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A Journey Through the Traditional and Biblical Church Leadership Practices: With Special Consideration to Administering the Church Ordinances

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE TRADITIONAL AND BIBLICAL CHURCH
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES: WITH SPECIAL CONSIDERATION TO
ADMINISTERING THE CHURCH ORDINANCES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

LYNDA WRIGHT GITTENS

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 22, 2019
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Global Perspectives.

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DEDICATION

To My Family,

Thank you to my daughters Shahara and Shaunda for allowing me the space I needed to complete this journey. Thanks to my children, son-in-love, grandchildren, sisters, niece, nephews, and my inner circle family and friends for their love, support and encouragement to complete the journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	III
LIST OF FIGURES	VI
ABSTRACT	VII
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem	5
Methodology	6
Participants.....	6
The Story	10
American Baptist Churches USA Policy	12
Traditional Practices—Leadership	14
Elders of the Church.....	14
Traditional Practices—Baptism	21
The Way to Salvation	21
Traditional Practices—The Lord’s Supper (Communion)	24
Communion Was the Way to Stay Connected to Christ	27
Summary and Conclusion	32
SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS	35
Introduction	35
Church Setting.....	37
Leadership	38
Selection of Church Leaders.....	39
Other Proposed Solution.....	44
Administering the Church Ordinances	48
Summary and Conclusion	52
SECTION 3: THESIS.....	54
Introduction	54
The Church—Upon This Rock	55
Church Setting.....	56
Church Doctrine.....	60
Leadership	63
Selection of Leaders	64
Transition in Selecting Church Leaders	66
The Covenant	67
The Act of Baptism	67
Transition Practice of Baptism.....	71
The Act of the Lord’s Supper	72
Transition Practices of the Lord’s Supper	74
Summary and Conclusion	75
SECTION 4: ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION.....	79
SECTION 5: ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION	81

SECTION 6: POSTSCRIPT	89
Developing the Artifact	89
Efficacy of the Artifact	89
The Journey of Lessons in the Development of the Artifact	90
Future Development	91
Conclusion	91
APPENDIX A: ARTIFACT	93
APPENDIX B: INDUCTIVE IN-DEPTH STUDY WORKBOOK	169
BIBLIOGRAPHY	179

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1 — Spiritual Gift Assessment Categories</i>	47
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ABSTRACT

Leadership in some denominations is traditionally structured as in the corporate world. For example, the senior pastor position is synonymous to Chief Executor Officer, and the deacons comprise the Board of Directors. Church and corporate organizations both have bylaws and policies identifying their beliefs and guidelines. In building a leadership team, the corporate and church officers normally follow an interview process of candidates.

This dissertation discusses developing a leadership team that aligns with Jesus' leadership style. A bird's eye view of the American Baptist Churches USA churches, located in Houston Texas, traditional practices and the apostle's traditional practices selecting leadership teams. These practices are not limited to the Baptist denomination.

Section One discusses churches' challenges following the traditional church practices in their leader-selection process designated to administer the church ordinances. It provides insight into churches' traditional practices observed during research. Section Two discusses the proposed solutions for developing an effective leadership team revealed in research and other resources. Jesus is the master leader; therefore, the church leadership should be Christ-like. The church should live as Jesus did (1 Jn 2:6) and, per Paul, be followers of Christ (1 Cor 11:1). Section Three contrasts traditional church leadership style and practices with the leadership styles and practices of Jesus, God, and the apostles. A strategic plan of ideas is shared to help church leaders successfully transition from the traditional to biblical church-leadership practices.

The artifact of this research, a manual, provides a detailed view of the traditional church practices versus biblical practices for developing a church leadership team,

including other Baptist associations and denominations, highlighting similarities within their traditional church practices. An accompanying inductive in-depth bible study workbook will help the reader define and analyze the integral components of Jesus's leadership style to facilitate their transition from traditional to biblical leadership.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) documents their history in their bylaws. Roger Williams is considered the father of the Baptist church in America, and he adopted the old Baptist tradition. The ABCUSA's brief history document states,

About 1638 Roger Williams established the first Baptist church in America in the then-uncolonized Rhode Island (Providence), which became the first government in history founded on the premise of absolute religious freedom.¹

The ABCUSA emphasizes in their bylaws and policies that Baptist organizations and the local churches are autonomous.² Armitage stated, "Williams did not merely lay the foundation of religious freedom, he constructed the whole edifice, in all its impregnable strength, and all its imperishable beauty."³ Williams was a fighter for the truth and not tradition. The ABCUSA foundation continues as a fighter and trail setter in its policies. Yet, it is a traditionalist in the area of church leadership. The ABCUSA maintains the values established in their early years and has followed biblical principles in many of its policies. If they continue the journey Williams began, ABCUSA will continue to make historical accomplishments. Section One shares the traditional practices

¹ American Baptist Churches USA, "Brief History," accessed December 6, 2016, http://www.abc-usa.org/what_we_believe/our-history/.

² American Baptist Churches USA, "Bylaws of American Baptist Churches in the USA," January 1, 2012. According to the ABC Bylaws Revised 2.1.13, "*Autonomy*" in the Baptist (free church) tradition was the unencumbered capacity of each local congregation and each organization created by local congregations and their members to exercise full rights of self-government in all matters of faith and practice.

³ Thomas Armitage, "A History of the Baptists," The Reformed Reader, June 26, 2013, Location 577, Kindle.

of the churches in Houston, Texas and members of the ABCUSA and the regional American Baptist Churches of the South (ABCOTS).. This section identifies the Baptist's traditional church practices and the ABCUSA's policies on the leadership authorized to administer church ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Understanding Baptist views on administering the ordinance by ordained leadership requires an understanding of their significance.

Baptists chose to reference baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances rather than using the terms Sacraments or the Eucharist. Scholars have defined the term as (1) "a legalistic air,"⁴ (2) "the sacred origin of the two central rites of the Church,"⁵ and (3) "Christ's command; it was something that Christ has ordained for his people."⁶ All the scholars are right in their views. The Baptists thought, as believers, that they must follow the orders of Jesus. He is the Commander in Chief of the church. He made a significant sacrifice for the believers. Therefore, the Lord's Supper honoring his sacrifice is sacred.

Baptists identify themselves as Protestants, yet there are other Protestant churches (e.g., Lutheran) who use the terms *Sacrament* and *Eucharist*. The term *Sacraments* include baptism and the Lord's Supper. The definition of the term is (1) "carrying the

⁴ John W. Brush, "Baptists and the Lord's Supper," *Foundations* 1, no. 4 (1958): 7–15.

⁵ James E. Carter, "The Lord's Supper: A Baptist Perspective," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 31, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 36–37. Author Carter wrote the Baptist views the Lord's Supper as symbolic than Sacramental. He highlighted Frank Stagg's view, "while the elements of the Lord's Supper are symbols, in a meaningful observance of the Lord's Supper there are 'realities far beyond symbolism—faith, hope, love, *koinonia*, self-examination, and worship.'"

⁶ John E. Steely, "The Lord's Supper: Theory and Practice among Baptists," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 28, no. 2 (1986): 91.

idea of an automatic bestowal of grace—*ex-opera operato* apart from and independent of that person’s will and intention,”⁷ and (2) “a Sacrament was not scriptural.”⁸

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are significant in the Christian belief following the doctrine of Jesus. According to scripture, Jesus commanded the apostles to baptize new disciples (Mt 28:19) and to observe the Lord’s Supper (Lk 22:19). Baptism is considered an outward expression of an individual’s belief and commitment to Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior. Baptists believe baptism was symbolic of dying in sin and becoming a new creature (2 Cor 5:17 KJV).

The term Eucharist is used for the Lord’s Supper and means “the giving of thanks or thanksgiving,”⁹ Scholars have further defined the Eucharist as

1. The Council of Trent affirmed in the *Decree on the Most Holy Eucharist* (1551) that Christ imbued this Sacrament with the riches of his divine love for all persons, “causing his wonderful works to be remembered,” (cf. Ps 111 [110]:4). He wanted us, when receiving it, to celebrate his memory (1 Cor 11:24) and to proclaim his death until he comes to judge the world (1 Cor 11:26; Council of Trent, Session 13, chapter 2).¹⁰
2. Catholics, like other Christians, use the language of thanksgiving, the Eucharist, when speaking of the Lord’s Supper in theological terms. At the

⁷ Steely, 91.

⁸ Brush, 12.

⁹ Carter, 35.

¹⁰ Jeffery Gros, “The Roman Catholic View,” in *The Lord’s Supper: Five Views*, ed. Gordon Smith (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press Academic, 2008), 2–3.

heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's body and blood (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1333).¹¹

The Christian practices of administering the Lord's Supper vary among the denominations. Some Baptist churches use either the terms *Lord's Supper* or *communion* when serving the elements. The elements that they use in the observances include bread, wafer, or cracker with wine or grape juice. Some traditional pastors use the term *Lord's Supper* because it occurred after their evening meal, and some refer to it as communion because we are partaking as a community of believers. Some nontraditional churches use the term *communion*. The communion in the "Lord's Supper was both with Jesus and with one another. The human aspect of the communion with one another has led many Baptists to reject the term."¹² According to Copeland, the Lord's Supper *common meal* discloses to us that we who share are one in Christ who was the common ground and wellspring of our life. Copeland believes that the Baptist's opposition to the communion sometimes goes to the extreme of denying that the Lord's Supper has the meaning of fellowship with one another in the congregation. The debate on using the term *communion* when referencing the Lord's Supper occurs at the local church level. Churches that use the term *communion* do not ignore the fact that it is the Lord's Supper.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Carter, 35.

The scriptures warrant that the Lord's Supper is a partnership and common tie that binds us together.¹³ This suggests that it provides a common bond among the believers.

Problem

As a seminary student and prior staff-intern minister for a Baptist church, which is a member of the ABCUSA, there appeared to be an intentional separation of leadership responsibilities between licensed and ordained ministers. One of the rules and responsibilities is administering the church ordinances. The senior pastor oversees and the ordained ministers are the only ones authorized to minister the church ordinances. These rules are traditional Baptist practices. This practice affects the effectiveness of the church leadership when administering the church ordinance. Based on this discovery, a journey began to research biblical practices, Baptist practices, policies on administering the two church ordinances, and the effect of these practices on the churches' evolving culture.¹⁴ Also, administering the ordinance has begun to challenge church leaders due to the size of the congregations, a paucity of ordained leaders, and virtual congregations.

Church culture is evolving with a constant influx of new church movements that challenge attendance of denominational churches and church worship services via the Internet and Facebook, which has increased churches' ability to minister to those viewing those media. The evolving culture is leading some Baptist churches to transition to

¹³ Edwin Luther Copeland, "Baptism and the Lord's Supper: A Positive Interpretation," *Review & Expositor* 47, no. 3 (1950): 330.

¹⁴ Martin Ubani and Raili Keränen-Pantsu, 2018, "Evolving Cultures of Religious Education: New Perspectives on Research, Policies and Practices," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 39 (2): 127–31. Culture was considered as "something that was constantly evolving in interaction with other developments and cultures."

nontraditional worship services and church practices—contemporary, virtual worship services.¹⁵ This new church culture challenges the church leadership in meeting congregations' needs.

Methodology

I chose two methods to obtain the information regarding the church practices in administering baptism and the Lord's Supper: site visits and social media observations. I visited the worship services of selected churches on Saturdays and a few first Sundays and conducted social-media and online observations. I also submitted an online survey to selected senior pastors and church leaders polling their denominational background, their current denomination if different from their background, their training, how they observe baptism and the Lord's Supper, their church policies and practices, and their biblical support of their policies and practices. A follow-up interview of a few of the surveyed pastors was performed to get an in-depth understanding of the leadership practices they used to select leaders and administer the church ordinances and to learn about challenges they experienced following or not following their church denomination's traditional policies and practices. The responses from these observations are discussed below under participants. That section identifies points of solutions from these observations.

Participants

The research participants process served small, large, and mega congregations in various denominations including the ABCUSA, Southern Baptist Convention USA,

¹⁵ Virtual services include online live stream services and Facebook live.

National Baptist Convention, messianic, and nondenominational. Their church leadership practices exhibited some similarities and some unique differences.¹⁶

The congregational size of the churches in the research ranged from twenty to twenty-five thousand people in attendance. The churches researched were 50% African American leadership and congregation, 25% Caucasian leadership and diverse congregation, 12.5% Jewish leadership and diverse congregation, and 12.5% other. The survey responses were 60% from majority-African American leadership, 20% from Caucasian leadership, and 20% from Jewish leadership.

Below are summaries of the observations of the several churches administering the Lord's Supper.

1. Church A, a large Baptist congregation, is not under the ABCUSA. They followed some traditional practices yet had removed *Baptist* from their name. During their first-Sunday worship service, they administered the Lord's Supper and the ordained church leaders (male and female) served the elements (grape juice and crackers). The senior pastor does not usually baptize.¹⁷
2. Church B is a small nondenominational congregation whose senior pastor is ordained under the Baptist denomination. In their first-Sunday morning worship service, they observed the Lord's Supper. A layperson is responsible for the distribution of the elements (grape juice and wafers) as the congregants

¹⁶ I attended several Sunday services to observe the administration of the ordinances, and to speak to the pastor or pastoral staff. These visits were conducted from October 2016 to October 2018. Baptism was observed at these churches. All other comments on baptism come from the responses to the online survey.

¹⁷ New Faith Church, Field Research Observation, Houston, TX, November 5, 2016.

enter the sanctuary. After the worship service, the pastor leads them in the liturgy for the partaking of the Lord's Supper. The senior pastor baptizes.¹⁸

3. Church C is a mega congregation of the Baptist denomination under the ABCUSA governing body. At their first-Sunday morning worship service, the Lord's Supper is administered by ordained church leaders (male and female), a traditional Baptist practice. The elements served are wine and communion crackers. The evening of the same first Sunday, they observed baptism service. The senior pastor along with one ordained deacon administers the immersion. The pastor quotes the liturgy for both. This church has an online-worship service that is also provided through Facebook live. Those viewing online during the administering of the Lord's Supper were not incorporated.¹⁹
4. Church D is a nondenominational mega congregation observed online that did not administer the Lord's Supper that first Sunday of the month. They do not observe the Lord's Supper every first Sunday nor do they baptize every first Sunday. They do baptism upon request; they have a baptism day as required.²⁰
5. Church E, a messianic congregation, did not administer the Lord's Supper on the first Sabbath of the month due to Passover. The senior rabbi generally led and performed the practice with the associate rabbi assisting, but the elements

¹⁸ Gateway Community Church, Field Research Observation, Houston, TX, November 6, 2016.

¹⁹ Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, Field Research Observation, Houston, TX, October 5, 30, November 6, 2016.

²⁰ Lakewood Church, Field Research Observation, Houston, TX, November 5 and 23, 2017.

were not served or given to the congregation. The rabbis are the only ones partaking at this particular service. The senior rabbi administers the baptism.²¹

6. Church F, a Baptist denomination church under the ABCUSA governing body, retains *missionary* in its title, but not on the ABCUSA's website. At first-Sunday worship service, the senior pastor leads a traditional Baptist practice along with ordained ministers and deacons. Though ABCUSA supports females ministers and deacons, this church leadership does not, reflecting a traditional Baptist practice. The elements served are grape juice and a communion wafer. No baptisms are administered that day.²²
7. Church G is a Baptist church that considers itself an ecumenical and liberal congregation. They are under the ABCUSA governing body. At first-Sunday morning worship service, they administered the Lord's Supper. They exercised some Baptist traditional practices and a strong dose of renewal practices. The ordained ministers and deacons administer the elements. The leaders do not pass the elements, the congregation comes to the front, takes bread or a cracker, and dips it in the cup. There is no baptism to administer that day.²³

The above research helped identify an evolving church culture, the traditional and nontraditional church practices of denominational and nondenominational churches and

²¹ Congregation Beth Messiah, Field Research Observation, Houston, TX, March 31, April 4, 13, 16, 17, and 23, 2018.

²² Sunnyside Missionary Baptist Church, Field Research Observation, Houston, TX, October 7, 2018.

²³ Covenant House of Houston, Field Research Observation, October 7, 2018.

their effect on serving the congregation and community. The churches with the small congregations are welcoming, and the Lord's Supper was intimate and informal. In the larger churches, greeters presented a designed, welcoming spirit. The congregation partook of a formal Lord's Supper with the traditional Baptist practices more evident. Observations as a social-media viewer revealed challenges not considered at the beginning of this research that are now incorporated because the church leaders must address the viewer's challenges. This contrast in experience observing the various practices helped provide proposed solutions for churches challenged to effectively serve their congregation and community in the evolving church culture.

The Story

In the Soul Saving Baptist Church (SSB),²⁴ for many years the staff consisted of the senior pastor and three deacons. The church quickly increased in membership, but still maintained the limited staff. SSB had increased to two worship services with an average of two thousand in attendance. The church used the senior pastor, three deacons, and a few volunteers to help serve the Lord's Supper bread and wine (elements). They were limited to using ordained deacons, but in a few years, they were able to increase the number of deacons to serve the elements of the Lord's Supper and are now holding three worship services per Sunday with two thousand people attending each.

After forty years of service, the founding senior pastor passes the baton of leadership to the associate pastor of ten years. His leadership leads to an expedient

²⁴ SSB is a fictitious name. The story is a nonfictional compilation of various churches' experiences.

increase in membership which requires additional worship services. Under the new leadership, membership increased from six to fifteen thousand within three years. The campus is unable to handle the volume of members and visitors. Therefore, to handle the logistics of the crowd, they expanded to five worship services (four services and an evening baptism) on first Sundays, and four worship services on other Sundays, along with virtual services. These multiple services severely challenged the leadership team, especially on first Sundays for baptisms and the Lord's Supper.

The ordained leaders customarily serve at the service they attended. This action left some services with insufficient coverage for serving the Lord's Supper. To resolve this challenge, the senior pastor required all ordained leaders to be available at all four worship services on first Sundays. This change caused some grumbling among the leaders, and after a year, some of the ordained leaders reverted to attending their preferred worship services.

Consequently, the church began the process of selection, election, and ordination of deacons to relieve the stress of serving the Lord's Supper elements. The process is slow and rigid, but within a few years; they were able to reduce the required attendance of ordained leaders' to at least two worship services on first Sundays.

Along with an increase in membership comes an increase in baptism candidates. The baptism occurs at the fifth worship service on first Sundays. The senior pastor performs the baptism with the assistance of an ordained deacon. The senior pastor preaches all four services every Sunday and baptizes a large number of converts at the evening service on first Sundays.

SSB is an active-mission/evangelism ministry witnessing to the community.

When those who accept Jesus as their Lord and savior request baptism, they are asked to attend church on the first Sunday for the ceremony. This traditional practice faced a challenge one weekend. On one Saturday, an individual accepts Jesus as Lord and savior and requests baptism. The person is told to come to one of the worship services to join the church and then participate in baptism at the evening service on first Sunday. That person had medical issues and died before the next worship service. The person's inability to be baptized is a disappointment for that person's family, and they wondered if their loved one is saved and going to heaven. Some individuals believe that one must be baptized in addition to the sinner's confession and acknowledgment of Jesus's position. This issue is addressed in the baptism area of Section One.

American Baptist Churches USA Policy

The ABCUSA, a body overseeing a segment of the Baptist denomination, provides guidelines on church operations which reflect traditionalist²⁵ and apostolic²⁶ leadership. ABCUSA supports women as pastors and deacons, unlike most historical

²⁵ Traditionalist define by Dictionary.com includes adherence to tradition as authority, especially in matters of religion; a system of philosophy according to which all knowledge of religious truth is derived from divine revelation and received by traditional instruction. This term is used more in line with the Biblical Pharisees as Traditionalist (Mk 7:9 NIV), which says, "And he continued, you have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!"

²⁶ Apostolic leadership in churches is designed as a biblical truth, possibly from Jesus' leadership, to his appointment of apostles, leaders in the church. The scripture does not designate the church's leadership structure: Apostolic succession, that bishops represent a direct, uninterrupted line of continuity from the apostles of Jesus Christ. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/apostolic-succession>. The Baptist denomination does not recognize bishops or apostles, yet their leadership structure is similar. Senior pastors' powers are handed down to them through ordination by a council of pastors and ordained ministers to rule over the church leaders and congregation.

Baptist organizations, such as the Southern Baptists and National Baptists. Many of their policies reflect traditional practices with some evidence of scriptural support.²⁷

Traditional church practices stigmatize unordained licensed ministers and limit their ability to serve the needs of the congregation and their community effectively. Two of the three ABCUSA churches observed follow this practice. ABCUSA is known for “pushing the envelope,” radical actions, and going against the grain. Yet, their guidelines continue the traditional church practice of exclusion. ABCUSA policies provide guidelines on baptism by immersion and the administration of the Lord’s Supper by church leaders, but there is no policy on the appropriate elements to serve for the Lord’s Supper.

As previously addressed in the introduction, the ordinance is a direct command by Jesus to the apostles to do this in remembrance of him, and the apostles passed this command to all those who believe in and follow Jesus. From the ABCUSA’s *The Church Covenant and Baptist Articles of Faith. Article 14: Of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper*,

We believe that Christian baptism was the immersion in water of a believer, in the name of the father, and of the son, and the holy ghost That it was a prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation; and to the Lord’s Supper, in which the members of the church, by the sacred use of bread and wine are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ - preceded always by solemn self-examination. (see Mt. 28:19–20; Rom. 6:4; I Cor. 11:26–28)²⁸

²⁷ American Baptist Churches USA, “American Baptist Policy Statement of Ordained Ministry: Preamble,” September 1989, <http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/ordain.pdf>, 1- 3.

²⁸ Robert Baines, Jr., “Baptist Familiarity: Church Covenant and Baptist Articles of Faith,” Last Modified 2009, <http://www.christian-living-site.com/support-files/baptistfamiliarity.pdf>, 3.

Traditional Practices—Leadership

Elders of the Church

Since the early church, councils and scholars have debated the administration of the ordinances. Walter Travers challenged the Puritans on the phrase, “only by preaching ministers,” inserted as the directive reference in *The Book of Common Prayer* for their biblical support, taking particular issue with the term *preach*. He replied by quoting, “Go forth, preach and baptize—which Christ having so joined together, it was not lawful for men to put asunder” (Mt 28:19).²⁹ All reformed churches follow this scripture.

The Baptist denomination holds that the scriptures identify two types of church officers (elders): pastors and deacons.³⁰ The church is responsible for selecting both the pastor and deacons to oversee the church. The ABCUSA identifies the bible as the authority for their belief and the development of their church policy.³¹ These leadership terms may be the basis for the traditional practices in the church. Jesus is referred to as *rabbi* (elder; Mt 26:25). He is the head of the church family, he administers the Lord’s Supper (Lk 22:19) and, some believe, the baptism (Jn 3:26). Those attending the Last Supper are the apostles, a leadership position designated by Jesus for the church.

²⁹ Stephen Mayor, *The Lord’s Supper in Early English Dissent* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 20–21.

³⁰ American Baptist Churches USA, “American Baptist Policy Statement of Ordained Ministry: Preamble,” 3. 1 Tim: 3 KJV describes the office of a bishop and deacon.

³¹ Ibid.

The ABCUSA policy states that the early church recognized the importance of church leaders. They have specific duties in God's ministry.³² Leeman states, "Scripture establishes the offices of deacon and elder ... Word-intensive work of preaching, prayer, and oversight while deacons attend to the physical needs of the congregation."³³

According to *The Baptist Distinctives*, the church, not the pastor or deacons, governs the operations of the church. The pastor provides leadership according to the scripture (1 Pt 5:1–5).³⁴ Some church organizations authorize deacons to oversee the church, and they have the power to elect senior pastors. In some churches, the senior pastor and deacon selection are put to a vote by the church congregation.

Observed ABCUSA churches have a hierarchy (church leadership): senior pastor, associate pastor, staff pastors, ordained ministers, ordained deacons, and clergy (including ordained and unordained ministers). These individuals have authority over selected areas of the church institution. The senior pastor has the responsibility and authority of overseeing the execution of the church's vision and mission. The associate and staff pastors are obliged to support the senior pastor and have authority over what the senior pastor has delegated to them. Ordained ministers and deacons share similar responsibilities within the church serving the congregation during the worship services and other selected events.³⁵

³² Ibid.

³³ Andrew M. Davis, *Baptist Foundation: Church Government for an Anti-institutional Age*, ed. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2015), 158.

³⁴ William M. Pinson, Jr., "Two Church Officers: Pastor and Deacons," *The Baptist Distinctives*, 2010, <https://www.baptistdistinctives.org/resources/articles/two-church-officers-pastors-and-deacons/>.

³⁵ Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, Field Research Observation, Houston, TX, October 5, 30, November 6, 2016.

ABCUSA policy authorizes the pastor or an ordained minister/deacon to administer the ordinance of baptism.³⁶ Armitage references “the writing of Mosheim from his book, *Ecclesiastical History I*, pp. 105–6, stating: At first, all who were engaged in propagating Christianity administered this rite, nor can it be called in question, that whoever persuaded any person to embrace Christianity, could baptize his disciple.”³⁷ He adds that there is a “period where ‘lay-baptism’ was not denied. Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome, all held that in cases of necessity ‘laymen’ should baptize and the Synod Elvira so decreed.”³⁸ ABCUSA policy states the New Testament does not identify ordained ministers as the ones to administer the baptism and the Lord’s Supper.³⁹

Also, the early church used the *Didache* (author unknown) as a resource that parallels Paul’s teachings. The *Didache 15* speaks on elder of the church as follows.

1. Appoint therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, meek men, and not lovers of money, and truthful and approved, for they also minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers.
2. Therefore do not despise them, for they are your honorable men together with the prophets and teachers.⁴⁰

ABCUSA policy states that the church, if the need arises, can call upon the laity to serve in leadership positions.⁴¹ The churches observed do not exercise this part of the

³⁶ American Baptist Churches USA, “American Baptist Policy.”

³⁷ Armitage, Location 887.

³⁸ Ibid., Location 886-7.

³⁹ American Baptist Churches USA, “Historic American Baptist Policy Statement on the Baptism of Believers by Immersion,” 1978, <http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/baptism-of-believers-by-immersion.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Peter Kirby, “The Didache: The Lord’s Teaching to the Heathen by the Twelve Apostles,” Early Christian Writings, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.thedidache.com>.

⁴¹ American Baptist Churches USA, “American Baptist Policy,” 5–6.

policy, but they need to exercise it due to small congregations or rapid congregational growth because they do not have enough ordained leaders to manage the assigned duties. The churches have licensed ministers and laymen servants available to serve.

Ordination. Roger Williams, the father of the ABCUSA, “was an ordained minister in the English Episcopal Church and reordained in Salem to ensure no one question his right to immerse on the ground of non-ordination.”⁴² The early church initiated the ordination to set aside the identity of leaders and their responsibilities within the church. ABCUSA believes “Ordination was tended to be the setting apart (by the call of God and the action of the church) of one of the many ministers to perform special functions of ministry on behalf of the community of faith.”⁴³ The process towards ordination is named catechism. A senior pastor, along with other ordained ministers offer wise counsel to examine the candidate for ordination. In some local Houston Baptist churches, this process can be intense for the candidate. ABCUSA guidelines for local churches help them with the process. The ABCOTS provides an ordination check off list which follows the ABCUSA policy. It added “for the ordination to be recognized by ABCOTS and ABC/USA, the Ordination Council must consist of at least five (5) ordained American Baptist Ministers listed in the Professional Registry-Directory of the

⁴² Armitage, Location 891, Kindle.

⁴³ American Baptist Churches USA, *Recommended Procedures for Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches* (Valley Forge, PA: American Baptist Churches USA, 1994), http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Ordination_Std.pdf, 6.

ABC/USA. Other minister/Deacons may be invited to participate on the Ordination Council; they do not have to be “Pastors” to participate.⁴⁴

ABCUSA policy states the term *minister* refers to pastor even though there are other ordained persons in church offices, such as bishops, deacons.⁴⁵ Initially, ordination was used to become a pastor; no one is ordained unless he or she is called to a church. However, now there are numerous ordained ministers with no prospect or intention of becoming senior pastors. To qualify to be ordained for ministry, ABCUSA offers three tracks. In summary, a candidate must be:

- (1) four years of undergraduate and a seminary graduate,
- (2) Exception to the educational prerequisite are not encourage but individuals may apply following these conditions:
 - a. Experience granted on the basis of two years of satisfactory growth and ministerial performance for every one year of academic preparation that is lacking in the candidates background, seven years of higher education being the norm,
 - b. maximum experiential equivalence which may be granted is six years, the equivalent to three years of higher education,
 - c. the candidate’s professional experience must meet selected criteria identified in the policy.⁴⁶

One of the ABCUSA observed will not ordain candidates without a seminary degree.

⁴⁴ American Baptist Churches of the South, "Ordination Check Off List for Pastors of the Abc /USA Churches," American Baptist Churches of the South, May 2008 revised, https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/a8ea18_1ffd9a23577645c9b69533013931496a.pdf; *ibid*.

⁴⁵ American Baptist Churches USA, Recommended Procedures for Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches, 2.

⁴⁶ American Baptist Churches USA, Recommended Procedures for Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches, *Ibid.*, 7-10.

Roles and Responsibility—Two Ordinances: The Lord’s Supper and

Baptism. In the Baptist church, two ordinances are significant to the faith: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptists believe they should be perpetually observed as a memorial.⁴⁷

The duties of the church elders are a controversial topic in the Christian arena. The early church had in-depth discussions on the development of the church’s order of service. Calvin believed that only the pastors could administer the Lord’s Supper, but the many English nonconformists disagreed. Thomas Cartwright believed that a minister should always administer the Sacraments.⁴⁸ Mayor comments that Cartwright’s “view was based on him being a minister and not sacerdotal reason.”⁴⁹ Scholars have debated various views and discussions on the order of service: preaching, reading of the word, and whether the minister who preaches the service should oversee the Lord’s Supper:

In 1580 the Council contacted the Bishops over the Puritan clergy to stop using separate clergymen to preach and oversee the communion. Another case was the charges recorded against John Udall, a licensed clergyman, for preaching, but overseeing the communion which the church did not authorize him to perform. Then you have “Eusebias Pager, a Devon minister,” who was challenged for observing the Sacraments monthly.⁵⁰

Designating roles and responsibility provides direction for the church. According to scripture, everything should be decent and in order (1 Cor 14:40). The roles and responsibility for administering the church ordinances—baptism and the Lord’s Supper—

⁴⁷ Perpetual means eternal. In the scripture Jesus says, “I will not drink of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Mt 26:29).

⁴⁸ Mayor, xiv.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 22–23.

are a serious challenge for some churches. Two issues cause a dilemma for the senior pastor in adhering to the traditional church practices:

- (1) Churches must modify how they administer the Lord's Supper: SSB required all ordained leaders to serve the Lord's Supper at all four worship services.
- (2) Some churches only authorize the senior or associate pastor, along with an ordained deacon, to administer the baptism of the new converts, weighing the senior or associate pastor.⁵¹

If there are an insufficient number of ordained deacons, the senior pastor is overextended. This process affects not only the Sunday worship service, but also the church's mission/evangelism ministry which cannot serve effectively to those they minister. That is, they are limited in their ability to administer those they serve based on a limited number of available ordained church leaders. In the SSB story, the evangelism team operating under the traditional Baptist practices cannot baptize or administer the Lord's Supper if requested because it has no ordained leaders. Evangelism teams need to be fully equipped to serve the community they are evangelizing. In the scriptures, Peter was asked by Cornelius to baptize his family. Right then, Peter delegates their baptism to those following him (Acts 10:47–48).

The ABCUSA addresses the roles and responsibilities of leadership in its policy, “tasks traditionally performed by ordained ministers include: leading the church in mission, preaching, conducting public worship, administering baptism and the Lord's

⁵¹ Field Experience conducted 2016–2018. Observing the ordinances administered by ABCUSA and other denominational churches and survey church leaders.

Supper ... and administering the church's organization."⁵² These roles distinguish who can perform the significant acts of worship and limits licensed ministers' worship service. ABCUSA does provide in its policy that other individuals may be used, this is discussed further in Section Two.

Traditional Practices—Baptism

The Way to Salvation

Baptism is a significant act of worship because Jesus asked John the Baptist to baptize him.⁵³ John the Baptist baptized many individuals who confessed their sins. Matthew spoke of Jesus's journey and the example he provides for those who believe and will follow him:

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John said, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" However, Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." When Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, ... the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ... a voice from heaven said, "This was my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Mt 3:13–17 ESV)

The ABCUSA policy for the local churches requires them to adhere to the historical practice of baptizing new converts. To be baptized, a new convert comes before the church to demonstrate their acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and savior and confess

⁵² American Baptist Churches USA, "American Baptist Policy Statement of Ordained Ministry: Preamble," 4.

⁵³ Baptism could be considered an entrance requirement by Jesus to enter the kingdom of heaven. Mk 16:16 KJV states, "He that believeth and was baptized shall be saved."

their sins.⁵⁴ Some observed traditional Baptist churches require the individual to walk down the aisle of the church to receive the “right hand of fellowship” (shaking hands with the pastor).

There are differences in practices between traditional and nontraditional local churches. A nontraditional Baptist church’s interpretation of Rom 10:9 places emphasis on the convert’s private or personal acknowledgment. New converts are not required to confess their beliefs publicly. Instead, they believe that the act of the baptism itself is the public and outward sign, in accordance with Rom 10:9.

The Ritual of Baptism. Arguments continue between denominations about what constitutes true baptism—immersion versus sprinkle. The Baptist insists their baptism method is accurate to the baptism of Jesus. ABCUSA believe baptism by immersion in the water is significant because it provides identification with Christ. John became known as The Baptist because he brought people to God by baptizing them in river water.

The scripture says, “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water,” (Mt 3:16 KJV) signifying that he was immersed. Dr. Ferguson believes “It was not evidenced to support that Jesus was immersed in the water. This scripture could mean that he walked out of the water not that he specifically was immersed.”⁵⁵ Surveyed church leaders believe Jesus was immersed in water when baptized and that it is symbolic of Jesus’s death and resurrection. They lean on this act of Jesus’s baptism as their

⁵⁴ Rom 10:9 NIV says, “if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

⁵⁵ Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, “Doctrine of the Church and Sacraments,” Lecture presented at the Reformed Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX, October 21–24, 2017.

example of administering baptism.⁵⁶ Those church leaders believe they are imitating Jesus's acts.

For many local churches, baptism is typically offered on first Sundays, but some offer it other than the first, or they do it as needed. Typically, the pastor (or another high-ranking minister in the church) performs this ritual. The traditional practice proceeds typically as follows: The pastor speaks liturgy over each candidate before they are immersed in the water, "I baptize you, my brother/sister in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."⁵⁷ After that statement, the pastor and deacon immerse the candidate. Candidate's emotions experience being baptized are based on their relationships with Jesus. After baptism, the candidate is a full member of the local church with voting rights on how the church is governed and the right to become a ministry leader. In earlier years, the certificate of baptism was used as an official document in the absence of an original birth certificate.

The baptism process is similar among some faiths. In Messianic Judaism, baptism is called "Believer's immersion" and is done by ordained rabbis and Shameshi (like deacons). They administer the baptism when requested and baptize individuals in the name of the Father, the Son, and Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Spirit).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Summary of the responses from the research surveys, November and December 2016.

⁵⁷ Dr. Franklin Callaway, Senior Pastor Yehoshua Missionary Baptist Church, response to survey, 2016.

⁵⁸ Rabbi Phillip, Congregation of Beth Messiah, response to survey, April 17, 2018.

Traditional Practices—The Lord’s Supper (Communion)

The ABCUSA believes the Lord’s Supper is Jesus’s command and is symbolic of his life, death, resurrection, and second coming.⁵⁹ They base their belief on two scriptures: “And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this was my body, which was broken for you: this do in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:24 KJV). Luke’s memoir of this act is similar (Lk 22:19 KJV). These scriptures are recited by the pastor or the overseer when administering the Lord’s Supper.

In preparation for the Lord’s Supper, deacons in Baptist churches are responsible for the preparation of the Lord’s Supper table and its elements. They take great care in the preparation of the bread the day before the observance of the communion. In some African American Baptist churches, there is a table positioned in front of the podium engraved with Jesus’s words: “Do This in Remembrance of Me,” (1 Cor 11:24 KJV). They cover the table with the white linen cloth, organize the trays on the table so that the pastor and church leaders can easily access and distributes the elements to the congregation. Now, this act is not biblical, but a part of the African American Baptist tradition because they believe the Lord’s Supper or communion should be a family table setting to reflect its origin and the white linen was discovered as an ancestors’ practice.

The senior pastor oversees the elements’ administration. The Lord’s Supper is an act initiated by Jesus, the head of the church, during the Passover meal, which he shared with the disciples. According to scripture, Jesus shared with his disciples his upcoming death and resurrection and instructed the disciples that as often as they partake of these

⁵⁹ American Baptist Churches USA, “Historic American Baptist Policy Statement.”

elements to remember him: “While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing. He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this was My body.’ And when he had taken a cup and given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this was My blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for forgiveness of sins,’” (Mt 26:26-28 NASB).

From studying the scriptures, Jesus clearly invited the disciples to Passover, a celebratory meal remembering God’s freeing of the Israelites. The placing of the blood of a sacrificial lamb over the door to avoid the death angel who would pass through killing firstborn Egyptians. This meal is a significant event because Jesus offered himself as a sacrificial lamb and offered eternal life to all who believe. Copeland notes that “In the Lord’s Supper the participating Christians ‘proclaim the Lord’s death.’ Every observance of the Lord’s Supper should be a sermon, on the central event of history-the Cross. Christ’s death, a supremely significant event, was proclaimed mutely but vividly by the elements, the bread, and wine.”⁶⁰ Some pastors before taking the elements say, “we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes,” referencing 1 Cor 11:26 NASB. About Copeland’s comment of the Lord’s Supper as a sermon, some pastors speak a sermonette before administering the Lord’s Supper. He then makes this summary that “The ordinances, are powerful preachments, peaking in eloquent language which supplements and surpasses words in the communication of Christian truth. ... It should be emphasized that it was the minister, called of God to lead the churches in doing the task which Christ

⁶⁰ Copeland, 329.

has given them, upon whom the responsibility falls for the meaningful interpretation and observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper."⁶¹

Observations and Interviews revealed some church pastors lead the Lord's Supper along with the assistant pastor. The ordained (ministers and deacons) assisted in serving the elements to the congregation. One senior pastor occasionally leads, but most delegates to the assistant pastor.⁶² The ordained ministers and deacons serve the elements to the congregation.

In traditional African American Baptist churches, pastors are viewed as the priest, similar to Aaron in the Old Testament. They are to be honored and respected⁶³ and are angels of God's House. In the years of before Christ, the priest would administer the sacrifice for sins on the altar on behalf of the people. Moses's brother, Aaron, was a priest (Ex 28:1). Moses told Aaron, "Come to the altar and sacrifice your sin offering, your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and the people; sacrifice the offering that was for the people and makes atonement for them, as the Lord has commanded," (Lv 9:6–7 NASB). Aaron's act could be the scripture cited by the early church associates with their view of the pastor leading the administration of the Lord's Supper.

The *Didache* speaks about when, why, and how the Lord's Supper should be administered in the church:

⁶¹ Ibid., 332.

⁶² Summary of the responses from the research surveys, November and December 2016.

⁶³ Mt 5:7 KJV: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

Didache 14

1. On the Lord's Day of the Lord come together, break bread and hold Eucharist, after confessing your transgressions that your offering may be pure.⁶⁴

Didache 9

And concerning the Eucharist, hold Eucharist thus:

1. First concerning the Cup, "We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the Holy Vine of David thy child, which, thou didst make known to us through Jesus, thy Child; to thee be glory forever."
2. And concerning the broken Bread: "We give thee thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known to us through Jesus, thy Child. To thee be glory forever."
3. "As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains but was brought together and became one, so let thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom, for thine was the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever."
4. But let none eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptized in the Lord's Name. For concerning this also did the Lord say, "Give not that which was holy to the dogs."⁶⁵

The administration of the Lord's Supper is a platform for many scholars to weigh in on the significance of partaking in this ceremonial act. They discuss the significance and the effect on the believers when they partake of the elements. This ceremonial act must be observed in the church setting and not at home.

Communion Was the Way to Stay Connected to Christ

The Baptist denomination places equal emphasis on the meanings and acts of the baptism and communion. John Steely states in his article, "In the matter of the Lord's Supper, the Baptists are more concerned with the meaning of the event than with the

⁶⁴ Kirby, "The Didache."

⁶⁵ Ibid.

precise form, although baptism the reverse was true.”⁶⁶ Jesus knows of his impending death and wants to prepare his disciples for what is about to happen. The day before Passover, Jesus gathers the disciples and washes their feet as he shares with them the upcoming events leading to his crucifixion and his expectations of them as his disciples.

The traditional Baptist leaders require church membership at their local church to participate in the Lord’s Supper, a closed communion. They cite the scripture to support this practice: “if any man hunger lets him eat at home,” (1 Cor 11:34 NASB).⁶⁷ There are Baptist churches which have open communion for anyone who is baptized, or they can account for themselves whether they should or should not participate.

The Ritual of Communion. Christian denominations vary on how often they serve the communion. Jesus stated that eating bread and drinking wine should continue until he returns. The New Testament provides no specific instruction on how often to consume this meal. Jesus plainly states that “as often as” it is done, we are to remember him (1 Cor 11:25 NASB).

Traditional practicing Baptist churches normally host an evening service on first Sundays, including baptisms, baby dedications, and the Lord’s Supper. Some churches observe the ordinances less often. Nontraditional Baptist churches normally serve communion during their daytime services:

This memorial was staged with a communion table with the words chiseled “This in Remembrance of Me.” The word “remembrance” was (*anamnesis*) in the scriptures. The table was covered with a white cloth, stacked with gold trays

⁶⁶ Steely, 92.

⁶⁷ Rev. Rowe (Deceased), Senior Pastor, Munger Avenue Baptist Church, Observance of Pastor’s Liturgy before Serving of Elements, 1970s.

covered with a white cloth. In these trays are the individual mini serving of square bread and individual cups filled with grape juice or wine.⁶⁸

As the congregants enter the sanctuary, they immediately recognize that this Sunday is a special day and it is the remembrance of Jesus Christ's sacrifice for believers through the partaking of communion. The first-Sunday scriptural reading (1 Cor 11: 23–31) is repetitive. The pastors focus the sermon on the sacrifice God made by Jesus giving his life for the believers.

After the invitation to become a member of the faith, the Lord's Supper begins. The leaders take their place in the procession and line up on each side of the table. The pastor stands behind the table and leads a prayer of blessing. The pastor hands the trays to the lead deacon, who passes the trays to the selected deacons or ministers. They serve two by two: one carrying the bread, the other the grape juice or wine. The trays are passed along each pew or row, so the congregants can obtain the elements.

Next, the pastor raises his hand with the bread and speaks the words of consecration, the rendition of 1 Cor 11:23-25, "The Lord Jesus, in the night when he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this was my body that was for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Then the pastor says, "Let us eat the bread." The congregation does as instructed and eats the bread. The pastor then raises his/her hand with the cup of drink and speaks, "Let us drink from the cup." The congregation follows the instruction and drinks from their cups.⁶⁹ (NASB)

⁶⁸ Steely.

⁶⁹ Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, Field Research Observation, Houston, TX, October 5, 30, November 6, 2016.

As mentioned before, some traditional and nontraditional churches practice open communion, allowing anyone who was baptized to participate in the Lord's Supper. At some churches, the pastor may announce that only those who are baptized can partake of the communion. Some churches practicing open communion do not make an announcement. Some nontraditional churches have small groups who observe the communion in their group setting on special observances: Good Friday, Holy Week, and so on. This observation can be a direct disorder of traditional churches.

Carter references J. R. Graves as saying, "The Lord's Supper was observed as a local church ordinance, commemorative only of the sacrificial chastisement of Christ for his people, never expressive of personal fellowship, or of courtesy for others, or used as a Sacrament."⁷⁰

The Messianic Jewish Synagogue uses a modified Jewish liturgy. During a visit to the Congregation Beth Messiah, the rabbi used the orthodox liturgy and included a citation from the New Testament. During the Passover season, the congregation observed their history at a special celebration. Only the rabbis participated in an observance that appeared similar to the Lord's Supper but was called *Kiddush*. The Jewish Sabbath and feast days are always set apart with a blessing over the bread and wine or juice.⁷¹ In the Qur'an community, the priest blesses the bread and wine before the meal (IQS 6:4–6).⁷²

⁷⁰ Carter, 37.

⁷¹ Rabbi Phillip, Congregation of Beth Messiah, Houston, TX, response to survey April 17, 2018.

⁷² Ben Witherington, III, *Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of The Lord's Supper*. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 19.

In the Messianic denomination and in some churches in the Baptist denominations the pastor administers the elements of the Lord's Supper. Christians must not ignore that Jesus gives the authority to the disciples to follow his instructions in making disciples, baptizing and teaching them his instructions. The disciples are not all rabbis or pastors but believers in Jesus who desired to serve Him.

The Elements of Communion. Partaking in the communion requires one to eat the bread representing Jesus's body. During Jesus's time, bread was a significant part of the meal. Jesus connected the bread to his body and in the Book of John explains how the bread represents his flesh and gives life. The bread Jesus broke and distributed at the Last Supper was unleavened bread. This bread has no yeast, so it did not rise. It is in the form of a loaf, and it is broken and shared among the family and guests. In the earlier years, in the Baptist church, the bread was broken into pieces. The church then progressed to serving bread-like crackers. Now some of the nontraditional churches use wafers.

Partaking of the communion includes the serving of the wine or grape juice. There was division among Baptists on what element is served in the cup for the communion, wine or grape juice. Many Baptist churches serve grape juice and frown on those who serve wine. No policy specifies one or the other should be used. Most Baptist churches (traditional and nontraditional) serve unfermented grape juice. A few nontraditional churches serve unfermented wine, another term for grape juice or juice from the fruit of the vine. The traditional Baptist's reason for using grape juice is the wine Jesus used in those days is no longer available. Some quotes "Thou shall not drink an alcoholic beverage." Initially, the Christians are served and drank from a common cup. Now with so many illnesses, churches chose to use individual cups. In some churches, deaconesses

poured the wine into the individual cups the day before and washed the cups after church service. In other churches, to make it more convenient for the deaconesses, the bread and grape juice are prepackaged together. There is no direction in the ABCUSA policy on the elements to be served.

Summary and Conclusion

The ABCUSA is progressive in their thinking and acceptance of the evolving church culture. Their acceptance of men and women called to the ministry and pastoral positions is well established. ABCUSA supports local churches to operate independently, and they provide guidelines and policies on traditional church practices on selecting pastors, ordaining church leaders, roles and responsibilities of church leaders, and administering the church ordinances.

Research reveals that during the early church laypersons baptized. The church leaders, for example, Tertullian and Augustine, agreed that when the church needs more leaders, it was okay to use the laity. The leaders in the early church recognized that the traditional practices are at times ineffective or not the best practices for the situation.⁷³

During baptisms and the observation of the Lord's Supper, based on the survey responses, many pastors learn traditional Baptist practices under their senior leadership, but a few learn them in seminary. They then teach these traditional practices to their leadership teams. When the leadership becomes a pastor, they demonstrate and teach their leadership team the traditional church practices. In conversations, minister colleagues speak about reading the bible for spiritual development and sermon/teaching

⁷³ Ibid.

preparation, but none spoke on leadership guidance. Some minister colleagues have not considered the differences in the traditional and biblical leadership tasks because they are highly conditioned to follow the affiliation's policy and accept it as biblical authority. Jesus is the ultimate example of leadership; why not study his style. The apostles reflected Jesus's leadership style. We as church leaders should also follow.

Traditional church practices are not bad: Their purpose was to set order within the church. ABCUSA policy does not provide guidelines on nontraditional practices. The ABCUSA organization does insert in their policy that, in case of need, unordained leaders can be used, but it appears either this exception is not widely known, or many are comfortable with the traditional practice.

The culture of the church is evolving, affecting the operation of the church, and the church needs to consider new options:

1. ABCUSA should provide alternative leadership-development policies in addition to the traditional leadership policies,
2. Church leaders need to consider new options for selecting leaders to serve their congregations effectively. With insufficient leaders to distribute or serve the church ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper may be eradicated,
3. The church needs to address how to incorporate those viewing the worship service through social media. Viewers should feel they are a part of the worship service including the church-ordinance process.

The purpose of this research is to discover Jesus's leadership style and how it can benefit the church leadership. Some churches are challenged with implementing or managing church operations according to their church affiliations' policies. They are

faced with an insufficient number of people to support an effective leadership team due to the guidelines established by the affiliation for selecting leaders and their duties in the church. Some pastors are suffocating as they try to manage all aspects of church operations (a small congregation) or overextended in their service to the church due to the inability to keep up with the growth of the church (megachurches). These pastors and ministers need options when they are unable to sustain the traditional leadership policies of their church affiliation.

Implementing or weaving Jesus's leadership style into their leadership style can release the pressure of team building. Jesus demonstrates and teaches leadership skills to the apostles. The apostles demonstrated and taught Jesus's skills to their disciples. The disciples demonstrated and taught those skills to their disciples. Why is this leadership style repeated? Jesus said, in summary, Go, teach, baptized and observe all things that he taught and make disciples (Mt 28:19–20). Through it all, Jesus will always be with us.

The practices observed in this research give rise to issues not identified initially, such as congregations' social media viewers. This progressive move toward new worship practices is seen in cyber churches, E-churches, and online churches. For this research, these viewers generated an evolving church culture.

In Section Two, the results and responses from the research and observations provide other proposed solutions. Some of the church practices would benefit other churches included in the research. For the virtual church to be incorporated into the worship service, they must be considered a congregation—one that is a part of the church. Therefore, addressing the definition of the church is significant for the identity of social-media viewers.

SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Introduction

Section One identified the historical development of the Baptist traditional practices for selecting a church leadership team to administer the church ordinances and their challenges. That section provided the background of how the roles and responsibilities are established for the church leadership, the significance of the church ordinance to Baptists and the scriptures used to support their decision documented in the ABCUSA association's policies and guidelines. It also identified how the challenges of following the traditional church practices impact the leadership team's effectiveness in serving a congregation in an evolving church culture.

As discussed in Section One, the ABCUSA takes pride in being autonomous. Local Baptist churches celebrate interdependence⁷⁴ and voluntary association with others for mission operations within the Christian community. The local Baptist church decides its church operations and ministry except for faith and polity.⁷⁵

The congregation's culture in many churches is believers searching for understanding and seeking the word of God to help them through their life challenge. Some congregation's family life moves at a fast pace and is inundated with instant

⁷⁴ American Baptist Churches USA, "Bylaws of American Baptist Churches in the USA," 46. "*Interdependence* in the Baptist (free church) tradition in exercising self-government in matters of faith and practice, was reckoning confidently upon one another; relying on one another: as individual believers, as local congregations, as organizations created by local congregations and/or their members; and laboring together for the well-being and general good of Christ's body, the Church, as members one of another."

⁷⁵ Ibid., 5.

gratification and technology. This church culture faces many personal challenges of job losses resulting in homelessness, death, terminal illness, changes to family dynamics, online bullying, teen suicide, and racism, to name a few. The church leadership is challenged to effectively administer not only the church ordinances and operations and provide an inspirational worship experience, but minister to the needs of their congregation. The culture of the community and society has an effect on the culture in the church. The worship music genre has swiftly moved, to attract the new generation,⁷⁶ from the traditional hymns and gospels to more contemporary music, and songs reflecting a personal relationship rather than a corporate relationship with God. For example, *Jesus is a Friend of Mine* compared to *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*. The proclamation of the word is more inspirational, ushering the congregation to reenter their personal lives after worship service with a little more courage to handle their life challenges rather than the traditional proclamation of the word about the wrath the God, the individual's unworthiness, and what they owe God.

The methodology in Section One is instrumental in the development of the problems stated in the previous section as well as the proposed solutions provided in this section. I reiterate some of the problems previously identified as it relates to the observance of the traditional Baptist practices and address the proposed solutions to help

⁷⁶ David John Seel, Jr., *The New Copernicans: Millennials and the Survival of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2018), xiv – xvi. (1) “Our millennial children are both the church’s greatest challenge and its most exciting new opportunity.” Close to 40% of millennials are “religious none” or unaffiliated—and it is the fastest growing segment of the population. Millennial pastors and youth ministers are disempowered; their perspective is often not taken seriously by senior church leadership. (2) *New generation* means a group of individuals born and living contemporaneously; *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “Generation,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/generation>. The new generation is currently referred to as *Millennial*.

church leadership teams select leaders to effectively serve their congregation and community and administer the church ordinances. The church setting is addressed to understand the concept of the traditional practices because it is the foundation for church leaders and the church ordinances.

Church Setting

The churches observed are similar church settings with some unique differences in worship experiences. They all followed traditional church practices in selecting leadership authorized to serve the church ordinances. The Lord's Supper is administered at the end of the service by each church. Church F is fully functioning as a traditional church including the elements. The senior pastor oversees the Lord's Supper even though he does not proclaim the word. The church leaders (all male) wore the traditional black suits with white gloves. The elements of the Lord's Supper are passed among the congregation. There are no women preachers on the platform, demonstrating that this church does not support women in ministry. Women program leaders are required to speak behind a podium strategically placed on the floor of the sanctuary. The traditional practices have been implanted in the associate preachers. This concept is paralyzing the progress of the associates becoming receptive to different practices and understanding the needs of their sheep (congregation). Jesus expects the elders of the church to be the shepherd. He also commands the elders (disciples) to teach his teachings and not the denominational traditions.

Church G offered a more relaxing worship experience. The senior pastor does not proclaim the word, but one of the worship committee members (who was not a minister) spoke in his absence. The deacons were dressed casually. The authorization of the

deacons serving the elements was traditional. The congregation was small. Therefore, the practice of the congregation serving themselves was practical.

Church C was a mixture of the traditional and modern worship experiences. The traditional practice was in the senior pastor overseeing the Lord's Supper and baptism. The pastor served the ordained church leaders after the elements were served to the congregation by the ordained leaders.

Leadership

The ABCUSA policies and guidelines on church leadership support the traditional Baptist practices in selecting church leaders under the belief that only ordained ministers should be authorized to administer the church ordinances. Surprisingly, the ABCUSA policy includes this statement, "any member of the church could be called upon to exercise all ministerial functions and responsibilities, even though this did not ordinarily happen."⁷⁷ This statement is unique in comparison to their other documents, such as ordained ministry, ordination, and commission which focus on ordained leaders.

This research revealed some churches under the ABCUSA are operating under the traditional Baptist practices. Even though the statement in the ABCUSA policy gives each church the right to bypass the requirement to use ordained leaders, church leadership at some of the Baptist churches have not exercised this freedom for several possible reasons. As previously stated in Section One, it may be because (1) they are not aware of that statement, (2) they are not aware of other practices, or (3) they want to remain with what they believe is the right practice.

⁷⁷ American Baptist Churches USA, *Recommended Procedures*, 5.

Selection of Church Leaders

As mentioned in Section One, Baptists believe “ordination was the act of the church by which, in the name of God, it delegates to a qualified person who has responded to the call of God, a wide range of ministerial functions and responsibilities.”⁷⁸ The traditional ordination process is induction or rites of passage into a pastoral position for the new candidate. Some Baptist churches in the African American community placed the candidate before the church and questioned them about scriptures and doctrine. In the 1990s, an observation was made of this type of catechism of new candidates. Those on the wise council began to question the candidate. Based on the candidate’s overall responses and performance, the council determines if they are ready for ordination. In other African American Baptist churches, the catechism is no longer public.

Willimon says that “ordination is a gift from God through the church, for the church, that the church might be the church of God for the world.”⁷⁹ The ABCUSA Ministerial Leadership Commission is responsible for overseeing the ministry operations in the ABCUSA churches.⁸⁰ The ABCUSA collaborates ministries common among the churches with principles and standards:

1. It is the right and responsibility of the local church to ordain those whom it recognizes as being called of God, and

⁷⁸ American Baptist Churches USA, “The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts,” accessed November 8, 2018, <http://www.tabcom.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/OrdinationProcess-CandidateDocuments.pdf>.

⁷⁹ William H. Willimon, *The Theology and Practice*, Rev ed. (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2016), 19.

⁸⁰ American Baptist Churches USA, *Recommended Procedures*, 5.

2. The candidate for ordination should be licensed by the local church in which membership was held.⁸¹

The licensing of the candidate, according to the ABCUSA standard is valid for four years on the expectation of their becoming ordained.⁸² Although the ABCUSA is autonomous, according to these guidelines, the association has some involvement, as discussed in Section One.

Another area of the ABCUSA policy providing guidelines on church leadership through their *Recommended Procedures for Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches*, the Ministerial Commission in Leadership document on ordaining church leaders, the council should

1. request a statement from candidates on their knowledge and experience,
2. determine their call to the ministry, Christian experience, academic and field preparation, and comprehension of Christian doctrine and practice, the Trinity, and the position of the church in today's world,
3. understand the ordinances as practiced in American Baptist Churches and the role of the minister;
4. subscribe to the covenant and code of ethics developed by the ministers council.⁸³

This statement allows the candidates to share who they are with the council, especially unfamiliar candidates. The area of academics and field preparation does not fit

⁸¹ Ibid., 5-7.

⁸² Ibid., 7.

⁸³ Ibid., 11.

all candidates, therefore rendering ineligible some with years of teaching and serving experience.

Having an insufficient leadership team diminishes the church's ability to adequately seize opportunities to serve its congregation and community. This challenge is elevated in some churches because the church elders are accustomed to the traditional Baptist practices for selecting their leaders and are not open to different practices. This challenge is infectious within the church community: Up-and-coming pastors implement these traditional church practices when selecting new church leaders.

I performed observations, surveys, and interviews of pastors to discover how church leaders are selected and how they administer the church ordinances. They are identified in Section One. The research reveals that some churches are challenged by an insufficient number of church leaders to serve the congregation. The survey includes churches supporting the traditional Baptist practice for the church ordination and those who authorize the laity to perform the duties of church leaders. This section identifies some of the practices these churches use in this research that provide proposed solutions for churches facing challenges.

The problems facing some traditional practicing churches were incorporated in the story shared in the previous section. A possible solution that can enable SSB to serve their congregation successfully is to review the ABCUSA policy and scripture. A closer look at the policy reveals that the ABCUSA allows any member to administer the church ordinances, and SSB has not exercised this flexibility at this time.⁸⁴ This covers ordained and unordained ministers, deacons, and layman leaders administering church ordinances.

⁸⁴ America Baptist Church USA, "American Baptist Policy," 4.

That statement gives the church permission to deviate from the traditional practice identified in the ABCUSA policies and guidelines. That statement is (1) within Jesus's teachings and (2) able to reduce the strain on the church leaders. If their purpose is to be a follower of Jesus, then church leaders should consider following his leadership style.

Transitioning from traditional Baptist practices to biblical practices in selecting church leaders will challenge those embedded in the traditional Baptist practices. Pastors eloquently speak on following Jesus in their sermons as it relates to the behavior of their congregation. However, following Jesus was not limited to how believers treat each other, worship God, and keep the faith. It is also about church leadership skills. Jesus, in his instructions to the disciples and believers, said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor 11:24). The church should not only remember Jesus's death and resurrection, but also how he lived, served, and led. The church leadership should remember Jesus's leadership style, identified in Section Three. Training on how to be an effective leader in some cases, included reading and discussing books written by corporate leaders. His or her experience in leadership is a useful tool. The fact Jesus is the Founder of the church and we are his followers, learning his leadership style would be essential to a pastor's personal and leadership team development. Youssef discusses how Jesus is proven to be the Messiah and how he identifies some points to consider in confirming leaders. Youssef's views are supported biblically and expand on its biblical interpretation. He states, "all leaders need to be confirmed and a person must be:"⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Michael Youssef, *The Leadership Style of Jesus: How to Make a Lasting Impact* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 17.

1. Trained for leadership

One should serve as an apprentice that “allow them to grow in leadership, become intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually more mature.”

2. Observed in leadership

Church leaders and members have an opportunity to observe and recognize the pastor’s unique gifts and abilities,

3. Confirmed by those outside the church congregation (1 Tm 3:7), and

4. Ordained—only God calls people to spiritual leadership.⁸⁶

There are some similarities in selecting leaders between ABCUSA’s standard and Youssef’s view. They both identify the need to learn about the candidate’s character and experience for any leadership position. They both identify training is essential and Youssef includes mentorship.

Church leaders can implement the proposal by ABCUSA to use laypersons to assist in leadership duties. In their selection process, churches can use some points identified by ABCUSA and Youssef. The leadership team should consider knowing and observing those identified or volunteered as leaders, including their leadership capabilities. This process will provide insight into the character of the person. They should consider a mentoring program to help those with little or no experience gain experience and knowledge. Also, church leaders can observe the candidates’ work ethics and skills. Each candidate should have some understanding of the doctrine established by Jesus and knowledge of the Trinity.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 18.

Regarding being ordained only by God, the church leader's purpose is not to ordain the purpose of the calling, but to acknowledge his or her calling. There are some clergies called by God who question the church ordination process of questioning their vocation. "Pastors are called by the church for specific communal leadership, so the church has a responsibility to examine those who wish to be considered for ordination prayerfully."⁸⁷ John Calvin "notes that God calls, but the church also must call to leadership in the name of Christ. The call to be clergy has more in common with the calling of Paul in Acts 9, in which someone is summoned by a specific task within the church mission, such as Go, for he was an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and Kings and before the people of Israel (Acts 9:15)."⁸⁸

Other Proposed Solution

The ABCUSA policy states leaders include ministers, deacons, and the laity. A few of the churches observed have developed ministers-in-training (MIT) programs for candidates seeking to be licensed to preach the Gospel. This training is useful for all potential leaders in ministry. There are many resources on MIT programs:

- *The Basic Guide for Minister's Training*⁸⁹ covers many areas of expectations of a minister seeking to be a pastor.

⁸⁷ Willimon.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 16.

⁸⁹ Apostle Jackie Howard, "The Basic Guide for Minister Training," Under His Wings National Ministerial Alliance, May 24, 2008, https://issuu.com/apostlejackie/docs/basic_guide_for_ministers_training.

- *Minister in Training: A Minister's Journey* (Paperback) by Pastor Natalie D Green covers accepting my call, lifestyle adjustments, continued spiritual growth, and leadership/servanthood,
- *A Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* by Richard J. Foster covers spiritual development well.

The laity is authorized to fill church leadership roles in the United Methodist denomination. Willimon addresses the calling of Cornelius and Matthias. “He stated that Matthias demonstrated that ministry also rises from the bottom up through God and vocational work in the church. Cornelius was called to be a disciple.”⁹⁰ According to their layperson training guide, they can serve in many areas of the church.

- They serve in the local church by vital leadership, care-giving ministry, and witness of the spoken word.
- They give leadership, assistance, and support to the mission and ministry of the church.
- They lead meetings for prayer, training study, and discussion as requested.
- They conduct or assist in services of worship and present sermons and addresses when requested.
- They assist in the distribution of the elements for Holy Communion.
- They can become certified lay servant as professing members of the United Methodist Church.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Willimon, 16.

⁹¹ Carol M. Norén, *What Happens Sunday Morning: A Layperson's Guide to Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press).

The Methodists have a *Lay Leader Handbook* that provides the job description, qualifications, and responsibilities. This practice is used in the Methodist denomination, and it is an effective practice for the churches and for the pastors. For example, a layperson is similar to an associate clergy with the responsibility to support the senior pastor's mission and vision for the church. Some of their identified qualifications are

- understanding that everyone has spiritual gifts and experiences vital to the body of Christ
- emulating the servant ministry of Jesus
- showing the love God and working well with everyone
- being able to help the pastor align the entire ministry to the church's mission
- modeling the outward focus of the church, connecting the congregation with the community and the world.⁹²

The layperson's duties are essential to senior pastors and the church's operations: Laypersons of the church speaks to the people and gives a significant understanding of the community needs. They connect with the people in the congregation's services. They attempt to welcome, prepare, and urge individuals to take part in the service.⁹³

To help identify people for layperson positions, churches could administer a spiritual gift assessment⁹⁴ to its new members and potential church leaders. This

⁹² The Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church, "Lay Leader Handbook," June 7, 2018, http://www.ctcumc.org/files/fileshare/kevin_walters/local+church+lay+leader_handbook.pdf, 2.

⁹³ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁴ LifeWay Christian Resources, "Spiritual Gifts Assessment Tools," January 1, 2014. <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/women-leadership-spiritual-gifts-growth-service>. This article was adapted from "Jesus on Leadership: Developing Servant Leaders," by Gene Wilkes, Pastor of Legacy Church, LifeWay Christian Resources, 1998.

assessment is an exceptional tool to identify potential leaders for ministry. Figure 1 samples some spiritual gift assessment categories.

The categories cover leadership, teaching, shepherding, and apostleship which all lead to leadership qualities. The categories have multiple questions that help identify a person's assets to interpret and identify their gift. These gifts are expanded from those identified in the book of Corinthians. Spiritual gift assessments could help church leadership teams find potential leaders in their church membership to serve on the leadership team and administer the church ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Some spiritual gift assessments are online. In using a spiritual gift assessment, the church leader reviews the results with individuals to help them understand and embrace their gifts. Some of their gifts may be out of their comfort zone, and they may fear failure.

LEADERSHIP	ADMINISTRATION	TEACHING	KNOWLEDGE
WISDOM	PROPHECY	DISCERNMENT	EXHORTATION
SHEPHERDING	FAITH	EVANGELISM	APOSTLESHIP
SERVICE/HELPS	MERCY	GIVING	HOSPITALITY

Figure 1 — Spiritual Gift Assessment Categories

Engaging laypersons is an excellent practice to reduce the leaders' gap and perform the church duties that are unaddressed. The duties identified for the layperson are community relations and congregation care. They can be assets in other areas of the church operations, but at least the Methodist denomination has created these positions for individuals with excellent leadership potential.

Administering the Church Ordinances

Traditional Baptist practice was reviewed and removed from some of the observed churches' practices with Baptist influences. A pastor at one of the observed churches stated in a sermon that the bible does not support restricting church-ordinance administration to ordained leaders. This traditional practice was replaced or revised to a different practice that is more aligned with biblical practices.

In the early church in England, the “More than 10,000 of the English were [baptized] ... in the river Sirarios [plus women and children]. They were baptized by each other after the apostolic leader blessed the water. This act was the first type of Baptism in England.”⁹⁵ The senior pastor or ordained ministers do not need to be the only baptizers.

A new church movement⁹⁶ presents uplifting Sunday worship services with no weekly discipleship, Sunday school, or bible study. These churches are usually located in schools with satellite worship sites. Some have cell groups led by laypersons to give believers a sense of fellowship and family. There are no significant participation commitments from the congregation but to show up for Sunday worship service. The church ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are not a perpetual ritual, but come on

⁹⁵ William Cathcart, *The Baptist Encyclopedia: A Dictionary of the Doctrines, Ordinances, Usages, Confessions of Faith, Sufferings, Labors and Successes, and of The General History of the Baptist Denomination in All Lands* (Berwyn Heights, MD: Arkose Press, 2015, 2015), 68- 69.

⁹⁶ New church movements are numerous. For example, Hope City Church was a movement to share Jesus in Houston and beyond. There was a senior pastor with lead pastors. Their cell groups are called connect groups and meet weekly to discuss key aspects of their church community. Hope City, “Hope City is a movement aimed at bringing Jesus to Houston and beyond,” accessed October 25, 2018, <https://hopecity.com/about/>.

a designated day, such as Resurrection Sunday. Some churches offer baptism day for all who desire it.

There is another new movement⁹⁷ of worship service through social media. Many churches connect their worship service through live streaming, Facebook Live, and other Internet systems. Observation of these churches during research revealed a few connect their worship services to social media and the viewers watch interacting almost not at all with the church leadership. They chat among themselves, and it appears no church leaders communicate with them, such as offering prayer for those requesting it. Having church leaders online adds a new dynamic to the administering of the church ordinances to their social-media members and attendees.

The need to incorporate online viewers is essential to the Christian community. All churches observed with online worship services provide viewers with an opportunity to interact with the service by offering them a donation button to provide their financial support. Those who consider themselves a part of the community of believers should have an opportunity to partake in the Lord's Supper. Integrating online viewers into the worship service may be a logistical challenge, but it must be reviewed and addressed so that all have an intimate worship experience. The solution could be to incorporate them into the worship service by sending prepackaged elements to the online members and attendees. This practice would be inclusive for all participating in the worship service to receive the Lord's Supper. One church in the survey mails prepackaged elements of the Lord's Supper upon request.⁹⁸ They have members who travel or may be sick and unable

⁹⁷ Ibid. Virtual services include online live stream services and Facebook live.

⁹⁸ Wake Chapel, response to research survey, October 31, 2018.

to attend worship service physically but who desire to partake in communion with the congregation. These members request the communion be sent to them. For those who are unable to attend due to sickness, deacons travel to their location and administer the Lord's Supper to them. Deacons taking the elements to the shut-ins is a practice at many Baptist churches.

The church ordinances provide some proposed solutions for SSB:

1. SSB can delegate church leaders to administer the Lord's Supper and baptism.

The senior pastor preaches the worship services. This practice does not provide additional church leaders, but it does release the senior pastor from that duty and provides him or her renewal time between services after proclaiming the word. This practice provides select leaders experience in administering the church ordinances. Although this practice is not traditional, since the senior pastor was present in service, this church leadership selection process was under the traditional Baptist practice. This is a nontraditional Baptist practice, but it is close to the biblical practices of Jesus's leadership style. They should consider the biblical practice to increase their leadership team for the serving the Lord's Supper during their multiple worship services, as well as baptism.⁹⁹

2. SSB can designate individuals from their small congregation to hand out the prepackaged Lord's-supper elements as the congregants enter the sanctuary. This practice saves time in distributing the elements and could be beneficial if the church does not have sufficient people to serve during the time of the

⁹⁹ New Faith Church, Field Research Observation, Houston, TX, November 5, 2016.

Lord's Supper. This method is not a traditional Baptist practice and could be a concern for some churches as to whether this practice is appropriate or even follows biblical practices,¹⁰⁰

3. SSB can create a worship service committee. The worship committee designates ordained deacons to lead and administer the elements of the Lord's Supper. This practice will allow the senior pastor to focus on proclaiming the Gospel during the worship service. This church also integrates the Baptist and Catholic traditions when administering the Lord's Supper. The small congregation approaches the deacons to receive their elements. This method was one area of their practice that was significantly different from traditional Baptist practices. There was a call and response before they administered the elements. One of the designated deacons asked the congregation "What does the bread represent?" The congregation responds, "The body of our Lord and Savior"; then he asked, "What does the wine represent?" The congregation responds, "The blood of our Lord and savior." This solution reduces the churches' challenge in not having enough leaders to distribute the elements to the congregation. For a large congregation, this practice may not be efficient due to the amount of time required to complete the process.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Gateway Community Church, Field Research Observation, Houston, TX, November 6, 2016.

¹⁰¹ Covenant House of Houston, October 7, 2018. Worship Committee assists the Ministers in planning the worship service and to promotes the worship of God through the arts.

Summary and Conclusion

The above practices in selecting church leaders implemented by the above churches are great options and are useful for them, yet it may not be useful for other churches. Some of the churches in this research, Churches C and F, use the traditional Baptist practices in selecting leaders and limit administering of the elements of baptism and the Lord's Supper to ordained leaders. Those church practices in selecting church leaders are sufficient for their congregation, but if Church B experiences rapid growth, they may need to revisit their practices.

The call to the ministry is a personal commitment for the individual. The need to know each candidate's spiritual path, what was their designated ministry, experience, and church doctrine knowledge is important for each candidate. Under traditional church practices, being a seminary graduate was not a requirement, but ABCUSA has included it as one of the requirements. Some churches have clergies that are licensed under the traditional practice but have now found themselves in between the change of practices regarding ordination. One church in the survey only ordain those who are seminary graduates with no grandfather clause. The ministers' reasonings for not attending seminary are based on their years of field and academic experiences. There is an age disparity among the present candidates; many individuals are over fifty years old. A few have attended bible classes in community settings as teachers as well as Bible College but have not sought a degree. They also have many years of experience in Sunday school, bible study, and speaking engagements. Changing the traditional leader-selection practice will provide sufficiently staffed leadership teams.

The MIT program is an excellent opportunity for the senior pastor to ensure that all candidates are prepared for licensing to preach the gospel. They should also develop such a program for those desiring to be a candidate for ordination. This training will cover practice and field experience for those wishing to be a part of the pastoral vocation. The candidates can be a part of the leadership team to administer the church ordinances. Church C provides MIT for upcoming ministers before licensing.

Leaders should have the willingness to serve; many do. The church should consider laypersons. There are members in the church who may not have a desire to be a deacon but would love to be in a leadership position to help church operations. Churches should canvas or survey the membership for interest. Some churches use spiritual gifts assessments to help church members wondering where to work in the church to determine their best qualities and how they could serve in the kingdom. Some believers do not know what their gifts are, or that what they love to do has a name and spiritual purpose; they may not know that the gift can be used in the kingdom.

To help churches with Jesus's best biblical practices, his leadership style is analyzed in Section Three, including the biblical and theological views on the church setting, church leadership, and church ordinances. A review of these views reveals Jesus's leadership style which directs the leadership style for church leaders. Paralleling the biblical and theological similarities on church practices and the ordinances helps determine solutions for churches in selecting church leaders and administering the church ordinances.

SECTION 3:

THESIS

Introduction

Baptist denominations believe God inspired all scripture (2 Tm 3:16) and all scripture is inerrant (Heb 6:18); it is impossible for God to lie. They believe one is saved when they confess their sins and believe in their heart that Jesus is the Son of God and their Lord and Savior. They believe one must be baptized by immersion in water. One is then eligible to participate in the partaking of the Lord's Supper.

The American Baptist Church USA (ABCUSA) has always recognized two ordinances in their worship service. ABCUSA policy says they partake of the two ordinances exemplifying obedience to our Lord's commands: believers' baptism and the Lord's Supper. We insist that baptism was administered only to those who have the maturity to understand its profound significance: resurrection to new life in Christ. And we follow the biblical example set by Christ when we fully immerse in water.¹⁰²

Jesus commands believers to replicate the Lord's Supper in remembrance of him. Moreover, he commands disciples to impart his teachings and go and baptize believers. The ABCUSA's beliefs are in line with Jesus's command to disciples on baptism and the Lord's Supper. The traditional practice authorizes only ordained leadership to administer the baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Section One is designed to begin the process of understanding the development of traditional church practices and provide clarity through the scriptures by addressing

¹⁰² American Baptist Churches USA, "What We Believe," last modified June 17, 2012, http://www.abc-usa.org/what_we_believe/identity/bible.

biblical practices demonstrated by Jesus and the apostles that the church should follow when selecting leaders. The focus for Section Three is a discussion on the leadership style of Jesus, the early church's perception of leadership, and the ordinances and redirection from traditional practices. This section shares the concept of church ordinances in discussing the identification of the church, church leadership, the significance of church ordinances, and the transition to the Biblical practices. In this section, I provide understanding of to whom Jesus was speaking when he commanded observance of the Lord's Supper and his purpose in the manner chosen to lead the ordinances. The scriptures references to the leadership of the church are conducive to following Jesus's leadership style.

The Church—Upon This Rock

Jesus's command to the disciples to baptize new converts and observe the Lord's Supper is for the church. What defines the church? According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*:

1. a building for public and especially Christian worship,
2. the clergy or officialdom of a religious body. The word church was put for the persons that are ordained for the ministry of the Gospel, that was to say, the clergy, and
3. a body or organization of religious believers.¹⁰³

The scripture identifies a church when Jesus spoke to the disciples and asked “‘who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replies, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the

¹⁰³ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “Church,” last updated December 17, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/church>.

living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who was in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church’” (Mt 16:15–20 NASB). The significance of this scripture is that Jesus will build the church with humanity. Jesus said “upon this rock” as a reference to the revelation of Peter, which he received through the Holy Spirit. A sign of the church is when the Holy Spirit falls on all attending a gathering in the whole building. Some believe that moment to be the beginning of the church (Acts 2:42–47).

The church Jesus describes is not a building, but the development of believers designated as disciples who gather together to share the teaching of Jesus and making disciples. It is good for the believers to dwell in unity. In gathering together as believers in Christ, “we all are one body” having many members who function differently (Rom 12:4–5 NASB). We are all one body with different skills, gifts, talents, and more. With the church culture evolving, those who are viewers on social media gather together at one source for worship, so the Internet can be considered a church setting.

Church Setting

The early church believes that the Lord’s Supper can only be observed in a church setting.¹⁰⁴ Several resources provide guidance or instructions in administering the Lord’s Supper.

John Calvin establishes, for the early church, an order of service that includes

1. Prayer

¹⁰⁴ James Milton Carroll, *The Trail of Blood* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 1931), Location 185, Kindle.

2. Sermon
3. Institution
4. Recitation of the promises given in the supper¹⁰⁵

Calvin believes there must be order in worship; therefore, he provides a guideline he considers honorable of the observance of the Sacraments. This order of service is similar to the traditional Baptist practice, where they recite the words Jesus spoke to the apostles when serving them. The pastor speaks over the bread and wine before the congregation takes each element.

Bartlett says that the “Lord’s Supper was an integral part of Theology and Worship.”¹⁰⁶ In his book, he states that Justin Martyr prepared an outline of worship that includes “the reading of some apostles’ memoirs, the prophets’ writings, congregational prayers, the Lord’s Supper, and benevolence. The Lord’s first day of creation was on a Sunday, and Christ resurrection was on a Sunday; therefore, the church should assemble to worship on Sundays.”¹⁰⁷ The setting up of the time to worship is an integrated part of a Christian’s life as the ordinance that honors the remembrance of Jesus. Saint Justin also provides a mass liturgy to be included in each Sunday’s worship service. His suggestion follows:

On Sunday all gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read. Then, the Ruler in a discourse instructs and exhorts the reading, offer prayers, and present the bread, wine, and water, This common gathering is on Sunday, since it was the first day, on which God created

¹⁰⁵ Mayor, 14-15.

¹⁰⁶ James Lee Bartlett, “A Theology of Worship: A Baptist Perspective,” Master’s thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX, 1999. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 33.

the Universe, and Jesus Christ, our Savior, rose from the dead. He was crucified on Friday, and Sunday He appeared to His Apostles.¹⁰⁸

Barnard writes that St. Justin interfaces the festival of Sunday as the Lord's day with the resurrection and the creation. There is an excellent typology here. The Jewish law blessed the seventh day of the week on which God rested. The Christian administration commends the eighth day, which is additionally the principal day of the week, to symbolize that the passion and resurrection of Christ influences "another creation," opening the route to the otherworldly request. The difference in the sacred day from the seventh to the eighth day additionally indicates emblematically that Judaism is established to plan for the Christian agreement, and subsequently, its feast offers a path to the Lord's day.¹⁰⁹ At an observation of a Baptist church, the senior pastor reflects this same view in his sermon that "Sunday was chosen because of the resurrection. He says that on Friday Jesus died, on Saturday nothing happened, but on Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead with all power. Therefore, they moved the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday."¹¹⁰

In the scriptures, the apostles are documented to have met in the town of Troas on the first Sabbath day of the month, and they observed the Lord's Supper. On the first day of the week, the disciples come together to break bread and Paul preached (Acts 20:7). This scripture can be the basis for why most denominations observe on the first Saturday or Sunday. Churches observed administered the Lord's Supper on first Sundays. The

¹⁰⁸ Lawrence Feingold, "The Mystery of Israel and the Church." Lecture Series 17. Saint Louis, MO: Association of Hebrew Catholics, 2016, <http://www.hebrewcatholic.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/17.07-Eucharist-According-to-Early-Church-Fathers-pdf>, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁰ Carroll Marr, Senior Pastor, Sermon, SouthCliff Church, Fort Worth, TX, April 21, 2018.

early church developed a plan on how the church should observe the ordinances. Some scholars developed an order of worship and designated who is authorized to participate in overseeing the worship service.

The churches observed, and pastors surveyed during this research revealed, that the majority observes the Lord's Supper monthly on the first Sunday, Good Friday, and Resurrection Sunday. One church observed annually; another church weekly. They follow this tradition established by St. Justin. Jesus, in his command to observe the covenant of the Lord's Supper, is "as often as you" do this (1 Cor 11:26). He does not stipulate where or how often to observe the Lord's Supper. Remembering the observance of the Passover, it is an annual observance. In past conversations, I have heard some Christians believe if you do it too frequently, it becomes meaningless to the individual.

John Calvin says,

For the frequency of celebrating this ordinance we have no rule in the New Testament. The early Christians observed it every Sabbath. The expression of the apostle, "as *often* as ye eat this bread," intimates that the practice of communion is frequent. Assuming it is designed, like the Passover, is to be an annual celebration only, there's has been no evidence from Scripture, and is contradicted by the most ancient practice.¹¹¹

The Ignatius letters to the Philadelphians and Smyrnaeans give guidance and direction in the observance of the Eucharist in the Catholic church. Also, Ignatius emphasizes that the bishop is authorized to administer the Eucharist. An excerpt from the letter to Philadelphians follows:

Ignatius reference to the Eucharist was presented as the source of Christian unity by giving the faithful communion with the one flesh and blood of Christ. This

¹¹¹ Samuel Wakefield, *A Complete System of Christian Theology; on a Concise, Comprehensive, and Systematic View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Cincinnati, OH: Walden and Stowe, 1862), 595-6.

unity must be liturgically represented and preserved through communion with the bishop. There was one altar, just as there was one bishop, together with the council of presbyters and the deacons, my fellow servants), in order that whatever you do, you do in accordance with God.¹¹²

If the church setting, a term reference by Saint Justin, is a building, then following the practices of the early church observance of the Lord's Supper, the believers in this evolving church culture will alienate those due to sickness, working, no transportation, and those viewing on social media. This belief that the Sacrament must be in the church building was not in line with the teachings of Jesus but was more of a church direction. Under the new covenant of Jesus, he wants his disciples to go out in the community. In biblical times, believers met in each other's homes (Acts 2:46).¹¹³

The scriptures do not specifically identify an order of worship service, but through Jewish culture, the teachings of Jesus, and God's orders to the Priest, one can summarize what a worship service may include.¹¹⁴ As for church ordinances, no order of worship was specified to honor, other than simply to do the act.

Church Doctrine

It is written in the scriptures to have a sound doctrine. Theologians, scholars, authors, and church denominations have discussed church doctrines including policies on

¹¹² Feingold, 3.

¹¹³ Acts 2:46 states one mind in the temple. Reference Acts 5:42 states to perform the act daily in the temple and in every hour. They ceased to teach and preach Jesus Christ. Matthew Henry's Commentary interpret that they met in the temple every day and ate in homes taking them food (making no reference to Lord's Supper). The breaking of bread (to have a share) may have referenced a regular meal or the Lord supper, or both.

¹¹⁴ One reference in the scripture, 1 Cor 14:16, states, "When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." Although several other scriptures described this, this is the only one that will be mentioned here.

their accuracy to the scriptures. For example, editor Jonathan Leeman states “that the distinction between a local church and a gathering of Christians was small or not as different as the policy of the church. To contend for a policy is to contend for the presence of the local church. Generally, Christians have seen church policy as tending to a few zones of church life,”¹¹⁵ such as the following:

- A church’s polity establishes who possesses authority over the processes of membership and discipline and what role baptism and the Lord’s Supper plan in signifying and constituting members as members and the church as a church.
- Polity creates leadership offices in the church, demarcates their responsibilities and jurisdictional boundaries, specifies who was eligible to serve in those offices, and stipulates the selection process.¹¹⁶

Carroll identifies doctrine as “the mark of the New Testament.”¹¹⁷ One of them relates to leadership:

It was officers-pastors and deacons (1 Tm 3:1–16). According to the practice of the early church, there were two kinds of officers: pastors and deacon. The pastor was called Bishop. Both pastor and deacon were to be selected by the church and to be servants of the church.¹¹⁸

Another author, Amy Oden, in her book, wrote this comment:

When we realize how we have inflated our frame of reference and imposed it on all of reality, we know we have committed the sin of idolatry, of taking our particular part and making it the whole.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Davis, 1.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁷ Carroll, 8.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 8, 12.

¹¹⁹ Amy G Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 18.

This statement reflects some denominations' views exhibited in their church practices. Their interpretations of the scriptures are true. T practices establish a hierarchy of leadership and the selection of leaders is not comparable to the leadership identified by Jesus and Paul. As addressed in Section One, the ABCUSA addresses the roles and responsibilities of leadership in its policy, saying "the assignments generally performed by appointed pastors include leading the congregation in the mission, lecturing, leading open love, controlling sanctification and the Lord's Supper ... directing weddings and funerals, and managing the congregation's organization."¹²⁰ These roles distinguish who can be part of the significant acts of worship, limiting licensed ministers serving in worship.

Jesus commands the apostles to observe the Lord's Supper and to remember him when they observe. Jesus's order of administering the Lord's Supper was not as formal as the church's order of service. The scripture (Lk 22:13–20) describes Jesus's order of administering the Lord's Supper as (1) Jesus instructed the apostles where to set up for the Passover, (2) at the location, he first observed the Passover, God's covenant, with the apostles. They shared the meal as directed by God, an unblemished lamb with wine, with their family in their home, and (3) after they observed the Passover, Jesus introduced the new covenant. He passed the bread, and each person broke a piece. He passed the wine for them to drink. Jesus was demonstrating how to administer the Lord's Supper. Of the three observed ABCUSA churches, at two of them, the senior pastor oversaw the Lord's Supper and the ordained leaders passed the trays with the elements to the congregation.

¹²⁰ American Baptist Churches USA, "American Baptist Policy Statement of Ordained Ministry: Preamble," 4.

At the other ABCUSA church, the ordained deacons oversaw the Lord's Supper in the absence of the senior pastor, and the congregation comes up, breaks the bread, and dips it in the cup of wine or water.

ABCUSA should revisit its policy, as stated earlier, to amend their policy and provide guideline that would assist church leaders select unordained leaders to perform church ordinances. Using a layperson as a church leader is an excellent practice for the churches.

Leadership

Some Baptist churches operate as a denominational hierarchy rather than a ministry of servants, which contribute to their leadership challenges. These challenges affect all denominations, but this research focuses on the Baptist churches in Houston, Texas under the ABCUSA and members of the ABCOTS. The church initiates the ordination to set aside the identity of leaders and their responsibilities in the church. As stated in Section One, Williams, the father of the ABCUSA, "was an ordained minister in the English Episcopal Church and reordained at Salem to ensure no one question his right to immerse on the ground of nonordination."¹²¹

God appoints elders to oversee the church for a specific purpose. Apostle Paul said Jesus "gave some apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors, and teachers" (Eph 4:11–13 NASB). Acts 14:23 NIV says, "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put

¹²¹ Armitage, Location 891, Kindle.

their trust.” As believers increased in number, a need arose for additional servants (Acts 6:1–4 NIV).

Jesus’s leadership practices were to ordain leaders to develop a relationship and pray for discernment. The apostles, including Paul, mirrored Jesus’s leadership practices of building relationships and praying. Paul provides instructions to minimize the challenges in the church relating to leadership. Elders are to equip and develop the body of Christ. Paul detailed the requirements of becoming a deacon and their duties saying, “Deacons must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or a drunk, but have faith and a clear conscious. Their character must be tested before serving as a deacon. Deacons have only one wife and good managers of their households including their children” (1 Tm 3:8–13 NASB).

The scripture was specific in determining how the church selects church deacons and their duties. The church has expanded its responsibilities to include the administering of church ordinances in the church setting.

Selection of Leaders

Jesus calls his disciples through the wisdom and knowledge of those he called. He knows their character and that they are not perfect, but they are dedicated. He teaches them the wisdom and knowledge they need for the ministry and then commissions them to go out and teach other disciples. For the church leaders to transition to biblical practices, they will need to understand Jesus’s leadership style. What is the leadership style of Jesus? Jesus’s model is built on four principles:

1. Calling of the spiritual leader
2. character of a spiritual leader

3. Competence of a spiritual leader
4. Commission of a spiritual leader¹²²

Jesus takes time to learn who his apostles are by spending time with them. They travel with him, they sleep where he sleeps, he eats meals with them, he converses with them, and he teaches them leadership. Jesus respects their culture and traditions as well as intercedes in their culture with the culture of the new covenant. One ABCUSA guideline is to request a personal statement. This statement shares the candidate's character.

Examples of Jesus leadership follow:

1. Jesus teaches the people through scripture, parables, and signs that influence and convict many of those following him as believers. He listens and identifies the individual's issues, and he addresses them through conversation and healing.
2. Jesus's relationship is demonstrated daily before the disciples. He prays before God for many hours, seeking God's wisdom in selecting apostles.
3. Jesus approaches John the Baptist for baptism. He does not step into John's position to baptize but submits to John's leadership for baptism.
4. Jesus observes with the apostles the old covenant Passover and then presents the new covenant observation of the Lord's Supper. He guides them in how to observe the new covenant by leading them in action and words (Matt 3:13–16).

¹²² Gregory B. Baxter, "A Leadership Training Manual for the 21st Century Leader Based on the Pattern and Principles Jesus Created to Train the Twelve Apostles," PhD diss., Liberty Baptist Theology Seminary, Lynchburg, VA, 2011, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/444/>, 5.

Churches currently modify the responsibilities of the church leaders that Paul establishes. Deacons serve communion rather than serving the needs of the widows. As discussed in Section Two, two of the three churches observed do not accept the practice of authorizing lay persons to become leaders to administer the ordinances. ABCUSA acknowledges in its policy that “although not particularly emphasized in the Baptist tradition, the earliest local churches had multiple leaders rather than single leaders in most cases. Churches with one pastoral leader emerged by the beginning of the second century AD. Bi-vocational ministry was often the early church model” (Act 18:3).¹²³

Transition in Selecting Church Leaders

Transitioning requires the senior pastor and church to implement the leadership skills of Jesus, referenced as biblical practices. Those practices mirror the leadership applications of Jesus, Peter, and the apostles, Paul and Barnabas. Jesus sets a pattern and the other leaders follow. They all pray for God’s wisdom. The church leaders and upcoming pastors should consider the following model of Jesus leadership:

1. Identify individuals who demonstrate their commitment to God and the church’s mission. Jesus and the apostles identified and appointed individuals who demonstrated the teachings of Jesus.
2. Seeking God’s wisdom in appointing individuals is the process of ordination. Jesus returns from prayer and selects twelve apostles from the many disciples in attendance. In turn, the apostles, Paul and Barnabas, prayed and fasted when they ordained the elders for the church (Acts 14:21–23).

¹²³ American Baptist Church USA, “American Baptist Policy,” 2.

3. Paul goes to the cities delivering to them the decrees to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem (Acts 16:4),
4. Paul establishes guidelines for Titus, whom he ordained, in selecting elders of the church. He directs Titus to select elders as he selected him (Ti 1:6–9, 13–14 and again in 1 Tm 3:1–7).
5. Paul sets guidelines in selecting deacons for the church elders (1 Tm 3:8–13):

The Covenant

The early church established, in their guidelines, that the senior pastor or bishop must lead the ritual. The traditional Baptist practice is similar to the instruction of the early church in including only the ordained leader as authorized to administer the ordinances. This policy and practice suffocate the effectiveness of ordaining leaders and the observance of the ordinance in some church settings. Local Baptist churches are autonomous and independent. Therefore, they can deviate from traditional practices without penalty.

The Act of Baptism

According to the Old Testament scriptures, Genesis 17 and Exodus 12, God makes a covenant with Abraham and the Israelites that included generational ordinances. The outward sign of this covenant is the circumcision. It gives the man access to God's promises. In the New Testament scriptures, Matthew 26, Jesus introduced himself to the disciples and the new covenant, which includes church ordinances. The outward sign of this covenant was baptism. It gives all believers in Jesus Christ access to the promises of

God. According to Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, they are both symbolic.¹²⁴ The circumcision to God is symbolically the same as baptism is to Christ. Both practices affected a family structure: Abraham the father of nations, and new converts adopted into the family of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is viewed as “the rites to entry”¹²⁵ into the church and Christian faith because each is identified as a member of the believers and followers of Jesus Christ. Therefore, converts have access to all the gifts, promises of God, and the Kingdom, including communication. When a new convert is saved and baptized, he or she is part of the church family. The new convert must first repent by confessing their sins, confess Jesus as Lord, and believe God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 10:9 NASB). The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines repent as “to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one’s life.”¹²⁶

According to the ABCUSA, the “American Baptists believe that every person who confesses faith in Jesus Christ was called to discipleship and ministry” (1 Cor 12:12–13).¹²⁷ They believe Jesus’s baptism was by immersion in the water. Therefore, they baptize new converts using that method. They based their belief on these scriptures:

¹²⁴ Ferguson.

¹²⁵ Richard E. DeMaris, “Backing Away from Baptism: Early Christian Ambivalence about Its Ritual,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 27, no. 1 (2013): 12.

¹²⁶ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “Repent,” last updated December 17, 2018. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/repent>.

¹²⁷ American Baptist Church USA, “American Baptist Policy,” 2. The Baptist denomination does not authorize infant baptism. Some Protestant Churches, for example Lutherans, believe in infant baptism. Baptism was the new covenant to circumcision, but circumcision was only for males (Col. 2:11,12). Another scripture regarding the entire household was baptism and the household could possibly include infants (Cornelius).

Mt 3:16 KJV says, “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water,” and Mk 1:10 KJV says, “And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him.”

Many Christian churches believe that Jesus was immersed in the waters when baptized. They lean on this act of Jesus’s baptism as their example of administering baptism. Some church leaders say they are imitating the acts of Jesus. The scripture above says “Jesus went up from the water,” signifying that he was immersed. Armitage says, “in administering baptism, I believe that the true baptism of the Gospel was a visible believer with his own consent to be baptized in common water, by dying, or, as it was, drowning, to holding forth death, burial, and resurrection, by a messenger of Jesus, into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”¹²⁸

Baptism is an act of worship based on the example of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus. John baptized many individuals who confessed their sins and wanted to be saved. When John baptized Jesus, the scripture said, “he immediately came up from the water” (Mt 3:13–17 NASB). The Pharisees and the followers of John the Baptist did believe he baptized converts, but scripture does not support their belief.¹²⁹

The disciples followed the commandments of Jesus to make disciples. Peter told the people to “repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38 NASB). The statement Peter makes speaks of baptism, and in the same breath, it uses

¹²⁸ Armitage, Location 916. He stated this from *Clarke’s Confession of Faith*, found in the records of his Church (No. 32).

¹²⁹ Jn 4:1 NASB. Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were.

baptism to receive the Holy Spirit. During a clergy meeting, a minister from another denomination asks the senior pastor why the Baptists say “in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Ghost” when they baptize rather than “in the name of Jesus” as was done in the Epistles. The senior pastor responded, “how Peter baptized was okay, but this church chooses to follow what Jesus said because he was the head of the church.”¹³⁰ In this scripture, Peter gives a spoken word to encourage them to convert to not uttering a word spoken over them during the baptismal act. ABCUSA believes Jesus and God are one and they will continue to speak the name of all three persons of the Trinity (Jn 10:30).

ABCUSA policy authorizes the pastor or an ordained minister/deacon to administer the ordinance of baptism. Armitage stated, “At first, all who were engaged in propagating Christianity administered this rite, nor can it be called in question, that whoever persuaded any person to embrace Christianity, could baptize his disciple.”¹³¹ He adds that there was a “period where ‘lay-baptism’ was not denied. Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome, all held that in cases of necessity ‘laymen’ should baptize and the Synod Elvira so decreed.”¹³² The ABCUSA policy states “It should be recognized that the New Testament gives no explicit indication that these persons were especially responsible for leadership in the observance of baptism or the Lord’s Supper.”¹³³

¹³⁰ Rev. Dr. Marcus D. Cosby, Clergy Meeting, Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, Houston, TX, 2017.

¹³¹ Armitage, Location 887, Kindle. Note: He referenced the writing of Mosheim from his book, *Ecclesiastics History I*, pp. 105–6.

¹³² Armitage, 883.

¹³³ American Baptist Church USA, “American Baptist Policy,” 2.

All church leaders interviewed for this research study stated their requirements to baptize someone are that the person confess faith, based on Rom 10:9. One pastor stated, “They are taught about baptism as an outward confession of an internal belief in Christ as savior and then immersed in the water fully.” The scripture states, “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13 NASB). Some pastors stated they administer the baptism along with an ordained deacon. Others state that any of the church’s ordained ministers can administer the baptism.

Transition Practice of Baptism

Transitioning to biblical practices requires the senior pastor to benefit by selecting and training laypersons through the proposed selection process to assist in the baptizing of new converts. If ministers are called to pastoral positions, this practice will help them obtain experience. It will reduce stress on the pastor from having to perform all ordinances on the same day. Peter authorized those who followed him to Cornelius’s home to baptize his family (Acts 10:47–48). Paul said he was not called to baptize (1 Cor 1:17).

Authorizing a layperson for evangelism ministry teams to baptize those who desire to be baptized on the spot or at the church will strengthen the team’s ability to serve the needs of those to whom they provide witness. The baptism time does not have to be rigidly performed on to the first Sunday with only the senior pastor performing the baptism. Rev. Dr. Martha Simmons, coauthor of the *Christian Minister’s Handbook*,

writes that baptism can take place weekly, monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly.¹³⁴ The evangelism team can consider setting up a baptism day in the communities they are serving. This would be a coordinated event much like John the Baptist baptizing many at one location.

For those viewing on social media, offering baptism is a logistical problem but could be administered through a partnership with other churches. Leaders must be online with viewers to observe their needs and respond. A leader should be offering viewers salvation at the same time it is being offered in the worship service. If they desire membership in the church they are watching, then those leaders can assist. If they desire membership at a local church, they should be referred to a church in their local area. If they desire baptism, they should be connected to a church for the baptism to be performed.

The Act of the Lord's Supper

The observance of the Passover is for the people of Israel to remember the deliverance of God (looking backward). The observance of the Lord's Supper (communion) is to remember the sacrifice the Lord Jesus made for believers and to look forward to fellowshiping with him in the future.¹³⁵

The scriptures say Jesus leads the observance of the new covenant, the Lord's Supper, and commands the apostles and disciples to mirror the observance in

¹³⁴ Martha Simmons, *Christian Minister's Manual: For the Pulpit* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2017).

¹³⁵ David H. Stern, *Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement with an Ancient Past* (Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish, 2007), 244.

remembrance of him. Jesus offered no specific commands as to who leads the observance. Jesus is the head of the church. Jesus directs the apostles to impart his teachings to the other disciples. The disciples (believers) practiced this with other believers. Jesus performing the observance can be the reason why the early church established the rule requiring ordained leaders to lead the observance. The biblical traditions of honoring the covenant are with the priest of the temples as it related to sacrifices, but Jesus is the sacrifice he gives of himself. The biblical honor of a covenant given by God is that God gave the Israelites a command to observe the Passover annually as a family for generations. The head of the family leads the Passover meal, and the first-born son shares the story of the exodus.

The Lord's Supper is an act initiated by Jesus during the Passover meal he shares with the disciples. According to scripture, Jesus shares with his disciples his upcoming death and resurrection in a few days, as well as instructions. Section One discusses the practice of Jesus during the Passover. He observes the Passover first before introducing the new covenant (Mt 26:26 NASB). Jesus instructs the disciples that as often as they partake of these elements to remember him. His will is that they will receive this Sacrament as the soul's spiritual food (cf. Mt 26:26) that will nourish and strengthen those who live by the life of him who said: "He who eats Me will live because of Me" (Jn 6:57). Jesus does not eat the bread. When he gives them the cup, they all drink, but he says that "he would not drink from the cup again until he returns." Did Jesus not partake because he is the sacrificial lamb? If the Christian church is following Jesus, should they partake of the sacrificial act or lead?

Section Two discusses how churches wrestled with how to reference this act of serving the elements as Sacraments or ordinance: The Lord's Supper or communion. Many pastors say it is the Lord's Supper because the meal happened at night and some refer to it as communion because we are partaking as a community of believers. Copeland in his article says,

The supper tells us that we who partake are all one in Christ, who was the common Ground and Source of our life. Unfortunately, Baptist sometimes goes to the extreme of denying that the supper has any connotation of *communion* or vital fellowship with each other in the church. Apart from the disputed meaning of the word *communion* in the particular context in which it was referenced to the Lord's Supper.¹³⁶

Interviews with pastors at some churches revealed the pastor leads the Lord's Supper, along with the assistant pastor. The ordained (ministers and deacons) assist in serving the elements to the congregation. One senior pastor "occasionally leads but mostly appoints the assistant pastor to lead."¹³⁷ The ordained ministers and deacons serve the elements to the congregation.

Transition Practices of the Lord's Supper

Transitioning to biblical practice requires the church leadership team to delegate to church leaders selected through the selection process identified earlier in the transition section to administer the Lord's Supper. They can identify laypersons as a communion ministry. Regardless of the size of their congregation, this transition will be effective.

¹³⁶ Copeland, 330.

¹³⁷ Dr. Andre Jermaine Lewis, Senior Pastor New Faith Church, response to survey, 2016.

- Establish a communion ministry of lay leaders to assist in administering the Lord's Supper. They can use the process identified under the leadership section on selecting leaders;
- Church leaders can serve the Lord's Supper in the traditional practice, with the community ministry (lay leaders) assisting with the passing of the elements to the congregants;
- The communion ministry can set up and clean up the communion elements if there are no deaconesses;
- The senior pastor can delegate from the clergy team (all ministers) and the staff leadership team to oversee administering the Lord's Supper. This practice will relieve the senior pastor to relax; and
- The Communion Ministry can oversee those who are sick and those who are viewing the worship service to receive the elements of the Lord's Supper.

Summary and Conclusion

This section addressed how Baptist churches in the ABCUSA can authorize individuals to assist in the administering of the church ordinances. All churches in the research can benefit from implementing the biblical practices of selecting leaders to serve the congregation and community and to administer the ordinances. The suggested options below summarize the steps the church needs to consider in transitioning from traditional practices to biblical practices to serve their congregation and community effectively. Solutions for the issues identified in Section One follow:

- ABCUSA should provide alternative leadership-development policies in addition to traditional leadership policies,

- Church leaders need to consider new options in selecting church leaders to serve their congregations effectively. Selecting church leaders will eradicate the issue of insufficient numbers of leaders to distribute or serve church ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper, and
- The church needs to address how to incorporate those viewing the worship service through social media to be inclusive in the worship service, including the church ordinance process.

Following the leadership of Jesus is a command for the church. Jesus's leadership style is effective for the church and its evolving culture. The manual includes the challenges of traditional practices and the effectiveness of biblical practices that are developed from this dissertation. I developed the manual in hopes that it will encourage pastors and leaders to study the scriptures and learn the leadership style of Jesus, and then implement those principles in their leadership style.

Jesus established the role of an exceptional leader. He came to serve (Mt 20:28). The Lord of lords washes the feet of the disciples (Jn 13:3). Jesus stated that whoever wants to become great must be a servant (Mk 10:41). Jesus had no hierarchical leadership, but the disciples loved followed and emulated him. Jesus did appoint apostles to be at the core of imparting his teachings to others to make disciples. They remained true to Jesus's teachings and leadership style. They maintained a relationship with God through prayer, as Jesus demonstrated. They desired to be Christ-like, as Paul stated in Ephesians 4. As leaders, they did not distinguish between being a follower of Jesus and a leader of Jesus's followers. There is a woven pattern of Old Testament practices and New Testament practices in traditional church practices. Jesus honors the old covenant before

he establishes the new covenant. His walk is not of the old covenant but the new covenant. He is among his followers, serving their needs and teaching them the scriptures and the future kingdom.

I did not perform this research to dishonor traditional church practices but to bring awareness that we are to lead in a Christ-like manner. Selected leaders of the church are identified by their character and practices of the new covenant, a process that brings no tenseness to the body of the church leadership. All who believe are given the authority of priestly work (1 Pt 2:9). This practice provides for the authority of laypersons as leaders of the church operations and ordinances. Effective leadership is the Christ-like leadership style.

Transitioning from traditional church practices may see one as a defector or traitor of the denomination in the beginning, but some senior pastors have made that move successfully.¹³⁸ These pastors have moved from their respective denomination church practices following the directions of God. Transitioning guides one to follow God's order of the steps. As a Baptist denominational leader, the denomination gives the church independence, as long as it is in the core of their doctrine. Transitioning to Jesus's leadership style is the example of a leader following Christ. The church leadership team will always be sufficient in number to provide support and service to the congregation, and to online and social-media viewers. This practice will increase the sufficiency of the leadership team and allow the senior pastor the ability to focus on the proclamation of the Word, as the Covenant Church in Houston references on their website. They have

¹³⁸ The senior pastors who have transitioned from some of the traditional practices are identified in Section One.

committees to handle the functions of the church, so the pastor can concentrate on proclaiming the Word of God.

Baptists believe that the scriptures are inerrant and inspired by God. Therefore, transitioning from traditional Baptist practices to Jesus's leadership style is biblically supported.

SECTION 4:

ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

The manual will provide pastors and clergies in understanding traditional church practices, the leadership style of Jesus, and determining the best practice for them to exercise. It discusses the Baptist churches' application of traditional church practices for selecting church leaders and their duties in church operations. These practices affect the churches' abilities to provide effective leadership in conjunction with assisting their growing congregation and community needs. To help the reader understand traditional church practices, I share the history of its development and the practices established by the Early Church, presenting the similarities and differences in traditional church practices among a few Baptist associations and conventions in the written policies that some local churches are following.

The manual shares the leadership style of Jesus and the apostles, including God's selection and anointing of leaders, according to the scriptures. Jesus's leadership style was similar to God's and the apostle's leadership styles paralleled those of Jesus. There are scriptures demonstrating church leadership that encourage church leaders to follow the leadership style of Jesus.

The manual includes examples of churches following traditional Baptist church practices, the leadership style of Jesus, and the effectiveness of these practices on their leadership team and congregation. The manual provides a strategic plan for how to transition to biblical practices and provides examples of churches that have transitioned toward the leadership style of Jesus. To assist the reader in understanding the practices, I

include a companion workbook, *Inductive Bible Study*, to help the reader understand how Jesus wants the church led.

This manual is a great source for discussion among peers in church leadership, seminaries, and bible college courses. The manual addresses the challenges and solutions to incorporate the virtual audience in the worship service and view them as a congregation. This is not the first book on Jesus's leadership style and Baptist church practices, I have found none that discuss the combined practices and provide a study guide.

SECTION 5:

ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

Title:

Transitioning from the Traditional Baptist Church Practices to the Biblical Church

Practices: Serving the Congregation and Community of an Evolving Church Culture

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Overview:

Transitioning from traditional church practices will be challenging for pastors and clergies who have participated in and supported these practices for years. They have observed church operations, the roles and responsibilities of church leadership, the serving of the Lord's Supper, and the act of baptism. This manual covers the history of traditional church practices and its influence on church leaders, the congregation, community, and upcoming pastors. It provides insight to Jesus's and the apostles' leadership style (biblical practices). This manual will help church leaders, especially pastors and clergies, recognize that some practices in the church are traditional and not the practices of Jesus and the apostles. They will learn to teach their ministry the way Jesus led. Jesus's style in leading church leaders and the church is functional, regardless of the size of the leadership team and congregation. Artwork or photos may be included.

Purpose:

The purpose of the manual is to aid pastors and leaders of ministry to adapt the leadership style of Jesus. It identifies the similarities and differences between traditional

church leadership practices and Christ's leadership practices. The manual covers the following:

- Leadership style of Jesus and the apostles
- Denomination and local church policy
- Traditional church practices
- The appointment of church leaders
- Administering the church ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper
- Church setting
- Ministering to the evolving church culture

Promotion and Marketing:

The manual is for pastors, church leaders, and ministry leaders and will be promoted to church leaders, church organizations, denomination associations/conventions, bible schools, and seminaries for study in a meeting, seminar, or course elective. Also, I will promote the manual through Amazon, Google books, and other social media. In the future, I may host sessions on the church leadership style of Jesus.

Competition & Uniqueness:

Some books discuss church leadership and the Baptist tradition. I included some of those books in the dissertation and manual:

1. Hammett, John S. *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2005.

Hammett's book and this manual (artifact) both discuss church doctrine and policies to assist readers in understanding the foundation of the Baptist denomination, but the manual focuses on their view on baptism and the Lord's Supper. I designed the manual to help pastors and church leaders understand the scriptures on doctrine. It compares Baptist church policies and practices to Jesus's policies and practices. An in-depth study workbook accompanies the manual to help the pastor and leaders understand their church practices and how those practices parallel the scriptures.

2. Maring, Norman H., and Winthrop S. Hudson. *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice*, 2nd rev ed. Edited by David Gregg. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2012.

Maring and Hudson discuss the policy and practices of the Baptist denomination, but the manual is a teaching tool to help church leaders, lay leaders, and pastors identify the differences between their denominational practices and Jesus's practices. The manual focuses on the church history relating to the traditional practices of church leadership and the church's ordinances. It discusses how similar these Baptist organizations are in their policies and practices. Also, the manual presents a parallel between Baptist Church practices and Jesus's practices and purposes.

3. Newton, Phil A. *Elders in the Life of the Church: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Ministry, 2014.

Newton's book focuses on the position of the elder. This manual discusses the selection and duties for elders of the church and the scriptural role for the elders. It further analyzes the original purpose of the elders to the expansion of their roles in the

current church. Also, it shares God's, Jesus's and the apostles' selection process of leaders along with paralleling the church's selection process of leaders.

4. Youssef, Michael. *The Leadership Style of Jesus: How to Make a Lasting Impact*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013.

Youssef's book and the manual focus on assisting pastors and church leaders to include Jesus's leadership style in their practice. This manual aid leader to review their relationship with Jesus and their denomination. Some leaders focus on what the church rules are and have considered the scriptures for direction on leadership. The manual is written for them to review and analyze their leadership style to see if they parallel Jesus's leadership style and practices.

I found no book during my research on traditional and biblical church practices with an inductive bible study.

Book Format: Nonfiction.

This manual is a journey to identify differences between church practices and biblical practices. It focuses explicitly on leadership styles in both practices. It includes observations of church operations and leadership practices, resources from research, and personal experience.

Chapter Outline:

Introduction

In this section, I share the reasoning and purpose of the manual. The Introduction provides a brief introduction to the author reflecting history, knowledge, and experience with traditional church practices. This section includes a brief overall view of the content of each chapter.

Chapter One—On this Rock, I Will Build My Church

In Chapter One, I discuss the significance of defining the term *church*, the interpretation of the term by the early church fathers, and the scriptures. I discuss the meaning of the church setting and ways churches can address the evolving church culture, for example, worshipping through technology including the Internet and Facebook Live.

Chapter Two—History of Traditional Church Practices and Policies

This chapter discusses the history of how the traditional church practices began and the influences of the early father's directives and their effect on the church of today. Chapter Two includes similarities and differences in the practices and policies of a few Baptist associations and conventions.

Chapter Three—Historical Biblical Church Practices

This chapter discusses the practices of Jesus and the apostles. Chapter Three identifies the leadership style of Jesus and discusses his effectiveness in ministering to the followers. In Chapter Three, I describe and the growth of the church, as identified in the scriptures.

Chapter Four—Traditional Practices Selecting Church Leadership

This Chapter discusses the history of traditional church practices and policies as they relate to appointing and ordaining church leaders and the guidelines for church leaders. In Chapter Four, I share the church practices of the early church and their effect on traditional church practices still followed today. I share the similarities and differences in policies between denominational associations and conventions.

Chapter Five—Biblical Practices Selecting Church Leadership

This chapter discusses church practices performed by Jesus and the apostles in selecting and anointing their leadership team, as identified in the scriptures. I share the steps they used to identify effective leaders to promote the teachings and practices of Jesus.

Chapter Six—Administering Church Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

This chapter discusses the terms *ordinance*, *Sacraments*, and *Eucharist* and the reasons the term ordinance is used by the Baptist denomination. In Chapter Six, I share traditions and biblical practices as well as policies for administering church ordinances. I discuss the relationship of the ordinances established by God to the Israelites and Jesus to all believers. The Chapter will aid church leaders in the practice of observing these ordinances, as Jesus did.

Chapter Seven—Transitioning from Traditional to Biblical Church Practices

In this chapter, I discuss strategic plans to aid church leaders in transitioning to the leadership style of Jesus. I share the testimony of those who made the transition and discuss options church leaders can use to present and implement the transition, such as through Ministers in Training and Layperson Training.

Appendix A—Evaluations

Appendix B – Sample of accompanying workbook—*Inductive Bible Study*.

Chapter One – Defining the Terminology in Chapter One to develop an understanding of Jesus’ statement “On this rock I will build my Church.”

Intended Readers:

Primary Audience:
New Senior Pastors
Associate Pastors and Clergy
Ministry Leaders
Laypersons

Secondary Audience:
Seminary Students
Church Leaders

Manuscript:

This manual should be no more than 250 pages, projected to be about 50,000 words. The projected completion is September 2020. This is my birthday month.

Author Bio:

Lynda Wright Gittens has been associated with the Baptist denomination since she accepted Christ. Her father was an ordained minister under the National Baptist Convention. She is an ordained minister conducting worship services in healthcare and shelter facilities.

Lynda has a Masters of Divinity with a Certification in Spirituality from The Houston |Graduate School of Theology and a Doctor in Ministry for Leadership of Global Perspective from the Portland Seminary.

Lynda is the founder and Executive Director of Babies Youth Children Empowerment Ministries, a nonprofit organization that provides free services in academic tutorials for students with learning challenges who are struggling academically. Also, the organization provides character development bible camps.

Dr. Gittens is active on social media and will reference this manual diligently through Facebook, LinkedIn, various websites, and Twitter. She is also connected to several pastors and ministry organizations on social media.

Publishing Credits:

This is her first published book. She has written curriculums for bible camp biblical lessons and tutorial curriculums and hopes to publish them as curriculums.

SECTION 6:

POSTSCRIPT

Developing the Artifact

This manual is a seed inspired from a five-year journey initiated from my service as an intern minister. I had an opportunity to work with selected staff ministers, assist with the development of the order of worship, and participate in the order of worship. I experienced the operations of the church, for example, staff meetings, and worship services. During this experience, I witnessed the separation of responsibility and the embracing of ordained ministers and licensed-only ministers and recognized how church operations did not reflect the practices of Jesus in administering church ordinances. This sparked my journey to review traditional Baptist church practices and biblical church practices. I sought to explore the leadership style of Jesus and the apostles to set the practices for the bible camp services and the worship services at the healthcare facility.

Efficacy of the Artifact

This dissertation focuses on the traditional Baptist and biblical church practices in administering church ordinances by authorized church leaders. As I dove into the research of these practices, I recognized that many of the traditions of the church are not supported biblically. I first set to prepare pamphlets, for example, “How to Administer the Lord’s Supper” or “How Jesus Selected Leaders.” During the first semester, I read a volume of research resources and the theological concept of church leadership. I realized many differences existed between traditional church practices and biblical church

practices. I decided to address them in the manual, similar to a series process. In other words, as I complete my research on a particular practice, I will publish that information that can be placed in a binder with the previous series.

The Journey of Lessons in the Development of the Artifact

In preparing the Track 2 dissertation, I found it to be a significant challenge to transfer and transform my Track 1 academic essays into the format and requirements of Track 2. I spent two months trying to identify what I could use from that research and those essays and determining in which section that information best fit. My academic essays were developed for Track 1. Track 2 requires a section on other proposed solutions that challenged me significantly because I had my own answers: bible practices. This section forced me to review my essays and field-experience papers to see if I had some potential proposed solutions. I sought other reading resources to search for assistance in this area and returned to my academic and field essays to find a beacon of light. I was able to see a little light and extended my research to develop that section more.

My research led me to expand to an accompanying *Inductive Bible Study* workbook, developed to aid the reader in an in-depth study to understand the value of traditional Baptist church practices and the leadership style of Jesus. The goal was to assist them in developing their voice to support their decision to transition and strategically plan to transition.

Future Development

As I mentioned previously, I found so many traditional church and biblical church practices that are not supported. In other words, the bible does not support some traditional practices, and some biblical practices are not part of church practices. Traditional Baptist church practices are challenged by operations affecting the evolving church culture that is not explicitly addressed biblically, but implied. The number of people experiencing church through technology is expanding, and church leaders need to address those viewers as congregants rather than isolating them, as many churches do except for receiving donations. An opportunity exists to assist church leaders to be more inclusive of Internet viewers as a distant congregation by developing a practice to minister to their needs.

Conclusion

This journey towards a Doctor in Ministry provided the platform for the development of this artifact. The consistent support of my advisors and the encouragement of my cohort, friends, and family are part of the structure in the development of this dissertation and artifact.

This manual will be an effective study tool for ministers in training sessions and seminaries. Despite several books on biblical church practices, I found none with an accompanying inclusive bible study. This manual identifies specific church practices and provides specific biblical practices that have been in effect since God spoke with his appointed leaders.

I recently was assigned leadership over worship services at a healthcare facility. This service will follow Jesus's leadership style with some traditional church practices.

APPENDIX A:

ARTIFACT

**A JOURNEY THROUGH TRADITIONAL AND
BIBLICAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP PRACTICES**

Developing an Effective Church Leadership Team

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	95
CHAPTER ONE—ON THIS ROCK, I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH	102
The Church Is	102
Church Setting.....	105
Biblically Speaking	111
Church Doctrine	112
The Church	113
Biblically Speaking	115
Membership.....	116
Summary	118
CHAPTER TWO—HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL CHURCH PRACTICES AND POLICIES	120
Early Church	121
Didache 15	122
Baptist Denomination	125
American Baptist Churches USA.....	127
Southern Baptist Convention	130
National Baptist Convention of America	132
Church Polity Authorized Leaders to Administer Church Ordinances	134
Baptism	137
The Ritual of Baptism	138
Lord’s Supper or Communion.....	140
The Ritual of Communion	140
The Elements	144
Summary	145
CHAPTER THREE—HISTORICAL BIBLICAL PRACTICES AND POLICIES.....	148
Leadership	148
Baptism	150
The Act of Baptism	152
Lord’s Supper—Celebrating the Future	155
The Elements of Communion	159
Summary	159
SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING	162
EVALUATION.....	163

INTRODUCTION

I was born into the Baptist denomination. My parents met and married in a Baptist Church. My mother's mother was a member of the same Baptist Church, as was my father's uncle. My father's parents were members of a different Baptist Church. Thus, our family structure is rooted in Baptist traditions. So, as the old folks of the Baptist church would say, if you cut me, I would bleed Baptist.

In the Baptist church where I grew up, services were rigid. People of all ages attended the church. Their leadership structure followed the traditional Baptist practice. Some members of the congregation were women referred to as deaconesses, sitting at the front of the church every Sunday wearing white suits, white stockings, and a doily on their heads. The deacons wore black suits with a white tie every Sunday. On first Sundays, for the Lord's Supper, at the time to serve the elements, they would put on white gloves. At this church, the Lord's Supper was served during the evening service. The pulpit consisted only of men, including the senior pastor. Women were not allowed to be in the pulpit area; during announcements made by women, they stood on a podium on the floor. I remember attending the children's programs; we were allowed on the stage where the ministers sat so the audience could see us

The older women were strict and intolerant at times, at least from my childhood point of view. My grandmother, who I loved, would have candy in her purse to keep us quiet during the service. At the age of six, I proclaimed the Lord Jesus as my Savior and I was baptized. Yes, I knew what I was doing. I had been preaching Jesus to my dolls.

At that church, my father was told by the senior pastor that he would never become a deacon at his church. Around that time, God ordered the wife of a new pastor, a

civil rights advocate, to reach out to women to help them build a church, and my mother was one of these women. When I was eight, my mother and father changed churches. My parents became charter members and my father became a deacon of that new Baptist church. The adults loved children and wanted the children to know the word of God, experience serving in worship and the community, develop leadership skills, understand our Black heritage family values, and more. I have wonderful memories growing up in that new church. This was my church, and it was unique.

My new Baptist church held services quite different from many of the traditional churches. The fellowship was exceptional. Through the years of existence, the church had membership with three conventions and associations: Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), and the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA). My church was involved in the civil rights movement and continues to fight against injustice. During my teen years, I yearned to fight injustice. As a young adult, I had a passion for developing youth and fighting injustices toward them, especially young women. At age seventeen, I received the call to preach, but I was not willing to go, due to the culture of the era. In my youth, no women became ministers; in my young adult years, women began to take on the role of minister. Also, I did not think my senior pastor, or any other minister would take me seriously. My father knew my calling. I now know that I was not scripturally ready. I needed to mature more in the word and in the development of my relationship with God. Of course, I took it to the extreme: I yielded to the call in my late fifties. My father, also in his fifties, acknowledged his calling to preach and was ordained in that new church.

After retirement, I attended the Houston Graduate School of Theology in Houston, Texas. In my second year, I signed up for a course requiring an internship. As a seminary student working as a staff intern minister at a Baptist Church, I found an intentional separation of leadership responsibilities between *licensed* and *ordained* ministers. One of those rules and responsibilities was the administration of church ordinances by ordained church leaders. Only the senior pastor, the ordained ministers, and the deacons were authorized to administer church ordinances. These rules were the traditional Baptist Church practices, but now God opened my mind to understand the difference between traditional practices and his word. These traditional practices have affected the effectiveness of the church leadership in administering the church ordinances. Based on my awareness, God designed a journey for me to research biblical practices—Baptist practices, and Baptist policies on church leadership administering two church ordinances—baptism and the Lord’s Supper—and the effect of these practices on the church’s evolving culture.¹³⁹

While on this journey, I enrolled in the Portland Seminary seeking a Doctor in Ministry. This journey led me to my dissertation, which developed into this manual. Preparing for this written assignment, I visited numerous church worship services of various denominations to observe leadership styles. I studied many resources on church leadership that included Jesus’s and the apostles’ leadership style and early church views on leadership practices for church leaders. In visiting churches, I found in administering

¹³⁹ Culture is “constantly evolving in interaction with other developments and cultures.” Ubani and Keränen-Pantsu.

the ordinances has become challenging for church leaders, due to the size of the congregations, an insufficient number of ordained leaders, and virtual congregations.

The church culture is evolving, which has raised new church movements that challenge church attendance in traditional-denomination churches. Church worship services held through the Internet (such as on Facebook) has increased the church's ability to minister to those viewing. The evolving culture has caused some Baptist churches to transition to nontraditional worship service and practices: contemporary, virtual worship service.¹⁴⁰ This church culture has challenged traditional church leadership in deciding how to minister to the needs of their congregations.

This manual discusses the policies and guidelines of traditional Baptist practices on selecting church leaders, their designated duties, the administering of church ordinances, and the effect of following those practices to serve their congregations, communities, and social-media viewers. This manual reviews the policies of the early church on practices for selecting church leaders and their designated duties. The manual includes biblical scriptures on church practices, focusing on Jesus's leadership style for clarity and mentoring tools.

This manual informs pastors, clergy, church leaders, and laity on Jesus's leadership style, outlined through scripture, and how church leaders emulate him in their own leadership styles. In the manual, I identify effective practices for selecting church leadership teams and administering church ordinances to congregations and communities

¹⁴⁰ Virtual services include online live-stream services and Facebook live. The Soul Saving Baptist Church (SSB) joined the online live-stream media and videoed their worship services. Over the past five years, they have used Facebook's Live feature to share worship services. These two expansions not only allowed existing members to observe worship services; they now have a broad virtual audience weekly.

using Jesus's and the apostles' leadership styles. Finally, this manual helps churches by discussing and highlighting practices to effectively serve the evolving church culture.

This manual was written to bring awareness, not to discredit traditional practices of Baptist denominations. It was written to share my journey in the hope that it will plant a seed in someone else's ministry. The manual is presented in seven chapters.

Chapter One shares that the church began when Jesus says to Peter, "On this rock, I will build my church." It defines the term *church* and discusses the significance of that definition. It shares the interpretation of the term by church fathers and scripture, specifically detailing what Jesus meant when he discussed building a church with Peter. In Chapter One, I discuss the sincerity of the early fathers to honor God in worship by establishing a form of church setting and their views on church leadership. I discuss the church's practices and their effect on how churches operate biblically. This chapter includes a discussion of the ways churches remain relevant and vital by addressing the evolving church culture, for example, worshipping through technology including the live-streaming and Facebook Live.

In Chapter Two, I share the early church's and traditional practices around church leadership and operations. This chapter discusses the history of how traditional church practices began. It addresses the importance of understanding church history and the influences of the early father's directives on traditional church practices and its effect on the church of today. Chapter Two includes practices and policies of three Baptist associations and conventions. For example:

- American Baptist Churches USA
- National Baptist Convention of America

- Southern Baptist Convention

It discusses the histories, differences, and similarities in their policies and guidelines supporting their church practices. The chapter includes some biblical references identified by churches to support their policies.

In Chapter Three, I share Jesus's and the apostles' church practices according to scripture. I identify and connect God's leadership practices with those of his leaders and address Jesus's expectations. Through scripture, I identify Jesus's leadership style and discuss his effectiveness in ministering to his followers and to church growth.

Chapter Four focuses on traditional practices in the selection process and the responsibilities of church leaders. In this chapter, I discuss the history of traditional church practices as they relate to appointing and ordaining church leaders as well as the rules and guidelines for church leaders. I share the early churches' practices, and their effect on traditional church practices still followed today. I provide the policies and practices of three organizations on the selection process of church leaders: ABCUSA; NBCA; and SBC.

Chapter Five focuses on selecting leaders. In this chapter, I discuss the scriptural practices performed by Jesus and the apostles in choosing and anointing their leadership teams. I identify and compare God's leadership styles and provide, through scripture, the steps used to identify leaders to effectively promote Jesus's teachings and practices.

Chapter Six attends to church ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the chapter, I share the terms *ordinance*, *Sacraments*, and *Eucharist*, and why Baptists use the term ordinance. I discuss the traditional church practices and policies for administering church ordinances. Through the scriptures, I identify Jesus's and the

apostles' practices for these ordinances. Also, I compare and contrast traditional and biblical practices related to the ordinances. I also discuss their purpose as established by God for the Israelites and by Jesus for all believers and their significance to believers.

Chapter Seven can help seed the transition from traditional practices to practices best for your ministry. I discuss and submit strategic plans for transitioning to biblical practices and for encouraging the leadership team to commit to those practices. Chapter Seven suggests how to implement biblical practices if you are already engaging in traditional practices. I share the testimony of those who have transitioned and discuss two potential avenues to present and implement the transition: Ministers in Training and Layperson Training.

Finally, I offer a companion inductive in-depth study workbook to guide you through the transition by identifying your own journey to the will of God in leadership.

CHAPTER ONE—ON THIS ROCK, I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH

Here's the church, and here's the steeple, open the door and see all the people.

—London Bell Nursery Rymes

The Church Is ...

At the beginning of Christianity, Jesus's command to the disciples to baptize the new converts and observe the Lord's Supper was for the church. Many interpretations, definitions, and views describe what the term *church* means. Some Christians believe the church is the building. Some Christians believe the community of believers are the church. Some Christians think they personally are the church. In this evolving church culture, the term church needs to be examined. So, what is the definition of church?

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* offered several options:

1. a building for public and especially Christian worship;
2. the clergy or officialdom of a religious body. "The word *church* ... is put for the persons that are ordained for the ministry of the Gospel, that is to say, the clergy" —J. Ayliffe; and
3. a body or organization of religious believers

The dictionary definition reflects the views of the comments stated above. I reviewed a few bible dictionaries for their definition of the term. The *Easton Bible Dictionary* states "there is no clear instance of its being used for a place of meeting or of worship, although in post-apostolic times it early received this meaning."¹⁴¹ The *Baker*

¹⁴¹ Matthew George Easton, *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2008), 146.

Encyclopedia of the Bible says, “A group or assembly of persons called together for a particular purpose. The term appears only twice in the Gospels.”¹⁴²

The best description of the church is found in the scriptures: Mt 16:1–20 NASB, the identity of a church is when Jesus spoke to the disciples and asked ““who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church.’” The significance of this scripture is that Jesus will build the church. Jesus said “upon this rock” as a reference to the revelation by Peter, which he received through the Holy Spirit. A sign of the church was when the Holy Spirit fell upon all attending a gathering in the whole building (Acts 2:1–4). Some Christians believe this act was the beginning of the church (Acts 2:42–47). Paul stated that the household of God is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; Eph 2:19–20 KJV. The apostles and prophets followed the command of Jesus and God and are deliverers of the Word that was given to them. Their work was to set the precedence of believing and acting on their belief in Jesus and God by instructing on the teachings of Jesus, increasing the number of believers. The prophets carried the Word of God to the people and those who listened and believed followed the instructions of the prophets. The building of the church must begin with a strong foundation, demonstrated by believers trusting, following, and instructing on the teachings of Jesus.

¹⁴² W. A. Elwell and B. J. Beitzel, “Church,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 458.

Christian Theologian Saint Justin defines the term church as a building. This belief that the people must be in a building is not the practice or teaching of Jesus, but more of the traditional church setting. Under God's leadership, the people were guided to go to the temple to worship. Under the new covenant, Jesus ordered his disciples to go out in the community. The disciple's custom was to go to the temple on the Sabbath, but Jesus also demonstrated that it was essential to go out to the community and teach the word. During those times, believers also met in each other's homes (Acts 2:46).¹⁴³

Let us be clear: a structure does not define a church. The church was built on those who believed in Jesus and gathered together to worship God and develop disciples for Christ. Jesus's church was not a building, but the development of believers designated as disciples who gather together to share his teachings. Some pastors speak about coming to the church to worship God. Therefore, Christians have switched their focus of worship to require it to be in a specific place. That was not the practice of Jesus. The church is the gathering of believers learning the teachings of Jesus and not the location where they gathered. Scripture says "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Ps 133:1 NASB). In addition to gathering together as believers, scripture states, "For as in one body we have many members and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of

¹⁴³ Acts 2:46 states one mind in the temple. Reference Acts 5:42 states to perform the act daily in the temple and in every hour. They ceased to teach and preach Jesus Christ. Matthew Henry's Commentary interpret that they met in the temple every day and ate in homes taking them food (making no reference to Lord's Supper). The breaking of bread (to have a share) may have referenced a regular meal or the Lord's Supper, or both.

another” (Rom 12:4–5 NASB). We are all one body with different skills, gifts, talents, and more. Again, the church is not a building but the community of believers.

Church leaders must recognize that church viewers gathered by technology are the new congregation. The new congregation participates in worship by responding through a system called chat. Church leaders can provide donation buttons on their websites and encourage viewers to be part of the church through their giving. Few have offered an avenue to minister and meet the needs of the viewers. They must reach out to determine what they could do to help their viewers. Some churches publish all services during the week to make them available to viewers. I have observed up to thousands of viewers watching and commenting on the chats, but very few churches communicate effectively with the viewers. This is a large area for ministry. Church culture is evolving: Viewers are using technology (websites, Facebook live, etc.) and gathering together at one source for worship, so they need to be considered part of the church setting. Churches that believe the building is the church continue to follow the practices of the early church in the observance of the Lord’s Supper, resistance to the evolving church culture will alienate those who are sick, work on Sundays, are without transportation to church; all can view through technology.

Church Setting

The church building usually contains pews, chairs, a stage, a choir stand, and more. Many people go to a church building to worship on their Sabbath day. Here, I discuss the church setting to help the reader understand the structure of the church worship service. The service structure began with Jewish practices and biblical practices being interpreted by the early church.

The day of the Sabbath varies between denominations and religious practices. A few questions arise: Which is the real Sabbath day? Must the day honored be consistent? Jews, Muslims, and some Christians (Seventh Day Adventists) observe Saturday as the Sabbath because God rested on the seventh day and the third commandment of the Ten Commands says to keep the Lord's day holy. In the Jewish calendar, weeks are documented as first day, second day, and so on, with the seventh day being Saturday.

However, other groups believe that Monday is the first workday. God rested on the seventh day. Therefore, Sunday would be the seventh day. Sundays are the prevalent Holy Day in most Christian denominations. Following the Christians' viewpoint, the world of economics has established Sunday as a day of rest in contrast to all other weekdays. The scripture says Jesus rose on the first day of the week (Mk 16:9). The calendar's first day of the week is Sunday, and the Jewish calendar refers to it as first day.

Another author, Lawrence Feingold, included in Lecture 17 a comment by author Barnard who stated that St. Justin interfaces the festival of Sunday as the Lord's Day with the Resurrection and the creation. Jewish law blessed the seventh day of the week on which God rested. The Christian administration commends the eighth day, which is additionally the primary day of the week, to symbolize that the passion and resurrection of Christ influences "another creation," opening the route to the otherworldly request. The difference in the sacred day from the seventh to the eighth day indicates emblematically that Judaism was established to plan for the Christian agreement, and subsequently, its feast offers a path to the Lord's day.¹⁴⁴ The eighth-day theory for the

¹⁴⁴ Feingold, 5.

support of Sunday comes from Jn 20:26, “And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.” This is eight days after Jesus’s resurrection which rotates you back to Sunday. Whether that is a support for meeting on Sundays, some look at it as when the Apostles gathered. I attended a worship service at a Baptist Church and the senior pastor reflected a similar view in his sermon saying, “Sunday was chosen because of the resurrection.” He said that on Friday Jesus died, On Saturday nothing happened, but on Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead with all power. Therefore, the Christians moved the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.”¹⁴⁵ Studying this one scripture provides two points. Does the day Jesus rose anoint Sunday as a holy day? The ten commandments say the day after the six-day work week is the holy day. No in-depth research was pursued on this issue. It is more important to take a day to honor and worship God and rest your body and mind, so you can be restored for the next six days. God knows what your intentions are, and his approval is what is important.

On the day of worship, the early fathers believed there needs to be an order of worship in service. The early church followed the order of service established by Christian Theologian John Calvin:

1. Prayer
2. Sermon
3. Institution
4. Recitation of the promises given in the supper
5. Excommunication of those debarred of the Lord’s prohibition

¹⁴⁵ Rev. Carroll Marr, Senior Pastor, Sermon, SouthCliff Church, Fort Worth, TX, April 21, 2018.

6. Prayer
7. Psalm or reading while the faithful communicate
8. Exhortation to the faith and charity
9. Thanks, and praise to God¹⁴⁶

When you visit some churches, you may observe a similar format. Some churches have many songs or scriptures read. My visitation of worship services at several churches reflected this church format:

1. Call to Worship
2. Prayer
3. Scripture
4. Songs
5. The proclamation of the word
6. Invitation to salvation
7. Song
8. Offering
9. Benediction

Those of the early church also believed that the Lord's Supper could only be observed in the church setting ¹⁴⁷ The church setting was a temple in the days of Aaron when the people were directed to go to worship God and bring their sacrifices. Christian church leaders have adopted that same view of worship. The worshippers must gather at the building on Sundays following the command of God, "Come into the house of the

¹⁴⁶ Mayor, 20–21.

¹⁴⁷ Carroll, 13

Lord and worshipped” (2 Sm 12:2) and “Enter into the gates with thanksgiving” (Ps 100:4).¹⁴⁸ Many Christian churches adopted these guidelines or views. The church needs to reflect what Jesus commanded. Yes, Jesus spent time at the temple, but a large amount of his time was in the community among the people. His command was to “Go out and make disciples” (Mt 28:19), not to go to the temple. This statement does not mean that you do not gather together to worship and pray; only that Jesus encouraged us to gather together (Mk 2:2). Scripture says that, when they gathered together, there was no room and Jesus preached the word. Jesus does not want the church to focus on isolating itself; rather, it should be salt in the world.

The setting of the time to worship is an integral part of a Christian’s life as the ordinance that gives honor to the remembrance of Jesus. Saint Justin also provided a mass liturgy to be included in each Sunday’s worship service:

And on the day called Sunday all who live in cities or the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read. Then, the Ruler in a discourse instructs and exhorts the reading. Then all will stand up and offer prayers. After the prayer, bread, wine, and water are presented; and the Ruler offers up prayers and thanksgivings, and the people assent, saying the Amen. ... But we all hold this common gathering on Sunday, since it is the first day, on which God created the Universe, and Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead. He was crucified on Friday, and Sunday He appeared to his Apostles.¹⁴⁹

This order of worship service is similar to the traditional Baptist practice where parishioners recite words Jesus spoke to the apostles when serving them. The pastor talks

¹⁴⁸ These scriptures address the Israelites going to the temple for worship. 2 Sm 12:2 speaks on David going to the temple to worship after the news of the death of his son. Ps 100:4 address Davis praise to God and expressing that when we go to through the gates of the temple, we should be thankful and praise God. The Psalm is one read and spoken many times.

¹⁴⁹ Feingold, 5.

about the bread and wine before the congregation takes each element. Each Christian denomination has taken its own views of the observance of the Lord's Supper. Some churches honor the observance weekly, monthly, or yearly. The early Christians observed it every Sabbath. John Calvin says,

For the frequency of celebrating this ordinance we have no rule in the New Testament. The expression of the apostle, "as *often* as ye eat this bread," draws one to believe that the practice of communion was frequent. Some believe it was designed, like the Passover, to be an annual celebration only, there is no evidence from scripture that there should be a specific time, and that would be contradicted by the most ancient practice.¹⁵⁰

The early church developed a plan on how the church should follow the ordinances.

Some scholars developed an order of worship and designated who should be authorized to participate in overseeing the worship service.

Many Baptist Churches administer the Lord's Supper on first Sundays. Church observations and pastor surveys revealed the majority observed the ordinances monthly on the First Sunday, and on Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. One church observed annually; another church weekly. They follow this tradition established by Jesus in his command to observe the covenant of the Lord's Supper was "as often as you do this" (1 Cor 11:26 KJV). He did not stipulate where or how often to observe the Lord's Supper. The observance of the Passover was an annual observance. In past conversations, I have heard some Christians suggest that if you do observe the Lord's Supper too frequently, it becomes meaningless to the individual.

¹⁵⁰ Wakefield, 595.

Bartlett wrote that the “Lord’s Supper is an integral part of Theology and Worship,”¹⁵¹ meaning as you partake of the Lord’s Supper, you are seeking Jesus to reveal his deity and an act of worship of him. He further wrote that Justin Martyr prepared an outline of worship. It included “the reading of some apostles’ memoirs, the prophets’ writings, congregational prayers, Lord’s Supper, and benevolence. The Lord’s first day of creation was on a Sunday, and Christ resurrection was on a Sunday; therefore, the church should assemble to worship on Sundays.”¹⁵²

This view supports traditional Baptist practices in observing the Lord’s Supper on a specific day. The scriptures did not specifically identify an order of worship service, but through the Jewish culture, Jesus’ teachings, and God’s orders to the Priest, one could summarize what services did not include, but a meal before the Lord’s Supper was common (1 Cor 14:16).¹⁵³ As for church ordinances, no order of worship is mandated in the scriptures. Jesus only commands that we do it.

Biblically Speaking

In the scripture, the apostles gathered together meeting in the town of Troas on a First Sabbath day of the month, and they observed the Lord’s Supper. Scripture states that on the “first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread and Paul

¹⁵¹ Bartlett, 1.

¹⁵² Bartlett, 33.

¹⁵³ One reference in the scripture is: When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. There are several other scriptures, but this is the only one that will be mentioned here. (1 Cor 14:16):

preached.” (Acts 20:7). This appears to be the basis of why most denominations observe on the first Saturday or Sunday.

Church Doctrine

Most church denominations have a doctrine that identifies and addresses their beliefs and order of operations. The doctrines developed by the church are in the order of the scriptures on doctrines, shared later in this chapter. To understand a denomination’s stance on church leadership, one must understand their doctrine. The definition of *doctrine* by *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* is

1. Teaching and Instruction;
2. Something that is taught; and
3. A principle or position or the body of principles in a branch of knowledge or system of belief: DOGMA Catholic *doctrine law*: a principle of law established through past decisions.

Church denominations follow some form of doctrine. The Baptist doctrine focuses on three areas: teachings cover membership and baptism, the integrity of the local church, and its relationship to the Baptist association. Baptists believe that God knows the heart of his people, but they have a provisional right of judge whether one belongs to the community of believers. The local church would honor the ordinances of the church by administering the baptism and Lord’s Supper. They believe local churches need to fellowship and participate with other local churches in the association.¹⁵⁴ Author Dr.

¹⁵⁴ Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice*, ed. David Gregg, 2nd rev ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2012), 45–48.

Carroll in his book, *The Trail of Blood*, identifies doctrine as “the mark of the New Testament”¹⁵⁵ meaning an identification.

The following is an example of The Southern Baptist Beliefs doctrine:

You become a Southern Baptist by uniting with a Southern Baptist church, one in friendly cooperation with the general Southern Baptist enterprise of reaching the world for Christ. Typically, church membership is a matter of receiving Jesus as your Savior and Lord and experiencing believer’s baptism by immersion.

Southern Baptists have prepared a statement of generally held convictions called The Baptist Faith and Message. It serves as a guide to understanding who they are.¹⁵⁶

The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by his laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by scripture.¹⁵⁷

After the above statement, they list their beliefs covering the Trinity and other views.

Authors Maring and Hudson wrote that the local church needs to have some visibility in the worlds. There is truth to that statement; the question that arises is, does it

¹⁵⁵ Carroll, 8.

¹⁵⁶ Southern Baptist Convention, “Basic Beliefs,” 2018, accessed November 26, 2018, <http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/basicbeliefs.asp>.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

have to be a building specifically designated as a church? The views that the church only exists in the church building limits some congregations and believers from going out and making disciples. Jesus commands us to go to the community, city, state, and the world and plant more churches. Church leaders need to promote to the people that they are to share the word of God with others and encourage the people to show the love of Jesus. The goal is not to encourage them to be a member of your church institution, but to be a member of the body of Christ.

Davis' book distinguished between a local church and a gathering of Christians, saying it is all about the church's policy. To contend with policy is to contend with the presence of the local church. Generally, Christians have seen the church as tending to a few zones of church life. Here are two of them:¹⁵⁸

- A church's policy establishes who possesses authority over the processes of membership and discipline and what role baptism and the Lord's Supper play in signifying and constituting members as members and the church as a church.
- Policy creates leadership offices in the church, demarcates their responsibilities and jurisdictional boundaries, specifies who is eligible to serve in those offices, and stipulates the selection process.¹⁵⁹

Author Amy Oden in her book wrote, "When we realize how we have inflated our frame of reference and imposed it on all of reality, we know we have committed the sin

¹⁵⁸ Davis.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 371.

of idolatry, of taking our particular part and making it the whole.”¹⁶⁰ This statement reflects some denominations’ views exhibited in their church practices. They believe their interpretation of the scripture is correct.

Biblically Speaking

The scriptures have been the basis for the church’s development of their doctrine. They are developed to document their denomination’s belief, practices, and teachings that are taught to the followers. Those scriptures (KJV) used as reference include:

2 Tm 3:16—All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Ti 2:1—But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.

Heb 13:9—Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For [it is] a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

Eph 4:14—That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

Ti 1:9—Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

These scriptures do not explicitly identify what is specifically in doctrine but do emphasize their significance in the faith. The scriptures above mention the purpose of the doctrine, for example, that scriptures are inspired by God, instruction, sound, and faithful words. These words reflect the components of the church’s doctrine.

¹⁶⁰ Oden, 18.

Membership

Some traditional practicing churches each have in their doctrine and policy statements relating to the term *membership*. The traditional practices of the Baptist Church institution developed a process called *church membership/church roll*. This process identifies an individual as a believer, one who accepted Jesus Christ as savior and desires to join a particular local church. In traditional times, one's name on the church roll was considered similar to having your name in the book of life. There is a song that says, "he done signed my name." The church tradition of becoming a member by the preacher announcing after the service "the doors of the church are now open" has evolved. In some traditional church institutions, a person walks to the front of the church, announces before the church a desire to join, and chooses whether to be baptized. Upon shaking the pastor's hand, the person is considered to have received the right hand of fellowship. In early times, a person wanting to join the church had to go before a congregational meeting and share his or her experience of conversion and meeting Jesus.¹⁶¹ This is not a well-known practice in Baptist churches, but some traditional practicing churches, as mentioned above, ask a person questions in front of the congregation.

In some church denominations including some Baptist churches, when an individual desires to join the church, that person walks down the aisle and is greeted by a church leader and escorted to a particular area for processing. In the new model church movement, pastors ask the congregation to repeat a prayer of salvation that signifies they

¹⁶¹ Maring and Hudson, 88.

are saved. The pastor does not advise those who spoke this prayer that they were joining the church institution as a member. I observed some churches in the new church movement having no specific public joining, but individuals can meet at the front of the church after the service. One church had them text to a particular number, which identifies them as wanting more information about salvation and the steps to be a part of the believer's community. This method excludes those who are not technology savvy. The pastor states that individual will not be inundated with texts and will send you a link to online information about salvation and baptism. Biblically, there was no test. The Bible requires no gathering of names of those who heard the word, were converted, and were baptized. A large crowd surrounded and followed Jesus and listened to his teachings. When Peter spoke, three thousand were added to the fold (Acts 2:41). That signifies that there was an account of the numbers converted

In traditional church practices, for one to partake in the Lord's Supper, the person in attendance must be saved (having repented of his or her sins and made a personal commitment to Christ as Savior), be received by the church (right hand of fellowship) and be baptized (immersed in water) in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Some traditional practicing churches have required an individual to be a member of their congregation (see Chapter Two). Membership is not a negative attribute, but it is not in alignment with Jesus's and the apostles' practices. If churches used that information to minister to the people's needs and to encourage them in discipleship, that would follow the teaching of Jesus. Using membership lists to send mail about the offering, that is not a practice in good faith.

The new church movement leaves membership as a personal decision. According to Apostle Paul, 1 Cor 11:28 says that “one should examine themselves so let him eat the bread and drink of that cup.” It is not the church’s judgment, but the individual’s.

Summary

This chapter was designed to help the reader understand Baptist views on the definition of a church. A Christian’s faith, beliefs, and practices are the outward characteristics of a person’s core of existence, which is the church. Jesus is the church’s cornerstone. Peter is the first stone in the foundation of the church because of his confirmation of who Jesus was (allegory). The apostles following Jesus and sharing his teachings are part of the foundation of the church. It is because of Jesus’s love for the people that the church developed.

Christians are asked to gather together in fellowship to learn Jesus’s teachings. This gathering led to designing a platform or format for those meetings called church settings. In this chapter, I explained the order of worship and the basis for the gathering of believers to meet. The early church had a significant influence on the church setting. As you prepare the format for your gathering, remember that Jesus is the head and should be sought to determine which path you, as the leader, should take. Study the scriptures and then prepare or review your local church doctrines.

Traditional Baptist churches in the past viewed membership in a way similar to the immigration department. You had to complete an interview process and background check by standing before the congregation and sharing your Christian conversion. If you were coming from another church, you had to have a letter of membership from that church verifying your membership in good standing (in good financial standing—a

tither). Jesus asked that the gathering of believers, those who believe in Jesus, be willing to follow his teachings. Jesus provided no background check because we all are sinners. If verification was important, Judas would have never been an apostle.

Remember, as you plant a church institution or ministry, that its life and longevity rests on those who are a part of the gathering. It is not your location, although the site is essential; it is not the structure of the building but the structure of the meeting. The church leader must minister to those in their community, city, state, the world, and those viewing through technology. They must not be excluded from the fellowship. For those viewing through technology, many church leaders provide an opportunity to donate funds to their church, but they do not minister to the needs of the viewers. Church leaders should have an online way to communicate with viewers. As a viewer of worship service, I observed individuals requesting prayer and no church leader or representative responded. The church is evolving, and leaders must be in servant mode to all.

Chapter Seven provides strategies to help you in transition to the biblical practices and the leadership style of Jesus.

CHAPTER TWO—HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL CHURCH PRACTICES AND POLICIES

He designated preachers, teachers, evangelist, apostles.

In this chapter I discuss the history and influencers of traditional Baptist church practices and policies. The traditional Baptist practices began with the Christian theologian's interpretation of the written word *scripture* on Jesus's and the apostles' teachings to the church. The scriptures provide teachings on the foundations and skeleton structure of the church and leave opportunities for believers to seek God for interpretation. Theologians, including John Calvin, Quintus Tertullian, and Saint Augustine, documented their beliefs and interpretations of the scriptures and faithfully formed guidelines on church formation for church leaders. Martin Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* shook and shaped the roles and responsibilities of early church leaders' power structure and authority. Documents were prepared. For example, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, originally written by the First Council of Nicaea and later amended by the First Council of Constantinople, helped set the tone of church doctrines. Other Creeds provided guidelines for the church's formation and development.

The early church documented the church formation including the order of worship, church leadership structure with authority, and the observation of the baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptist denomination founders used the early church's formation as a guideline in the development of their practices and policies. The denominations' practices and policies have been modified by some of the local churches, but other local churches continue to follow some original practices. This chapter will address the effects of the practices and their effectiveness in the evolving church culture and community.

Early Church

For years, early church councils and scholars debated the method of administering church-ordinance guidelines. One instruction was the *Book of Common Prayer*. It provided instructions on church operations and observations including the baptism and Eucharist. English Puritan Theologian, Walter Travers, challenged the Puritans about the phrase “only by preaching ministers” inserted as the directive reference in the *Book of Common Prayer* for their biblical support when addressing the administration of the Lord’s Supper. The term *preach* was a significant point for him. He replied by quoting Mt 28:19: “Go forth, preach and baptize—which Christ having so joined together, it was not lawful for men to put asunder.” This was the view of all the reformed churches.¹⁶² The implication from the early church rule that only the preaching minister can administer the Lord’s Supper is similar to the power structure “hierarchy.” No scripture supports this guideline, and no written support by the early church substantiates this rule.

The early church established in guidelines that the senior pastor or bishop must lead the ritual. They used the Didache as a resource of guidance in developing their procedures. The author of the Didache is unknown, but scholars believe it parallels Paul’s teachings. It speaks about the elder of the church as follows:

¹⁶² Ibid. Mayor, 20–21.

Didache 15

1. Appoint therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, meek men, and not lovers of money, and truthful and approved, for they also minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers.
2. Therefore, do not despise them, for they are your honorable men together with the prophets and teachers.¹⁶³

Didache 15 address the church leaders as Paul did in 1 Timothy. It does not expand to provide their duties but to establish that those in this position should be respected and honored. It also helps the church identify church leaders' character.

Traditional Baptist practice is similar to the traditions of the early church including the affirmation that only an ordained leader is authorized to administer church ordinances. The duties of church leaders have been a controversial platform in the Christian arena among denominations. The early church had comprehensive discussions on the development of the church's order of service and the authority of power, previously identified by Travers' complaint. Travers was not the only one to address the orders of the early church. Theologian John Calvin believed that only senior pastors could administer the Lord's Supper, but many English nonconformists disagreed.¹⁶⁴ Thomas Cartwright, an English Puritan, also thought, like Calvin, that the minister must be the one to administer the Sacraments.¹⁶⁵ Author Mayor commented that Cartwright's

¹⁶³ Kirby.

¹⁶⁴ Mayor.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

“view was based on him being a minister and not sacerdotal reason.”¹⁶⁶ Various views and discussions on the order of service took place, questioning whether preaching or reading of the word should take place, or whether the minister who preached the service should oversee the Lord’s Supper. For example,

In 1580 the Council contacted the Bishops over the Puritan clergy to stop using separate clergymen to preach and oversee the communion. Another case was the charges recorded against John Udall, a licensed clergyman, for preaching but overseeing the communion which the church did not authorize him to perform. Then you have “Eusebias Pager, a Devon minister,” who was challenged for observing the Sacraments monthly.¹⁶⁷

The early church was fighting for control of the church leadership; it challenged church leaders who operated outside their guidelines. This action is present in churches today. Whenever the local church modifies traditions, it threatens the power the council has established over the church leadership. Modification and disagreement encourage senior pastors to move traditional practices under the early church, even in the Baptist denomination, to establish themselves under a nondenominational structure. This move allows those senior pastors, such as TD Jakes, John Olsteen, and Ira Hilliard, to follow the guidelines they believed were best for the church. Their roots were in Baptist traditions. In observing their worship services on first Sundays, neither of these churches served communion. This is indeed a move from traditional Baptist practices. No baptism was administered on first Sunday. They have no required days for baptism. This action is not biblical in a sense because the new converts were baptized at the time of their conversion.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 22, 23

Christian churches (all denominations) are inconsistent in administering church ordinances even though their denominations' practices are based on their following the early church, that is, Catholics and Protestants. In preparing for the observance of church ordinances, church leaders focus on leadership authority rather than the ineffectiveness of serving the congregation and community. Their inefficiency is due to an insufficient number of church leaders authorized to serve the elements. My research revealed that the early church had a period when laypersons administered the baptism. Church leaders, Christian theologians Tertullian and Augustine agreed that when the church is in a time where more leaders are needed, it is okay to use laymen. Leaders in the early church recognized that traditional practices were at times ineffective or not the best practices. For example, in the earlier years, in England "More than 10,000 of the English were [baptized] ... in the river Sirarios [plus women and children]. They were baptized by each other after the apostolic leader blessed the water. This act was the first type of baptism in England."¹⁶⁸

Christian Theologian Ignatius wrote letters to the Philadelphians and Smyrnaeans giving guidance and direction in the observance of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church. Ignatius emphasized that the Bishop should be the only one authorized to administer the Eucharist. Here is an excerpt from the letter to Philadelphians:

According to the letter written to the Philadelphians, Ignatius reference to the Eucharist emphasizes the obligation of celebrating it in union with the bishop. The Eucharist is presented as the source of Christian unity by giving the faithful communion with the one flesh and blood of Christ. This unity must be liturgically represented and preserved through communion with the bishop: Take care, therefore, to participate in one Eucharist (for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup that leads to unity through his blood; there is one altar, just as

¹⁶⁸ Cathcart, 69.

there is one bishop, together with the council of presbyters and the deacons, my fellow servants), in order that whatever you do, you do in accordance with God.¹⁶⁹

In a letter to Smyrnaeans, Ignatius' again encourages a connection between the Eucharist and the bishop. Only that Eucharist under the authority of the bishop (or whomever he designates) is to be considered valid. "Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be"; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic church.¹⁷⁰

Christian Theologian Justin says "The distribution and the partaking of the Eucharist elements are to each, and to those who are absent, a portion is sent by the deacons. The Ruler will take the excess to the care of the orphans and widows, and those who are sick, those who are in bonds, and the strangers who are traveling among us."¹⁷¹

Distributing the elements is part of some churches' practices. To gather information on church practices in distributing the Lord's Supper elements, I visited select churches; most followed traditional practices. In my survey of select pastors, I found that a few churches send church deacons to visit shut-in members. I discuss the results of the observations in Chapter Four.

Baptist Denomination

The Baptist denomination's traditional practices are aligned with the early church practices in many ways. The traditional Baptist church operates with a traditionalist¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Feingold, 3.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 4, Letter to the Smyrnaeans 8, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 255.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Traditionalist defined by Dictionary.com states "adherence to tradition as authority, especially in matters of religion; a system of philosophy according to which all knowledge of religious truth is derived from divine revelation and received by traditional instruction." This term is used more in line with the

and apostolic¹⁷³ leadership, such as the Southern Baptist Convention. The early church and Baptist denominations have similar church practices for selecting church leaders and their duties. I discuss these similarities in Chapter Four. Their practices differ in genderizing¹⁷⁴ for the selection of pastors and deacons. Generally, the Baptist denomination is not supportive of female pastors or deacons, but a few are supportive, such as ABCUSA.

Some traditional Baptist churches agree on church leaders wearing the traditional uniform of a black suit, white shirt, and white tie. A few traditionalist Baptist African American churches wear white gloves. Traditional elements are the bread crackers and grape juice, but a few served wine and grape juice. The regular distribution of the single glasses filled with grape juice and a separate tray for the crackers is still practiced in some Baptist churches, but some distribute prepackaged grape juice and bread wafer.

Many denominations established their own practices in administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, but they all have similarities to early

biblical Pharisees as traditionalists (Mk 7:9 NIV), which says, "And he continued, you have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!"

¹⁷³ Apostolic leadership in the church institution is designed as a biblical truth, possibly from the leadership of Jesus, to his appointment of Apostles, leaders in the church. The scripture has not designed the church's leadership: Apostolic succession, teaching that bishops represent a direct, uninterrupted line of continuity from the apostles of Jesus Christ. The bishops possess certain special powers handed down to them from the apostles: the right to confirm church members, to ordain priests, to consecrate other bishops, and to rule over the clergy and church members. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Apostolic leadership," accessed December 4, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/apostolic-succession>. The Baptist denomination does not recognize bishops and apostles, yet their leadership structure is similar. Senior pastors have powers handed down to them through ordination by a council of pastors and ordained ministers to rule over church leaders (including ordained and licensed ministers and deacons) and the congregation.

¹⁷⁴ Genderizing defined as making distinctions in (a group) according to gender. *Collins English Dictionary*, s.v. "Genderize," accessed December 4, 2018, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/genderize>.

church practices. Some traditional practices are not biblical: For example, only the priest, pastor, and ordained leaders (ministers and deacons) are authorized to administer the ordinances. Writer Shawn D. Wright wrote in the book, *Baptist Foundation*, “denominations are divided on who can administrate the supper? Where should it be given? How often should the supper be observed? The Catholic Church elders are the ones with a special grace of ordination. The Protestant Evangelical churches only ordained ministers. The Baptist historically believes that only pastors should administrate the ordinances.”¹⁷⁵ The early church had similar discussions on the challenge of who is authorized to administer the Lord’s Supper elements.

It is important to recognize that the Baptist denomination supports autonomy. I reviewed three major Baptist associations or conferences and found traditional-practice similarities and differences in policies and operations. They established church doctrines and policies for their local churches to implement or develop similar ones. I obtained the information presented below from the organizations’ websites, books, and personal experience.

American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA)

The first Baptist governance I reviewed was that of the ABCUSA. The ABCUSA wrote in their bylaws “Throughout the history of Israel, and in the early church, the people of God have always understood the importance of recognizing some persons as leaders within the community of faith. These persons had specific responsibilities within

¹⁷⁵ Davis, 157–8.

the ministry for the stewardship of the word of God.”¹⁷⁶ Their policies and guidelines align with traditional church practices from the early church with some modifications. Their practices on church leadership establish a hierarchy of leadership, and their policy on selecting church leaders is not comparable to the selection of leadership identified by Jesus and Paul. The ABCUSA addressed the roles and responsibilities of leadership in their policy—writing appointed pastors generally perform leaders’ “assignments including leading the congregation in the mission, lecturing, leading open love, controlling sanctification and the Lord’s Supper ... directing weddings and funerals, and managing the congregation’s organization.”¹⁷⁷ These leadership roles have distinguished who is authorized to be part of the significant acts of worship, including ordained ministers and deacons administering church ordinances. This specific identification of ordained ministers limits licensed ministers’ participation in worship.

Of the Baptist churches observed in this research, three were ABCUSA churches located in Houston, Texas. In one ABCUSA church, the senior pastor oversaw the Lord’s Supper and ordained ministers and deacons passed the trays with the elements. One served grape juice and bread crackers to the congregation. Another church had a similar administration function for the Lord’s Supper, but they served wine and bread crackers with the option of grape juice. In the other ABCUSA church, ordained deacons alone oversaw the administering the Lord’s Supper, due to the senior pastor’s absence. Their congregation came up, selected and broke the bread, dipped it in wine or water.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ American Baptist Churches USA, “American Baptist Policy Statement of Ordained Ministry: Preamble,” 4.

In their 2012 bylaws, the ABCUSA wrote guidelines that reflect traditional practices with some evidence of scriptural support.¹⁷⁸ Their policy reflects traditional practices with some not biblically authorized. Some of those policies stigmatize licensed ministers who are not ordained from being able to service the needs of the congregation and their community: performing weddings and administering church ordinances. ABCUSA is known for “pushing the envelope,” radical, and going against the grain. Yet, their guidelines for church leaders, it includes this policy of exclusion. ABCUSA policies provide instructions on the administration of the baptism by immersion, and of the Lord’s Supper by church leaders, yet no policy on the appropriate elements to serve for the Lord’s Supper.

ABCUSA policies and guidelines on church leadership include traditional Baptist practices in selecting church leaders: only ordained ministers are authorized to administer church ordinances. The ABCUSA policy included this statement: “Any member of the church could be called upon to exercise all ministerial functions and responsibilities, even though this did not ordinarily happen.”¹⁷⁹ This is unique in comparison to what is written in their other documents, for example, ordained ministry, ordination, and commission, which focus on ordained leaders. There are ABCUSA churches not functioning under the traditional practices. I discuss this area of traditional practices further in Chapter Four.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ American Baptist Churches, USA. *Recommended Procedures*.

Southern Baptist Convention

The second Baptist governance reviewed was that of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches, which reflect traditional practices in their leadership. This convention is a powerful organization financially and by membership. Their bylaws and other legal documents were unavailable on the organization's website. A few articles on various SBC websites provided information for this research. This organization genderizes their acceptance and selection of church leaders. They believe that women should not be pastors or teach men and they stand on one scripture. 1 Tm 2:12 says, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Their belief of all-male pastors is no longer prevalent in some SBC churches. A few churches have women pastors, according to the website. On the SBC website was posted an article on "who is in charge," written by Frank S. Page, the 2004 President and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee. The article provided information about church leadership in the SBC. Page discusses the leadership hierarchy and practices including the churches hiring pastors only to preach, the congregation being in charge of church policies, and pastors ruling rather than leading. In this article, Page referred to authors Dever and Patterson who are also resources for this manual.

Many churches struggle as to whether to have a plurality of elders. In the debate above, Mark Dever stated his belief in the plurality of elders. Patterson also said, "I do not have a problem with the multiplicity of elders within congregationalism." While I agree with both Dever and Patterson at this point, the vast majority of our churches choose to have a singular pastor, bishop, or elder. I think that is quite fine. Even when additional staff members are employed, or lay elders are selected, I think the issue before us is not as much an issue of polity, but of character. And I think it is clear that the bible is much more focused on the character and integrity of the leaders than specifically defining the actual job descriptions of the various leaders. Perhaps this was intentional? I believe that the bible is the inerrant Word of God. Therefore, I believe that what is in scripture is

what is meant to be there. I also believe that what is not there is meant not to be there. Our Lord, being a wise and omniscient God, knew that the needs of the Body might change from time to time and from place to place. However, as long as leaders exhibit the kind of character outlined in the scripture, church governance and polity will be done in a way that honors the Lord!¹⁸⁰

The SBC doctrine says,

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water. ... It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members ... memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate his second coming.¹⁸¹

The SBC has been challenged on their views of church leadership regarding women specifically. Their opinions did not prevent several women from pursuing God's direction for them and are now public figures: Beth Moore and Joyce Meyers. Many women began teaching women in their homes and now are teaching women and men. Both women have a worldwide ministry.

The SBC has several sponsored seminaries. Those seminars admit women to study various areas of ministry but exclude pastoral. The SBC has adopted revisions to their policies to address the evolving culture of individuals' personal identification, and they are still adapting to the changes in their community. A local church observes the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday. Their senior pastor oversees the Lord's Supper, and ordained leaders serve the elements: grape juice and bread crackers. Another local church has a team of laypersons preparing the elements for the Lord's Supper.

¹⁸⁰ Frank S. Page, "The Church—Who Is in Charge?" Southern Baptist Convention Life, 2011, accessed November 25, 2018, <http://www.sbc LIFE.net/article/2042/the-church--who-is-in-charge>.

¹⁸¹ Southern Baptist Convention.

National Baptist Convention of America

The National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA) is an association whose members are African American Churches. In fact, the NBCA was organized for African American churches because they were often neglected or excluded from dominant White organizations.

Black Baptists differ from Southern Baptists: Black Baptist differ from Southern Baptist most of all in our theological understanding of church/community relationship. We believe the church should promote justice and peacemaking legislation and policies that deal with the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, social, political and economic needs of not only individuals and families but just as important, one's race. Since Blacks in America have always dealt with *racism* our understanding of the church's mission is deeply determined by our sociological status in America and the world at any given time.¹⁸²

According to the NBCA website,

Only ordained deacons or licensed ministers under the authority of an ordained pastor/minister may conduct the ordinance of Baptism. If the ordained pastor/minister is present and leading the baptismal service (actually says the words), the physical immersion may be done by anyone. In fact, Jesus himself never baptized anyone. He let his disciples do it for Him.¹⁸³

Based on the information on their website, NBCA licensed ministers are permitted to “practice” their calling under the authority of a local pastor. They are not permitted to administer communion, baptism, or funerals without the authorization of their local pastor. Through the eyes of the NBCA, only ordained ministers are legally authorized to perform marriages, yet some states do not require one to be an ordained

¹⁸² National Baptist Convention of America, “Baptist Denominations & Doctrines Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed December 27, 2018, <http://www.nationalbaptist.com/resources/church-faqs/baptist-denomination-faqs.html>.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

minister. Their policies provide the local church the authority to recall the license of a minister, but it is a challenge to recall the license of a minister who is ordained. An ordained minister is authorized to perform all church operations and ordinances and requires no approval from another minister.¹⁸⁴

NBCA policy includes that Baptists rejected the idea of apostolic succession—“an unbroken line of ordained clergy dating back to the apostles”¹⁸⁵—and that ordination was associated with grace. The NBCA website states,

1. We believe in total immersion in water based on the personal confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the only source of salvation on the part of a believer.
2. We believe the most doctrinally correct church organizational, decision-making structure is one that is Congregationally-based. This means, ultimately, church decisions reside with the active membership on the basis of democratically voting procedures. The general example used to highlight this reality has to do with employing a pastor. Each local church interviews and makes an offer to a preacher to become its pastor. In many non-Baptist denominations, i.e., Methodists, Episcopalians, Catholics, etc., a Bishop appoints pastors to churches.
3. We believe a Christian’s conscience is ultimately accountable to Christ alone and therefore no decisions made by others can be forced upon him or her.
4. We believe that each Baptist church is structurally and doctrinally independent from other Baptist Churches. We are separate and unequal. No Baptist church can be told by another Baptist church what to believe, how to think, or how to organize itself. Each is autonomous.¹⁸⁶

I visited a Baptist church that removed the term “Baptist” from their name but still follows the doctrine and some of the traditional practices of the Baptist denomination.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

One practice in which they diverged from tradition was the senior pastor overseeing the administering of the Lord's Supper. The senior pastor was present and preached, but he no longer administers the church ordinances and delegates that duty to the associate pastor or an ordained minister and ordained deacons. An observation of a few nondenominational churches with Baptist influence revealed they have transitioned some practices to similarly align with biblical practices. For example, the pastor gave the liturgy for the Lord's Supper, but selected members of the congregation distributed the elements. Another church was observed not observing the Lord's Supper monthly.

Church Polity Authorized Leaders to Administer Church Ordinances

According to the Baptist distinctives, the church, not the pastor or deacon, governs the operations of the church. The pastor provides leadership according to the scripture (1 Pt 5:1–5).¹⁸⁷ Some church organizations authorize deacons to oversee the church, and they have the power to elect senior pastors. In some church processes, the church congregation selects senior pastors and deacons by voting. This authority of deacons run the church is not scriptural.

To establish authority and procedure in the local church, the Baptist denomination created a policy that addresses who has authority over who:

- Processes of membership and discipline
- The role of baptism and the Lord's Supper
- Creating leadership offices in the church¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Pinson.

¹⁸⁸ Davis, 2.

Paul's leadership instructions on elders and deacons were documented in the Book of Acts, 1 Peter, 1 Timothy and Titus, based on the churches' dysfunctional operations. Dr. Ferguson said Paul, "established a paradigm for church leadership."¹⁸⁹ Ferguson believes Acts 6 was the origin of the diaconate ministry and the disciples were the first appointment of deacons in the church.¹⁹⁰

Author Leeman wrote, "Scripture establishes the offices of deacon and elder ... Word-intensive work of preaching, prayer, and oversight while deacons attend to the physical needs of the congregation."¹⁹¹ Author Carroll wrote, "Leadership: It is officers-pastors and deacons" (1 Tm 3:1–16). According to the practice of the early church, the pastor was called bishop. The pastor and deacon were to be selected by the church and to be servants of the church.¹⁹²

ABCUSA policy states history reflects Israel and the early church recognizes the importance of leaders in the church. They have specific duties with God's ministry.¹⁹³ Traditional practicing churches have a hierarchy (church leadership) with the senior pastor, associate pastor, staff pastors, ordained ministers, ordained deacons, and clergy (including ordained and unordained ministers). Their policy notes that an associate pastor has a different meaning in the church. The associate pastor is not scriptural but having an assistant to the pastor is necessary for some church settings. These individuals have

¹⁸⁹ Ferguson.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Davis, Location 647, Kindle.

¹⁹² Carroll, 8, 12.

¹⁹³ American Baptist Church USA, "Historic American Baptist Policy Statement."

authority over selected areas of the church institution. The senior pastor has the responsibility and authority of overseeing the execution of the church's vision and mission. The associate and staff pastors have the responsibility to support the senior pastor and have authority over what the senior pastor has delegated to them. The ordained ministers and deacons share similar responsibilities in the church, serving the congregation during the worship services and other selected events.¹⁹⁴ Clergy responsibility is limited to selected events and assignments the senior pastor has designated.¹⁹⁵

ABCUSA policy authorizes only the pastor or an ordained minister/deacon to administer the ordinance of baptism.¹⁹⁶ Author Armitage referenced in "the writing of Mosheim from his book, *Ecclesiastical History I*, pp. 105–6, stating: At first, all who were engaged in propagating Christianity administered this rite, nor can it be called in question, that whoever persuaded any person to embrace Christianity, could baptize his disciple."¹⁹⁷ Armitage adds that there was a "period where 'lay-baptism' was not denied. Christian Theologians Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome, all held that in cases of necessity 'laymen' should baptize and the Synod Elvira so decreed."¹⁹⁸ ABCUSA

¹⁹⁴ American Baptist Churches USA, *Recommended Procedures*.

¹⁹⁵ Field observation, the pastor designates the participation of the ministers in worship acts. For example, ordained ministers assist in the administering the Lord's Supper and unordained ministers are not authorized to administer; all ministers participate in the prayer ministry.

¹⁹⁶ American Baptist Churches USA, *Recommended Procedures*.

¹⁹⁷ Armitage, Location 872, Kindle.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

policy states the *New Testament* does not identify that the ordained minister as the one to administer the baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹⁹⁹

ABCUSA policy said, if the need arises, the church could call on laypersons to serve in a leadership position.²⁰⁰ Though this statement is in the policy, few of the observed and surveyed churches in Houston, Texas have exercised this part of the policy, but it would be beneficial for those that have leadership challenges. Churches experiencing rapid congregational growth face problems with an insufficient number of ordained leaders to manage the duties assigned. They should consider authorizing their licensed ministers and laymen servants available to serve. Few of the traditional Baptist churches in Houston, Tx have done this. The ABCUSA has given them permission to do so, according to their policy.

Baptism

The Baptist denomination believes that one must be born again and being baptized is a symbol of one dying, as they go under the water, and being reborn (new birth) as they are brought up from the water. When a new convert is baptized, he or she becomes part of the church family. As a church member, one's job is to

- Know the gospel
- Only support teachers who teach the gospel
- Live by the gospel in word and deed
- Help other church members do the same

¹⁹⁹ American Baptist Churches USA, "Historic American Baptist Policy Statement."

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

- Call non-Christian neighbors to the obedience of repentance and faith in Christ²⁰¹

After baptism, the candidate is a full member of the local church with voting rights on how the church is governed and becomes a ministry leader.

The Ritual of Baptism

Arguments have been continuous between denominations about what is true baptism—immersion versus sprinkle. The Baptist denomination insists their baptism emulates the baptism of Jesus. They contend that baptism is performed by immersion in water, which is significant because it provides identification with Christ. John the Baptist became known as *The Baptist* because he was bringing people to God and baptizing them in river waters.

The scripture says, “Jesus went up from the water” (Mt 3:16), signifying that he was immersed. Baptist churches believe that Jesus was immersed in the waters when baptized²⁰² and that it is symbolic of Jesus’s death and resurrection. They lean on this act of Jesus’s baptism as their example of administering baptism. Some church leaders say they are emulating the acts of Jesus.²⁰³

For many local churches, baptism is typically offered on first Sundays, but some offer it on Sundays other than the first, or they do it as needed. Typically, the pastor (or

²⁰¹ Davis, 16.

²⁰² William A. Lawson, What Do I Believe, sermon, Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, Houston, TX.

²⁰³ Summary of the responses from the research surveys, November and December 2016.

another high-ranking minister in the church) performs this ritual. The traditional practice proceeds typically as follows:

The deaconesses gather the candidates for baptism. Each candidate wears a white covering. Some nondenominations churches do not baptize individuals using the communion clothing. The individuals wear their own clothes of their choice. In the Baptist denomination, the senior pastor normally speaks a liturgy over each candidate before they are immersed in the water saying, “I baptize you, my brother/sister in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”²⁰⁴ After that statement, the pastor or deacon covers the candidate’s eyes and nose to immerse them under the water—back first and quickly pulls them up out of the water. How the candidate feels is based on his or her relationship with Jesus. After the baptismal act, the candidate, along with other candidates, is brought before the congregation and given a certificate of baptism along with the bible. In earlier years, the certificate of baptism was used as an official document when no original birth certificate was available.

During my research, I visited the Messianic Judaism Community, and their baptism beliefs are similar to Baptist beliefs. They reference their baptism as a “believer’s immersion,” performed by ordained rabbis and Shameshi (deacons). They support a practice similar to traditional church practices of ordained ministers, or an elder, administers the baptism. They practice on-demand rather than monthly baptism.

²⁰⁴ Field experience conducted in 2016–18. The field experience included observing the ordinances administered by ABCUSA churches and other denominational churches and surveying church leaders of the same and similar churches.

Their liturgy over their candidates before baptizing them is “in the name of the Father, the Son, and Rauch HaKodesh (Holy Spirit).”²⁰⁵

The Lord’s Supper or Communion

The traditional Baptist practice in partaking of the Lord’s Supper or communion is that one must have been baptized and a member of the Baptist church. At least the traditional church requires one to be a member of the church where they receive the Lord’s Supper or communion. Some Baptist churches have moved from the requirement that one must be a member of their church to participate in the observation of the Lord’s Supper or communion.

The Ritual of Communion

Christian denominations vary on how often they serve the communion. Jesus stated that we should continue to observe the Lord’s Supper until he returns. The New Testament provides no specific instruction on how often to do this. Jesus plainly said that every time it is done, we should remember him (1 Cor 11:26). Author Carter referenced J. R. Graves writing, “The Lord’s Supper was observed as a local church ordinance, commemorative only of the sacrificial chastisement of Christ for his people, never expressive of personal fellowship, or of courtesy for others, or used as a Sacrament.”²⁰⁶

The traditional Baptist church practice was to host an evening service on first Sundays that includes the baptism, baby dedication, and the Lord’s Supper. Some

²⁰⁵ Rabbi Phillip, Congregation of Beth Messiah, response to survey, April 17, 2018.

²⁰⁶ Carter, 37.

churches observe it during an evening service, and some observe it during the morning worship service. For some churches, evening service was canceled due to low turnout, congregation safety, multiple services, and overtasking for church leaders. Nontraditional Baptist churches serve communion during their daytime services.

In some churches, this memorial is staged with a communion table with the words chiseled “This in Remembrance of Me.” The word “remembrance” (*anamnesis*) is in the scriptures. The table is covered with a white cloth, stacked with gold trays covered with a white cloth. In an African American church, the senior pastor told the story behind the cloth covering the element trays: It is a practice of our ancestors to keep the flies from invading the elements. Their church had opened windows and the flies would invade the church. Each tray holds an individual small serving of square bread and individual cups filled with grape juice or wine.²⁰⁷

As the congregants enter the sanctuary, they immediately recognize from the table setting that this is a special Sunday and it is the remembrance of the sacrifice Jesus Christ made for believers by partaking of the communion. On first Sunday, the congregation participates in a responsive reading of the scripture passages, 1 Cor 11:23–31. The music played and sung focuses on Jesus’s death and resurrection. The pastor’s sermon generally focuses on the sacrifice God made by incarnating as Jesus, laying down his life for us, and promising to return to us in the future to join him in eternity. After the invitation to become a member of the faith, the preparation to serve communion begins. Ordained church leaders take their position in the procession and line up on each side of the table. The pastor stands behind the table and the chairman or leader of the deacon board says a

²⁰⁷ Steely.

prayer of blessing. The pastor hands the trays to the lead deacon who distributes the trays to the selected deacons or ministers. Church leaders serve two by two: one carrying the bread, the other the grape juice or wine. The trays are passed down each aisle, so congregants can take the elements. After everyone is served, church leaders return to the front of the church. The pastor and associate pastor or delegated leader serve the elements to the church leaders who served the congregation.

Now, the pastor raises his hand with the bread and speaks the Words of Consecration: the rendition of 1 Cor 11:23–24, “The Lord Jesus, in the night when he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Then the pastor says, “Let us eat the bread.” The congregation does as instructed and eats the bread. The pastor then raises a hand with the cup of drink and speaks, “let us drink from the cup.” The congregation follows the instruction and drinks from their cups. In some churches, specifically African American church, the pastor then says, “the scripture says, ‘and when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives’ written in Mk 14:26 KJV.” The musicians begin to play, and the congregants sing as they exit the sanctuary and reflect on their experiences.²⁰⁸

Some nontraditional churches have a formal practice; some are informal. However, all offer open communion. Anyone who is baptized can participate in the Lord’s Supper, regardless of their particular church membership. At some churches, the pastor may announce to the congregants that only those who are baptized should partake of the communion. The Baptist and nondenominational churches observed in my research

²⁰⁸ Davis.

practice open communion and did not make an announcement regarding baptism or membership requirements. On special occasions—for example, passion week—some churches observe the communion in their cell groups. Also, in a non-Sunday group setting on special observances—Good Friday and Holy Week—some observe the Lord's Supper. This practice is in direct contrast to traditional and early church practices.

I observed the Messianic Jewish Synagogue to learn how they observed the Lord's Supper, especially when the Passover was the same week as the observance. They do not observe the Lord's Supper the first Sunday when they celebrate the Passover. They do a special celebration during the Passover celebration. During my visit to the synagogue, the rabbis used the orthodox liturgy and included cites from the New Testament. During the service, they spoke in Hebrew and Greek as well as English so that all in attendance could participate and feel part of the service. During the Passover season, the congregation observed their history at a special celebration.

During the Sabbath, they celebrated the Lord's Supper uniquely. The rabbis were the only ones participating in the observance and in the Lord's Supper. One rabbi spoke the liturgy of the Lord's Supper while the other broke the bread and drank from the cup. The congregation did not partake. This reminded me of the Old Testament hierarchy when the priest in the temple made the sacrifice for the people's sins. Was this the same act? The rabbi stated that the ceremony at the end of the Shabbat service was not communion, it was Kiddush. Jewish Sabbath and feast days are always set apart with a blessing over the bread and wine or juice, known as Kiddush.²⁰⁹ In the Qur'an

²⁰⁹ Rabbi Phillip, Congregation of Beth Messiah, Houston, TX, interview by Lynda Wright Gittens, April 17, 2018, 2018.

Community, IQS 6:4–6, the entire ceremony was performed by the priest before the meal.²¹⁰

The Messianic denomination and the traditional Baptist church practices share the same belief that the pastor should administer the elements of the Lord’s Supper. Church leaders must not ignore that Jesus gave the authority to the disciples to follow his instructions in making disciples, baptizing, and instructing them in his teachings. The disciples were not all rabbis or pastors but believers in Jesus who desired to serve Him. I discuss Jesus’s practices further in Chapter Three.

The Elements

Some Baptist churches served bread-like crackers or wafers along with wine or grape juice. One church served bread such that participants broke off a piece and dipped it in either wine or water. Some nontraditional churches use bread wafers and grape juice. I have found no written traditional Baptist practice exists regarding the bread element served, but an unwritten practice for the liquid element is grape juice.

Policies have little emphasis on the bread elements to be served for the communion. Some Baptist churches serve grape juice and frown on those that serve wine. I found no policy specifying use of one or the other. A few nontraditional churches serve unfermented wine, the fruit of the vine. I heard a few traditional Baptist pastors say the reason for using grape juice is that the wine Jesus used in those days is no longer available. Some Christian leaders respond, “Thou shall not drink an alcoholic beverage.”

²¹⁰ Ben Witherington, III., *Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of The Lord’s Supper*. (Waco, Tx: Baylor University Press, 2007), 19.

The Baptist church in which I was baptized served grape juice. The Baptist church where I was raised served wine. I remember our first communion, and when the congregation drank the wine, many coughed because the wine was room temperature and strong. I do not know if many remember Morgen David Concord Wine.

Initially, Christians were served and drank from a common cup. Now, with so many illnesses, churches have chosen to use individual cups prepared by the deaconesses or a communion team to address health concerns. In other churches, to make it more convenient for the deaconesses or the lack of deaconess, the bread and grape juice are prepackaged together.

Summary

This chapter discussed the history of the development of traditional Baptist Church practices. It was essential to find the root for the decisions implemented and sometimes strictly followed by those of the Baptist denomination. The early church had a significant influence on church practices of the Baptist denomination. The three denomination governances reviewed all share similar practices, but some differences did emerge. I shared theologians' views on how the church operates and their development orders of worship to the early churches. The early churches were very structured and significantly leaned toward ordained leaders as the only ones who could lead.

Baptists insist on baptism by immersion in the water. Author DeMaris used the term “the rites to entry”²¹¹ to describe baptism in the Baptist Church. In the earlier years, baptism was performed with the candidate naked in cold water. According to the *Baptist*

²¹¹ DeMaris, 12.

Encyclopedia, “Richard Baxter, who served the Redeemers Kingdom,”²¹² felt this was a violation of the Sixth and Seventh Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” and “Thou shall not commit adultery.” He believed that putting someone in cold water was murder and having them naked was wicked.²¹³ I am happy that this is no longer a traditional church practice. Scripture did not support this method of baptism. The pool of water at some Baptist churches may be still cold, but these days modern sanctuaries have heated pools, and candidates wear baptismal garments.

The three governances reviewed shared similar structures in church leadership, except in the area of female pastors. All believed ordained pastors and church leaders should administer church ordinances, but because the churches are independent, local church could deviate from those policies. The three governances differ in gender leadership. The ABCUSA supports female leaders in ministry as pastors and deacons. The SBC and the NBCA do not. These governances promote autonomy but still promote policies and guidelines with traditional Baptist practices for the local churches to access. It is important to note that local churches have permission to deviate. Churches exercise their right of independence by selecting women to be the senior pastor in the SBC. In the ABCUSA and nondenominational churches observed using laypersons, the pastors have traditional Baptist roots.

Church leadership is significantly important for the church to be functional and relevant in the community. The senior pastor is the nucleus of church operations. He or she determines the vision and mission for the church congregation. The pastor is the

²¹² Cathcart, 68.

²¹³ Ibid.

officiant of the order of worship. For a small congregation, a senior pastor without a staff minister may be sufficient. The pastor needs assistance in serving the congregation and the community. The pastor and congregation need to make decisions as to the advantages of deviating from traditional Baptist church practices. With the evolving church culture and online viewers, church leaders should consider those viewers when exercising their traditional church practices to administer the communion to the in-house congregation. I discuss this choice further in Chapter Seven.

The church has no need to deviate from its doctrine; just its practice. The scriptures speak on doctrines that give evidence that the gathering of believers needs to have an organization. It is God who encourages order and decency in what believers do for the church. Traditional practices inconsistent with the practices of Jesus and the apostles should be reconsidered. The workbook companion will help the reader determine whether to deviate.

CHAPTER THREE—HISTORICAL BIBLICAL PRACTICES AND POLICIES

According to Ephesians, Jesus is the head of the Church. He is the head of the fellowship gathering, and church leaders give him honor by following his lead.

Leadership

The Baptist denomination believes the scriptures identify two types of church officers (elders): pastors and deacons.²¹⁴ The church has the responsibility for selecting the pastor and deacons to be the overseers of the church. The ABCUSA identifies the bible as the authority for their belief and the development of their church policy.²¹⁵ Regarding leadership in the church, Jesus was referred to as *rabbi* (elder; Mt 26:25). He is the head of the church family, he administered the Lord's Supper (Lk 22:19), and some believe he administered the baptism (Jn 3:26). Those in attendance at the last supper were the apostles, a position Jesus designated for the church.

Jesus established a leadership team of twelve apostles with various backgrounds and experiences. They were initially selected as the disciples close to Jesus. He taught them and developed them to be effective leaders. They each had a position on the team, such as treasurer. The apostle leadership team was the same individuals chosen by Jesus except one. They each were expected to teach the other disciples Jesus' teachings (Mt 28:19–20). They all were given authority to help people. Scripture says, "Jesus

²¹⁴ ABCUSA policy and 1 Tim 3 describes the office of a bishop and deacon.

²¹⁵ ABCUSA policy.

summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness” (Mt 10:1 NASB).

As a biblical honor, God commanded the Israelites to observe Passover annually as a family for generations. The family head leads the Passover meal, and the first-born son shares the story of the exodus. The scriptures say that Jesus led the observance of the new covenant, the Lord’s Supper, and commanded apostles and disciples to mirror the practice in remembrance of him. Jesus gave no specific commands as to who leads the celebration, but Jesus is the head of the church. Jesus directed the apostles to impart his teachings to the other. The disciples (believers) practiced this with other believers. Jesus performing the observance could be why the early church established that rule for ordained leaders. The biblical traditions of honoring the covenant were with the priest of the temples as it related to sacrifices, but Jesus was the sacrifice, for he gave of himself.

Jesus developed and trained some of the disciples, and of all the disciples, twelve were selected as apostles. After Jesus ascended to Heaven, Peter appears to rise up as the leader of the apostles. He led the search for someone to replace Judas. Jesus did not identify him directly as the next leader in line, but Jesus did say that Peter was the rock that initiated the church. In selecting leaders, Peter was the apostle to initiate action to search for an apostle to replace Judas. Acts 1:15 says, “Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples.” In verse 23, they appointed two to consider for the one position. I discuss this appointment in Chapter Five.

Peter asserted his leadership skills among the other apostles, disciples, and the people when they traveled to Jerusalem per Jesus’s directions. In Acts 2:14, on Pentecost, Peter stood and spoke among the eleven apostles and the people to explain what they

experienced; the people believed they were drunk, but it was their reaction to being filled with the Holy Spirit. Verse 41 says about three thousand were converted and baptized.

Paul prepared the instructions to the church of Corinthians on administering the Lord's Supper. It is written in 1 Cor 11 how to observe the ordinance, but no direction on who administers. Paul discusses how Jesus administered the elements but provides no guidance to the church on who should lead the practice. Jesus's leadership style was to teach and develop the apostles and disciples to imitate and teach his ways to others. Upon the night he was to be betrayed, Jesus demonstrated the act of the new covenant—the Lord's Supper. Jesus, the head of the church, did not administer this covenant with anyone else. He commanded (delegated) the apostles, too, and they commissioned the disciples to act according to Jesus's teachings and Paul's revelations from Jesus.

Baptism

John the Baptist administered the baptism of repentance (Mt 3:1–11). He baptized thousands before and after he baptized Jesus. His authority was helping people confess their sins and repent. He would speak to them about Jesus and his power. John prepared them for Jesus's coming and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John had disciples (Lk 7:19) and they were concerned that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John. Two left and followed Jesus (Jn 1:35–37). His disciples must have assisted him with the baptism.

Jesus's request to be baptized by John the Baptist was not for himself, but for the sinners, according to Dr. Ferguson.²¹⁶ God revealed his approval of this practice when he spoke of Jesus as his Son and that he was well pleased. Jesus provided no instructions on

²¹⁶ Ferguson.

how to baptize, but the disciples learned the practice from observing John. Jesus commanded the disciples and all to baptize the believers. The scriptures reflect no guidelines on the mode of baptism or time frame. Rev. Dr. Martha Simmons, coauthor of the *Christian Minister's Handbook*, wrote that baptism could take place weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly.²¹⁷

A new convert's baptism and belief in Jesus Christ leads to an inward change to a new life. God adopted them into the family of Christ (Eph 1:5). Author Hartman says, "Paul uniquely uses the word *huiiothesia*, which is translated adoption, five times."²¹⁸ We are adopted into the family of God.

Baptism was viewed as "the rites to entry"²¹⁹ into the church and Christian faith because each was identified as a member of the believers and was a follower of Jesus Christ. Therefore, converts have access to all the gifts, promises of God, and the kingdom, including communication. When a new convert was baptized, he or she was part of the church family.

One of the steps toward baptism is to repent, "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be

²¹⁷ Simmons, 98.

²¹⁸ Aaron N. Hartman, "Our Adoption by God God's Plan from Eternity Past: How It Relates to Theology and Church Practice," Master's thesis, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2011, accessed December 11, 2017, https://www.rts.edu/sharedresources/documents/global/Student_Theses/201110-Hartman-Aaron.pdf.

²¹⁹ DeMaris, 12.

saved.” (Rom 10:9 NASB). The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines repent as “to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one’s life.”²²⁰

The Act of Baptism

Many Christian churches believe Jesus was immersed in the waters when baptized. They based their belief on these scriptures: Mt 3:16 KJV says, “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water,” and Mk 1:10 KJV says, “And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him.” Focusing on the part of the scripture, “Jesus went up straightway from the water,” implies that he was immersed. Jn 1:31 says, “I did not know him, but for this purpose, I came baptizing with water” (Jn 1:31 ESV). The English Standard Version and the New International Version use the term “with water.” The NASB uses the term “in the water”: “I came baptizing in water” (Jn 1:31).

Author Armitage says, “in administering baptism, I believe that the true baptism of the Gospel was a visible believer with his own consent to be baptized in common water, by dying, or, as it was, drowning, to holding forth death, burial, and resurrection, by a messenger of Jesus, into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”²²¹

Baptism has become an act of worship based on the example of John the Baptist and Jesus. He baptized many individuals who confessed their sins and wanted to be

²²⁰ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “Repent,” Accessed December 6, 2016. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/repent>.

²²¹ Armitage, 916. He stated this from *Clarke’s Confession of Faith*, found in the records of his Church (No. 32).

saved. Mt 3:13–17 premieres Jesus’s journey and the example he provided for those who believe and will follow him saying,

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” When Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This was my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Mt 3:13–17 NASB)

The Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist did believe he baptized converts, but scripture did not support their belief. Jn 4:2 KJV commented, “Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.”

The disciples followed Jesus’s commandments to make disciples. Acts 2:38 states, “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38 NASB). This demonstrates and supports that baptism was not limited to ordained church leaders, but to those who followed (disciples). Peter discussed baptism and, in the same breath, mentioned receiving the Holy Spirit. During a clergy meeting, a minister from another denomination asked the senior pastor why the Baptists say “in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Ghost” when baptizing rather than “in the name of Jesus” as was done in the Epistles. The senior pastor responded, “how Peter baptized was okay, but this Baptist pastor chooses to follow what Jesus said because he was the head of the church”²²² (Jn 10:30; Acts 16:7). That was a good nurturing response;

²²² Rev. Dr. Marcus D. Cosby, Clergy Meeting, Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, Houston, TX, 2017.

it did not bring shame or cause the minister to feel embarrassed for asking the question.

Peter's style of baptizing is from being mentored by Jesus and ensuring that the significant points of the liturgy were spoken. According to Act 2:38, "Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." In this scripture, Peter gave a spoken word to encourage them to convert rather than a word spoken over them during the baptismal act. The traditional church believes Jesus and God are one and they will continue to speak the name of all three persons of the Trinity.

Apostle Paul, the overseer of the church community, said, "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did also baptize the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void" (1 Cor 1:14–17 NASB). Paul, as the elder of the churches, believed he was to delegate the duties of baptizing and focus on preaching. Paul wanted to keep the focus on Jesus as head of the church. He was their Lord and Savior. Jesus was the one who sacrificed his life for their salvation and eternal life. Paul rebaptized the disciples of John the Baptist because John baptized them for the repentance of sin and not the acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God. "Apostle Paul baptizing John the Baptist's twelve disciples in the name of Jesus laid hands on them, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. This act was performed" (Acts 19).

The Lord's Supper—Celebrating the Future

Paul, in his instructions on administering the Lord's Supper, does not stipulate how one is authorized to lead. His emphasis was on sincerity in honoring Jesus in the observance. Apostle Paul, in his leadership to of the Church, helped them manage their congregations. He offered guidelines in 1 Cor 11:20, 23–26, 33–34 (KJV),

20 When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord's Supper. **23** For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: **24** And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. **25** After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. **26** For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he comes. **33** Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. **34** And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

Apostle Paul states that the disciples met on the first day of the week, together broke bread, and Paul preached (Acts 20:7). Many denominations have taken this practice as a requirement. This was not directing the church to do it the first day of the week. It occurred when Paul met the disciples in Troas, five days after the days of unleavened bread. They stayed for seven days before they gathered in the upper room. Matthew Henry's commentary interprets this as "the disciples meeting on the first day of the week the Christian Sabbath. They came together on the first day of the week, which they called the Lord's Day" (Rv 1:10). They came together to celebrate and honor Jesus Christ, remembering his resurrection and the pouring of the Holy Spirit. He further explained that when the disciples came together, it was their practice to come together in all the

churches. The commentary went on to say that the “disciple should have established a set a date for this ordinance.”²²³

Christologically, Jesus has many titles. John spoke of him as the Son of Man, The Son of God, and the Lamb of God. We believe that his monikers Son of Man and the Son of God in the scriptures above are based on his humanity and divinity. John 1 says “in the beginning, the Word was with God, the Word was God, the Word became flesh and walk among us.” Jn 1:34–36 KJV says, “**34** And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. **35** Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; **36** And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!” Jesus referenced himself as the Lamb of God because God used the blood and bodies of a lamb sacrifice as a symbol of his covenant with the Israelites. The blood of the lamb saved their lives, and the flesh of the lamb nourishes their body.

On his journey, Jesus taught and preached to the disciples and believers about God’s love for them; what he has prepared for them. He referenced the Lord’s Supper in his teachings before he met with the disciples during the Passover. Jn 6:47–59 ESV says,

47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. **48** I am the bread of life. **49** Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. **50** This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. **51** I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. **52** The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” **53** So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. **54** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. **55** For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. **56** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. **57** As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so

²²³ Matthew Henry, “Matthew Henry’s Commentary,” Bible Gateway, accessed December 8, 2017, <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/matthew-henry/toc/>.

whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. **58** This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread [c] the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” **59** Jesus [d] said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

At the gathering for the Passover, Jesus introduced them to the new covenant. Lk 22:17–20 KJV says,

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide *it* among yourselves: **18** For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come. **19** And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake *it*, and gave unto them, saying, ‘This is my body which is given to you: this do in remembrance of me.’ **20** Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

Jesus referred to himself as the bread and blood in this text. Theologically, the Lord’s Supper has a similar reference. Jesus sacrifices his body to reconcile the people to God, and he gave us access to eternal life. His blood provided the people with access to power and protection. Dr. Ferguson summarized as follows:

- Jesus gave himself by the bread and wine
- The cup of blessing, not thanksgiving
- Existential blessing
- The Lord’s Supper is the preaching
- Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving²²⁴

God provided guidelines for the Israelites on how to practice the Passover, yet there is no detailed written guideline on how to practice this ordinance. No month, day or time was specified to practice this; identify who, where, or when this practice should be exercised; or the type of bread and wine.

²²⁴ Ferguson.

Just as God said to the Israelites in Ex. 13:3 KJV to “remember this day,” Jesus said to the disciples to remember him (1 Cor 11:24 KJV). The question is, what are we to remember? Are we to remember how he served, why he died, that he died, or his resurrection? This new covenant was an order to the Church. It is a memorial of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and should be remembered. We who believe that Jesus is the Son of God were saved from death because of our sins. He was sinless (unblemished). Jesus stated that we should perform this practice “to proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes back again” (Heb 9:18–28).

Jesus administered the Lord’s supper was a demonstration, teaching, and instructions to the apostles on when and how to partake in the celebratory or memorial meal in his remembrance. He did not give a command as to who should lead. He commanded it to be done in his memory as often as they observed it. Peter and the apostles observed this meal when they gathered together but how often they met is not clear. Scriptures say the apostles met on the first Sunday. However, the lack of other scriptures saying they met on other days does not mean the Christians are required to meet and observe church ordinances on first Sundays. Jesus gave an option “as often.” (1 Cor 11:26 KJV). In the scriptures, it is written that the believers gathered at one another’s homes and observed the meal in remembrance of Jesus. Acts 2:46 says they continued “daily with one accord in the temple” and breaking bread from house to house. Matthew Henry’s commentary interpreted that breaking bread means observing the remembrance of Jesus. Acts 5:42 states daily in the temple and every hour. They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ (KJV). A commentary states they met in the temple every day,

ate in the home taking them food (makes no reference to the Lord's Supper). Was breaking of bread (to have a share) the regular meal or the Lord's Supper, or both?

The Elements of Communion

Jesus may have used the same unleavened bread at the Passover when he shared the last meal with the disciples because it was after the Passover. Partaking in the communion requires one to eat the bread that represents the body of Jesus. During Jesus's time, bread was a significant part of the meal. Jesus connected the bread to his body. In the Book of John, it is written that the bread represents Jesus's flesh and he gives life. The bread received at the Last Supper by Jesus was unleavened bread. This bread had no yeast; therefore, it did not rise. It was a loaf, and it was broken and shared among the family and guest. In the earlier years, bread was broken into pieces in the Baptist church.

Wine represents the blood of Jesus. It was part of the Jewish celebration of the Passover. Is it wrong to use wine? I say no! To the church leaders that respond, "this wine is not the same as what Jesus used," the bread the church uses is not the same as the bread Jesus used. He used a loaf of bread, not bread crackers or wafers. The meaning of the elements that they represent Jesus's body and blood and are to be honored as such.

Summary

Again, Jesus provided no written instructions on the practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Scriptures present no instructions on how to baptize, but the fact that it exists, and that Jesus requires it to be performed is sufficient to do it. Baptists believe it must be by immersion. Catholics and Methodists do not; but use the sprinkle method. Some difference exists in the terms used in various biblical versions; specifically, the

terms *with* and *in* the water. The reference to Jesus coming up out of the water demonstrates to some that Jesus was immersed but Reform Professor, Dr. Ferguson, says he could have walked up out of the water, not that he was under the water, but he was in the water.²²⁵ To that statement, one does not need to go into a body of water to have water poured on them. This could be done with vessels. Therefore, I am in agreement with immersion. The manual focus is on administering the baptism and not the method.

The only instruction for administering the Lord's Supper is to follow how Jesus did it. This meal after they observed the Passover was a significant observation commanded by God. Christians do not have that connection to the Passover. Therefore, they only observe the Lord's Supper. The supper was an intimate act with his twelve disciples and did not include all disciples at that time. Looking at how Jesus administered the Lord's Supper, one could say that it was meant only for the twelve, but scripture reveals that the twelve were not the only ones observing this meal. That does not mean all believers are excluded from observing church ordinances. Paul's instructions to the church in Corinth about observing the meal in remembrance of Jesus support the Christian belief that all who believe can participate. Jesus demonstrated the practice by administering to the disciples. For example, Jesus handed the bread to the disciples to pass it among them, and then he passed the wine. As they received the elements, Jesus shared the purpose of each element. Jesus did command that they remember him every time they performed the Lord's Supper until his return.

The Lord's Supper is not a calendar event, but one to be observed as often as the church or gathering agree. The elements served on this day may need to be considered,

²²⁵ Ibid.

due to individuals' health issues and addictions. The accompanying inductive in-depth study workbook will help you in transition to the practices of Jesus.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

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EVALUATION

Participant/Reader Name: _____ Date: _____

City, State: _____

1. Church Position

- a. Senior Pastor
- b. Associate Pastor
- c. Ordained Minister
- d. Ordained Deacon
- e. Minister
- f. Layperson
- g. Just Interested

2. Why are you reading this manual?

- a. To learn the church practices
- b. Curious
- c. To learn Jesus' leadership style
- d. Course requirements/elective
- e. Denomination or Church
- f. Other _____

3. What was your expectation reading the Manual, workbook or both?

4. Did the Manual meet your expectations?

a. Yes

b. No

Explain why not? _____

5. What knowledge or incite did you receive from the book?

6. Would you recommend this manual and workbook to others to read and experience?

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this study by taking the survey. The next questions will help us learn if the content of this book was of interest and helpful to our readers.

Manual Evaluation Tool

Name: _____ City: _____

Church Denomination: _____

Part 1: Organization/Format

Organizational feature	3 Very Helpful	2 Mostly helpful	1 Partially helpful	0 Little or Not helpful
Manual provides a useful table of contents, glossary & index
Layout is consistent, and chapters are arranged logically
Chapters contain clear and comprehensive introductions and summaries
Manual contains references, bibliography and resources
Information is accurate & current
Format is visually appealing & interesting
Other (please specify)

Notes:

Part 2: Content

Content criteria	3 Very helpful	2 Mostly helpful	1 Partially helpful	0 Little or Not helpful
Real-life applications are given
Information and directions are clearly written and explained
Activities are developmentally appropriate
Was the content accurate?
Activities include guiding questions which encourage the development of higher-level thinking skills
Other (please specify)

Notes:

Part 3: Workbook Materials

Criteria	3 Very helpful	2 Mostly helpful	1 Partially helpful	0 Little or Not helpful
Facilitator's material with resource package
Facilitator's material is comprehensive, organized and easy to use
References provided were helpful
Workbook exercises were helpful
<i>Other (please specify)</i>

Notes:

Part 4: Traditional/Biblical Church Practices

Criteria	3 Very helpful	2 Mostly helpful	1 Partially helpful	0 Little or Not helpful
Elders and deacons are important roles for the Church (believers community).
Subject matter covers a spectrum of church practices familiar to you – traditional
Subject matter covers a spectrum of church practices - biblical

Church Ordinances are important to Believers	.	.	.	.
Chapter One – you have an increase knowledge of the term church (biblical)	.	.	.	.
Chapter Two – you have an increase knowledge of traditional church policies	.	.	.	.
Chapter Three – you have an increase knowledge of Jesus’ and the Apostles’ leadership style	.	.	.	.
Chapter Four – you have an increased knowledge of selecting a leadership team	.	.	.	.
Chapter Five – you have an increased knowledge of administering the church ordinances	.	.	.	.
Have you been inspired to transition from some traditional church practices to Jesus’ leadership style and the Apostles?	.	.	.	.
Other (please specify)	.	.	.	.

Notes:

Transitioning Church Practices Evaluation – use the Teachers Evaluation Tool to design.

classroom.jc-schools.net/finchums/textbook.doc

APPENDIX B:
INDUCTIVE IN-DEPTH STUDY WORKBOOK

Sample

(next page)

Chapter One – Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church

A significant part of the language is vocabulary. You need to understand or interpret what a sentence, paragraph, book etc. are saying. You must understand what the meaning of the word. For example, it's root, syntax, etc. To understand the scriptures there are terms you need to know to interpret the scriptures. You may not be able to read Hebrew or Greek but there are several resources that can help you with understanding it's meaning. You also need to understand the culture and times when these terms were used to obtain clarification of context.

Let's begin with defining important terms in Chapter One. There are some terms define in the written text but its reinforce the knowledge obtain plus you are building your support for your decision which will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Instructions – Search the definition in the dictionary or internet search for the terms. Then search the scriptures to find if there is a definition. Choose three versions for various responses. If it is not clear in the scriptures, which many times they are not, you may need to get additional resources.

See the appendix for suggested resources. Define the following words:

Church – Dictionary _____	Reference/Source
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Church – Scriptures _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Church – Commentary _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Church – Greek term and definition _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What was the context of this term was used in the scriptures?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Rock – Dictionary _____	Reference/Source
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_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Rock – Scriptures _____	_____
-------------------------	-------

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Rock – Commentary _____	_____
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_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Rock – Greek term and definition _____	_____
--	-------

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What was the context of this term was used in the scriptures?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Gathering – Dictionary _____

Reference/Source

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Gathering – Scriptures _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Gathering – Commentary _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Gathering – Greek term and dictionary _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What was the context of this term was used in the scriptures?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Church Setting – Dictionary _____	Resources
_____	_____
_____	_____
Church Setting – Scriptures _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Church Setting – Commentary _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
What was the context of this term was used in the scriptures?	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Believer – Dictionary _____	Reference/Source
_____	_____
_____	_____
Believer – Scriptures _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Believer – Commentary _____	_____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Believer – Greek term and definition _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What was the context of this term was used in the scriptures?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Doctrine – Dictionary _____

Reference/Source

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Doctrine – Scriptures _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Doctrine – Commentary _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Doctrine – Greek term and definition _____

What was the context of this term was used in the scriptures?

Tradition – Dictionary _____	Reference/Source
------------------------------	------------------

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Tradition – Scriptures _____	
------------------------------	--

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Tradition – Commentary _____	
------------------------------	--

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Tradition – Greek term and definition _____	
---	--

_____	_____
_____	_____

What was the context of this term was used in the scriptures?

Denomination – Dictionary _____ Reference/Source

Denomination – Scriptures _____

Denomination – Commentary _____

Denomination – Greek term and definition _____

What was the context of this term was used in the scriptures?

You have now defined the terms. Please summarize those terms and share your interpretation of what is a 'church?'

How does your church or religious affiliation interpret what is a 'church?'

After this exercise, is there a change or modification to your view of what a church is or is it the same? If there is a change, please write what part of the exercise encourage your current view of what a church is and how do you feel about that discovery?

Thinking of your church's order of worship and other services, compare your or a church setting to the way the believers worship when they gathered together and notate the differences.

Please write what you would say to an individual wanting or needing to understand what a church is?

As a believer and follower of Jesus, what is your purpose as a member of the church designed by Jesus?

This exercise was prepared to assist you in understanding Jesus' view and purpose of the church. They encourage you to look at your church's practices to see how they are in alignment with Jesus' purpose and leadership style. They aid you in recognizing how you relate to church and your purpose in the church setting not just as the church leaders. As a church leader, this exercise will assist you in identifying the significance of your responsibility to the church and to truthfully exhibit the church that Jesus designed.

Reflection: Please consider all the information you found for the definition of Church and write your view of the definition of what the term church. i.e. What or Who is the Church?

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