

**THE SENIOR PASTOR/EXECUTIVE PASTOR TEAM:
A CONTEMPORARY PARADIGM FOR THE LARGER CHURCH STAFF**

by

JOHN T. HAWCO

A PROJECT/DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

2005

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Graduation Date May 13, 2005

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of the executive pastor (EP) as an accepted member of the pastoral staff in larger churches has only recently been the subject of limited formal study. Deployed for over 20 years, many EPs forge their own job-descriptions and their titles and tasks vary. The EP serves with the senior pastor (SP) as a co-pastoral, administrative leader. Recent studies have explored the utilization of EPs to implement the church's vision, as well as competencies needed. Contributing to the limited extant EP literature, this exploratory study focuses on the contextual and relational factors affecting the senior pastor/executive pastor (SPEP) team paradigm.

Findings are presented from four EP focus group interviews conducted in four cities in the United States involving churches of just below a thousand in attendance, to around five thousand. Supplemental interviews with their senior pastors were conducted, as well as interviews with several high-profile executive pastors from around the country.

Findings include the contexts and reasons for creating the SPEP team, theological legitimacy, necessary gifts and EP backgrounds, as well as viability regarding ministry effectiveness and leadership of the church staff. The relational factors crucial for the successful creation and on-going maintenance of the SPEP team yielded vital guiding principles for satisfaction among the SP, the EP, and the extended staff. Preferred analogies and biblical parallels for the SPEP team were identified and discussed. Suggestions for further research include exploring the effectiveness of differing categories of SPEP teams, the effect of EP tenure, the "stewarding" the EP, and the effect of gender mix on the SPEP team.

To that remarkable cohort of Executive Pastors who, leading alongside excellent colleagues, significantly contribute to the building up of the body of Christ and His glory, and who are some of the most self-effacing, Christ-honoring, hard-working, clear-thinking, strategically motivated, and self-sacrificing servant-leaders I have ever come to know; and to their excellent Administrative Assistants; they truly are “the keepers of the gates.”

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks are in order to those who have made the fulfillment of this project possible. Thanks to God and His people at Union Center Christian Church for their patience, prayers and support; to the elders, particularly for their encouragement to press on; and to all of our staff who kept ministry going in my absence. Thanks to my family: my mother Doris Horne, and especially my wife, Cheri, and all five of our children, for the many sacrifices they have made.

Thanks to my various technical supporters for their wonderful work: Karl Peabody, Timothy Hawco, Christin Daniels, Nancy Krissel, Victoria DelSanto, Laura Kasson, Linda Wales, Merrit and Donna Rector, Bill and Joyce Murphy, George and Ginny Greene, Dr. Janet Goodrich. Abundant thanks go to both Dr. Uldarico Rex Dumdum and Susan Woodcook, administrative assistant, for their labors beyond the call of duty.

Thanks to all of the D.Min. faculty and support staff at Covenant Theological Seminary, for their patience and assistance. Drs. Phil Douglass and Wilson Benton have my gratitude for their insights.

Thanks to three particular Executive Pastors: Howard Lucy, for sacrificially pioneering the office at UCCC without a compass; Craig Shields, our present office-bearer and a true son in the faith; and Dr. Merrit Rector, the source of my first serious discussions about this project, and a gracious friend.

Thanks to every Senior and Executive Pastor who assisted in any way with information gathering: Leith Anderson, John Piper, Robert Ricker, Scott Sherman, Randy Pope, Roger Barrier, Tim Coop, Paul Wislocky, Tim Keller, Mike Breaux, Ken Geis, Sam Crabtree, Jim Rightler, Merrit Rector, Dave Gordon, John Purcell, Ferrol Macon, Gary Schrader, Glen Elliott, Jim Schambach, John Nesbitt, Terry Gyger, Gordon Walls, Jeff Mills, Glen Kruen, Ron Jones, Dick Kauffman, Sandy Mason, Chuck Faber, Greg Hawkins and Craig Williford.

Finally, for exact reproduction permissions thanks to the following churches, individuals and publishers: Redeemer Presbyterian, Bethlehem Baptist, Wooddale Church, Perimeter Church, Casas Adobes Baptist, Pantano Christian; to Dave Travis of Leadership Network, Don Payne of Denver Seminary, and to Ken Killinski and Jerry Wofford of Zondervan Publishers, Gary McIntosh and Baker Books.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COO	Chief Operating Officer
COS	Chief of Staff
DMin	Doctor of Ministry
DR	Direct Report
EdD	Doctor of Education
EFree	Evangelical Free Church
EO	Executive Officer (of a ship)
EP	Executive Pastor
FT	Full Time
JD	Job Description
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MRE	Master of Religious Education
PT	Part Time
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SPEP	Senior Pastor/Executive Pastor
SP	Senior Pastor
WCA	Willow Creek Association
#3 EP	Level 3 Executive Pastor

CHAPTER ONE

From a human perspective the outcome of the redemptive drama being played out on planet Earth will be determined by how well church leaders lead. - Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*¹

Leadership works best when it is provided by teams of gifted leaders serving together in pursuit of a clear and compelling vision. - George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership*²

Introduction

Living and confessing churches are clear in their purpose. To the glory of God they obey His command in mission: make disciples, mature them, and get them to repeat the process of evangelism, discipleship, and reproduction.³ Whatever the local church uses for a mission statement, if they are serious about biblical ministry, these mandates are held to, at least in theory if not in practice. They expect their leaders to support and direct them into fruitful mission. Senior pastors are key influencers in this process.

The senior pastor is an accepted icon in the multiplestaff church. The executive pastor, on the other hand, often meets with a quizzical, "What does *he* do?" On the church scene for over twenty years, there is still no common definition or job description for the executive pastor, nor is it universally accepted that an "executive pastor" is biblically permissible. The meaning of the title ranges from church business administrator to traditional assistant pastor to a full senior associate pastor. Various leadership and

¹ (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 27.

² (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 8.

³ Matt. 28:19-20.

relational analogies have been used to try to explain this executive pastor officer. Most executive pastor positions have come to exist through church travail, and their job descriptions have been invented from within the organization.

This exploratory study seeks to contribute to a growing but limited body of literature dealing with the particular church leadership team comprised of a senior and an executive pastor (SPEP). Specifically, the focus of this study is the contextual and relational factors involved in legitimate creation and maintenance of an effective SPEP team. Church environments and leadership giftings and limitations, are factors in the deployment of this paradigm for team leadership. The unique relationship between these two senior leaders is critical to the local church's vision implementation, operational success, and overall satisfaction.

Leadership experts agree that working relationships either enhance or diminish personal and organizational health. "Leaders are enriched in terms of what they can accomplish through the quality of relationships they have developed with each other," says leadership researcher, Bruce Avolio.⁴ Consequently, the quality of the working relationship between the senior pastor and the executive pastor is vital to the success of the team, and also to the team's potential to successfully shepherd, lead, and manage the growing church. The present study is designed to discover the contextual factors and relational dynamics at work around and within the SPEP team.

This study presents findings from four focus groups conducted in four different

⁴ Bruce Avolio, *Full Leadership Development: Building the Vital Forces in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999), xi. Also Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 187-190.

cities in the United States (one city from each of the Western, Southern, Midwestern, and Northeastern regions). The groups were comprised of executive pastors from large churches, i.e., with attendance in the range of 1000, to around 5000. Phone interviews with the corresponding senior pastors were conducted, as well as supplemental interviews with several high-profile executive pastors from around the country.

This chapter provides an overview of the study. A brief review of the problems that led to the rise of the SPEP team, the specific purpose of the study, and the primary research questions are presented. The significance of this study's contribution is given, along with definitions of terms, and a brief overview of the remaining chapters.

Statement of the Problem

As churches in America grew and added staff, the senior pastor suddenly became the chief of staff, chief fund raiser, mentor and coach, and he just ran out of steam. And so churches experimented with associate pastors to help, but that just didn't work. What those churches needed was a point person who was responsible for managing and leading the whole church.⁵

As the church grapples with growth, appropriate systems are needed to manage the congregation's ministry. Spiritual leaders with management skills are in demand. The executive pastor is a solution that churches are increasingly utilizing. Whereas executive pastors were once an underground movement, David Fletcher, in an interview on the subject of the executive pastor, comments, "I think things are changing now. The position has been accepted."⁶ Churches have launched this contemporary team leadership paradigm, with or without clear guidelines for it or knowledge about it.

⁵ David Fletcher, cited in Rez Gopez-Sindac, "The C. E. Interview: Dr. David Fletcher," *Church Executive Magazine*, July, 2004. (Database online) available at www.churchexecutive.com, 1-2.

⁶ Ibid.

There are several compelling reasons for the present study. Overburdened senior pastors and inadequate church leadership structures will continue to give rise to solutions such as the SPEP team. There is insufficient extant knowledge about the SPEP team. Especially of interest, there is a research gap regarding the *contextual* factors and *relational* dynamics affecting the viability of this paradigm.

The problem facing the typical senior pastor of a successful ministry results from the growth which occurs because of his faithful labor. Inevitably, problems arise: ever-growing expectations are often unintentionally placed upon him; burnout or a sense of inadequacy moves in; and the church, in need of leadership, plateaus. Dr. Fletcher's interviewer comments,

It is no secret that pastors of large and growing churches are overburdened with tremendous pressures, and the executive pastor, according to Fletcher, serves as a gatekeeper and helps relieve stress on the senior pastor so they can focus on what they do best -- preaching, teaching and casting vision.⁷

Here the pressure results from a limitation of gifts, abilities, and capacities in relation to the growing size or systems of the church. One church leadership researcher who works with executive pastors through Leadership Network puts it this way:

What's driving this issue at your church? At the root, there are two basic, interwoven answers. *Growth and/or pain. The system has outgrown the team as it is currently structured and gifted.* Staff, whether Senior Pastor or other team members, is feeling the stress. Often the board makes note of this and wonders: Is there another way? Also, it is usually a Senior Pastor's initiative to seek a solution such as an Executive Pastor.⁸

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Dave Travis, "Beta Code: Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor," *Church Champions Update*, 1999. (Database online) Available from www.leadnet.org. Italics mine.

One contributor to the tension is the gift mix of most senior pastors. Christian researcher George Barna has discovered that while 69% of the pastors of effective churches have preaching/teaching as their primary gift emphasis, administration and leadership are found in only 15% of these pastors. The result is that these churches tend to supplement this lack with a gifted leader.⁹

Some churches seek to meet this vital need for leadership by the creative development of a split pastoral office: the SPEP team.¹⁰ The strategic delegation of a large part of what was traditionally the senior pastor's role to another faithful leader can "save" the senior pastor from being overtaxed, return to him the time and energy he needs to invest in his primary tasks, and bring about a healthier direction and accountability for the ministries of the church. The importance of complementing the senior pastor has been found to be a recurring theme in studies of executive pastors. Wes Kiel, in one of the few circulated unpublished papers on this subject, comments about the executive pastor's job description:

The working definition under which I operated contained the following elements:

- has primary responsibility for coordination and supervision of the staff
- is seen as being "*second in command*" behind the senior pastor
- has some program responsibility of his/her own.¹¹

Compensating for the senior pastor's weaknesses or limitations is critical. Most senior pastors initially sense the call of God to shepherd, and especially to teach the word. If they are successful in these areas and God sovereignly blesses, growth will occur, bringing with it a management crisis. An appropriate organizational mechanism is

⁹ George Barna, *Habits of Highly Effective Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1998), 32-34.

¹⁰ Wes Kiel, "The Executive Pastor," unpublished research paper (Holland, MI: Christ Memorial Church, 1988), 8. He refers to the executive pastor as a splitting of the traditional senior pastor role.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2-3. Italics mine.

crucial if a growing church is to break through this growth barrier to her mission of fruitful ministry in the world. Is there biblical warrant for the SPEP team model?

Theologians agree that there is room for creative structural forms within the general framework of Scripture.¹² This application of delegated authority and oversight is consistent with the principle behind the New Testament *diakonos*, whose role was to bring relief to the elders' workload.¹³

This contemporary paradigm has been illustrated by various analogies, one of which is that of a marriage. The home is managed by two leaders, sharing the load with differing roles, with one carrying the ultimate responsibility for the leadership office (the senior pastor). This allusion to marriage, referenced by both ecclesiastical and marketplace writers, illustrates the power, trust, and community involved in the best of SPEP teams.¹⁴ This team has also been referred to as a "leadership couple."¹⁵

It becomes obvious, then, that the position of executive pastor is entrusted with a lot of responsibility and a great deal of power. The senior pastor shares power and authority in the fullest sense to enable the executive role to truly work. If he does share it, the executive pastor must be a faithful steward of that trust. Therefore, to be effective, the SPEP team needs to be highly relational. Further, the church must be ready to follow this contemporary design in staffing. Poor choices in motives, gifting, personalities, and

¹² Gene Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 130.

¹³ Acts 6:1-6. The text is at least illustrative of the context for the creation of the diaconate.

¹⁴ Kenneth Kilinski and Jerry Wofford, *Organization and Leadership in the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 173. See also, Dan Ciampa and Michael Watkins, "The Successor's Dilemma," *Harvard Business Review*, vol.77, no.1 (November-December, 1999): 3-5. They state that a CEO and his successor must work at their relationship as in marriage to prevent the erosion of trust.

¹⁵ Peter Gronn, "Substituting for Leadership: The Neglected Role of the Leadership Couple," *Leadership Quarterly*, vol.10, no. 1, (1999): 41-44.

timing could easily contribute to the failure of such a team, and consequently create loss for the church of God.

In summary, though the executive pastor's role may appear unclear to many parishioners, his deployment is a reality in many of America's megachurches. This need-driven office is particularly connected to the abilities of the traditional primary leader of the church's staff, the senior pastor. The executive pastor's role is to fill in the management side of the pastoral office to ensure the accomplishment of the church's mission while avoiding overtaxing the senior pastor.

Statement of the Purpose

In an effort to effectively lead the people of God in the fulfillment of their God-given mission in the face of church growth and cultural change, larger churches are increasingly deploying this contemporary paradigm for senior leadership. Currently, there are only a few guidelines for doing so. With the critical need for church leaders to guide their congregations into successful kingdom advancement, and with the team ministry model having support in Scripture, the SPEP team paradigm is vital to the effectiveness of the church of Christ in fulfilling her mission. David Fletcher's study proved his hypothesis via multiple case studies confirming that, "there is a functional need for an Executive Pastor to facilitate policy and vision implementation in Elder-led churches and that the position of Executive Pastor administers a church government that represents Christ and His teaching."¹⁶

¹⁶ David Fletcher, "Case Studies of Policy and Vision Implementation by the Executive Pastor" (D.Min. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2004), 3.

The purpose of this study is to add to the knowledge base regarding the executive pastor. It explores the factors, contextual and relational, that make for a legitimate and successful SPEP experience. Drawing from the actual experiences of executive pastors reported in focus group interview settings, and supplemental interviews with their senior pastors and several other high-profile executive pastors, this study seeks to discover: How did the executive pastor office evolve? When is it appropriate for a church to move to an SPEP leadership team model? What are the core spiritual, attitudinal, and pastoral-administrative competencies? What is the job description, and what adaptations were made? What are the "rules of marriage," the relational boundaries and overlaps of each team member's domain? What are the primary causes of success or failure for the senior pastor and the executive pastor in their work? Is there evidence among senior pastors and their executives that the team model has been a success?

There has been little formal literature directly addressing the office of the executive pastor(EP) until the present year, 2004, which saw significant research on this subject.¹⁷ Nor is there any published manual on the philosophy of ministry or guidelines for executive pastors. Wes Kiel's unpublished work, referenced earlier, comes the closest to this. While job descriptions for executive pastors continue to evolve, the essentials appear to include: supporting the senior pastor in the implementation of the church's vision and being accountable directly to him; overseeing the functioning of the church staff (or at least part of the staff); and helping formulate and administrate the strategic

¹⁷ Ibid.; See also Timothy Woodruff, "Executive Pastors' Perceptions of Leadership and Management Competencies Needed for Local Church Administration" (Ed.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004). This study was limited to SBC megachurches. 2004 appeared to be "the year of the executive pastor."

plan for the church (which might include financial management).¹⁸ Can we confirm the validity, main functions, and essential relational dynamics of this office?

Primary Research Questions

The present study has been guided by the following research questions:

1. What was the church and staff *context* in which the particular SPEP team came into being? How has it evolved?
2. What are the top *priorities* for each team member in job performance and in relational development and maintenance?
3. What are the *reasons* given for claiming satisfaction/success or dissatisfaction/failure in working with the SPEP leadership model?

Significance of the Study

First, church leaders in growing or large churches could be helped by some navigational soundings when facing a senior level staffing decision of this kind. Responding to need, many have been or may be tempted to put an executive pastor in place in a less than careful fashion. The experience and insights presented in this study certainly help churches considering this senior staff model to avoid making the worst mistakes. Of particular interest is the relational dynamic involved in any SPEP team.

Even if a church has a growing staff and high quality elders, the responsibility for overall vision, direction, and teaching/preaching usually falls to the senior pastor. In order to maintain that priority it makes sense to consider a co-pastor to help with the administrative, staff-management overload. The insights gleaned in this study should be

¹⁸ See appendix 4 for sample job descriptions.

helpful for pastoral staff and church boards who must decide when and if this move is needed, what to look for in such a leader, as well as, how to proceed or not.

Second, senior pastors and executive pastors, together with their elders, board leaders, and management teams, can profit from the experiences and insights recorded here to help them develop, support, and nurture the SPEP's relationship.

Third, those already engaged in the paradigm (executive pastors and senior pastors) do not have all the answers about it. This study contributes to the SPEP team knowledge base which is critical for the clarification, refinement, and discovery of causes of difficulties, and for encouragement to forge ahead with the SPEP paradigm. The evidence of this need was manifested in executive pastors' responsiveness to the Leadership Network's Executive Pastors' Forum, which was held periodically during the 1990s. As one executive pastor stated, "[That] points to my second motive for being here. When you look around there is not any literature on this. I would hope we could pool our experience in inventing these jobs, so they could get up to speed a little faster."¹⁹

Fourth, parishioners may be helped to embrace new leadership paradigms, realizing that such models are not inherently unspiritual, but actually helpful to the cause of Christ. Further, it may assist them to join in the vision-casting and healthy use of church systems to see ministry succeed. A prevailing mindset among church members, which wrongly insists on the senior pastor being the one to "touch" everything, must give way to more appropriate thinking. The SPEP team leadership model takes delegation to the next level, for the good of all involved.

¹⁹ Sam Crabtree, Minneapolis focus group interview, January 2004.

It is the premise of this study that the SPEG leadership team is a contemporary paradigm that is compatible with Scripture, and viable and useful for growing churches in America. Consequently, it will be strongly argued that certain understandings and guidelines must be followed for it to be deployed successfully.

Definition of Terms

Senior pastor: The senior minister of a church, in the traditional sense;²⁰ the primary teaching shepherd and leader, especially the leader of the multiple staff ministry and the primary vision-caster. When people ask, “Who is the pastor at First Church?” the senior pastor is named even if there are six pastors on the staff. This type of leadership might be reflected in the ministry James in the Jerusalem church in that he apparently was recognized as one outstanding among the elders, a leader among equals.²¹

Executive pastor: An administrative pastor; especially, in the present context, a co-pastor or senior associate pastor of the church. He is responsible for the governing side of the ministry to ensure the implementation of the church’s vision (including things like staff accountability, ministry effectiveness, and fiscal oversight).

Staff: The employees of the church, usually distinguished as ministry staff (those who direct ministry areas of the church, e.g., Children’s Director, Missions Coordinator, Women’s Ministry Director), pastoral staff (formally called “pastor” of some ministry area, e.g., Pastor of Visitation, Youth Pastor, etc.), and administrative or support staff (including secretaries, business managers, custodians, etc.). Some churches also distinguish between paid and unpaid ministry staff.

²⁰ Marvin Judy, *The Multiple Staff Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1969), 92.

²¹ Acts 15:13ff.

Church context: The interrelated conditions in the life of the church in which something exists or occurs;²² the history and condition of the church as relates to attendance (growth, decline, turnaround), stewardship (general rate of member service as well as giving), staff (size and types), and senior leadership (gift mix and tenure), and spiritual atmosphere.

Priorities: The essentials (attitudes, activities, and private disciplines) which cannot be neglected in a field, job or relationship; the values or behaviors that are non-negotiable.

Relational factors: Interpersonal dynamics that “actively contribute to the production of a result.” In this case the contributing behaviors and attitudes needed to maintain the connection of the SPEP team.²³ Various issues surface: trust, loyalty, accountability, etc.

Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: The state of being happy or pleased, or of not being so.²⁴ Which attitudes, actions, decisions, and results, contribute to personal and team fulfillment or discouragement? What increases or decreases team dysfunction? What lends itself to individual team member energizing or depletion?

Success/Failure: Can be subjective, depending on the interviewee. In the church, success is measured in numerous ways, and not all measurements are spiritually sound. Nevertheless, certain indicators in the New Testament can help us. Conversion growth, spiritual maturation, involvement in the Christian cause, and the development of unity in

²² *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Co.,1979), s. v. “environment.”

²³ *Ibid.*, s.v. “factor.”

²⁴ *Ibid.*, s.v. “satisfy,” “satisfaction,” and “dissatisfaction.”

purpose would be considered excellent outcomes according to Scripture. These outcomes can be measured to determine the success of ministry strategies.

Chapter Overviews

Chapter two provides an extensive survey of the extant literature relating to the executive pastor and the SPEP team leadership model. Chapter three delineates the methodology of the present study: the design of the study, the interview structure, and an assessment of the study. Chapter four presents the findings, with extensive quotations and charts, as each research question is discussed in turn. Chapter five provides a short summary and discussion of the findings, a discussion of dogma as it relates to the SPEP team, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an extensive survey of the extant literature relating to the executive pastor. This, of necessity, requires a consideration of critical leadership issues for senior level leaders. An apologetic for church management is provided. Issues of church size and the evolution of staffing, as well as team theory, are examined, all of which contribute to the pastoral context of co-leadership. Finally, the emergence of the SPEP team as a contemporary church leadership paradigm is discussed.

Church Ministry, Growth and Staffing

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.¹

And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let each exercise them accordingly: . . . he who leads, with diligence.²

For the fulfilling of her purpose, the church has been graced with gifts from the Holy Spirit. Though the categorization of spiritual gifts varies, it is obvious that there are gifts for leading the church. These leadership gifts involve both speaking and managing tasks (e.g., prophecy, teaching, administration, and pastoring).³ But gifts are not the only

¹ I Pet. 4:10-11.

² Rom. 12:6, 8.

³ Eph. 4:11ff; I Cor. 12:28ff.

factor that helps the church move ahead. Human personalities that utilize these gifts and other acquired skills, spiritual dynamics of renewal or apostasy, and historical and cultural circumstances under the sovereignty of God all play a part in the effectiveness of the church in advancing the Kingdom of God at any point in time.

American churches are in an interesting period. Congregational sizes and diverse demographics have made church staffing an important issue.⁴ In the last century, third world cultures have experienced more in the way of renewal and evangelistic growth than the West has. The resulting gigantic congregations may be led in a “cell” or “military” style.⁵ American Christianity has some large churches as well. Though some of these churches may have grown by revival,⁶ they are more often led in a way that reflects a corporate style.⁷ Pastoral staff roles and titles are more diverse than they were forty years ago. Churches and ministries now have staff dedicated to the business and management dimensions: information technology director, minister of stewardship, and church administrator.⁸ Marketplace wisdom on leadership and management, often on the cutting edge and ahead of the church, is filtering into the church.⁹ Although some underlying presuppositions of the corporate model may be harmful to the church

⁴ Leith Anderson, *A Church for the 21st Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1992), 177; Gary McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 16-18.

⁵ Paul Yonggi Cho, *More Than Numbers* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 15. As an example, Cho’s assembly in Seoul, Korea was a model cell church of over 200,000 members in 1984. My last hearing was that attendance at his church was 800,000.

⁶ Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 40. Lovelace describes the theology of Jonathan Edwards on revival thus: “an outpouring of the Holy Spirit which restores the people of God to normal spiritual life.” The results of revival are empowered Christians and many subsequent conversions.

⁷ W. A. Criswell, *Criswell’s Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1980), 114. First Baptist Church, Dallas, TX, and Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, IL reflect corporate design.

⁸ Harold Westing, *Multiple Staff Church Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1997), 37, 215.

environment, nevertheless there is wisdom to be gleaned. Such concerns will be addresses below in the section on church management.

The Changing Context of Church Ministry

Consider the complexity of managing congregational size in many local churches. In 1980 Lyle Schaller, parish consultant for the Yokefellow Institute of Richmond, Indiana, and prolific author on church growth and church management author, offered the following grid concerning Protestant church size:¹⁰

Average Attendance at Worship	Percentile	Type
35	25%	Fellowship
75	50%	Small
140	75%	Middle-sized
200	85%	Awkward-size
350	95%	Large
600	98%	Huge
700 or more	100%	Minidenomination

According to Schaller, an American Protestant church in 1980 with over 700 in attendance was considered huge. Ninety-five percent of all American Protestant churches were 350 or below in attendance. Perhaps it is the proverbial growth “ceiling” that led him to refer to the “awkward-size.” The term “minidenomination” was not merely an

⁹ Glenn Wagner, *Escape From Church, Inc* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 21-26; Os Guinness, *Dining With The Devil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 51-53; George Barna *Marketing the Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1990), 26-27.

¹⁰ Lyle Schaller: *Multiple Staff and the Large Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 28.

expression of humor, but reflects the fact that congregations of large proportions tend to become regional pacesetters.

By the 1990s the demographics had changed for North American churches. Church growth and leadership expert Gary McIntosh demonstrated in a 1999 study, shown below, that by that time there existed two higher categories of church size than those listed by Schaller.¹¹

Attendance	Percentile	Attendance	Percentile
2000	99%	75-99	50%
800-1999	98%	55-74	40%
400-799	95%	45-54	35%
250-399	90%	40-44	30%
200-249	85%	35-39	25%
150-199	80%	30-34	20%
140-149	75%	25-29	15%
130-139	70%	20-24	10%
100-129	60%	19 or less	5%

Here we find that churches with attendance figures of 800 and higher constitute only two percent of all churches in the United States. An attendance of 1000 or higher places a church in the unique top one percentile. These developments in church growth raise some challenges for larger churches. For example, what must change in leadership styles, staffing, ministry plan, and management to accommodate these developments? What can be safely borrowed, or modified, from marketplace philosophy, corporate theory, and best practices, in order to facilitate effective leadership in larger congregations?

¹¹ Gary McIntosh: *One Size Doesn't Fit All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1999) 17.

The Emergence of the Executive Pastor

It is the premise of this study that the senior pastor/executive pastor (SPEP) leadership team is a viable one. Written material specifically dealing with the “executive pastor” is growing, yet remains insufficient. As of 2004, there were only two other doctoral dissertations specifically dealing with the executive pastor.¹² There has been some profiling work done by seminary professors and executive pastors themselves. Interestingly, the qualities needed for the office of executive pastor consistently indicate strengths required for a complementary “right hand” to the senior pastor.¹³

Fifty years ago, assigning a pastor a specific administration title was unheard of. “Church administrator” was thought of, but the pastoral dimension was excluded. Recently, the terms “administrative pastor” and “executive pastor” are more commonly found in the literature. A significant work on formal church staffing was Marvin Judy’s *The Multiple Staff Ministry*, published in 1969. Judy refers to an “executive minister,” but by this he simply means the senior pastor as the “boss.”¹⁴ Harold Westing’s *Multiple Church Staff Handbook*, (1985) does not mention the executive pastor. The second edition (1997) not only refers to the executive pastor, but also includes it in an evolutionary chart.¹⁵ The chart covers church staff trends from 1920 to 2000 and indicates that before 1970, most church ministry staff were hired for pastoral care, music, and Christian Education. After the 1970s business administrators were included, as well as

¹² Fletcher, *Case Studies*; Woodruff, *Executive Pastor’s Perceptions*. See p. 7, note 16 and p. 8, note 17.

¹³ Greg Bourgon, “Executive Pastor Profile,” Unpublished notes (St. Paul, MN: Bethel Seminary, 1999), 1, 4.

¹⁴ Marvin T. Judy, *Multiple Staff*, 92.

¹⁵ Harold Westing, *Multiple Church Staff Handbook*, 2^d edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1997), 37, 215.

specialists in youth, college and career, children, and singles. The 1980s saw further specialization in ministry assignments to include activities and recreation, volunteer overseer, and *executive pastor*. The 1990s brought even more specialization that were further influenced by the corporate model, including media/communications, senior adults, and brokers.¹⁶ The last term may or may not be considered ministry staff. In addition, some parachurch organizations have created financial planning ministries.

Kenneth Kilinski and Jerry Wofford, a senior pastor and a business school professor, respectively, authored in 1973 what became a standard text on church administration.¹⁷ Their work may have been one of the earliest to use the title “executive pastor” in any church staff/administrative text.¹⁸ In charting staff acquisitions, they suggest adding a full-time associate (usually a pastoral generalist) in a congregation of approximately 900 parishioners. In addition, when attendance reaches 1000, a full-time business manager is recommended.¹⁹ By the year 2000, the existence of the executive pastor position had become prevalent in the literature.²⁰

To summarize, the co-leadership paradigm of the SPEP team is a contemporary development designed to help senior pastors cope with complex, changing management situations in the megachurch environment of America.

¹⁶ Ibid., 215.

¹⁷ Kilinski and Wofford, *Organization and Leadership*. I was assigned this text in the 1970s at Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary (now Denver Seminary). Kilinski was pastor of Pantego Bible Church, Arlington, Texas, which grew into a thriving church with an excellent website. Wofford, with a Ph.D. and background in organization and industrial psychology, held a professorship at the University of Texas.

¹⁸ Ibid., 176.

¹⁹ Ibid., 174.

²⁰ Gary McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 73.

The Issue of Leadership

“It occurs to me that perhaps the best test of whether one is a qualified leader, is to find out if anyone is following him.”

- D.E. Hoste²¹

It is a premise of this study that the executive pastor is more than just a church administrator or assistant pastor. While church administrative literature does not always distinguish these offices, the terms and titles convey meanings.

Consider first the term “assistant” which means “to give support or aid” and especially “supplementary support or aid; help.”²² Being an assistant pastor could mean doing some of the same pastoral duties as the leader, or completely other tasks by assignment. Compare now the term “associate.” The noun means a “partner, colleague, or companion.” The adjective “associate” means, “closely connected, closely related, and having secondary or subordinate status,” as in “associate professor,” which ranks above an assistant but below a full professor.²³ Whether it is clearly stated or not, clergy, at least, tend to think in these ways.²⁴ An assistant pastor (often an intern or a retiree) would be seen as support ministry staff. Associates could be seen the same way, or may be considered close to equals. Obviously, there are no linguistic absolutes regarding the use of these terms. Also, churches may not give much value to titular distinctions. Certainly, the position title is not always a reflection of an individual’s skill level. However, according to common use among clergy, an associate would more readily be considered to replace a senior pastor than an assistant would be.²⁵

²¹ Quoted in J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1967), 34.

²² *Webster’s*, s. v. “assistant.”

²³ *Ibid.*, s. v. “associate.”

²⁴ See chapter 4, table 1 below. My first EP focus group question was, “Where does your situation fall?” EPs had little trouble distinguishing the “associate” status from others.

How the titles impact the issue at hand is as follows: depending on the church's structure and philosophy, a senior pastor/executive pastor team would probably be considered an associate team. If the executive pastor was designated a "church administrator," this would be operationally considered an assistant role. The title "administrative pastor" could imply the same idea. This point is confirmed by McIntosh's comment on a staff leadership chart:

By superimposing the different breadths of oversight, one can see that the senior pastor clearly stands in a much different position than the rest of the staff, no matter how large the church grows. *Executive pastors of very large churches come the closest to having the same breadth of oversight as the senior pastor.* Still, even in those situations the senior pastor continues to have a slight edge in oversight, or at least the congregation tends to perceive it as so.²⁶

It is this "breadth of oversight," or ownership of the overall pastoral ministry that brings us to the leadership issue. Few would dispute that the pastoral role includes leadership. The shepherd leads the sheep in and out, feeds, protects, and disciplines. Hence, if the leadership team includes an executive *pastor*, he must possess the qualities and competencies of a leader appropriate for the task and the partnership.

General Characteristics of Leadership

"A leader is a man who has the ability to get other people to do what they don't want to do and like it."

- Harry Truman²⁷

²⁵ Gopez-Sindac, "C.E.Interview," 3. Dr Fletcher states that it would be very difficult to lose a SP and EP at the same time. If the first resigns, it is best for the executive to stay at least a year for the church's sake. The present study found some SPEP teams who were planning to have the EP become the SP.

²⁶ McIntosh, *Staff Your Church*, 73. Italics mine.

Authors both Christian and secular concur regarding the need for leadership. For example, J. Oswald Sanders states, “God and man are constantly searching for leaders in the various branches of Christian enterprise.”²⁸ Marketplace leadership consultant Warren Bennis agrees. “There are 240 million Americans, and we’ve tried for a couple of decades to get along without leaders. It hasn’t worked very well. So let’s admit it: we cannot function without leaders.”²⁹ Noel Tichy, a world-renowned business guru and mentor to General Electric’s Jack Welch, and not without spiritual influence, insists that healthy and growing companies must have teaching leaders, that is, leaders who develop more leaders. In fact, for Tichy, leaders *are* teachers.³⁰ This sounds similar to the Pauline attribute of church overseers in the Pastoral Epistles, “able to teach.”³¹

Further, both religious and marketplace organizations know what leadership looks like; it means having followers. Both types of organizations would distinguish between leading and managing. A common proverb is that the manager is making sure we climb the ladder; the leader is making sure the ladder is against the right wall. This is “doing things right” versus “doing the right things,” a distinction made between managers and leaders, respectively. Bennis compares the two thus: managers administer, leaders innovate; managers maintain, leaders develop; managers focus on structures and systems, leaders focus on people; managers rely on control, leaders on trust; managers watch the bottom line, the short range, whereas leaders watch the horizon, the long

²⁷ Quoted in Howard Gardner, *Leading Minds* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 22.

²⁸ Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 18.

²⁹ Warren Bennis, *Becoming a Leader* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1989), 15.

³⁰ Noel Tichy, *The Leadership Engine* (New York: Harper Business, 1997), 45-47.

³¹ 1 Timothy 3:2.

range.³² The leader's vision and inspiration makes possible the "getting people to like it" part of Harry Truman's statement.

Obviously, there are crossovers in both areas, and the lines of demarcation are not always rigid. However, we can see the difference in emphasis, and this difference is critical for effective pastoral leadership in large or growing churches, especially once they grow beyond 1000. Such pastoring needs to be more high-level (leading), as opposed to detail-driven (managing). We must distinguish here the leadership/administration dimension from the purely pastoral. Shepherding has to, at times, involve details. An executive pastor would need some skill in both leading and managing. He must help lead the team with vision, without micromanaging, and still be able to hold them to the implementation of the vision via accountability and performance goals.

Some of the most creative thinking on the subject has come from the marketplace, where authors may have Christian motives or not. Interestingly, the secular authors keep discovering principles which should bring their leaders toward the spiritual qualities that are familiar in Scripture. Christians would affirm that Jesus was the model of righteous leadership. Out of His life come qualities like vision, integrity, servanthood, and reproduction. Business writers such as Robert Shaw, Warren Bennis, James Kouzes, Barry Posner, and Burt Nanus focus on the same qualities. Robert Greenleaf, Charles Manz, and Alan Briskin approach it more philosophically, encouraging self-examination, servant attitudes, and a broader consideration of the spiritual side of one's employees.³³

³² Bennis, *Becoming a Leader*, 45.

³³ Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977); Alan Briskin, *The Stirring of Soul in the Workplace* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996).

Charles Manz, for example, on the wisdom of famous persons, finds in Jesus an example of what he thinks is good business leadership: avoidance of hypocrisy, developing others, and mercy in dealing with subordinates, just to name a few.³⁴ According to business wisdom there are three important attributes which are relevant to spiritual leaders, as well.

Integrity

Integrity and trust are constant themes in the new leadership literature. These must be “givens” in the Christian context. But the business world is fighting to get its leaders to buy in to consistency, honesty, and integrity, which is commonly defined as doing what you said you would do. Robert Shaw describes the integrity issue as one of three imperatives that develop cumulative trust: achieving results, demonstrating concern, and acting with integrity. Each of these three is vital to trust development, which he defines as “the belief that those on whom we depend will meet our expectations of them.”³⁵

Kouzes and Posner report their findings on popular response to the statement, “Management is honest, upright and ethical,” among workers in the USA, Canada, Japan and Europe:³⁶

³⁴ Charles Manz, *The Leadership Wisdom of Jesus* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1998), 17, 25, 48.

³⁵ Robert Shaw, *Trust in the Balance* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997), 18-21.

Office workers	This is very important (%)	This is very true (%)
Canada	87	36
United States	85	40
European	80	26
Japan	72	16

Even if the USA fares a little better in morale about leadership, the results have serious implications for the need for integrity in an already fragile climate. Business and politics, not to mention the institutional church, have all contributed to its decay.

The discussion of integrity in leadership is strategically placed here at the beginning because it is so critical in Christian as well as secular organizations. “Choose out from among you seven men of good reputation” the apostles said, in order to give them leadership.³⁷ Bill Hybels, senior pastor at Willow Creek Community Church, insists that of the qualities he looks for in leaders and potential staff, integrity, or character, is first and foremost.³⁸ Since team playing involves so much mutual trust and support, those who see ministry as teamwork will put the utmost value on character, integrity, and honesty.

From the business side, integrity means consistency, and thus in the following ways:

What we reveal to others reflects what we know.
What we say is aligned with how we behave.

Our behavior is consistent across situations.
Our behavior is consistent over time.³⁹

³⁶ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997), 35.

³⁷ Acts 6:3.

³⁸ Bill Hybels, *Building a Dream Team*, Willow Creek Association, LS9805, 1998, cassette.

³⁹ Shaw, *Trust*, 63.

For companies, this means sticking with plans and demonstrating values. Even some CEOs who came in as perceived “hatchet-men” gained immense admiration over time because of their integrity. They dealt honestly, fairly, and consistently to get the job done. And they achieved results.⁴⁰

Bottom line results are important in business, but also in the church, though they are harder to define in the latter. Teams consistently look for skills to contribute to the success of the team. Churches tend to be more merciful in terms of bottom line results and productivity. Some of this is good in terms of corporate atmosphere, but it is not always healthy in terms of being overly tolerant. There are times when the church needs to replace or remove workers. Dealing with this in a spirit of grace is definitely a learned skill and requires wisdom. Corporate style assemblies seem more aggressive in this regard than most. Willow Creek, for example, monitors, evaluates, and “rearranges the furniture” as needed, especially in the case of character flaws and gift-task mismatches.⁴¹

There is, however, a growing trend among business practitioners and authors away from cut throat strategies toward servanthood, caring, concern, team dynamics (such as consensus and empowerment), and investing in and developing team members. An excellent philosophical journey into the human side of management is found in the work of Briskin. His idea of the soul is by no means biblical, but he challenges management to consider the fuller human side of employees. He looks negatively at several historic social and management discoveries, such as the management theory of

⁴⁰ For example, Jack Welch of General Electric is often referenced in texts such as *Leadership Engine, Trust*, etc.

⁴¹ Bill Hybels, *Dream Team*; and *Navigating Transitions*, Willow Creek Association, DF0002, 1999, cassette.

getting the most out of a worker by sheer financial pressure. He refers to this paradigm as the “Gospel of Efficiency.”⁴² Briskin’s point is that there are deeper stirrings in the heart that need to be considered. He appeals to management to consider the emotional culture that working together creates. Certainly, integrity with compassion is a requisite for pastoral leaders, including executive pastors. Message and action must be consistent if a leader is to have legitimate power, and the church, mission-driven as it may be, is wise to honor its most valuable resource – people.

Vision

Without losing sight of the bottom line, business authors say that workers need leaders who inspire vision. Kouzes and Posner assert, “When leaders do their best, they challenge, inspire, enable, model, and encourage.”⁴³ Here we see the needs of the follower considered. Note that most people want to be productive, even if, at times, the motive is greed or self-esteem.

Being challenged is a recurring theme in leadership literature: the challenge of a vision of something better. Modeling and inspiration provided by leaders give followers something to strive after. Also important in this regard is caring by encouragement and enablement. Encouragement includes recognizing contributions and celebrating accomplishments (thanks, praise, rewards, and tokens thereof). Enablement includes fostering collaboration and strengthening others (empowerment, training, etc.).⁴⁴

⁴² Briskin, *The Stirring of Soul*, 123.

⁴³ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1987), 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

Interestingly, in a survey of 1500 managers from around the country evaluating 225 leadership values and traits, the perceived priorities were as follows: integrity first, competence second, and leadership (inspiring, decisive, directional) third. Kouzes and Posner conclude that the majority of us want leaders who are honest, competent, forward-looking, and inspiring, with “caring” falling under the inspiration category.⁴⁵

Vision is a big contributor to successful leadership. Church leaders have spoken much about the power of vision and values.⁴⁶ A true leader is adept at communicating the picture of a preferred future (vision). He then embraces and shares the values (guiding principles) that are strategically needed to get there. Finally, he models and inspires by living and working consistently within those values. This is recognized more deeply on a spiritual level, because for Christian leaders modeling has a moral dimension as well.

The overriding need of the church, if it is to discharge its obligation to the rising generation, is for a leadership that is authoritative, spiritual, and sacrificial. *Authoritative*, because people love to be led by one who knows where he is going and who inspires confidence. They follow almost without question the man who shows himself wise and strong, who adheres to what he believes. *Spiritual*, because a leadership that is unspiritual, that can be fully explained in terms the natural, although ever so attractive and competent, will result only in sterility and moral and spiritual bankruptcy. *Sacrificial*, because modeled on the life of the One who gave Himself a sacrifice for the whole world, who left us an example that we should follow His steps.⁴⁷

This issue of vision and inspirational leadership has also been examined in terms of exceptional qualities in the leader, over and above acquired skills. The term “charismatic leadership,” first used by Max Weber, the world-renowned sociologist,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁶ Barna, *Power of Vision.*; also, Aubrey Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996).

⁴⁷ Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 19. Italics original.

refers to persons “set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least . . . exceptional powers and qualities . . . and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader.”⁴⁸ This occurs across faith boundaries, of course, but certainly charismatic gifts in the persons of Christian leaders, have graced the church in history and today.

There are two interesting points about charismatic leadership. First, leadership author Jay Conger asserts that charisma can be “routinized.” By this he means that the charismatic leader’s legacy can be continued. He suggests five ways to do so: (1) an administrative apparatus that puts the leader’s mission into practice, (2) “transferring” charisma through rites and ceremony, (3) incorporating the message into oral and written traditions, (4) selecting a similar successor who is committed to the leader’s mission, and (5) continued identification and commitment to the charismatic’s original mission.⁴⁹

This has great relevance to the ministry of the church, both in embodying the mission of Jesus Himself and in sustaining the vision and values of effectual churches in the Kingdom. Further, does not an executive pastor also find power by embodying the mission, vision, and values of the leadership of a church, especially of the senior or founding charismatic pastor?⁵⁰ In fact, the five steps given by Conger fit appropriately with the actions of larger churches with senior pastor/executive pastor teams. The executive pastor helps put systems in place to fulfill the vision, often brought or molded by the senior pastor. The traditions are recorded in vision and values statements which

⁴⁸ Quoted in Jay Conger, and Rabindra N. Kanungo, eds., *Charismatic Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988), 13-14.

⁴⁹ Conger and Kanungo, *Charismatic*, 33.

⁵⁰ “Charismatic pastor” is not used as a theological distinction here.

drive the systems and keep the church on target. When a successor is found, even from the outside, he must be aligned with the vision for the transfer of power to work.⁵¹

The second point of interest about charismatic leadership is the idea of its liability. James Collins, author of *Built to Last*, suggests that charismatic leadership is a liability because when the charismatic leader leaves, the company typically suffers. Too much has revolved around his persona, presence, and abilities.⁵² Collins and his associate examined thirty-six companies in two sets of eighteen. One set consisted of prevailing corporations, while the parallel set consisted of merely surviving companies. Consistently, they found that the surviving companies had been built with charismatic leadership.⁵³ Once the leader died or left, the companies stalled. The others were led by what Collins refers to as “clock-builders,” as opposed to the charismatic “time-tellers.” Time-tellers are impressive because they can always tell the time. Their insight is remarkable but short-lived. Clock-builders, on the other hand, are steady, methodical leaders who work to preserve core values in a company, but at the same time stimulate progress. They are not locked into tradition, and they figure if everyone can tell time, all the better. The kingdom of God is not limited by mortal weaknesses, yet God allows natural laws to prove true. How often it is that “next generation” does not sustain the vitality and health of the former. Collins’ insight is particularly pointed, in that the difficulty may lie with the charismatic leader’s own shortcomings rather than the team that follows him or her. The executive pastor is usually expected to complement the

⁵¹ Willow Creek Community Church, Barrington, IL, is a good example of values-driven ministry. Reaching the “unchurched” dominates all ministry investment including staffing.

⁵² Bill Hybels and James Collins, *Building Prevailing Churches*, Willow Creek Association, ADF01, 1999, cassette.

⁵³ James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1994), 3-10.

senior, and in regard to the liability of a charismatic senior, the EP may be the linchpin for the church's longevity and vitality.

Collins' work also has implications for leadership in cases of "discontinuous change." Such change is radical and non-sequential, brought about, for example, by a new CEO, as in Jack Welch's turnaround of General Electric.⁵⁴ The ship is sinking, so we radically overhaul everything to save it and make it seaworthy again.

Discontinuous change is qualitatively different from incremental change. It requires a break with the past, perhaps even the deliberate destruction of certain elements of the current system. It raises fundamental issues of values and basic vision. It is frequently uncertain, incomplete, and headed toward a future that is unclear. It is traumatic, painful, and demanding on the organization and its people.⁵⁵

This happens in churches in times of revival or by some other means. George Barna refers to these assemblies as "turn-around churches."⁵⁶ In some cases, this is a good thing. Collins discovered in his studies, however, that only a few corporations successfully turned around by pulling in an *outside* CEO. Usually, the leadership was already there in the company. In addition, Collins found that charismatic leaders are not necessary for long term success.⁵⁷ The whole idea of building for the future, selecting successors, and even charismatic "routinization" has implications for the pastoral leadership of our churches. The issue of "legacy" is briefly discussed below in the section on co-leadership. Is it possible to be planning for the future replacement of the current leadership? Moses, Jesus, and Paul all did so. While leadership succession plans are

⁵⁴ Tichy, *Leadership Engine*, 100ff.

⁵⁵ David A. Nadler, Robert B. Shaw, A. Elise Walton, and Associates, *Discontinuous Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995), 37.

⁵⁶ George Barna, *Turnaround Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 52-54.

carefully developed in the marketplace, most churches today usually do not have such plans.

Transformation

An emerging area of leadership study is “transformational leadership.” The very name should evoke a “so what else is new?” response from Christians. But this term has risen up in corporate circles to be contrasted with the prevailing practice of “transactional leadership.” Simply put, as the names imply, the latter is motivation for exchanged benefits: you work, I pay you. The former is motivation for more deeply modeled values, and therefore, more visionary. Leadership scholar Bernard Bass, who has been instrumental in developing this concept of leadership, writes:

The leadership of the great men (and great women) in history has usually been transformational, not transactional. These leaders have influenced their contemporaries in two ways: through their own personalities and through the ideas for which they stand. In either case, the influence was unlikely to be a matter of a simple cost-benefit transaction. Nor was it a two-way, cost-benefit exchange. For example, it was more difficult and less rewarding for the Hebrews led by Moses to move up to a higher level of spirituality and to dematerialize their god (Freud, 1922). Nor was it necessarily the easy and more beneficial path for the transformational leader, Moses, to promote change instead of accepting things as they were.... To be transactional is the easy way out; to be transformational is the more difficult path to pursue.⁵⁸

So the transformational leader relies on vision and modeling to inspire his followers. Christians have snatched up the term.⁵⁹ It would seem a natural piracy since

⁵⁷ Collins, *Built to Last*, 10.

⁵⁸ Bernard M. Bass, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 26.

⁵⁹ Leighton Ford, *Transformational Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), and Jerry Wofford, *Transformational Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999).

this was most assuredly our Master's style. However, it seems that some benefits are derived in a "transactional" way in our walk with Christ. How else could one author describe himself as a satisfied "Christian hedonist?"⁶⁰ Somehow the commitment to Jesus' servant leadership brings a payback. At the very least there is fulfillment in the process. Leighton Ford says in reference to this investment, "As I understand Jesus, his bottom line was not just getting the job done, but *growing people and getting the job done*. It is said that transformational leaders work themselves out of a job as subordinates are converted into leaders."⁶¹ The impartational investment, the development of people, is emphasized in Ford's imaginary interaction between Peter and Jesus as the Lord states, "You are my vision and my goal."⁶²

Certainly the Kingdom of God lifts our vision and values beyond mere mortal, temporal goals. It is a healthy reminder that in Christ our *being* comes before our *doing*, though both are important. Greenleaf proposes the servant leadership model for the corporate world, so that the institution functions in a more enriching way.⁶³ Tichy describes Father Cunningham's transformational approach to the street kids of Detroit. Focus: HOPE is a servant organization that is fulfilling the words of this priest in his desire to see "young black men and women in the highest positions of productivity in our society."⁶⁴ If one ponders the influence that a large church could have on a community, it becomes clear that the leadership team has a profound stewardship assignment to lead the saints into transformational servant leadership.

⁶⁰ John Piper, *Desiring God*, 2d ed. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996), 25.

⁶¹ Ford, *Transformational Leadership*, 164. Italics mine.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 49ff.

⁶⁴ Tichy, *Leadership Engine*, 251.

In summarizing this section on leadership, it is important to note that the marketplace speaks of some principles that are similar to those in the Bible: integrity, credibility, transformation, and vision. From a pastoral perspective, the first two should be expected. Integrity and credibility are crucial qualities. The third, transformation, seems fundamental to the gospel. Any dissension on the transformation aspect would require examination of a church's entire philosophy of ministry, particularly their discipleship process. Biblical transformation is what we desire. The fourth, vision, is also a mark of the spiritual leader. Nanus calls vision "a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization."⁶⁵ This seems particularly important in terms of the shared ministry of the SPEP team, although sometimes "realistic" may be shooting too low in terms of what the Holy Spirit can accomplish. Gardner mentions three levels of leaders: *ordinary* (aligns his people by telling the traditions effectively), *innovative* (adds a new twist), and the rare *visionary* (creates a whole new story).⁶⁶ Gardner's thought-provoking categories seem to capture the leadership styles of good or successful pastors: maintaining well; progressive (by re-envisioning the church creatively), and radical mission (like Father Cunningham).

If the New Testament calls leaders to model truth and mission to the flock, then both the senior and executive pastors must embody the vision with integrity before their people. If the senior pastor is the primary source of vision, as is often the case, the executive must also embrace it and implement it in the ministry of the church for the desired transformation.

⁶⁵ Burt Nanus, *Visionary Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992), 8.

⁶⁶ Gardner, *Leading Minds*, 10-11.

Spiritual Leadership

While churches can certainly glean from the marketplace, filtering the knowledge through a Christian worldview will achieve deeper levels of insight, morality and motivation. For instance, recognition and reward have limitations in terms of ethics. Leaders have to be honest in using them and not risk harming the recipient spiritually. Nevertheless, the church could risk more use of recognition to encourage her people even as the Scriptures demonstrate.⁶⁷

Shepherding

There is no question that the Old and New Testaments teach leadership principles to God's people. The primary picture of spiritual leadership in the Bible is *shepherding*. Both Testaments speak to this dimension of leadership. David shepherded the people with skillful hands and integrity.⁶⁸ Jesus is the good shepherd and the chief shepherd.⁶⁹ The spiritual leaders of the congregation are to "shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."⁷⁰ As followers of Christ, they also sacrifice to lead and serve the "sheep," a metaphor for the people of God. The Greek word *poimaino*, used in Acts 20, means to "protect, care for, nurture," i.e., to do the job of a shepherd.⁷¹ Protective guidance is certainly implied in the context of that verse. Spiritual leaders

⁶⁷ See, for example, Phil. 1:7, 8; 4:15-18; Rom. 16:1-13.

⁶⁸ Psalm 78:72-78.

⁶⁹ John 10:11; 1 Pet. 5:4.

⁷⁰ Acts 20:28.

⁷¹ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), s. v. "poimainw"; and Joseph Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1889), s. v. "poimainw".

guide and serve people because of Christ's command to love one another, and particularly as leaders, because of His command to feed and guard his sheep. This is the essence of spiritual leadership. Thomas Oden, Professor of Theology and Ethics at Drew University, states:

No image has influenced the practice of pastoral care more than its chief formative metaphor, the good shepherd caring for the vulnerable flock amid a perilous world. This central matrix of imagery has served as the foundation for other images of the pastor— guardian of tradition, guide through hazard, and physician of the flock. It is only on the basis of this axial metaphor that the pastor can reflect rightly upon due authorization to ministry and upon *diakonia*. It constitutes an important link in the correlation of Christ's shepherding with contemporary shepherding.⁷²

Now in comparison to the “rulers of the Gentiles,”⁷³ Christian leadership is servant-oriented and self-effacing. There is no lack of biblical evidence in this regard.⁷⁴ But if “leadership is influence,” as many affirm in both camps, is there a place to exert it? Authority is an integral part of spiritual leadership, and not just moral authority, but official authority as well. Therefore it is appropriate for church officers to wield authority, although the *how* is at issue.

The Bible's use of word-pictures for leaders is significant: slave, servant, house-steward, shepherd. These descriptives speak to the *what* and *how* of leadership. *How* involves modeling, integrity, and humility. *What* includes feeding, directing, guarding, and managing. 1 Peter 5:1-3, encourages the shepherds (referring to the office of elder) to lead with right motives and humility, but to be active in oversight. In other words, spiritual leaders are expected to lead. One writer states:

⁷² Thomas Oden, *Becoming a Minister*, vol. 1 of *Classical Pastoral Care* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), 41.

⁷³ Mark 10:42-45. Jesus instructs His disciples against domineering leadership.

First, he must be a leader. I define a Christian leader as a godly person (character) who knows where he is going (vision) and has followers (influence).⁷⁵

Authority

The expectation to actually lead has implications for American church culture where response to authority is often less than healthy. Pastors and elders serve people because of Christ's command to love one another, and as leaders, to feed his sheep. They serve the Lord first and foremost. Authority itself is based on the nature of God, as John Frame rightly affirms: "Authority is God's right to be obeyed."⁷⁶ His leaders' service to others is derived from His claim and authority upon them. They respond and lead in obedience to the King.⁷⁷ It is the same with followers. They are Christ's first, and then, out of submission to Him, they appropriately respond to their servant leaders.

Without endorsing a heavy-handed, top-down leadership, something still needs to be said in favor of godly leaders wielding authority rightly. Literature from the 1970s demonstrates that theology is definitely not done in a vacuum. For example, Lawrence Richards' *Theology of Church Leadership*, while having much useful biblical data, draws conclusions that are slanted in a direction of radical egalitarianism, anti-establishment-arianism, and anti-authoritarianism.⁷⁸ In Richards' view, any corporate church structure is wrong. Churches should be property-less, and spiritual leaders are very low on the authority scale, except to teach and influence. This is open to challenge in light of the

⁷⁴ John 13:1-17; Mark 10:42-45; Eph.3:1-2, 8; 5:1-2; Phil. 2:1-8.

⁷⁵ Aubrey Malphurs, *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 163.

⁷⁶ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1987), 16.

⁷⁷ Acts 20:28 indicates that it is the Holy Spirit's role to place elders over local congregations.

⁷⁸ Lawrence O. Richards and Clyde Hoeldtke, *A Theology of Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1980), 88-91.

following Scriptures: “Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account;” and “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor.”⁷⁹

Hebrews 13:17 encourages the saints to “obey” their leaders and “submit” for their own spiritual well-being. The words “obey” (*peitho*) and “submit” (*hupeiko*) both refer to compliance. The first means to “allow oneself to be persuaded.”⁸⁰ The second word, which when referring to opposing parties means “to yield” or “give way,” is here used figuratively to mean, “yielding to authority or admonition.”⁸¹ There is clearly a divine intention that the congregation should respond appropriately to a healthy church leadership’s direction. That direction should be embraced when it is Scriptural and well-reasoned. Occasionally, circumstances might mitigate against obedience. Spiritual abuse, misuse of power, and departures from orthodoxy may all contribute to legitimate resistance to leaders. Without proper modeling of servanthood, pastors will not foster obedience among the saints. Nevertheless, in a healthy context, church leaders can and must lead.

Referring to elders, the word “manage” or “rule” in 1 Timothy 3:4 is *proestotes*, which means “to be at the head, superintend, rule,” or “to care for, protect.”⁸² Leading and oversight is the obvious meaning here. Earl Radmacher, former president of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, commented on this passage back in the 1970s concluding

⁷⁹ Heb. 13:17 and I Tim. 5:17, respectively. D. A. Carson does challenge Richard’s view of authority as based on a logical fallacy. See D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 108.

⁸⁰ Thayer; *Lexicon*, s. v. “πειρω”; Timothy Friberg, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, s. v. “Pei, qesqe . . .” [CD-ROM] (Big Forks, MT: BibleWorks, LLC, 2000),

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, s. v. “up-eikw . . .”

⁸² Thayer, *Lexicon*, also Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s. v. “proestw/ tej”, “proisthmi”. A further discussion of its use will follow.

that if the elders who rule well are worthy of honor, then they must rule something! To lead and protect implies ownership and requires authority, albeit gentle, humble, and servant-oriented. Christian leadership author Gene Wilkes agrees: “Responsibility must be paired with authority.”⁸³ He adds that the combination of responsibility and authority contributes to personal growth. Malphurs is more direct in rebutting the powerless inclinations of some writers on Christian leadership:

This is the general result of an antiauthoritarian mood among church members, the promotion of a passive ‘enabler’ model for professional leadership, and the church renewal movement of the 1960s and 1970s that missed the importance of having a full-time professional leader at the helm. The first argument is theological. Where two or more persons serve together for any period of time, one must assume the position of primary leader.⁸⁴

He goes on to use the relationship of husband and wife, as well as the Trinity, as examples of equality with differing roles. Equality and role distinction are not incompatible. Insight concerning equality and role distinctions is valuable in the context of co-leadership. There are risks with authority. One text on serving as an associate alongside a senior pastor is so accommodating toward the “head man” that the reader might well suspect the associate’s unwillingness to challenge a pastor’s egomania.⁸⁵ Lack of balance aside, the Bible teaches agape-loving, servant-driven leadership that is to be exercised. In the case of Jesus, the disciples are rebuked for power-grabbing and pride, not for leading. He tells them, in effect, You are right to call me Lord, *because I am*. So

⁸³ C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1980), 181.

⁸⁴ Malphurs, *Pouring*, 165.

⁸⁵ Walter S. Beebe, *The Second Man* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of The Lord Publishers, 1997).

do what I'm doing and serve each other.⁸⁶ Though pastors and elders are not “lords,” they are those who serve the saints with power because they have authority in Christ. The modeling is strengthened by the fact that they are *leaders*. The problem is not having authority. The problem is misusing and abusing it. When leaders get out of control in ego or behavior, their co-leaders need to correct them and, if necessary, remove them. Accountability among pastors and elders is a joint task, and accountability and discipline are authoritative responsibilities of shepherds.

A senior leadership team can model both shepherding concern and administrative authority for the ultimate good of the church's mission. Leadership has both the weight of responsibility and the “teeth” of authority. As former associate pastor of Moody Church and administration author Bruce Jones affirms,

While there is good biblical precedent for keeping the Servant perspective, there is no reason to conclude . . . that being a leader means only being a servant and that servants do not command. Managers of households and churches do command.⁸⁷

Thomas Oden adds his affirmation on pastoral authority. Speaking of the conflict about pastoral power in the early church, he remarks, “While paradigms like guidance or rulership do not fully grasp the essence of pastoral authority, nonetheless *any attempt to disavow authority altogether is disallowed.*”⁸⁸

To review, spiritual leadership must be exercised in the church. Vision and ministry direction must be provided by leaders with integrity to assist the transformation of Christians. Biblical texts such as Ephesians 4:11-16 and Romans 12:6-8 speak of these

⁸⁶ John 13: 12-17. Researcher's paraphrase.

⁸⁷ Bruce W. Jones, *Ministerial Leadership in a Managerial World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988), 61.

⁸⁸ Oden, *Classical Pastoral Care*, 56. Italics mine.

leaders and reveal that there are also administrative gifts of the Holy Spirit. Leaders must be empowered to guide the affairs of local assemblies to help them fulfill their mission in the world.

The Management of the Church

But if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?

-1 Tim. 3:5

Administration and management have overlaps in meaning. Administration is doing “executives duties,” managing details. Management is “conducting or supervising something, executive skill.”⁸⁹ Is there a need for these competencies in the church of God? The answer is yes in spite of the fact that church business can become a lifeless machine. Ted Engstrom, former executive vice president of World Vision, comments on the wrongful categorization of business technique as “unspiritual:”

When some Christians look at . . . others in government or business administration, whether stated or implied, they consider these distasteful or a secondary gift, appearing less important than other functions of service. Frequently one hears pastors consider these areas to be nonessential, uninteresting, and less spiritual than, say, preaching, teaching, or counseling. For centuries the church, beginning with the rise of monasticism, has drawn a sharp distinction between what is sacred and what is secular. This is unfortunate. People who reason this way misunderstand a significant biblical concept that sets forth the function of administration as a *cherished spiritual gift*.⁹⁰

Despite the danger of bureaucracy and micromanagement, healthy administration and management can and does take place in the church. It is a critical part of leading people

⁸⁹ *Webster's*, s.v. “administration” and “management.”

in the fulfillment of mission. As indicated by Engstrom, some of this direction comes to the church by virtue of gifting.

Spiritual Gifts

Gifts were not given to keep us from learning other skills and spiritual disciplines. One not having the gift of faith cannot justify avoiding growth in the area of faith. The same goes for Christians who do not have the gift of giving. Or serving. So even without a gift of government or administration, one cannot be excused from neglecting necessary duties. This investigation will bypass the obvious leadership and pastoral gifts like teaching, prophecy, pastor, and evangelist, in order to concentrate on the less publicized gifts.

The present author concurs with church leadership author Bobby Clinton, one of the early practitioners of spiritual gift discovery, that “governments” and “administration” are probably the same gift.⁹¹ In Romans 12:8 the word for “rule” is *proistemi*, “to lead, care for, stand before.”⁹² The assignment is to lead, or manage, with zeal, care, and earnestness. Professor Emeritus of New Testament Everett Harrison comments, “A few interpreters, doubtless influenced by the items immediately preceding and following, favor the meaning of ‘giving aid,’ ‘furnishing care,’ and this is possible. However, the exercise of leadership is the more common in NT usage (1 Thess 5:12; 1

⁹⁰ Ted Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 52. Italics mine.

⁹¹ Bobby Clinton, *Spiritual Gifts* (Beaverlodge, Alberta: Horizon House, 1985), 155, 158.

⁹² Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “proisthmi”

Tim 3:4, 5; 5:17).”⁹³ The references following this quote speak respectively of persons leading the church, managing their homes, and ruling well as officers in the church. James Dunn gives a defense of the caring meaning of *proistemi* since the activities described in the text have moved toward benevolence.⁹⁴ However, not only do English Bible translations use the word with a “leadership” meaning, but commentator Basel Reicke correctly indicates that the very nature of “giving care” in the New Testament church can imply oversight. “The whole passage is speaking of the gifts of grace imparted to different office-bearers,” and though not necessarily referring to rank, the word does imply that the task is “in large measure that of pastoral care.”⁹⁵ After careful consideration of both possible meanings, commentator Charles Hodge comments that the most common understanding of the phrase in v. 8 is “anyone who exercises authority in the church,” and that is not limited to pastors or elders.⁹⁶

In 1 Corinthians 12 the word is *kubernesis* (which means “the skill with which a pilot guides a ship” and figuratively refers to “leadership skill, administrative ability.”⁹⁷ A. T. Robertson comments on the term as referring to governing. “Probably Paul has in mind bishops (*episcopoi*) or elders (*presbuteroi*), the outstanding leaders (*hoi*

⁹³ Everett Harrison, *Romans*, Vol. 10 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 131.

⁹⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans, 9-16*, vol. 38 of *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David Hubbard and Glenn Burke (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 730-732.

⁹⁵ Gerhard Friedrich Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 6, trans. and ed. by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1968), 701-702, s.v. *proi<sthmi* (by Basel Reicke).

⁹⁶ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, rev. ed. 1886 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1974), 393; also, R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on the Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Henrickson Publishers, 2001), 764-765. This Lutheran scholar gives a similar conclusion: “Anyone who is placed at the head of others,” implying various lay-level leadership roles in the church.

⁹⁷ Friberg, *Lexicon*, s. v. “kubernh, sij.”

proistameno in 1 Th. 5:12).”⁹⁸ Kenneth Kilinski, when he was pastor of Pantego Bible Church, wrote with Jerry Wofford concerning the gift of administration:

The work of the ministry, whether in a local church or on the mission field, demands a certain amount of administration. The biblical principle of orderliness commits the church to this. “Let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner” (1 Cor. 14:40) is to be the guideline. . . . Administration is not simply organization. Nor is administration manipulation. Administration is the ability to “rule” within the body of Christ. . . . it has the idea of guiding and directing a segment of the body of Christ.⁹⁹

In terms of giftedness, “government” is a Spirit-driven ability to link people up with the right tasks in the body, to direct them in ministry so that they function well, are fulfilled, and fruitful. Many pastors who may be excellent as teaching elders do not have it. How wise it would be for a teaching shepherd to team up with a governmentally-gifted pastor. This idea is not without precedent. Using the implications of 1 Timothy 5:17, Presbyterian churches with a plurality of leaders divide their teams into those who concentrate on teaching and those who concentrate on guiding: teaching and ruling elders, respectively.¹⁰⁰

Administration

There is legitimate concern about administration being brought wholesale from the corporate sector into the church, a definite reaction against the “corporate image” as found in some American megachurches. Such passion provokes comments like the following:

⁹⁸ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 4 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1931), 174.

⁹⁹ Kilinski and Wofford, *Organization and Leadership*, 51.

I believe that the one problem underlying all others is that we have moved both pastors and churches from a community model to a corporation model. In some churches the pastor is the preaching machine while someone else runs the business side of things. In other churches the pastor is the CEO, the boss, the chairman of the board. But in both cases the pastor is a corporate officer, not a shepherd.¹⁰¹

I am having the depressing experience reading congregational descriptions of what these churches want in pastor. With hardly an exception they don't want pastors at all- they want managers of their religious company. They want a pastor they can follow so they won't have to bother with following Jesus anymore.¹⁰²

The other resistance comes from the shepherds themselves. Many church management writers agree that most pastors are hired for their preaching and teaching skills. They are probably not gifted administratively, and they have received little if any training in the area of church leadership and administration. Actually, most do not like it. Fuller Seminary colleagues David Luecke and Sam Southard, tell of a sociologist, Samuel Blizzard, who reported on a representative study of 690 ministers:

As these ministers told Blizzard about the various roles of their work, they tended to attach the most importance to their role as preacher, followed by pastor, priest, and teacher. Their roles as organizer and administrator were least important to them. Likewise, they felt most effective and satisfied in their preacher and pastor roles, with organizer and administrator again at the bottom of the list. Yet, it was these least preferred roles where they reported spending the most time.¹⁰³

Luecke and Southard conclude that this dilemma is stressful. Though stating the obvious, they proceed to make an excellent point as to the pastor's misperception about administration as ministry:

¹⁰⁰ Lawrence Eyres, *The Elders of the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1975), 64-68.

¹⁰¹ Glenn E. Wagner, *Escape From Church, Inc.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 21.

¹⁰² Marva Dawn and Eugene Peterson, *The Unnecessary Pastor* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 4.

These complaints reveal a narrow view of administration. Such pastors have a faulty concept of the function. They cannot really see how the church is built up through the building up of people. Pastors who prefer to see mostly the needs of the people in front of them are also likely to be ineffective activating a church mission that reaches beyond the immediate concerns of the members.¹⁰⁴

Others agree with a ministry view of administration: “Administration does not keep me from people. It is people. It doesn’t prevent my serving them; it gives me a way to serve them.”¹⁰⁵

An Apologetic for Church Administration

One of the words used in the New Testament for the elders is *episkopos*, an overseer. The very name instructs us as to the leader’s role. New Testament commentator William Barclay affirms the meaning of *episkopos* (overseer) as a “superintendent” and agrees with most scholarship that the terms “overseer” and “elder” refer to the same office in the New Testament church.¹⁰⁶ Evangelical authors may concede to different nuances implied by the various terms, but most concur that one office is meant.¹⁰⁷ Thus elders have watchful oversight, “guardianship” of the congregation.¹⁰⁸ This requires giving direction to people in the church, if for nothing else than their own safety. Some authors are opposed to any official connection between the ministries of the saints and

¹⁰³ David S. Luecke and Samuel Southard, *Pastoral Administration* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 11.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

¹⁰⁵ Leith Anderson, Don Cousins, and Arthur DeKruyter, *Mastering Church Management* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1990), 41.

¹⁰⁶ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 80-82.

¹⁰⁷ See Robert Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 141; Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 1091; and Eyres, *Elders*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “episkopos.”

the formal leadership of the church, other than that of support and cheering.¹⁰⁹ Such a hard line is unnecessary. Commentators on church structure admit to a certain amount of flexibility within Scriptural parameters.¹¹⁰ Certainly, helping to manage people in their ministries cannot be a violation of their spiritual freedom. In fact, it is part of serving them.

In defense of sound management in the church, we could go back through the years to men who would never be accused of being “company men” rather than shepherds. W.A. Criswell, the famous pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, TX, and obviously a strong leader, writes in his *Guidebook for Pastors* that the senior pastor should see to the organization of the ministry and direct the staff.¹¹¹ Few would question the spiritual authenticity of C. H. Spurgeon, yet in his leadership of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in the nineteenth century he relied heavily upon an administrator to achieve spiritual ends.¹¹² Andrew Blackwood of Princeton, writing in 1949, spoke to the necessary work of vision and delegation in a managerial way. Commenting on the account of Jethro with Moses he writes:

Many a pastor today has no broad plan for the field.
He does not seek advice from men who excel in his line.
He does not delegate responsibility to his teammates.
He does not let strong men work in their own ways.
He does not discover and enlist new leaders.¹¹³

The Reformed pastor Lowell Ditzen, writing in 1962 before the megachurch movement, comments about organizing and leadership in the parish. Ditzen mentions an

¹⁰⁹ Lawrence O. Richards and Clyde Hoeldtke, *A Theology of Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1980), 98.

¹¹⁰ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1094-1097; and Getz, *Sharpening the Focus*, 130.

¹¹¹ W.A. Criswell, *Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1980), 81- 99.

¹¹² G. Holden Pike, *James Archer Spurgeon* (London: Alexander & Shepherd, 1894), 3.

unimpressive pastor being quite successful by exercising one simple rule of management: thoroughness. His friend said his success came from his “boundless moral obligation to be thorough and meticulous.” Further, the pastor would live by the principle, “do it now.”¹¹⁴

Three other texts are of note. *Minding God's Business*, by Ray Anderson, sets forth the defense of systems being neutral. What makes them “spiritual” is the purpose and controlling attitude. He leans toward the “general will of God” view, similar to Gary Friesen’s view in *Decision Making and the Will of God*.¹¹⁵ This may be taken to downplay the Holy Spirit’s role in guidance and leading, something godly administrators surely seek. Nevertheless, a sure defense of administration emerges, and good insight, such as in the following excerpt:

1. Effective leadership means reading the signs of God's promise in the context of present events, and translating these signs into goals; this is ‘preparing the way of the Lord.’
2. Effective leadership means directing and coordinating the energies and resources of the organization toward realization of the goals; this is being a ‘faithful steward’ of God's business.
3. Effective leadership means maintaining quality control over the character and purpose of the organization; this is to ‘give proof before the churches’ of love and obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 8:24).¹¹⁶

Anderson rightly teaches that it is a leader’s job to discern “what the Father is doing”¹¹⁷ in the world, so the church can press into the will of God. Anderson would also affirm that it is unwise to plan first and then pray for God’s blessing as an attempt to

¹¹³ Andrew W. Blackwood, *Pastoral Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1980), 31

¹¹⁴ Lowell Russell Ditzen, *Church Administration* (New York: MacMillan, 1962), 7.

¹¹⁵ Gary Friesen, *Decision Making and the Will of God* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980). His thesis is that God’s will is discovered through sanctified sense and biblical principles. “Spirit-leading” is suspect.

¹¹⁶ Ray S. Anderson, *Minding God's Business* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986), 65.

guarantee the outcome. These reflect echoes of the marketplace plea for vision and transformation.

Bruce Jones' approach is practical and common-sensical in *Ministerial Leadership in a Managerial World*. He folds in thinking about spiritual gifting to grasp the inclinations of pastors in terms of administration. He gives three main categories according to the leading gifts: leader, administrator, and pastor.¹¹⁸ (He distinguishes those first two gifts which Clinton combined.) He gives practical staff development advice, though his statistics are based on the work of Lyle Schaller and are outdated. Still, they point out that after a certain volume of attendance, church leadership style shifts from "big family" to "corporate," which includes strong pastoral leadership.¹¹⁹

A much cited text in church administration writings was *The Wheel Within The Wheel*, by Richard Hutcheson, clergyman and denominational executive for the Presbyterian Church (USA). His thesis is based on the principle that the Holy Spirit is primary in the church (the inner wheel of the machine), but certain machinery is necessary nonetheless. Here is his defense:

Let us lay to rest once for all any lingering suspicion that the Biblical view of the church is inherently in conflict with management science or organizational techniques. Even though its uniqueness has at times led to anti-organizational movements, the church is and will always be a human organization. Its first responsibility is to God. Yet while functioning in faithfulness to God and his purposes, it must use the best human resources available. And it must use these resources within a church that must always remain God-centered.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ John 5: 19-20.

¹¹⁸ Bruce W. Jones, *Ministerial Leadership in a Managerial World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988), 70-71.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹²⁰ Hutcheson, *Wheel Within the Wheel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 63.

Luecke and Southard make an excellent case for pastors fulfilling the duty of administration as ministry, and yet they do not want shepherds to get bogged down in administrative details. Here is their counsel:

Understand the source of your dissatisfaction. We assume we are addressing pastors who have trouble finding church administration to be a real source of joy in their work...We suggest that pastors complain about administration when they view it as calling them to do more of what does not come instinctively. They focus on the demands that take them away from their natural interests. Be open to comprehensive leadership through mutual ministry.¹²¹

They comment that some pastors do not wish to be dependent either upon the Spirit or upon Christian leaders. Yet, team ministry is obviously the design of the Holy Spirit in gifting the church. Luecke and Southard distinguish two major leadership inclinations (rather than four or more personality types). They suggest that it is helpful to understand whether our ministry passion is *relational* or *task-oriented*. A leader who knows his inclinations can better compensate in the area of personal management. God may have some “other-gifted” person to complement the leader’s gifts and inclinations. This is particularly relevant to the concept of the SPEP team.

However, it is understandable to find pastoral reluctance to turn the reins over to a layman who may be gifted or skilled in business. Too often wrong-spirited individuals have been placed in leadership because of status or business skill alone.¹²² There must be a kingdom mindset first, and then talent to place under the Spirit’s control. Christian management author Michael Dibbert was reluctant to ask the pastor to give up control of ministry:

¹²¹ Luecke and Southard, *Pastoral Administration*, 20, 23.

¹²² Dick Iverson, *Team Ministry* (Portland, OR: Bible Temple Publishing, 1984), 21ff. An important issue to Iverson is to have in place only qualified leaders.

How many of these business people have practical ministry experience and understand (1) the purposes of the church, and (2) their personal role in the church in light of that purpose?¹²³

Integration of Shepherding and Administration

It is interesting to note that growing churches generally have pastoral leaders who are at least comfortable with a degree of administrative ability. Luecke and Southard, referencing findings by James Ashbrook, add that those pastors who were “synthesizers” of the pastoral role and administration were found to be happier and more effective.¹²⁴ Could there not be a sharing of these two dimensions (shepherding and administrating) between two co-leaders? Indeed, it seems logical that both strong pastoral leadership and strong administrative leadership would be needed to adequately steward church growth in a large context. Further, since spiritual gifts were not intended to cause exclusivity in people’s service, two differently gifted persons could complement each other’s skills and gifts through a close working relationship.

Researchers Martin Butler and Robert Herman, in an unusually careful selection sample, narrowed a field of over 1000 pastors to 49 names. With an 85% response rate, they were able to come up with the following substantial conclusions:

The fact that differences between especially effective and less effective ministers were explained more by skills than by demographic variables supports the value of leadership education. Although a certain degree of native ability is probably necessary, it is possible to teach a person to be a better planner, delegator, change agent, multitasker, and problem solver. It is also possible to guide a minister-to-be into attitudes that foster care for individuals, a servant motif, and personal integrity. Thus the implications for the selection and education of ministers are clear. Educational institutions for

¹²³ Michael T. Dibbert, *Spiritual Leadership, Responsible Management* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 21.

¹²⁴ Luecke and Southard, *Pastoral Administration*, 16.

ministers should consider and strengthen curricula designed to enhance ministerial leadership skills.

Congregations in search of a minister should give explicit attention to assessing the extent to which candidates have developed their ministerial skills.¹²⁵

In response to this admonishment, theological schools have risen to meet the challenge.¹²⁶ Regardless of the source of the wisdom gleaned, Hutcheson suggests that whenever embracing management theories, it is the minister's job

1. To examine these issues and techniques *theologically* - that is, from the perspective of the church's "givens."
2. To use them *selectively* - that is, to employ those methods and approaches that are congruent with the church's "givens," and to reject those that reflect or promote assumptions which are at odds with those of the church.
3. To use them in conjunction with, and as subsidiary to, the *church's own unique gifts* - that is, to use them as servants of, rather than substitutes for, the Holy Spirit.¹²⁷

Concluding this section on management, it can be affirmed that both wisdom gained by training and the existence of relevant spiritual giftings provide the basis of an apologetic for church administration. It will require a paradigm shift for many ministers to think of administration as a legitimate part of ministry. Derailing corporate spirituality with bureaucracy is possible, but excellence in a church's ministry appears impossible without good leaders and administrators.

Church Size and Staffing

Historical Comparisons

"It is better to get ten men to work than to do the work of ten men."

¹²⁵ Martin D. Butler and Robert D. Herman, "Effective Ministerial Leadership," *Non-Profit Management and Leadership*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Spring 1999), 238.

¹²⁶ E.g., Bethel Seminary in Minneapolis partners with Willow Creek Community Church to provide accredited leadership studies.

¹²⁷ Hutcheson, *Wheel Within the Wheel*, 155. Italics original.

- D.L. Moody¹²⁸

Ditzen's *Handbook of Church Administration* dates from 1962. In it he gives an early "recommended church staff" listing according to church size in terms of members:

At 300 members: one minister, one part-time sexton, and possibly a part-time music leader.

At 600 members: the same, plus a part-time secretary and part-time treasurer.

At 800: the same, plus a part-time student assistant, and the secretary and sexton become full-time.

At 1200 members: add a Director of Religious Education, a part-time parish visitor and another secretary.

At 1600: Two ministers, Director of Religious Education, two secretaries, two sextons, full time organist/choir director and a part-time financial secretary.¹²⁹

Those were the days! By 1973 Kilinski and Wofford suggested a little healthier spread of labor:¹³⁰

Size	Ministry Staff					I	Support		
	Senior	Educ	Youth	Music	Special		Secr	Cust	special
1-200	X					I	X*		
2-300	X	X*				I	X*		
3-400	X	X				I	X		
4-500	X	X	X*	X*		I	X	X	
5-600	X	X	X	X*		I	XX*	X	
6-700	X	X	X	X*	InternX*		XX	X	
7-800	X	X	X	X	InternX*		XX	XX*	
8-900	X	X	X	X	InternX*		XX	XX	
9-1000	X	X	X	X	X Assoc		XXX	XX	
1000-1500	X	X	X	X	XXX Assoc/Child		XXX	XX	X Business-

¹²⁸ Quoted in Blackwood, *Pastoral Leadership*, 33.

¹²⁹ Ditzen, *Handbook*, 185.

¹³⁰ Kilinski and Wofford, *Organization and Leadership*, 176.

1500-2000	X	X	X	XXXX	Assoc	XXX	XX	X	Manager
Child, College, Adult									

These figures reflect approximately a 200 to 1 ratio for church attendees to pastoral staff. In the 2000s the ratio has moved to 150 parishioners per staff person. This ratio has been based on the capacity of a pastor to realistically care for a certain number of people, referred to as “span of care.” McIntosh insists that one pastoral staff should be in place for every 150 people in attendance. However, since his concern is how to staff for growth, he recommends that the staff person should be in place in advance to bring in new parishioners.¹³¹ In other words, to grow to 450, a church should add a third pastoral staff member at 300. The implication for the large, growing church is that a multiple staff team approach to ministry is in order.

Spans of care vary with the giftedness of the leader. Charles Spurgeon, the “Prince of Preachers,” could carry the weight of ministry to thousands at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and its related parachurch ministries. However, his brother James was the true manager of these ministries. He was a prototype of the “executive pastor,” a good public leader and a diligent administrator.¹³² On a more modest level, Richard Baxter would minister personally each year to *eight hundred* families. This could easily represent over 2000 souls. He did so with only one pastoral assistant!¹³³ However, ministering in the seventeenth century meant that his constituency was agrarian or craft-centered, and hence available during the day. There are cultural and social differences unique to large churches in modern America.

¹³¹ McIntosh, *Staff Your Church*, 42.

¹³² Pike, *James Archer Spurgeon*, 2, 93-97.

Role Shifts in Pastoral Leadership

Lyle Schaller has substantial insight into the context of larger churches. He explains the distinctives in a thorough list. Here are a few highlights:

1. Perhaps the most widely held misconception about large congregations is that they are enjoying a plethora of leadership.
2. The larger the number of persons in the group, the greater the demands the collection of people place on the leadership to initiate.
3. The larger the congregation, the greater the conflict over use of rooms and the greater volume of complaints that ‘somebody has been using our room.’
4. The larger the congregation, the more critical the need for a systematic and intentional system for the development and maintenance of a network of lay volunteers.
5. The larger the congregation, the more necessary it is to plan for the care of the members rather than assume it will happen spontaneously.
6. The larger the congregation, the more important it is to have a carefully designed, systematic, and highly redundant internal communication system.
7. The larger the congregation, the greater the temptation for many leaders to ‘play house’ and to focus on real estate concerns rather than to grapple with questions of purpose, role, and mission.
8. The larger the congregation, the more disruptive are changes in the professional staff.
9. The larger the congregation, the more important it becomes for everyone, and especially for the senior minister, to recognize and accept the fact that the senior minister cannot be the shepherd, or pastor, to every member.
10. The larger the professional staff, the more likely there will be confusion over who a particular member will turn to as *my* pastor in time of personal or family crisis.
11. The larger the congregation, the more important it is to encourage long pastorates.
12. The larger the congregation, the greater the institutional pressure on the senior minister to place a higher priority on administration rather than on spending time with members in a pastoral role.
13. The larger the congregation, the more crucial it is in program planning to use both the small group model and the large group model in program development.

¹³³ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1982), xviii.

14. The larger the congregation, the greater the need for an organizational and decision-making structure that emphasizes performance.

15. The larger the congregation, the greater the need for carefully disciplined planning and preparation of every event and program.¹³⁴

All of these items indicate a burgeoning set of pressures on the senior pastor.

Several things stand out as relevant when a corporate model prevails: systematic care, administration, and management become necessary, including among the pastoral staff. Ongoing measurement and performance quality become critical issues. Such an administrative burden makes an executive or administrative pastor more necessary.

Schaller mentions three differences worth commenting on. First is the need for what Bill Hybels refers to as “volunteer intensive” organization. Built upon servants and ministry leaders, this administrative and managerial endeavor does not “just happen.”¹³⁵ This requires the intentional development and placement of systems, administratively led.

Second is the tenure of the senior pastor. Stability (i.e., integrity, credibility) and longevity play a part in the health and welfare of the assembly. Schaller asserts,

While there is no evidence to prove that either long pastorates or expansion of the program staff will produce numerical growth in a church, there is very persuasive evidence that suggests it is rare to find a growing congregation that has sustained its growth for a long period of time that has not had the benefits of both long pastorates and an adequate program staff.¹³⁶

Rick Warren affirms this in *The Purpose Driven Church*:

Healthy, large churches are led by pastors who have been there a long time. I found dozens of examples. A long pastorate does not

¹³⁴ Schaller, *Multiple Staff*, 17-27.

¹³⁵ Bill Hybels and Lee Strobel, *Creating a Volunteer Intensive Organization*, Willow Creek Association, DF9704, 1997, cassette.

¹³⁶ Schaller, *Multiple Staff*, 57.

guarantee a church will grow, but changing pastors every few years guarantees a church *won't* grow.¹³⁷

Third, as churches grow, the pastor becomes increasingly limited in giving direct care to the body. He must do it through others. He must become a “rancher” rather than a shepherd.¹³⁸ Carl George put the pattern behind this idea on paper as a strategy.¹³⁹

Modeling a cell church leadership layout after Moses’ encounter with Jethro in Exodus 12, he simply commits care to faithful men. This multiplication principle is repeated in 1 Timothy 2:2. While Larry Richards dismisses this lesson outright as an “Old Testament hierarchical model,” the present study affirms that the model can be enhanced by humble servant leadership and team-building.¹⁴⁰ The SPEP team, along with elders and other spiritual leaders, can and must create an appropriate system for pastoral care.

McIntosh offers the following “rules of thumb” regarding congregational size:

200.....The pastor models shepherding - to all the people personally.

400.....The pastor delegates - shepherd all the people through volunteers.

600.....The pastor transfers part of role - shepherd all the people through leaders.

800.....The pastor transfers all of role - shepherd all the people through pastoral staff.¹⁴¹

He also compares the change of pastoral roles to the corporate model where he moves from worker, to skilled, to lead man, to foreman and supervisor, to middle and top management (all this up to a congregational size of 800). Finally, the large church pastor

¹³⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 31.

¹³⁸ An unfortunate metaphor, in that ranchers have cowhands who drive the cattle.

¹³⁹ Carl F. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1992), 121ff.

¹⁴⁰ Richards, *Theology*, 23, 138-141.

parallels the corporate president (up to 2000) and the chairman (beyond 2000).¹⁴² This may be arbitrary, yet there certainly is a direct connection between size and style of leadership. George categorizes churches as “large” if they get past 1000; “huge” if they pass 3000 (mega), and “beyond huge” when they pass 10,000 (meta).^{143*}

Summarizing this section, it can be demonstrated that each growth level necessitates corresponding changes in leadership. Congregational complexity, shepherding needs, limits to spans of care, including the number of staff “reports” to the pastor, necessitate the use of teams and/or co-leadership.

Team Theory and Ministry

Join a large church and you get lost in the crowd.

- John N. Vaughan¹⁴⁴

Providing pastoral care becomes a strategic issue as congregations become larger. Due to the enormity of the task, it must be shared. Senior pastors must engage other shepherds to ensure that people do not get “lost.” A church can grow in volume and depth, but it will require the reproduction of leaders and teamwork. Secular and Christian authors concur about the development of leaders:

Winning organizations have leaders at all levels. Producing those leaders is what separates the winners from the losers.¹⁴⁵

Growth can occur in various ways. If an assembly grows as a result of spiritual renewal it will eventually need a reformation of structure. For example, Evangelical Free

¹⁴¹ McIntosh. *Staff Your Church*, 78.

¹⁴² Ibid., 79.

¹⁴³ George, *Prepare Your Church*, 54. *The term “Meta” refers to the flexible, multi-congregational church.

pastor and author Bill Hull asserts the following: “After revival begins, the real work starts. Revival brings power; reformation transforms that power into lasting change.”¹⁴⁶ Growth also occurs via spiritual health in the functioning church under the guidance of diligent leadership. However the church grows, there is a great need for structure and leadership development. Failure to develop other team members is one of the “fatal errors” senior ministers can make.¹⁴⁷ The church requires an infrastructure and a cooperative leadership team committed to producing more leaders.

General Information on Teams

To highlight the relational and complementarity issues in team work, we will use the definition given by consultants and leadership authors John Katzenbach and Douglas Smith in their seminal work *The Wisdom of Teams*:

A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.¹⁴⁸

Drawing on the concept of “complementarity,” the visionary leader can use administratively oriented people to formulate strategies to implement his or her vision. However, the challenge is to fully leverage each member’s abilities. Developing a high performance team takes time, work, and application of some specific principles. Two

¹⁴⁴ John N. Vaughan, *The Large Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985), 32. Vaughan does not believe this statement.

¹⁴⁵ Tichy, *Leadership Engine*, 9.

¹⁴⁶ Bill Hull, *Revival That Reforms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1998), 11. See also Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics*, 75.

¹⁴⁷ Steven Brown, *Thirteen Fatal Errors Managers Make* (New York: Berkley Books, 1985), 19-32.

¹⁴⁸ Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1993), 45.

leading books on teams in secular literature are *Designing Team-Based Organizations* by Mohrman, Cohen, and Mohrman, and *The Wisdom of Teams* by Katzenbach and Smith, mentioned above.¹⁴⁹ Both explain the principles for the development of teams, including implications for top level executives.

Direction

Pastoral leadership styles fall between senior pastors who are heavy-handed to those who operate fully by team consensus. Yet, even with consensus servant team-leaders are needed. We know intuitively that the “buck has to stop” with someone. Leadership Summit speaker Pat MacMillan insists that having no leader is not good: “it doesn’t work.”¹⁵⁰ Mohrman et al describe the “new Manager” and his assignments: he must serve as a team member, but also *lead* as manager,” which includes vision and communication – direction.¹⁵¹

Gary McIntosh comments about leading a pastoral team in the following manner:

An executive pastor assumes much of the chief executive officer role, a pastor of care may take most of the duties of medicine man, and so forth. However, the people will continue to *hold the senior pastor responsible* for all three areas, even as his role changes from being a shepherd to being a rancher.¹⁵²

He reinforces the primary role of the senior pastor when building a staff: “The second staff person to be hired should be a person who balances the gifts and talents *of the senior*

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.; also Susan A. Mohrman, Susan G. Cohen, and Allan M. Mohrman, Jr., *Designing Team-Based Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995).

¹⁵⁰ Pat MacMillan, “Six Characteristics of High Performance Teams,” Willow Creek Association, LS9508, 1995, cassette.

¹⁵¹ Mohrman, Cohen, and Mohrman, *Team-Based*, 272-273.

¹⁵² McIntosh, *Staff Your Church*, 77. Italics mine.

pastor.”¹⁵³ Complementarity is further explored below and in the sections on pastoral staff and the SPEP.

Complements (Gifts)

Referring again to Katzenbach and Smith in *The Wisdom of Teams*, their definition of “team” adds one word with spiritual relevance: “complement.” “A team is a small number of people with *complementary* skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach, for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.”¹⁵⁴ This is good insight for pastoral staff discussions and implementation. Complementary skills and gifts were already referenced by McIntosh, above. The application becomes more complex as the team grows. As for *accountability*, churches tend to be overly merciful, or even sloppy, about accountability in anything past morals and image. *Purpose* and *approach* fit with mission and philosophy of ministry, or *values*—we operate in such a way that God is glorified and our credibility to lead is sustained. Exploring how we complement each other could make staff meetings very stimulating. According to Don Cousins, only twenty five percent of staff meetings should be business. Fifty percent percent should be training.¹⁵⁵ Katzenbach and Smith offer this team-dynamic insight:

When meetings become a chore, it is a sign that most of the people in the group are uncertain why they have gathered, beyond some notion of getting along together better. Most people consider this a waste of time. Large groups usually reach this breaking point much sooner

¹⁵³ Ibid., 31. Italics mine.

¹⁵⁴ Katzenbach and Smith, *Wisdom*, 45.

¹⁵⁵ Anderson, Cousins, and DeKruyter, *Mastering*, 147.

than small numbers of people. . . . Thus, groups much bigger than twenty or twenty-five have difficulty becoming real teams.¹⁵⁶

They list the complementary skills that must be developed for the right team mix and synthesize these to three: (1) technical or functional skill, (2) problem-solving and decision-making skill, (3) interpersonal skills, including communication and conflict resolution.¹⁵⁷ From a spiritual perspective, the last skill would be first. Interpersonal skill, character, honesty, and trust-building would be primary. Technical skill, or gifting, should balance the rest of the team.

Alignment (Unity)

Co-authors George Labovitz and Victor Rosansky emphasize the need for alignment in the organization, describing it as both *vertical* and *horizontal*: a clear leadership vision from above, and everyone rowing in the same direction.¹⁵⁸ They point this out as “the main thing:”

The main thing for the organization as a whole must be a common and unifying concept to which every unit can contribute. . . . Each department and team must be able to see a direct relationship between what it does and this overarching goal. . . . The main thing must be clear, easy to understand, consistent with the strategy of the organization, and actionable by every group and individual.¹⁵⁹

The authors emphasize the significance of alignment as “the main thing.” “Vertical alignment energizes people, provides direction, and offers opportunity for involvement.” As an illustration they tell the story of FedEx winning the 1990 Baldrige Award largely because the Baldrige examiner was so impressed with a woman in the FedEx airport

¹⁵⁶ Katzenbach and Smith, *Wisdom*, 49-50.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁵⁸ George Labovitz and Victor Rosansky, *Alignment* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 26.

drop-off booth. She was so clear and articulate about what they were doing and where they were going, even though a continent away from headquarters, that she won the prize for them.¹⁶⁰ Casting vision that is so pervasive is a constant job, and Hybels emphasizes correctly that people's "vision bucket" needs continual replenishing.¹⁶¹ Consequently, this must be a shared responsibility for an SPEP team; executive pastors can and must continually articulate their shared vision and values.

Excellent insight was shared by one Leadership Summit speaker, Pat MacMillan, on the team alignment issue. He described a team rowing a boat out to sea. There are two non-aligned team members: one is trying to row to shore, and the other is just slightly turned, rowing just a little off target. He then asked which rower is the most dangerous person to the team? The answer is the rower who is just slightly off target. The first person is obviously not interested in going to sea. He will not be a problem for long, as he will soon get out of the boat. The other person, however, *looks* like he is on the team. Therefore he has the greatest potential for disruption at the worst possible moment.¹⁶² Senior pastors and executive pastors have the responsibility of challenging those who are not really on the team.

MacMillan also describes the useful dynamics of productive teams. Three are directly tied to pastoral leadership. First, group commitment to a very clear purpose; second, a division of labor; third, the need to develop solid relationships which especially involve trust, respect, acceptance of differences, shared goals, courtesy, and

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 43-44.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 27-28.

¹⁶¹ Bill Hybels and Lee Strobel, *Creating Urgency Through Vision*, Willow Creek Association, DF9804, 1998, cassette.

¹⁶² MacMillan, *High Performance*.

accountability. He insists that teams need a leader, a facilitator and inspirer, to fully leverage the potential of the team.

The team environment secular leaders aim to establish is a safe place for risk-taking, synergy, accountability, and creative collaboration. The church, filled with gifts and grace, is a place that teams can potentially work. There is abundant evidence for teams in the Scripture, both Old and New Testaments. Even the texts on leadership in the church imply teamwork.¹⁶³

Pastoral Staff

Marvin Judy's *The Multiple Staff Ministry* was traditional in the sense that "authority is assigned by the congregation to the senior minister as the leader."¹⁶⁴ Judy was insightful and forward-looking as he focused on the concept of "co-pastoring" (my term), where he states that such pastoral arrangements may have "equal salaries, equal pulpit time, and equal administrative responsibilities." He adds, however, "Age differences, salary discrepancies, and areas of responsibility emerge, causing, almost without exception, one of the ministers to be looked upon by the congregation and other members of the staff as senior in action, if not in name."¹⁶⁵ This is an interesting and highly practical insight.

Judy describes the senior minister in the following manner:

The term "executive minister" is more descriptive of what the office is... the term "senior minister" is used with reservations. The title implies seniority in executive authority, not seniority in professional abilities on the staff.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Acts 15:6; 1 Timothy 3; James 5:14.

¹⁶⁴ Judy, *Multiple Staff*, 49.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

He continues to affirm the view of the senior pastor as the authoritative leader of the team unless such authority is shared with a co-pastor or “administrative pastor.”¹⁶⁷

The task of the senior minister is to help create a climate within the congregation, and more especially the employed staff, which will bring about maximum participation of each person involved. . . . On the one hand, they are expected by the congregation and employed staff to be the executive of the staff. On the other hand, the senior minister is expected to carry a full professional role as minister and pastor while working with the other members of the staff.¹⁶⁸

Judy concurs with most church administration writers: the senior pastor has the lead role. But in the last comment he points to the overwhelming difficulty of being expected to “do it all.” Consequently, he urges the senior pastor to select a *complementary* staff. Leith Anderson describes a pastor’s choice to adjust to a growing congregation, which includes a role shift in that he is no longer the first person called. For leadership not to adjust is a church growth restrictor, as are the alternatives Anderson lists below:

The other alternatives are clear: (1) limit the size of the church to the leadership style and relational needs of the pastor, (2) push a pastor to keep adding more spokes to the hub until he or she burns out, (3) change pastors so the church can get a pastor who relates differently, while the outgoing pastor can find another church to fit his or her style.¹⁶⁹

He further asserts that most choose the first alternative, and thus, out of the 375,000 churches in America, 95% are no larger than 250 people. To grow past one pastor’s gifting and skills, other complementary servants are necessary. We know this is true from the biblical concept of the body of Christ having differing gifts, but multiple

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 50.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 97, 98.

¹⁶⁹ Leith Anderson, *A Church for the 21st Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1992), 177.

staff is a smart option, as well as multiple ministries. Schaller gives eight reasons for adding staff today:

1. Sensitivity to different and complex demography--much more complex than in 1955.
2. Specialization in society--and expected in the church.
3. Choices--people want them.
4. The nuclear family is in decline--women volunteers are fewer.
5. The “hire it out” mentality.
6. Americanization--national diversity means “less glue” for the church congregation.
7. Loyalty is on the decline.
8. Inter-denominational marriage--complexities put more pressure on staff.¹⁷⁰

I would add that these factors also bring limits to a pastoral staff’s “span of care.” Martin and McIntosh make some modern staffing comparisons alluding to the growing complexity of ministry and to an age of specialization:¹⁷¹

That was then...	This is now...
Generalists	Specialists
Pastoral counseling	Pastor of Counseling
Pastoral visitation	Pastor of Visitation
Administrative help	Pastor of Administration
Unspoken expectations	Performance objectives
Staff as employees	Staff as associates
Leadership demanded	Leadership earned
A boss	A mentor
Staff care	Lay care

¹⁷⁰ Schaller, *Multiple Staff*, 53-55.

¹⁷¹ Glen Martin and Gary McIntosh, *The Issachar Factor* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 58, 92.

They also affirm that the senior pastor has the primary role in staff selection and staff alignment with the church's vision, 99% of the time.¹⁷² Further, in a magazine article about transitioning to multiple staff, William Bargiol writes:

In most multistaff structures the pastor, or perhaps the one identified as "senior pastor," is expected to function as the general administrator. Administration simply means making sure that everything gets assigned to the proper persons for attention and action, and calling each person to accountability. Such a role is essential to good group activity.

In a multistaff context the pastor must function in one of two basic ways. He must either be the authoritative "man in control," or he must be the leader of a team.¹⁷³

The appropriate blending of personality traits, leadership styles, and gifting in a team is ideal. Malphurs recommends investigating spiritual gifts, passions, personality, and natural talents when looking for staff members.¹⁷⁴ However, consider the incredible burden that all of these assertions have placed upon the senior pastor. It makes sense to surround him with other gifted, complementary team members. This raises a critical point. Since there is agreement that pastors usually incline toward the shepherd or teaching/preaching role, why not fill in the growing gap of administration? Jim Means conveys his passion that the pastoral ministry not be lost:

In its decidedly perverted form, the pastoral director becomes the CEO (chief executive officer), who efficiently runs the church as one would run a successful business enterprise or a Chamber of Commerce . . . Nothing declares the contamination of the CEO role more than the following statement: "In one church growth research project it was discovered that in many churches 85 percent of

¹⁷² Ibid., 94.

¹⁷³ J. William Bargiol, "Role Change from Single Staff to Multistaff Church," *Church Administration*, vol. 38, no. 4 (January 1997), 35.

¹⁷⁴ Malphurs, *Pouring*, 51-53.

available time is given to management, while only 15 percent of time is given for ministry.”¹⁷⁵

In such a context it is clear that priorities are out of balance. The corporate “machine” has swallowed up the minister and ministry. The primary reason for the church’s existence is, at best, marginalized. George Barna concurs with this.¹⁷⁶ He asserts that gifted shepherds, while acknowledging *some* administration as necessary and even as ministry, ought not be derailed from the use of their primary, motivational gifts.

If my experiences and observations are correct, it seems clear that a healthy church is one which is not exclusively dependent upon the pastor for the final decisions on all programs and events. The pastor is ideally more of a defender of the vision and dispenser of authority and encouragement than an operations manager. . . . In much the same way, I found that the leaders of the growing churches delegated responsibility without anxiety...it provided the senior pastor the freedom to concentrate on the areas of giftedness which probably allowed him to rise to the position of senior pastor in the first place. In my estimation, *few of these men were truly gifted administrators.*¹⁷⁷

While struggling with church growth and the need for shepherding, pastors have been encouraged to pastor the staff and leaders first, and the congregation through the staff and leaders. This is referred to as the “Jethro model,” and it seems a healthy and reasonable alternative to being resigned to the fact that it is God’s will for churches to remain small.¹⁷⁸ Smallness may be one solution. An extraordinary work of the Spirit among the people may be another. Somehow the early church was able to thrive with

¹⁷⁵ James E. Means, *Effective Pastors for a New Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 88. Means quotes Bruce Jones, *Ministerial Leadership*, 88.

¹⁷⁶ George Barna, *User Friendly Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), 182.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 156, 144.

¹⁷⁸ George, *Prepare Your Church*, 54-60. Italics mine.

thousands, as it did in Jerusalem in Acts 2. They had a leadership team of “pastoral staff” who facilitated growth and health.

The Associate Pastor

Probably no position on the church staff is fraught with as many problems as is that of the associate minister.¹⁷⁹

- Marvin Judy

Marvin Judy encourages the associate to learn the “symbiosis” needed to work well with the senior pastor. There are various texts on the position and role of associate pastors. One expresses an author’s frustrating journey in the associate pastor position. Sometimes he was misunderstood or questioned as to why he was not interested in “moving up.” He makes it clear that even if the associate is viewed as a VP working alongside the CEO, there is clearly *not* an equal standing.¹⁸⁰ The very title of one dissertation reflects this perception: “Running the Race in Second Place.”¹⁸¹ No text is as clear and strong on the associate’s subordinate role as *The Second Man*, by Walter Beebe. While this book, as the others, gives valuable encouragement about “death to self” (self-effacement), Beebe basically describes the associate’s role as *an administrative* “assistant pastor:” he occasionally preaches, visits, and serves at the church altar in evangelism, but primarily he is there to take a load of details away from the senior pastor.¹⁸² Depending on the church, the associate may have an administrative or leadership role with the rest of the staff as an executive pastor might.

¹⁷⁹ Judy, *Multiple Staff*, 111.

¹⁸⁰ Robert J. Radcliffe, *Effective Ministry As an Associate Pastor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1998), 83.

¹⁸¹ Philip Schmunk, “Running the Race in Second Place: How to Be a Winning Associate Pastor” (D.Min. diss., Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1995).

¹⁸² Beebe, *Second Man*, 51.

The title of “associate pastor” would mean that this man is to be treated with the same respect as the pastor in that they are co-laborers as heads of the church. In many instances this would mean that the man does not feel called to pastor the church but, as the associate worker, feels called of the Lord to assist the pastor in every way as he leads the church.¹⁸³

Of course, there are ways to make this team work well and edify the members.

Greg Ogden provides some insightful pointers:

1. Associate pastors should defer to the senior pastor.
2. Longevity and satisfaction are the by-products of a clearly defined role.
3. An associate’s ability to flourish depends on the inner security of the head of staff.
4. A senior pastor's spirit creates the climate for growth.
5. Senior pastors serve associates by being committed to their ministry success.
6. An associate's value is rooted in the call of God, not in the ascribed worth of the position.¹⁸⁴

There is substantial agreement throughout the literature as to the senior pastor taking the lead, encouraging, guiding, and selecting the staff. Ultimately, the senior pastor and/or the senior leadership team, is responsible for establishing the climate for the church and the team to work in. He is wise who leads a team while showing them respect and care, empowering and coaching them, directing where needed but also receiving from them, communicating clearly and being proactive with conflict.¹⁸⁵ “Wise leaders foster followers’ commitment and teamwork rather than followers’ calculating compliance.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Ibid., 13.

¹⁸⁴ Greg Ogden, “The Role of an Associate Pastor,” in *Leadership Handbooks of Practical Theology*, vol. 3., ed. James D. Berkley (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 156-157.

¹⁸⁵ Clyde McDowell, “Ten Ways To Support Your Staff,” *Vital Ministry*, vol. 1, no. 3 (January – February 1998), 38-41.

¹⁸⁶ Manz, *Leadership Wisdom of Jesus*, 146.

There are different categories of associates. Judy lists three types: intern, career, and second-ministry.¹⁸⁷ The last would typically be a retired pastor returning to minister alongside another leader, without carrying the full load of the senior pastorate. Interns are usually the younger trainees. The career associates, however, are of interest to this study. Executive pastors would be such co-pastors. Some executive pastors add another category to the mix: second career associates. Some executive pastors come from high-level management jobs (first careers) in order to fulfill a call to ministry later in life.¹⁸⁸

Female Associates

Before leaving the subject of associates, I will briefly comment on the participation of women in associate ministry. John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene make the assertion that “Outside the military management model, men and women are equally capable of inspiring commitment and bringing out the best in people.”¹⁸⁹ In addition, they highlight a trend toward the inclusion of females in senior or associate level ministry roles. In *Megatrends 2000* they state:

With the rejection of science as religion has come the rise of the feminine in the most patriarchal of institutions, churches. Today eighty-four denominations ordain women, and there are 21,000 female ministers in U.S. churches.¹⁹⁰

Mainline denominational authors tend to take this for granted. Those from a more conservative ecclesiology should seek to be creative about utilizing this burgeoning work

¹⁸⁷ Judy, *Multiple Staff*, 116-125.

¹⁸⁸ E.g., Howard Lucy, first executive pastor at Union Center Christian Church, Endicott, NY, took an early retirement from IBM to enter youth ministry.

¹⁸⁹ John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1990), 219.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 273.

force. Relevant to the present study is the practice in some charismatic churches of having a husband and wife co-pastor team. However, a viable biblical defense for this staff arrangement might be elusive. One author's comments insisted that since she and her husband were "one," they should *both* be considered the "pastor." Her husband concurs, adding, "God told me WE are the pastor."¹⁹¹

Some churches have employed females for high-level administrative positions, precursors to executive pastors. Wes Kiel, who used a three month sabbatical to research executive pastors in over sixty churches, comments:

Although I tried to locate churches with female executive pastors, I was unable to do so. I met a female executive pastor before the idea of the sabbatical study was even born but before the study got underway, that relationship was terminated.¹⁹²

Since the trend that Naisbitt and Aburdene identify is bound to continue, undoubtedly other gender mixed SPEP team models will arise. This opens up an opportunity for substantial research concerning both the viability and the dynamics of serving in a gender-mixed senior-level pastoral team.

To conclude this section, it is clear that to be effective the pastoral staff must work as a team to bring direction and alignment to the ministries of the church. Historically, associates have experienced particular difficulties when a senior leader is insecure or unwilling to maximize a complementary leader. The modern trend toward specialization in ministry can work to complement a church staff when the dynamics are right to add a new member, yet added staff members accentuate the need for an administrative leader to direct and coach them.

¹⁹¹ Jean Coleman, "How Do You Co-Pastor With Your Husband?," in *Solving the Ministry's Toughest Problems*, vol.1, ed. Stephen E. Strang (Alamonte Springs, FL: Strang Communications Company, 1984), 361.

Co-Leadership and Ministry

Co-Leaders

Republican Rome had a successful system of co-leadership that lasted for over four centuries . . . [Their] practices are supported by modern research in social cognition and teams, and together they help answer the question: How do you establish a system in which two heads *really* are better than one?¹⁹³

As remarkable as it may seem, powerful co-leadership has existed and does exist.

Corporate suites have been re-designed to appoint dual leaders to the “corner office.”

Sample companies include Warner Brothers, Bell Atlantic/GTE, and J.C. Penney.¹⁹⁴

A 1997 survey of 3,000 American family businesses conducted by Arthur Andersen and MassMutual found that 10% of these companies had co-CEOs and 42% were contemplating co-leadership as a *serious succession strategy*.¹⁹⁵

The lessons from history indicate that co-leadership has great potential for conflict, but if successful, even greater potential for mutuality and team synergy.

Co-leaders are a uniquely structured team of two people, and co-leadership is a much shorter and more natural step away from shared (but usually unequal) team leadership than it is from a hierarchical single commander.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Wes Kiel, “The Executive Pastor,” 3.

¹⁹³ David Sally, “Co-Leadership: Lessons from Republican Rome,” *California Management Review*, vol. 44, no.4 (Summer 2002), 84.

¹⁹⁴ David Heenan and Warren Bennis, *Co-Leaders: The Power of Great Partnerships* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999), 257.

¹⁹⁵ Sally, “Co Leadership,” 85. Sally quotes statistics from P.S. Estess, “Two’s Company,” *Entrepreneur*, May 1997, 90-92. Italics mine.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

Evidence of mutuality and power-sharing in the leadership of Roman co-consuls is reported in the form of five relevant principles: (1) co-leaders arrive and depart together; (2) they have no chance of immediately and permanently ascending to solo leadership; (3) there may be two leaders, but there is one office; (4) there is shared power and each can veto the other; (5) there is a need for self-denial and humility.¹⁹⁷ Reference has been made to the security of the primary leader as central to the success of true complementary team work. In fact, the biggest problems facing high-performance executive teams are relationally based: distrust and ego. For example, a succession strategy, referenced above, is seriously impacted by the ability of co-leaders to win the battles of trust and ego.

Vivid insight can be gleaned regarding the building process for a high-performance top executive team, including the SPEP team, by observing a CEO's choice of a successor. Hans Finzel gives several reasons why leaders can't "let go" to their successors, but the two most relevant to this discussion are the CEO's *self-worth* and *lack of confidence* in the successor.¹⁹⁸ The solution is relationally based: it is found in lots of communication -- time spent together on the relationship. Dan Ciampa and Michael Watkins state that there are three stages that occur after a CEO approves a replacement: satisfaction of doing one's duty, discomfort and gradual resistance, and active resistance.¹⁹⁹ Once again, the solution resides in the relationship. According to Ciampa and Watkins, the key to defeating the resistance is open interaction about decisions and plans, thus preventing "second guessing" that erodes trust. They, along with Christian authors, refer to this type of bonding as a marriage, not to be entered into lightly and

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 87-95.

requiring hard work to make it effective.²⁰⁰ And hard work means time, a very precious resource that executives and high level leaders do not want to waste.

Ego, and control over it, was a factor in a number of famous co-leader teams. Often the second-in-command was the more effective, but more self-effacing, leader.²⁰¹ Even today, in a few exceptional corporate executive suites, there are remarkable, complementary teams. In a chapter about “The Two Bobs” (the chairman and president of Chrysler), the authors of *Co-Leaders* write:

‘Bob Lutz will go down in history as the greatest president Chrysler has ever had,’ Eaton said. Lutz in turn gave Eaton the lion’s share of credit for Chrysler’s bounce back from near death to record profits. In an interview with *USA Today*, Lutz lauded both Eaton’s openness and his comfort in sharing power for the firm’s turnaround. ‘What Bob has,’ Lutz said, ‘is self-esteem but no ego, as opposed to somebody who has ego but no self-esteem....He’s able to submerge his ego for the good of the enterprise--something a lot of executives just aren’t able to do.’²⁰²

The relational and complementary insights are quite relevant to the functioning of church leadership, especially a senior pastor/executive pastor team. Christians might expect those serving the church to do better than “worldly” businessmen, but even spiritual leaders are trapped in “earthen vessels.”²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 165.

¹⁹⁹ Ciampa and Watkins, “The Successor’s Dilemma,” 4-5.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 3. Also Kilinski and Wofford, *Organization*, 173.

²⁰¹ Heenan and Bennis, *Co-Leaders*, 81, 141. The authors describe the amazing, at times self-sacrificing, relationships of Chou En-lai with Mao Tse-tung and Anne Sullivan Macy with Helen Keller.

²⁰² Ibid., 32.

²⁰³ 2 Cor. 4:7.

Co-Pastors

According to Charles Dunahoo, “A team is two or more people committed to a common purpose and to each other with a willingness to use their gifts and abilities to carry out their mission.”²⁰⁴ He further states:

As we have studied and researched the area of the team model, it has been a mystery as to why the church has been so long in developing this concept of ministry because it is obviously the biblical pattern. The Protestant Reformation set the stage for this team model with both its doctrines of the church and the universal priesthood of all believers.²⁰⁵

Much of our experience in churches, however, has not demonstrated the healthiest team ministry. Yet teams are biblical and potentially effective.²⁰⁶ When an SPEP team is committed to a common goal, the key to success is gifting compatibility and relational commitment to each other.

There are numerous examples of seemingly successful teams of senior pastors and executive pastors. Earlier we referenced the Metropolitan Tabernacle of C.H. Spurgeon. James Spurgeon was recognized and installed as co-pastor of the Tabernacle, while clearly functioning as a full minister, but tasked with administration of its huge systems.²⁰⁷ This was born out of the “limitations” of the senior minister. After fifteen years of pastoring the Tabernacle and finding the congregational membership at 3634 and himself close to exhaustion, Charles welcomed his brother as an administrative boon.²⁰⁸

Both senior leaders held significant power but clearly defined roles. In fact, James Spurgeon, extremely talented as a leader and communicator, channeled his abilities

²⁰⁴ Charles H. Dunahoo, “Team Building: Key to Church Growth” (D. Min. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1989), 36.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 39.

²⁰⁶ Mark 3:13-19, 6:7; Acts 8:14, 13:1-3.

²⁰⁷ Pike, *James Archer Spurgeon*, 85-90.

deliberately to enhance Charles' public preaching and "point-man" role. James' vision of supporting his brother's call created a symbiosis and productivity that neither could have accomplished as solitary leaders of the Tabernacle. Their relationship contributed to the church's success, since their personal views were aligned, and mutual affection between them was evident.²⁰⁹

Such control of ego and motives is critical to a healthy pastoral staff. On a general pastoral staff level, Howard Bixby found these issues related to associate staff work satisfaction:

The number one job satisfier was, 'the confidence and cooperation of the senior pastor.' The chief dissatisfier was, 'ministry goals and philosophy conflict with the senior pastor.' The number two and three dissatisfiers are also significant in regard to staff conflict: [number 2] Poor staff communication -- few planning sessions, superficial personal relationships; and [number 3] A senior pastor who is threatened by the person or the ministry of the Minister of Education.²¹⁰

Bill Hybels, senior pastor of the Chicago area megachurch, Willow Creek Community Church, has lauded teamwork with an executive pastor as a liberating symbiosis for senior pastors.²¹¹ His audio discussion was one of the first works for general circulation dedicated particularly to this staff position. Outside of in-house church job descriptions and seminary-level profiles of needed EP characteristics, there was very little documentation of guidance for executive pastors before 1999 outside of

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 95, 100.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 101-103.

²¹⁰ Howard L. Bixby, "A Study of Job Satisfiers and Job Dissatisfiers of Ministers of Education" (Western Michigan University, 1972), 138, cited in John E. Grauley, "Conflict in Teamwork" (D.Min. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1979), 20.

²¹¹ Bill Hybels, Nancy Beach and Greg Hawkins, *The Emerging Role of the Executive Pastor*, Willow Creek Association, DF0204, 2002, cassette.

the EP network.²¹² Greg Hawkins, executive pastor at Willow Creek, reflects the symbiotic team relationship by explaining that part of his task is to “get inside [Bill’s] mind,” so as to make decisions as the senior pastor would.²¹³ Executive pastoring like this is ego-controlled and self-effacing in the best sense.

Additional comments from experts are relevant to our study: “High-performance teams are extremely rare.”²¹⁴ They take a “high degree of personal commitment,” in that relationship building and maintenance, open communication, and accountability all require intentional effort. In corporate settings, which are highly competitive, executives often resist true teamwork because, “We do not easily take responsibility for the performance of others, nor lightly let them assume responsibility for us.”²¹⁵ Katzenbach and Smith point to five wrong ideas team members have that make it tougher to form teams at the top:

- (1) The purpose of the team at the top is identical to the purpose of the company.
- (2) Membership in the team is automatic.
- (3) The role and contribution of team members, including the leader, are defined by their hierarchical and functional position.
(*So the leader will make or break performance.*)
- (4) *Spending extra time is inefficient.*
- (5) Team effectiveness depends only on communications and openness.²¹⁶

“I know teams work. But I still am not convinced it is worth the time and effort to push further in the direction of making our Executive Office into a team,” an executive confesses, indicating that he is part of the problem.²¹⁷

²¹² Greg Bourgon, “Executive Pastor Guidelines” (St. Paul, MN: Bethel Seminary, 1999). Also Leadership Network published Dave Travis’ “Beta Code” (1999) on the executive pastor. See p. 4, note 8.

²¹³ Hybels, Beach and Hawkins, *Emerging Role*.

²¹⁴ Katzenbach and Smith, *Wisdom*, 4.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

In examining co-leadership, it is has been affirmed that co-leaders have the potential to make significant contributions to their organizations, however, co-leadership requires a willingness to cooperate fully: to share power, to subdue ego, to partner with another's strengths, and to complementarily minimize their weakness. This requires investment of relational time and energy to lay the necessary foundation of trust. Getting SPEP co-leadership to work is more than a creative idea; it may be the way to survive, or better still, to prevail.

The Senior Pastor/Executive Pastor Paradigm

As the church grapples with growth, systems are needed to manage the congregation's ministry. Spiritual leaders with management skills are in demand. The executive pastor (EP) is a solution an increasing number of churches are utilizing. Most EPs have forged a job description "from scratch and without consultation with each other."²¹⁸ The first extensive exploration of the position was Wes Kiel's sabbatical project of 1988. He commented how remarkable it is that, in spite of the initial lack of consultation, the job does have recurring themes. Notice executive pastor Preston Mitchell's comment given in an interview:

My role is a little more unique than the role of a *typical* executive pastor. I don't have all the staff reporting to me. I am not the business administrator. I don't deal with finances and all that kind of stuff. I think I'm more like a *chief of staff*. I just try to do what needs to be done to help Ed manage the day-to-day operations of the church. The primary thing that I do and will continue to do is to *free up Ed Young so he can do what he needs to do* to be the best senior pastor he

²¹⁶ Ibid., 216-221. Italics mine.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 126.

²¹⁸ Kiel, "Executive Pastors," 9.

can be.²¹⁹

Job Description

What is typical? Should Mitchell's comment above be catalogued as "typical" in the very best sense of the SPEP team? Business administration is not central to the SPEP arrangement. That can be delegated. Lack of staff reporting is somewhat atypical, and yet it seems balanced by the "chief of staff" analogy. Working alongside the senior pastor as a complementary senior associate, more than an assistant, is implied.

The EP has become more commonplace as larger churches continue to appear on the evangelical landscape. The size of the church contributes to the need for this senior team leadership. However, David Fletcher, author of the first dissertation dealing directly with this office, responds to an interviewer's question about the need for a church to be at a certain size before hiring an EP:

If you look at the jobs that are being posted on job boards such as ChurchStaffing.com, you'll find that many of the churches needing an executive pastor are in the 500-member range. Here's the motivation for it. When you hire a second person on the staff, let's say a youth minister, not much is really taken off the senior pastor's plate. As a matter of fact, you are adding to the senior pastor's workload because now he has to oversee this full-time employee. But when you hire an executive pastor, you are actually taking work off the senior pastor's plate and you're putting that on someone else's plate. So for the overburdened preaching pastor, it's a relief.²²⁰

So the position has been folded into the fabric of the church, and even smaller congregations are pursuing it. Fletcher indicates that management of the staff is usual for executive pastors. Grappling with the business side of managing the church's ministry is

²¹⁹ Rez Gopez-Sindac, "The C.E. Interview: Preston Mitchell," *Church Executive Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 9 (September 2004), 11. Italics mine.

²²⁰ David Fletcher, "The C.E. Interview," 3.

inevitable. Out of concern for “worldly business” overrunning the church, some might question the SPEP team’s legitimacy. Even churches that have and believe in executive pastors may change the name to avoid the connotation of becoming too corporate or businesslike.²²¹ Yet, it is the business of the church and its pressure that has birthed the EP role and caused the rise of the EP’s deployment. To recall the C.E. interview from chapter one:

It is no secret that pastors of large and growing churches are overburdened with tremendous pressures, and the executive pastor, according to Fletcher, serves as a gatekeeper and helps relieve stress on the senior pastor so they can focus on what they do best -- preaching, teaching and casting vision.²²²

Here the pressure results, at least partly, from the gift-mix of most senior pastors. Barna reminded us that preaching and teaching are the primary giftings in nearly 70% of all pastors, while leading and administrating are found in 15% at best.”²²³ This demonstrates the primary roles of the SPEP team as understood in this study: for the senior pastor (SP), leading by teaching, vision-casting, and setting the tone for the church; for the executive pastor, leading by implementing the vision through goals and maintaining the right working atmosphere with the staff.

This study affirms that the SPEP is a co-leadership team where the EP works closely in unique partnership with the SP, more intimately than the other staff in general do. Willow Creek Community Church, referenced earlier, gave audio press to the

²²¹ E.g., Perimeter Church, Atlanta. Their EP is entitled “Staff Director.” (Phone interview with SP Randy Pope, October 2004).

²²² Gopez-Sindac, “The C.E. Interview: Fletcher,” 1.

²²³ George Barna, *Habits of Highly Effective Churches*, 32.

executive pastor in 2002.²²⁴ Their *modus operandi* is to allow EP Greg Hawkins to be an extension of SP Bill Hybels' leadership. He is a decision-maker on low, middle and high-level issues. Hawkins seeks to "get inside" Hybels' head, know what he thinks, how he would decide, and administrate accordingly.²²⁵

The level of authority is reflected in the following question related to the succession dilemma and in Fletcher's answer:

Is the executive pastor co-terminus with the senior pastor? If the senior pastor resigns, should the executive pastor resign also? . . . That's a very difficult question to answer. *For the health of the church, I always suggest that the executive pastor stay at least for the first year that the new senior pastor is present. This would allow them to see if they could develop a relationship and work well together. The key here is that there has to be a great working relationship between them. If, after a year, they were just oil and water -- great folks but not great to work together -- then the executive pastor would need to move on. But I think it would be very difficult for a church to lose both its senior pastor and executive pastor at the same time.*²²⁶

This reflects the influence the executive pastor wields in the church. Some EPs do stay on to become SPs, though it is very unusual. Gifting would influence this. In business terms, executive pastors have referred to the senior pastor's role as CEO (or CSO: Chief Spiritual Officer) and their role as the COO. One EP said, "He [the SP] preaches and I run the shop!"²²⁷ Though humorous, this last expression, referring to a true senior-associate relationship, generally communicates the meaning and intention of the executive pastor as understood among practitioners.

This should not imply embracing a "business only" mentality. "Pastor" is part of the title, and that role is included in the true senior associate SPEP team. EP Preston

²²⁴ Hybels, Beach, and Hawkins, *Emerging Role*.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Gopez-Sindac, "C.E. Interview: Fletcher," 3. Italics mine.

Mitchell, whose one-time church ministry job was spiritual development, comments:

I think my corporate background helped me bring in some business principles that we continue to use in our church. The church is never a business, and we don't make it a business, but there are principles from the business world that we can incorporate into the church that will help us operate more efficiently.²²⁸

In contrast to this needed business emphasis, the formal job description for an EP in a culturally relevant congregation speaks volumes to the potential status of the role:

The Executive Pastor is not primarily an administrator but a functionally co-equal leader within the staff. He is the only staff-person to report to the Senior Pastor, and all Sr/Exec Directors report to him. The EP is therefore seen as a *power-equal and a proxy to the SP* within the leadership. However, outside of the leadership, the SP is by far the more visible and is the vision-caster leader. The Executive Pastor would be the only associate pastor, and therefore the only pastor with a vote on the Session.²²⁹

This particular job description addresses representation to the community and organizations stating, “The EP is seen as the main representative of the SP and as an equally powerful representative of [the church] in general.” Because of the visibility of this church’s ministry, there is a great demand for personal contact and, “The only two people they will want to talk to [are] the SP or the EP. The EP ends up getting most of these referrals.”²³⁰

Competencies

Most executive pastors have a reference in their job description relating to serving the senior pastor and vision implementation. Required competencies for this include: representing the SP accurately, planning, staffing, evaluating, supervising, and managing

²²⁷ Merrit Rector, EP phone interview with author, Burnsville, MN, March, 2001.

²²⁸ Gopez-Sindac, “CE Interview: Mitchell,” 11.

²²⁹ EP job description, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, 2004, 1. Italics mine.

²³⁰ Ibid., 2.

the staff and the church ministries, and sometimes developing and shepherding the staff.²³¹ A recurring theme is relieving the SP from administrative details and more.

Hawkins mentioned learning to “read the room” to see where Hybels needed to show up.

As an extension of Hybel’s leadership, this EP learned to sense when he can cover for the SP, or if “it has to be him” who steps in.²³²

It becomes obvious that in such power-sharing, certain personal traits are required. The EP must be comfortable with a second position role and with serving the SP. He must also be trustworthy, maintaining the relationship carefully, openly, and honestly. As to the integrity of an open, loyal relationship, Hybels comments, “We cannot afford to sin against each other.”²³³ Dave Travis, who convened a focus group of executive pastors through Leadership Network, settled on nine primary questions and answers about the SPEP model, of which the following two are relational:

Who does the Executive Pastor Serve? In our view, the Executive Pastor *primarily serves the Senior Pastor*. The Senior Pastor is looking for a person to help guide the overall direction and function of the church in leadership. For this reason, the Executive Pastor’s gifts and competencies must complement the Senior Pastor. This means that the Senior Pastor must clearly define for them what they need in an Executive Pastor. They should then examine what gifts are missing and needed. The Senior Pastor will have adaptations to make but the Executive Pastor must adapt to play to the Senior Pastor’s strengths.

What is the key issue to making this work? By our experience, the key issue is *a high level of trust* between the Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor. Those teams that don’t trust each other don’t last long. A key factor in trust building is constant, honest communication.²³⁴

²³¹ Kiel, “Executive Pastor,” 3, 9. Job descriptions nearly always include direct reporting and/or service to the senior pastor.

²³² Hybels, Beach, and Hawkins, *Emerging Role*.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Dave Travis, “Beta Code,” 2.

An unpublished paper by Sam Crabtree, EP to John Piper, took the form of an advice column, with touches of humor, since so many in the EP role are learning to navigate solo. EPs in the “underground” network who asked for copies found that, the number two priority after prayer, was focusing on establishing a trust relationship with the senior pastor.²³⁵

The emphasis on the relationship with the SP is found in all writings on the EP. It is no surprise, therefore, that a seminary profile, by Greg Bourgond of Bethel Seminary, lists *loyalty* as the first quality needed for the EP office.²³⁶ Further, satisfaction with being second in command and a sense of calling to the role are important: “the SP is the ‘shepherd of the flock of the church’ while the EP is the shepherd of the systems of the church.”²³⁷ Systems oversight requires the leadership abilities of vision implementation, team-building, organization, and being mission-focused. Bourgond also emphasizes the spiritual leadership dimension for the EP by including spiritual authenticity, teaching ability, and relational skills.²³⁸ This reinforces the idea of the EP being a true co-leader, having visible influence in alignment with the SP. This leadership role lies beyond pure business administrative ability, although some successful EPs have come from that background. Kiel comments, “I believe the gifts that make a person a good business manager are quite different, even opposite from the gifts which make a good executive pastor.”²³⁹ Nevertheless, the systems must be directed and developed.

²³⁵ Sam Crabtree, “The First 100 Days,” (Minneapolis, MN: Bethlehem Baptist Church, 1998).

²³⁶ Bourgond, *Executive Pastor*, 1.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

²³⁹ Kiel, “Executive Pastor,” 5.

Analogies

Besides the COO illustration, Kiel describes numerous analogies from his contacts with EPs: co-senior pastor, *in locis parentis*, ship's captain and first mate, ball-team owner and coach, and college president and dean.²⁴⁰

As demonstrated, the parental and marital analogy surfaces repeatedly, appropriately addressing the issue of complementarity. Compensating for the typical SP's limitations is crucial. Again, most SPs sense the call of God to shepherd and teach the Word. If successful in their ministry strengths, growth occurs, bringing its attendant systems' crisis. The minister should not neglect his primary call if it has not changed. Bible teacher Alistair Begg admitted that in a smaller church he could handle the management, but as his new church grew, the leaders gathered to brainstorm a solution to his administrative inefficiencies:

Our solution was to invite one of our elders who at that time was a partner with an accounting firm, to join our pastoral team as "director of ministry." This involved a very significant delegation on my part. Essentially what I did was give Jeff the oversight of the other members of the pastoral team and ask him to help me in the overall direction of ministry.

This is a subtle, crucial, necessary balancing act, which is fraught with danger and should probably not be attempted in most cases. *The only analogy that comes close to describing the nature of this relationship is that of marriage, indeed of a good marriage.* For example, if we can think for a moment of the other members of the pastoral team as children (only for the sake of the analogy), then when the father is absent, the mother's role is not to establish a whole new set of guidelines for family living, but to uphold the principles that Dad has established and to do so with an infectious enthusiasm. In the same way, in the father's absence the mother does not bemoan the fact that she is alone but instead prays with and for the children and encourages them to look forward to his return.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 8-9.

²⁴¹ Derek Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2004), 247-248. Italics mine.

This marriage analogy illustrates the power, trust, and community involved in the best of SPEP teams. Kilinski and Wofford also referred to the staff relationship as a “vocational marriage.”²⁴²

Shared “parental” authority is reported in Kiel’s paper, as SPs reinforce the EP’s role by their interaction with the staff:

Several Executive Pastors identified the staff meeting as a place where their authority was established. The Senior Pastor ‘gave up’ the staff meeting to them. While the Senior Pastor would attend, regularly or at his own discretion, it was the Executive who set the agenda and presided. In some cases the Senior Pastor has a regular part in the meeting: devotions, vision sharing, Senior Pastor’s report, etc. But the meeting ‘belongs to’ the Executive Pastor.

Since much of their work is behind the scenes, and since the nature of their work causes them to sometimes be seen as intruders or even usurpers, it is not surprising to find Executive Pastors deeply appreciative of the public support received from their Senior Pastors.²⁴³

Biblical Models

In seeking a Scriptural model for the SPEP co-leadership team, the best illustration may be Pharaoh and Joseph. Despite the negative overtones of Pharaoh’s despotism, he was concerned enough for his country when facing famine to listen to the solution offered by Joseph.²⁴⁴ Joseph modeled the spirit of the EP in that he sought to serve Pharaoh wholeheartedly, rather than slacking or resisting him. Pharaoh’s trust in his young executive was so firm that Joseph was empowered and exalted, and as a consequence, Joseph made Pharaoh successful.

Two obvious biblical analogies of complementary teams are the marriage relationship, already noted, and the Trinity. Both demonstrate equality of persons, love

²⁴² Kilinski and Wofford, *Organization*, 173. See p. 6, note 14.

and respect. Both indicate roles within the relationship, leader and responder. Both are committed to common goals. When referring to marriage, this researcher speaks of the working out of leadership in the home as “mutual submission with deference to headship.” Only in the rare case of a needed “tie-breaker” does deference have to be invoked. A true team will operate on consensus as much as possible. A leader must choose to respond to that mutual accountability, but he or she remains the leader. Teams go to work as leaders share power. Jesus did so with His disciples, but He was ever Lord. One author stated pragmatically, in caution against total equality in teams, “It is hard to fire your friend!”²⁴⁵

When contemplating the Trinity we know the Father plans and the Son obeys; yet there is equality, efficiency, harmony, fulfillment. SP George Cladis of Noroton Presbyterian Church in Darien, Connecticut, explores the teamwork of the Trinity as loving community:

In the seventh century, John of Damascus, a Greek theologian, described the relationship of the persons of God (Trinity) as *perichoresis*. Perichoresis means literally “circle dance.”

Based on the biblical descriptions of Father, Son, and Spirit, John depicted the three persons of the Trinity in a circle. A *perichoretic* image of the Trinity is that of the three persons of God in

constant movement in a circle that implies intimacy, equality, unity yet distinction, and love.²⁴⁶

Cladis argues for egalitarian team dynamics on the basis of the mutuality of the triune God:

²⁴³ Kiel, “Executive Pastor,” 18.

²⁴⁴ Gen 41.

²⁴⁵ Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *The Change Masters: Innovation for Productivity in the American Corporation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 263.

²⁴⁶ George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 4.

The perichoretic model of God calls into question the traditional hierarchies of power, control, and domination that have formed the basis for church leadership in the past. The medieval church both borrowed its leadership structures from the leadership structures of the empire and then modeled hierarchical structures on the image of the reign of God over all creation. Old Testament illustrations of king and kingdom further underscored the idea that hierarchical power was the divine model of leadership. The postmodern era, however, calls for new leadership structures and the New Testament provides better examples of leadership than empire leading and maintaining.

The perichoretic symbol of the Trinity is more helpful to the church living in a postmodern world. Although we, as the creatures of God, are not equal to God, the divine community of the Trinity provides a helpful image for human community that reflects the love and intimacy of the Godhead. Hierarchical distinctions in human community give way to a sense of the body of Christ, with each part equal and important.²⁴⁷

Undoubtedly there is truth in Cladis' comments relevant to deep community in teamwork, as well as cultural sensitivity. Ideally, it must be possible in a team to balance a healthy, open community of equals with a respect for leaders among equals. McIntosh also references the Trinity in regard to teamwork, but distinguishes between the "ontological" and "economic" dimensions.²⁴⁸ Ontologically, all persons are one and equal. Economically, the "household" operates by role and function; oneness does not negate role.

Some churches utilize a tripartite senior leadership structure. Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City lays out three major ministry areas: Vision/Policy, Strategy/Management, and Tactics/Ministry. These areas are led by the Session, the Leadership Teams, and the Small Groups/Ministry Team, in that order.²⁴⁹ An EP explained that this thinking was inspired by Israel's leadership: prophets, kings,

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 5.

²⁴⁸ McIntosh, *Staff Your Church*, 95-96.

²⁴⁹ Tim Keller, "Vision and Model: Gospel-Driven Church" (unpublished paper, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, 1997), 5.

and priests, respectively.²⁵⁰ This would make the EP the “king” in exercising government. In managing the systems and ministries of the church, the details become his domain, not the SP’s. The SP’s exercise of prophetic vision reserves the right to challenge and call for corrections to any misalignment of the system. In the functioning of this team there is an abiding mutuality in that even the “prophet,” the SP, must on occasion defer to his “second,” the EP.

To summarize our information on the SPEP team, this study asserts that the EP, once invisible, has become a visible and legitimate part of the contemporary church staff. SPEP teams generally describe their roles as (1) leading by teaching, vision-casting, and setting the tone for the church (SP); and (2) leading by implementing the vision through goals and management and maintaining the right working atmosphere with the staff (EP). Relational competencies and actual chemistry are critical to the success of the SPEP team, especially loyalty, integrity, and ego-control. Complementary giftings and abilities add to the satisfaction of working together successfully. When the SPEP team is a true senior co-leadership team, the parties share power in a way that has given rise to the analogies of CEO and COO, President and Chief of Staff, or even a marriage.

Conclusion

This study affirms that the SPEP team is not an illegitimate ministry model *a priori* due to its corporate origin. The church in the book of Acts demonstrates the possibility of applying new leadership paradigms. The church grew in size and inclusivity, and the complexity of that culture required creative structural solutions to the

²⁵⁰ Dick Kaufman, EP interview with author, Annapolis, MD, July 1997.

resultant problems. A classic leadership development text is Acts 6, where the apostles established a new office to facilitate benevolence in the church.²⁵¹ Two short comments in v. 7 describe the success of this administrative shift: “the word of God kept on spreading,” and “the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly.” This reveals that the congregation at large responded to the apostles’ lead to delegate responsibility, to follow the new structure, and as a result, they experienced the blessing of God.

The increasing number of large churches in modern America requires a management system adequate to cope with the resulting organizational complexity. Administrative personnel have been accepted on large church staffs, but the requirement of the SP overseeing all such persons depletes his time and energies, and consequently underutilizes his primary giftings. Shepherding and teaching ministries must not be given fifteen percent of a senior pastor’s time. The quest for a fully complementary co-leader has resulted in the emergence of the SPEP team paradigm. To uniquely blend gifts, while working efficiently in a dual leadership role, is the challenge of the SPEP team. A pastoral gift of *government* linked to a senior shepherd can “split” the SP office into two effectual, complementary leaders. Together, they can lead the staff and church officers in strategic implementation of the church’s vision.

Biblical qualifications would have to be evident in both members of the SPEP team. They are both *pastors*. “The selection of spiritually and psychologically qualified people for leadership positions in the church is one of the most obvious administrative

²⁵¹ Acts 6:1-7. “Office” is appropriate, even if one is unconvinced that this situation created the “diaconate.”

principles in the New Testament.”²⁵² Both are *leaders*, carrying forward a common vision. Leadership qualities such as integrity, complementary skills, and team productivity are therefore required.

This paradigm is one of shared power. The SP delegates authority to the EP to act on behalf of the SP. An EP job description may assign the EP to be the primary public interface, second only to the SP. They must both be fully aligned with each other as they both represent the primary office in the church.

The SPEP team relationship requires time and tending. Trust is a critical issue and also a potential source of sanctification. The church works in community. The SPEP is a unique leadership team that can model community at its best. Communication, humility, self-sacrifice, and self-effacement are necessary in both parties. Hard work and time invested cement the SPEP team bond, yielding personal satisfaction as well as productivity in God’s purpose. And productivity of the church’s purpose is at stake. The crucial need for the church to prevail is emphasized in this expanded opening remark from Bill Hybels, quoted in the introduction of this study:

Ten years ago I sat in a little restaurant during my summer study break and wrote these words: *The local church is the hope of the world and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders.* For the first time, I realized that from a human perspective the outcome of the redemptive drama being played out on planet Earth will be determined by how well church leaders lead. Many churches are filled with sincere, talented, godly people who would love to leverage their spiritual gifts in order to impact the world for Christ. The question is this: Will the men and women who have been entrusted with leadership gifts take their gifts seriously, develop them fully, and deploy them courageously, so that the willing and gifted believers in their churches can work together to make a difference in the world?²⁵³

²⁵² Kilinski and Wofford, *Organization*, 151.

²⁵³ Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, 27. Italics original.

The SPEP team is an appropriate contemporary mechanism for the church's structural needs. Its usefulness in the advancement of the kingdom is, and will remain, the ultimate assessment question.

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

It has been over a decade since I became aware of the growing presence of EPs in the church of America. As our own church utilized this staff position, as the SP I became increasingly interested in how to best leverage this resource so that the church would be effectively shepherded, led, and managed. That interest prompted this study. After a search of the extant literature it became evident that there was little written regarding the SPEP leadership team. This warranted an exploratory investigation.

Chapter 3 proceeds as follows: the *Design of the Study* section provides the rationale for choosing a qualitative method and for using the focus group interview as the primary method for collecting data. Next, the chapter details the *Interview Design* in three phases, with sample interview protocols for each phase. The chapter ends with sections on *Assessment* and the *Limitations of the Study*.

Design of the Study

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the contextual and relational factors and dynamics present in an SPEP leadership team, a research method was needed that would enable the capture and description of the perceptions, beliefs, and insights of EPs and SPs. To meet this need a qualitative study was pursued. Professors Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln contrast qualitative from quantitative research:

The word *qualitative* implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry.¹

A qualitative method is appropriate in this study. Much of the data collected consists of information identical to that described by research author M.Q. Patton as follows:

Qualitative data consist of ‘detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories’ (Patton, 1980, p. 22).²

The specific type of qualitative method that was chosen for this study is the *focus group interview*. Referencing other research scholars, authors Pranee Liamputtong Rice and Douglas Ezzy explain:

According to Khan and Manderson (1992, p. 57), a focus group interview is a qualitative method “with the primary aim of describing and understanding perceptions, interpretations, and beliefs of a select population to gain understanding of a particular issue from the perspective of the group’s participants.”³

Focus groups have the advantage of allowing interaction between the informants. According to Rice and Ezzy, “It is successful only to the extent that the participants are

¹ Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, Eds., *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 13.

² M. Q. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation Methods* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1980), 22, quoted in Sharan B. Merriam, *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988), 67-68.

³ M. Khan and L. Manderson, “Focus Groups in Tropical Diseases Research,” *Health, Policy and Planning*, Vol.7, no.1, 57, quoted in Pranee Liamputtong Rice and Douglas Ezzy, *Qualitative Research Methods* (Victoria, Australia: Oxford University Press, 1999), 72.

able to talk to each other, rather than individually answering the moderator's questions."⁴

In the present study, the EPs were usually motivated to gather together for dialogue with their colleagues.⁵ Rice and Ezzy indicate the reason for interest:

Typically, focus group interviews involve a group of people . . . who come from similar social and cultural backgrounds or who have *similar experiences or concerns*. They gather together to discuss a specific issue with the help of a moderator in a particular setting where participants feel comfortable enough to engage in a dynamic discussion for at least one or two hours.⁶

The focus group interview method was therefore a better choice than the group interview or the one-on-one interview alone, because it had the added advantage of generating additional insights that emerge as a result of the discussion and interaction among the informants.

To supplement and corroborate the data that was captured through a set of focus group interviews with EPs, this study utilized phone interviews with SPs. In addition, phone interviews were also conducted with several high-profile EPs who were not in the focus group interviews. By high-profile, we refer to EPs of very visible or successful churches.

Through phone and face-to-face group interviews, it was expected that significant emerging themes would surface as we explored the *context* for the creation of SPEP team, the *priorities* of both job-performance and relationship-maintenance, and the top *causes* of success and satisfaction, as well as failure and dissatisfaction in working with this model. Pooling the common experiences of EPs, asking about their church context, their personal backgrounds, their relationship with their SPs, their frustrations and joys,

⁴ Rice and Ezzy, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 72

⁵ At least once, our focus group was the first of other future meetings for neighboring EPs.

⁶ Rice and Ezzy, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 72. Italics mine.

and what wisdom they had gained revealed new data and confirmed some previously held views recorded in the limited literature about EPs. This was the expected observation when interacting with those engaged in the SPEP team paradigm, whether the paradigm was successful or not.

As has been mentioned, supplementary phone interviews as well as focus groups were employed to gather data. The phone interview was the main instrument for reaching SPs to corroborate the data. Some high-profile EPs were also reached in this manner, but the main generator of information was the gathering of EPs in focus groups. Qualitative researcher David Morgan writes concerning supplemental focus groups, "The focus groups could ... serve as a source of follow-up data to assist the primary method. For instance, they might be used to pursue poorly understood survey results or to evaluate the outcome of a program."⁷ Following the initial interviews, I used the focus groups as the primary investigative method of the program called: the SPEP team.

Further supplementary data was bound to surface which could be of great interest and value to the study. As contacts were made, some of the pastors were highly motivated to share data without a formal interview. This led to insights giving direction to the interview questions, additional contacts, and new resource materials.

Interview Approach

The interviews involved three phases: *initial contacts* with EPs to surface issues and more contacts, *focus groups* with EPs, and *interviews* with the corresponding SPs.

⁷ David L. Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1977), 3.

The first phase involved initiating contacts with an initial list of EPs and others that would surface through those conversations. I had personal conversations with at least three significant informants before the study was formally underway. They helped generate issues and contacts.⁸ I determined the willingness of pastoral teams to cooperate. This included some pastors who are functioning in these roles, even if not technically entitled “executive pastor.” I initiated contacts through e-mail or phone calls. Usually, the team’s administrative assistants helped me find the best way to make contact. Most of the first contacts were with the EPs whose names surfaced. They were usually accessible and responsive because of their affinity for the position. If the contact was personally unknown, I used a generic approach either by e-mail or phone.⁹

The second phase comprised the supplemental focus groups. If I received a favorable response to the first requests, I would make the initial contact to explore the possibilities of longer interviews or potential focus groups. Usually, the initial contact was very favorable with great interest and spontaneous dialogue. The focus group lists were generated through these conversations.

I proposed meeting with at least three regional groups of two to five EPs each. I believed that gathering the executives only, rather than including the SPs, would provide a more freeing environment. Fontana and Frey comment:

This type of interview is not, however, without problems. The emerging group culture may interfere with individual expression, the group may be dominated by one person, the group format makes it difficult to research sensitive topics, ‘group-think’ is a possible outcome, and the requirements for interviewer skills are greater

⁸ Merrit Rector, former EP of First Evangelical Free Church, St. Louis, MO, was an early significant informant, along with Craig Williford, President of Denver Seminary.

⁹ See below under “Survey Design.”

because of group dynamics. Nevertheless, the group interview is a viable option for both qualitative and quantitative research.¹⁰

Considering the potential problems of group interviewing, I decided that discussing the hard realities of maintaining the interpersonal relationship would be more restricted in the presence of a bad "marriage partner." Only the healthiest teams would be able to enjoy full freedom in discussing this. Further, most necessary insights could be gleaned from cooperating SPs during the phone interview phase. Their perspectives would help the interviewer direct the group back toward exploration, should they get caught in group-think. Of particular interest, then, is relationship maintenance and the satisfaction and success of the team.

If the request resulted in a focus group, I would let the EP who was cooperating make the offer to his colleagues. They were often very willing to do this and to decide on a convenient time and place. With only one focus group did I need to make all the initial contacts, and even then the EP referred me to the other church. With all the groups I offered to buy lunch to encourage their participation. (One meeting took place in a restaurant. It was an excellent mix of pastors, but the noise level made this option less than preferable.)

Originally I had hoped to determine three things from the initial contacts: (1) which SPEP teams functioned as true senior co-pastors (associates) and were therefore candidates for focus group involvement, (2) who among their colleagues would also fall into the same category and would be interested in participating, and (3) what are some of

¹⁰ Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, "Interviewing: The Art of Science," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 365.

the common themes that emerge regarding the feasibility of SPEP teams, relationship maintenance, and job satisfaction and success. However, item (1) was too restrictive to immediately enable focus groups to be formed. This was due to the limited number of any kind of EPs in a given locale, or due to factors of schedule or unwillingness. By opening the population to any “executive pastor,” item (2) was more easily achieved.¹¹ Item (3) helped create questions for the later focus groups.

Also, I endeavored to acquire as many formal job descriptions as possible, especially from those participating in the research. These were to be added to the appendices with permission. They will contribute to the discussion of my findings, as well as help formulate questions if clarifications about roles becomes necessary.

The third phase, which came after the focus group, was a phone interview with the respective SPs. I initiated contact with the SP of each church represented, after asking the assistance of the executive to encourage his teammate’s cooperation. This was the most difficult part of the research. SPs of large, busy churches are difficult to access without an “in,” giving rise to my need to establish a connection with the EP first. Most EPs sent word to their SPs that my request would be coming.¹² Only if I was thwarted by phone would I re-initiate and settle for an e-mail response. Conversation is much preferred due to the tone and nuance that is communicated verbally. Also, I was privileged to conduct several supplemental, high-profile EP interviews to add to my data.

¹¹ A limited study of true “co-leaders” would have greater success in large cities utilizing sufficient megachurches which employ EPs.

¹² See below under “Survey Design.”

Survey and Interview Design

In phase one initial contacts with SPEP teams were made by phone or e-mail. If the contact was personally unknown, I used a generic approach, addressed to the EP of a large church. I briefly introduced myself and explained my purpose, requesting a five minute phone contact to explore the possibility of further contact.¹³

If I received a favorable response to the first request, I would pursue the contact to explore the possibility of a longer interview or a potential focus group. Usually, the very first contact was quite favorable, marked by great interest and spontaneous dialogue. I would ask very few starter questions, perhaps about their view of the relationship with the SP, or how the position came into being. Then I would send a follow-up e-mail in hopes for a potential focus group, exploring the EP's potential to gather other EPs in a group setting.¹⁴

In phase two, focus group locations, dates, and times were established, and I traveled to six cities across the country. Four of these were full focus groups. Two were exclusive high-profile interviews, which also included interviews with the SPs. I used a focus group interview guide as a starting point.¹⁵ Often the conversations went out of order, or departed from the guide, which spread eleven questions over four pages of notes. The questions were in four main sections: Context, Competencies, Practices, and Additional Questions. I started each session with introductions, prayer, and a description of how we would proceed. After the discussion time, I would close with clarifications concerning confidentiality, openness to follow-up contacts from myself, and any interest

¹³ See appendix 3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See appendix 1.

in the published results. I had participants plan for an hour and a half time slot, but the enthusiasm never waned before two hours had passed. Further, all participants expressed interest in the findings.

In phase three, I asked participating EPs to encourage their SPs' openness to an interview. I sent a note by mail explaining that I had already been in contact with their EPs, and that granting me a twenty minute phone interview would be highly valued. I offered to make any time slot work.¹⁶ I prepared a questionnaire for the SP that covered history, church context, SP and EP roles, analogies, assessments of success and satisfaction, as well as any other wisdom the SP might have on the subject of the SPEP team.¹⁷

Each interview was conducted by phone at the SP's convenience. Occasionally, e-mailing the questionnaire was the only viable way to get a response. I would also ask permission to follow-up through the SP's administrative assistant for any brief clarifications that might be needed. Then, depending on the response, I would send a small gift certificate as a "thank you" so that he and his executive could have a future meeting at one of their preferred establishments.

Assessment

Data captured via focus group and phone interviews were transcribed so that they could be thoroughly analyzed. My own thinking and written notes were also transcribed and included with the above data. An analysis of the data was performed, working through the categories of the research questions, in order to identify and allow themes to

¹⁶ See appendix 3.

¹⁷ See appendix 2.

emerge. Themes were explained and the implications discussed. Contextual and relational insights, best and worst practices, critical success and failure factors, “marriage rules and guidelines,” along with sample EP job descriptions, are presented and discussed in chapter four below. Segments of actual data in the form of vignettes and quotes are included to augment understanding of the material. The implications of these findings, conclusions, and suggestions for further study are in chapter five.

Anticipated results of this study were useful findings relating to the SPEP paradigm, especially relational insights. I anticipated two other results. First, I expected to be personally satisfied with the pragmatic and spiritual legitimacy of this paradigm. At this level of leadership I found servants of remarkable character in both chairs. Second, I expected the side benefit of a stimulating experience for the group participants. Their encouragement through the experience was confirmed.

Limitations of the Study

The EP almost existed as an underground movement until recently. During the 1990s there was an annual national forum held, but only EPs were welcome and the numbers were limited. Nevertheless, in this study four focus group interviews consisting of eleven EPs were conducted in four cities: Minneapolis, MN, Tucson, AZ, Atlanta, GA, and Harrisburg, PA. Extensive interviews with two more EPs were also conducted in New York, NY and Lexington, KY. In addition, phone interviews were conducted with SPs and several high-profile EPs. The focus group interviews were primarily with EPs engaged in churches ranging from 800 to 5000 in attendance.

While many insights were generated from the phone and face-to-face interviews that I conducted, a major limitation to this study is the generalizability of its findings, a typical limitation in qualitative studies. My small sample size, while drawn from churches ranging in size from 800 to 5000, is not a statistically representative sample. My sample was further limited in accessibility by permission to interview, cost, and time. In addition, as there currently does not exist an available comprehensive directory of SPEP teams in the United States, nor a comprehensive directory of EPs, it was extremely difficult to generate a statistically representative sample. In sum, while the findings of this study undoubtedly add to the SPEP team knowledge base, it has limitations in applicability in the sense that one cannot make accurate generalizations from its findings. An advanced research engine might find a way collect the job descriptions of thousands of EPs across the country, or perhaps from all the EP forum participants. Such data could be quantitatively analyzed, and the levels of their SPEP roles could be categorized.

The next two limitations are method-based. First, the focus group interviews enabled me to interview participants who enjoyed the opportunity to take part in the discussion and to witness their interaction and the enthusiasm toward the subject matter. Such a research method, however, may have its own built-in limitation in that some participants may be hesitant to share the very intimate, and perhaps embarrassing, details of the SPEP relationship. Second, this study acknowledges that each interview context, whether focus group or individual phone interview, is one of interaction, and thus, as referenced earlier, the dynamics can affect the outcome.¹⁸ While I used a structured set of

¹⁸ Fontana and Frey, *Interviewing*, 365.

questions to limit wide variations in the data generated, I acknowledge that there are, in fact, occasional variations in the nature and amount of data generated in the interviews, due to the impact of the interactions among the participants. Also, responsiveness of the SPs was often a limiting factor due to the time constraints of their schedules. Sometimes it was necessary to utilize e-mail for responses, which is definitely not preferred.

A fourth and final limitation of the study is the recognition that a qualitative study is not value-free. Consequently, I want to acknowledge that my own pre-disposition and theories have some bearing in interpreting and reporting the study's findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This study explored the factors that make for a legitimate and successful SPEP team experience. Below are the primary research questions asked of EPs in focus group interview settings:

1. What was the church and staff *context* in which the SPEP team came into being? How has it evolved? What is the (biblical) rationale, if any, for so doing?
2. What are the top *priorities* for each SPEP team member in job-performance and in team relational development and maintenance?
3. What are the *reasons* given for claiming satisfaction/success or dissatisfaction/failure in working with this leadership model?

This chapter proceeds in the following manner. First, the results of the initial contacts with knowledgeable informants having extensive EP experience are reported. These insights provided a framework for the development of exploratory questions with EPs and SPs. Second, the findings from the resulting EP focus groups and the corresponding interviews with SPs are given. These are reported categorically, clustering the information around the emergent themes. Background, EP gifting and call, church size, relationship to the SP, priorities in team work such as leading, interfacing with the SP, sharing power, leading the staff, and the practices that bring satisfaction are revealed. Also, a set of SPEP relational analogies, theological insights and relevant proverbs are

given. Tables are provided to help clarify the context. Finally, the corroborating input of high profile EPs has been added.

Significant Findings from the Initial Contacts

Denver Seminary President Craig Williford set things in motion in a phone conversation in 2000. He had served as an EP in several large churches before his role at Denver. His identification of three general categories of EPs provided my opening question for the focus group interviews: a pure administrator, a full senior associate, and something in between with all authority resting with the SP. The full senior associate, in Williford's view, is an extension of the church's vision. All staff report to him, and he knows more about the church than all others.

Williford insightfully identified the top pressure points of an SPEP team: the SP must uphold the validity of the EP, the ego of the EP must be that of a "servant-leader," and the amount of time one-on-one for communication between the EP and SP is critical to preventing major breakdowns.

In March 2001, I interviewed Merrit Rector, EP at the First Evangelical Free Church in St. Louis. He provided referrals and concepts that opened discussion for the groups. Agreeing with the relational concern for the EP with the SP that Williford had expressed, Rector added an important insight: the significance of the background of the EP. A non-ministry person, in his experience, was more difficult to place in an EP position, due to the attitudes of the ministry staff reporting to the EP.

When to use the SPEP model in regard to church size, staff dynamics, and gifting was mentioned. Williford suggested that an administrator is needed in a church of

approximately 400 to 500 parishioners. Another office, perhaps an EP, is needed at 1200. Finally, a full EP (co-senior), is necessary at 2500 or more. Both men, however, suggested that other contextual factors, in addition to church size, were involved in making the decision to go to an EP solution. Rector commented that the EP is needed when the church needs to either “go to a new level,” solve problems that the EP has answers to, develop the staff, or add to the church a missing spiritual gift.

While EPs come from both clergy and marketplace backgrounds, the majority have been clergymen. Their role is to manage the ministry systems of the church. From the initial set of EP job descriptions (JDs) I collected, EP JDs include leading and directing the staff, along with being in partnership with the SP. Shown below is an articulate statement that captures the essence of the role of the EP, including the relational aspects of the SPEP leadership team:

An Executive Pastor is in the role of Chief Operating Officer of the church. He should represent the staff to the Elders and vice versa. He should be the one who *keeps the day to day operational challenges off of the Senior Pastor's back*. He should oversee the implementation of the church's goals that will help it reach its vision. He keeps the staff accountable to setting and meeting their individual goals that support the churchwide goals. He pastors, communicates with, disciplines, and loves the staff more than anyone else.

The organizational relationship may be more similar to that of a ship, with the Sr. Pastor being the captain and an executive officer being the Executive Pastor. *The captain has direct access to all of the officers of the ship, but does not usurp the authority of the executive officer* except in an emergency situation.¹

In sum, the three categories of EPs, tasks and relational roles, and the contextual factors creating the EP position became the initial basis for this exploratory study.

¹ EP Job Description, Perimeter Church, Atlanta, GA. Italics mine.

Profile of Interviewees

The focus groups were comprised of eleven EPs in city churches ranging in attendance from approximately 900 to 5000. Rounding off to the nearest 500, the churches served by our focus group EPs had a congregational size distribution as follows: two churches at 1000, one at 2500, four at 3000, one at 3500, one at 4000, one at 4500, and one at 5000. The denominational backgrounds included three Baptists, two Evangelical Free, two Presbyterians, one Assemblies of God, one charismatic non-denominational, and two other non-denominational churches.

Executive Pastors

Of the eleven EPs only one came from a pure marketplace background. Others had business or military backgrounds but had entered ministry prior to becoming an EP. Of the eleven at least three were open or interested in a future SP possibility. Nearly all affirmed a call of God to the present SPEP team situation. While nearly every EP interviewed admitted enjoyment of the job, three expressed great satisfaction or contentment to be in the number two role indefinitely, and at least four indicated frustrations and hazards connected with the position. Of the EPs interviewed, only two had been brought in from outside the church to serve as the EP.

At least two EPs experienced difficulties with SPs who did poorly in ministry, and one experienced difficulties from the church generally. Virtually all EPs, excepting the last mentioned, affirmed the vitality and usefulness of the SPEP team model for the good of the church's ministry.

Senior Pastors

Of the corresponding eleven SPs at least three were high-profile names: authors, speakers, and pastors of well-known churches. At least seven had been the primary growth pastors of the churches, and the EP was still serving the same man. At least eight SPs experienced ministry pressure related to growth that provoked the EP solution. One SP had the EP in place strategically. About half of the SPs were “hands-off” style leaders. Some were pleased to be released from most details. Fewer than half were still exercising a “hands-on” approach, and a few could be counted as strong administrators.

High-Profile Executive Pastors

Insights were gleaned from the EPs of well-known SPs and their successful mega churches: Alistair Begg of Parkside Church, Cleveland, OH; Rick Warren of Saddleback Community Church, Lake Forrest, CA; Mike Breaux of Southland Christian Church, Lexington, KY (now at Willow Creek Community Church); Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City; and Randy Frazee of Pantego Bible Church, Fort Worth, TX.

Findings from the Focus Groups and Corroborating SP Interviews

Question 1: Background and Context

The EP's Background

“I’ve had more trouble with staff from a non-theological background.”

- Merrit Rector

A statement like this piques curiosity. In questioning the career histories of the EPs I interviewed, I found that nearly all had a theological or ministry background. I also found that most are in the third category, a true senior-associate pastor, per Williford's categories. Most EPs were selected from within the local church. EP tenure ranged from 1.5 years to 14 years. This data is reflected in Table 1.

EPs have mentioned that understanding pastoral ministry is critical in their role with the staff. A person who is a purely business-minded "bean-counter" will most likely not work. Staff members with theological training, some of whom have made large sacrifices to be in ministry, do not respond well to an overly "bottom-line" business attitude. EPs have affirmed that having a heart for the ministry issues involved helps the EP get so much farther in leading staff. EPs with pastoral skills are better off. However, as one EP said, "I think where you run into a problem as an executive pastor is if you are *too* pastoral, and not administrative-organizational-business-minded." The accountability side of the role is necessary to the office. The corresponding senior pastor favorably admitted that his EP has to lead, and that he does so with grace.

Hiring EPs from the marketplace can and does work if several things prevail. He must know the culture, values, and the people of the church. Avoiding "stepping on people" will give an EP a 95% chance of retention according to one SP. One EP stated that there were two necessities to make this work. First, an EP cannot be a purely corporate thinker. Pastoral staff meetings cannot become an "IBM board meeting with a word of prayer." Second, he cannot be over the staff if he is simply a bookkeeper. Such a person would be accepted as long as he was on the same level as the rest of the staff, but not over them. This indicates, again, the need for spiritual leadership in the EP role.

Furthermore, competency portfolio additions, such as theological training, ministerial credentials or improving people skills, might be appropriate or necessary to enhance the EP's competency and acceptance.

Table 1. Executive Pastors Role and Background

EPs	Background	In-House	Category	Preach
EP 1	Ministry	Yes	#3	No
EP 2	Ministry	Yes	#3	Yes
EP 3	Ministry	Yes	#2 & #3	
EP 4	Ministry	Yes	#3	Rarely
EP 5	Ministry	No	#3	Yes
EP 6	Ministry	No	#2 & #3	Some
EP 7	Ministry	Yes	#3	Rarely
EP 8	Business	Yes	#3	No
EP 9	Ministry	Yes	#3	Yes
EP 10	Ministry	Yes	#3	Yes
EP 11	Ministry	Yes	#2	No

Key: EP Category: #2 is administrator, #3 is a Senior Associate.

One very effective EP, a man with a law and engineering background, was at first retained to oversee a site project. The SP spotted him and asked him to pray about becoming the EP. Now he has been in the EP role for over a decade, and the SP says that

the staff are productive, happy, led, and pastored well by the EP. When asked about additions to his competency portfolio, the SP's answer was "none." However, he added that the EP was part of the church and served as an elder. He had been through the appropriate training and therefore understood the local church's ministry, vision, and people. Credit was also attributed to the church's elder training. In response to hiring a pure administrator, the same SP said, "We would never hire that person." Ministry understanding and shepherding are vital in this role. Another high-profile SP said that his EP was hired to the position from another ministry position in the church. This EP needed supervisory skills added to his competency portfolio, not simply accounting.

"It is very high risk to bring [an EP] in from the outside," an SP said. Yet it happens. An outstanding example is the SPEP team in one high-profile church ministry. The SP, an author, writer, and speaker, noticed his future EP running a ministry seminar. Four qualities put the man on the top of his search list: amazing organizational skills, a heart for ministry, appreciation of the SP's work already in place, and communication skills. The EP reported that the SP noticed that he was "in love with [the SP's] vision." Tight agreement theologically and philosophically surfaced as very important in such a hire.

The job description itself offered more flexibility. In the above hire the JD was adjusted to fit the man. Basic needs were expected to be met: management abilities, alignment with the SP and leadership. However, the JD details could flex to fit the called man as well. Others experienced the same privilege. Senior pastors asked them to come on in the EP role, and then they were free to collaboratively write the JD after coming on board.

In several cases the churches had the foresight to trouble-shoot the position in advance. At John Piper’s church, a right-hand staff person laid aside his missions oversight to be a “guinea pig” on an experimental trial basis that lasted approximately nine months. The result was full consensus with the staff and the board that the EP job was necessary. Other churches had administrators or administrative pastors as early trial runs. Failure, in some cases, was attributed to a “bean-counter” mentality rather than a visionary mentality.

The EP’s Title and Role

I think the “executive pastor” title is confusing to the average person inside of the congregation. It’s like, ‘what is that?’

- Dave Gordon

I think it’s real easy to define what a “youth pastor” does, or a “children’s pastor.” “Staff director” doesn’t fit well. “Executive pastor” doesn’t really fit well because people don’t want to think of the church as a business. But there’s really nothing better. I mean that’s kind of the best attempt right now to describe it.

- Ferrol Macon

When I came on board they were called “associate pastors.” The senior pastor asked me what I wanted to be called. I didn’t want to be called an “administrative pastor” because that has sort of a cold edge to it. If you are going to be the heavy sometimes, you know, it doesn’t add anything to it. So “executive pastor” was kind of a morally neutral, not morally, *professionally* neutral term that made it a little bit ambiguous. “Well, what does he do, and how does he function?”

-Jim Schambach

Establishing the EP before the congregation brought an interesting turn as revealed in the EPs’ comments above. Even an SP said he preferred the title “staff director” over “executive pastor,” because the latter sounded too business-like. One EP said he preferred the term “Senior Associate Pastor.” “Administrative Pastor” is too

menial, whereas executive pastor may sound too business like. Sensitivity to the “pastoral” dimension caused reaction to certain titles. The findings of this study revealed common agreement that, outside of the congregation knowing the person’s associate status, the local congregation usually knew little about the actual role and inner workings of directing the staff. Only if the staff becomes unproductive or unhappy will the congregation really care or react. Whether planning for or managing through an EP, the constant refrain of pastors and boards is that the congregation doesn’t care as long as it works. Often the reaction after the EP is established is positive: “Why did we wait to do this?” Functional effectiveness has been noted to improve with the EP managing the staff and various ministries for the SP.

It should be noted that although the SP is a primary voice in the choice and management of the EP, depending on the church’s polity, the board may be involved in approval and continuing affirmation of the EP role. Some EPs actually lead the church board meetings as well as the staff meetings. Some SPs are delighted with this leadership support. Other SPs continue to lead the church board and elders directly, leaving the EP to concentrate on managing the staff.

Church Size

Another issue of context relevant when embracing the SPEP team was the factor of the church and its size. SPs’ insights were most helpful in this regard. They felt that when the congregation or the staff have grown to the point that the SP cannot keep everyone in the loop, some administrative help is required. Considering the size of the staff reporting to the SP, one articulate EP commented,

I don't know if there is a magic number, because I think it depends on the individual's capacity, and in a giftedness - spiritual giftedness - and just abilities and experiences. But I think if the senior pastor is supervising more than four to five people, then I would question the ability of the senior pastor to effectively do the other demands of his position: preaching, pastoral care, and whatever else that senior pastor has as a passion. The number of people would be smaller if the person has less administrative gifting or doesn't have the gift of leadership. So, I think the gift of administration or the gift of leadership would enable the senior pastor to have a larger span of control.²

There are SPs with exceptional administrative ability, and these pastors have to choose to give up control. This study, however, found that such ability appears to be unusual for most SPs. In addition, SPs were generally relieved to allow the EP to take over the details and reporting. EPs agreed that a staff of 20-25 people requires administrative help. Bill Hybels has said that 20-30 staff require it, or congregations over 1000.³ The SP gifting and style is critical. One SP says he should have had an EP "the day after he started the church." However, size does factor in. John Piper stated that size implies "organizational complexity." It is not just the numbers, but the relationships, the spans of care, and more complex systems. His church was one of those that experimented with the EP position. This study noted that churches often wait too long before having an EP on board. The EPs interviewed admit that the church should have come to this position sooner than later. "The amount of oversight is killing the SP," and it is "starting to do some damage."

² John Nesbitt, Harrisburg focus group interview, October 2004.

³ Hybels, Beach, and Hawkins, *The Emerging Role*.

Factors That Birth the EP Position

I think often this position appears after some kind of a crisis, something that didn't go right, or there's been a change, and that's not always a good thing. You would prefer that it starts out of vision. But sometimes that's how you get peoples' attention, "Wait a minute. We didn't cover this area, or we could have done this better!" . . . And that can be a positive thing for the person that comes in. Because immediately they can make a difference, make an impact, and prove their value.⁴

During the group sessions I observed that statements like the above elicited lots of laughter and agreement among the EPs. There is a common experience among EPs that usually it is pressure that births the position, or at least the invitation by the SP to enter it. Up to a church size of 1000 the SP can use an administrator to help out. As church size approaches 2000, an EP is more appropriate. Among larger churches, one EP reported that the church plateaued at a growth ceiling of 1800, with six pastoral staff but no EP. At another church of 1700-1800 and thirty staff members, the decision was made to add an EP. It was noted, however, that a smaller church of 1100, with six pastors, four program staff, plus some support staff, already had an EP. It appears that 1000 in attendance is a minimal target church size for establishing an SPEP team. I have noted, however, that some forward-looking SPs are looking earlier for the right EP complement. Collective wisdom seems to indicate that attendance below the 1000 mark may legitimize some type of administrator on staff, and that an EP full associate may be better warranted for church size greater than 1000, for two reasons. First is the issue of pay scale. Many feel that the EP, if indeed a true senior associate, should be paid appropriately, second only to the SP. Under 1000 persons, this is financially difficult.

⁴ Ken Geis, Minneapolis focus group interview, January 2004.

Table 2. EPs: Numbers for Attendance, Staff & Direct Reports

EPs	Number in Attendance	Number of Staff	Direct Reports & Other Staff
EP 1	3,000	148	8/140
EP 2	2,300	35	4/31
EP 3	4,400	16	11
EP 4	5,000	100	20/80
EP 5	2,800	75	17 PS/ 58
EP 6	3,000	35	8
EP 7	4,000	57	13/7
EP 8	3,500	140	8/132
EP 9	900	19	7PS
EP 10	2,800	42	4/42
EP 11	1,100	27	4/10 (support)

Second is the issue of dynamics due to church growth and size. Churches over 10,000, for example, have completely different dynamics, systems, reporting, and senior leadership structures than the churches visited for this study. It is quite possible for the church to outgrow the individual abilities of both the SP and the EP, so why be premature? In fact, one leader mentioned that, in churches up to 5000, the SPEP marriage is the ideal “hand-

in-glove” arrangement. Table 2 reflects church sizes, as well as staff responsibilities, for the interviewed EPs.

In summary, most EPs entered their role from previous ministry experience rather than the marketplace, and most were called to the EP role from within their church. Though reaction was ambiguous among some parishioners, the title “executive pastor” was most often applied to those in the category of senior associate or co pastor (category #3) who came on board to lead the staff in response to a management crisis regarding systems and staffing in growing megachurches, especially when approaching or surpassing attendance of 1000.

Question 2: SPEP team priorities

Job Performance

“He is not just a pastor who likes to read the Wall Street Journal.”

- Leith Anderson

If, in general, pastors have difficulty enforcing accountability, it is also true that some EPs, if called and gifted in areas other than ministry, may need to work on relational skills. Several SPs admitted that some EPs needed to soften their overly task-oriented or intimidating “edge.” The EPs who were willing to grow in this grace have been well-received by the staff. Having mission-driven accountability in mind, they do worry sometimes about being perceived as the SP’s “hammer.” Of course, there is the need to push at times:

The word executive has the idea of executing. The Executive Pastor executes for the Senior Pastor when he doesn’t have the time, and may not have the ability now, to execute within the church . . . an

overall vision . . . that plays out in the programming and staff. So the executive pastor has to have the leadership skills to carry that out.⁵

I agree with Gary. I just find that I get so much farther in that executing ability because I understand the pastoral ministry. I know what they are doing from both sides: empathy and sympathy, but also pushing when I know I need to push.⁶

Often the response of the staff to the EP as shepherd lends itself to a healthier working atmosphere. There was general agreement that EPs must have empathy and understanding of the sacrifices the pastoral staff and their families have often made. Such staff may resent a lack of understanding of the ethos of the pastorate.

However, the ability to “take the heat” and enforce accountability is still crucial to the job. Some EPs and SPs commented on the “whining” of the staff. One SP commented that he had heard others remark with resignation, “Once you get to a certain size, your staff are just going to be unhappy.” Our findings would contradict this statement, although there are at least three factors that seem to contribute to such unhappiness. First is a completely wrong person on the staff. Insubordination, wrong motives and bad attitudes end up being unworkable for everyone. Second is the adjustment to the EP being the primary interface with the SP. EPs remark, “They did not join the staff to work with me!” Most staff were first attracted to the persona of the SP, so some interface with him is needed. Still, this submission to delegated authority requires adjustment for some pastoral staff. A high-profile SP said that at the inception of the EP position the staff “didn’t like it. But either I leave, or they change. The newer staff get along OK with it.” Further, if an EP does not lead them well, the staff are frustrated. As mentioned earlier,

⁵ Gary Schrader, Tucson focus group interview, January 2004.

⁶ Glen Elliott, Tucson focus group interview, January 2004.

the fully administrative mindset tends to provoke this frustration. Again, the chain of command and “inner circles” generate tensions and jealousies. This leads us to the third issue: there is a difference among younger ministry staffers, especially specialists, in their attitude about service. Older men, serving as EPs, find it surprising that some staff have not entered the ministry with a full servant attitude. “It’s not my job, niche, expertise,” is a common reaction when some staff are asked to minister to the sick, or some other traditional pastoral task. Older ministers, or those with more years in the ministry, tend to have a settled disposition of servanthood springing from either older styles of discipleship or the seasoning of experience.

In several senior level teams I found triads of leaders: Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor, and Pastoral Care Pastor (PCP). Both of the associates serve the SP primarily. For example, if the EP cannot help a staff member pastorally, the PCP is sent in. The SP can send him into any situation to troubleshoot on the SP’s behalf. The same spirit of “acting like the SP” prevails with both associates.

Gifting and Call

Have you ever . . . heard of somebody who aspired to be an Executive Pastor? That’s what he wants to be, like someone wants to be a Youth Pastor or a Worship Pastor. I don’t see how that works that way, because of that tie to the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor really selects or recruits the person that matches him.⁷

Repeatedly the idea surfaced that EPs are made, not born. This does not mean that they do not have appropriate giftings or have not been created with the right traits. What is meant is the fact that the SP of a growing congregation is central to the choice of the EP. Usually the EP, while engaged in some other ministry elsewhere, is approached by

⁷ Gary Schrader, Tucson focus group.

the SP. More often than not, men ministering in another area of the church are spotted by the SP and are asked to come alongside him. They usually have an awareness of God's calling to the specific situational role. Some EPs sense that their position is not permanent. They have other gifts they would like to develop, but the call on them, for now, is to complement the SP. Several mentioned succession to the SP slot, with the support of the SP, at the appropriate time. Their submission at this point is profound! Some EPs have fallen in love with their job and their church as much as one would expect an SP, especially a founding SP, to do. Somehow there is the sense of the Spirit nudging the EP into this slot, as one EP states:

I didn't want to be number one. And in the sphere of organizational size and the complex organization that I was comfortable operating in, I didn't want to be number one. But I also didn't want to be number fifteen or ten or seven, you know? I wanted to be in a influential role. So what I learned over time is that I had to look for a strong number one that I could be compatible with and complementary to, and that I could respect and trust going up the ladder. And that's what I needed to find for me to be able to serve in a satisfied and appropriate way. Because you can't be a strong number two with a weak number one. It just doesn't work.⁸

This study has observed that while most EPs do love their work, "it is not the place to go for relief." Some EPs admit to stress and fatigue. It can be all-consuming; anything wrong in the system is their problem. It follows them at night. One EP seemed fully content and unfrazzled in his job at a church of 5000, and managing without stress. Some are just worn out with the workload. Later we will address the issue of the nurture and care of the EP. I have further discovered that most EPs are energized by what they do.

⁸ John Nesbitt, Harrisburg focus group.

When asked what satisfies them most, the prevailing answer is building and directing their team into growth and success. It is encouraging to answer the staff's questions and guide them into solutions; having them thrive brings joy to the EP. Also, seeing large ministry goals achieved or a major endeavor of the church brought into existence brings great satisfaction. Job satisfiers will be discussed later.

Team relationship with the SP

I think, too, that the myth of the super-pastor who can do it all is starting to go away a little bit for large churches, because reality hits and they are acknowledging that they just can't do it all. Their ability to preach and focus on leadership development and vision is just so diminished by the day-to-day stuff.⁹

It is the place to go if you desire a complementary role. If your primary gift isn't preaching, yet you want to be in a leadership role of the church, it's about the only alternative.¹⁰

The SPEP is a team based on complementary leadership. Two complementary roles continued to emerge in the interviews. "You have a vision caster, a vision trumpeter, and you've got a vision keeper, vision monitor."¹¹ "SP preaching and overall leadership, EP overall day-to-day leadership, particularly with the staff."¹² Here is a JD that is insightful: "to work with the SP to develop and implement the envisioned future of Intown Community Church; to serve as the primary representative of the SP in his absence."¹³

⁹ Jim Rightler, Minneapolis focus group interview, January 2004.

¹⁰ John Nesbitt, Harrisburg focus group.

¹¹ Sam Crabtree, Minneapolis focus group interview, January 2004.

¹² Robert Ricker, SP e-mail interview with author, February 2004.

¹³ Dave Gordon, Atlanta focus group interview, September 2004.

In terms of the relationship with SP, from the JDs collected and analyzed, all but one include: “work with,” or “answers to” the SP. At least four JDs use terms such as: “serve” the SP, “relieve” the SP, “help” the SP fulfill his call, “keep as much off his back” as possible. Half of the JDs state specifically, “to develop the vision of the church,” or “of the SP.” Four others say, “to achieve the mission statement, ministry goals, or strategic plan of the church.” Three add, “under the authority of, or responsible to, the SP.” The close working relationship with and connection to the SP is unavoidable.

It came to me at that Executive Pastor Forum. There were thirty people in my group. Of the thirty in the group . . . only one had been an Executive Pastor in more than one church. He was a Southern Baptist, and he had just moved from a church in Texas to a church in Florida. And the reason he went there is because he knew the Senior Pastor from seminary. They all were Executive Pastors either because they grew up [as] part of that church or they had a relationship with the Senior Pastor.¹⁴

From a relational perspective, it became apparent that a key prerequisite for the EP is to be “in sync” with the SP. Developing and maintaining this relationship is so critical that EPs reported this subject as one of the major discussions during the EP forums. There are two sides to the relationship: the servant “John The Baptist” attitude of the EP, and the “gospel humility” and security of the SP.¹⁵ Holding the office as a true Senior Associate (category #3) carries a great deal of authority that can potentially be misused. Images of Captain and First Officer or Executive Officer, or CEO and COO, indicate the power involved. The trust and loyalty factors are crucial. First, the SP must

¹⁴ Jim Rightler, Minneapolis focus group.

¹⁵ Wes Kiel, “Executive Pastor,” 11. The attitude needed for this office is that of “the Baptist”: “He must increase, I must decrease.” Terry Gyger, EP of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC, spoke of the need for gospel humility among SPs.

convey and reinforce the authority given. Second, the EP must maintain it with the SP and earn it with the staff, as he works with them relationally and with integrity. Spiritual authenticity is important; a phony will never work.

The first part of the equation, the SP's bestowing of authority, is the primary step. SPs seek persons with the right spirit of co-leadership as mentioned above. Some of the attitude is reflected in the EPs' comments below:

There is this huge empowerment in this role when you're invited to do it and you don't seek it. I felt hugely empowered in my role, and honored. It's kept [in] me a deep sense of humility about the fact that it wasn't something I sought after.¹⁶

Even the word "submission" in the Bible, *hupotasso*, which talks about "lining up under," [is] the way I think about . . . my relationship with John Piper. I want to get under him, line up under him, and push him up this imaginary ladder that I picture. I just want to help him to be freed up from a lot of bric-a-brac so that he can succeed in pursuing his vision. If I'm pushing up on this ladder, and he gets very high up on the ladder, guess who gets to go along for the ride, right there with him? Basically, I want him to fulfill his calling under God. That's what I want to help him do, and the church, . . . because the calling on my life is bigger than John Piper.¹⁷

In determining the status of an EP, the issue of authority, especially hiring and firing, was discussed. All the EPs concur that the "buck stops" with the SP, as far as staff authority is concerned. However, some EPs in true co-leadership have exercised authority to hire and fire without the approval of the SP, depending on the staff position. Support staff issues seldom come to the SP's attention. While ministry staff problems might be discussed with the SP, pastoral staff or associate problems must be. Here is where the learning curve for the SP goes up. If authority has been delegated to the EP, it must be reinforced. SPs have undone their own delegation by interfering and "fixing" a problem.

¹⁶ Jim Rightler, Minneapolis focus group.

¹⁷ Sam Crabtree, Minneapolis focus group.

For example, a staff person is unhappy with the EP's decision. The staff person gets to the SP, usually a more shepherding personality, and manages to get at his heartstrings, and the SP overrules the decision of the EP. The submission of the EP to the SP does not mean passivity. From time to time an EP may have to confront the SP to deal with issues as illustrated in the above example. One SP said he had to learn not to "swoop in" to fix these things, and rather work through the established channel of his EP.¹⁸ One SP, when the staff was murmuring about an EP's decision, took the time to say to them that what they were communicating is that "you are unhappy with *me*."¹⁹ Such solidarity in the SPEP team usually stifles any intention on the part of the staff to go around the EP.

Often, as has been noted, the delegation to the EP of authority over the staff and to run the affairs of the church is a win-win situation for both the EP and the SP. The SP empowers the EP to run staff meetings and oversee them and to shepherd the staff. This arrangement frees the SP to invest more time and effort in his gifted area. John Piper was delighted to be released from the labor of leading staff meetings. Under Sam Crabtree's leadership, he is free to sit in as one of the staff, observe and enter into into the staff dynamics as appropriate.²⁰ Other high-profile SPs express happiness and relief in doing the few things they do well. Perimeter Presbyterian Church SP Randy Pope has only two reports: his EP and his Pastoral Care Associate. His view is that an SP can only do two or three things well, and usually it is only one or two things. In his case, as a preacher and

¹⁸ Roger Barrier, SP phone interview with author, January 2004.

¹⁹ Terry Gyger, interview with author, New York, NY, February 2004. He was referencing SP Tim Keller.

²⁰ John Piper, SP phone interview with author, April 2004. Piper said he was now free to "bubble up" in meetings with Crabtree leading.

vision-caster, not only in the church but also in the community, he must have many of the “shop details” offloaded from him. EPs and SPs typically meet on a weekly basis to appraise one another of what is happening. EPs list the decisions they are making, but occasionally need to get the SP’s affirmation or insight about what they are doing in a particular case.

The Interfacing SPEP Team as Co-Leaders

Cardinal rule number two, I guess, is, “Never surprise your senior pastor.” Sometimes that means, “You need to know the wind is blowing this way on something,” which [the SP] may not even do anything about, but he needs to know.²¹

Honest, unvarnished information is important, whether it is pleasant or not. One SP stated that his staff carry the responsibility of keeping him informed; it is not his job to go around asking questions. Most EPs have the clout of being next to the SP. When this working relationship is well established, the congregation and staff know that if they get the EP’s ear, they have the SP’s ear as well. The EP has the stewardship responsibility of knowing what information the SP needs to know and act upon. EPs will decide when the SP needs to be “in the room.” There are times the EP coaches the SP in the use of his clout, that which he often is unaware of.

The phrase that we use is that “Tim needs to be very careful how he stewards his influence of authority.” I think he created that phrase. He knows there are times when I go in and say, “I need you to speak to this, because only you can speak to this,” and other times I say, “This isn’t worth using any chips,” you know, “Stay out of this.” And he is very aware of the power and influence that he has. That helps both of us when [SPs] are aware of that, and there is a sense in which they are coached. I guess that’s fair, we do coach them in that piece.²²

²¹Glen Elliott, Tucson focus group.

²²Ibid.

Many SPs admit to the learning curve they underwent in realizing the weight their words have. SP tenure alone, as seen in Table 3, reveals that with years of faithful service comes congregational trust, and therefore power. What may merely be an off hand

Table 3. EP Backgrounds: EP & SP Tenures & Church Denomination

EPs	EP Tenure	SP Tenure	Church Denomination
EP 1	10	29	Baptist
EP 2	4	12	Non-Denominational
EP 3	10 & 3		Non-Denominational
EP 4	5	27	Baptist
EP 5	7	25	Baptist
EP 6	6	18	Evangelical Free
EP 7	1.5	14	Non-denominational
EP 8	14	27	Presbyterian
EP 9	4.5	6	Presbyterian
EP 10	8.5	23	Assemblies of God
EP 11	5	12	Evangelical Free

comment, a moment's thinking out loud, or a sputter ends up affecting other team members, sometimes drastically. More than once the image of David wanting water from the well at Bethlehem and his warriors' response was used to illustrate this. SPs, especially those with a good self-image and appropriate humility, know themselves pretty well and do not take their every thought that seriously. But others do. Co-leaders like the EP must understand this dynamic, and know how to read the SP's frame of reference. He provides a filter for the rest of the staff as to what the SP really thinks. He "ought to be able to finish the sentences of the Senior Pastor," because the EP is the "community interface."²³ This role of community interface is important. It is why the EP must know how the SP thinks, and must speak for him. On the congregational side of the interface, when people are creating ministry opportunities, and plans begin to develop, the EP will get the SP to weigh in on the issue before "the horse is completely out of the barn." One SPEP team experienced difficulty because the EP thought for himself too much. The problem was he did so *out loud*, and because he represented the SP, these unaligned comments undermined the SP's influence. Healthy SPEP teams do not stifle independent thinking, but the misalignments must get ironed out before either member goes public.

This dynamic at work can make the SPEP team an excellent model of Christian community. True respect of each other is required. As Hybels had indicated concerning his EP, they cannot afford to "sin against each other."²⁴ Some EP pushback is needed to keep the SP on track in the process of stewarding his call to the church. These comments by an EP help clarify:

It's helping him understand how to lead there, to know those ramifications. I know it just looks like Bill Hybels is this guy that's

²³ John Piper, SP phone interview with author, August 2004.

²⁴ Hybels, Beach and Hawkins, *Emerging Role*.

running everything. I know that's not the facts of life. Greg Hawkins and the staff that's there have to walk as a team communicating that it's not Bill Hybels' church, even though it looks like it, because he's always the public [point man]. And church size starts making that more and more true, the larger it gets, and roles start getting redefined, whether you want them to or not, or damage is done, enough so, that this year, [Hybels is] giving up most of the preaching to go that direction, to use that gift and heart that he has for [leadership].²⁵

One EP expressed that the SP cannot speak to groups without the rest of the leadership team knowing what he is going to say. He added, "Those days left us." The present day involves jointly reviewing the key points the SP is making before they are made. This is important when speaking to leaders in the church. This is less political than it is practical. The power of his words are difficult to reverse. So it is important that the EP is on the same page with him, so there is no accidental shift in direction. Since this is no longer the small church, the role is different and the stakes are higher. What the SP says and does really matters.

I thought it was interesting. Of the Executive Pastors that I have met, very few of them see their Executive Pastor role as permanent, . . . "This is what I am going to do the rest of my life." They are doing it because [at] this moment, for this church, with this pastor, this is what is needed, and I'm that person the can and should do that.²⁶

Shifts in role occur in the large church. Earlier referenced was the idea of an EP succeeding the SP as the new SP. SPs may sense the need to move on, retire, or shift to a new strategic focus, as in the case of Bill Hybels. This affects the next stage for the EP. If he is effective, he is usually asked to stay until the new SP is on board, and then assess whether the new SP and old EP are a "fit." Some of the EPs interviewed are open to

²⁵ Gary Schrader, Tucson focus group.

²⁶ Ibid.

future SP positions. Some EP positions are further subdivided. One EP manages all support and non-ministry staff. The other concentrates on ministry or pastoral staff. Occasionally, even the SP reports to the EP. This is an excellent illustration of shared leadership and mutual submission. I will touch on this below in the section on analogies.

“[The EP has] got to be able to be not easily hurt!” One EP said the question for you if you are interested in doing this job is, “How thick is your skin?” EPs can catch heat from both directions. Staff get irritated. Congregants come to the “interface” rather than the SP, because it feels safer to do so. The SP can be edgy or mouthy. The EP must get along with it. “If the senior pastor has edges, the executive pastor must be like clay.”²⁷ This is so because the EP is often, in fact, the SP’s “press secretary.”²⁸

It is appropriate at this point to comment on the personal aspects of the relationship between the SP and the EP. It is not necessary that EPs and SPs be the closest, most intimate friends. Some do have those close friend relationships. Most have a healthy friendship, they enjoy each other’s company and have mutual respect and deep trust. However, few need to be “best friends.” SPs often go to other large church SPs for accountability. One SP who established the EP position at the point of a growth crisis was encouraged by another SP to do so. The advising SP said that men in their positions are the loneliest people, and only those in the role will understand. Some EPs find that they need to be an ear for the SP, but that the listening is not reciprocal, at least not equally. EPs want to connect with each other, but it is not clear how many do so on a regular basis. Some EPs find their most satisfying relationships in their church, even from among

²⁷John Piper, SP interview.

²⁸Scott Sherman, SP phone interview with author, October 2004.

some of the staff. This is important when considering the analogies to be discussed later. This is a working relationship, so it has those limitations.

Leading the Staff

EPs are responsible for the performance of the staff. One focus group spent considerable time discussing the difference between accountability/job performance and affirmation. In a ministry environment of grace, everyone should be affirmed because of their valuable gifting from God. But this does not necessarily mean they are doing a good job or are aligned with the church's vision and values. The EP has to navigate these sometimes murky waters to keep the mission of the church moving forward without discounting valuable players. Often when staff are failing to perform, one EP stated, "It's about them being in the wrong place." Some churches tried to move under-performing staff to differing positions to find a fit within the church, rather than proceed with immediate termination.

Most EPs lead the staff meetings. Some share this responsibility with the SP: EP provides agenda and business, SP gives devotions. Some admit to an advantage for the staff when the SP is not around all the time. The EP may disciple and shepherd the staff, and some staff are intimidated by the SP of the megachurch. Occasionally the SP's absence gives them opportunity to open up with the EP. EPs generally meet regularly with their own staff reports, usually weekly. One EP illustrated the SP "intimidation factor" by the story a staff person who confessed his moral problem to the EP. The EP was able to shepherd him and prepare him to meet with the SP, but the EP felt it would have been unlikely for the staff person to go straight to the SP with this issue. Further, the

SP was comfortable with the EP's handling of this delicate situation. The EP confessed that there is a wisdom needed in the timing of such issues: knowing when to wait, when to consult, and when to send it up to the SP. The EP's trust account carries a great deal of weight.

EPs usually have an open door for the staff to come to them. EPs expressed the fact that they must wear a variety of hats: friend, supervisor, pastor, decision-maker, and leader. One EP was thanked by a staff member for wearing his "macro-hat" in a staff meeting. By this he meant that the EP managed to cast a church-wide vision that helped the staff re-orient their perspective. Another EP added that the staff come to him already knowing which hat they need him to wear. When the EP responds accordingly, the staff person is encouraged in his or her task. The EP builds ministry mechanisms to fulfill the church's vision, but he does so with staff members he trusts and believes in. The EP is often invisible to the congregation, but not to the church staff.

EPs often have the thankless job of terminating employees. This task is not enjoyed, but EPs tolerate it and even turn it to a profitable experience. As some EPs related, they may not mind the firing part, but they "have never met a Senior Pastor who would say that." That is why the EP role acts as a buffer to the SP in this matter. This is not so much as to avoid the responsibility the SP carries, but rather to keep his shepherding role clear. A terminated staff member may desire the ministry of the SP after the fact.

Hiring is also part of the EP JD. EPs admit that to do this right requires tremendous time and energy. One EP stated that he could not imagine firing one of his direct reports because of the quality and level of their work. If that level of staff were

failing, it would reflect a serious problem in the whole organization. Growing churches will add to their staff, and this requires reporting to someone. As the staff grows, reports must be delegated to keep the spans of care manageable. As mentioned, staff meetings, individual or *en masse*, are usually held weekly or every other week. EPs admit that they live in meetings.

In summary, the job priorities for the EP in an SPEP context include: working in close association with the SP, leading the staff and ministry systems of the church, and holding them accountable to vision and mission implementation goals. Supportive qualities include: a sense of call to the situation-specific role for this season of need in the church, openness to flexing with JD changes, loyalty and integrity in co-stewarding the power and influence shared with the SP, compensating for and complementing the SP's time and gifting limitations, and having a genuine pastoral ethos even in the executive role. The close connection to the SP is critical. The EP must be able to "finish the SP's sentences," help guard him from administrative details, and also know when the SP "must be in the room" to address critical issues.

Question 3: Satisfaction

It has become clear in this study that the SPEP team can only result in satisfaction if the SP and EP actually like each other and fully trust each other. Further, we have seen that there are those leaders who want to play a significant role in the church, yet have no interest in being "number one." Such a personality or mindset lends itself to contentment in the success of the EP's counterpart. EPs have expressed that a rule of thumb is to never desire to be the senior pastor. This study also revealed that some EPs will succeed

the present SP, but in such cases there is agreement as to when and how. The EP must derive satisfaction in being in the right place for the moment. More than one EP admitted to the challenge expressed by a grinning colleague, “The hardest instrument to play in the orchestra is second fiddle.” It is clear that genuine mutual respect must be in place for the SPEP relationship to be satisfying.

SP Issues

Beside the relational maintenance, the co-leading of the SPEP team is a critical source of either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. SPs have expressed great satisfaction in knowing the church is being cared for while they are released to work in the areas of their giftedness. SPs of large churches can quickly summarize their JDs: preach, teach, cast vision, lead the management team (not necessarily the meetings), maintain morale, and speak to the church on crucial issues. The EPs shepherd and guide the ministry systems of the church to see to it that the vision is implemented. EPs help develop systems to make this happen and to keep the pressure off the SP. The SPs is the “point man” in the congregation, so every ministry of the church is tempted to demand his involvement, either physically or verbally. EPs, again, deflect this pressure as the SP’s alter-ego, speaking and acting for the SP, and helping the SP know when he “needs to be in the room.”

When the EP is empowered by the SP and the leadership of the church, EP satisfaction is great. Several EPs acknowledged the gratification of being entrusted with great power, feeling “hugely empowered and honored” when invited to the task of EP.

Many EPs are called to stand in the SP's place when he is gone. Hence the need to think and act as the SP would, the need to study and fully understand the SP's mind.

This gratification can, however, be dispelled the moment an SP undermines his EP. There are times of conflict or disagreement. Healthy SPEP teams work the issue out in private so that they remain in solidarity outside the room. If an EP makes a wrong decision, the SP will go to the EP and confront him. Together they will decide how to proceed. If the SP overturns the EP's decision unilaterally, he will have undermined the EP's authority as well as his own success. EPs expressed the frustration of firing someone who then gets the ear of the SP, who is often a compassionate shepherd and who in turn un-terminates the staff person. When an SP continues to send people back to their proper supervisor, the EP, he reinforces the EP's position and effectiveness. EPs do confront the erosion of authority. As mentioned earlier, one SP was strongly encouraged not to "swoop in" to fix situations that were already under the EP's control. One SP, who happens to possess excellent administrative abilities, maintains the power of his EP by insisting on dealing with all the staff through the EP. That SP also insists that the church lay leaders deal with him directly rather than going to a staff person with a complaint. Such a policy not only gives a sense of empowerment but also protection to the pastoral staff. Further, the impact of gratification cannot be underestimated when the SP gives public notice of, and expressed appreciation for, the work and person of the EP.

When the SPEP relationship is open, the EP is empowered to do his job. SP defensiveness undermines the EP's "press secretary" role. One EP described the joy of being able to confront the SP with "hard stuff." Another EP said he could speak to his SP near the level that even the SP's wife might. Receptivity on the SP's part makes the job

possible, even for EPs who would prefer not to confront. EPs know they must do so if they are to remain loyal to the well-being of their counterpart.

Frustration in the SPEP team can be caused by differing styles of leadership. Some EPs may be more creative or collaborative, in their leading of the staff than the SP is comfortable with. One SP spoke of the satisfaction of five staff members collaborating on plans. The openness and affirmation of the church leadership was gratifying. The traditional hierarchical leadership model is certainly utilized in some SPEP models, but a number of EPs expressed desire for and enjoyment of more collaborative team dynamics.

An SP who is too passive in leadership can cause difficulties for the EP and the church. EPs have had to push their SPs in both directions: to back off from micromanaging and controlling the EP's designated domain of responsibility, and to step up to a more visible leadership role. One EP expressed some of the same complaints about SPs that others gave for other ministry staff. Specialization, and a lack of understanding of the broader discipleship demands of ministry, affect the thinking of some younger SPs. "They want to delegate out the equipping part to the executive pastor or to other pastors. They just want to concentrate on preaching," this EP opined. A lack of engagement on the part of the SP, especially where the EP is coaching the SP to step up ("You need to be in the room here!"), causes an erosion of the SP's authority, and frustration and disappointment for his EP. The key is to know when the church, as well as the SPEP team, are ready for that level of specialization. Ministers with experience know that complete concentration on only one task is seldom appropriate.

Another relational point regarding the SPEP team is relevant before we address the staff dynamics. The need for mutual humility is prevalent in the comments of EPs.

They note that not only do other staff get jealous of the SPEP relationship, and some EPs jealous of the SP's visibility, but SPs also can be tempted to jealousy as the EP builds closer relationships with the staff than the SP does.

The EP Leading the Staff

The team I work with, associate pastors, those are the guys. We are living and dying together in this cause. We talk community a lot, [about] intimacy in our church, and that's where I can get that. I like that. Does that compromise my ability to lead them? Just the opposite, I believe."²⁹

If the SPEP relationship is intact, the next major issue relates to managing the staff. All pastoral staff have occasional dilemmas with parishioners, but for EPs these appear to be the least of their concerns. After their relationship with the SP, the relationship with the staff is the greatest source of satisfaction or frustration. This finding was corroborated by the EP forum in the critical issues cited: style of management, empowering the staff, and relational issues like jealousy.

The above quote reflects a positive connection between the EP and his staff. Reference has already been made to staff attitudes being affected by the level of commitment or maturity among the staff. The unique relationship that an EP has with the SP can naturally provoke jealousy in some pastoral staff members. Some EPs reported the staff's need to adjust to this new reality of the EP having real authority to make the calls relevant to staff ministry. Some SPs keep in continual contact with the pastoral staff, while letting the EP manage them. Other SPs release most of this interaction to the EP. Many EPs shepherd their staff members. In at least one instance, the SP also has a

²⁹ Gary Schrader, Tucson focus group.

senior pastoral associate. Should the EP get stuck with a pastoral problem with a staff member, the associate is called in rather than the SP.

Though some EPs reported being best of friends with the SP, it is interesting to note that the majority of EPs did not find their closest friendship with SPs. Some found deep relationships and accountability with fellow staff members or friends in the church. This is a completely comfortable arrangement for SPEP teams. Non-negotiable in the SPEP relationship, however, is the need for accountability and honesty.

Most EPs enjoy equipping the staff, coaching them, and building and leading the team to accomplish the ministry vision of the church. One SP mentioned the “rich context” of great relationships among the staff primarily due to the leadership of his EP. He added, “No one is leaving out of unhappiness.” Several EPs preferred developing consensus with the staff team, and may be frustrated for the staff if the SP is too inflexible. Seeing the staff’s ministry flourish and knowing they are doing better because the EP is on the scene brings to EPs a sense of fulfillment. “Usually, the staff aren’t complaining about this; they like it,” one EP commented. The SP is not going to meet their needs due to his lack of time or ability, so the EP is truly their advocate and coach. In this regard, EPs also mentioned that some exposure to the SP is important to staff morale. Total isolation from the SP is not good, especially with pastoral and associate staff.

The EP role involves leadership and decision-making. One EP was realistic about his sense of responsibility for the church: “The nature of the position lends itself to being a heat-shield, organizationally. It’s a troubleshooting type of role.” When resolving conflicts, sometimes someone will remain unhappy. “You almost have to have . . . a

Teflon coat - nothing sticks to you,” an EP reflected. Avoidance of conflict will not work for this role. EPs must, of necessity, confront difficult issues, even if they have a personal dislike for it. Not only did some EPs not dread conflicts and problem-solving; they might actually be energized by it. For problem-solving, a certain flexibility seems appropriate. As mentioned above, JDs were often made up along the way as the EP tried to bring structure to a situation. Much experiential learning occurs in the EPs developing role.

I had to fire somebody three weeks ago. There’s a pastoral dimension to that that’s not there in business: “You’re out of here. We will see you to the parking lot. Here’s your check, good-bye!” You fire a guy and you’re going to see him in church on Sunday, and you’re going to see his wife and his kids, and it’s . . . different. You have to go about it differently, and you care about it differently, I think, than if it’s somebody who just flips burgers for you.³⁰

Along with joys and fulfillment in the EP role, there are corresponding stress and tensions. Firing has been addressed above. The above quote captures a prevailing feeling among EPs regarding their discomfort with the hard business side of the church’s ministry. The dynamics leading up to a firing and other human factors can certainly have an effect on the emotional life of the EP. One critical issue, according to one EP, was the “struggle of knowledge” about people’s sins and weaknesses while also having to maintain the right attitude toward them, a burden also borne by the SP. More particularly, when leading the church staff, staff attitudes and work ethics can weigh heavily on the EP’s heart. Staff member’s unwillingness to serve or to remain accountable, refusal to submit to a new hire or promotion of a fellow-staffer, or simple lack of integrity, or sloth, all contribute to the EP’s job being harder. On the positive side, one EP was confident that even if a staff dismissal were necessary, it would be handled honorably, and all

³⁰ Merrit Rector, Minneapolis focus group interview, January 2004.

involved would ultimately know the rightness of the decision. While not liking the possibility, this EP manifested a distinct lack of stress about it.

Staff may feel that the EP's stand on accountability and performance goals demonstrates a lack of grace, but this reflects naivete on their part. EPs reported with thankfulness that most of the people on the staff are motivated "make-it-happen" types. One EP, responding to the bad attitude of a staff member, reminded them that he had forewarned them, "We have a public face and a hidden face." This statement does not call into question the church's integrity, but rather expresses what every church experiences. Every staff member, and even the systems of the church, are imperfect and tainted by sin.

One staffing issue mentioned by EPs was the hiring of persons from within the church. The fact that most EPs were hired from within the church testifies to the potential effectiveness of that process. However, there is a potential difficulty that might come with such hires, namely that if employment does not work, it opens up greater pastoral complications. It was mentioned earlier that church staff sometimes develop an unsubmitive attitude toward a promoted colleague. One EP wisely reflected, "I think it's also human nature to complain or distrust. They distrust the representative approach." This reference relates to the fact that the larger a church becomes, the more decisions have to be made by the leadership/management team. Even an EP is a representative for the SP. As the system becomes larger and consequent changes occur, the staff may no longer be in every decision-making loop, nor be able to discuss every move with the SP. There is resistance to that process, due to the fear that the staff's best interests may not have been considered. Again, some feel that the EP becomes a "wall," a blockade, to the

SP. But support from the SP, and solidarity in the SPEP relationship, will work to alleviate and overcome this attitude.

General Attitudes

It's addictive in the sense that it's great responsibility but a great reward, and the adrenaline rush of being a part of the present and the future!³¹

Beyond the qualities needed by an EP associate, such as loyalty, trustworthiness, and complementary gifting, some others should be mentioned. "I believe you have to have a certain appetite for work. It's not a job you lollygag along in," said an EP serving a church of over 4000. Indeed, the stress can be intense. Men in these high-level leadership roles take seriously the success of the churches they serve. More than one EP expressed feelings like the following: "Six days a week . . . I'm thinking about it, and Saturday, too." "I'm usually the one of the first people here and one of the last to leave; that's pretty consistent." "There's this devotion of heart to this thing called [Casas Adobes Baptist Church]. And that consumes me at 3:00 a.m."

Passion, a sense of responsibility, and a healthy work ethic keep the EP sharp and effective. While the learning curve can be steep, in time, most learn to balance the never-ending demands of the job. The EP at one high-profile church expresses it for nearly every EP: "One of the ways I think about my job is: if there's a problem at [the church] long enough, it's my problem." Still, this EP felt he was able to be with his family at all important moments. The EP's sense of job ownership must be balanced with the ability to set boundaries and say "no," and to admit limitations. EPs need enough emotional

³¹ Jim Schambach, Harrisburg focus group interview, October 2004.

security to be comfortable in second place, to say “no” without fear, and to take hits from disgruntled people without getting off their mission or losing a right attitude.

Of the EPs interviewed in focus groups, all were hard workers. Only two manifested a completely calm contentment with their role and workload. Perhaps due to differences in personality, just over half seemed to feel high intensity about the job: “I always want to have more stuff out there than I can handle.” Many EPs in the group affirmed this attitude. At least four indicated present or past stress. At least two had carried the weight of a building program in addition to their regular EP responsibilities, and two had experienced difficulties with senior pastors at some point.

Nurture and Care of the EP

I think that the work load of an executive pastor has to be acknowledged and managed by more than just the executive pastor. It has to be acknowledged by the senior pastor. It has to be acknowledged by the leadership team of the church, whether it’s the deacons or the elder board, and they have to work intentionally to address that. But the [ultimate] responsibility for it has to rest with the person.³²

An EP articulated the above admonishment in light of the all-consuming potential of the EP’s job. While affirming that the management of EP’s calendar is primarily his own responsibility, church leaders (especially SPs) need to help reinforce boundaries for the EP. Consideration should be given to the season of the EP’s life as well as the church’s needs. One EP wanted to “raise a red flag” for church leaders to notice their EPs situations. Small children at home, health limitations, physical stamina, and extra stress

³² John Nesbitt, Harrisburg focus group.

caused by a major initiative at the church need to be taken under advisement and appropriate support provided.

Words of instruction came from a few EPs about stewarding this gifted person, particularly when churches are involved with building programs. It was noted that the added responsibility of a building program takes a heavy toll on the EP, and it can be very physically and spiritually exhausting for him. One recommendation was to get another person to carry the primary load of the building program, or at least to relieve the EP of his regular duties during that time so that he can concentrate on the building plan. One EP, recognizing the building program as a season that had to be endured, expressed concern for his own spiritual life: "I've been trying to recover my soul." While EPs are expected to watch out for and hold the staff accountable, church leadership needs to ensure that the EP is properly cared for.

In summary, satisfactions and frustrations are part of the EP experience. Great satisfaction is found among EPs when (1) the relationship with the SP is healthy and (2) the leading of the staff is successful. The biggest frustrations are found when the SP undermines or distrusts the EP's authority. Staff conflicts can also lead to stress, but many EPs recognize that this issue comes with the territory. A good work ethic and a comfort with the behind-the-scenes role will increase the satisfaction of the EP. Finally, having the SP and church leaders clearly and supportively acknowledge that the EP is not indefatigable, and putting in place appropriate policy guidelines and actions so as to not overburden him, along with appropriate affirmation and occasional special appreciation for his contribution, will provide extra refreshment to the EP as the church stewards this servant.

With a brief twenty-five year history, the EP best practices are still being written. One EP's humor expressed the experimental nature of this ministry: "It just feels good that over the last seven years I've been there, I haven't wrecked the thing!" To the contrary, the EP is often the right person to effectively lead the church's ministry and provide the traits and competencies to complement the SP.

Additional Findings

The interview was designed to explore at least three other areas of interest. EPs were asked for their comments about *analogies* for the SPEP team; a *theological* or *biblical framework* for the establishment of the SPEP; and on a more pragmatic note, they were asked to share acquired wisdom or *proverbs* relevant to the SPEP team.

Analogies for the SPEP Team

It is kind of like we are husband and wife, you are the father who's away at work all day, I am the mother who's home. I know what's going on with the kids and when you come home I've got to tell you what's going on, and sometimes I need you to step in and help with this. But I'm the one that knows what's going on at home. And that only works if those two are really sharing a united front on every level. That analogy will break down if you push it too far.³³

Marriage was one analogy offered to elicit response in the interviews. It is useful as an analogy, but with practical limitations. In the EP focus group sessions and the corresponding SP interviews, fewer than half of the EPs and SPs were comfortable with the analogy, even provided there were some caveats when using it. Most preferred other analogies. Two EPs strongly disliked the marriage analogy. It received more enthusiasm

³³ Glen Elliott, Tucson focus group. In spite of his use of this analogy, he actually disliked it.

during SP interviews than in EP interviews by at least four SPs. One SP strongly opposed it.

Table 4 reports the other three common EP analogies beside marriage: the CEO and COO (repeatedly criticized for its corporate overtones), the ship's Captain and Executive Officer, and the President and his Chief of Staff. Leith Anderson used the corporate paradigm: the SP is the CEO, the elders are the Board of Directors, and the EPs are Vice Presidents. He emphasized the importance of the SPEP team as primarily a business arrangement for the effective management of the church. Wes Kiel pointed out that each SPEP team will choose the analogy that works for them.

The CEO/COO analogy was a common method of explaining the overall role distinctions between the SP and EP. The SP (CEO) is looked upon as the leader, the provider of direction, and the one ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the organization. Day-to-day operations are under the EP (COO)'s jurisdiction. Delegation is appropriate. The COO does not personally check the janitorial supplies, but a deputy must bring an accounting to the COO, either directly or indirectly. The CEO would not even be informed about this unless the COO felt the need to inform him of something of great significance. The CEO trusts the COO's coverage of the business management. The President and Chief of Staff (COS) analogy illustrates the same dialogue and delegation of authority. The COS is trusted to carry out the President's intentions. He appraises where the President needs to be and how much he really needs to know.

Table 4. Favorite and Least Favorite SPEP Analogies among EPs

EPs	Favorite Analogy	Least Favorite Analogy
EP 1	President/COS	CEO/COO
EP 2	None	Marriage
EP 3		
EP 4	CEO/COO	None
EP 5	President/COS; Captain/EO	None
EP 6	CEO/COO	None
EP 7	Captain/Executive Officer	Marriage
EP 8	1.Captain/Executive Officer 2.CEO/COO	1. Marriage; 2. Coach/ Offensive Coordinator
EP 9	Captain/Executive Officer	CEO/COO
EP 10	None	Marriage
EP 11	CEO/COO	Marriage

Another EP with a military background naturally used the Ship's Captain and Executive Officer analogy. His point in using this analogy related to submission: there is protection in being under another leader. SPs are not perfect, they may make mistakes. They may not see as much of what is going on as the EP sees, but the EP reminds himself

that he is under God-appointed leadership. He is careful not to develop an “I know better” attitude. Further, the ship analogy illustrates that the Captain has full confidence in the Executive Officer. The Captain may address any sailor directly, at will. Sailors can address the Captain, but their inquiries and interaction must be big picture issues, and not merely about tactical operations. Any of the latter should be addressed to the Executive Officer. These analogies provide insightful portrayals of the SPEP working relationship. The SP sets the direction and course. The EP knows what the chief wants and makes implementation decisions accordingly.

Regarding the marriage analogy, while agreeing on its limitations, some SPs became energized during the interview. Some high-profile EPs volunteered the image automatically. Jeff Mills, EP to SP Alistair Begg, describes himself as “the ministry wife.”³⁴ Dad is out teaching while he is home with the kids. Glen Kruen, EP to SP Rick Warren stated that early in their working relationship he “wanted to divorce Rick.”³⁵ Nevertheless, the outworking of the relationship can prove to be extremely satisfying and obviously has in those cases. Trying to use a picture of marriage that most of these leaders would affirm, I described the SPEP team as functioning *in mutual submission with deference to headship*. This was embraced as highly illustrative, with the following caveats:

1. It is not necessarily a permanent bond; it is not a sin to end this SPEP “marriage” relationship.

³⁴ Jeff Mills, phone interview with the author, September 2004.

³⁵ Glen Kruen, phone interview with the author, September 2004.

2. The SPEP “marriage” is not automatically an emotional relationship as would be expected in marriage. Intimate accountability, being closest of friends, is not a prerequisite to make the SPEP relationship work.

Still there is the “flavor” of marriage in shared responsibility and celebration of the team. John Piper commented on the analogy: “The egalitarian model will not work. Sam is deferential toward my headship. Power is given to each other, while one is still chief.” But he added, as in marriage, if a husband and wife need a “manual” to function, it won’t work. It works only if there is appreciation for and enjoyment of each other’s gifting, style of leadership, and contribution. Another SP stated, “No, that actually is it!” He humorously added that in his marriage there’s only been three times in fifteen years that he has appealed to the command to submit. He could not imagine the SPEP team working without a loyal friendship, at least. SP Randy Pope felt marriage was a good analogy if you have the right idea of marriage. “You disagree, but you work it through. Like at home!”³⁶ Pope agreed that the “marriage” should end if: the EP is no longer effective, or he if is draining the SP to be less effective, or in the event of moral failure. An EP who disliked the marriage analogy said he definitely liked the concept of a covenant. The SPEP team covenants together in a loyal, power-sharing, mutually accountable relationship, yet with deference to headship.

Often the marriage analogy came up in the course of discussion. One EP, explaining the strengths of the two senior leaders at his church exclaimed, “It’s like, you know, we’re married.” Another EP pointed out that if the EP and SP are both leaders, friction will occur. “Just like if you and your wife are both leaders . . . personality profiles

³⁶ Randy Pope, SP phone interview with author, October 2004.

. . . will say [you will] have friction.” In such cases corrective discussions ensue between the SP and the EP to settle it. But the analogy has also surfaced as a negative illustration:

I would guess that maybe half of the Executive Pastors’ situations I hear about getting started seem to fail - kind of like marriages today. About half of them don’t work because of chemistry, or . . . one of them isn’t humble enough. It takes humility, really! I think it takes humility on both the Senior Pastor’s part and the Executive Pastor’s part for the role to work out.³⁷

Wes Kiel commented that one weakness of the marriage analogy is the problem of marrying someone before you really know them. If you really get to know a person you have a better chance of making this work.

Theological or Biblical Models

It’s a kingly role . . . bringing order and leadership. You look to Christ to do that because Christ subdues our hearts and draws us to himself. There’s a certain subduing that we do . . . as executive pastors, in trying to organize [and] bring sense to that.³⁸

When asked about a theological or biblical rationale, virtually all EPs agreed that a specific passage did not exist that would exegetically supply a defense of the EP office. Two EPs felt little need to find such a rationale. At least one SP insisted that it simply was not a theological issue. Most chuckled at the idea of having a nice package on the subject. Two responded with a strong theological thought. All agreed that the role is supported within the biblical framework of service and giftings, and nearly all gave biblical models and illustrations for the SPEP paradigm. Table 5 summarizes this data.

³⁷ John Purcell, Atlanta focus group interview, September 2004.

³⁸ Dave Gordon, Atlanta focus group interview, September 2004.

To illustrate the EP role, several biblical pictures were offered. One EP expressed that Joseph's service to Pharaoh was the clearest model. He added that Joseph was a champion as an executive officer, faithful to God's larger plan in that he stewarded the "embryonic church" represented by Jacob's desperate family. Another pragmatic argument was based on Acts 6. The need for leaders who are called and gifted to preach to be protected from important but routine mercy ministry was met by the establishing of administrative officers. This provides a biblical framework at least, if not the direct establishment of the office. Other EPs reflected that Moses had Joshua, Moses had Aaron, David had Jonathan, Ezra had Nehemiah, and Paul had Barnabas, some of whom served as right-hand men for a season at least, teams of co-leaders with significant helpers, "inner circle" colleagues. Another EP, referencing the gift passage of 1 Peter 4, asserted that an EP is simply using his executive ability, his serving gift, alongside another man's speaking gift (SP), to move the church forward in her mission to the glory of God. He added that it is also possible, as with any gifting, to execute church ministry in a manner that is not to the glory of God.

Two EPs were quickly affirming of theological support. The above quote about "kingly" rule is in agreement with the concept shared by Redeemer Presbyterian Church's former EP Dick Kaufmann. Embracing the Old Testament model of leadership in the Davidic kingdom, roles are divided between the king who brings order, the prophet who brings vision, and the priest who brings healing community. These correspond to the megachurch structure of a leadership triad consisting of the EP, SP, and the pastor over pastoral care or small groups. One of the three is tasked with bringing order to the larger

church community. But the analogy breaks down with the EP being the “point man,” as the king was in Israel. Nevertheless, there is warrant for using this model.

Table 5. Theological Rationales and Biblical Models for the EP Role

EP	Theological Rationale	Biblical Models/illustrations
EP 1	No (no need)	
EP 2	No	Jethro and Moses
EP 3	No	Spiritual Gifts
EP 4	No (no need)	Yes, Biblical Models
EP 5	No	Speaking and Serving Gifts (1 Pet.4)
EP 6	No	Spiritual Gifts and Need
EP 7	No	The Seven Officers (Acts 6)
EP 8	No	Spiritual Gifts
EP 9	Yes	OT Prophet, Priest, King
EP 10	No	
EP 11	Yes	Spiritual Gifts (Eph.4)

It is just the out-working of Ephesians 4. Different people have different roles, and it's a contemporary application [for an] organizational environment [that] works in a church. You know the distinctions that they talk about at Willow Creek: . . . the cause, the community, and the corporation? Every church has all three aspects of that . . . and this is the attention [to] the corporate aspect. The community is the family, and the cause is the mission, and . . . the corporate aspect requires corporate structure.³⁹

Next to the Kingdom model, the above quote was the clearest articulation of theological support for the SPEP team. Simply put, the SPEP is perceived to be a contemporary model of Ephesians 4. The complementary leadership gifts embodied in the servant-leaders of the church are designed to equip and guide the people of God into successful mission. Every SPEP team interviewed was intentional about fulfilling this biblical mandate. A brief exegetical discussion of this view will follow in chapter 5.

Proverbs

When asked to share wisdom or proverbs, most EPs paused for a moment's reflection. Then both serious and humorous thoughts emerged. The proverbs are listed below with little commentary. They are clustered under three headings: general, relationship with the SP, and leading. A few proverbs came from the SPs interviewed. The first group of proverbs are about the SPEP model in general:

“There are a lot of easier ways to make money!”

“You have to love it to be in it!”

“It's the same as being a senior pastor; don't do it unless you can't not do it!”

“It's a lonely job . . . a unique position in the middle.”

“I was . . . a non-workaholic in a workaholic job.”

³⁹ John Nesbitt, Harriburg focus group.

“‘No’ is a good word!”

The EP overseeing ministry staff for SP Leith Anderson summed up this perspective on the EP role in general:

There are days when I wouldn't do anything else. There are days when I would do anything else, but most days there's a real - well, every day there's a sense of call. Even in the midst of problem-solving and whatever tensions or adversities might be arriving on that day. It's why God put me here.⁴⁰

The second group of proverbs have to do with the SPEP relationship:

“You know the hardest instrument to play in a church? Second fiddle. You don't try and play first fiddle.”

“The Executive Pastor must have a ‘John the Baptist’ attitude.”

“You've got to be loyal to the man you're working for.”

“Loyalty doesn't qualify you, but . . . disloyalty will disqualify you!”

“Public loyalty gives you leverage privately.”

“One of my life scriptures is [in] Luke . . . ‘faithful in little’. . . but the next Scripture says, ‘If you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who will give unto you your own?’”

“He ought to be able to finish the sentences of the Senior Pastor!”

“The Executive Pastor is kind of a wall to the Senior Pastor.”

This last comment has both positive and negative overtones; positive for the SP and negative for the staff. The SP needs to be sure that he does not overdelegate his leadership to the EP. Nevertheless, the EP carries authority with the staff, as the following comment affirms:

⁴⁰ Ken Geis, Minneapolis focus group interview, January 2004.

It's real easy to get lulled into thinking [the EP role is] really not that significant, or that . . . words don't matter as much. I've learned a few things this year. I've lost the right to think out loud, and my words mean a whole lot more to the people that I lead than I would ever realize that they did!⁴¹

The third group of proverbs are about the EP's task of leading:

"If you hire smart, you don't have to manage tough."

"You get what you pay for."

"Don't build what you can afford. Build what you need."

"There needs to be accountability . . . You can't expect what you don't inspect."

"The title 'Executive Pastor' is sort of an oxymoron. I've found that there are times they want me to be more 'executive,' and then times they want me to be more 'pastoral.'"

"I probably wear three hats. I wear a supervisor hat, a friend hat, and a pastor hat."

Relevant to making the tough ministry calls, like ending a program that is no longer working, one EP humorously recalled:

There's an Indian proverb that says, "When the horse is dead, the Indian gets off." In other words, if it isn't going anywhere, let it go. I was getting off at the Miami airport one time, before it was all built up, and here was a dead horse with rigor mortis, with one leg up in the air. And there was a meadow lark on it, just singing away, and I said to Donna, "there's something that I can learn from." And she said, "What did you see?" I said, "Don't sing on a dead horse!"⁴²

To summarize the additional findings, many analogies and proverbs referenced the primacy of the relationship between the EP and SP, and the loyalty, alignment, and humility needed to succeed in the EP role. One analogy, the CEO/COO team, was a favorite for those who felt the description was the best way to communicate with

⁴¹ Ferrol Macon, Atlanta focus group interview, September 2004.

⁴² Merrit Rector, Minneapolis focus group.

corporately influenced Americans and the least favorite for several EPs who resisted that corporate flavor. An equally negative response was voiced about the marriage analogy, although it was often utilized in describing the SPEP team working relationship. Lastly, all EPs affirmed the biblical validity of the SPEP team structure for the church. Nearly all offered biblical passages and illustrations to endorse the team model, and two articulated a specific theological rationale.

High-Profile EP Input

Many of the findings above were corroborated by the supplemental interviews with high-profile EPs at Parkside Church, Cleveland, Saddleback Community Church, Oro Valley, Southland Christian Church, Lexington, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, and Pantego Bible Church, . All affirmed the role of releasing the SP from the details of operations. Most of these megachurches have SPs with extensive speaking, writing, and traveling ministries, and are therefore in need of a complementary leadership role extension on the church campus. Jeff Mills, EP to SP Alistair Begg, affirmed the “stay-at-home-mom” role for the EP. Both he and Glen Krueen of Saddleback Community Church referenced the marriage analogy to explain their honored positions. In offloading duties and demands from the SP, Terry Gyger (Redeemer Presbyterian Church) is the primary interface with SP Tim Keller. If people speak to him, they have Keller’s ear. Gordon Walls (Southland Christian Church), is a category 2 EP co-leader with a marketplace background, but was one of the most respected elders in the church. He became EP for SP Mike Breaux and had virtually all the staff reporting to him. Breaux referred to their team with the analogy of the “coach and offensive coordinator.”

One significant difference was noticeable among the churches with attendance figures of 10,000 or more. Staff structures change, and the tight hand-in-glove relationship between the SP and EP changes. EPs have further decisions to oversee, and SPs tend to have more associate staff in the inner circle. The SPEP team paradigm we have examined appears to be most appropriate for the church size of 1000 to 5000, with a dyad, or at most triad, senior leadership team.

I think the Executive Pastor role is an essential piece to God's organization of the church. And I really do think they're a very important piece of the puzzle.⁴³

In summary, this study leads us to conclude that the SPEP leadership team is a viable structural paradigm for growing megachurches of a congregational size of 1000 to 5000. Our findings reinforce the conclusions of earlier informal studies by Kiel and Travis. EPs know that the title "Executive Pastor" is used differently in various churches. There is general agreement that the essential meaning of the title is that of a true co-leader, a senior associate, distinguishing the EP from a church business administrator. This is especially true in larger megachurches. The EP fulfills a leadership role, as well as an executive or management role. The EP shepherds the systems of the church, coaching the staff to fulfill their mission. A trusting relationship of the EP with the SP is a critical success factor, since the EP primarily is serving the SP, who is the principal visionary leader of the church. The need for the SP to reinforce the delegated authority of the EP was affirmed. The potential for burnout in the EP role pointed to the need for the SP and the church leaders to help steward this servant-leader with boundaries and appropriate

⁴³ Gordon Walls, interview with the author, Lexington, KY, February 2004.

appreciation. A high capacity for work, submission, loyalty, strategic thinking, gospel humility, and brave integrity are important to success in this role. Analogies, such as the CEO/COO team, have been used to illustrate the roles the SP and EP fulfill in the megachurch. Though there is no specific reference in Scripture to the SPEP team, all EPs believe that the model is compatible with Scripture. Most EPs find biblical illustrations of the SPEP team dynamics, and a few offer a theological rationale.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A Summary of the Study

The executive pastor . . . serves as a gatekeeper and helps relieve stress on the senior pastor so they can focus on what they do best -- preaching, teaching, and casting vision. – Rez Gopez-Sindac, “CE Interview: Dr. David Fletcher”¹

The editor for *Church Executive* quoted above references the insight of David Fletcher, author of the first Doctor of Ministry dissertation concerning the executive pastor. The EP is now an accepted part of the evangelical megachurch landscape, having appeared in churches for more than twenty years, and finally referenced in church administrative texts in the last decade. Initial informal studies revealed certain constants in the EP position, though the specific job descriptions vary from church to church.

The introduction of this study indicated that the primary issues driving the deployment of the EP are increased church congregational size, consequent increased staff size, and the gifting and capacity of the senior pastor. The growth resulting from the efforts of a visionary SP precipitates an eventual management crisis. Large numbers of people are beyond the reach of the SP’s personal touch. Overseeing the staff hired to meet this ministry need can also be past his reach. Senior pastor and author Larry Osborne comments on this dilemma:

¹ Sindac-Gopez, “CE Interview: Fletcher,” 1-2.

Many church leaders fail to understand that more members and staff don't just make a church bigger. They make it different. Roles and relationships change, often dramatically, usually unintentionally. Ministry growth is more than adding players. Sometimes it's a whole new ballgame.²

One attempt at handling the new game is the utilization of the SPEP team paradigm. Keil's informal study on the EP assumed at least two important dimensions to the EP's role: (1) primary responsibility for the coordination and supervision of the staff, and (2) a position of second-in-command behind the SP.³ Though not every EP interviewed would feel they hold such a rank, they do nevertheless represent the SP in matters of ministry management. A feature consistently found among "level 3" EPs (senior associate co-leaders) is the fact that they can speak for the SP. Such a role needs to be highly relational. This was clearly reinforced in the interview findings.

Reviewing the relevant literature, chapter 2 revealed only one specific reference to the EP in church administrative writings dating from 1973 or earlier. The EP position became accepted in the literature of the 1990s. As a leadership position, and not simply as a support staff role, the EP role requires the qualities of leadership such as integrity, vision, spiritual authenticity, and godly exercise of authority. Finding an adequate apologetic for management in the church, both in Scripture and in Christian leadership authors, this study affirmed the legitimacy of blending administration with shepherding in the church. Indeed, the case was made that administration is, at times, spiritual work.

² Larry Osborne, "What Game Are We Playing?" *Leadership Journal*, vol. 21, no.1 (Winter 2000), 80.

³ Keil, "The Executive Pastor," 8.

The complex matrix of relationships created by megachurch staffing has given fresh impetus to the team approach to ministry. To keep complementarily gifted persons aligned with a common goal requires leadership. Add to this the complication of church staffs becoming increasingly specialized, rather than all ministry staff being generalists, and the task becomes highly complex and demanding. As Killinski and Wofford indicated in 1973, “The leadership of the staff should be the direct responsibility of the pastor.”⁴ They concede that a large church could turn that job over to an EP. Once the staff becomes the size of a small church, the conflict with the SP’s time is immediately obvious. The EP position is a viable complement designed to release the SP from ministry management to enable him to invest in his gifted ministry areas such as preaching, teaching and vision-casting.

The high leadership level of the SPEP team required a consideration of co-leadership and co-pastoring. Issues of mutuality, veto power, and solidarity have played a vital part in effective co-leadership in history. In church history, the SPEP team paradigm was classically demonstrated in the Metropolitan Tabernacle under the leadership of the Spurgeon brothers, Charles and James. Charles, the famous preacher-pastor, was profoundly complemented by James’ administrative expertise, which was deliberately focused to maximize Charles’ prowess, even by the intentional neglect of some other giftings found in James. Co-pastoring requires a deep trust, a confidence of each leader in his counterpart. Reports indicated that a lack of such confidence in the co-pastor on the part of the senior pastor was always the number one cause for dissatisfaction in the position.

⁴ Killinski and Wofford, *Organization*, 176.

Specifics on the EP have only been forthcoming in the last sixteen years, beginning with the study of Wes Keil. JDs and general resourcing and dialogue among EPs who attended EP forums were the only available information. Seminary staff profiles and electronic focus group summaries were available in the late 1990s, and several dissertations on the subject were completed in 2004.

Chapter 3 indicated that the purpose of this study was to add to the knowledge base regarding the executive pastor, especially exploring the contextual and relational factors that make for a legitimate and successful SPEP experience. Initial contacts were made with two significant informants, both having prior EP experience. Further, the researcher had previous interaction with two other high-profile EPs. These discussions generated questions for future focus group interviews of EPs.

In focus group interview settings, EPs shared their thoughts on when it is appropriate for a church to move to an SPEP team model; what is the job description for the EP and the SP; what are the primary causes of success or failure for the SP and EP in their working relationship; and what are the necessary spiritual, attitudinal, and ministry competencies. Further, through phone or e-mail interviews, corresponding SPs shared their insights on the history, roles, and satisfaction of their own SPEP experience. A few high-profile EPs were contacted for further input, as well. The study explored analogies, theological or biblical rationales, and acquired wisdom among EPs. Follow-up contacts were made with EPs to clarify data.

Discussion of the Findings

The key issue is a high level of trust between the Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor . . . teams that don't trust each other don't last long.⁵

⁵ Travis, "Beta Code."

In chapter 4 we noted that there is no getting around the centrality of the relational factors and dynamics between the SP and the EP. The dual SPEP team relationship is the most common in churches, but does not preclude modifications in the structure of the senior leadership team. Of the eleven EPs involved in focus groups, at least two had the EP position divided between an EP over ministry staff and an EP over support staff. Four churches had at least three senior leaders sharing the co-leadership. Some utilized a team with an SP, an EP, and a pastoral senior associate or an additional teaching pastor. Some used a more collaborative co-leadership model, but more than half were primarily top-down leadership models. The latter team configuration places a strong emphasis on the SP being the point-man and primary vision-caster. This does not indicate to what extent or how the SP might include leaders in decision-making processes. Furthermore, the SPEP team does not dictate ecclesiology. Local churches must establish the role of their elders as it relates to influencing the staff. Some churches expect the elders to work through the SPEP team as the point leaders for the congregation. Many EPs actually lead their church's elder meetings.

Couples emerge over time out of close, task-oriented working relationships between superiors and subordinates, which each party experiences as deeply satisfying and rewarding. So well developed and refined is the understanding at the heart of the relationship that a leadership coupling may be likened to a marriage.⁶

Peter Gronn, reporting here on "leadership couples," indicated the potential satisfaction of a co-leading relationship, as well as alluding to an analogy that this study specifically explored. Other marketplace authors have affirmed the value of close, satisfying team relationships. The relationship between the SP and the EP remains the top

⁶ Gronn, "The Leadership Couple," 44.

issue in utilizing this paradigm. In terms of the team relationship, loyalty, submission, a servant heart, and comfort with “second place” are crucial to the EP’s satisfaction with the role. Gospel humility, the willingness to receive honest feedback from the EP, on the part of the SP is also critical. The SP must command a reasonable amount of respect from the EP. One EP stated that he would never work for a man who did not have a clearly articulated vision.

Keil refers to the SPEP team as a splitting of the SP’s role.⁷ The EP picks up the business side of the ministry, which is still part of the senior leader’s responsibility, in order to lead it as the SP would. A critical factor, therefore, in EP selection is a sense of call to the particular church situation, and especially a call to come alongside the SP. Hence, most EPs were called to their role from within their own church, being invited to do so by the SP. Of the study’s eleven EP focus group participants only two were called to the EP role from outside the church, and one of those had been spotted by the SP and placed at the top of the church’s search list. All indications point to the conclusion that an EP should never be hired without the full agreement of the SP. A vacancy in the SP position might allow a church leadership team to make an exception. But it must be understood that a lack of chemistry between the EP and the next SP renders this option a major risk.

“I think it’s important that the Senior Minister (has) ‘his guy.’ We don’t want to strap the Senior Minister with somebody that’s not his person.”⁸ Effectiveness and satisfaction may be reflected in the fact that of the nine focus group churches sustaining

⁷ Keil, “The Executive Pastor,” 8.

⁸ EP Gordon Walls, interview with the author, Lexington, KY, February 2004.

attendance of over 2000, the SPEP teams reflected significant tenures. Two teams were no longer intact due to the departure of the SP. Of the seven remaining intact, five reported SP tenures of more than twenty years, and EP tenures corresponding to those SPs ranged from a minimum of five years up to fourteen years. Even after discovering that EPs often felt their JDs were in a state of flux, or that they may not be called to this role permanently, a full half of EPs surveyed claimed to have found their niche for a long and satisfying ministry relationship. Those who were open to future SP positions or other calls usually expressed a settled disposition concerning the call to their present role. In cases where the EPs were less than thrilled, the chief dissatisfaction was the insecurity, lack of support, or controlling management style of the SP.

It was discovered that the EP must study the SP and know how to “finish his sentences.” Complete alignment, faithfulness to the SP’s vision and point of view, are critical in the EP role. “Public loyalty gives you leverage privately. Loyalty doesn’t qualify you, but . . . disloyalty will disqualify you.”⁹ An EP, who thinks he knows better or overly verbalizes independent thinking can erode the solidarity of the SPEP team. Incidentally, this works in both directions in a healthy SPEP team. In the best instances, SPs and EPs can “get in each other’s faces,” disagreeing, discussing, and resolving any alignment conflicts. In fact, it was reported in four teams that part of the role of the EP was to help the SP steward the power of his words. SPs, especially those with long tenure, must realize the impact of a mere offhand comment coming from their lips. A faithful EP can actually coach the SP in this regard if the relationship is healthy. The EP

⁹ Ibid.

must be courageous enough to present tough information to the SP, whether the SP chooses to act on it or not.

Nearly every EP had priority access to the SP. Usually, at this level of senior leadership, the SP's time is carefully protected. EPs, even when sensitive to the pressure on their SP, nearly always meet weekly with the SP and have a means of constant communication through the week. The access and alignment the EP has with the SP often make the EP the public representative of the SP. When the SPEP team is working, when "end runs" are thwarted by solidarity between the SP and EP, when the SP reinforces the validity of the EP's decisions, the staff and congregation learn that to have the EP's ear is to have the SP's attention as well. On the negative side, those who are disgruntled because of denied access complain that the EP presents a wall to the SP. Ministers can become untouchable and aloof from their people, but this structure is not designed to create such an atmosphere. Rather, it is a systems application to protect the time of the SP. Jesus' disciples cooperated with Him, at times, in removing from the masses. The larger group of disciples, as well, had to adjust to being outside the "inner circle" meetings.¹⁰ One EP recalled a megachurch pastor's remark: "If you say 'yes' to everything that goes on during the week, you will be saying 'no' to that congregation you preach to on the weekend."¹¹ EPs see their task as unburdening the SP of everything that can be covered by another, while still deciding when to give the assignment to the SP.

The EP role, as noted above, is actually a faithful stewardship of another man's ministry. EPs referenced the story of Joseph serving Pharaoh as the model of the EP's

¹⁰ E.g., Mark 5:37; 9:2. Jesus apparently had a habit of taking only Peter, James and John into certain contexts.

¹¹ EP Gordon Walls, referencing Pastor Bob Russell.

stewardship of delegated authority. Given shared authority, EPs often expressed a sense of being honored, entrusted with a significant kingdom role. One EP, a member of a long-tenured SPEP team, shared that one of his theme verses was Jesus' reference to being faithful with another person's goods, reflecting that the SPEP team shares responsibility for the ministry entrusted to the SP. One EP stated that while not desiring the first place on the team (SP), this role was the next significant position of influence. With the right spirit of support and desire for the success of others and the larger team, the EP role can be very gratifying. One EP referred to the gratification of making kingdom decisions as "addictive" in the best sense.

Other biblical principles and analogies were used to capture the senior leadership team configuration and function. All EPs affirmed the structure of the SPEP team as an expression of *gifting* fitted to *need*. The highly corporate analogy of the CEO/COO team was strongly disliked by a few EPs precisely because of the corporate overtones which seem to give a "worldly" flavor to a spiritual organization. Nevertheless, half of the EPs either preferred it or were comfortable with its ability to communicate the SP and EP roles. One EP put the following spin on the analogy: Chief *Spiritual* Officer (SP) and the Chief Operating Officer (EP). The CSO makes sure the vision is before the staff and the church, while being concerned for the church's spiritual health. The COO, who is also pastoral in thinking, must ensure that the staff is performing properly and that the vision is being fulfilled.

Other SPEP team analogies included President and Chief of Staff, ship's Captain and Executive Officer, Vision Caster and Vision Keeper, and husband and wife. The President/COS and Ship's Captain/EO were the next highest preferred analogies. The

only analogy receiving more negative reactions among the focus group EPs than the CEO/COO analogy was the marriage analogy. This was of interest to this study because the marriage analogy had been used in reference to the SPEP team in the researcher's own experience; it was sometimes utilized to explain the dynamics of the SPEP relationship even by EPs who disliked the analogy; and it was embraced enthusiastically by at least one high-profile EP and at least one SP during the interviews. In reference to the marriage analogy, this study concludes that, while it may be useful as an in-house explanation of the dynamics of the SPEP relationship, it is not the first choice analogy for the SPEP team. The analogy requires more cautionary explanation than even the CEO/COO analogy. The "vision caster" and "vision keeper," referring to the SP and EP respectively, is not an analogy but is certainly illustrative.¹² This corresponds with Dr. Greg Bourgon's SPEP team description of "vision caster" and "vision implementer."¹³

Realistically, no senior pastor in a multistaff church can totally avoid administration. An EP, however, if he is complementarily gifted, can alleviate the press of endless details involved in the large church context. "The Executive Pastor also serves the staff as supervisor. In many cases, staff have desired more input than the Senior Pastor had time to give."¹⁴ EPs do serve as shepherds to the staff. It is critical that they have a ministry heart rather than a bottom-line, productivity mind set. EPs reported teaching, discipling, problem-solving with, and directing the staff. As the term "executive" implies, there is an execution side to the position. Accountability, planning,

¹² EP Sam Crabtree, Minneapolis focus group.

¹³ Bourgon, "Executive Pastor Profile," 4.

¹⁴ Travis, "Beta Code."

ministry goals, correction, hiring, and firing are all part of the EP's domain in the business side of the church.

Experience has confirmed that the EP who is only corporate in thinking will not work well. Churches pioneering this office with a purely businesslike administrator admitted to frustrations and failures. A ministry mindset must be in place, both to guide the team toward kingdom accomplishment and to develop the right *esprit de corps* among ministry staff. Some EPs with marketplace roots needed to add theological training to their portfolio. Conversely, a few EPs from ministry backgrounds needed to add management skills.

“It takes a lot of . . . emotional intelligence to work this job,” one high-profile EP reported. Relational dynamics, sensitivity, and a balance of grace and accountability are all needed in this role. The greatest joy EPs experience, next to a satisfying relationship with the SP, is the success of their staff. A true team player, the EP rejoices when, after coaching and cheering on the staff, they succeed at their task. Several EPs confessed to not knowing exactly how to guide the staff in some circumstances, yet by being available and with them in the problem, the staff members went back to work encouraged and successful, much to the joy and thankfulness of the EP. EPs do hold a strategic leadership role in the kingdom.

The EP is on the “front line” when dealing with not only successful staff, but also with stalled, struggling, hurting, whining, or even insubordinate staff. He takes the hits so the SP can still serve as pastor to the staff person who is terminated, for example. Further, his work is more often than not behind-the-scenes, while his counterpart stands in the limelight. The EP must have a good work ethic, tolerance for the frustrations that arise

among the staff, and a “John the Baptist” attitude. It was further affirmed that SPs and church leaders should acknowledge the consuming nature of the EP position and help establish boundaries for the healthy stewarding of the person in this office.

The EP role requires a complementarily gifted leader for the SP. Theologically, all EP’s affirmed the biblical validity of the SPEP team structure. Nearly all offered biblical reasoning for the team, especially in regard to spiritual gifting. The SPEP team is a contemporary model of personal leadership giftings as described in Ephesians 4. Verses 11-12, referring to the gifts of evangelists, apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers is set in a context of unity. The intention is that these various personal giftings supply the leadership needed to move the Body of Christ forward to maturity and the accomplishment of ministry. Whether the same person, or two differing leaders, the pastor and teacher giftings clearly refer to the stationary leaders, those positioned in the local church rather than being itinerate.¹⁵ Commentator Andrew Lincoln draws an appropriate connection between the stationed pastors and the administrative giftings listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Romans 12:8.¹⁶ This would place the SPEP team of visionary teacher and pastoral administrator within the exegetical domain of Ephesians 4.

In summary, although the title may remain ambiguous in the church at large, this study found that the title of “Executive Pastor” was most often applied to those in category 3 (senior associate, co-pastoring) roles. These officers were added by splitting the SP role in response to the management crisis in growing megachurches in order to provide hands on leadership through the EP, especially to the staff. In this study’s view, it

¹⁵ S.D.F. Salmond, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, vol. 3 of *The Expositors Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing), 330.

¹⁶ Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol.42 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 251.

is safe to add a category 3 EP when the church is approaching or surpassing attendance of 1000. Even while retaining an EP, the leadership structure will most likely change again after the congregational size reaches 5000 to 10,000.

With barely a twenty-five year history, EP best practices are still being discovered, but some seem universal. The biggest frustrations to EPs are found in the relationship with the SP. Undermining the EP's authority or distrust on the part of the SP will defeat the EP's effectiveness. On the other hand, EPs who think that they know better than the SP, or who are unable to finish the SP's sentences with integrity, will also defeat the effectiveness of the SPEP team. Some best practices in regard to these issues were illustrated by one SP's strong enforcement of his EP's position in telling his staff (who were unhappy with the EP's decision) that they were really unhappy with him (the SP); an EP who truly loves the SP's vision and sees his role as helping "push the SP up the 'vision ladder;'" and all SPs and EPs who communicate so well that the EPs can finish the SP's sentences, can read when the SP "needs to be in the room," and can coach the SP about his public communication.

Regarding competence, EPs who are effective at leading staff or board meetings give the SP relief and joy. The staff is happier and the SP can participate rather than carry the additional burden of preparing to lead. This study recommends to churches considering the SPEP team paradigm that the potential SP and EP spend sufficient time together before commitments are made. This is necessary in order to determine (1) if the SP can delegate and not violate the authority of the EP; (2) if the SP can trust the EP implicitly and is not likely to be jealous of the EP's relationship with the staff; (3) if the EP is able to be the SP's "press agent," truly respecting the SP and remaining loyal to

him, while taking the knocks of the EP role; (4) if the SP's vision is sufficient motivation for this EP; and (5) if the EP will find satisfaction in this supporting position and in seeing the whole team succeed. Once it is determined that the relationship between the SP and EP is workable, the staff would be the next consideration. It should be noted, however, that upon instituting this kind of paradigm shift the staff commonly complain. This is due to the fact that they no longer have the same access to the SP. The congregation's perception is rarely a consideration in the installment EPs.

Finally, the SPEP team can serve megachurches as they cope with congregational size and complex systems. The limitations of visionary SPs can be complemented by ministry sensitive, executive leaders. These EPs work in a unique close relationship with their SPs, providing a united co-leader team for the church, often illustrated by such models as the CEO/COO team. The SPEP team paradigm has been deployed as a valid contemporary application of spiritual gifts and biblical church leadership.

Suggestions for Further Research

The chances of a successful limited study of true co-leaders would be greater in large cities with sufficient megachurches having the EP office already in place.

Exploratory investigations could be pursued in the following areas:

1. A study performed qualitatively as well as quantitatively to assess the effectiveness of various categories of SPEP senior leadership team configurations would be revealing and would add tremendously to the knowledge base on EPs. Superior-subordinate SPEP teams, genuine SPEP partnerships of senior co-leaders, and other collaborative SPEP teams, such as leadership triads could be compared for overall church

impact, as well as internal team satisfaction. Contextual factors for each team configuration would need to be taken into account for comparison purposes.

2. Depending on the background of the executive pastor (marketplace or ministry), the specific additions and modifications to his portfolio would be worth examining. Where additions or modifications were made successfully, illustrative case studies of the process and explanations of the instruments used would certainly help prepare and guide future EPs as they train for and transition into this vital job.

3. When considering future EP training, a qualitative study would be important to explore the levels of satisfaction among the staff. One discovery of this study was a sense of relief among staff on the one hand, and the problem of whining by staff on the other. Such a study would be influenced by variations in the exercise of the EP role. However, a particular benefit of such a multi-church staff study would be a valuable knowledge repository of specific best-practices, lessons of experience, and hindrances on the part of the EP. This could provide vital resources for the effective training of EPs.

4. What is the importance of longevity in the EP office as compared to the SP? Longevity in the SP office is often linked with church growth and success.¹⁷ Since the EP is often an extension of the SP's authority, does EP tenure also contribute to the church's health, positively or negatively? This investigation would require a longitudinal study. Some of the participants might change their opinions, JDs, or roles with the passing of time. Some teams may even dissolve during the research process. SPEP teams with long dual tenures may reveal advantageous results in their church statistics.

¹⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 31.

5. A critical issue as EPs continue to be added to church staffs is that of stewarding the EP person. This study touches on the potential hazard of this highly consuming role. Some EPs raised a warning flag. A few indicated exhaustion from the job. At least one non-participating EP, during an initial contact, indicated he was “through” due to magnitude of the task. Best and worst practices could be explored and profiles developed to aid SPs and church boards in monitoring the stress level of their EPs and to appropriately caring for them.

6. Looking at the SPEP in the broader church context one might pursue how gender mix affects this paradigm. Samples may be limited, but exploring the effectiveness of SPEP teams with a male SP and a female EP, or the reverse would be revealing not only in terms of church growth but also sociologically.

APPENDIX 1

EXECUTIVE PASTOR QUESTIONNAIRES

COVER SHEET: EXECUTIVE PASTOR'S FOCUS GROUP

CITY: _____ DATE/TIME: _____

EXECUTIVE PASTOR: _____ **SR PASTOR** _____

CHURCH _____ **ATTENDANCE** _____

EXECUTIVE PASTOR: _____ **SR PASTOR** _____

CHURCH _____ **ATTENDANCE** _____

EXECUTIVE PASTOR: _____ **SR PASTOR** _____

CHURCH _____ **ATTENDANCE** _____

EXECUTIVE PASTOR: _____ **SR PASTOR** _____

CHURCH _____ **ATTENDANCE** _____

EXECUTIVE PASTOR: _____ **SR PASTOR** _____

CHURCH _____ **ATTENDANCE** _____

Executive Pastor Focus Group Questions:

CONTEXT:

1. Greg Williford Stated: 3 types. Admin pastor: hands on \$, projects, facil for Sr Pastor
Exec P: supervisor, \$, Plant, also staffing (but all author= SrP)
True Sr. Assoc pastor (COO): extension of Ch Vision/ mission
All staff report to him
Knows more about the church min than all others

Your situation falls where?

2. Describe your view of the best time and context for a church or a senior pastor to select an Ex-pastor?
When should they definitely *not* do so? (Cong size, Staff size, Dynamics-giftings? What?)
(PS: Hybels says: Staff=20-30, Congr=1000-1500. Williford says: 1200 need Ex, 2500 need Ex Pastor)

COMPETENCIES:

1. Your job description said you see to it the Sr pastor fulfills his call, church the vision. How correct do you think this is?

2. What do you think the basic qualities, gifts, competencies needed for this job really are? Others state that loyalty, second place/ detail-oriented is necessary for this job. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
Bourgand/Payne/Hybels

3. Are there guidelines for churches and staff considering this new paradigm? If someone asked you if he should take an executive pastor position, what would you tell him?

PRACTICES:

1. Tell us your best practices. What are the most satisfying and successful things you do as a team? Success according to SrP, ExP, Staff, Board, Congregation?

2. Please tell us about any tensions, frustrations, dilemmas, or failures that occur when ministering on this team.

Williford: Pressure points: 1. Sr Past upholds validity of ExP

2. Ego of Ex P must be "Svnt Ldr."

3. Amount of time 1 on 1 w/ Sr P- Always up to speed
Breakdowns come here- quality relationship between.

Hybles: "Cant afford to sin vs e/o" Chem, Compet, Integrity

5. Do you have any "proverbs," advice, or concise principles to impart to churches or their senior pastor/executive pastor team?

Additional questions:

7. How do *you* lead a whole team to common vision implementation: refining, implementing, and assessing processes and products of ministry against a vision and philosophy? How do *you* keep on track, personally? How do you keep in sync with each other? Regarding *control*, how do you empower and not micro-manage? How do you negotiate staff attitudes?

8. What would you tell an ExPastor who was having trouble handling the work-load. How do you keep from “workaholism,” or discouragement?

9. Just for the record, do you have/use a theological rationale or a philosophy statement for this paradigm?

CONFIDENTIALITY: YES _____ NO _____

OPEN TO FOLLOW-UP CALL? YES _____ NO _____

COPIES OF DISS? _____

EXECUTIVE PASTOR: LAST REQUEST

Dear brothers,

I want to thank you again for helping me with my research.

This should be my last request before I mail you a copy of my dissertation (I hope). ☺

I seem to have unclear details on the following items. Sorry. It should not take more than 3 minutes to answer this- just copy and fill-in.

Probably you Administrative Assistant can fill it in, and then just ask for yourr answer on the last question.

Thanks again.

John Hawco

How many years has your present Senior Pastor been at the church? _____

Do you, as Executive Pastor ever preach (pulpit)? _____

Presently, How many full and part time staff? _____

How many of the staff DIRECTLY report to the Executive Pastor? _____

How many other staff would be included under your direct reports? _____

Last Question:

In the research the following analogies surfaced. Please rank your top preference or top dislike:

CEO/COO _____

Ship's Captain/ Executive Officer _____

President and Chief of Staff _____

Coach and Offensive Coordinator _____

Marriage (does not imply off-job socialization) _____

THANKS AGAIN!

APPENDIX 2

SENIOR PASTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

4. Please tell me about your job descriptions:

a. (If no job-description) Describe these two senior leader's job descriptions **in a couple of sentences**. Please include roles and responsibilities.

b. (If job-description in hand) On your job-description it states, _____. Please comment.

5. Has the role of the executive-pastor changed over time in your particular church? In what ways?

6. Describe the working relationship: How often and long do you meet? What is typically covered in that meeting?

7. What, specifically, do you do to guard boundaries, expectations, authority, and responsibilities? What are the "**marriage rules?**" How can other staff affect the marriage? How would you know that the marriage should end? (**Would you use a different analogy?**)

8. Is it working? What criteria can you cite for evidence of effectiveness? Do you see a correlation with your church's discipleship level, conversions, attendance, stewardship, or general atmosphere? What would your board chairman say? Other staff? The key people in the congregation? Are you personally satisfied?

9. Any other thoughts? Comments? Proverbs?

CONFIDENTIALITY: YES _____ NO _____

OPEN TO FOLLOW-UP CONTACT? YES _____ NO _____

DO YOU DRINK COFFEE? ☺

APPENDIX 3

INITIAL CONTACT INSTRUMENTS

Phase One

Sample Initial EP Request:

Dear (first name),

My name is John Hawco. I am the senior pastor of a growing church in upstate NY(over 1,000), and I am completing a DMin study through Covenant Seminary (St Louis) on the unique role of the Executive Pastor. We also have an Executive Pastor on our staff.

I would be so grateful if I could talk to you by phone for 5 minutes about the possibility of scheduling an interview to tap into your knowledge/experience. Any help you can offer would be greatly appreciated.

If you could spare a 5 minute window, please write back with a couple of possibilities. I will confirm by e-mail and call on my nickel. Thanks for your kind consideration.

John Hawco
Union Center Christian Church
607-754-8222
unioncenter.org

Administrative Assistant: Susan Woodcook

Phase Two

Sample Follow-Up EP Request:

Dear (first name),

Thanks so much for your time a week ago. Even (in a very limited) time I gleaned so much!

Quick question. You mentioned possibly connecting to have a session with one or two of the executive pastors nearby. Do you think we could pull that off? The minimum is two, you and another ExP. I'd try to cover all expenses.

If you think we could do it, there is one "difficult" request: I need the ExPs to (encourage) the Sr Ps for a 15-20 minute complementary interview (by phone). An e-mail questionnaire could suffice (but it is not as good). I work hard not to waste these men's time. Let me know if you think it is possible. (Hope it is!)

Thanks again for all you have done already, and I'll look forward to talking again at the very least. And (as per our conversation) I will send you a copy of anything worthwhile I might produce.

Gratefully, John Hawco- Endicott, NY. www.unioncenter.org

Phase Three

Sample SP Request:

Dear (first name, occasionally with Pastor, or Dr.),

I am writing to ask for your help.

I am wondering if you could spare 20 minutes for a phone interview at your convenience. This would be a complementary interview to one that (name of his executive pastor) participated in at (city or church name).

This is a DMin project on the **executive pastor**. Your work with (name of his executive pastor) makes you a critical informant. I will work around your schedule and pay for the call. If you can possibly swing it, let me know when it would be convenient.

Thanks for your consideration.

Gratefully,

John Hawco, Sr Pastor

Union Center Christian Church, Endicott NY. 607-754-8222

APPENDIX 4

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Wooddale Church
Eden Prairie, Minnesota

J O B O U T L I N E

Senior Pastor

A. QUALIFICATIONS

1. Baccalaureate degree and divinity degree.
2. Have served as pastor or associate pastor for minimum of five years.
3. Ability to preach effectively.
Ability to understand and communicate the role of the local church.
Ability to lead.
Ability to relate all programs of the church and organize to accomplish them.
4. Endorse and support the Church Covenant and Statement of Faith as stated in the Wooddale Church Constitution.
Evidence a commitment to the Wooddale Church Purpose Statement, to honor God by making more disciples for Jesus Christ.
Support the traditional evangelical theology for which Wooddale Church stands.
Remain a member in good standing of Wooddale Church.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Senior Pastor is responsible for the direction, thrust, and ministry of the total church, including its priorities and spiritual vitality.

1. Develop policy and direction of ministry, with lay leadership.
2. Develop and encourage staff.
3. Build spiritual maturity in the lay leadership.
4. Preach regularly.
5. Guide the total church thrust to fellowship, discipleship, and evangelism with effective administration.
6. Spell out the ministry priorities and guidelines to the congregation.

C. RELATIONSHIPS

1. Reports to the congregation through the Board of Elders.
2. Works with the Board of Elders and the other committees and ministry teams as needed.
3. Supervises Executive Pastors, and is responsible for all staff.

Wooddale Church
Eden Prairie, Minnesota

J O B O U T L I N E

Executive Pastor for Program Ministry

A. QUALIFICATIONS

1. Baccalaureate degree and divinity degree.
2. At least five years in a multi-staff church setting with experience in administration and staff development.
3. Ability to relate to and work with Senior Pastor, while assisting in executing his vision for the church.
Ability to coordinate church operations effectively.
Ability to develop pastoral staff and facilitate their leadership in specific ministry areas.
4. Endorse and support the Church Covenant and Statement of Faith as printed in the Wooddale Church Constitution.
Evidence a commitment to the Wooddale Church Purpose Statement, honoring God by making more disciples for Jesus Christ.
Support the traditional evangelical theology for which Wooddale Church stands.
Remain a member in good standing of Wooddale Church.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES

Primary general responsibility is to oversee church's overall ministry operations and give direction to the pastoral staff.

1. Supervise pastoral staff members in their specific area of ministry and meet monthly with each.
2. Meet regularly with Senior Pastor to apprise him of status of church operations and staff activities.
3. Assemble pastoral staff task forces as necessary for project/program development and coordination.
4. Meet regularly with CE (age-level) pastoral staff.
5. Lead pastoral staff meetings in Senior Pastor's absence.
6. Coordinate staff retreats and activities.
7. Develop and maintain controls on all programs and activities, and coordinate staff responsibilities.
8. Maintain personal contact with individuals, couples, families, and programs.
9. Carry out responsibilities as assigned by the Senior Pastor.

C. RELATIONSHIPS

1. Reports to the Senior Pastor.
2. Meets with Board of Elders in the Senior Pastor's absence.
3. Coordinates with other committees and ministry teams.
4. Supervises pastoral staff.
5. Coordinates with other members of church staff.

BOE: 1/97

Wooddale Church
Eden Prairie, Minnesota

J O B O U T L I N E

Executive Pastor for Ministry Support

A. QUALIFICATIONS

1. Bachelors degree. Masters degree desirable.
2. Experience of, at minimum, 10 years in leadership positions in secular or Christian setting, with specific experience in people development and at least two other of the primary responsibility areas of this position.
Must have a record of proven performance.
3. Skills include the ability to lead, to think conceptually as well as in specifics, to negotiate well with diverse publics, to write and speak clearly, to organize well and to make good things happen.
4. Endorse and support the Church Covenant and Statement of Faith as stated in the Wooddale Church Constitution.
Evidence a commitment to the Wooddale Church Purpose Statement, honoring
God by making more disciples for Jesus Christ.
Support the traditional evangelical theology for which Wooddale Church stands.
Remain a member in good standing of Wooddale Church.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES

The mission of this position is to, directly and through others, initiate, coordinate, and manage support services that lead to excellence in ministry by pastors and other ministry leaders, achieving ministry goals for the glory of God. Key support services include:

1. The development of training skills in staff and laity with the result that fellowship, discipleship, and evangelism are enhanced through people effectively trained and empowered to minister.
2. The development of skills in recruiting and motivating laity for ministry, including position descriptions, training, and goal setting, as well as personnel policies and benefits.
3. The application of longer term financial planning tools to ministry goals, including balance sheet management, new segmented fund raising programs, and lender development.
4. The design and implementation of information systems on people to permit and encourage more meaningful ministry by and to people of Wooddale Church.

5. The supervision of professional management of real estate, including preventive maintenance, cost benefit measures, and space allocation and use - to minimize cost and maximize ministry use and benefit.
6. The development and use of diverse communication skills and instruments to enhance ministry.
7. The enhancement and management of a variety of other support functions such as food service, office management, accounting and budgeting, computer hardware, software, and operations, measurement of key ministry functions and goals, market research, crisis management, and regulatory agency relationships.
8. Fulfillment of other responsibilities as assigned by the Senior Pastor.

C. RELATIONSHIPS

1. Reports to the Senior Pastor.
2. Works with Board of Elders and Ministry Teams as needed.
3. Supervises support staff.
4. Works closely with the Senior Pastor and pastoral staff.

BOE: 1/17/00

JOB DESCRIPTION

SENIOR PASTOR, I C CHURCH

PASTORAL PROGRAM PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

I. JOB DESCRIPTION

Purpose: A short ‘to’ statement:

Description: A short description of actual job parameters:

Responsibilities: List main areas of responsibility, with a detailed list of specific tasks below each:

1. *PREACHER/TEACHER*

- Preach approximately 40 Sundays a year
- Preach outreach events
- 3-5 Outside Conferences/Churches a year
- Teach portion of Inquirer’s seminars
- Teach officer training
- Teach occasional seminars

2. **MENTOR**

- Personal support for church planters supported by ICC around the world
- Mentor church planting apprentice and give spiritual leadership for the pastoral staff of ICC

3. **WORSHIP LEADER**

- Liturgy for the Lord’s Day, Holy Seasons, Special Services
- Sacraments and Pastoral Rites of the church
- Corporate Prayer

4. **LEADER**

- Vision Cast in all areas of leadership responsibility with Executive Pastor (EP) and Senior Management Team (SMT)
- Work with EP/SMT on key staffing appointments and personnel decisions
- Participate in Senior Staff meetings, Pastor’s Meetings, and Session meetings
- Stewardship and Capital Campaigns
- Movement: “Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther” ministries in the city

5. PASTOR/SHEPHERD

- Evangelism
- Spiritual Direction
- Crisis Care
- Weddings
- Funerals
- Staff and Officers
- Pray for the congregation and the city

6. WRITER

- “First-contact” communications
- Bi-monthly Newsletter articles
- Periodic Pastoral letters to congregation
- Position Papers
- Journal Articles (2 annually)
- Books (1 every 3-5 years?)

7. STUDENT

- Complete PhD at the University 2004

8. OTHER

- Consult and meet with ministry teams, task forces
- Represent church at Ecclesiastical and Public/Secular events
- Participate in General Assembly, Presbytery
- 1-2 week Mission Trip
- Administration/Delegation
- Trouble Shooting

***Key Relationships:* List key relationships of submission and authority:**

Direct Authority: 1.

Influential Relationships: 1.

Accountable to: 1.

***Qualifications:* List all minimal and preferable qualifications for employment:**

Education:

Experience: 1.

Character: 1.

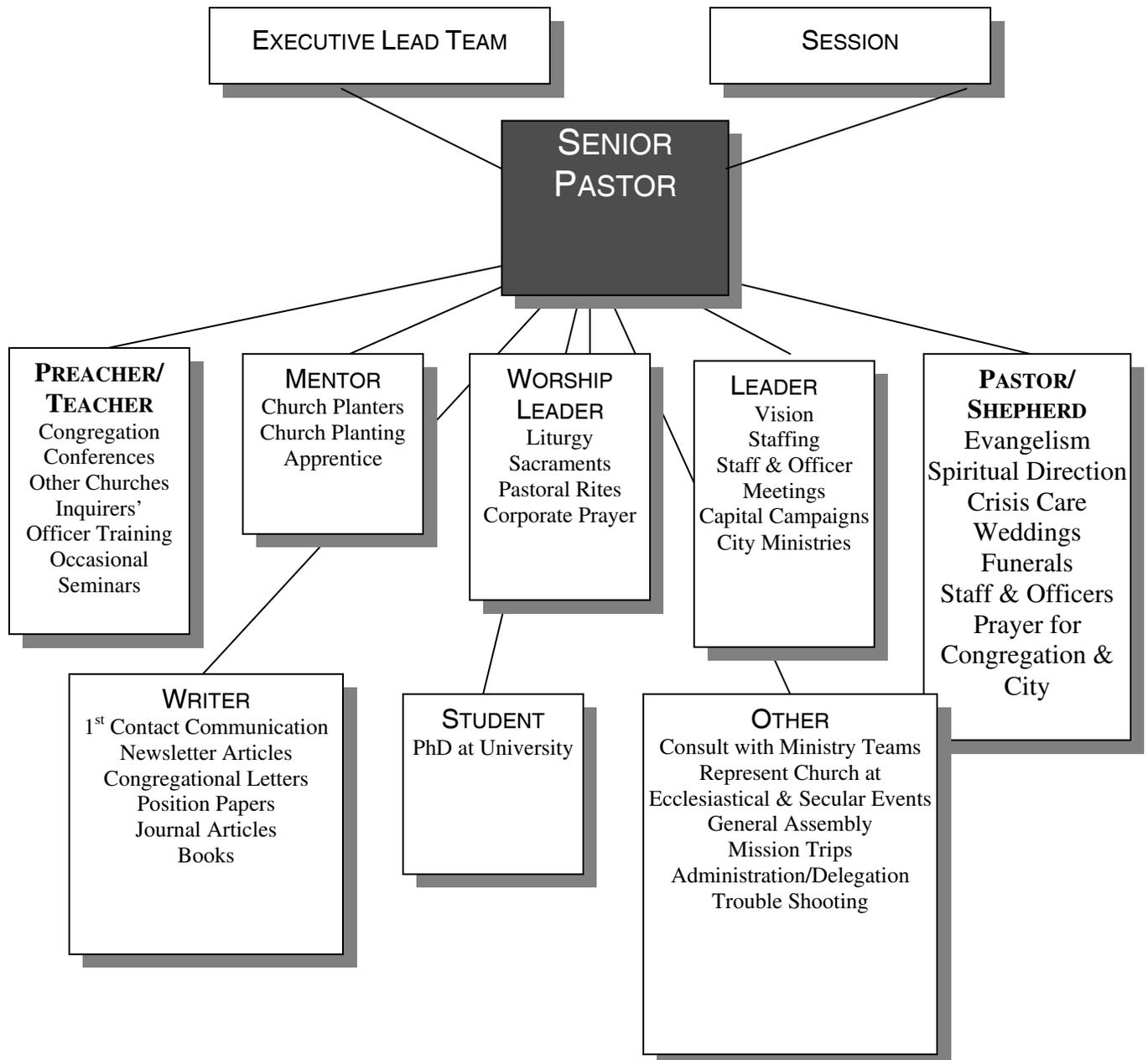
Skills: 1.

Theological/Vision Fit:

Age Range:

II. MINISTRY MAP

A flow chart outlining one-word descriptions of the main areas of ministry/ responsibility with people/tasks falling under each:



JOB DESCRIPTION

EXECUTIVE PASTOR, I C CHURCH

PASTORAL PROGRAM PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

I. JOB DESCRIPTION

Purpose: **A short 'to' statement:**
To shepherd and guide the ministry systems of the church.

Description: **A short description of actual job parameters:**
To work with Senior Pastor to develop and implement the envisioned future of I C Church by

- Developing and implementing the overall ministry strategy,
- Overseeing the functions of the Session and the Diaconate,
- Leading and Pastoring the Program Staff, and
- Overseeing all issues of staff relations and development.

Responsibilities: **List main areas of responsibility, with a detailed list of specific tasks below each:**

1. Help insure that the Senior Pastor is able to fulfill his call efficiently and effectively.
2. Oversee the issues of staff relations and development resulting in an effective ministry team.
3. Lead and pastor the Pastoral, Program, and Professional staff, including monitoring the annual performance review and overall staff planning.
4. Work with the Senior Pastor to develop and implement the overall envisioned future of I C C.
5. Lead and moderate the Staff, Session and other assigned meetings.
6. Oversee the functions of the Session, Diaconate, and other Presbytery functions.
7. Coordinate Staff/Session retreats, planning dates, as well as other key leader events as requested by the Senior Pastor.
8. Monitor all departmental budgets and overall church budget.
9. Serve as the primary representative of the Senior Pastor in his absence.
10. Monitor the pulse of the congregation through various means.
11. Teach, preach, and lead worship as requested by the Senior Pastor.

Key Relationships:**List key relationships of submission and authority:****Direct Authority:**

1. All staff at I C Church

Influential Relationships:

1. Staff
2. Session
3. Diaconate
4. Ministry Leaders
5. Developing Leaders

Accountable to:

1. Senior Pastor
2. Executive Lead Team

***Qualifications:* List all minimal and preferable qualifications for employment:**

Education: Advanced theological education—Master of Divinity

Experience:

1. Preferably an ordained pastor in the PCA or able and willing to transfer membership to the PCA.
2. Extensive pastoral ministry experience, including leadership of small groups, ministry teams, evangelism experience, training leaders, and successful program design with the systems of the church in mind.
3. Generally well read in a wide range of subjects.
4. Culturally astute, through reading, ministry experience and interaction, and travel.

Character:

1. Loyal to the Senior Pastor
2. Preserves confidentiality
3. Implementer
4. Teachable
5. Strong ego with maturity and gospel-focused in personal application
6. Honest
7. Compassionate and community-focused, with a pastoral heart
8. Practices spiritual disciplines
9. Loves and appreciates the city

Skills:

1. Understands the characteristics of good leadership and exhibits these leadership skills
2. Possesses proven ability to recruit, lead, and care for staff and lay leaders
3. Has capacity for organization and follow-through
4. Experienced in public speaking and preaching
5. Able to relate to different cultures and races.

Theological/Vision Fit:

Compatible and agreeable to Intown's vision

Age Range:

40-50 years

II. PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

Mission:

A short statement of how you wish to minister through your position:
To provide coordination, supervision, and management of the Church Staff, Session, and other Key Leaders, so that all are:

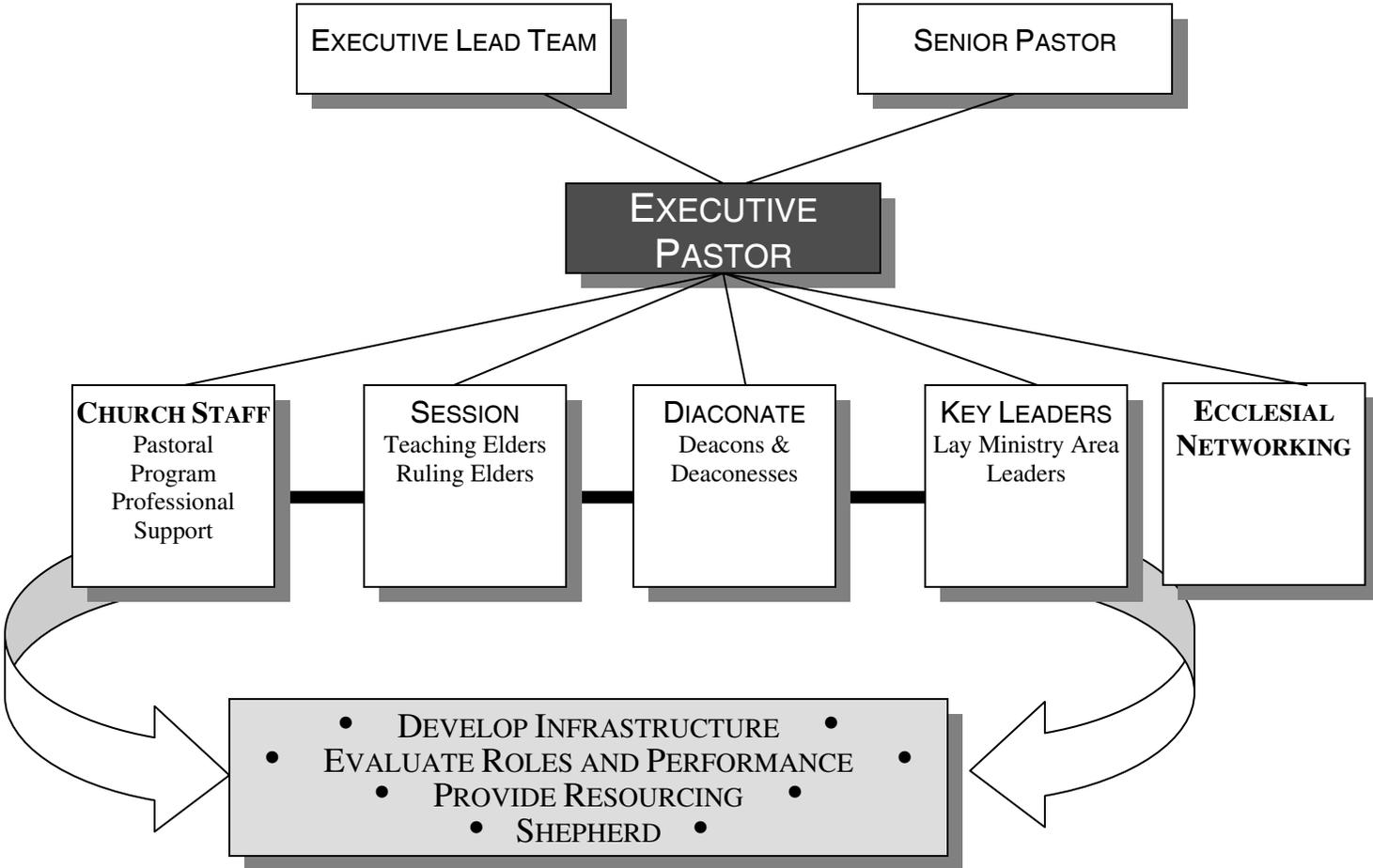
- Contributing toward the larger goal,
- Doing their share of the work, while sensing that they are cared for,
- Having access to a share of the available resources, and
- Utilizing their God-given gifts and temperaments in the most suitable ministry position.

Core Values and Beliefs:

A detailed explication of the mission statement:

III. MINISTRY MAP

A flow chart outlining one-word descriptions of the main areas of ministry/ responsibility with people/tasks falling under each:



Senior Pastor

Vision Statement: To lead, equip and pastor in such a way that Perimeter Church becomes a safe home for God's people to mature and be equipped as followers of Christ in order to establish an effective mission to non-kingdom people, thus pleasing God.

God's people will be considered mature and equipped followers of Christ when:

- >They are living consistently under the control of the Holy Spirit and the direction of the Word of God;
- >They have discovered, developed, and are using their spiritual gifts;
- >They have learned to effectively share their faith;
- >They give evidence of being:
 - faithful members of God's church,
 - effective managers of life, relationships and resources,
 - willing ministers to God's people, and
 - available messengers to non-kingdom people.

Perimeter Church will be considered a safe home when its people are routinely provided with:

- >vital worship demonstrating the presence and power of God,
- >true fellowship founded on significant and meaningful relationships,
- >biblical instruction and discipleship training grounded in biblical theology,
- >pastoral care and shepherding directed to the needs of the whole person, and
- >equipping and empowerment to do the work of ministry.

Perimeter Church will be considered an effective mission to non-kingdom people when:

- >proclaiming a biblical theology which answers the questions and issues of the culture in which we live,
- >influencing all social, political, educational and professional segments of society with Christians who embrace a biblical world and life view,
- >continuously starting Home Churches and WYN 2000 Groups in the neighborhoods and apartment complexes within a reasonable driving distance of the church,
- >equipping our members to share their faith,
- >facilitating ministries to major people groups in Atlanta based on needs, interests, occupations, age, life experiences and other factors,
- >working with Perimeter Ministries (PMI) to start churches of like values throughout the Greater Metropolitan area and to minister to the underresourced people of inner-city Atlanta,

- >sending people and financial resources to support and start ministries in other countries, and
- >beginning and servicing overseas training centers which equip leadership and establish strong churches in their countries.

Mission Statement: To provide the spiritual leadership, instruction, exhortation, role modeling, pastoral care and equipping necessary to lead Perimeter Church to accomplish its mission and goals and to live out its values thus fulfilling its vision.

Senior Pastor Job Responsibilities

1. Preaching

- Approximately 40 Sunday Mornings at Perimeter
- Approximately 8 Sunday Celebrations
- Guest Preaching at PMI Churches and Occasional Guest Preaching

2. Teaching

- Weekly Daybreak for Men
- Monthly Inquirer's Weekends and Membership Seminars
- 3D Evangelism Seminars
- TEAMS Orientations
- Occasional Conferences
- Home Bible Studies
- P.M. Perspectives
- Combined Celebrations
- Pastor's Weekends

3. Discipling

- 10 Men Per Year

4. Training

- Leadership Training
- PMI Pastor's Forum

5. Leading

- Elder's Meetings
- Staff & Programming

- Staff & Pastoral Care
- Capital Gifts Program
- PMI Board

6. *Managing*

- Staff Director
- PMI Director

7. *Pastoral Care*

- Weddings
- Funerals
- Crisis Care
- Counseling
- Staff
- Officers

8. *Writing*

- Manuals
- Position Papers
- Books

9. *Vision Casting*

- TEAMS
- Staff Appointments
- Meeting With Ministry Teams
- Meeting With PMI Officers & Staff

10. *Other*

- Represent Church At City-Wide and Ecclesiastical Events
- Presbytery Participation
- General Assembly Participation
- Administration
- Trouble Shooting
- On Executive Committee Of The Building Committee

Position Description Staff Director

Duties:

General: To serve the Sr. Pastor and church staff to help them accomplish their ministry goals.

Specific:

1. Oversee the church staff, including:
 - A. Directing
 - B. Supporting
 - C. Coaching
 - D. Delegating
 - E. Pastoring
 - F. Planning and facilitating staff meetings and retreats
 - G. Holding staff accountable to spiritual disciplines, spiritual growth, and professional growth
 - H. Holding staff accountable to establishing and meeting goals
 - I. Reviewing performance
 - J. General hiring oversight through HR Dept.
2. Attend all Elder Ministry Team meetings, serving as the staff liaison
3. Support the Senior Pastor, as the leader of the church, in any way needed
4. Perform duties of a Christian leader as **official** duties of my position, meaning that I will:
 - A. Be a **messenger**, reaching out to those who need Christ and His Church by sponsoring four people into the life of the church (meaning membership and ministry connection). Prayerfully, at least one of these will be a non-Christian.
 - B. **Be a discipler**, investing in the life of a few by leading a small group, either a Discipleship Group or a Common Cause group.
 - C. **Be a leader-equipper**, leading all of my ministries through lay Ministry Teams, which oversee the ministry or at least provide significant input and counsel.
 - D. Operate all of my ministries not with independent volunteer workers but through "**Common Cause**" small groups, each with a leader, recruiter, and shepherd (who may be one, two, or three separate individuals).
 - E. **Be a shepherd**, measuring those in my ministries in the "Shepherding Values" and establishing numerical goals for improvement in these areas. Maintain a shepherding relationship with all leaders in my ministry.
 - F. Be a servant **leader**, providing "unbelievable service" to those in this church, among other things by returning all phone calls the same day, responding to all emails within 24 hours, and answering all requests the same week.

Skills & Abilities Needed

1. Leadership -Including the ability to see the big picture at all times
2. Management -The ability to manage situationally and to understand the details of individual ministries when necessary, but not get mired in them

Character Traits Needed

1. Servanthood -This person must thrive on leading by serving, while being in the background
2. Loyalty -This person must be 100% loyal to the Senior Pastor
3. Teamwork -He must be able to develop a unique working relationship with the Senior Pastor, allowing him to lead and to have direct access to all of the Ministry Staff for providing counsel and vision. The organizational effect should be similar to that on a ship, with the Senior Pastor as Captain and Executive Pastor as Executive Officer.
4. Spiritually maturity -Need not be ordained, but must be mature Christian

Relationships

1. Reports to the Sr. Pastor
2. Directly responsible for the Department Heads
3. Works with the Elder Ministry Team as Staff liaison

Other Thoughts About this Position

An Executive Pastor is in the role of Chief Operating Officer of the church. He should represent the staff to the Elders and vice versa. He should be the one who keeps the day to day operational challenges off of the Senior Pastor's back. He should oversee the implementation of the church's goals that will help it reach its vision. He keeps the staff accountable to setting and meeting their individual goals that support the churchwide goals. He pastors, communicates with, disciplines, and loves the staff more than anyone else.

At the same time, he must allow the staff to go directly to the Senior Pastor for occasional input and counsel regarding their ministries. After all, they didn't come to work there because of the Executive Pastor—more than likely they were attracted to the Senior Pastor and his ministry. This is uniquely different from the corporate model of CEO and COO, and means that these two have to have an excellent relationship in which they communicate regularly, having at least one weekly meeting, and constantly renegotiate who is doing what in different situations. They must have an excellent relationship of trust. The organizational relationship may be more similar to that of a ship, with the Sr. Pastor being the captain and an executive officer being the Executive Pastor. The captain has direct access to all of the officers of the ship, but does not usurp the authority of the executive officer except in an emergency situation.

The Executive Pastor must continually strive to be a servant leader and everything that that term means. He must fully lead and he must fully serve. The role requires strong but gentle leadership. This role can be easily perceived as taking too much power, so he must be very careful to communicate with both the Sr. Pastor and the Elders all along the way prior to making moves. He must allow the Sr. Pastor to be in the foreground with the Elders and the congregation, but he should be in the foreground with the staff. He should recommend that he read regularly on leadership, management, and human resources to maintain a focus. He should also focus on over-communicating with the Sr. Pastor, staff as a whole, and officers.

If this sounds like a very big job, it is. It may mean that, if he is an ordained pastor, he has to consider not doing some things that he enjoys doing, such as counseling people other than staff and teaching very much in the church. It also means that he has to manage smartly, meaning through his staff managers (delegation). But he must be there for all of the staff.

It is important that all of this be the Executive Pastor's real passion, because this is the real work for him.

***Casas Adobes Baptist Church
Pastor
Job Description***

1. Prepare and deliver top-quality, relevant sermons.
2. Work with the Executive Pastor and Co-Pastor in ministry administration, translate the vision of the church into workable plans, and coordinate and supervise the entire paid staff.
3. Work with the Pastor Team and serve *ex officio* on other ministry teams. Attend the weekly Team Leader meetings.
4. Chair the Casas Council and the Leadership Body.
5. Get the relocation done.
6. Sell Casas' old site at 2131 West Ina Road.
7. Oversee building fund-raisers.
8. Conduct weddings and funerals as called upon.
9. Lead and teach Core classes (i.e. Principles of Spiritual Growth & Christian Theology).
10. Lead, counsel, and advise as necessary with staff and Casas membership.
11. Maintain a strong walk with the Lord through personal spiritual discipleship that leads toward spiritual maturity and spiritual fruit.

January 1997
Updated October 1998

EXECUTIVE PASTOR
Casas Adobes Baptist Church
Job Description

1. To help insure that the Senior Pastor is allowed to fulfill his call efficiently and effectively, act on the Senior Pastors behalf in ministry administration, translating the vision of the church into workable plans, and coordination and supervision of the entire paid staff.
2. Manage and oversee the ministries of CABC by evaluating programs and personnel, setting and implementing goals and objectives, and giving regular supervision to the paid staff.
3. Supervise the Associate Pastors and serve ex officio on their teams. Chair the weekly Team Leader meetings.
4. Assist, advise, inform, and relieve the Senior Pastor each week and as requested by him.
5. Coordinate church calendaring.
6. Coordinate staff events, such as staff luncheons, staff retreats, staff planning days, leadership banquet.
7. Oversee new members ministries, including the Discovering Church Membership class, baptisms, and new member records.
8. Serve on the Casas Council and the Leadership Body.
9. Do special projects, as called upon by the Senior Pastor.
10. Conduct weddings and funerals as called upon.
11. Supervise the Pastor's secretary and the Volunteer Services Coordinator.
12. Serve on the Pastor Team.
13. Maintain a strong walk with the Lord through personal spiritual discipleship that leads toward spiritual maturity and spiritual fruit.

Executive Pastor For Ministry Design and Coordination
Bethlehem Baptist Church
Job Description and Qualifications
May 23, 1997

1. **AIM**

The aim of the Executive Pastor For Ministry Design and Coordination shall be to glorify Jesus Christ wholeheartedly in the power of the Holy Spirit by taking responsibility for the design and coordination of the various ministries of Bethlehem Baptist Church under the direction of the Senior Pastor and Elders. He shall earnestly seek to advance the faith and love of the church and to gather in the lost sheep. The Executive Pastor shall embrace, with a joyful heart, our goal of **spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples** and our values and fresh initiatives as expressed in the church's mission statement.

2. **LINES OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

Under the Lord, the Executive Pastor is ultimately responsible to the congregation of Bethlehem Baptist Church and is subordinate to the Elders and more specifically the Senior Pastor. This person will report to and work closely with the Senior Pastor. The Executive Pastor should endeavor to experience and maintain the joyful camaraderie and creative complementation of gifts and ministries of the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastors, Elders and Administrators.

3. **QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE POSITION**

The Executive Pastor will be a member in good standing of Bethlehem Baptist Church. If not a member when called by the church, he will complete the process within three months of the date when employment begins. Beyond the doctrinal and ethical implications in embracing our Affirmation of Faith and our Church Covenant (implicit in membership) the Executive Pastor will manifest a hearty support for the leadership of the church in general and specifically for that of the Senior Pastor.

The Executive Pastor should have had some years of proven ministry at the pastoral/elder level and a good grasp and hearty endorsement of the biblical and theological orientation of the leadership of Bethlehem.

The Executive Pastor needs to meet the spiritual and character qualifications of the elder as found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 and to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit as found in Gal. 5:22. He should be wise, discerning, decisive, sensitive, tender, firm. He should be a man of prayer and a man of the Word, sensitive to what the Spirit is saying to Bethlehem. He should be a self-starter and an initiative taker. He needs to have a special sensitivity to the process of

decision making, to know when to make decisions himself and when and with whom to make decisions needing wider ownership. He should be an articulate communicator of the vision and ministries of the church. He needs to have significant inter-personal skills. Through conduct, attitude, and personality, he should be able to represent Bethlehem well both within and outside the church.

The Executive Pastor should be able to wisely delegate to appropriate people as much as possible so that he can rise above the surface of the ocean of details and keep his eyes fixed on the Destination. The following list of responsibilities should be read in this light.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

Ministry Design and Coordination

1. Exercise oversight of the ministries of Bethlehem Baptist Church to ensure that the vision, goals, priorities and responsibilities which God has given us are being enacted in our life as a church.
2. Work with the various heads of the ministries to ensure that the goals of our church are being worked out in and through the individual ministries.
3. Seek the Lord as to those who might appropriately lead the various ministries when a leadership vacuum occurs and work with the elders, staff and Senior Pastor to fill those ministry positions with godly leadership.
4. Be sensitive to the Lord's leading when a new ministry should be conceived and implemented and initiate the process for this to happen.
5. Chair the weekly staff meetings and lead the planning portion of the staff retreats
6. Network with other ministries in our area to ensure that we cooperate and coordinate rather than duplicate.
7. Being responsible for making major policy decisions in conjunction with the Senior Pastor and the council of elders.

Vision Keeper - Implementing the vision of the senior pastor

1. A friend of the senior pastor who can share his vision and heart, meeting regularly with the senior pastor to ensure a close partnering in the ministry.
2. Fostering an *esprit de corps* among the pastoral staff, the elders, the support staff and the congregation which reflects the ideals of the vision statement and its taking deeper root in the life of the church.
3. Keeper of the big picture, master planning, and overall coordination in light of the unique vision and ministry of Bethlehem Baptist Church.
4. Ensuring that the current staff is in sync with the senior pastor and the vision of the church; overseeing the process of hiring and orienting new staff as needed who will help us implement the vision of the church.

Leading and Managing the pastors

1. Job descriptions and performance appraisals for pastors and administrators.
2. Read weekly ministry and accountability reports submitted by pastors and administrators.

3. Bi-weekly accountability sessions with each pastor and administrator.
4. Assist the Senior Pastor as needed in providing pastoral care for the Pastors and Administrators.
5. Work with the pastors and administrators to steward the resource that they are so that they do not burn out but thrive both on the homefront and in the ministry.
6. Work with the elders, FPA's (Financial and Property Administrators), Pastoral Care and Compensation Committee in regards to staff compensation and benefits.
7. Help the pastoral staff discern the balance between ministering to the one and ministering to the many in the carrying out of their pastoral responsibilities.
8. Coordinate and approve pastoral staff vacations, conferences, speaking opportunities, continuing education, sick days, days off, and appropriate use of ministry accounts.
9. Assist the Business Administrator and/or Office Manager who will take the lead in the ministry accountability, direction and care of the support staff.

Team-building and bringing cohesiveness to the church programs

1. Utilization of the church resources in a fair and balanced manner among the ministries.
2. Balance mission of each pastor and program with the needs and opportunities of the church as a whole.
3. Encourage pastors and ministries to work *together*, not merely side by side, increasing the understanding of how one's efforts effect and enable the other ministries and ensuring the efficient and fair use of finances, publicity, facilities, support staff, etc. The object is both to keep resources focused on the current need and to enhance an attitude of teamwork among the entire staff.
4. Encourage ministry leaders in the recruiting and networking of volunteers so that individuals are helped to become engaged in ministries consistent with their giftings.
5. Ensure ongoing communication between Senior Pastor, Associate Pastors, Elders, FPA's and other staff, between the staff and the church, and between ministry groups within the church.
6. Evaluate all of the implications of proposals for ministry as they arise concerning how they relate to the vision of the church and how they relate to support staff, finances, building space, volunteers, and pastors.
7. Work with the Business Administrator and/or Office Manager in the coordination of the use of support staff and the facilities.
8. Work with the staff, the elders and the FPA's in the formation of the annual budget.

MINISTRY POSITION DESCRIPTION
JOHN D. PASTOR
AS EXECUTIVE PASTOR

Position Title	Ministry	Department
Executive Pastor	Administer EFree to be an effective & efficient church	Administration & Ministry Development

Responsibilities	Passion for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan, implement and administer the various support systems of EFree- financial, information, communication and personnel. • Oversee day-to-day operations of the ministry in accordance with strategic direction. • In the absence of a lead pastor, serve as the team leader for the Staff Leadership Team, facilitating meetings, and supervising pastoral and support staff. • Plan, implement and administer a ministry development function which enables individuals to minister appropriately and effectively in the body of Christ. • Facilitate Elder and Trustee Board processes and functions as needed and appropriate. • Time permitting, teach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating effective, efficient support systems. • Meeting genuine needs in people, whether physical, emotional or spiritual. • Helping people grow in Christ to the point of greater spiritual maturity and investing in others through personal ministry. • Practicing good stewardship of God's resources. • Helping people to resolve conflicts.

Spiritual Gifts	Talents/Skills	Personal Style
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Administration</i> (Divine enablement to understand what makes an organization function, and the special ability to plan and execute procedures that accomplish the goals of the ministry.) • <i>Teaching</i> (Divine enablement to understand, clearly explain, and apply the Word of God, causing greater Christ-likeness in the lives of listeners.) • <i>Helps</i> (Divine enablement to accomplish practical and necessary tasks which free-up, support and meet the needs of others.) 	<p>Disciplined. Organized personally and able to organize others.</p> <p>Analytical. Able to trouble-shoot and problem solve. Principle centered. Ability to understand and create systems- financial, human resource, organizational.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Task-oriented.</i> Energized by achieving results. • <i>Structured.</i> Prefer clear direction and orderly process.

Additional Comments

John reports to the Board of Elders, while maintaining accountability with and to the other pastors and staff. Also works closely with Elders, Trustees, as well as the Ministry Development and Personnel Teams. As a member of the Pastoral Staff, John also serves as a member of the Board of Elders.

**Responsible for leadership over these elements of
EFree's Vision Statement (What We Intend to Do)**

- We dream of every member being engaged in service for Christ.
- We dream of one fourth of the members being committed to discover their unique qualities for ministry and serve in the area best expressing what God made them to be; serve in secondary ministries as needed by the body; and prepare for ministry by participating in systematic advanced leadership training.
- We dream of initiating 20 ministry groups for regular service outside our local body.

In addition to providing leadership for the above elements of EFree's Vision Statement, John will also be expected to assist other pastors and members of the leadership team in the accomplishment of their objectives.

Ministry Description
Associate Pastor of Ministry Support

General Responsibilities

As a senior staff member, partner with the elders, senior pastor, and senior associate pastor to establish and support administrative teams, systems, and processes with the goal of allowing the staff as well as the body at large to minister more effectively and efficiently.

Specific Responsibilities

Ministry Support

Develop and maintain a system for identifying giftedness and enabling members of the body to minister more effectively.

Supervise all non-pastor/non-director paid staff in such a way that the ministry of all staff members is enhanced.

Financial Management

Direct and coordinate the financial activities and associated personnel of the church including oversight of budget development (in cooperation with the treasurer).

Review and analyze financial reports; maintain oversight of staff compliance.

Review, negotiate and maintain all health, liability and property insurances.

Systems and Facilities

Establish systems and provide oversight for the use, maintenance and purchase of all equipment, facilities, and property of the church including the development and implementation of policies, budgets, and usage calendars for facilities, equipment, vehicles, etc;

Establish systems and provide oversight for all maintenance, renovation, or new construction projects of facilities;

Develop and implement a comprehensive information system plan to maximize the effectiveness of all church staff and functions, including recommendations for hardware and software requirements into the future;

Develop and coordinate systems and policies for human resources, benefit plans, training, etc.

Responsible to:

Senior Pastor

ASSOCIATE PASTOR, MISSIONS

ACCOUNTABLE TO: Senior Pastor

PURPOSE: To serve the church by working under the direction of the Senior Pastor to facilitate and implement the vision, develop new programs in keeping with established goals, maximize the effectiveness of the present program, give leadership, supervision and training to pastoral staff members and volunteers involved in ministry; and, to develop, implement and coordinate an effective and comprehensive program of missions on a local, national and international level.

PRIMARY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Meet on a regular basis with the Senior Pastor to clarify vision, goals and strategy.
2. Evaluate the evolving needs of the congregation, and work to strengthen, evaluate and restructure the present ministries in keeping with those needs.
3. Supervise the work of pastoral staff members, meeting regularly with, and providing leadership to them in areas of individual goal setting and accountability. Receive quarterly goal statements and evaluations from staff members for the purpose of review and discussion.
4. Oversee the development of each pastor's annual goals and action plans to ensure measurable objectives are included to meet the church's strategic plan.
5. Oversee the development of the ministries' annual operating budgets and monitor expenses to ensure ministries are operating within their budgets.
6. Work under the direction of the Senior Pastor, and in coordination with the Director of Operations, taking primary responsibility for ensuring up to date pastoral job descriptions and regular evaluation of pastoral staff.

7. Oversee and make recommendations regarding the hiring/firing of all ministerial staff.
8. Provide ongoing vision casting, accountability and skill training with the pastoral staff by creating an agenda and leading regular pastoral staff meetings.
9. Administer the work of ministerial staff members by developing a Christ-like community that encourages teamwork and mutual support by providing leadership and nurture to the staff.
10. Assist the Senior Pastor in agenda development and leadership of monthly, all-staff meetings.
11. Develop, coordinate and administer a comprehensive missions program for the church, focusing on the community, nation and the world.
12. Supervise the missions programs and strategies and communicate to the congregation a Biblical understanding of world missions that encourages involvement through prayer, friendship and financial support.
13. Evaluate and monitor mission organizations and missionaries sponsored by the church, on a regular basis.
14. Recruit, train and deploy people into local, national and foreign mission.
15. Assist in worship and preach at the request of the Senior Pastor. Teach in the education program of the church, as requested.
16. Conduct weddings and funerals, providing appropriate preparation and support.
17. Attend board(s) meetings as a resource and for informational purposes at the request of the Senior Pastor.
18. Represent the church by serving in community and civic organizations, and coordinate staff involvement in the same.
19. Attend Executive Team meetings, staff meetings and retreats.
20. Cooperate with the Senior Pastor by performing any other duties when

asked to do so.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Education & experience: College degree in related field of biblical, teaching or pastoral ministry with five years experience in the areas of mission and discipleship. Preference given to Master's degree and experience in budget preparation, staff supervision, meeting facilitation and public speaking. Knowledge of team building skills and volunteer management is useful.

Knowledge, skills and abilities: Requires strong ability to form interpersonal relationships with staff and volunteers. Needs basic math and elevated reading skills to compute and interpret financial and monetary reports. Will utilize intermediate reasoning skills to solve problems and interpret a variety of instructional formats. Intermediate speaking skills are necessary as position requires ability for public speaking before the congregation and other community groups. Elevated writing skills will be required to participate in writing sermons, newsletter articles and in developing training materials.

Environmental Conditions: Works primarily indoors with possible exposure to temperature changes and occasional exposure to stairs/steps and uneven surfaces. Position may include travel to other countries and exposure to a wide variance in environmental conditions.

Physical Requirements: The position generally is light to medium work but may, when in the field on mission assignments, require heavy strength ability. Mission trips may require ability to operate a motor vehicle. General duties will require ability to operate a computer keyboard and include frequent verbal expression of ideas and information to the public and staff.

BENEFITS: This is an exempt, regular, full time position. Accrues vacation and sick leave per current employee handbook. The position is eligible for insurance and retirement benefits as determined by the Board of Elders.

1/4/01

ADMINISTRATIVE PASTOR
COVENANT CHURCH
Job Description [rev. 1-00]

MISSION: To be a key leader, manager and administrator in a healthy, growing church that celebrates the love, joy and life of Jesus Christ in ways that foster their own spiritual growth and focus their concern on the needs of others.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES: To plan, organize, direct and evaluate the professional staff (i.e. pastoral/program, support/office/custodial/technical/contract for service etc.) and church ministries in partnership with the Senior Pastor and lay leadership of the congregation; to oversee and administer the financial assets and budgets, and the maintenance and utilization of buildings and grounds of FCC; to serve as an “ombudsman” for creative problem solving and addressing the congregation’s issues and concerns; to have a personal ministry of teaching and communication of Biblical truths as a pastor with the staff, to the congregation and in the community.

LINES OF COMMUNICATION AND AUTHORITY: Reports to the Senior Pastor, Church Council and Congregational meeting according to the CC Constitution and Bylaws; responsible for all other professional staff employed by CC; serves on the Church Council, Pastoral Committee, Search Committees, Property Committee, and other committees and task forces as appropriate.

SPECIFIC DUTIES:

- > Facilitate the development of the congregation’s vision through long and short term plans with pastoral/program staff, Church Council, and key committees and task forces;
- > Organize and direct the pastoral/program staff, leading regular staff meetings, prayer times and retreats, setting agendas and developing reporting, support and evaluation systems;
- > Serve on the Church Council as appointed pastor (voice but no vote as per by-laws), and on the Pastoral Committee as chief of staff, as the staff liaison with custodial staff to the Property Committee;
- > Recruit, train, direct and evaluate the support and technical staff, convening groups or teams regularly for communication and encouragement in concert with an office manager, head custodian, food service director, etc.;

- > Oversee the program scheduling and usage of the building and grounds;
- > Oversee the purchasing and usage of church equipment and office supplies;
- > Direct the internal communication and external advertising programs of the congregation;
- > Direct the overall stewardship enrichment ministry, long range budgeting process and any special fund campaigns of the congregation in concert with the Business Manager and Finance Committee;
- > Oversee the maintenance of appropriate compliance with legal, insurance and community ordinance requirements;
- > Teach in adult discipleship ministries, assist in worship leadership and preach on occasion, and provide pastoral care as available, and other duties as agreed to with the Senior Pastor;
- > Maintain regular office hours with regular communications and individual meetings with staff, lay leaders and congregational members and respond to issues and concerns in a Biblical manner;
- > Maintain communication, cooperation and involvement with denominational, other church and community leaders representing CC to a larger constituency beyond the congregation.

Redeemer Presbyterian, NYC

JOB DESCRIPTION

CONCEPT: The Executive Pastor is not primarily an administrator but a functionally co-equal leader within the staff. He is the only staff-person to report to the Senior Pastor, and all Sr/Exec Directors report to him. The EP is therefore is seen as a power-equal and a proxy to the SP within the leadership. However, outside of the leadership, the SP is by far the more visible and is the vision-caster leader. The Executive Pastor would be the only associate pastor, and therefore the only pastor with a vote on the Session.

TASKS:

1. SEE THE MULTI-SITE STRATEGY THROUGH TO ITS CONCLUSION.

- **Worship leading and preaching.** Probably serving as a 'site pastor' with the most prominent role at one or two sites of preaching, observing the sacraments, baptizing and receiving members. This will probably be the East Side AM site (the largest).
- **Key leadership in one or two Capital Fund campaigns.** We will probably be raising funds twice in the next 10 years to purchase one or two buildings and to capitalize major new ministries and church planting. May be called on to represent Redeemer to some foundations, institutions, donors.
- **Execute the 10-yr 'Ramps'.** We are currently working on a 10 year plan that will lay out the stages in 'congregationalizing' our different sites with a view to making them networked sister churches with their own pastors. May be a collegiate model.
- **Creation of Redeemer, Inc.** When the sites have their own pastors, and major new entity must be launched. Will have a major role in the conceptualizing and creation of this new organization.

2. MENTOR SR/EXEC DIRECTORS TO CREATE, EXPAND, AND SUSTAIN THEIR MINISTRIES.

- **Serve as the 'top' of the new staff structure.** Run a new staff structure, in which only 3-4 Sr/Executive directors report to the Executive Pastor. All other directors report to the Sr/Exec directors. Getting this new system to work is the EP's job. Revisions will be in order.
- **Create ministry.** Each Sr/Exec Director has at least one extremely large, major new ministry program or department to bring on-line over the next 2-4 years. These include: the Center for Faith and Work, Gospel and Life discipleship sequence (2 yrs), an 'Alpha-like' evangelism ministry, and an internship/fellows' program.
- **Expand ministry.** Each of the Sr/Exec Directors must he helped to

expand and sustain existing ministries and not lose interest in any vital work.

- **Help them problem-solve.** Oversee/mediate areas of conflict between departments or help Sr/Exec directors handle conflicts within departments.
- **Do annual performance review** of personal, professional, ministry goals with each director. And **be annually reviewed** by Sr Pastor and elder team.

3. LEAD STAFF AND SESSION MEETINGS. (note: Staff re-structuring may change these.)

- Meets with **Sr Pastor** (1.5 times per week) Purposes: comprehensive.
- Prepares/moderates **executive staff meetings**. (1.5 per month) Purposes: a) shares with SP and EP responsibility for executing church overall goals set by elders, b) on basis of reporting and strategizing sets agenda for elders' meetings and retreat and proposes church goals, emphases, and priorities.
- Prepares/moderates **directors meetings**. (1.5 per month) Purpose: community building, vision-casting and vision maintenance, communication, discussing broader whole church issues (state of finances, IT and office administration.) Helps establish overall staff policies.
- Prepares/co-moderates **session meetings**. (1 per month) Responsible for: cluster oversight system of directors, with assistant creates Session agenda/docket. **Annual budget process**.
- **Pastoring the leaders.** Provide general pastoral support/availability to all staff and elders. Pastoral responsibilities of the congregation will generally be referred to cell staff and the counseling center, but EP can do general pastoral work at his discretion.

4. DEVELOP YOUR OWN ROLE IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- The need for teaching and training within the ministries of Redeemer is enormous. The EP's abilities are required. He must find places that match his own calling and 'ministry passions.'
- Examples abound. They include. The Center for Faith and Work, the Church Planting Center, the Gospel and Life discipleship sequence, the internship/fellows program, as well as currently unforeseen developments.

5. TAMING THE 'REPRESENTATIONAL BEAST' The EP is seen as the main representative of the SP and as an equally powerful representative of Redeemer in general. There are a great and growing number of agents who want to 'talk to Redeemer'--denominational officials, ministries and other churches in the city, Christian ministries across the country, other PCA pastors across the country and in the presbytery, writers, journalists, etc, etc. (For example, the Billy Graham Association calls.) The only two people they will want to talk to is the SP or the EP. The EP ends up getting most of these referrals. At first this seems pleasant but soon it becomes evident that this is a 'beast' that needs to be tamed lest it eat us. We need to do a great deal of thinking about who the EP should be 'representing Redeemer' to. For example, there are a number of ethnic pastors within NYC that we should not be snubbing and who the EP should give time to. The time Dick and Terry have given to them has paid off for ministry in the city. On the other hand PCA churches and officials from across the country also demand time, and the EP should be careful

not to let this eat up his time.

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SOUTHLAND CHRISTIAN CHURCH

JOB DESCRIPTION

Title: SENIOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reports to: Senior Minister

Purpose: To provide leadership, direction and guidance to the staff in carrying out the Mission Statement of Southland Christian Church, under the authority of the Senior Minister and Board of Elders.

Primary Supervision Responsibilities:

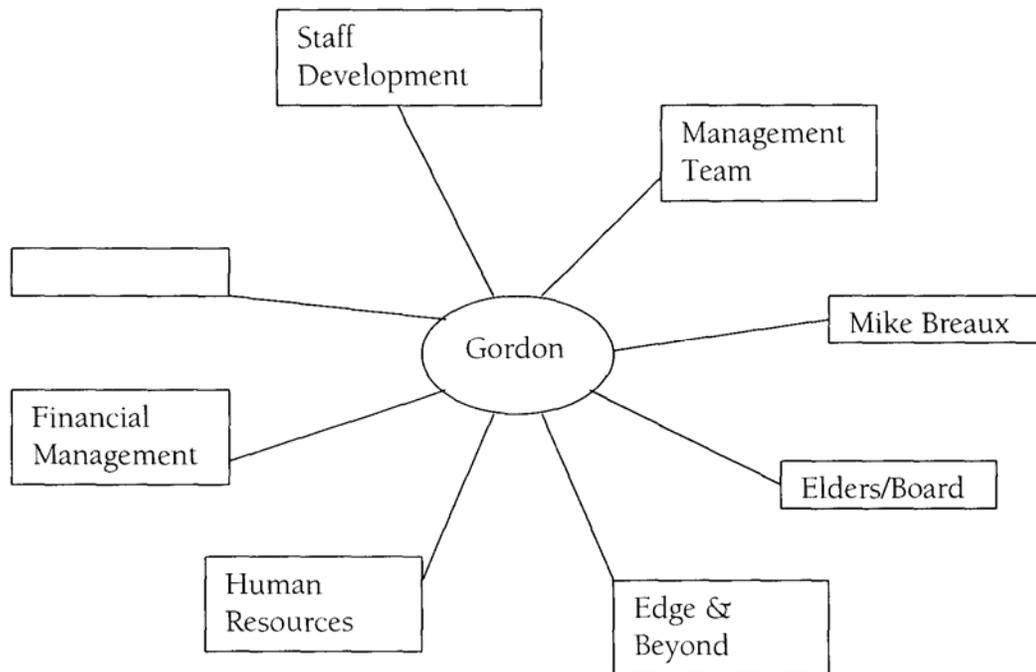
- Leadership in training, motivation, encouragement and organization of the staff.
- Leadership in coordinating / implementing the SCC Ministry Plan.
- Leadership in Human Resources, Personnel Management and Financial Management.
- Leadership in helping staff members achieve high impact by coordinating these processes involving staff relations: development, organization, assignment, accountability, motivation, discipline, repositioning, coaching, conflict resolution, evaluating results, etc.
- Remove / reduce the administrative responsibility as much as possible from the Senior Minister.
- Oversee day-to-day operation of the church.

The Senior Executive Director reports directly to the Senior Minister to develop plans and procedures to carry out the Senior Minister's vision for the administration of Southland Christian Church. He serves as leader of the

Management Team.

Attributes:

- A deeply committed Christian who has proven to be a man after God's heart and is experiencing an authentic personal relationship with the Lord in his personal life, family, business and church life.
- A proven strategic and resourceful thinker who can capture and articulate the big picture, and long term vision of the church.
- A team builder, who has successfully recruited, trained, motivated and promoted others into handling more responsibility.



- A proven results oriented, problem solver who can win and maintain the confidence of others.
- A lover of people and has the passion and ability to lead non-believers to the Lord.

APPENDIX 5

MISCELLANEOUS EXECUTIVE PASTOR DOCUMENTS

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

A Trajectory for the New Executive Pastor
Sam Crabtree & Friends

1. Pray. We serve in the strength that God supplies.

1 Peter 4:11 Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; 11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

2. Focus on establishing a trust relationship with the senior pastor.
3. Learn names. Use them.
(See Romans 16, a roster of individuals personally affirmed by Paul.)
4. Commend whatever is commendable. Affirm whatever you can. Bless and be a blessing. Encourage. Thank people like crazy. Build morale. Sometimes put it in writing. You are “earning” the right to be heard. You’ll need the credibility later when you have to make an unpopular decision or enforce a difficult policy.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Titus 3:8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to affirm, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

5. Ask the “who” question a lot. Who makes what decisions? Who is in charge of XYZ? Who reports to whom? Who will follow up on that? Familiarize yourself with the existing turfdoms, official or unofficial. Be on the lookout for redundancies and for gaps. Observe, observe, observe.

Revelation 2:19 *I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.*

6. Organize. Organize your priorities. Organize your office: your tools, your work environment, the personal affects that communicate something about you and about your expectations. Organize your calendar. Get important church dates and staff dates on your calendar.

1 Corinthians 14:40 *But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.*

7. Ask lots of questions. Where are the sacred cows? Why do we do it that way? Have we ever considered doing it another way? Like this? When was that decision made? By whom? What is the process for XYZ?

Luke 2:46 *And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions.*

8. Restrain the inner urge to purposely change lots of things. For on thing, there will be enough unintentional change as a simple bi-product of your arrival, and change poses challenges for both productivity and morale.
9. Speak the truth in love. Truth without love can be harsh. Love without truth isn't love, but is eventually injurious. When discussing issues that involve people who are not in the room, strive to say only what you would be willing to say if they were present.

Ephesians 4:15 *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,*

10. Be constantly asking (and answering) "What's the next step?" and "Who is responsible to take it?"
11. Read key documents. Discover the history, the loci of the consensus, the pillars of the assembly, and the providence of God in the life of the congregation.
12. Arrange one-on-one time with key influencers (officially or unofficially). Ask them what they think is the need of the hour. Give them an invitation to advise you.
13. Demonstrate that you really "own" the values of the church, that you really cherish treasured things (especially that your supremely value the supremely valuable – Christ Jesus), and that this is not just a career job.

14. Build consensus. Get key parties talking together. Though there will no doubt be plenty of places to *make* decisions, this is rather *facilitating* decisions that stakeholders own and agree with.
15. Kiss babies. This is not an advocacy of manipulative schmoozing. This is shorthand for getting into the lives of the people and loving them where they live. The church is not mainly buildings, charters, and policies. It is the people of God gathered. *Really* love their babies! And their teenagers, and their personal stories, and their hurts.

Church Champions Update: One hand grenade for your mind (EDITED)

The weekly update for Church Champions written by Dave Travis
For the week of November 19, 1999

This week:

- **BETA CODE: SENIOR PASTOR AND EXECUTIVE PASTOR**

Back in the spring of this year I described some of the beta code process in the software industry. I explained how companies work with key developers of products by releasing a kernel, the basic inner workings of a program, to a developer community for improvement and adaptation.

In many ways this is what Leadership Network has been about for 15 years. We work with key innovators and early adopters to find the things that are working in their ministries. We then share those learnings with others.

For some years now, we have observed and brought together groups of Executive Pastors. This development, while not altogether new, is one of the areas we always seem to get calls about. I know that not all of you get these calls or have many churches in this category. That's OK. Some of the technique in developing the code may help other situations.

A few months ago we convened a small focus group of Senior Pastor/Executive Pastor teams with varying experience levels to talk with each other. We worked with them on some of the more frequently asked questions that we get about the topic. We wanted to produce some beta code that churches could use in their particular circumstances.

The following is a compilation of that "code." It is not intended to be a "be all and end all document." We want you to take it and make it better. Use it as you see fit. Consider this version 1.0.

Senior Pastor/Executive Pastor

One of the frequently asked questions of Leadership Network is (a) do we need an Executive Pastor? And (b) How do we get one?

To help answer these questions, we convened a small focus group of Senior Pastors/Executive Pastor teams who have a variety of experiences with this concept. In addition, we inquired with a few other healthy teams to develop some responses to these questions.

Consider this document "beta code" for helping you determine some of the paths and questions your church should consider.

1. What's driving this issue at your church? At the root, there are two basic, interwoven answers. Growth and/or pain. The system has outgrown the team as it is currently structured and gifted. Staff, whether Senior Pastor or other team members, is feeling the stress. Often the board makes note of this and wonders: Is there another way? Also, it is usually a Senior Pastor's initiative to seek a solution such as an Executive Pastor.

2. What is the actual role we need? Decide if you are talking about an Administrative Pastor or an Executive Pastor. These are some of the titles used to distinguish between roles. Most commonly, an Administrative Pastor, or Church Business Administrator, is deployed to oversee the areas of the church such as facilities, finances, support teams, etc. This person may or may not be on the Leadership/Management team of the Church. This person may or may not have pastor/shepherd gifts.

An Executive Pastor (other terms include Staff Director, Executive Director or similar) is deployed to oversee a large percentage of the staff, including the Administrative pastor. In this case, the Executive Pastor operates like the Executive officer of a ship, handling much of the day to day operations and programs. This person is an integral part of the Leadership/Management team of the Church. This person will also usually have pastor/shepherd gifts. Some of the other metaphors include pilot as Executive Pastor with Senior Pastor as Navigator. In corporate language, some see the role as CEO for Pastor and COO for Executive Pastor.

In general the larger the congregation, the more they lean towards the Executive Pastor role.

3. Who does the Executive Pastor Serve? In our view, the Executive Pastor primarily serves the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor is looking for a person to help guide the overall direction and function of the church in leadership. For this reason, the Executive Pastor's gifts and competencies must complement the Senior Pastor. This means that the Senior Pastor must

clearly define for them what they need in an Executive Pastor. They should then examine what gifts are missing and needed. The Senior Pastor will have adaptations to make but the Executive Pastor must adapt to play to the Senior Pastor's strengths.

The Executive Pastor also serves the staff as supervisor. In many cases, staff have desired more input than the Senior Pastor had time to give.

The Board is also served in that many now feel they have a person to help carry out some of the functional work in the church. Most often both Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor attend Board meetings.

4. What is the key issue to making this work? By our experience, the key issue is a high level of trust between the Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor. Those teams that don't trust each other don't last long. A key factor in trust building is constant, honest communication.

5. Who does what? One of the best ideas developed from the focus group came from a church that sat down with their board and wrote a three column statement of what was needed from the Senior Pastor, the Executive Pastor and the Board. It is not static document, as needs change, adjustments are made. The process is unique for each church and team and it cannot be static. We are often asked for sample job descriptions. Because of the unique nature of each congregation, we feel this process of clarification of roles is the best way to design each description to fit the team.

6. Who leads Staff meeting? This type of decision is an example of the numerous issues that Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor need to clarify. In some cases the Senior Pastor continues to lead the bulk of the staff meeting. In other cases, the Executive Pastor takes over primary leadership. In still yet others, there is shared leadership. Each should clarify these issues with each other.

7. Do you seek a person within the organization or outside? The key issues are gifts and trust. We most often see that in an internal candidate. In some cases, the person may already be on the staff, have the gifts to serve as the leader, and have the trust of the Senior Pastor and Board. On many occasions the person is a lay member of the church with giftedness and the trust of the leadership take on these responsibilities.

If a church goes outside the organization to find this person, make sure the gifts are there and there are seeds of trust. I have recommended that if a church is serious about an outside candidate, then the Senior Pastor and

potential Executive Pastor spend several days together in a retreat, sharing their hearts, values and vision before any decision is made.

8. What about salary? We asked our focus group what was the maximum, minimum and "about right" difference between the Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor salary. Each church is different in terms of tenure and experience but our respondents said the maximum difference between the Senior Salary and Executive Pastor would be 39% less, the minimum 13% less with 23% less being "about right."

9. Who makes the biggest adjustments? Everyone has to make adjustments once this position is implemented. The Senior Pastors feel they have to make big adjustments in their work style with the staff. Senior Pastors tend to continue to over function in a supervisory type role with other staff during the transition period.

The staff has to adjust to working with an Executive Pastor as the team leader. Many long-term staff may say, "I came to work with the Senior Pastor not this person." The role of Executive Pastor requires strong but gentle leadership.

Most Executive pastors have to adapt to both situations. They must learn to translate the Pastor's vision and direction and focus the organization and resources towards that vision and direction. They must learn to give the Senior Pastor appropriate feedback from the staff team. Basically, the role must over communicate with both pastor and the rest of the team.

That's the end of the official document. Most of the other questions we get tend to be very specific church situations. The general answer to most of those questions is "Well, that depends..."

If you have something to add, we would love to see it. Send it in by hitting the reply button on this email. In a few weeks we will take the adjustments and post them on the web site under the special reports section.

By the way, Warren Schuh, a former Executive Pastor and now member of our Leadership Network team helped prepare this code.

Permission is freely granted to forward this update to your friends

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http://www.leadnet.org/allthingsln/archive_template.asp?archive_id=52&db=champsupdate

www.churchchamp.org

SUBURBAN MINISTRY ASSESSMENT PROFILE
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Section 2 – Senior Pastor Traits (leader of paid pastoral staff)

- _____ Releases significant relationships with church members to other staff.
- _____ Able to absorb criticism without bitterness or distraction.
- _____ Communicates personal integrity effectively through other staff, leaders, family and pulpit.
- _____ Sets the vision, direction and tone for ministry.
- _____ Takes final responsibility for the ministry.
- _____ Delegates large portions of both routine and enjoyable ministry tasks.
- _____ Understands differences between leading paid staff and volunteers.
- _____ Comfortable with organizational diversity.
- _____ Pursues excellence with grace and patience.
- _____ Balances confidence in personal abilities with humble dependence on God.
- _____ Balances organizational management with ministry to individuals.
- _____ Balances personal accessibility with effective time management.
- _____ Oriented toward the big picture and vision of ministry.

Comments:

Section 3 – Executive or Associate Pastor Traits

- _____ **Creative in accomplishing tasks.**
- _____ **Possesses good analytical skills.**
- _____ **Comfortable with supportive (“#2”) role.**
- _____ **Refines and implements a ministry vision.**
- _____ **Leads diverse ministries toward a common vision.**
- _____ **Handles complex, detailed tasks efficiently.**
- _____ **Assesses the process and product of ministry in light of vision and philosophy.**
- _____ **Handles human resource issues in a caring, timely and objective manner.**
- _____ **Balances loyalty with individuality.**

Comments:

**XPastor is a Forum for
Executive Pastors ♦ Church Leaders ♦ Senior Pastors**

The role of the Executive Pastor is exploding into thousands of churches! Church leaders need five functions ...

- [Administrator of resources](#)
- [Catalyst for ministry](#)
- [Mentor of staff](#)
- [Minister in the congregation](#)
- [Overseer of church-wide ministry](#)

Discover and enhance your ability to lead and manage the church in the [XP-101 seminar](#). This seminar is for XPs and XPs to be, Christian workers with similar function to XPs, and for Senior Pastors who want to examine the XP role. Currently there are no seminaries or seminars to prepare XPs. [XP-101 is an ideal job and resume builder as it gives you advanced study on church leadership.](#)

These five XP functions are needed in churches of 350+, 1800+ and 3000+. The need for the XPastor is born in the [management crises](#) of churches and Senior Pastors. Ministerial and management activities push aside the art of preaching. The Senior Pastor often is the Chief of Staff, visionary, executive, fundraiser and board member. Oh, the Senior Pastor "also" preaches ...

To address the need for church management, the Executive Pastor position has exploded into thousands of churches. The XP has [vision](#), implements the [vision](#) of the Senior Pastor and implements policies of the governing board. See for yourself in [job descriptions](#) of Executive Pastors from churches of [300+](#), [1800+](#) and [3000+](#).

Profit from [current job openings](#) and [resumes](#). Observe how the XP allows the Senior Pastor to focus on preaching and casting vision. Whether the role is called [Executive Pastor](#), [Senior Team Leader](#) or something else, the role has become common in U.S. and Canadian churches of all sizes.

Use the [free XP-Indicator](#) to evaluate the XP role. Now in its second edition and used by churches around the country, [the Indicator gives objective data to articulate your needs and desires.](#)

There is a growing body of information in the rooms of this XP home hosted by [Dr. David R. Fletcher](#), an XP in Dallas and Lecturer & Adjunct Professor in two seminaries. While this site is devoted to US churches, folks from [other countries](#) continue to journey here. Read the doc's [dissertation on the XPastor](#).

The CE Interview: Dr. David Fletcher

"Behind every senior pastor's success is a point person—someone who, although erudite and gifted, is not too proud to play second fiddle. Dr. David Fletcher, executive pastor of Northwest Bible Church in Dallas, TX, is one such man."

"After the President of the U.S. or the General Secretary of the U.N., I firmly believe the toughest job is being the Executive Pastor for a large church."

—Bruce Dingman

The hyperbole of Bruce's quote illustrates the complexity of the Executive Pastor position.

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