversmith guild led by a man named Demetrius, and spiritual and economic struggles. Paul learned what it meant to lead and teach a local church, to teach believers and non-believers alike. Paul learned how to lead and nurture a congregation and care for himself. At the end of his time in and around Ephesus, Paul bid the elders—those who presided over the church in Ephesus—his final farewell at Miletus, in Acts 20:17–38. Paul gathered the Ephesus elders together and held himself up as an example of how church leaders should act and demonstrate their faith in God. His "speech to the Ephesian elders at Miletus brings to

⁴⁰ Grant, 32.

⁴¹ Collins, 21.

fitting conclusion his controversial mission to the city of Ephesus. Because it is his only speech addressed to believers, it carries paradigmatic value for the readers of Acts.”⁴²

This speech addresses foundational guidance to be used by all pastors and is particularly important for second-career pastors who have experienced standards in other professions.

Paul’s farewell address included this statement: “Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.” The Christian Church belongs to God and is God’s to give into the care of whomever God chooses. Paul instructs those who have received stewardship over a part of God’s church with the following. “He charges the elders (here called [*episkopoi*, overseers] without change of meaning) with their ministry in ever-vigilant expectations of coming dangers.”⁴³ Collins writes that one of the main reasons for the effect of conflict on vocational ministers, and by extension second-career pastors, is that they fail to practice enough self-discipline. This failure causes them not to have the reserves and confidence to withstand the inevitable conflict that arises when a person serves God.

A lack of reserves of energy and confidence is like, “When the bucket’s empty, everything scrapes the bottom,”⁴⁴ which creates the perfect environment for depression. The Apostle Paul tells us to “keep watch over yourselves” (Acts 20:28) meaning to be on guard so that a pastor continues to follow the example of Jesus and Paul. It is important

⁴² Robert W. Wall, N. T. Wright, and J. Paul. Sampley, *The New Interpreter’s Bible, v. X: Acts of the Apostles, Introduction to Epistolary Literature, Letter to the Romans, First Letter to the Corinthians* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 280.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 283.

⁴⁴ Collins, loc. 630, Kindle.

for the second-career pastor to not be distracted from their primary duty of caring for the flock. In order to stay focused on their call, a second-career pastor must manage the expectations in their lives. There will always be other priorities and distractions that have the potential to take the second-career pastor off course. Since this is the case, “Paul is saying to the leaders that the first order of business is to guard their own heart and mind that they might be better prepared to then guard the flock entrusted to their watch care.”⁴⁵ Without guarding one’s own heart and mind it becomes increasingly difficult to fulfill Gods’ will and guard the flock.

Paul then goes on to tell pastors to keep watch over “all the flock” (Acts 20:28) not part of the flock; “Picking and choosing which sheep to keep watch over is not an option for the Christian minister.”⁴⁶ In keeping watch over the entire flock, a pastor is helping to manage the congregation’s expectations in the sense that the second-career pastor is responsible for keeping the flock on the way of Christ by keeping the example of Jesus and Paul as the primary guide. Upon assuming a pastoral role of a congregation, an individual is faced with danger that is similar to that faced by the elders of Ephesus following Paul’s departure. “Paul’s rehearsal of the dangers that will face the elders following his departure is enclosed in his charge for them to ‘keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock’ (Acts 20:28 NRSV) and to be alert to his pastoral example.”⁴⁷ He uses this metaphor to illustrate what a pastor is expected to do. This metaphor sums up the pastoral responsibilities of all church leaders particularly pastors. The image of the

⁴⁵ Bob Deffinbaugh, “Acts 20 Commentary,” *Precept Austin*, January 1, 2017, <http://www.preceptaustin.org/acts-20-commentary>.

⁴⁶ Collins, loc. 1029, Kindle.

⁴⁷ Wall, Wright, and Sampley, 283.

good shepherd was understandable to Paul's audience in his day and is still now: "The image of the shepherd watching over his flock is a familiar biblical metaphor of the leader's provident care over Israel of which the Paul of Acts is exemplary."⁴⁸

Collins discusses managing the pastor's call, meaning to develop realistic expectations of what it means to be called by God into ministry.⁴⁹ Acts 20:28 continues, "...of which the Holy Spirit has made you..." God has used the gift of the Holy Spirit to form second-career pastors. Being formed and equipped by God through the Holy Spirit makes a pastor competent to shepherd a flock. "Paul presumes their competence to do so because 'the Holy Spirit has made you overseers,' which not only suggests the mediation of the Spirit's power for ministry but also the Spirit's authorizing 'mark' in their lives that others have recognized."⁵⁰ This has a strong connection to second-career pastors and why they stay or leave recognized vocational pastoral ministry. The connection is obvious. A person enters a recognized vocational pastoral ministry as the result of a call from God. Even if the person is unclear on what it means to be called, he or she has a belief in the call and the faith community's recognition of the call is critical to the success of his or her ministry. In speaking of his own experiences, Collins states, "Eventually, I became healthy, content, and on a roll - because I believed the Holy Spirit had put me there."⁵¹ The belief that the Holy Spirit has placed a pastor in their current ministry context allows the pastor to have confidence in the Spirit's leading of them and through

⁴⁸ Wall, Wright, and Sampley, 283.

⁴⁹ Collins, loc. 414, Kindle.

⁵⁰ Wall, Wright, and Sampley, 283.

⁵¹ Collins, loc. 1405, Kindle.

them their congregation. This belief being confirmed by the congregation and having the “spiritual leaders around him or her is a gift”⁵² that confirms what the pastor already knows. This also confirms the pastor’s authority, which is granted by God and recognized by the congregation. For the second-career pastor, this could be immensely different from what they experienced in former occupations and careers, where authority was exclusively understood to originate from other human beings not a divine being.

He then continues with Acts 20:28 by discussing the expectations of a pastor’s authority, “...the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” Collins states emphatically, “You are not a lackey; you are an overseer, a leader.”⁵³ When pastors and congregations clearly understand this, then realistic and faithful expectations can be established for a ministry. Paul viewed those Ephesian elders as shepherds of the church of God. A pastor is called to shepherd a flock. Managing expectations is part of doing this. The second-career pastor can bring all of their experience in managing, organizing, and leading to bear in the role of shepherd. They can do this by setting realistic obtainable goals and communicating how long it might take for change to occur. They can also be a non-anxious presence and demonstrate grace and forgiveness just as God has done. A second-career pastor has to learn to become a shepherd rather than a hired hand, even if they previously owned their own business or started the organization they were with. The state of mind is what is important. In any mindset other than service to God, an individual often understands themselves to be only interacting with other individuals and that achievement is the only standard. In ministry pastors can be more concerned for the

⁵² Grubbs, 84.

⁵³ Collins, loc. 1758, Kindle.

wholeness well-being of their congregants despite failure to achieve goals than they may have been in their non-ministry careers. Rather than driving the herd ahead of them, a shepherd leads, guides, and walks among the flock.

The last segment of Act 20:28 is "...church of God which he bought with his own son's blood." A rather frightening statement, unless it is understood, is not that God sacrificed Jesus but that Jesus' sacrifice was inevitable given humanities condition and was perpetrated by humanity not God. This action allows for the salvation rather than the destruction of humanity and means "That God acquires a people by saving them from destruction [which] is a biblical idea and probably Paul's meaning here."⁵⁴ God brought those who repented back into relationship with God and invited them into God's church through the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ, God's only begotten son. For all the change that is going on in and to the church, as well as the world in which it resides, "God's mission to the world always has included a people He would call His own."⁵⁵ The Church of God is not an afterthought or superfluous; it is absolutely part of God's design and will continue to exist in some form until the end. This is intended to give vocational ministers hope, because what they are doing is serving God, and God will not abandon them. Balancing this hope against the despair of so many people helps the pastor lead them to not fear the circumstances but rather hope in the promises of God. Second-career pastors, by understanding their own expectations and the expectations of their congregations, have begun to live among the people. "The ethos shaped by the inclusion of Paul's charge to pastoral action is of a countercultural community whose beliefs and practices are set

⁵⁴ Wall, Wright, and Sampley, 284.

⁵⁵ Collins, loc. 2551, Kindle.

against the social norm.”⁵⁶ This continues to be the case today even though social norms in the U.S. are currently more in flux and formation than in a stable form.

The Apostle Paul has lasting importance to pastors as a spiritual example and theological mentor. “In this regard, the themes of his speech suggest touch-points with his letters that help to fashion a coherent theological understanding of church leadership for example, faithful and humble leadership, costly suffering of consecrated service to God, congregational welfare over personal gain and confronting threats against the church.”⁵⁷ Ensuring assumptions are realistic may well be the most important factor in the success of the transition into Christian ministry and the long-term viability of the call. The ability of the second-career pastor to effectively submit to the expectations of God, to lead by understanding their personal expectations and those of the congregation can be the difference between recognized vocational pastoral ministry being a joyous, fulfilling journey of faithful service to God and a miserable, painful mistake.

Communication is a Vital Ingredient

For any pastor, the most important form of communication is prayer. In prayer God speaks to those who will listen. The most important source of understanding God’s expectations is prayer, reading scripture prayerfully, and listening to others well in order to hear what God is saying. A pastor is to “Treat every encounter with every person...as the most important thing at the moment”⁵⁸ so that they might not miss important

⁵⁶ Wall, Wright, and Sampley, 284.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 281.

⁵⁸ D. Michael Abrashoff, *It’s Your Ship: Management Techniques from the Best Damn Ship in the Navy* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), 44.

information expressed by the person they are engaged with. The most important aspect of understanding a congregation's expectations is effective communication between the pastor and the leaders of the congregation. New pastors yearn to serve God and share the gospel, but they need to move in to a community and see, hear, taste, touch, and smell those living around them in order to do it. Most importantly they need to listen to the community and read the signs placed there by God. In this way, they can develop realistic expectations and build trust with those involved with their ministry. This allows decisions that are made by the new pastor and/or the congregation to be trusted by those affected by them.

Captain Michael Abrashoff USN describes his technique for effective communication while commanding the U.S.S. Benfold as, "lead by example, listen aggressively, communicate purpose and meaning, create a climate of trust, look for results, not salutes, take calculated risks, go beyond standard procedure, build up your people's confidence, generate unity and improve your people's quality of life as much as possible."⁵⁹ Trust is built up when we listen to and share our stories and our expectations. This is done as "We trust each other into speech, and we listen each other into trust."⁶⁰ Communication in the form of the transmittal of facts and opinions by one person without regard for what others reply or say is not as helpful to building trust as an open and honest conversation amongst a congregation's decision makers. The best way to discern God's will in order to make decisions is through conversation. This is why "Conversation

⁵⁹ Abrashoff, 5.

⁶⁰ C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison, *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), 216.

should be an important part of every church's decision-making process."⁶¹ Open and honest conversation allows the new pastor to trust the decisions of the congregation and the congregation to trust the decisions of the pastor. Trust is not achieved by requiring every decision to be discussed at length because, "Not every decision requires a long conversation with the full community, but they all require trust, and that is built up in conversation over time."⁶² Conversation in which the new pastor listens carefully is the only way to discover the expectations that need to be managed, the sharing of the pastor's expectations, and the discovery of the true reality of the ministry he or she has been called into.

Conclusion

In order to thrive in ministry, second-career pastors need to know how to read the signs that point out the expectations of God, their congregation, and themselves. Transitions are periods of uncertainty and discovery resulting in the integration of new and old expectations into the relationship between God, pastor, and congregation. In order to survive and thrive in ministry, second-career pastors should endeavor to understand what God expects of them before addressing any other expectations. Only then can they ask the right questions about the ministry context they are called into, put down roots, manage expectations, care for themselves, and continuously strive to deepen their faith and relationship with God while leading others to do the same. In doing these

⁶¹ Smith and Pattison, 216.

⁶² Ibid.

things pastors will be able to read the signs God provides and follow where God leads. This will then allow them to thrive in ministry.

The managing of expectations is an on-going activity throughout the transition into ministry and during ministry. Failure to manage them effectively can cause transitions to be more painful than necessary or end them prematurely. The next chapter will explore the transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry for the second-career pastor in more detail.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TRANSITION

*Everything looks different here.
I miss the way things used to be.*

From the outskirts of town, where of old the mile-stone stood, now a stranger, looking down, I behold the shadowy crown of the dark and haunted wood. It is changed, or am I changed? Ah! The oaks are fresh and green, But the friends with whom I ranged through their thickets are estranged by the years that intervene.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Brand New Pastor Pete Finding His Way

As retirement from the U.S. Air Force approached, Sergeant Pete began his transition to a new occupational reality. In looking back, it seemed obvious that the transition began before he actually retired, continued after he officially retired, and went on still as he answered God's call into ministry. Pete first began to seriously respond to God's call five years before he retired, when he began a conversation about ministry with his pastor, who was a mentor of his. Before he completed all of the requirements to retire, Pete chose a seminary to attend, was interviewed and accepted into it, and secured funds and scholarship to pay for his education. He retired from the U.S. Air Force after twenty-three years as a security policeman, made arrangements to rent his house, packed up his family, and moved from out west to back east. The transition continued.

They arrived at their destination only to discover that they did not have the housing they were counting on. Without family, friends, or church readily available, Pete turned to the seminary where he was enrolled, just as he would have turned to the U.S. Air Force for help with his housing problem. The seminary could not help. This was the

first big obstacle Pete had encountered during his transition into ministry. Fortunately for Pete, his parents were able to pay for a motel room until he could find something else. In the meantime, the seminary expected him to attend classes, participate in campus life, and apply to local churches for student minister positions. While Pete and his family were essentially homeless, accruing an excessive motel bill, no one else felt any sense of urgency about his situation. For the first time in his adult life, Pete and his family were on their own - another unexpected occurrence during his transition. There was no support structure during his transition into ministry as there had been in the military. Ministry seemed cold and very lonely. Pete felt lost, and he wanted to go back to his former life. Not very long into his transition, Pete was assailed by serious doubts about his call.

Finally, a church interviewed him and asked him to become their pastor to youth and families. Through prayer and guidance, God led Pete to this opportunity. Upon accepting this opportunity Pete immediately gained a mentor and friend in the senior pastor. His new church helped him find housing, but it was seventy miles away from the seminary. At least they cared, and it allowed Pete to become part of the larger community in which the church was located. Pete and his family immersed themselves in the local community and had little to do socially with the seminary. The transition was back on track.

It quickly became apparent to Pete that one of the main reasons he was hired was because of the congregation's hopes that he could bring order to a disorderly youth group and Sunday school program. He was expected to police and discipline the youth. However, Pete needed relationships built on trust and mutual understanding with the children, youth, and their families. He knew these kinds of relationships were what God

had called him too. If God had wanted Pete to be a police officer of youth, he would have retired and entered civilian law enforcement—not seminary. Pete was forced to realize he was not in control of the transition into ministry. It was being impacted by others and not always positively. Some of his assumptions were very wrong, which made him wonder again about his call.

In his new and unfamiliar role in his new church, Pete expected a lot of direction from his mentor as to what the congregation expected him to do. He even hoped there would be written guidance, but instead he was happily told that he could do whatever he wanted. Pete was unsure how he should proceed, but he was sure they did not mean for him to stay home and watch television. “How does one transition into a new role without guidance?” Pete wondered.

After the first month, Pete was asked where he planned to take the youth on the annual mission trip. No one had mentioned this requirement to him before. Now the guidance came, but not in a way that Pete was used to. In October, he was approached about planning the annual Christmas program. It was getting late, he was told; he better come up with something. The first of December, the senior pastor asked him if he had remembered to arrange for Santa Claus to be at the Christmas program. Again, Pete did not know that the same man plays Santa every year. After New Year’s, people were shocked that Pete did not know about the tri-annual youth meeting the regional church hosted. Finally, Pete was told he had to participate as a counselor at the two summer camps the church youth regularly attended.

Pete’s former career led him to expect prior planning of events, a set plan designed to achieve desired results, an annual training plan, and a deployment schedule.

During his transition, he learned that even though in many churches programs and events were planned a year or more in advance, the situation that Pete was invited into was one in which the previous youth and children's pastor had been asked to leave because of her inability to perform the duties as assigned to the satisfaction of the congregation and senior pastor. This was never mentioned in the position interview and, even though Pete met regularly with the senior pastor, he felt like specific guidance did not come in a timely manner.

In hindsight, the time spent as the youth and children's pastor was rewarding and filled with many meaningful experiences and Pete acquired knowledge, he did not have prior to being involved in the ministry. If the interview committee had been bluntly honest, or if he could have read better between the lines, Pete would most likely have not taken the position. However, credit has to be given to God that this time of transition into settled ministry was extremely beneficial in exposing Pete to some of the unexpected challenges that can be faced during a transition into ministry. Even more importantly, the discovery that the support and leading of God and God's people, particularly the mentoring of the senior pastor, was able to be relied on during a transition into ministry, despite the twists and turns it might take, was invaluable. Pete sure was glad he followed God's leading into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry position where he was taught by God and blessed by God's people, even though it became apparent the Pete was not in control.

‘Transition’ Defined

According to William Bridges in his book *Transitions, Making Sense of Life’s Changes*, “All transitions are composed of an ending, a neutral zone and a new beginning.”¹ In this chapter, transition into denominationally recognized vocational pastoral ministry is not just another word for a change from one profession into ministry. A second-career pastor has to transition from old paradigms into a new paradigm of recognized vocational ministry. One such paradigm shift is when “one must make the transition from ‘let this cup pass from me’ to ‘nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done.’”² Much like the Christian belief of baptism, this is more than a change of jobs or locations; it is entering into a new life. This transition is filled with the new expectations of God, the pastor, and their congregations. It also includes countless changes of varying degrees of importance. There is a difference between change and transition. It is the difference between the old life and a new life: “Change is situational. Transition, on the other hand, is psychological.”³ When a person is entering a new phase of life, for example a new profession or retirement, change is the place of employment or no longer going to work. ‘Transition’ is the attitudes that have to change rather than the circumstances. Transitioning into recognized vocational pastoral ministry is more than a change of address; it is a psychological and spiritual shift into a new life. There are a number of individuals within U.S.-American society who have transitioned or are

¹ Bridges, loc. 60, Kindle.

² Collins, loc. 1668, Kindle.

³ Bridges, loc. 64, Kindle.

considering transitioning from what is commonly called a ‘secular occupation’ into church or denominationally recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

All transitions by second-career pastors into vocational pastoral ministry begin with a call from God, and God leads them through it, just like a good shepherd. God chooses mortals to carry God’s good news to humanity, “God’s good pleasure is to entrust the message of reconciliation to creatures made of dust-to us, in other words.”⁴ In this way God’s creatures bring the message of reconciliation, of repentance and salvation to God’s creatures. It seems that this is God’s plan and can be seen as God’s plan to transition humanity from separation from God back into a right relationship with our creator. As God leads the second-career pastor from one life into another, there is no guarantee, even though God called, that the transition into ministry will be smooth or even successful. A hard truth to learn during transition is that, “living in community is hard, and a faith community is no exception. Churches of all stripes have issues.”⁵ Every issue though can be worked through with God’s guidance. The second-career pastor after all is a creature of dust, and “In the heart and soul of the person being called is the stormy region where one hopes that the call may be true and at the same time trembles at what that might mean.”⁶ To be called by God is to be called from the boat onto the stormy sea like Peter.⁷ In this way all pastors are faced with the hope that God is calling and they fear what it might mean for them.

⁴ Stephen Sprinkle, 101.

⁵ Collins, loc. Kindle, 2601.

⁶ Stephen Sprinkle, 104.

⁷ Matthew 14:29.

During the transition, many challenges arise for the second-career pastor. This transition not only impacts one's profession but all aspects of a person's life. This transition mirrors the effect of baptism on the second-career pastor's life: a death to their old life and a rebirth into a new one. How well the second-career pastor can read the signs of God's leading and follow them during this transition determines the longevity and vitality of a pastorate. Following where God leads and submitting to God's will is the way in which every pastor manages the transition from a secular occupation into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. When managed well, the second-career pastor's new life will be pleasing to God and life giving to them. This not because of specific events, but rather the transition of the second-career pastor's inner self: "It is not those events, but rather the inner reorientation and self-redefinition that you have to go through in order to incorporate any of those changes into your life. Without a transition, a change is just a rearrangement of the furniture."⁸ If a second-career pastor has not experienced a rebirth but only a change of occupation, then their time in ministry will be short, painful, and destructive, as is demonstrated by an over reliance on their own understanding and more faith in their past experiences rather than an openness to where God was leading them to do a new thing.

A Transition into a New Life

It appears evident that most people living in the U.S. have been on the move. Some go just around the corner, while others traverse across the country. More importantly than a physical transition are the spiritual and attitude transitions that occur

⁸ Bridges, loc. 68, Kindle.

during a person's lifetime, "Americans have always been in transition. From place to place and job to job, Americans kept moving."⁹ Because it is more common than in previous generations for people to move and change circumstances, there is an assumption that everyone knows how to do it and will navigate the transition with relative ease. This is generally not true, "there is a great need to find ways of making the transition both caring and positive."¹⁰ While, there are unique challenges during the transition into a role as pastor for anyone, there are also those that are particular to a second career pastor: "It is a difficult process to let go of an old situation, of suffering the confusing nowhere of in-betweenness, and launching forth again in a new situation."¹¹ For the second-career pastor this process leading into recognized vocational pastoral ministry might be the most difficult transition of their life. Much like baptism, they are dying to their old life, lying in the grave, and then rising to a new life.

There are a number of individuals in the United States who have transitioned, are planning to transition, or are considering transitioning from a secular occupation into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry vocation. The intent of this chapter is to explore this transition and identify several areas that might prove surprising to those who are transitioning in the hope that this will better prepare second-career persons transitioning into ministry to face these surprises with realistic expectations.

The Christian 'call' to recognized vocational pastoral ministry is the term that is used to denote the transition from a previous context into denominationally recognized

⁹ Bridges, loc. 1, Kindle.

¹⁰ Hoge and Wenger, loc. 49, Kindle.

¹¹ Bridges., loc. 3, Kindle.

vocational pastoral ministry. The Christian call happens in every minister's life as well as the lives of all Christians, regardless of whether they enter recognized vocational pastoral ministry or not. Transitions occur during the narraphor of a person's life, and within that life is a micro-narraphor—a shorter period of an individual's life—of the call into ministry, both of which take place within the meta-narraphor of God, the grand overarching narraphor of God and creation. During this micro-narraphor, signs and symbols that are part of God's continuing meta-narraphor appear in order to serve to direct and mark the course of the career transition.

The actual transition into ministry from a non-ministry occupation is an important area to study. The way the transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry is accomplished does have significant consequences for the individual, the body of Christ, and the individual's specific ministry context. Like in any career transition, the insertion of a new person into a ministry context changes the dynamic of the ministry and will impact the ministry in ways that are often unforeseen. The new pastor brings new life and a dying to an old way of life for a congregation.

The Signs and Symbols Experienced Before the Transition

Words, expressions, gestures, art, music, feelings, and the reactions of others and to others during the transition can lead a person further along the path into recognized vocational pastoral ministry or redirect them away from it. Some of the more important signs during the transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry are the words that they remember hearing. The early teaching from their parents, Sunday school teachers, camp leaders, youth leaders, pastors, and other authority figures within the context of the

Christian Church were signs and symbols that directly impacted the trajectory of those who were being called.

Even more importantly than the words spoken are the signs of adherence to the words spoken, the doctrines stated, and the creeds followed by those very same authority figures, both while participating in the life of the church and, even more importantly, in the entirety of their lives as observed by those who are called into ministry. The behaviors and demeanor of professing Christians were signs to those who are called by God. The incorporation of the tenets of Christianity into the lives of those who have the greatest influence over the person called has the greatest impact on their transition. Their lives will either reflect the faith that they profess or a compartmentalized belief system that had little impact on their daily life.

During a transition into ministry, a second-career pastor is afforded several opportunities to reflect upon the influences and experiences they had earlier in life. Stephen Sprinkle, in his book on ordination, engages in this very practice when he writes, “Many autumns had come and gone, and Sulpher, Kentucky seemed like another life altogether. But in ways deeper than I could express or understand, I had carried that church and those people with me.”¹² Through reflection on their previous experiences of God and the church, second-career pastors begin to realize that some experiences have affected them more deeply and stayed with them longer than they thought. This reflection allows second career pastors to become aware of God’s guidance, and they realize their transition into ministry began earlier than they knew; it continues throughout their life. The hope of this dissertation is that it will help a second career pastor be able to say,

¹² Stephen Sprinkle, 110.

“[t]he spirit of the living God has opened doors when I’ve been in transition or confusion and led me into amazing opportunities and new connections.”¹³

The demeanors of those who have the greatest impact on those called have a great power. When a parent, pastor, Sunday school teacher, or youth leader looks and acts like they love God and their neighbors, it can have a positive impact on a person transitioning into ministry. When they do not look and act like they love God, it can derail the transition and devastate the individual who is called. Sprinkle writes, “While experiences of God sometimes come to ministers in a sacred place such as a sanctuary or a historic pulpit, God is more often revealed to them in the relationships they have with other people.”¹⁴ So, if a trusted pastor quietly reflects their disgust with other people or acts as if the church is his or her personal kingdom without regard to God then this can have a negative impact upon the transitioner. However, when they are supportive and humble, this can greatly aid the second-career pastor’s own relationship with God. Whether or not the people that have influence upon the life of the person transitioning into ministry act from a place of joy or obligation, resent those who need their help, or serve as if it is Christ himself that they are ministering to, matters a great deal. Even the subjective interpretation of facial expressions, gestures, and posture of those who serve can be used by God as signs and guides to the person being called, into an ever-deeper relationship with the divine Godhead of the Christian faith.

The art, music, and scripture that is experienced by those who are being called can be forms of prayer and serve as signs and symbols from God during the transition, the

¹³ Harris, loc. 147, Kindle.

¹⁴ Stephen Sprinkle, 110.

images and sounds serving to guide one ever closer to God. A person transitioning into recognized vocational pastoral ministry can experience art and music with new appreciation, listening for the voice of God, and consulting with trusted companions on what they saw and heard. Bible study and scripture reading takes on a new importance and deeper meanings and can serve as mentoring guides to a deeper relationship with God.

Art can serve as a symbol of the divine, “The purpose of Christian art is to deepen our encounter with God. From the tiny to the monumental, from private meditation, to a massive stained-glass window in a great cathedral, the function is the same: to catch the imagination, to open the heart and the mind, so that we may better hear the divine promptings.”¹⁵ Art acts as a window upon the divine and truth that is best expressed through the mediums of art, such as emotions that are accessed through sight, smell, and sound. Music also serves a similar function from any genre music can serve to strike a chord within those being called that relates to the place they find themselves on the transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. “Flood” by Jars of Clay, “Here I am Lord,” by Daniel L. Schutte, and “The Hallelujah Chorus,” by Handel are just a few that might serve as signs that impact and influence the transition by drawing the transitioner further along or even causing them to pause and reflect on if they really are ready to say, “Here I am Lord.” All of this is part of what can best be described as the process by which God transitions individuals from a non-ministry occupation into a recognized ministry.

¹⁵ Judith Couchman, *The Art of Faith: A Guide to Understanding Christian Images* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2012), 3.

The Process and Place

On one hand, the transition process itself can be a long frustrating and messy process with many steps forward and back. On the other hand, it can be a relatively straightforward process that is filled with contentment and a joyous expectation for what God has in store for the one called. It should probably be expected to be some combination of joy, expectation, frustration, despair, exhilaration, and a host of other emotions as the one who is being called into recognized vocational pastoral ministry transitions down the path to it.

Every transition is the moving away from the previous context, a dying to a previous life circumstance and the entering into a new paradigm, a new life. This movement away can be both highly anticipated and at the same time highly stressful. Depending on the experience and the signs observed during the transition, the individual can either be built up or torn apart: “If it is deep and far-reaching, transition makes a person feel that not only is a piece of reality gone, but that everything that had seemed to be reality was simply an enchantment. With the spell broken, life can look so different that we hardly recognize it.”¹⁶ The changes of reality and the death of the former life are common experiences for those who are in transition on the path toward recognized vocational ministry. Answering a Christian call can be, and probably is, the greatest transition in any person’s life, filled with joy and a sense of purpose. It might also not be an entirely positive experience. On the other hand, in Barna’s *The State of Pastors*, it is reported, “Contrary to conventional wisdom, most pastors are faring well.”¹⁷ This gives

¹⁶ Bridges, loc. 35, Kindle.

¹⁷ Barna Group, 20.

hope that most pastors are engaged in fulfilling and God-pleasing ministry with a sense of their place in the community and within the church.

Every individual has some sense of place. For many people that can be their place of employment. Whether or not that place is a positive or negative experience, it is the place the employees identify with. As a person who has received a call into ministry begins the transition toward recognized vocational pastoral ministry, they begin to die to their former life and they start to lose their place, even while they may still reside in that same location. As a person begins the transition process, their place in the world becomes a question. Even as a person acknowledges God's claim upon them, their context begins to change mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Obstacles During Transition

Along the path of the transition into pastoral ministry issues can “emerge from the differences between the old and the new setting and are not knowable in advance of the transition..”¹⁸ For example, sometimes the vision of ministry a person embarks with encounters an unexpected reality, “differences that arise from discrepancies between the transitioner's expectations of their new job and the subsequent reality.”¹⁹ This in turn can cause them to be unrealistic in their view of what can be accomplished or, more importantly, what God intends to be accomplished in their ministry setting. Stephen Sprinkle recounts his own experience in his first ministry call, “What I was unable to hear at the time was that my ego was so tied up in making this first ministry of mine a success

¹⁸ Grant, 5.

¹⁹ Ibid., 32.

that I felt that the slowness of results was a personal referendum on me. Frankly, my heart hardened.”²⁰ This hardening of heart that is so common when reality does not match a pastor’s hopes and dreams can eventually end a promising ministry before it was necessary.

The financial cost of following a call can also be a serious and significant issue during the transition. For example, a person with a family and debt may feel a strong sense of call into recognized vocational pastoral ministry, but once they find out that they will be required to relocate, it can become an issue that makes it difficult to follow God’s call. The hope or expectation that the church will cover the cost of transitioning into ministry is seldom realized, and that can also be a significant issue. The cost of a seminary education can also be problematic. Also, the preparation a person received from their local church, from their life experiences, and their sincere engagement with God through scripture and prayer may not be enough because of their lack of openness or willingness to change their hearts and minds to conform to God’s will.

During the transition, the called wait with impatience for God to equip them and for the time of formation, that is the transition to end, even as God uses their transition as a means to form them as God’s servant and humble them so that they can be equipped. This can be perceived as an obstacle even though it is necessary to the transition. Even though the second-career pastor has heard the call clearly, they continue to be called closer to God. This is not an obstacle, but the continued leading by God requires them to dedicate time to care for themselves and to nurture their relationship with God. If a pastor is unwilling to dedicate this time, then their unwillingness becomes an obstacle to their

²⁰ Stephen Sprinkle, 114.

deepening relationship with God and their ability to experience the fullest transition possible.

During the transition they are called into a deeper relationship with God, with a congregation, and a deeper understanding of themselves. They are not a finished product even though God has clearly called them. During the transition, the second-career pastor's call is affirmed by a community of faith and God who opened the doors through which they were led. They receive education, which also helps to equip them for ministry and their involvement in continuing education continues to form them. And finally, during their transition they will be called by a congregation into a denominationally recognized vocational pastoral ministry setting. This affirms their call even as they continue to transition into the pastor God intends them to be. A pastor is always in transition and subject to new calls or the repeated affirming of their current call.

There is tension between the many unanticipated aspects of the transition and the perception that everything is going to be better at the new place because God called them. For the second-career pastor entering into recognized vocational pastoral ministry, this can be an extremely problematic perception. It is almost guaranteed that the second-career pastor will find unanticipated features of the transition all along the way to ministry. The realization of this before and, to a lesser extent, during the transition should help the second-career pastor be flexible whether the challenges be emotional, spiritual, physical, or locational, i.e. a new school, home, or group. Without this realization, the transition can become problematic with the result to the second-career pastor of suffering from "The two human realities, becoming stiff-necked and hard of heart."²¹ Becoming

²¹ Stephen Sprinkle, 114.

stiff-necked and hard of heart can be the result of unrealistic expectations during a transition. Unrealistic expectations can also cause a second-career pastor to “discover that they were mistaken in believing that they were called to ordained ministry,”²² which might be only seem true because of his or her own expectations. All of these “are natural responses to life lived in a world that is seldom fair. Like sin itself, pain and loss are unnecessary for us, but still inevitable.”²³ They are often caused by a failure to be informed or accept the information available when transitioning into ministry.

When a second-career pastor does become inflexible and derailed during his or her transition into ministry or a new ministry setting, she or he should endeavor to be grateful for all that God has done to get him or her. All “local church ministers in Protestant denominations today feel many pressures”²⁴ and being grateful does not come naturally when under pressure. They need to engage in an intentional practice of daily gratitude, but “The movement from bitterness and resentment to gratitude is made possible only by an act of God. Actual experience and theological reflection on it teach us that. The truth is that long before we ever acknowledged it, down the long corridor of time God has been calling us.”²⁵ Acknowledging this is a necessary step for second-career pastors in understanding that their transition into ministry started before they realized it, and they were guided by God even before they acknowledged it.

²² Hoge and Wenger, loc. 50, Kindle.

²³ Stephen Sprinkle, 114.

²⁴ Hoge and Wenger, loc. 56, Kindle.

²⁵ Stephen Sprinkle, 114.

Finally, an issue might arise from “difficulties in accurately forecasting internal reactions or feelings to the new experiences.”²⁶ This might well be the most difficult issue to cope with. Having clearly received a call from God, a second-career pastor, thinking themselves well prepared by their life experiences, may find themselves surprised by the intense highs and lows that can accompany the journey into recognized vocational ministry. In a new ministry setting, a second career pastor, “needs help forging new bonds with veteran ministers and ministers newly arrived in a given community need to make connections with everyone there”²⁷, a local mentor would be a tremendous value in assisting in this. If a person can follow the simple mentoring advice to try to neither get to high nor to low and always practice being grateful, it can help sustain them while being called into recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

Conclusion

The ability to read the signs along the way into recognized vocational pastoral ministry can aid the person responding to God’s call immensely. The understanding of the metaphors used all around them and the narraphor of their life as it entwines with the narraphor that God is writing in creation will ensure a faithful, God inspired, Holy Spirit lead transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. The ability to read the signs of what God is doing in their life and the lives of those they come in contact with will allow the person transitioning along the path to recognized vocational pastoral ministry to fully immerse themselves into the meta-narraphor of God and to remain grateful for what

²⁶ Grant, 33.

²⁷ Hoge and Wegner, loc. 616, Kindle.

God has done and is doing. This then will result in the ability to overcome the “surprises during the transition, which represents an important issue for the transitioner.”²⁸

The transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry does have significant consequences for second-career pastors, the body of Christ, and the ministry context into which they find themselves called by God. In every transition into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry setting, the insertion of a new person changes the dynamic of the ministry and will impact the ministry in ways that are often unforeseen. Transitions occur during the narraphor, the narrative and metaphor, of a person’s life, and within that life is a micro-narraphor of the call into ministry. During this micro-narraphor, there appear signs and symbols that are part of God’s continuing narraphor, which serve to direct and mark the course of the career transition into ministry. These signs and symbols from God can take many forms: words, expressions, gestures, art, and music, as well as feelings and reactions by others and to others.

In any transition there is a moving away from the previous context, a dying to a previous life circumstance, a rebirth into new life circumstances, and a dawning understanding of the new context. In the United States of America, these transitions are often not acknowledged whereas “Other societies, in short, regularly and repeatedly dramatized the transition process, which was the way that how-the-way-things had-been ended in a kind of death, and a new way-things-are going to-be took its place through a sort of birth.”²⁹ This movement away can be both highly anticipated and at the same time highly stressful. Depending on the experience and the signs observed during the

²⁸ Grant, 32.

²⁹ Bridges, loc. 84, Kindle.

transition, the individual can either be built up or torn apart: “If it is deep and far-reaching, transition makes a person feel that not only is a piece of reality gone, but that everything that had seemed to be reality was simply an enchantment. With the spell broken, life can look so different that we hardly recognize it.”³⁰ The next chapter will examine the narrative of the Apostle Peter as it relates to his transition from his old life as a fisherman into a second-career pastor, as well as God’s, his and others expectations of him and for him.

³⁰ William Bridges, *The Way of Transition: Embracing Life’s Most Difficult Moments*. (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing), 2001, loc. 35, Kindle.

CHAPTER FIVE

A NEW LIFE

When Jesus called Peter out of his fishing boat, it was as if Peter was called out of the waters of baptism, into a new life.

Settled Pastor Pete

Pastor Pete felt pretty good. Eighteen months into his new call as the minister of a small-town congregation, a lot had been accomplished. He had become acquainted with several local pastors, six of whom had started the same year as he had. In addition to them he had found a couple of experienced local pastors to coach and mentor him. He was part of forming new pastor prayer groups and he found the support of the pastors involved in these groups invaluable. There were successes with his new congregation also, such as completing extensive building repairs and improvements, having the building painted, adding sixty new members, new ministries - Children Worship and Wonder, Family Promise, a program for homeless families, a weekly community supper, a bible study, a youth group, and children's Sunday school - and reorganizing the church's polity. There were also failures such as miscommunication that caused hurt, people to leave the congregation, and disagreements as to the congregation's priorities. It felt like the transition was over and he and his family were fully integrated into the congregation. He knew all the congregant's names; he and his family had been invited to and attended significant events in the lives of some of the congregants. Most significantly, long-time congregants started to share their personal lives and the history of the church with them.

A few people had left the church, but more had joined, and the level of trust between Pastor Pete and the congregation was noticeably deepening. He was told where all the money was as a tangible sign of the trust the church patriarch had in him. One thing that kept bothering Pastor Pete, though, was the continuing expectation that he would leave. He was told by a ninety-year-old member that Pastor Pete was bound to leave soon because he got too much done. Another long-time member was sure that Pastor Pete was working so hard so that he would move up the ladder to a larger and more prestigious position somewhere. He was told that it would be a surprise if he stayed five years. This attitude caused the congregation to hold back and not trust the situation; they were reluctant to be hurt again. Pastor Pete did not understand until one day he read an old congregation survey result. In the compilation of the survey results one comment was repeated several times: “Why do we always lose our pastors? How come they never stay?” When he read this comment, Pete realized the transition would never be completely finished until he left to transition into a new ministry context or phase of life. A long healthy pastorate with a good ending to it was what his congregation needed to heal.

The Apostle Peter: A Second-Career Pastor

This chapter will look at the Apostle Peter as a biblical example of what a transition from a secular occupation into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry might look like. Throughout scripture God called human beings into service. Several argued, some reluctantly agreed, and still others apparently readily accepted God’s call and endeavored to fulfill their call to the best of their ability. In the grand tradition of call

narratives in scripture, Simon the fisherman was called from the nets of his father into the service of the Creator, his heavenly Father. In this case, God, incarnate in Jesus, walked right up to Peter and said to him, “Follow me.” No voice from heaven, no dream, but rather an intentional material call by God to leave his career and transition into a recognized vocational pastoral ministry. What was God asking of Peter? It was to change his entire life in order to serve God, to not only change careers, but to be born again into a new life. Peter experienced “[t]he precondition for every sense of calling to ministry, dramatic or not, is the great event of God in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Godself.”¹ This led him to stop what he was doing for a living and to follow Jesus instead, making following Jesus his highest priority.

In general, transitions are fraught with misunderstandings and conflicts between the expectations of those who are called and the one who calls. In Peter’s case, his expectations of what would be required of him and what God really would require were often dissimilar. Peter first met Jesus through his brother Andrew, who was a follower of John the Baptist. After Jesus’ baptism, Andrew started following Jesus,² and introduced him to Simon Peter. Sometime later, while walking on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus passed Peter and Andrew working on their father’s boats. At this time Jesus called Peter to follow him. Whether or not Peter expected this call or had planned for it, “He immediately left his nets (and it is assumed his fishing career) and began to follow Jesus in his ministry along with Andrew and the two brothers John and James.”³

¹ Stephen Sprinkle, 116.

² John 1:35–42.

³ Matthew 4:18–22.

A significant portion of the Gospels could be viewed as on-the-job training of the disciples, the students of Jesus, to be sent out as Apostles into recognized vocational pastoral ministry: their own transitions into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. Peter along with James and John were also seen as an inner circle, the three closest to Jesus and hence to God. As one of the closest to Jesus, “Peter witnessed most of the miracles of Jesus and was constantly with him as a close companion.”⁴ Even so, it appears that as a disciple, Peter had an expectation that he might be in charge, possibly because of his status as an older brother, and had to be dissuaded of that notion by Jesus on more than one occasion while they journeyed together. After Jesus’ death and resurrection Peter continued to grow in stature and wisdom, resulting in his responsibilities and duties changing as God’s servant, as well as the expectations of others and Peter. This chapter will look at some of those changing expectations of the Apostle Peter as he transitioned from fisherman to the respected leader of the early Christian church.

This career change had significant consequences not only in Simon Peter’s life, but also in the life of the world through his influence at the founding of the Christian church. For most second-career pastors, their transitions will not be as significant for themselves or the world as Peter’s was, but they are still significant to them and the congregations who are led to call them by God.

Simon Peter, The Galilean Fishermen

Peter is known to have been a fisherman, which required skill, knowledge, raw materials, and a license: “Fishing licenses were required for access to certain areas, and

⁴ Stephen Sprinkle, 105.

fishers needed various raw materials such as wood for their boats and flax for their nets.”⁵ Fishing at the time was a physically demanding occupation and not only the success of the business, but also the very survival of his family depended upon Peter’s efforts. Peter owned at least one boat,⁶ indicating that Peter was somewhat successful in this occupation. He and his family lived in Capernaum, a fishing village with a synagogue located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, where he owned a home. It was “a small Jewish fishing and agricultural community on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee”⁷ He was also married.⁸ This may indicate that Peter was one of the well to do where he lived, but it is more likely that he was what we today would consider a poor subsistence fisherman: “Most peasant fishing families were poor and lived at subsistence level, while a small minority of elites held the bulk of wealth and power.”⁹

The Roman Empire dominated Galilee during Peter’s lifetime and “the region was known for being a hotbed of political activity and some of it violent.”¹⁰ This means Peter would have had to navigate a complicated economic relationship with Roman authorities in addition to the local societal expectations. Roman interests dominated everything: “This region was ruled by Herod Antipas; a client king of the Romans. The economy was one in which questions of production, processing, trade, and their regulation could not be

⁵ Alicia J. Batten, “Fishing Economy in the Sea of Galilee,” *Bible Odyssey*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/related-articles/fishing-economy-in-the-sea-of-galilee>.

⁶ Luke 5:3.

⁷ Batten.

⁸ Matthew 8:14.

⁹ Batten.

¹⁰ Allen D. Callahan, “The Political Climate of Galilee,” *Frontline*, April 1998, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/portrait/galilee.html>.

separated from politics, religion, and family or village life.”¹¹ Peter, as well as everyone else, would have experienced the unfairness of Roman rule and may well have harbored resentment towards the occupying Legions and those who collaborated with them. Not only Roman rule though but also the rule of those Rome gave the task in Galilee “throughout the time of Jesus, was ruled by one of Herod's sons. So, it was ruled much as his father's kingdom had been, as a kind of small client kingdom. In a client kingdom, the King, himself, is the absolute overlord. He's given a lot of freedom by Romans, insofar as all he has to do, basically, is raise his own taxes. And then he's in charge of everything else.”¹² This caused an abundance of discontent and unrest in Galilee.

Known as Simon and the brother of Andrew, he witnessed firsthand a miracle of Jesus before he was ever called to be a disciple. Having worked all night Peter and other fishermen were cleaning up for the day expecting to finish up and go home. God apparently had other expectations. Jesus asked them to use their boats to preach from, requiring Peter and the others to cease their labors and do as Jesus asked. “When he was finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.’ Simon answered, ‘Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets’” (Luke 5:4–5). When Simon Peter did this, so many fish were caught that help had to be called. Realizing it was a miracle, he begged Jesus to go away from him because he was not worthy.¹³ For Peter, this miracle was a mixed blessing.

¹¹ Batten.

¹² L. Michael White, “Politics in Galilee,” *Frontline*, April 1998, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/portrait/galilee.html>.

¹³ Luke 5:6–9.

One of the realities of life in Galilee was that, “Evidently families had to occasionally hire day laborers for assistance with the haul (Mark 1:19–20). Fish processors and distributors were required to pay taxes for the product and tolls for its transport. A reference to processed fish, *opsarion*, appears in John 6:9–11.”¹⁴ This added to the financial burdens on fishing families, but was mitigated by having sons able to work. If the sons were to leave for whatever reason, this would have added an additional burden to their family, possibly even making it impossible to continue fishing.

Peter expected to be a fisherman all his life, to work hard and struggle for a living. He did not expect to witness miracles, let alone perform them himself. He had a wife and children to feed and care for. He had a father and brothers who relied upon him. He was the oldest son and so he expected to follow in his father’s footsteps to become the patriarch of his family. God had other expectations of Simon Peter: he was to catch people rather than fish, to help reconcile humanity to God, to be the first to understand who Jesus was, the one whose true confession would be the rock upon which God’s community would be built.

Eusebius said about Peter and the other fishermen, “Reflect on the nature and grandeur of the Almighty God who could associate himself with the poor of the lowly fisherman’s class. To use them to carry out God’s mission baffles all rationality. God thought good to use the most unsophisticated and common people as ministers of his own design.”¹⁵ Peter’s expectations of God and God’s of Peter were in conflict from the very

¹⁴ Batten.

¹⁵ Thomas Oden and Christopher Hall, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998), 17.

beginning of Peter's call into ministry. Yet God called and built a church upon this humble man's understanding of Jesus. This chapter will reflect upon the merging of the expectations of God, Peter, and those Peter interacted with.

Jesus' Expectations v. Peter's

In John 1:42, the Apostle Peter's brother Andrew—one of Jesus' first followers—introduces him to Jesus. Jesus later speaks to Peter and Andrew while tending their fishing nets: “When they had brought their boats ashore, they left everything and followed him” (Luke 5:11). Why did they follow him? What were their expectations? Were they hoping to escape an existence in which they were oppressed and exploited? Being a subject area of Rome caused the people who lived their great hardship as, “In general, the economy of the Roman Empire was extractive insofar as production and distribution served the interests of the powerful, not those who actually performed the labor. Peasant fishers and processors had little to no control over fees for fishing licenses or tax and toll rates. It is reasonable to conclude that such an economic situation was largely one of exploitation.”¹⁶ This added to the misery and resentment of the local populations. Following Jesus must have been a way for Peter to escape from his old life. Was it because they saw in following Jesus a glorious future for themselves and Israel or something else? The ancient father Jerome said, “There must have been something divinely compelling in the face of the Savior. Otherwise they would not have acted so irrationally as to follow a man whom they had never seen before. Does one leave a father to follow a man in whom he sees nothing more than he sees in his father? They left their

¹⁶ Batten.

father of the flesh to follow the Father of the spirit.”¹⁷ They followed Jesus because they had found the Messiah and recognized that he was from God.

From the very beginning, Peter became the leader of the disciples. The Gospels, Acts, and Pauline Letters picture Peter as the leader of the disciples. Peter was part of Jesus’ inner circle, which consisted of himself, James, and John.¹⁸ “Yes, these three were chosen: Peter, James and John. But why only three? First there is the mystery of the Trinity embedded in this number, a number sacred in itself. Second, according to Moses, Jacob set three peeled branches in the watering troughs. Finally, it is written, “A three-ply cord is not easily broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:12)”¹⁹ They were chosen because the three together were a stronger witness to Jesus’ ministry.

Peter also often spoke for the disciples.²⁰ As the foremost disciple, Peter held more influence with Jesus than the others. This leads to the expectation on Peter’s part that to a certain extent Jesus would listen to his council and submit to him. Two examples of this are the transfiguration²¹ and when Peter took Jesus aside to rebuke him for saying he was going to die.²² On these two occasions it appears that Peter expected to assert his authority over Jesus and this new movement of the Holy Spirit. However, God and Jesus were having none of this as God told Peter, James, and John that Jesus was God’s son

¹⁷ Oden and Hall, 19.

¹⁸ Mark 5:37.

¹⁹ Oden and Hall, 72.

²⁰ Mark 9:5.

²¹ Luke 9:33.

²² Mark 8:32.

and to listen to him. So, Peter did not erect a tent at the site of the transfiguration.²³ Furthermore, Jesus did not accept Peter's rebuke, but rather told Peter he was acting as a Satan and to get behind him, to keep his mind on divine goals not human ones.²⁴ Based on these scenes, it could be understood that Peter's expectations for Jesus was to be the Messiah to Israel and to reestablish the Kingdom of David within the Promised Land, an earthly Kingdom in which Peter would stand prominently, based upon his understanding of Jesus as "The Messiah of God."²⁵ The establishment of sacred places where miraculous events had occurred would honor Jesus, and Jesus would listen to Peter when he spoke.

Jesus' expectations of Peter were quite different. Jesus expected Peter to follow him, to grasp the meaning of the Kingdom of God, and to have faith. Jesus called Peter away from fishing and told him to follow him and he would make him a fisher of men.²⁶ Peter dropped his nets followed Jesus, leaving everything behind.²⁷ Jesus expected Peter to feed people,²⁸ to heal people,²⁹ and to have faith.³⁰ These expectations are based on

²³ Luke 9:36–37.

²⁴ Mark 8:33.

²⁵ Luke 9:20.

²⁶ Matthew 4:18.

²⁷ Matthew 4:20.

²⁸ Matthew 14:16.

²⁹ Matthew 8:16.

³⁰ Matthew 14:28–31.

Peter's stated understanding about Jesus, who would build God's Church, and death would not prevail against it.³¹

Peter the Apostle and the Expectation of the New Pastor

Jesus called Peter. At first Peter had no idea what that really meant. He might have based his expectations of Jesus upon what he had been taught about the old prophets of Israel. In the Gospel of Matthew, "They are not told why they should follow Jesus, what following will mean, or where the path will lead them."³² In following Jesus, Peter was exposed to the ministry of Jesus: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people."³³ By witnessing what Jesus did and how he did it, Peter was being taught by the Holy Spirit.³⁴ The Holy Spirit through Jesus trained Peter for his second career in recognized ministry, just as pastoral mentors, seminary professors, bible college faculty and Christian role models are intended to do today. Jesus modeled to Peter how a pastor should lead, carry one's self, counsel others, care for others, and love others.³⁵ Jesus informed Peter by opening his eyes to God's intention for

³¹ Matthew 18:16–19.

³² Eugene Boring, and Pheme Perkins, *The New Interpreter's Bible, v. VIII: New Testament Articles, Matthew, Mark* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 169.

³³ Matthew 4:23.

³⁴ Matthew 5.

³⁵ Matthew 6.

creation.³⁶ He reinterpreted the history of Israel.³⁷ Jesus was Peter's coach and Peter was Jesus' apprentice.³⁸ Peter was being formed into a pastor.³⁹

In his formation as he witnessed the life and ministry of Jesus, Peter served God, but as a child of Israel, he must have also had questions for Jesus.⁴⁰ He demanded answers and struggled to learn what he was being taught.⁴¹ Peter expected to follow in the footsteps of his mentor and to repeat the teachings of Jesus, heal people of their afflictions, and declare the good news. The second-career pastor like Peter expects to emulate their mentors and to share the teaching they have received. They might expect their ministry to settle into a routine of preaching and helping those in need. Ministry would continue to be a life of learning and imparting the knowledge gained in study and a vocation in which others follow their lead and help with the ordinary duties associated with ministry. Yet, the ministry that Jesus called Peter into was not a settled life nor is the ministry anyone is called into.

To follow the Son of Man means not a life of acceptance and ease, but rather a life with nowhere to place one's head and no time for other priorities.⁴² A second-career pastor will find that following Jesus can quickly lead to storms, and the fear of losing oneself in the conflicts that arise in ministry. The experience of the second-career pastor

³⁶ Matthew 6:25–34.

³⁷ Matthew 8:10–12.

³⁸ Matthew 4:19; 10.

³⁹ Matthew 10:25.

⁴⁰ Matthew 21:1–14; 14:15.

⁴¹ Matthew 14:28–31.

⁴² Matthew 8:20–22.

and the realities of their ministry can often be in conflict. Peter and the other disciples are immediately led into not only a rewarding life, but also a challenging existence in which the realities of ministries, their expectations, and the expectations of others result in inevitable conflict. It has been noted that these rewards and challenges have “been the experience of new Christians wherever the gospel has been proclaimed in a non-Christian culture. It is true also for many in the Christian west. Taking a stand on controversial social issues in Jesus’ name can draw the wrath of family and community. Many who feel a call to the recognized vocational pastoral ministry or missionary service are treated with contempt by those who should be supportive.”⁴³ This is the story of the disciples as they follow their teacher into ministry, and this is often the story for second-career pastors who are led by the Holy Spirit into recognized vocational ministry.

Peter the Evangelist and the Expectation of the Experienced Pastor

By the end of the gospels, Peter is not the same man who was originally called by Jesus to become a fisher of men. The initial compelling call of Jesus had been obscured or even forgotten in the aftermath of the collapse of Jesus’ ministry and his crucifixion. Peter denied that he even knew Jesus and by doing so he denied his call. He did this publicly, and for a time he was lost and hid with the other disciples for fear of the Jews.⁴⁴ His experience led him to a dark place, and he seemed to have forgotten that “It was he [sic] of all the Apostles who had enough faith that he could walk out on the water to

⁴³ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 95.

⁴⁴ John 20:19.

Christ before being distracted by the strong wind around him.”⁴⁵ Like Peter, the experienced second-career pastor has seen the storms of ministry, has been called to make hard choices, and at times has failed to live up to God’s calling for a variety of reasons.

However, Peter’s ministry was renewed and his call restored because he found the tomb empty and met the risen Lord, realizing that failures, mistakes, nor even death can destroy God’s plan: “On the resurrection morning, when Mary told Peter and John that the tomb was empty, Peter ran to the tomb and was the first to enter the empty tomb.”⁴⁶ Jesus then appears to Peter and the other disciples, “The Lord Jesus himself chided his disciples, his earliest followers who remained close to him, because they did not believe that he was alive but grieved over him as dead.”⁴⁷ Peter, like the others, expected to mourn for Jesus, be arrested like Jesus, or at best to go back to his old life, broken and disappointed. Instead Jesus finds them again and sends them out to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁸ Peter was recommissioned by Jesus⁴⁹ and arrived in Jerusalem where, on the day of Pentecost, he preached his greatest sermon and baptized thousands into the body of Christ.⁵⁰ From there he went out and preached the gospel to the Jews, healing, casting out

⁴⁵ King, loc. 117, Kindle.

⁴⁶ Ibid., loc. 141, Kindle.

⁴⁷ Oden and Hall, 237.

⁴⁸ Matthew 28:19.

⁴⁹ John 21:19.

⁵⁰ Acts 2.

demons, and even raising a man from the dead. The experienced pastor like Peter has gone through the refiner's fire and, if he or she survives, is free of the burden of his or her expectations and the expectations of others, finding them, perhaps for the first time, truly in line with God's expectations.

Peter the Leader and the Expectation of the Senior Pastor

After Peter was renewed in spirit and Jesus ascended to heaven, “there can be little doubt that the other Apostles still looked up to Peter as can be seen after the ascension when Peter took charge and directed the group's replacement of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15–26).”⁵¹ It appears obvious that Jesus himself appointed Peter to be the leader of the disciples and the early church because of the solid rock of Peter's confession, when he said, “upon this rock I will build my church.”⁵² Jesus appears to Peter and tells him to feed his sheep and once again told him to “Follow Me.”⁵³ “The Resurrected One confers a leadership role that is higher and of lasting duration, which will come to an end only with his martyrdom. Thus, one cannot fail to see that such special authority is attributed to Peter.”⁵⁴ Peter, the disciples and the church were all looking for Jesus' immediate return as they watch him ascend in Acts 1. They felt a sense of urgency to evangelize the entire world.

⁵¹ Robert Alan King, *A Biography of Saint Simon the Apostle: From Fisherman to Martyr* (Casa Grande, AZ: King and Associates, 2012), loc. 211, Kindle.

⁵² Matthew 16:18.

⁵³ John 21:19.

⁵⁴ Martin Hengel, *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), loc. 136, Kindle.

As time passed and the awaited return of Christ was delayed, problems arose among the believers, the leaders of the church searched for answers and suffering came for them just as it did for Jesus. As the leader of the church, Peter surely expected to suffer just as his Lord had, he surely expected problems to arise, and he expected God to be with him throughout it all. In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter and John were arrested because of their teaching and they went before the Sanhedrin to be questioned. The Holy Spirit was with Peter, and he was able to answer their questions.⁵⁵ “Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit to give persuasive and powerful response to whatever accusation is implied by the council’s question.”⁵⁶

What Peter clearly did not expect, or at least what was unprepared for, was the way in which God brought Gentiles into the church. “Peter said, I really am learning that God doesn’t show partiality to one group of people over another. Rather, in every nation, whoever worships him and does what is right is acceptable to him”⁵⁷ -not by first becoming adherents to Judaism, but rather staying Gentile and not entering into the Mosaic covenant and following the purity laws.⁵⁸ “The Jews in Jerusalem were most certainly opposed to accepting the Gentiles into the fold at first, but it was Peter’s word that swayed them into belief that this was God’s will. It was also Peter who was instrumental in settling the dispute about circumcision and the laws of Moses.”⁵⁹ He was able to present a convincing argument that led to the Jerusalem council decision. Peter,

⁵⁵ Acts 4:8.

⁵⁶ Wall, Wright, and Sampley, 283.

⁵⁷ Acts 10:34–35 (CEB).

⁵⁸ Acts 11:1; 15:1.

⁵⁹ King, loc. 220, Kindle.

now a more experienced pastor, a respected leader in the church who was often but not always deferred to, had authority. Jesus conferred authority on Peter, and the early church honored Peter. He expected to be prepared for anything because he had seen everything, but even the old experienced pastor can still be caught off guard and surprised by what God is doing and where God leads.

After experiencing a long pastorate, the pastor in any church has survived many challenges to their ministry and to their faith. Like Peter, they have overcome obstacles and have been affirmed in their calling at different times in their ministry and yet, like Peter, a time will come where something new will arise and the time will come for their leadership to end.

Conclusion

God expects something from all of us. For those God has called into recognized vocational pastoral ministry, different is expected. For the second-career pastor like Peter, called out of a non-ministry occupation into ministry, God expects them to use their unique experiences to fulfill God's plan and to meet God's expectations. Yet God's expectations of those called can be very mysterious and confusing. Peter was trained directly by Jesus, while the second-career pastor has been gifted the Holy Spirit as a teacher and guide. The Holy Spirit uses their experiences in the work place and what that taught them to expect in shaping them during their transition into recognized ministry. The Holy Spirit then instructs them, through prayer, study, and the elders of the church on the assumptions of those whom they serve and the often-unfathomable plans of God. As unfathomable as it might be, "God chooses to use human beings to convey the good

news to the world. This is a great mystery. How God calls is something we can talk about in general terms, such as from the Holy Spirit and through the church into the service of Jesus Christ. But even an experienced minister of the gospel must honestly say that the fact of the calling remains mysterious and amazing.”⁶⁰ This amazing mystery is what requires faith and action on the part of all those called to be second-career pastors.

God calls and people answer. For the second-career pastor, when they answer God’s call, they respond with a unique set of experiences in the workplace that inform and even color their expectations of what ministry as a pastor will entail. The experiences of their culture and contexts in their non-ministry occupations have taught them valuable lessons as to what to expect from themselves and others. Their experience of being called, of answering and of following Jesus as they are instructed by the Holy Spirit, mirrors the experience of the Apostle Peter, the man upon who’s confession Jesus built his church.

For everyone entering ministry, there appears to be a wide variety of expectations: God’s, theirs, and those whom they serve. Peter confused his own expectations of Jesus with God’s. He had problems in his ministry because he did not always understand God’s plan. He thought he understood what was expected even though he failed to understand all that Jesus taught him. When he grasped the true nature of God’s plan for creation, its redemption through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, Peter quit trying to meet his own expectations and the expectations of others and lived only to fulfill God’s. The second-career pastor has to do the same. They have to learn to look past human expectations and discern God’s will as they serve in a recognized ministry setting.

⁶⁰ Stephen Sprinkle, 101.

The next chapter will endeavor to give advice and solutions for not only surviving but also thriving in recognized vocational pastoral ministry with the intent of extending the longevity of a pastorate.

CHAPTER SIX

HOW TO GIVE YOUR LIFE IN SERVICE WITHOUT DYING

This is easy, all you gotta do is shut-up and listen.

From Sergeant Pete to Pastor Pete

While Pete was still in the Air Force, he became very active in the church he was born and raised in. The pastor of the church became a friend and mentor to Pete and coached him how to interact well in church. Eventually, his church asked him to be an elder, because he demonstrated a love for God and already willingly served in variety of ways. They asked him to help teach the youth of the church, and at summer camps he was invited to share the story of his faith journey and his life experiences. As an elder, Pete was drawn deeper into the Holy Scriptures while preparing to serve. He received affirmation for his public speaking and witness. Even though Pete felt unworthy, God continued to draw him closer to God's side through his church.

One day, while in a local supermarket, Pete ran into his childhood pastor, the man who baptized him as a youth. Unexpectedly to both Pete and the pastor, Pete asked him what it was like to be a pastor. The pastor replied, "You don't want to be a pastor if you can do anything else." This put Pete off a little but it also piqued his curiosity. Pete shared the experience with his wife, who just shook her head. A short time later, after a spirit-filled family camp, Pete approached his current Pastor about entering the ministry. This pastor received Pete's questions enthusiastically and encouraged Pete to enter ministry. As Pete still had a number of years before he could retire from the Air Force, he waited to pursue God's call to ministry. During this time, he prayed daily about this life-

changing decision. He had many conversations with his wife, his parents, siblings, coworkers, friends, and other pastors about ministry and whether he might be suited for it. Not everyone agreed that Pete should be a pastor, but his wife and family supported him in his call. As his Air Force retirement approached, Pete began a formal discernment process in which he asked for his pastor and congregation's recognition of his call from God and gifts for ministry. He applied to and was accepted into a seminary, located financial support, and then like Abram, uprooted his family and moved to a foreign land—in Pete's case, the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

During seminary, Pete served a local church as an associate pastor for youth and families where the senior pastor and the elders of the congregation mentored him. He was introduced to spiritual direction, which is engagement with a spiritual director where the primary questions are, "What is God saying?" and "Where is God leading?" He also learned to read Scripture by *lectio divina*, Latin for "Divine Reading," a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation, and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's word. Pete also completed a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education, in which he was led to deep self-reflection as a way to more authentically serve those in need.

Continuing to receive affirmation and support from the congregation he served, Pete and his family were able to participate in the life of the community in which the church was located. After three years, Pete graduated from seminary and entered his denomination's process for placing pastors, called "Search and Call." Through this process, Pete was interviewed by a couple of churches, and within a month of graduation from seminary, he received a congregational call to serve a congregation in Washington.

The location of this church was much closer to where Pete grew up than the church he served during seminary. Pete and his family asked a lot of questions about the community and the history of their new ministry setting. He also enrolled his children in school and personally engaged locally by leading cub scouts, joining local clergy groups, the Chamber of Commerce, and a local non-profit board. Pete engaged where he could and where he was invited. As a person new to the community, not every civic organization was open to him, and there were many he was not aware of. Not attending a seminary also allowed him a great deal of more time to be involved in the local community. He and his wife also volunteered at their children's school and coached their children's sports teams. All this allowed Pete and his family to put down deep roots into the place God planted them.

As the years passed, Pete helped guide his congregation to engage in new ways of serving others and explored the best practices of service with them. He did this in part, by leading by example. The congregation started to offer shelter to shelter-less families by joining with a national organization called Family Promise, through which the congregation housed the families for seven nights at a time as part of a rotation with other local congregations. They also began providing a weekly community supper for anyone who wanted to attend, which was a mixture of the homeless, elderly, lonely, and families whose parents got relief from the expense and effort of providing an evening meal one night a week and members of the congregation. Congregational members also began to visit the local juvenile detention center, provide a safe place for children on Halloween, serve and welcome their neighbors, and, in general, be God's anointed to their valley. Pete began to understand that his transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry

was over. His expectations for the ministry and his congregation's expectations for him had merged and, together as a congregation who came together to serve God, they actively worked to discern God's expectations for them.

Introduction

Second-career pastors transitioning into a recognized vocational ministry experience many unexpected issues and tensions as they transition. This transition period begins when the second-career pastor first acknowledges God's call to recognized vocational pastoral ministry and continues through the beginning of their first call to serve a congregation. Unexpected obstacles often arise during transitions. It is a "difficult process of letting go of an old situation, of suffering the confusing nowhere of in-betweenness, and of launching forth again in a new situation."¹ The process is made even more difficult by uninformed and unrealistic expectations. The intent of this chapter is to offer some advice as to how to avoid them and form both informed and realistic expectations for their ministry. The first thing any individual considering recognized vocational pastoral ministry should do is enter into a time of discernment, first by praying and then by seeking affirmation of their call from their family, pastor, friends and congregation.

Should You Leave Your Job and Enter Ministry?

When God calls a person into recognized vocational pastoral ministry, there can be a desire to quit one's job and immediately enter it. However, obstacles quickly appear

¹ Bridges, 4.

and every hindrance to this desire to follow God's call can seem unnecessary and even a direct assault upon God's will for the individual. This is why all individuals feeling a call to ministry need to enter into a time of discernment. This begins with prayer, but it also would be wise for one of the first things a second-career individual does is talk to their family if they have one: "Talk openly and honestly with your spouse and children about your dreams for your career. Listen carefully to the concerns they express. If your family doesn't support your potential move to full-time ministry, don't rush into it. Instead, pass a magnifying glass over your life and deal with the issues you see there."² In addition to family, all second-career pastors should seek the counsel of their pastor, who is essential for guiding them with their discernment process. If a person does not have a strong relationship with a trusted pastor, they should establish this relationship before they continue in their discernment. This can also be extremely helpful in discerning God's intention.

All individuals entering into discernment of God's call should realize that after the initial call into ministry that every Christian share, there are

Three incremental calls: the secret call, or the inner psycho-spiritual persuasion that invites or summons a person to pursue ministry, the providential call, or the invitation or command to take up ministry as a result of personal gifts and talents that give evidence the divine guidance of his or her life by all its circumstances, and finally, the ecclesiastical call, which is the invitation or summons of the community of faith or the institution of the church.³

² Whitney Von Lake Hopler, "Should You Leave the Business World for Ministry?" Crosswalk.com, July 9, 2007, <http://www.crosswalk.com/family/career/should-you-leave-the-business-world-for-ministry-11546536.html>.

³ Stephen Sprinkle, 13.

Awareness of these three incremental calls can allow a person to recognize that answering God's call should not be done hastily but rather better done slowly and intentionally. They should also realize that they may "need more education to be effective in a full-time ministry job."⁴ In addition, "pastors must adapt to and be sensitive about the perspectives of both the lay leadership and the lay "followership" of the congregation regarding their lives as pastors, which may be much different than expectations faced in previous employment settings."⁵ With this understanding in mind they should then, "Scout out the opportunities before you if you choose to enter full-time ministry and compare them to the sacrifices you'll likely have to make."⁶ This will allow them to be thoroughly aware of what they are getting into, and to plan and manage the transition into ministry well, while trusting that God will help them every step of the way if God is truly calling them.

After having faithfully entered into a discernment process in which an individual sought God's will through prayer, conversation with their pastor, family, friends, and congregation, she or he should reflect on everything they heard and discerned as a way of counting the costs, to their personal lives, financial health, spiritual well-being, and the emotional and physical impact to him or her associated with entering recognized vocational ministry, such as personal: "Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it?"⁷ Once second-

⁴ Hopley.

⁵ Nichols, 131.

⁶ Hopley.

⁷ Luke 14:27-28.

career pastors understand the costs and are sure of God's call to ministry, they should begin the transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry.

Can I Be One of Them?

When second-career pastors enter the ministry, they are forever changed by the transition. They leave the familiarity and security of their former career and enter a new reality. Many second-career pastors form new relationships with other clergy. These relationships often serve to replace old acquaintances. Unfortunately, when they find themselves called to a congregation, they often have to relocate, and it becomes difficult to maintain their collegial relationships. Generally, the congregants are strangers, just as the second-career pastor is to them. This unfamiliarity will cause difficulties. Whether or not those difficulties lead to a short pastorate or can be overcome depends on a willingness to engage in open and honest communication with God and those who called them. The reestablishment of local collegial relationships is critical in overcoming difficulties by providing local support. This will also introduce the second-career pastor to potential local mentors. These local mentors are absolutely necessary “to finding a way to keep them connected and supported, and finding resources to help them grow and continue to develop as leaders, to be able to share their frustrations with people, and just those kinds of wholesome things, that’s key to keep people in the ministry.”⁸ The shared experiences of a local context with other local clergy helps to strengthen and lengthen any ministry.

⁸ Hoge and Wegner, loc. 2111, Kindle.

These relationships are similar to that formed in combat units. Sebastian Junger, a war correspondent, wrote a book related to his own experiences of posttraumatic stress disorder and the difficulty he faced in transitioning between conflict areas and the relative peace and security of his home in the United States. The subject of his book is specifically about the difficulty veterans have in reintegrating into U.S.-American society. However, it also relates to second-career pastors as they transition into the new setting of their first recognized ministry call. Junger notes the greater difficulty of reintegrating into the culture of the U.S. for its veterans than reintegration into aboriginal tribes and other cultures, such as Israel's, where military conflict is more widely felt within the society than for only those who have served to protect and their families. He posits that the difficulty might be from the inability of others to relate to the veteran and therefore the longing of the veteran for the closeness and belonging that they felt in the military, specifically during deployments and high stress times.⁹ For second-career pastors, this is similar to leaving a former career and for those who were educated in a seminary, the close bond that was formed with other seminarians is difficult to replicate within their congregation. Like military veterans' pastors need close support as they integrate into a new ministry setting, "and whether that's through coaching or mentoring or whatever it is, it provides a kind of support and helps them see that what they're doing makes a difference."¹⁰ This support reinforces their sense of purpose and belonging.

Attempts to engage congregants at the same level as other seminarians can cause significant issues for the new second-career pastor. Junger begins his book by asking

⁹ Junger, 135.

¹⁰ Hoge and Wegner, loc. 2115, Kindle.

some striking questions: “How do you become an adult in a society that doesn’t ask for sacrifice? How do you become a man in a world that doesn’t require courage?”¹¹ He then follows this up with: “Humans don’t mind hardship, in fact they thrive on it; what they mind is not feeling necessary. Modern society has perfected the art of making people not feel necessary.”¹² Churches too can make people feel unnecessary.

Although Junger’s book had no direct connection to a second-career pastor entering a new ministry setting, it did have many correlations. A church as a community can experience a greater or lesser degree of unity and cohesion depending on its members. The modern church in the United States has made it so easy to participate in the body that little, if anything, is actually required of the individual or the family. Worship has been professionalized to the point that the church member is no longer necessary. If a congregant misses worship it does not seem to impact the body. People need to feel necessary and secure.

Second-career pastors should enter a new ministry setting with the expectation that both they and their congregation serve God’s purpose. A first-time visitor to a church or a new pastor just accepting a call enter into the new setting with the expectation that they will not only be welcomed but that there will be a place for them, and they will find a sense of purpose. The second-career pastor is hired or placed into a ministry setting, implying that they are needed. However, if they are viewed simply as a replaceable part in a machine, the pastor might quickly start to question their necessity to the ministry or church, especially if the church leaders fail to include them in important decisions. In a

¹¹ Junger, xiv.

¹² Ibid., xvii.

similar manner, a second-career pastor should not do so much or do things so well that the church members start to feel superfluous and unnecessary to the organization.

There are parallels in building a church and its unity through shared experiences and honest conversation that builds trust between its members and the way a military unit builds unit cohesion. Hardship and sacrifice are shared, not discouraged or avoided. More people share tough decisions, not less. The tougher the decision and the greater the hardship, the more church members need to be involved. A second-career pastor, with their greater life experiences, may be better able to help a congregation not only welcome individuals and families, but make them feel necessary to the body, while maintaining that same feeling themselves than a younger first-career pastor. Of course, only if the second-career pastors learned over time and in their previous occupations how to do this. If, for instance, they were a supervisor, team leader, or non-commissioned officer in their previous occupations, they were certainly exposed to the experience of welcoming and utilizing new people, which a first-career would not have had.

Second-career pastors transitioning into a new ministry setting need to establish collegial relationships. It is imperative that they also find meaning within their ministry, even as they assist their congregants in doing so. They also need to engage deeply in the culture of their place of call. The success in these things will allow everyone involved to thrive and live abundantly for God.

Take It Slow, Build A Community

A second-career pastor entering their first recognized vocational pastoral ministry setting should endeavor to establish or join established groups within the community that

they are called to but be cautious in committing to long-term commitments. In the book *Slow Church*, the authors contend that the church in the United States of America has become industrialized just as agriculture has been. The demands for instant gratification, products with similar qualities, quantifiable and repeatable results, and the marketing of the church as a product that fills a perceived need have taken God's church off track. They insist that the faithful church will look more like a family dinner table at Thanksgiving than a McDonald's restaurant. It would benefit the second-career pastor to consider "the language and philosophy of the Slow Food Movement as a means to rethink the ways in which we share life together in our church communities."¹³ This would allow them to be comfortable with the time it takes to nurture and affect change in a congregation. The time it takes to prepare a meal from scratch is similar to the time and care God expects a pastor to take in shepherding a flock. Home cooked meals are not finished quickly and a new ministry doesn't bear fruit quickly. "When you go to a new ministry, you should plant a peach tree, and do not expect your ministry to bear fruit before that peach tree does."¹⁴

God seems to work slowly, as humans perceive time, allowing both death and life to be a part of the very act of creation, much to the dismay of many. However, every significant relationship in a person's life grows over time. An individual's relationship with a church and with God matures as time passes, as they weather shared experiences of joy and sorrow. There is little depth and strength to relationships that are formed quickly. Depth and trust come from long, continued engagement: "God is transforming

¹³ Smith and Pattison, 15.

¹⁴ Hoge and Wegner, loc. 2124, Kindle.

and reconciling the world. But unlike human revolutionaries who demand instant and total change, God is not impatient.”¹⁵ God works primarily through people using love and reconciliation. Individual Christians become as yeast to affect change. This takes time, and God is patient and long-suffering, able to wait for the inevitable result of the yeast’s influence on the dough. “Well, it takes three years before you get a peach off that tree”¹⁶ and it takes about three years for a ministry to start to bear fruit that is sweet and mature.

In following God’s example, the second-career pastor will take time to build relationships within their congregations and community: “God is thus revealed as omnipotent precisely in the fact that God stakes everything on the intelligence, free will, and trust of human beings...God attains the goal desired because in this world, joy in God’s story is stronger than all inertia and greed, so this *joy continually seizes people and gathers them into the people of God.*”¹⁷ The second-career pastor can learn and then teach that a better way to be church is to interact and give to others, rather than to consume the programs of a church with the primary focus on the benefit to oneself. It is better to prepare a home cooked meal, sit down, and eat it with your neighbor, than to buy fast food and deliver it to them to eat on their own.

What does this have to do with this dissertation? It addresses the expectation of quick results in the lives of a minister’s congregation. It reassures a new second-career minister that God has called them to a recognized vocational pastoral ministry in a particular place, at a particular time, not so much to fix the flock or build the flock, but to

¹⁵ Smith and Pattison, 24.

¹⁶ Hoge and Wegner, loc. 2124, Kindle.

¹⁷ Smith and Pattison, 27 [emphasis from source].

live with them, love them, and feed them a home cooked meal, prepared for them by someone they know cares. In this way, “The people of God become a sort of demonstration plot for what God intends for all humanity and all creation.”¹⁸

The Slow Church Movement offers to a second-career pastor a counter perspective to the “church growth movement” based on the work of Donald McGavran. Many new pastors are introduced to this movement as the best way to grow a church and its premise that the only faithful church is a numerically growing one. McGavran advocated that the churches’ primary job was to make disciples, and the effectiveness of a church’s efforts could be measured by the number of individuals in worship, the amount of money contributed to it, and the participation of members in its programs. He stated that this could be best achieved when churches only attempted to reach one demographic at a time. He wrote, “People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers...The world’s population is a mosaic, and each piece has a separate life of its own that seems strange and often unlovely to men and women of other pieces.”¹⁹ For many churches and denominations, they understand their call from God as a directive to reach out to a particular group with shared characteristics by marketing to them and catering to their specific needs. Many new believers have come to know Jesus the Christ as their Lord and Savior through the efforts of churches subscribing to McGavran’s way. Many have also come to understand the church as a place that is to satisfy their personal needs rather than a group of people called together to serve God. This leads to pastors who were called to serve a congregation, “who have a theological education and who

¹⁸ Smith and Pattison, 29.

¹⁹ Ibid., 46.

make decisions every day are challenged on their leadership like never before by people in their congregations. Being the pastor of so many people who know best how to run the church can be exhausting.”²⁰ There is another way though. The authors of *Slow Church* contend, “In contrast, the New Testament is clear that heterogeneity, not homogeneity, is the hallmark of the authentic kingdom.”²¹ The diverse church of fifty to one-hundred, rooted in a community, engaging all demographics within the community, is a more faithful reflection of God’s intention for the church and the reality of creation. Not to create uniformity but rather unity while embracing the diversity of God’s people and faithfully following God. Thus, second-career pastors should consider a different way of looking at ministry and what it means for it to be successful and life giving. It is more than growth and numbers. Another way to view a ministry as successful is by using the analogy of a slow cooked meal for their view of what church should be. How the ministry tastes and the fruit it bears is more important than the number of people present in worship.

Rehab Your Leadership Style

Many second-career pastors are taught in their former careers the leadership and management styles of corporations, rather than that of Jesus of Nazareth. The idea that the church is a business encourages them to then implement their previous training and experience in the church—a temptation that a first-career pastor does not have. A question for a second-career pastor is how much of their former training they should

²⁰ Collins, loc. 260, Kindle.

²¹ Smith and Pattison, 47.

utilize in their new ministry setting. If they were autocratic or more decentralized in the experience of leadership, they have a choice to make. They might well be encouraged by their congregation or denomination to be one or the other, either is an option. The leader seen at the helm of many successful organizations is the type of leader churches have long been looking for. Despite this, second-career pastors have to decide for themselves what style is most authentic for them and pleasing to God. In his book *The Christian Leader*, Bill Hull questions whether this is really the type of leader a Christian pastor should endeavor to be. He asks the question, “Did Jesus fit the successful leadership profile?”²² His answer, “From everything I know about him, he didn’t, nor does he intend or expect that any of us fit the profile.”²³ Hull proposes that for far too long the church has secularized Christian leadership and that it is past time for it to start following Jesus’ leadership example instead. Jesus was truly a leader and he demonstrated this by example, “a leader will never accomplish what he or she wants by ordering it done. Real leadership must be done by example, not precept.”²⁴ This is what God does, God leads by example.

In aid of second career pastors the dissertation offers points to consider based upon Hull’s idea of rehabilitating the second career pastor’s view of specific elements of leadership. He starts with the leader’s understanding of Jesus and his leadership style. He states, “The real world as it is often called, does not take Jesus seriously as a leader.”²⁵

²² Hull, 16.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Abrashoff, 32.

²⁵ Hull, 23.

However, considering that Jesus is in fact God, this stance should be reconsidered. Hull writes, “The challenge for the Christian leader is to find the same balance Jesus found. He had enough ambition to carry out his mission and enough humility to stay in submission to his Father.”²⁶ Many people acting as Satan, including Peter and the religious authorities of his day, tried to turn Jesus away from his path and his leadership style, but his way of leading was God’s way and he stayed true to it. Another way to say it is, “if leaders back their words with action, if they practice what they preach, their words create a self-fulfilling prophecy”²⁷, and this is what Jesus did. His enemies wish he had not.

Ultimately, the goal for second-career pastors should be to please God in all they do. Second-career pastors should refocus themselves away from the leadership styles they learned or developed in their former profession and towards a more God-pleasing, Jesus-following, and essentially more sustainable leadership style. This is one more area for them to address when desiring to increase the longevity and vitality of their pastorates.

Entering Wonderland

The first year of a new ministry for a second-career pastor is the end of a transition into a new recognized vocational pastoral ministry context and the continuing maturation of their ministry in that particular place and time. The initial phase of a pastorate, which can last up to eighteen months, is filled with discovering the expectations of God, the pastor, and the congregation. It is during this time that the new

²⁶ Hull, 34.

²⁷ Abrashoff, 50.

pastor has the freshest vision of their ministry. New pastors should view with wonder where God has placed them, before they become used to their surrounding and unable to see with fresh eyes. This applies to all pastors regardless of their level of experience. The pastor enters a new ministry setting and in fact sees things the congregation has become blind to. This is a significant problem for God's church. Not only because of the mismatch between the pastor's and congregants' expectations, but it also implies a lack of concern as to God's expectations for both.

Problems during an initial ministry context can have devastating impact on the new and inexperienced second-career pastor. The premise of this dissertation is that a lack of realistic expectations based on a deep and abiding relationship with God and congregants is a primary—if not the primary—cause of the high rate of pastors leaving recognized vocational pastoral ministry locations and ministry altogether. In order to help second-career pastors avoid or overcome these mismatches of different expectations, this dissertation offers a second-career pastor several questions to ask oneself within the first year of any new ministry setting, based on Harris' work.

These questions are intended to invite the second-career pastor to use their personal experiences gained in their previous career occupations and life experiences to dive deeper into their new ministry context more quickly and intentionally. It is important to note that even though a second-career pastor has left their former life behind when they transitioned into a denominationally recognized vocational pastoral ministry position, they should endeavor to use all of their life experiences to aid their service to God and the community they were called to.

The questions are as follows:

1. What do you see when you look at the building? What is the condition of the building and grounds, what hangs from the walls and what is on the bulletin boards? There is information readily available from looking at the building. The observation of peeling paint, missing shingles, worn carpet, and un-mowed lawns are all signs that send messages about a congregation's spiritual state and the ministry setting. Well-kept grounds and neighborhoods do also.
2. How can I really get to know the new congregation? It is recommended that a pastor early in entering a new ministry begin interviewing a number of the leaders in the church asking them to tell of the history of the ministry and sharing their hopes and fears. Actively listening and understanding that the conversations are incredibly important will help build strong relationships.
3. How solid is the foundation of trust in the pastor and the community? This is incredibly important. It is imperative that a new pastor is trustworthy. It is equally important that the congregation be also. Decisions that are made need to be followed through with, not undermined or deferred. Make no promises that cannot be or are not kept. "An absence of trust stems from an unwillingness to be genuinely open with one another about mistakes and weaknesses."²⁸
4. Who's leading around here? Who is really in charge? "As a new pastor, you may find yourself asking, who's leading around here?"²⁹ An attitude of curiosity can help answer this important question. Be aware of both the formal and informal

²⁸ Patrick M. Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 187.

²⁹ Harris., loc. 1034, Kindle.

authority exercised within the congregation. It is important to know that informal leaders always exist and who they are as they may have more authority than those who hold formal positions of authority.

5. How does a second-career Pastor assess the congregational leadership? He or she could rely upon their own work experience or utilize a book on leadership such as Patrick Lencioni's book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. In this book he states, "genuine teamwork in most organizations remains as elusive as it has ever been. Organizations fail to achieve teamwork because they unknowingly fall prey to five natural but dangerous pitfalls, or dysfunctional characteristics of teams: absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results."³⁰ It could be wise for a second-career pastor to be heavily involved in choosing leaders for the church they serve and to favor those who regularly attend Bible study and worship rather than those who do not.
6. What size is your church? It matters in the sense that different sized churches handle things differently and need to be handled differently. Everything does not work the same in a church with 50 in attendance and one with 2,000. True numbers are important, and at every size, God will provide all that is needed to fulfill God's expectations, not necessarily the pastor's or the congregation's.
7. What have you learned about yourself during your transition into ministry? Honest self-reflection about success and failure, strengths, and weaknesses is vital for a second-career pastor to engage in. Having a mentor is recognized as being

³⁰ Lencioni, 187.

vitality important, a “mentor, assigned or individually sought out, to guide the new pastor would appear to be one of the more effective tools leading to successful pastoring experiences.”³¹ In addition to a mentor, continuing engagement in spiritual direction, ministry coaching, professional development, Clinical Pastoral Education and continuing education, will help a second-career pastor become and remain aware of their reactions to both positive and negative stressors.

8. Where is the pastor and congregation headed? Vision casting, shared purpose, and understanding what God wants the congregation to do and be is crucial to a second-career pastor thriving in recognized vocational pastoral ministry and contexts. “It is time to assess your congregation’s mission and vision and ask, what is God yearning for your congregation to be and do in this particular place at this unique time? Your congregation’s purpose isn’t what you and other leaders want the congregation to be and do. Rather, it is what God yearns for.”³² What God yearns for can be understood only through prayer, study, and community.
9. How is business? “Maybe the church isn’t a business, but pastors and leaders need to lead and manage it well.”³³ The administrative needs of a congregation do not have to be directly handled by the pastor, but the pastor would be well advised to be intimately aware of them.
10. How do I deal with difficult behavior from congregants? In churches across the United States, “we church folks have confused being loving with being nice.

³¹ D. Brown, interview.

³² Harris, loc. 2332, Kindle.

³³ Ibid., loc. 2854, Kindle.

Mind you, I am not saying that we should be nasty, but we have a problem confronting those who are emotionally immature.”³⁴ The second-career pastor should first be aware of their own behavior and then model the behavior that they desire in the emotionally immature. When pastors fail to get the results they desire, they should first look at themselves and start by asking themselves three questions, “Did I clearly articulate the goals? Did I give people enough time and did they have enough resources to accomplish the task and did they have the ability to get the desired results?”³⁵

11. What is next? Review the first calendar year and look ahead to the next. The new second-career pastor always makes some congregants happy and others unhappy. He or she has experienced both success and failure and now needs to become a better leader and nurturer of the flock. “Gallup pollsters found that people need a leader who builds trust, shows compassion, provides stability, and creates hope.”³⁶ So keep your promises, offer grace, and ask for forgiveness from any who you may have offended, stick around, and be as non-anxious as possible, especially during the hardest times.

Answering these questions could prove invaluable for the second-career pastor, helping them transition between non-ministry occupations and a recognized vocational pastoral ministry, with realistic expectations and usable tools at their disposal.

³⁴ Harris, loc. 3314, Kindle.

³⁵ Abrashoff, 33.

³⁶ Harris., loc. 3636, Kindle.

Starting Out or Giving Up

Travis Collins addresses another serious consideration for the second-career pastor in his book *For Ministers About to Start*. The main focus of this book is pastoral burnout, its cause, and the correctives offered by the author. Depression and other mental health issues are also mentioned. His concern for these issues is that they are major contributors to clergy leaving recognized vocational pastoral ministry, not in God's time but rather earlier than necessary, broken and bitter. The root cause of this is that being a pastor can be difficult, but that is oversimplifying the issue. The issue is the same issue as Peter had, he "gave his life as a flawed man who lived in the knowledge that he was utterly dependent upon God."³⁷ All pastors are flawed and it is difficult to depend on God and other people. Collins offers more statistics to show that being a pastor is difficult, "[t]wenty eight percent of ministers say they have at one time been forcefully terminated. Thirty three percent say that being in ministry is an outright hazard to their family. Seventy five percent report severe stress."³⁸ This is unacceptable and directly impacts the longevity and vitality of a pastorate as well as negatively impacting the ability of a local congregation to call a pastor. The ability to retire from ministry is also low and affects the retention of experienced pastors and to a lesser extent the recruitment of new ones, "[l]arge numbers of pastors are drinking to much and looking for love in all the wrong places. Words like coping and surviving have replaced words like visioning and growing. Dreams of Kingdom expansion are giving way to dreams of early retirement."³⁹ The

³⁷ Hull, 114.

³⁸ Collins, loc. 208, Kindle.

³⁹ Collins, loc. 221, Kindle.

church, essentially a volunteer organization, holds the authority of the volunteers—the congregation—in tension with the authority of the vocational minister—the paid employee, which can cause a tremendous amount of stress on both the pastor and the congregant. Second-career pastors should use all their knowledge and experience to lessen the stress within their church and endeavor to be a non-anxious presence whenever possible.

This is just one of many issues that complicate the relationship between vocational ministers and the people they minister to: The author goes on to say that far too often these struggles cause churches not to grow, pastors to become burned out, and promising vocational ministries to end earlier than necessary. He says that the most common reason for clergy burnout is church conflict.

Travis Collins, in his book, also offers recommendations for combating pastoral burnout. He clearly states that a pastor should care for their congregants. A second-career pastor is often able to bring management skills learned in their former professions to assist them in caring for their congregations. Collins also writes that one of the main reasons for the effect of conflict on vocational ministers is that they fail to practice enough self-discipline. This failure causes them to not have the reserves and confidence to withstand the inevitable conflict that arises when a person serves God, which creates the perfect environment for depression.

Second-career pastors have learned self-care and should intentionally practice it by establishing firm boundaries between their congregations and themselves. Often, they have learned to do this in their life and should not hesitate to use techniques learned in

non-ministry occupations to maintain their boundaries. A problem arises when a pastor believes that they have to meet all of their congregants' expectations.

The desire to serve can overwhelm established boundaries and cycles of Sabbath. When those boundaries collapse, burnout becomes an increasing possibility. This burnout or extreme tiredness directly impacts a pastor's tenure in a ministry. Collins writes, "Ministry tenure also corresponds to how frequently pastors have felt emotionally or mentally exhausted in the past three months."⁴⁰ This greatly affects the length of a pastorate and shortens many before they should be. Clergy and congregations need to clearly understand what realistic and faithful expectations of boundaries can be established for a ministry. If they discern these through active listening, it will help to limit church conflict. If church conflict is limited, then a pastor will stay in a recognized vocational pastoral ministry position, and if it is not, the pastor will leave. This can have a significant impact on the length and vitality of a pastorate. The same holds true for all aspects of ministry.

The conflicts within churches, and the damages they can do to those God calls into ministry, their mental and physical health, is significant. It often causes second-career pastors to leave ministry early. By centering their lives and ministries on scripture and establishing and maintaining realistic boundaries, second-career pastors can not only survive ministry for several years, but they can thrive in it.

⁴⁰ Barna Group, 23.

Consider What You are Called to Do

When working on a common goal, groups of people accomplish more than individuals acting alone in almost any context. This is true of God’s people when they work together, “when followers of Jesus share life together in a particular place they become much greater than the sum of their parts—they actually become something altogether new,”⁴¹ which is why God established the church—to do something greater than could be done by any individual and to invite people to become something new. A second-career pastor should shift their attention from ministry based on individualism and living above place to ministry focused on the place in which the community resides. When churches in particular geographic areas join together to serve God it changes both the churches and the place. Those Christians who cooperate with each other in a small geographic area will participate with God as God transforms that area into something new and better.

A church or individual pastor cannot act independently from the community in which they reside. Individuals and churches are interdependent, “the independent individual is always a fictive creation of those men sufficiently privileged to shift the concern for dependence on to others.”⁴² The second-career pastor should “take up a God-honoring orientation to others”⁴³ recognizing that his or her actions affect the congregation and the actions of the congregation affects it’s geographic location.

⁴¹ Paul Sparks, Tim Sorens, and Dwight J. Friesen, *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship, and Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 22.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴³ Pence, loc. 164, Kindle.

Churches can become disconnected to the location in which they worship and then fail to have a positive effect upon the community in which they reside. This is referred to as, “living above Place, which names the tendency to develop structures that keep cause and effect relationships far apart in space and time where we cannot have firsthand experience of them.”⁴⁴ Churches and the second-career pastors that are part of them are not individual and are not able to actually live above place, but rather are placed in specific locations to serve the Kingdom of God in cooperative relationships with other Christians in that place as part of the Body of Christ. If they attempt to live above the place they reside then the congregation and its pastor become ever more divorced from the reality of the community around them. This causes it to then become increasingly irrelevant to God’s kingdom. Second-career pastors should never be siloed away from the context of their ministry, as they might have been in their previous careers. Being siloed away from the world is to be disengaged from what God is doing in the world, and it is therefore being unfaithful to God’s call for the church. Second-career pastors and their churches should correct this development. They should engage their context deeply and with their eyes wide open because “when local expressions of the church embrace their limitations and accept responsibility, they weave together a fabric of reconciliation and renewal. They enter back into the wild and discover this is exactly where the Spirit has been at work.”⁴⁵ This allows them to be more able to see what the Holy Spirit is doing right under their noses and to participate more directly with it.

⁴⁴ Sparks, Sorens, and Friesen, 23.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

It is important that the expectations a second-career pastor and the congregation are addressed during the pastor's transition into a new ministry setting, particularly the expectations around their place in the community where they exist. It is the contention of this dissertation that the notion that a church should be indifferent to the place in which it meets to worship and that it can stand alone in faithful witness, while it ignores what God is doing around it, often without its participation, should be challenged by second-career pastors. They should do this in order for them and their congregation to have a long and fruitful relationship and serve God more faithfully together in their place. The local church has a primary role to play in what God is doing in communities around the world. In order to fully participate with God, a second-career pastor should become deeply engaged in the community in which they serve and acquire local resources to assist in their self-care. Examples of this would be collegial relationships, engagement in local ministries the pastor finds meaningful, and an enhanced ability to lead their congregation out into the local neighborhood to join the Holy Spirit, wherever it is at work. The assumption is that being thus engaged will lead to longer, more vital and life-affirming ministries.

Remaining a Whole Person in Ministry

This dissertation offers practical guidance to second-career pastors. The guidance in this section is based on the book, *Next Steps to Ministry: Entering a Life in Christian Ministry* by David Markle. They are as follows: The second-career pastors should be themselves. A solid understanding of their strengths and weaknesses is important to a pastor's ability to thrive in ministry. A ministers who are forced to or

willingly try to perform tasks they are unsuited for will often fail. When they fail to understand what they need to do to renew themselves or do not set appropriate boundaries to protect those needs they will fail to thrive in ministry.

The goal of ministry is to win the race, not just survive. In Markle's section one, knowing oneself is followed by developing one's faith, personal integrity and willingness to learn. A second-career pastor should always be transforming and maturing in the ministry, even as they are going through the transition into recognized ministry: "The life of a Christ follower is an unending experience of life transformation."⁴⁶ The second-career pastor should discover their approach to ministry and affirm their call to ministry.

Once a pastor is affirmed, finding a place in ministry that fits is the next step. This leads to the requirement for effective communication. Listening is the most important thing in communication, which is one of the most important aspects of ministry: "Agreement is not the goal, understanding is."⁴⁷ As pastors learn to listen more effectively, they start to better live into their call. Christians are to place their lives before God, every aspect of their lives, as an offering. In doing this, second-career pastors are living into their call and deepening their faith. This then leads them to continue their education, to become life-long learners. Taken together, these aspects of ministry help second-career pastors to mature both in faith and ministry in order to thrive and endure in ministry.

Second-career pastors should attend to care for the souls of their congregants, to equip their congregants for ministry by teaching them what God expects of them. They

⁴⁶ Markle, 79.

⁴⁷ Rand and Phyllis Michael, 115.

can do this leading by example, to contextualize the Gospel by applying it to everyday life and what they have experienced in the ministry in which they and their congregation serve. Pastors need to learn to lead by example, to be just, and a non-anxious presence during the storms that are experienced. They also have to practice spiritual and physical self-care, as well as learn to lead effective meetings and support realistic budgets. A second-career person called into vocational ministry is first called to love the people, to shepherd a flock. This means to be with them during significant events and transitions in their lives and to provide loving care and support at all times. This love and support can take many forms, all of which should be used in teaching and equipping the people to do the same for others. Pastors are also called to teach their congregations how to apply the gospel to their lives. They are to be humble leaders who are able to withstand criticism and follow God wherever God leads.

To sum up, pastoral ministry calls for an artistry that engages the whole person. To be a Christ follower who is willing to become our Lord's servant set apart for ministry and who does the acts of Christian ministry as a part of his or her complete being. We cannot serve God in part but only as a whole person.

What Happens When I Do Not Look Alike?

How does a second-career pastor serve God in a location where they are not the same as the people they are called to serve? To answer that question, the following example of Dr. Alan Pence and his wife is offered. Dr. Pence served God in many remote locations as a leader. He writes with great sincerity, "for over forty years, I served with a large Bible translation organization in various leadership roles. Experiences all over the

world taught me that there is a great deal to learn about leading people.”⁴⁸ Dr. Pence and his wife willingly traveled to Papua, New Guinea and into the backcountry in order to settle in with a people living in a remote village in order to learn their unique language. They did this for the express purpose of translating the Holy Bible into their language. In their minds they could only truly learn the language by living and working beside the people who spoke it. The Pence’s moved into a remote location with one young child and one on the way, little sanitation, and no medical care in order to bring the gospel to their neighbors. They were willing to see, hear, taste, touch, and smell their neighbors. Second-career pastors yearn to reach the un-churched, de-churched, and done with church crowd with the gospel. To do so they need to be willing to move into a community and see, hear, taste, touch, and smell those living around them. They cannot allow their church and themselves to become “siloes in a pious prison such that it cannot engage with the everyday realities of life.”⁴⁹

Dr. Pence, due to his willingness to take on difficult assignments, found himself being given ever-greater responsibilities within the organization, and all of these tasks involved other people. Often it is understood that “most people who become official leaders were already providing some form of unofficial leadership within their group,”⁵⁰ which does not mean they are thoroughly prepared to lead. As Dr. Pence’s career progressed and he was given more leadership role, he realized how unprepared he was: “One thing that is common for those thrust into these roles is that they often receive little

⁴⁸ Pence, loc. 201, Kindle.

⁴⁹ Sparks, Sorens, and Friesen, 35.

⁵⁰ Pence, loc. 126, Kindle.

or no education of mentoring for it.”⁵¹ After his experiences, he was determined to publish a book to help fill that void. He advises,

Those who find themselves thrust into a leadership role may want the path toward leadership to be a straight line that they can plot with confidence and then walk in. At other times, they may expect it to be nicely packaged in a well-defined space with no ambiguities. Contrary to these uninformed wishes, leadership is not so straight or well packaged.⁵²

Second-career pastors must realize that they will be leaders of the church they are called to serve. They will have a certain amount of authority in that congregation, but their leadership and authority may not be well defined, it often is not despite the assumptions of the newly called second-career pastors and the congregations.

The expectations of a second-career pastor of his or her ecclesial leadership and new congregation are important to manage by being realistic and understanding what support is offered and what is not. This can be discovered by asking several questions. What type of support is realistic to expect from ecclesial leadership or the organization that placed the new pastor into a strange new place? Is some form of leadership or management training to be expected? Can the new pastor expect spiritual pastoral and material support? On the other hand, what are realistic expectations of congregations when calling a first time, second-career pastor in the area of leadership and management? The answers to these questions will help a second-career pastor manage their expectations and enable them to be realistic and less disappointed in their ministry setting.

⁵¹ Pence., loc. 129, Kindle.

⁵² Ibid, loc. 136, Kindle.

What Should a Second-Career Pastor Know?

Eric Tokajer, a Jewish rabbi, wrote a short and concise book about the thirty-one things he wished he had been told before he entered ministry. He states, “When someone recommended that I write a book, my first thought was who would read it? ... After all, I am truly just an average person. Then it hit me, there is one thing that I am above average at, failure.”⁵³ He offers a list of things every second-career pastor should know, based on his failures in ministry. The list is offered here to help second-career pastors called into recognized vocational pastoral ministry avoid common mistakes that shorten or limit their ministries. It is a practical guide written from the perspective of a congregational rabbi and is easily applied to Christian ministers or leaders in general.

The lessons shared in this dissertation are based upon Tokajer’s work. They will often seem obvious but need to be stated because they are often missed or forgotten by ministers. Not every minister is going to need to hear every piece of advice but every piece of advice is valuable to someone.

First begin everything with prayer. Prayer is the most available resource God provides. Often it is the most infrequently used. Do nothing without prayer. Make it consistent, deliberate, and timely. Read scripture daily: “When we study the Bible and allow the Spirit of God to become our personal guide and tutor, we can share these revelations with others.”⁵⁴

⁵³ Eric D. Tokajer, “*Oy!!! How Did I Get Here*”: *Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry* (Cork, IE: BookBaby, 2013), 10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

Learn to do nothing. Stop doing and start resting. Set aside time each day and remember to observe Sabbath every week.

If a second-career pastor has children it is important for their children's sake that they remember they are not in ministry and neither are their grandchildren. Your children can participate and serve but do not consider them readily available help, and do not let congregants treat them differently from other children. Do not lose your family while attempting to save the world. The poor and the poor in spirit will always be with you. Your family will not. Make time for them to be more important than the needs of others.

Exercise consistently as it reduces waists and stress. It is essential for life-giving ministry. Unfortunately for many second-career pastors, it becomes harder to do as a person ages. Do your best and be consistent. You do not have to eat everything you are offered. Establish a healthy boundary around what you will eat. Portion control and frequency of consumption are yours to control. People will get used to you not eating.

Do not spend more than you earn. Avoid debt and save some. Do not get yourself in trouble while helping people in trouble. Do not give away what you cannot afford and do not go to awkward or dangerous situations alone. Use a system of checks and balances where the congregation's money is involved. Do not count money alone and do not write checks. Always insist someone else counts the offering and makes the deposit. Trust the people God sends who are willing to help.

Teach what you know. Research what you do not. Do not be afraid to admit you do not know, but be confident in what you do. Preach the truth, be prophetic when needed and compassionate always. Pastors do not know everything but they know a lot.

Share authority, place others in charge of programs and projects, and let them succeed or fail. Be there to honor them in everything they do. Do not hand off leadership, and share authority with others before you have equipped them. Let people be part of your congregation while raising them up slowly. Let people feel necessary. Do not do everything for them. Do not avoid hardship, share it. The tougher the decision the more people should be involved. There are few non-emergent decisions that have to be made now. Think, pray, consult with others before you act or allow others to act. Do not accept every fight that is offered and do not let being right break relationships. You do not need everything you want; God will provide everything you need. There will always be enough money, time, and volunteers to do what God expects you to do.

Sin is separation from God and neighbor. Do not let being right cause you to sin. Address problems and disagreements when they arise; do not let them fester and grow. Never be afraid to apologize even when you are not sure you have done anything to apologize for and always be sincere. Think before you speak, as much as possible. Use your pastoral privilege wisely. Use it to heal, not wound. People hear what they want to hear; the Holy Spirit causes them to hear what they need to hear. Walk humbly and trust the Holy Spirit. There can be only one person in charge and there will always be someone in charge. Know who it is, lead when it is you, and follow when it is not. A good leader was and is a good follower.

Be present wherever you are. Make sure your flock knows you love them before you use your staff on them. Be honest, but think about the impact of what you say. Sometimes it is better to say nothing. What you do does not have to be perfect; your service to God is not a performance. Showing up and being present is more important

than getting it right. Try to get it right though since there is no excuse for not trying. Do things for the right reasons, not because it has always been done. I hope this helps. It is the intention of this dissertation to lengthen pastorates and help them to be life-giving for all involved.

Conclusion

If a person can follow the simple piece of advice to try to neither get too high nor too low, it can help sustain them while being called into recognized vocational pastoral ministry. In following the guidance shared in this chapter, second career pastors will be able to enter a new ministry context effectively. They are encouraged to do this through self-reflection, understanding the ministry context, being God-focused rather than performance-driven, and becoming truly and deeply part of the community in which the congregation they serve exists. The second-career pastor should recognize the importance of prayer early and often throughout their transition into recognized vocational ministry.

Prayer invites God to move their lives in God's service. It is the strategy for heeding God's call, transitioning into ministry, and sustaining longevity. Related to this, a second-career pastor could consider inserting spiritual disciplines into their lives with their spouse, with a small group, and even with the leadership of the church. Serving such spiritual endeavors early on can set a tone and reset the DNA of the church.

A second-career pastor should always build a community of wise counsel in heeding and obeying God's call and enduring through local church issues. Fostering wise support from area/county pastors can easily do this. Loneliness can hamper longevity. Spiritual directors, coaches, and mentors are extremely important when a second-career

pastor first senses God's call, through the transition into recognized vocational pastoral ministry and on into the continuing of their ministry. They are invaluable when struggling in ministry. Finally, early in a call to a church, a second-career pastor should ask which congregants make the most important decisions and then remember who is really in charge: God.

Suggestions for Further Research

There are several areas for further research. While inquiring about second-career pastors within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), it was discovered that there has never been a felt need to distinguish between traditional and non-traditional pastors. There were quite literally no statistical records kept specifically recognizing who were second-career pastors. For this reason, no information was available denominationally concerning second-career pastors. The first area for further research could be a comprehensive study of pastors within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), identifying which pastors are second-career. A comprehensive study of those in recognized vocational pastoral ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) should also gather statistical data on second-career pastors to include: the age in which they entered recognized vocational pastoral ministry, their educational level, the time between high school graduation and being called to a recognized vocational pastoral ministry, the length of pastorates, the age they left recognized vocational pastoral ministry, and the length of time they were engaged in their call.

Another area for further research is to establish guidelines as to what criteria should be considered in determining if someone is in fact second-career. As it stands,

defining their status is entirely up to the individual involved. There is some question as to what constitutes a career. Is it retirement from a career or a number of years engaged in a specific profession? Further research should be conducted with second-career pastors as to their level of satisfaction with ministry as opposed to their non-ministry occupations. Questions concerning their met and unmet expectations could be asked. In connection to this, congregations could also be surveyed as to their satisfaction with those who called to serve as their pastors.

In addition, research into the question of the connection between being a second-career pastor and the length, vitality, and satisfaction with recognized vocational pastoral ministry. As well as collecting and categorizing any causal evidence that can be uncovered as to whether being a second career pastor is more of a help or hindrance to a God-fearing, Kingdom-building, relationship-deepening, recognized, vocational pastoral ministry.

A possible area of further research could be into what the best duration for a specific individual to be engaged in a particular recognized vocational pastoral ministry would be. It seems generally accepted that a duration less than five years is less than ideal and that at some point between ten to fifteen years a change might be for the best. This idea is not supported by any particular research but rather only by opinion. The clearest answer at this point seems to be that it depends entirely on the individual and the congregation involved. The real answer is that it depends entirely upon God and the needs of God's Kingdom.

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