A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING LEAD PASTOR PERCEPTIONS ON THE INFLUENCE OF THEIR LEADERSHIP STYLE ON MINISTERIAL STAFF MOTIVATION

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DEDICATION

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"*He was mentally slow, unsociable and adrift forever in his foolish dreams*" [said of Albert Einstein in his early school years] (Goertzel, 2004, p. 257).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

2FA—Two-Factor Authentication

AG—Assemblies of God

AGC—Assemblies of God Coach

CEO—Chief Executive Officer

FRLM—Full Range Leadership Model

IRB—Institutional Review Board

ISD—Information Systems Development

NU—Northwest University

SCLC—Southern Christian Leadership Conference

TL—Transformational Leadership

U.S.—United States

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate lived experiences of lead pastors in the northwest region of the Assemblies of God (AG) on the effect of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. The purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of which leadership styles lead pastors found most helpful in motivating their ministerial staff. The study employed a qualitative, phenomenological methodology to gather detailed data from participants who met research criteria and conveyed an expansive perspective of their lived experiences. The researcher amassed detailed information from multiple AG lead pastors from the AG northwest region, comprising the Northwest Ministry Network, Oregon Ministry Network, Alaska Ministry Network, Montana Ministry Network, Wyoming Ministry Network, and the Southern Idaho Ministry Network. The researcher conducted 16 interviews to collect data showing how pastoral leadership influences motivation of ministerial staff. The findings revealed emergence of staff development, downward empowerment, teamwork, psychological safety, and fair treatment as frequent to highly frequent motivational factors. Authoritarian leadership factors repeatedly surfaced as a highly frequent demotivational factor. Key findings suggest the preceding factors influence ministerial staff motivation. As a result of the findings, recent guidance recommends promoting and supporting staff development, downward empowerment, teamwork, psychological safety, and fair treatment, which may increase ministerial staff motivation. As such, lead pastors, district networks, practitioners, and church policy makers can cultivate these motivational factors in their interactions with ministerial staff members to help achieve the church organization's mission.

Keywords: Organizational leadership, transformational leadership, ministerial staff motivation, leadership style, qualitative study

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the 21st century, Duke Divinity School led the most extensive survey on U.S. clergy regarding why clergy leave the pastorate. Findings revealed a significant number of associate pastors—approximately 50%—resigned partly because of conflict with the lead pastors' leadership style (Hoge & Wenger, 2005). A more recent study published by Barna Group and Pepperdine University found 76% of clergy knew at least one minister who quit prematurely because of conflict-related problems (Barna Group, 2017). General agreement has remained among researchers confirming pastors leave or contemplate leaving the ministry because of stressful work environments and differences in leadership style (Exantus, 2012; Joynt & Dreyer, 2013; Lifeway Research, 2015; Visker et al., 2017).

Additionally, researchers have argued uncontrolled pastoral job stress and leadership problems with ministry supervisors often lead to decreased motivation and workplace dissatisfaction across denominational boundaries (Chand, 2015; Faucett et al., 2013; Hoge et al., 1995; Maslach et al., 2001). In response to these troubling trends, specialists have studied and recommended coping strategies to mitigate the number of pastors leaving the ministry (Doolittle, 2010; Visker et al., 2017). For instance, in 2018 alone, the Lilly Endowment awarded $504.5 million in grants; $127.8 million—approximately 25%—focused on strengthening pastoral ministry leadership research (Lilly Endowment, 2018).

Despite the overabundance of resources available to pastors, 38% of U.S. ministers have considered quitting full-time ministry (Barna Group, 2021), which was

attributed to conflict with the lead pastor's or denominational representative's leadership style (Joynt, 2017). In addition, the COVID-19 global pandemic exacerbated pastoral attrition significantly (Wisconsin Council of Churches, 2020). Data science experts at Gallup found the COVID-19 global pandemic produced the most significant disruption in U.S. religious history (RantanJee, 2021). Researchers also have maintained pastors will likely leave their ministry jobs at increased rates because of ministry disturbance connected to COVID-19 and other controversial social issues (Hall, 2021; Lifeway Research, 2020; Quinn & Smith, 2021). Another concern compounding pastoral attrition is insufficient pastoral training to navigate such impediments (Barna Group, 2020b; Edington, 2018; Rowell, 2020). In 2015, the North American Mission Board and Lifeway Research discovered 48% of pastors believed seminary did not prepare them sufficiently for the people side of ministry (Lifeway Research, 2015).

As such, pastoral leaders commonly lack and fall short of crucial leadership skills needed to successfully manage people in their organizations, especially in times of heightened community need (Bonem & Patterson, 2012; Exantus, 2012; Krejcir, 2016; Virginia Theological Seminary, 2014). As a result, many theological training schools and seminaries in the United States have attempted to revamp their course curriculum to address students' needs (Brekke, 2021; Princeton Theological Seminary, 2020). Though experts remain uncertain about the negative trajectory of pastoral resignations (Barna Group, 2020a; McConnell, 2021; Wisconsin Council of Churches, 2020).

Pastors will continue to quit their careers early, impacting the health of congregations across the United States, if no effective solutions are identified. In times of societal calamity and change, like all other organizational leaders, pastors must identify

and employ new leadership tools and resources (Campbell & Osteen, 2021; Gibbs, 2009; Rowell, 2020) to motivate their ministerial staff effectively to remain on the job (Gallup, 2022). Although it is impossible to cover every facet of pastoral attrition factors in this research, exploring the perceptions of lead pastors on the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation is necessary to unveil viable insights to help address the multifaceted problem.

Background

Experts have theorized why pastors leave the ministry prematurely at concerning rates (Exantus, 2011; Jackson-Jordan, 2013; Joynt & Dreyer, 2013; Krejcir, 2016). Lead ministerial jobs carry enormous role responsibilities and challenges, thus taking precedence over other administrative tasks, including leadership development (Barna Group, 2017; Wells, 2013). Many current church leaders do not possess satisfactory people management skills to effectively motivate their ministerial staff (Exantus, 2012; Green, 2016; Lancaster, 2020; Rowell, 2020). Also, as previously established, the COVID-19 global pandemic intensified pastoral attrition (Lifeway Research, 2020; Smietana, 2021). There is currently an absence of research pertaining to pastoral perspectives of the impact of their leadership style on the motivation of ministerial employees, particularly amid societal disruptions. The presumption stands that pastoral leadership style contributes to successful ministry outcomes involving people (Edington, 2018). Gaining insight into the leadership styles and practices that enhance motivation effectively among ministerial staff might offer an entirely new vantage point for ministry leaders seeking to enhance the longevity of their team's employment.

As such, more research becomes necessary to understand what lead pastors perceive the effect of their leadership approach to be on ministerial staff motivation, particularly on associate pastors who minister in the post-COVID era. Researchers have asserted managers influence 70% of employees' motivation (Beck & Harter, 2015; RantanJee, 2021), and a motivated employee has been shown to perform at higher levels, display greater engagement, and greater commitment to the organization (Hanaysha & Majid, 2018; Hidayah & Tobing, 2018; Rida & Siddiqui, 2019). Therefore, uncovering what leadership approaches lead pastors believe influence ministerial staff motivation has potential implications for church policymakers, practitioners, and academics.

Theoretical Framework

In the context of qualitative research, scholars have employed theoretical and conceptual frameworks to clarify and provide insight into the behaviors, attitudes, traits, practices, and patterns under investigation (Creswell, 2014; White, 2017). This qualitative study builds on two theories that frame, define, and assist in better understanding the phenomena. These two theoretical frameworks include transformational leadership and the three-factor motivation model. Together, these frameworks integrated conceptually explain how followers may become motivated to accomplish organizational goals and objectives.

Transformational Leadership

The first theory that grounds this study is transformational leadership (TL). TL theory originated in the seminal work *Leadership* (Burns, 1978). Bass and Avolio (1994) further developed it and encompassed a spectrum of three distinct leadership styles or

approaches, called the full-range leadership model (FRLM). FRLM includes transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership.

TL is designed to motivate followers to higher cognitive engagement, group influence, and organizational performance (Bass, 1985). TL as an approach comprises four factors explaining how followers become motivated: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transactional leadership is a style emphasizing condition-reward and manages individuals or situations by exception (Bass, 1990; Northouse, 2015). Laissez-faire leadership represents a hands-off passive management approach and relinquishes a certain level of responsibility and control (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

Three-Factor Motivation Model

The three-factor motivation model complements the TL approach. Sirota et al.'s (2005) model builds on the work of previous scholars (Maslow, 1943; Mayo, 1933; McClelland & Mac Clelland, 1961; McGregor, 1960) and posits employees experience motivation when three needs, or factors, become met. These factors include achievement, camaraderie, and equity (Sirota et al., 2005). Sirota and Klein (2013) asserted workers become motivated to accomplish the organization's goals when they realize these three needs. Achievement means taking pride in doing things that matter, personally and organizationally, and receiving "recognition for one's accomplishments" (Sirota & Klein, 2013, p. 14). Camaraderie entails having "warm, interesting, and cooperative relations with others in the workplace" (Sirota & Klein, 2013, p. 17). Equity denotes one's perception that their treatment remains fair and just in relation to their primary working conditions (Sirota & Klein, 2013). Sirota et al. (2005) stated, "When all three needs are

present, it results in enthusiasm directed toward accomplishing organizational goals" (p. 26).

Conceptual Integration

The conceptual integration process proves beneficial in practice (Mayer & Sparrowe, 2013) and provides scholars with an explanation of the phenomena from various dimensions, reinforcing and enhancing key positions (Lanzer, 2018; Tabea et al., 2019). Bass and Avolio (1994) proposed a leadership theory known as the FRLM, which integrates with the three-factor model to expound the ways through which transformational leaders enhance follower motivation.

These frameworks were important and useful in this study because they demonstrate how followers become motivated to reach the organization's goals and objectives. TL and the three-factor model of employee motivation contribute to an understanding and clarification of how employees become effectively motivated. The compatibility of motivation theory and TL continues to be valid enough to provide pastoral leaders with ways to leverage leadership style to foster workplace motivation among their ministerial staff. By building on these two theoretical frameworks, pastoral leaders can better understand how their leadership style influences employee motivation.

History of Pastoral Leadership in the Church

Although a contemporary understanding of pastoral leadership effectiveness has little documentation in the early church literature (Clarke, 1992; Howard, 2015; Lowney, 2009), the evolution of pastoral leadership throughout the church's past expresses it. Examining the historical development of pastoral leadership provides a glimpse into the portrayal of pastoral leaders. Conducting an appraisal of historical accounts facilitates the

identification of ecclesiastical variables that played a significant effect in shaping the evolution of pastoral responsibilities. The following epochs under consideration are the Early Church Period, the Christian Roman Empire Age, the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformation, the Modern Age, and the Post-Modern Age.

Early Church (70–312 CE)

The duties and obligations of lead and assisting pastors in the early church had no clear definition (Bray, 2016; Shelley, 2013). Experts argued pastoral titles mentioned in the early church literature regarding duties and functions remain ambiguous and were used interchangeably (Bray, 2016; Strand, 2016). A consensus exists among scholars that ecclesiastical leadership structures existed in the early church, including spiritual and administrative duties (Bray, 2016; Cairns, 1996; Johnston, 2006b; Shelley, 2013; Sullivan, 2001). The vast body of literature has offered contrasting viewpoints regarding the roles within these leadership structures. Bray (2016) and Shelley (2013) argued the existence of strong evidence supporting three pastoral roles that developed in the early Christian church: (a) *presbyteroi* (elders), (b) *episkopoi* (bishops or overseers), and (c) *diakonoi* (deacons or ministers). Some experts have contended a twofold model of pastoral ministry made up of charismatic and administrative officials existed before the formation of the diaconate (Cairns, 1996; Johnston, 2006b). Despite these varying perspectives, the literature has supported the idea that an organized hierarchical structure of pastoral leadership emerged after the disappearance of the apostles.

Christian Roman Empire Age (313–590 CE)

With the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity, the church connected with the Roman state and became the moral benchmark for the entire society (Peterson,

2000; Shelley, 2013). The Edict of Milan, issued by Constantine, established religious tolerance throughout the Roman Empire and set the stage for Christianity being the official religion (Cairns, 1996; Peterson, 2000). The political reforms instituted by Constantine legitimized the minister's role (Shelley, 2013) and paved the way for the reorganization of church leadership (Gómez, 2019). Consequently, the restructure of pastoral leadership created a more formalized church hierarchy consisting of patriarchs, bishops, priests, and assisting deacons (Gómez, 2019).

Furthermore, Bray (2016) and Cairns (1996) maintained pastoral leaders gained favor with the Roman state and granted adjudicating roles or legal powers at important church councils to persecute enemies. As the early Christian church expanded across the Roman Empire, it adopted its provincial structures, including towns, metropolitan areas, large urban cities, and regions to organize its command structure (Peterson, 2000; Shelley, 2013; Sullivan, 2001). In doing so, the church in the West established a clearly defined ecclesiastical hierarchy, with the church of Rome exercising centralized authority (Shelley, 2013).

Middle Ages (500–1000 CE)

The role of the clergy drastically shifted in the Middle Ages. No other time in western Christianity further complicated and challenged the part of ministers than the medieval era (Madigan, 2015; Ozment, 2020). With the rise of the papacy and the development of the sacramental system, ordained ministers positioned themselves as sacred intermediaries between God and the average churchgoer (Bray, 2016; Peterson, 2000). As such, the papacy, or bishop of Rome, ascended to greater heights of spiritual and political power, which sometimes overshadowed the kingdom's secular rulers

(Shelley, 2013). The most potent weapon church leaders used to exercise their political influence included ex-communication (Shelley, 2013). In addition, the development of the mass, liturgy, and sacraments during the Middle Ages portrayed pastoral leaders as "specialists in rituals from which the laity hoped to benefit" (Madigan, 2015, p. 107). In other words, the church considered pastoral leaders a spiritual conduit between God and the parishioners, petitioning the people's prayers and supplications (Madigan, 2015).

Likewise, the liturgical development of the Eucharist, administered only by the pastoral leaders, allowed members of the congregation, as they perceived it, to encounter the divine spirit of Christ and secure God's blessing (Madigan, 2015). When the pastoral leader performed the Eucharistic ritual during mass, church attenders believed the bread and wine would convert into the physical body and blood of Christ, known as *transubstantiatio* or transubstantiation, and be consecrated (Johnston, 2011; McBrien & Attridge, 1995). Because of the Eucharistic practice, the laity perceived the pastoral leader as set apart spiritually, and the human mediator between God and His creation (Cairns, 1996; Peterson, 2000).

Protestant Reformation (1000–1649 CE)

Before the Protestant Reformation, skepticism, humanism, self-discovery, enlightenment, rebirth, and philosophical thought marked European society (Grendler, 2010; Ozment, 2020; Stitzinger, 1995). For these reasons, critical and intellectual pastoral leaders across Europe scrutinized (Bray, 2016; Stitzinger, 1995) and challenged (Peterson, 2000) the religious practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant Reformation movement of the 16th century took root and shifted congregational expectations. Pastoral leadership roles pivoted from spiritual leaders to religious activists,

upholding specific applications and the interpretation of scripture (Hessel, 2015). The church met deep-seated divisions and renewal (Dixon, 2016). Pastors became the theological leaders and diplomats of their emerging denominations, which added to the complexity of their roles (Cohn-Sherbok, 2013; Miller, 2012). For example, leaders like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli became essential and influential pastoral leaders during the Protestant Reformation (Shelley, 2013). Their theological views on the reform fueled many biblical, theological, and philosophical controversies (Cohn-Sherbok, 2013). Because of their theological contributions during the reformation, pastoral duties involved the prioritization of preaching and teaching (Virtual Protestant Museum, 2022).

Modern Period (1649–1959)

The Great Awakening (1730–1770) in the United States during the 18th century changed pastoral ministry and care (Leslie, 1983). Holifield (2005) argued Jonathan Edwards suggested ministers practice pastoral care like skillful physicians adapting their counsels for different spiritual cases. However, pastoral roles looked different during the American Revolution (1775–1783). Pastors assumed militant roles, supporting the resistance against the British by serving as military chaplains, state legislatures, and even as soldiers leading the Continental troops into strategic battles (The Library of Congress, n.d.-b).

Likewise, the U.S. Civil War (1861–1865) shaped the position of ministers. Holifield (2007) explained the war created the most prominent divide in the pastoral ranks in U.S. history and that roles and responsibilities differed in the North and the South. From the northern perspective, ministers took up pulpits as lecturers to spiritualize the biblical stance on preserving the Union and abolishing institutionalized slavery

(Moorhead, 2000). However, the southern worldview stood apart. For these religious leaders, political and military participation represented a moral obligation and was essential to support the Confederate cause (Stout, 2008). For instance, a substantial portion of the sermons in the south included war-related teachings and taught southerners that their divine right included maintaining slavery (Stout, 2008).

Furthermore, World War II (1939–1945) impacted all aspects of U.S. society, especially church life (Abrams, 1948). Political and social involvement impacted pastoral roles (Abrams, 1948; Capps, 1984; Holifield, 2005). The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor became the culprit for the United States to be fully involved in the war, resulting in millions of American men and women supporting the war effort in new capacities (The Library of Congress, n.d.-c). Although Christianity diminished in the United States in the middle of the 20th century, as did the needs and services of pastors, it was not until the 1950s that the economy improved and religion reawakened (Grant, 2014).

Postmodern Era (1960–Present)

Between the 1960s and 1970s, the Christian church in the United States faced extraordinary societal shifts with the Vietnam War (1955–1975), the Civil Rights Movement, and unprecedented politically driven assassinations (Jenkins, 2018; McLeod, 2007). Pastoral leaders split over social and political controversies, especially human rights issues (Jenkins, 2018). The watershed of social and political events during the postmodern era shaped the roles of pastors into congregational peacekeepers amid the turbulent political, economic, and social climate (Jenkins, 2018).

During the last 3 decades, megachurches have dominated the religious landscape in the United States (Ellingson, 2009; James et al., 2014) and have attracted at least 2,000

people for weekly worship services (Greenblatt & Powell, 2007). Though considerable debate has been about the integrity of their message (Greenblatt & Powell, 2007; James et al., 2014; Washington et al., 2014), megachurch pastors are highly visible, entrepreneurial, and politically involved (Thumma & Bird, 2015). Megachurch leaders sometimes function as business executives, city officials, or even governors instead of pastoral leaders (Thumma, 1996; Washington et al., 2014). Due to some of these reasons, researchers have argued many reputable church leaders identify their roles as chief executive officers, primarily expanding their congregation's brand to achieve notable success (Gauthier et al., 2016; Washington et al., 2014).

Recently, pastoral leaders in the United States have faced new challenges related to the societal disruption caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic (Barna Group, 2020b; Quinn & Smith, 2021; Wisconsin Council of Churches, 2020). Concerns among religious leaders include reaching a younger audience and revitalizing spiritual growth (Barna Group, 2020a). Still, they involve themselves with learning new technologies (Campbell & Osteen, 2021) and congregational engagement strategies to mitigate declining attendance, which brings on additional financial pressures (Eagle et al., 2021). Subsequently, ministry disruptions linked to the COVID-19 global pandemic have caused pastoral leaders to rethink their priorities, taking precedence over developing systems to motivate ministerial staff (Hayes et al., 2021).

Lead Pastors

Lead pastor roles are rooted in the historical models of Christian leadership, specifically from the rich denominational networks that evolved over the centuries (Ledbetter et al., 2016). Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Quaker, Methodist, and

Pentecostal pastoral leaders preserve their pastoral traditions in various ways consistent with their theological views, dogmatic perspectives, and historical traditions (Holifield, 2005, 2007; Ledbetter et al., 2016; McBrien & Attridge, 1995). Expectations of these pastoral leaders include organizing services, pastoral care, effective preaching, counseling, teaching, administration, and vision casting (Blumhofer, 1993; Blumhofer, 1989; Holifield, 2005, 2007; Ledbetter et al., 2016; McBrien & Attridge, 1995).

Ministerial Staff

The ministerial staff includes assistant or associate pastors and other supporting ministerial roles in the church. Like lead pastors, ministerial staff differs among Christian traditions, but ultimately, the ministerial staff must be responsible for supporting the lead pastor (Greenblatt & Powell, 2007). Assessing the historical development of ministerial staff positions and their implications for current responsibilities remains difficult. Therefore, the researcher reviewed the literature's critical autobiographies and biographies of influential pastoral assistants. Spurgeon (2018) wrote to a newly hired assistant pastor regarding his duties, including preaching relief as needed, helping with visiting the sick, attending parishioner needs, and attending church meetings.

History of Pastoral Leadership in the Assemblies of God

The Assemblies of God (AG) is a Christian denomination that traces its roots to 1914 in Hot Springs, Arkansas, with only 300 members (Blumhofer, 1989). It originated from large Pentecostal movements and networks to establish uniformity of doctrine and ministry credentials (McGee et al., 2012). Today, the AG has more than 69 million adherents worldwide, making it the most expansive Pentecostal tradition in the world

(Assemblies of God, 2022). About 12,000 churches and roughly 3 million congregants in the United States affiliate with the AG (North Central University, 2022).

The AG has unique characteristics and organizational challenges as with other Christian denominations. First, AG churches have little centralized structure because the local church functions autonomously in all administrative operations (Constitution and Bylaws of the Assemblies of God, 2021; Hoge & Wenger, 2005). Second, AG ministers have less formal education requirements to reach ordination than other similar Christian denominations (Constitution and Bylaws of the Assemblies of God, 2021; Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2016; Hoge & Wenger, 2005). Therefore, some researchers have argued these factors reduce leadership effectiveness (Brainard, 1996; Lifeway Research, 2015). For example, researchers of AG pastors identified a significant statistical difference between formal education level and successfully managing organizational relationships (Lifeway Research, 2015). The findings indicated the higher the education level, the greater success in managing more extensive relationships through practical conflict management skills (Lifeway Research, 2015). Despite these challenges, denominational officials are highly interested in related studies to improve leadership and ministry effectiveness (Tanner & Zvonkovic, 2011). Examining the leadership styles that are most effective in promoting motivation among ministerial staff can provide helpful knowledge into leadership techniques that can enhance the efficacy of leadership in local AG congregations.

Assemblies of God Pastoral Leadership in the United States

Nine AG geographic regions exist in the United States: South Central, Northeast, the Gulf, Southeast, Southwest, Great Lakes, North Central, Northwest, and Language

District-Networks (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020a). South Central reflects the largest AG region with active ministers, making up approximately 14% of all AG pastors in the United States (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020d). The roles and duties of lead pastors and ministerial staff in the local church overlap but also become distinctive regarding the order of authority. The AG Constitution and Bylaws do not differentiate ministerial duties between lead pastors and the ministerial staff but rather provide pastoral ministry classifications, essential qualifications, education requirements, and the eligibility of women and ministers from other organizations (Constitution and Bylaws of the Assemblies of God, 2021). Nevertheless, alternative sources within the AG community offer valuable perspectives on the operational dynamics of lead pastors and the ministerial staff within the context of a local church.

Assemblies of God Lead Pastors

The general duties of AG lead pastors include leading the church in all matters, such as preaching, teaching, evangelizing, serving human needs, managing staff, and providing operational direction (Assemblies of God, 2021a). Steinberg (1979) described AG lead pastors as divinely appointed by God, anointed, and head of the church "in delegating [all] ministerial leadership" (p. 3). In addition, AG lead pastors become responsible for congregational leadership, church administration, the financial health of the organization, and ultimately, the lead shepherd caring for the local church body (Steinberg, 1979). Hamill (1979) further expounded on the topic and described AG lead pastors as chief staff administrators wholly responsible for the church's success by motivating the ministerial staff effectively. Typically, the church board nominates lead

pastors of the AG. Congregations then vote them in with two thirds majority votes needed (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2009).

Assemblies of God Ministerial Staff

AG ministerial staff in the United States support the lead pastor's objectives and goals (General Council Position Paper, 2019). The ministerial staff also assists the lead pastor with preaching, teaching, and congregational care. That being the case, the role of ministerial staff in the local AG church remains arduous. Data from the General Secretary's office corroborate the role of the lead pastor as challenging. From 1987–2020, the denomination's pastorate experienced the most significant increase in pastoral terminations (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020c), attributed to resignations and forced endings. The ratio of pastoral additions to terminations in 2020, approximately 0.77, had never indexed so low. For every minister who left the pastorate, roughly 0.77 ministers backfilled. The AG experienced the most significant year-over-year net change decline of total U.S. ministers, down nearly 484 pastors between 2019 and 2020 (i.e., the year of the COVID-19 global pandemic; General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020c). The negative changes can be attributed to resigned and dismissed pastors (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020b). More precisely, the pastoral terminations contributing to the negative results originated from the licensed ministers' category, typically ministerial staff (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020b).

Assemblies of God Pastoral Leadership in the Northwest Region of the United States

The AG northwest region contains 792 churches and 2,848 pastors (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020d), making it the minor geography of active

pastors, specifically 7.6%. To calculate these values, divide the number of pastors from the regions by the total number of pastors (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020c). Evaluating 2020 to 2019, 484 pastors terminated memberships across all AG geographic regions (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020b). The southwest region indexed the highest for pastors leaving, approximately 227, and the Language District-Networks indexed the second highest regarding terminated memberships, roughly 180.

However, the northwest region experienced opposite trends. The northwest region indexed at 28, making it the geographic region retaining the most ministers (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020d). Previously published data determined these numbers, aggregating AG U.S. ministers by credential type, annual change, and region (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020d). The data uphold that the northwest region has been doing much better than the other AG regions in retaining pastors, which has implications for the other AG regions. Discovering the perceptions of AG lead pastors in the northwest region on the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation could prove beneficial and provide other AG regions with helpful practices that could improve leadership effectiveness.

Gaps in Research

A vast amount of literature pertaining to motivation and pastoral leadership has focused on the notion of vocational calling and personality types (Joynt, 2017; Piper, 2013; Snelgar et al., 2017). Guidance has not existed in the literature regarding how pastoral leadership style affects ministerial staff motivation. With the limited availability of past studies, no previous study has identified or focused on how pastoral leadership

styles influence ministerial staff motivation. Therefore, researching pastoral leadership style as a causal factor influencing ministerial staff motivation maintains importance and provides the opportunity to investigate a new and comparatively unexplored area of research.

The literature has not expanded the knowledge domain on how pastoral leadership styles influence ministerial staff satisfaction and motivation (Adams et al., 2017; Barna Group, 2017; Visker et al., 2017). One closely related study investigated the relationship between leadership style and employee motivation in a church setting. The survey results indicated a significant relationship between leadership style and employee motivation, directly impacting job performance (Tumbel, 2016). Though, Tumbel's (2016) work has remained limited because it did not specify and define employee roles in the sample. The population selection for the study did not clarify the inclusion of ministerial staff.

Other related studies examined the correlation between pastoral leadership styles and congregational health and growth (Burton, 2010; Calaway, 2015; Luckel, 2013). Various scholars have examined the connection between leadership style and member commitment (Frisbie, 2016; Heinz, 2017). Another critical study in the field explored the link between ministerial leadership approaches and eight quality measures: (a) empowering leadership, (b) gift-orientated ministry, (c) passionate spirituality, (d) functional structures, (e) inspiring works of service, (f) small holistic groups, (g) need-oriented evangelism, and (h) loving relationships (Rumley, 2011). Rowold (2008) maintained worshipers' satisfaction levels had positive effects when the lead pastor practiced transformational leadership in their management style. A different critical study found church members needed effective leadership to be committed to God and church

activities, though no specific leadership style demonstrated more effectiveness than others (Owusu, 2016).

The comparative literature does not explore how lead pastors' leadership styles impact the ministerial staff's enthusiasm and motivation. Some of the more recent literature has addressed other issues about religious leadership. Wollschleger (2018) argued pastoral leadership style served as a primary contributor and factor to congregational vitality and fruitfulness. Ward (2012) spiritualized the effectiveness of religious leadership styles. He argued the entire humanity and teachings of Jesus Christ demand his behavior, attitudes, interpersonal skills, and communication techniques. LaMothe (2012) claimed efficient pastoral leadership methods connect to the Bible and become sufficient to lead church members in times of complexity. Ernest Van and Mbengu (2013) proposed ministry leaders in the church should emulate Jesus' conflict management model as an effective tool when dealing with challenging issues in their organizations.

Additional empirical studies investigate correlations between lead pastor leadership styles and organizational effectiveness (Fogarty, 2013; Rumley, 2011). However, the current literature has not discussed how lead pastors' leadership styles influence ministerial staff motivation. Fogarty (2013) argued transactional leadership predicted volunteer extrinsic motivation, while transformational leadership projected intrinsic motivation. Rumley (2011) concluded transformational and transactional leadership are related to pastoral leadership effectiveness and linked to church health and flourishing. However, none of these studies pointed out the impact on ministerial staff motivation.

Statement of the Research Problem

Pastoral turnover is a prevailing issue for the church (Barna Group, 2021; Hall, 2021; Joynt & Dreyer, 2013; Marrs, 2012; Spencer et al., 2012). The existing body of research has focused widely on pastors leaving the ministry or contemplating it due to the stressful work environment it begets (Adams et al., 2017; Exantus, 2012; Hessel Jr, 2015; Joynt & Dreyer, 2013; Lifeway Research, 2015; Visker et al., 2017). Earlier studies have suggested a significant number of associate pastors resigned partly because of conflict with the senior pastors' leadership style (Hoge & Wenger, 2005; Lifeway Research, 2015). A limited number of available comparative studies have demonstrated pastoral leadership style as a possible reason contributing to the issue (Winston & Wickman, 2005).

The specific issue illustrates AG—a mainline Pentecostal denomination—experienced the most significant decline in total U.S. ministers between 2019 and 2020 (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020c). Further study becomes necessary to understand pastoral attrition as a phenomenon related to leadership style. Hence, the primary objective of this research holds significance as it delves into the perspectives of lead pastors regarding the impact of their leadership style on the motivation of ministerial staff. The relevance and timeliness of comprehending successful leadership styles for motivating ministerial staff remains essential for prolonging the career of such staff members. More importantly, this study may validate practical leadership methods to help AG church organizations develop their leadership skills to increase ministerial staff motivation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the lived experiences of lead pastors in the northwest region of the AG regarding the effect of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. By exploring the perceptions of lead pastors, this study delivers insight into what leadership styles lead pastors found most effective in motivating their ministerial staff.

Research Questions

Three overarching research questions guided this study to explore which leadership styles or approaches proved most effective in motivating ministerial staff:

1. What leadership styles or approaches do AG lead pastors perceive to be most helpful in motivating ministerial staff members?
2. What leadership styles or approaches do AG lead pastors perceive to be least helpful in motivating ministerial staff members?
3. In what ways do AG lead pastors perceive their leadership style influences employee motivation among the ministerial staff?

Significance of Problem

This study is meaningful because it explored effective pastoral leadership styles, which could directly affect AG religious leaders, ministerial staff, and churches. AG pastors left the pastorate exponentially for the first time in over 30 years, specifically, the licensed ministers who typically hold associate pastoral roles. The ratio of pastoral additions to terminations, estimated at roughly 0.77, has reached a notable level, indicating the rate at which new ministers are entering does not match the rate at which ministers are leaving (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020c). As a result of

the pronounced study, organizational leaders in the AG may recognize the need to emulate proven leadership approaches that positively influence ministerial staff motivation. Pastoral leaders can efficiently gain new practical leadership tools to motivate their ministerial staff.

Also, the preceding research holds importance because it has the potential to inform the larger body of literature and address the gap, explaining the influence pastoral leadership style has on ministerial staff motivation. Academics will learn how transformational leadership and the three-factor model of motivation, brought together, explain how employees become motivated. Pastoral ministry researchers will increase their understanding of how these theoretical constructs become compatible in explaining how leadership style influences workplace motivation. Without furthering the understanding of how leadership style impacts ministerial staff motivation, practitioners could miss an opportunity to create new leadership strategies to help struggling staff pastors remain on the job. Pastoral leaders today can comprehend what leadership styles work best to motivate the staff pastors of the future. There exists a large, widening gap in this research, and academic examiners and church leaders today can be aware of what leadership styles work best to motivate the staff pastors of the future to lessen pastoral attrition.

Definitions

Definitions of terms associated with dissertations come to be crucial for the study to mitigate confusion, misinterpretation and ambiguity (Roberts, 2010). Below are key terms and meanings found in this dissertation:

Leadership. Leadership describes the "process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2015, p. 6).

Leadership style. Leadership style includes the behavior displayed by a person who attempts to influence others (Northouse, 2015) and, at times, showcases a combination of styles with one dominating the other (Berkley, 1994).

Church. A church describes a specific group or assembly of Christian believers gathering in a particular place (Bray, 2016; Powell, 2011).

The Assemblies of God United States. The Assemblies of God United States (AG U.S.) is the most prominent Christian Pentecostal denomination globally, with over 69 million members worldwide (Assemblies of God, 2022). The AG U.S. has four classifications of the local church in the Constitution of the Assemblies of God, Article XI: Local Assemblies (Assemblies of God, 2021b).

General Council Affiliated Churches. General council affiliated churches include those bodies of believers who accept the AG tenants of faith (e.g., the 16 Fundamental Truths) and have at least 20 members. Moreover, these churches have enough members to fill leadership roles, have the financial means to provide for the pastor, and self-govern (Assemblies of God, 2021b).

District Council Affiliated Churches. District council affiliated churches encompass those bodies of believers who accept AG tenants of faith but cannot yet meet all the requirements of the general council affiliated churches. Therefore, these church bodies receive direct supervision under the AG district or network (Assemblies of God, 2021b).

Parent Affiliated Churches. Parent affiliated churches describe those bodies of believers who accept AG tenants of faith but remain under the direct supervision of the parent church according to their organizational constitution and bylaws (Assemblies of God, 2021b). Typically, these churches report to the parent church, with several multisite locations.

Cooperating Assemblies. Cooperating assemblies include those bodies of believers who agree with the AG 16 Fundamental Truths but select to enter into a cooperative status with the AG district or leadership network (Assemblies of God, 2021b).

Multi-staff Church. A multi-staff church refers to a large church that "has capable staff members who long to have a broader area of ministry beyond their current restricted assignments" (Berkley, 1994, p. 234).

Denominational Official. The denominational official or superintendent supports the lead pastors in the district with training, coaching, and mental health resources. They want the churches in their district to succeed (Berkley, 1994).

The AG has three distinct areas of ministerial credentialing as defined next:

Certified Minister. The certified minister in the AG describes the beginning level for standard ministry in the church:

> Those who indicate God's call to ministry manifest a desire to enter the ministry by engaging in Christian work and, who devote a part of his or her time to Christian service may be recognized as Certified Ministers. They shall be involved in some type of viable ministry. Whenever possible are to remain under

> the supervision of a pastor. (Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, 2020, p. 1)

Certified Ministers in the AG, based on this description, include bivocational employees under the supervision of a pastor. Additionally, these ministry workers typically do not serve as the church organization's key decision makers.

Licensed Minister. The licensed minister in the AG refers to the intermediate level recognition for standard ministry in the church:

> Those who exhibit clear evidence of a call to ministry and practical experience in preaching, together with an evident purpose to devote one's life to ministry, are eligible for a License to Preach. They shall be involved in some type of viable ministry. This credential can lead to Ordination. A minister must hold a license for two consecutive years to be qualified to apply for ordination. (Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, 2020, p. 1)

Based on this description, licensed ministers in the AG are full-time vocational employees under the supervision of a lead pastor en route to the pastorate themselves. These ministry workers include the associate pastors, not the church organization's key decisionmakers.

Ordained Minister. The ordained minister in the AG describes the highest level of recognition for standard ministry in the church:

> Qualifications for Ordination are outlined in the New Testament scriptures (I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:7-9). They shall be persons of mature Christian experience who are qualified and able to undertake the responsibilities of the full ministry. In addition, ordination applicants must be twenty-three (23) years of age or older, be

> a member of the Northwest Ministry Network for no less than one (1) year prior to ordination, and must possess a License to Preach for at least (2) consecutive years. (Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, 2020, p. 1).

Based on the previous explanation, ordained ministers in the AG are full-time vocational lead pastors supervised by the Board of Deacons. These ministry workers serve as the primary decision-makers in the church organization.

Lead pastor. The lead pastor refers to the senior leader in the local church with credentials at the ordination level in the AG (The General Presbytery, 2020). The responsibilities of the lead pastor encompass three vital areas: (a) ministry of the Word, (b) pastoral care, and (c) leading (Assemblies of God, 2021b). The lead pastor's responsibility entails casting the strategic vision, administration, financial health, organizational communication, and setting the goals for the local church (Assemblies of God, 2021b).

Ministerial staff. Ministerial staff includes the associate pastor, assistant pastor, youth pastor, and other ministerial staff, supporting the lead pastor by offering new alternative ministries and serving more people in the congregation (Berkley, 1994). These pastoral ministry workers have credentials at the licensed level in the AG (Detrick, 2019). Throughout the study, the ministerial staff represent employees who directly or indirectly report to the lead pastor.

Delimitations and Assumptions

The research scope for this study focused on AG lead pastors in the northwest region. Within the breadth of this research, exclusive interest was in pastoral leaders involved in pastoral ministry for more than 5 years. The selected study population

included female and male leaders between 35 and 60, reflecting the median age range of active AG credentialed ministers in all the geographic regions from 1995 to 2020 (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020e). Each AG lead pastor served as the overseer of a general council affiliated church with supervisor responsibility for their ministerial staff. The minimum number of pastoral multi-staff under the AG lead pastor became three ministers.

The researcher acknowledges some ontological assumptions factor. Creswell and Creswell (2013) argued numerous researchers operate within diverse ontological backgrounds or realities. These other realities often set up and impact the way researchers understand and interpret meaning. The researcher approached the study from a distinct reality different from participants. For instance, the research participants included full-time AG pastors employed by a nonprofit organization (e.g., a church). On the contrary, the researcher worked as a marketing professional in the marketplace but had minimal experience as a bivocational minister. For these reasons, the researcher conceivably understood ministerial staff motivation differently, impacting the data interpretation and analysis.

Furthermore, the researcher brought epistemological beliefs to the project. Creswell and Creswell (2013) stated the epistemological viewpoint entails a philosophical assumption where "researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied . . . [and] the subjective evidence is assembled based on individual views" (p. 20). The researcher discloses participants' subjective views provided knowledge about the study topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

Organization of the Study

The balance of this research contains four distinct chapters, a bibliography, and appendixes in chronological order. Chapter 2 provides a systematic evaluation of peer-reviewed literature relevant to the topic. Chapter 3 describes the research instruments, data collection procedures, and the population for the study. After this, Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the data and the research findings. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the findings, discussion, conclusions, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the evolution of pastoral leadership in the Christian faith. A theoretical framework is presented that demonstrates the interconnection between transformational leadership (TL) and the three-factor model of human motivation in explaining the influence of leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. Past secular and sacred events influencing the development of pastoral leadership roles is presented with specific attention given to the Assemblies of God (AG) denomination. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature gaps and the need to inquire into lead pastor perceptions on the influence of their leadership approach on ministerial staff motivation.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers have found positive relationships between TL and employee motivation and maintain that the connection between the two constructs should be expanded by scholars and practiced by managers (Alghazo & Al-Anazi, 2016; Clipa & Greciuc, 2018; Fant, 2019; Reis Neto et al., 2019). Evidence has indicated transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles also motivate followers effectively and should be examined further (Fiaz et al., 2017; Kalsoom et al., 2018; Nadeak et al., 2019; Wahyuni et al., 2020). Similarly, a body of information has advised a blend of transformational and transactional behaviors motivates workers best (Mengesha, 2015; Musinguzi et al., 2020). One notable drawback that has emerged in the literature on both sides of the argument (Rawat, 2015; Wahyuni et al., 2020) includes the single use of TL as a core supporting theoretical construct. For example, recent advancements in the literature since 2019 have

brought together TL theory and well-established motivation models to illustrate how workers become motivated effectively (Fant, 2019; Tabea et al., 2019).

Transformational Leadership

TL originated in the seminal book titled *Leadership* (Burns, 1978). TL is a theoretical framework that encompasses leadership practices aimed at guiding, cultivating, disseminating, and perpetuating a vision among followers. Much of the ground-breaking work with TL commenced in the early 1990s. Bass and Avolio (1994) expanded the understanding of TL by incorporating a spectrum of three distinct leadership styles called the full-range leadership model (FRLM). FRLM contains TL, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership. TL attempts to motivate followers to higher cognitive engagement, group influence, and organizational performance (Bass, 1985). Furthermore, TL (Bass & Avolio, 1994) includes four factors that explain how followers are motivated: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. On the other hand, transactional leadership denotes a managerial approach that emphasizes the use of contingent rewards and the management of individuals or circumstances through the identification and handling of exceptions (Northouse, 2015). Additionally, laissez-faire leadership refers to a passive management approach that relinquishes a certain level of responsibility and control (Northouse, 2015).

Three-Factor Motivation Model

There remains a vast amount of literature on motivation in social science (Elliot et al., 2017). There are two main areas of study of motivation theory: content theories and process theories (Rhee, 2019). Content theories explain why people become motivated,

while process theories clarify how people become motivated (Dinibutun, 2012). Well-acknowledged content theories comprise Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory, and McClelland and Mac Clelland's (1961) theory of needs. Fundamental process theories cover Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, Latham and Locke's (1990) goal-setting theory, and Sirota and Klein (2013) and Sirota et al.'s (2005) three-factor model of human motivation. Both motivation categories seek to explain why and how employees in organizations become motivated.

Sirota et al.'s (2005) three-factor motivation model builds on the work of earlier scholars (Maslow, 1943; Mayo, 1933; McClelland & Mac Clelland, 1961; McGregor, 1960) and postulates employees experience motivation when three needs, or factors, become met. These factors consist of achievement, camaraderie, and equity (Sirota et al., 2005). Sirota and Klein (2013) argued workers become motivated to achieve the organization's goals by filling these three needs. *Achievement* means taking pride in doing things that matter, personally and organizationally, and receiving "recognition for one's accomplishments" (Sirota & Klein, 2013, p. 14). *Camaraderie* entails having "warm, interesting, and cooperative relations with others in the workplace" (Sirota & Klein, 2013, p. 17). *Equity* denotes one's perception that they receive fair and just treatment regarding primary working conditions (Sirota & Klein, 2013). Sirota et al. (2005) explained when achievement, camaraderie, and equity coincide, the outcome results in enthusiasm toward realizing the organization's goals.

Conceptual Integration

A conceptual integration between the three-factor motivation model and TL was used in this study, which is harmonious in theory and practice and demonstrates the ways

workers receive motivation from a leadership style standpoint. The conceptual integration process seems advantageous (Mayer & Sparrowe, 2013) and assists scholars in explaining phenomena from multiple dimensions, strengthening and advancing key positions (Lanzer, 2018; Tabea et al., 2019). Yi et al. (2019) discussed conceptual models connecting to TL to navigate follower motivation and proactive, creative behavior. An implication from Yi et al.'s (2019) research revealed drawing on related theoretical lenses offers an understanding of how leaders and followers intertwine to develop favorable results.

Furthermore, Bass and Avolio (1994) identified the FRLM, which aligns with the three-factor model to explain how transformational leaders contribute to follower motivation. Transformational leaders cultivate camaraderie through idealized influence by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Antonakis, 2012; Avolio, 1999; Sirota & Klein, 2013). Using inspirational motivation, transformational leaders inspire followers to take calculated risks and achieve extraordinary results to accomplish greatness (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Bass, 1988; Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Bass, 1985, 1990; Sirota et al., 2005). Through intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders develop followers' skillsets and abilities, which can help them successfully attain higher levels of motivation and self-efficacy (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bandura & Walters, 1977; Bass, 1985; Sirota & Klein, 2013). Lastly, transformational leaders act as coaches with individualized consideration to create an equitable, inclusive environment where ideas matter, trust abounds, voices remain heard, and followers receive impartial treatment (Avolio, 1999; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Sirota et al., 2005).

Practical Application

Bass and Avolio (1994) and Sirota and Klein (2013) maintained workers become motivated by leadership style. Sirota et al. (2005) explained the three need factors work together in practice to produce participative leadership. Participative leadership describes an "active [leadership] style that stimulates involvement" (Sirota et al., 2005, p. 179) to the point where employee motivation thrives. Likewise, the participative leadership style is based on a management practice that influences employee morale, individual performance, team cohesion, and organizational growth directly (Sirota & Klein, 2013). Similarly, TL refers to a management approach in a leadership continuum connected to motivating workers (Northouse, 2015).

The conceptual integration between TL and the three-factor motivation model has a wealth of applications in functional domains (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013; Bouwmans et al., 2017; Islam et al., 2018). Therefore, applications associated with motivational characteristics between these paradigms have become abundant in the literature. For instance, Bouwmans et al. (2017) discovered TL relates positively to aspects of the three-factor motivation model through participative leadership. The most relevant inferences from Bouwmans et al.'s study demonstrated these concepts work well together to influence team learning, decision making, and interdependence in higher education. Findings from the research revealed practical implications that offered guidance on how transformational educators stimulate team learning through the participative processes (Bouwmans et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Islam et al. (2018) validated the positive moderating role of participative leadership, associated with the three-factor model, between TL and

organizational commitment in the banking industry. Conclusions from Islam et al. presented evidence that transformational business leaders positively contribute toward participative employee decision making to develop emotional bonding, professional development, and career longevity. Arnold and Loughlin (2013) maintained transformational leaders in business and government were likelier to practice participative leadership versus directive to foster intellectual stimulation. Theoretical implications of the study extended the leadership literature by combining participative and transformational theory. Moreover, Arnold and Loughlin (2013) suggested TL had a higher probability of being practiced in a participative manner.

Also, pastoral ministry researchers have affirmed similar findings from exploring the relationship between TL leadership style, ministry effectiveness, achievement, camaraderie and social justice or equity (Culbertson, 2021; Fiebig & Christopher, 2018; McCall, 2019; Whitehead, 2019). To summarize, the literature exposed several themes that applied the conceptual framework linking TL and the three-factor model. Essential exemplars classified in the literature supported and strengthened ways in which transformational leaders satisfy the three-factor motivation requirements of employees to realize personal and organizational goals.

Transformational Leadership and Achievement

Few studies have demonstrated the association between TL and participative leadership, which has included the application of the three-factor model (Arifah et al., 2018; Aun et al., 2019; Hahm, 2018; Juhro & Aulia, 2018; Kovach, 2018, 2019; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019; Page et al., 2019; Shaw et al., 2018). These studies have revealed both these constructs, together, motivate workers to achieve results. Hahm (2018) argued

idealized influence directly involves employees' achieving goals in a participative manner when working virtually. After exploring virtual business teams, he determined transformational leaders could motivate employees by creating positive, participative relationship dynamics in the group. A recent scholarly investigation conducted in the field of business determined the integration of transformational and participatory leadership styles has a substantial impact on employees' levels of work-related accomplishment (Aun et al., 2019). Implications derived from the study placed practical importance on managers needing to employ workable leadership approaches that encourage higher performance and productivity.

However, Newman et al. (2018) found entrepreneurial leadership in a large Chinese multinational organization positively moderated the impact of self-efficacy on employee innovation and achievement. They clarified the study's inconsistent results with the social cognitive theory framework. They suggested entrepreneurial behaviors, not transformational or participative ones, fostered creative achievement and led to higher self-efficacy among workers. Implications of their findings reinforced the need for managers to obtain the most from employees by identifying and encouraging the entrepreneurial process. Still, these findings contrast with other significant studies (Kovach, 2018, 2019) in which transformational leadership transcended any other context in causing higher achievement outcomes.

Juhro and Aulia (2018) upheld TL reflected a participative approach contributing to motivation and achievement. Their study uncovered a unique perspective and suggested applied neuroscience could bolster achievement outcomes associated with transformational leaders and employees. Juhro and Aulia argued thinking-based theory

and the applied science approach reassured that transformational leaders and employees could achieve transforming competencies, advancing theoretical understanding. Other studies have ascertained a combined transformational and participative leadership, which correlates with the three-factor model, strengthened management practices and employee achievement outcomes with the presence of democratic interactive behaviors (Arifah et al., 2018; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019; Shaw et al., 2018). Conclusions proposed in these studies may have implications for education and health care industries in supporting transformational leadership and the utility of participative mentoring programs.

In pastoral ministry, Culbertson (2021) explored the connection between the TL style of pastors in relation to successful ministry outcomes. Findings in the study revealed and concluded a positive moderate correlation between pastors' TL approach and building trust, mentoring, encouraging others, and cultivating inventive thinking.

Transformational Leadership and Camaraderie

The literature has maintained a well-recognized association that TL influences team effectiveness or camaraderie. Musinguzi et al. (2020) contended idealized influence behavior and intellectual stimulation can positively motivate teams, unlike transactional and laissez-faire styles. Musinguzi et al.'s findings revealed health care workers in Uganda preferred transformational leaders to support unit cohesion and skill development, which describe motivating factors behind job satisfaction (Sirota & Klein, 2013; Sirota et al., 2005). Thus, the aforementioned research findings showed TL impacted motivation, job satisfaction, and fostering camaraderie positively compared to other leadership approaches.

Lai et al. (2018) and Wiyono (2018) held interest in various dimensions of team performance within the context of TL. Findings in these studies showed team effectiveness and collaborative motivation became meaningfully associated with transformational characteristics, such as idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspiration, and self-awareness. These findings had significant repercussions for organizations looking to employ leadership models that impact teamwork and organizational efficiency significantly. Further results stood consistent with those found in the literature, where transformational leadership characteristics linked to team empowerment, team-efficacy, team prosocial motivation, positive team learning, and overall group performance (Hassan et al., 2019; Mohd & Mohd Arshad, 2019; Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2018).

Results demonstrated by Oh et al. (2021) provided a new viewpoint on the topic. The findings proved unlike other previous studies (Hassan et al., 2019; Lai et al., 2018; Mohd & Mohd Arshad, 2019; Musinguzi et al., 2020; Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2018; Wiyono, 2018) and reported transactional behaviors, not transformational, had a significant impact and positive influence on teamwork quality. Researchers clearly used study methods dependably in the information systems development context, though not expansively tested in other settings.

From a pastoral ministry standpoint, McCall (2019) investigated how transformational pastors in African American churches influenced empowerment, collaboration, and commitment toward social responsibility. The findings revealed TL significantly correlated with visionary leadership, inspiration, encouraging others,

empowerment, and teamwork regarding the organization's dedication toward social responsibility.

Transformational and Equity

The literature also presented compelling evidence on how leadership style impacts positive social change. Multiple studies have confirmed the connection between transformational behaviors and equity (Evans et al., 2019; Strear et al., 2018; Tabea et al., 2019). For example, Evans et al. (2019) investigated the significance of transformational leaders within a Spanish–English two-way immersion program. The findings exposed that behaviors associated with TL fostered a positive bilingual community experience and helped sustain equitable practices, developing and supporting diverse professional learning.

These findings remained consistent with similar studies but in different industries. To illustrate, Plichta (2018) and Tabea et al. (2019) discovered a relationship between TL and positive equality outcomes when mediated by employee fairness perception. Plichta (2018) interviewed school principals and teachers to understand how perceptions of transformational aspects added to staff equality, relationship building, confidence, and collaboration. The critical themes covered during the interview included supportive leadership, mutual respect, trust, concern, cooperation, and encouragement. The most significant finding that emerged, which has practical implications, stipulated professional development workshops for school leaders could improve aspects of transformational leadership, enhance student learning, create incremental learning opportunities, and advance positive social transformation.

Tabea et al. (2019) studied correlations between transformational leadership and equity over time in business. Data collection included 479 German employees in a three-wave longitudinal study. The questionnaire-based study showed transformational leadership significantly predicted fair-task distribution. The research team concluded employing fair-task distribution by leaders proved vital to motivating followers and increasing overall well-being. Others have pursued similar studies in education (Strear et al., 2018), business (Mauludin & Sulistyorini, 2018), and government (Andersen et al., 2018), in which researchers analyzed transformational leadership and equity to comprehend leadership effectiveness and organizational justice topics.

Furthermore, Fiebig and Christopher (2018) reported female religious leaders who predominantly practiced TL exhibited significant compassion toward followers and aided in creating solutions to social justice issues. The researchers also discovered female religious leaders who demonstrated TL practices helped followers "experience personal growth and gain self-confidence" (Fiebig & Christopher, 2018, p. 510).

Although the literature has provided a wealth of knowledge and application linking TL and motivational theory in business environments, the study of leadership development within the Christian faith community needs further exploration. Early followers of Christ did not understand modern-day notions of TL and leadership effectiveness (Clarke, 1992; Howard, 2015; Lowney, 2009). However, pastoral leadership models reflect their evolution throughout history. Exploring how pastoral leadership has changed across past events sheds light on how history has portrayed pastoral leaders.

History of Pastoral Leadership in the Church

This section explores the role of pastors throughout past events of the Christian church and delivers the background, to a certain extent, on the effectiveness of pastoral leadership. An assessment of past accounts presents the fundamental causes that transformed the roles of pastors. The critical church periods (i.e., the Early Church, the Christian Roman Empire Age, the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformation, the Modern Age, and the Post-Modern Age) are examined.

Early Church (33–100 CE)

The roles and responsibilities of pastors in the early church had no clear definition or structure (Bray, 2016; Shelley, 2013). The field of literature has thoroughly examined these domains to present a comprehensive understanding of the distinctive responsibilities and roles of pastors (Bray, 2016; Strand, 2016). There remains widespread acknowledgment that church leadership positions existed in the early church, including sacerdotal and administrative responsibilities (Bray, 2016; Cairns, 1996; Johnston, 2006b; Shelley, 2013; Sullivan, 2001).

The Church in Jerusalem

The literature on the topic of the ancient church in Jerusalem proves plentiful. Bray (2016), Brown (1997), and Sullivan (2001) claimed the apostles managed the church in Jerusalem and decided to appoint seven deacons or ministers to help with social and administrative duties. The biblical passage in Acts 6 pertains to the deliberations of the authorities within the early church of Jerusalem regarding the allocation of pastoral roles and associated responsibilities. A rising division existed among the early followers

of Jesus regarding the obligation to care for those in social need (Bray, 2016; Brown, 1997; Guzik, 2017).

As the early church expanded, so did the ministerial leaders' commitments and expectations (Fear et al., 2013). The congregation complained that the early church leadership neglected those living on the margins of society (Brown, 1997). However, the administration in Acts 6 conversely maintained their primary duties encompassed prayer and gospel preaching. The resolution came in the formation of the diaconate (Bray, 2016; Brown, 1997) when leadership delegated ministerial tasks involving administrative assignments to respected individuals in the community. The early principal role of the minister quickly evolved into the preacher and teacher of the Word, while supervisory assignments dealing with the people side of ministry became entrusted to deacons (New International Version, 1973/2022; Sullivan, 2001).

The Apostle Paul

Modern scholars have generally accepted the Apostle Paul represented an influential early Jewish Christian leader, preacher, teacher, missionary, and a dual citizen of the Roman Empire (Clarke, 1992; Harrington, 2010; Lokkesmoe, 2017; Powell, 2011; Sullivan, 2001). Paul's pastoral role in the early church served as parental, mediatory, and consultative. Paul dealt with moral problems disrupting the Corinthian church by "offering pastoral advice for their solution" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 34). Clarke (1992) offered a different perspective on the ethical issues impacting the Corinthian church. Clarke (1992) attributed Paul's concerns to the "inappropriateness of secular leadership models [existing] within the Christian church" (p. 126). Paul's apprehensions in the Corinthian Christian community were attributed mainly to litigation and secular jurisprudence.

Furthermore, Paul's ministry portrayed pastoral leaders as social influencers and liberators, tackling issues about peace, reconciliation, and restorative justice (Cairns, 1996; Keown, 2018). Paul addressed these notions while imprisoned in Ephesus or Rome sometime between CE 53–60 (Harrington, 2010; Keown, 2018). The situation entailed a fugitive slave, Onesimus, fleeing from his Roman owner, Philemon. Paul wrote a letter to Philemon, who resided in Colossae, urging him to show grace to Onesimus and free him for helpful ministry service (Keener & Walton, 2016; New International Version, 1973/2022). Harrington (2010) contended Paul used the power of persuasion, rather than his apostolic authority, to encourage Philemon to view Onesimus "no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother" (New International Version, 1973/2022, Philemon. 1:16). Paul's request provides an example of how influential pastoral leaders in the early church ought to advocate for the marginalized and less unfortunate.

Office of the Episcopate

After the apostles disappeared from the early church, an organic congregational structure began to evolve. Bray (2016) argued the office of the bishop materialized after the apostolic period. Meanwhile, as the church struggled to preserve its unanimity, "the monarchial collective leadership emerged, and more authority developed toward the bishop" (Bray, 2016, p. 83). Johnston (2006a) explained the local bishops replaced the apostles' unique role due to divine appointment or *Dei Verbum* (by divine revelation). McBrien and Attridge (1995), along with Sullivan (2001), argued church tradition divinely inspired and carried on the establishment of apostolic succession.

The Arrival of Orthodoxy

The evidence in the literature offers varied viewpoints regarding the preciseness of pastoral duties and roles at the end of the first century. For instance, Bray (2016) and Shelley (2013) argued information upholds that three pastoral roles developed in the early Christian church: (a) *presbyteroi* (elders), (b) *episkopoi* (overseers or bishops), and (c) *diakonoi* (deacons or ministers). In addition, Peterson (2000) concluded "many churches had developed established offices such as bishops, priests, deacons, and elders" (p. 39).

Certain researchers have posited the existence of a dual pastoral paradigm comprising charismatic and administrative officials prior to the establishment of the diaconate (Cairns, 1996; Johnston, 2006b). Cairns (1996) maintained the church offices divided into two distinct groups: spiritually gifted individuals (e.g., teachers) and the other administrative personnel who carried out governmental functions in the congregation. Despite these perspectives, compelling research supports the various viewpoints regarding the organized hierarchical structure of pastoral leadership.

Christian Roman Empire Age (101–500 CE)

Followers of Jesus in the Roman Empire faced Roman persecution that threatened their societal peace (New International Version, 2022, Romans 13; Peterson, 2000). Christians experienced heavy oppression and harsh treatment under the direction of the Roman emperor, Claudius Nero (Cairns, 1996; Peterson, 2000; Shelley, 2013). Accordingly, pastoral roles morphed into the crucial function of counselor, encourager, and, in some instances, the defending legal representative for oppressed church members (Clarke, 1992).

Another issue facing the church included internal theological disputes, specifically heretical teaching and continuous schism (Bray, 2016; Cairns, 1996). Cyprian of Carthage, an influential bishop with pagan roots, wrote the *De Unitate Catholicae Ecclesiae* (the Unification of the Universal Church) or translated *On the Unity of the Church,* according to McBrien and Attridge (1995). Cyprian created the work mentioned above to address false teaching and clarified the distinction between bishop and elder, underscoring that the bishop represented the leadership focal point and safe guarder of church unity (Bray, 2016; Cairns, 1996; McBrien & Attridge, 1995). Furthermore, Cyprian elevated the roles of pastors, perceiving that they possessed mystical powers, sacrificing Christ's body and blood through the Eucharist or communion (Cairns, 1996; McBrien & Attridge, 1995). One crucial inference drawn from Cyprian's view states that "it was becoming increasingly clear that it was the bishop's duty to protect and defend the church's faith" (Bray, 2016, p. 69).

The Rise of the Imperial Church

As the Roman Empire weakened between 284 and 500 CE, the Roman Emperor Diocletian undertook momentous tax system reforms to mitigate the decline, further attacking the Christian way of life (Peterson, 2000). Notwithstanding, when Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, the church came to power by uniting with the Roman Empire, which would imperialize the Christian faith (Madigan, 2015; Peterson, 2000; Shelley, 2013). Constantine granted religious acceptance throughout the Roman Empire by issuing the Edict of Milan, further underpinning the Christianization of the kingdom (Cairns, 1996; Peterson, 2000). Eventually, Constantine implemented social and political developments that validated pastoral leaders (Shelley, 2013), ultimately

restructuring the ecclesial offices (Gómez, 2019). As a result, the redistribution of pastoral leadership authority shaped a definitive church hierarchy of patriarchs, bishops, priests, and deacons (Gómez, 2019).

Bray (2016) and Cairns (1996) elucidated those pastoral leaders won the support of the Roman state and received arbitrating roles or legal supremacies at vital church councils. During the expansion of the early Christian church throughout the Roman Empire, it adopted a system of provincial organization in the establishment of parishes and the hierarchical structure of authority (Peterson, 2000; Shelley, 2013; Sullivan, 2001). Thus, the church in the West created a well-defined ecclesiastical organizational arrangement that exercised centralized influence (Shelley, 2013).

Middle Ages (501–1500 CE)

The medieval era brought significant changes to pastoral leaders of western Christianity. The papacy ascended to the most significant height of power chiefly because of the political and cultural instability in the West (Peterson, 2000). With the ecclesial reforms instituted by Pope Gregory III, the papacy emerged as the most influential spiritual and political office in Europe, overshadowing the secular leaders of the kingdom at times (Shelley, 2013). The act of excommunication, as noted by Shelley (2013), was a significant instrument used by the pope to assert political power, thereby barring individuals who opposed the church from engaging in sacred rites, *communicatio in sacris* (Vatican, n.d.).

The Liturgy and Sacraments. Another way that demonstrates the changed roles of pastors during the Middle Ages includes the development of the sacramental system (Bray, 2016; Cairns, 1996; Madigan, 2015). The medieval sacramental system did not

develop fully until the Middle Ages and surfaced among Christians in Western Europe (Bray, 2016). As Bray (2016) claimed, the word "sacrament" associates with the term "oath" found in ancient church literature dating back to 200 CE. Peterson (2000) said "a sacrament is a physical act that somehow leads to participation in the supernatural" (p. 40).

Additionally, a sacrament permits one to enter into God's presence, love, and power through the resurrection of Jesus (McBrien & Attridge, 1995). It allows one to experience God's unconditional love through a window of grace. Berkhof (1949), in his formative work, *Systematic Theology*, explained that *sacrament* signifies an outward sign or visible sign that expresses inward spiritual grace, faith and commitment to God. Madigan (2015) explained the pastor's religious duties served mainly as liturgical and sacramental in curing and caring for souls. These responsibilities included being available to offer communion, confession, counseling, marriage vows, catechesis (i.e., religious instruction), preaching, and, especially in smaller villages, praying over the families' crops, cattle, and harvests (Madigan, 2015; McBrien & Attridge, 1995). The Western Orthodox Christian tradition (i.e., the Roman Catholic rite) developed seven sacraments: Baptism, the Eucharist, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders (McBrien & Attridge, 1995). The formation of the sacraments in Christian Western orthodoxy came in response to widespread church growth, the Roman Empire's decline, and the lack of a well-educated clergy (Bray, 2016).

Under those circumstances, the church positioned pastors as the sacred intercessors between God and the ordinary parishioner (Bray, 2016; Peterson, 2000). The development of the Roman Catholic mass (*missa* in Latin) during the Middle Ages

depicted clergy as “specialists in rituals from which the laity hoped to benefit” (Madigan, 2015, p. 107). When the pastoral leader conducted the Eucharistic ceremony during the liturgy, congregants held the belief that the bread and wine would undergo transubstantiation, transforming into the physical presence of Christ’s body and blood, so becoming sanctified (Johnston, 2011; McBrien & Attridge, 1995). The church considered pastoral leaders the sole spiritual conduit between God and the congregation, beseeching for the people (Madigan, 2015). The laity further believed the pastoral leader had spiritual authority not available to the everyday Christian and the power to absolve sins or moral wrongdoings (Cairns, 1996; McBrien & Attridge, 1995; Peterson, 2000).

Charlemagne and Pastoral Roles. With the rise of Islam in the East, the Roman Empire had a forthcoming adversary, mainly since the centralized power in the kingdom resided in Constantinople (Cairns, 1996; Cohn-Sherbok, 2013). To reestablish and revive the power in the Western kingdom, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as the new Holy Roman Emperor (Cairns, 1996; Cohn-Sherbok, 2013; Madigan, 2015; Shelley, 2013). Charlemagne significantly contributed to the development of pastoral roles in the church. Well-documented evidence in the literature supports the concept of his aggressive reforms elevating the status of pastors and improving their educational and moral standards (Cairns, 1996; Cohn-Sherbok, 2013; Madigan, 2015; Peterson, 2000). Moreover, Madigan (2015) claimed Charlemagne strengthened ecclesiastical law, religious literacy, monastic life, and foreign missions. It is important to note the average pastor in the Middle Ages did not have basic literacy levels (Madigan, 2015) but was responsible for interpreting the Bible for the congregation.

The Crusades. The Christian crusades in the late Middle Ages signified religious and military campaigns against the Muslims in the East (Peterson, 2000). Pope Urban II granted spiritual incentives (i.e., indulgences) to motivate and inspire all Christians to take up arms to earn favor with God (Bauer, 2010; Bray, 2016; Madden, 2013; Peterson, 2000; Riley-Smith, 2003). The religious practice of indulgences impacted the laity and the clergy. Knowing highly affluent crusaders would seek any spiritual incentive for past wrongdoings, pastoral leaders focused on reforming the aristocratic knightly class. As a result, the configuration of the militant pastoral leader embodied in the Knights Templar or Crusaders developed (Holt, 2013). Crusaders (e.g., secular knights with religious vows) and pastors perceived the First Crusade as an armed pilgrimage, fulfilling various roles and duties on the battlefield to earn eternal rewards (Robeck, 2003).

Protestant Reformation (1501–1649 CE)

The Renaissance marked the end of the Middle Ages and spread across Europe between the 14th and 17th centuries (Campbell, 2019; Jerry, 2006). Europeans saw a profound impact from humanistic ideologies, critical reasoning, self-reflection, artistic expression, intellectual revival, and abstract conceptualization (Grendler, 2010; Jerry, 2006; Ozment, 2020; Stitzinger, 1995). The religious practices of the Western church were distrusted (Bray, 2016; Stitzinger, 1995) and opposed by pastoral thought leaders across Europe (Peterson, 2000). The turning point that steered widespread protest against the church included the corruption in the sacramental system, reaching its height with the promotion of indulgences. Bray (2016) concluded the Protestant Reformation took root due to influential pastoral leaders like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Huldrych Zwingli.

As Roman Catholic priests considered their vocation more sacred than the average Christian (Bray, 2016), angered theologians, like Luther, directly challenged the dogmatic teachings, spiritual authority, and practices of the Roman Catholic church. Ledbetter et al. (2016) claimed the Lutheran notion of leadership originated from the idea "of the priesthood of all believers . . . [who viewed] themselves less as overlords . . . and more as representatives of their [spiritual] communities" (p. 36). The roles of pastors transformed into religious campaigners, preserving particular biblical interpretations that benefitted their cause and denominational convictions (Hessel, 2015). As a result, the church experienced deep division over irreconcilable theological and doctrinal views (Dixon, 2016).

Post-Reformation Changes in the Pastorate. The Protestant Reformation made the clergy accessible and available to the typical churchgoer (Stenschke, 2015). Reformed pastors completely eradicated the monastic practice of mandated celibacy (Stenschke, 2015). The church pictured pastors as fathering children and providing financially for their families (Ozment, 2020; Stenschke, 2015; Willimon, 2002). Furthermore, parishioners expected pastors to prioritize preaching and teaching the Word of God rather than presiding over the traditional Roman Catholic liturgy (Bray, 2016; Willimon, 2002). Willimon (2002) explained the Reformation shifted the pastor's role from the nature of the church to the sole authority of the Bible (*sola scriptura*) and that the care of souls transitioned from *via poenitentiae* (communal penance) to spiritual individualism (Ozment, 2020).

The Advent of the Printing Press and Counter-Reformation. Translating the Latin Vulgate into different languages, like English, allowed ordinary people to read the

Bible for themselves, which became progressively common after the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1438 (Lemann-Haupt, 2020). With the development of the printing machine, pastors became effective preachers, teachers, and apologists (Pettegree, 2015). The printing press allowed Evangelical publicists to reach a broad audience to improve the Christian faith (Edwards, 2004; Peterson, 2000). Though a strong resistance formed, Roman Catholic pastoral roles also adapted.

To combat the rapid spread of theological claims associated with the reformation movement, Ignatius of Loyola, a prematurely retired military leader injured in battle (Peterson, 2000), formed a new monastic order called the Society of Jesus (i.e., the Jesuits) and built rigorous educations systems, missions, preaching centers, and spiritual retreats (O'Malley, 1982) to train priests to defend Catholic teachings (Bray, 2016; Noreen, 1998). Catholic pastoral leader roles represented the keepers of the Catholic faith and defenders of the Christian apostolic tradition.

Modern Period (1650–1959)

Pastoral roles in U.S. history have undertaken major shifts attributed to new theologies, denominational affiliations, cultural changes, and socio-political developments (Holifield, 2007). Rationalism and liberalism influenced the early American church during the modern period (Cairns, 1996). The colonists decided to separate the church and the affairs of the state based on these notions, resulting in the proliferation of Christian denominations (Cairns, 1996; Holifield, 2007). Shelley (2013) clarified each religious group wanted the freedom to declare its position, epitomized by the creation of the newly formed U.S. colonial governments.

The Great Awakening. The Great Awakening of the 1740s swept through the American colonies and served as a critical event that shaped the intellectual imagination of society (Richard, 1989). Moral transformation and personal conversion became the emphasis due to the overwhelming pluralistic tensions in society (Kidd, 2007). Movement leaders like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and Gilbert Tennent proved highly influential in the Great Awakening (Kidd, 2007; Peterson, 2000). Cohn-Sherbok (2013) claimed Edwards passed for a devout Calvinist and an emotionally charged preacher of the great revival. Holifield (2005) argued Jonathan Edwards advised ministers act like skillful physicians adapting their counsels for different spiritual cases.

The religious revival and theological thinking during the 18th century, furthermore, produced changes in the clergy (Leslie, 1983). Churches considered pastors in New England the moral teachers, scholars, authoritative preachers, counselors, denominational representatives, and providers of the sacraments (Holifield, 2005, 2007; Stout, 2011). Pastoral views, duties, and expectations differed by denomination (Rossel, 1970). Congregationalists preferred their pastors to be specialized and emphasize inner spiritual understanding, but Presbyterians wanted their pastors to evaluate doctrines and the public behaviors of churchgoers (Fraser, 1998; Holifield, 2005). Some of the pioneering theological work in the 18th century stemmed from the historical sermons written by Jonathan Edwards, articulating the roles of Congregationalist pastors from the pulpit (Holifield, 2007; Marsden, 2003).

To illustrate, on July 8, 1741, Jonathan Edwards delivered an influential sermon to his congregation in Enfield, Connecticut. The sermon titled *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (Marsden, 2003) presented the pastor as the expert interpreter of the soul from

the signs of faith (Holifield, 2005). In Edward's sermon, it became clear his role as a pastor included aggressive persuasion, almost from a position of fear, to "convert" the lost souls in the church to avoid eternal damnation. He stated:

> The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ. -- That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any thing to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up. (Edwards, 1741, para. 21)

The aforementioned excerpt from Jonathan Edward's homily signified a common sermon topic among 18th-century Calvinist preachers (Kidd, 2007). It exemplified some standards of pastoral duties like evangelizing the lost, teaching, reconciling, and evangelizing (Holifield, 2007).

The American Revolution. The Great Awakening or Age of Enlightenment created polarized changes in clergy and society (Baldwin, 1958; Steward, 2021), which emphasized the right to participate in politics, cast a vote, and attain greater freedom of thought and expression (Shelley, 2013; Smidt, 2004). The sociopolitical soil cultivated the revolutionary spirit in the U.S. colonies. Pastoral duties during the American Revolution transformed as "ministers [who] spoke for and against separation from England, served on local committees . . . helped organize state conventions, and served as delegates to provincial congresses" (Holifield, 2007, p. 100). U.S. clergy occupied

militant roles accompanying the resistance against the British by serving as regiment chaplains, state legislatures, and even as soldiers leading the Continental troops into significant battles (The Library of Congress, n.d.-b).

To illustrate the point, one notable pastor during the American Revolution, John Witherspoon, represented the only minister among 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence (Couvillon, 1996; Crawford & Olson, 2001). These have been imperative study topics in the literature for numerous years and articulated in many seminal works. Crowder (2017), Headley (1864), Holifield (2007), Fisher (2015), and Smidt (2016) expounded pastoral duties included participating in sociopolitical reform movements, fighting on the frontlines, caring for the sick, ministering to the wounded, and holding prayer services in the military camps.

As an exemplar, the reality of pastors carrying out fighting duties has been widely validated in the literature (Crowder, 2017; Headley, 1864; Steward, 2021). Headly (1864), a 19th-century historiographer, provided one biographical anecdote that best described the mutual fighting sentiment among some clergy. Rev. John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg of New Jersey understood the duty, responsibility, and scope of his role, as testified by Headley (1864) in 1774:

> He took leave of his people in a farewell sermon . . . and told them of the resolution he had taken to fight, and if need be, die for his country on the battle-field [at Bunker Hill]. It was a strange announcement from the pulpit, but there were few to criticize his abandonment of his profession, for he had breathed his own fervid spirit into his congregation . . . and said, “The Bible tells us there is a time for all things, and there is a time to preach, and a time to pray, but the time

> for me to preach has passed away"; then raising his voice, till it rung like the blast of a trumpet through the church, he exclaimed, "All there is a time to fight, and that time has now come." Closing the services he stepped into the vestry-room, and laying aside his gown, put on his colonel's uniform, and stood before his astonished congregation in full regimentals. (p. 123)

The existing body of literature on the subject indicates, to some degree, the prevalent claim that U.S. clergy actively participated in armed conflict against the British throughout the Revolutionary period (Frazer, 2018). However, not all American ministers during this time period aligned themselves with the patriot cause, resulting in divisions within pastoral responsibilities (Holifield, 2007).

U.S. Civil War. From the start of the 1860s, the issue of slavery not only divided politicians but also created dissensions between the largest Protestant denominations (Cairns, 1996; Holifield, 2007). The U.S. Civil War generally formed the position of ministers depending on their political fidelities and location. Ministers in the North typically argued for the complete abolition of slavery, whereas ministers in the South primarily defended slavery, each from a biblical standpoint (Holifield, 2007). From the northern view, pastors took up pulpits as lecturers to spiritualize the biblical stance on upholding the Union and eradicating the long-standing institution of slavery (Moorhead, 2000).

However, the south held a different perspective. Political and military involvement meant duty for these clergy, and supporting the Confederate cause became essential (Stout, 2008). A substantial portion of the sermons in the south included war-related teachings and taught southerners that their divine right included maintaining

slavery (Stout, 2008). Nevertheless, pastors in the Union and Confederacy both occupied vital chaplain roles in the army. Researchers confirmed the military commissioned over 3,600 ministers as army chaplains in the Union and Confederate platoons (Binsfield et al., 2008), dedicated to caring for soldiers on both sides of the war.

The 19th century in the United States witnessed a notable increase in urban growth, influenced by extensive economic advancements brought by the industrial revolution (The Library of Congress, n.d.-a). Alongside this growth, two noteworthy developments occurred within the clergy (Holifield, 2007). First, there was a process of professionalization within the pastorate, whereby the role of clergy members became more formalized and specialized. Second, there was a rise in the prominence of influential African American preachers, who emerged as significant figures in theological communities (Holifield, 2007). Throughout the 19th century, and not just in the United States, pastors served among the most respected societal roles and typically placed a high value on education (Holifield, 2007; Jacob, 2007; Naylor, 1977). The establishment of theological seminaries in the United States significantly enhanced the professional training of clergy members. Formalized education among pastors quickly became the conventional pattern for professional schooling (Naylor, 1977).

However, formalized schooling was not the case for all clergy, namely African American pastors. Before the Civil War, the role of African American pastors in Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches embraced a variety of issues, including activism, the absolution of slavery, educating fugitive classes, and taking charge of political and social movements (Mitchell, 2010; Richey et al., 2000; Swift, 1999). Though, after the war, African American pastors, primarily Methodists and Baptists,

migrated into all-Black denominations, “creating the largest religious secession Americans had ever seen” (Holifield, 2007, p. 148). African American preachers continued to seek full socio-political equality (Washington et al., 2004). They became the new leaders of their communities, establishing key social centers that bolstered economic and educational improvement for marginalized African Americans (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Harry Hosier, George Liele, and Noah Davie emerged as influential black preachers in the late 19th century, known as populist preachers, developing a homiletic style of oratory-based call and response (Albert, 2004; Holifield, 2007).

The Second World War. After the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States became engaged fully in World War II. Hitler and the Nazis, a German-fascist movement, committed mass atrocities and crimes against humanity (The Library of Congress, n.d.-c; Roland, 2010). Many Americans, both men and women, served the war cause in numerous capacities (The Library of Congress, n.d.-c). Furthermore, World War II impacted religious people, specifically the clergy (Abrams, 1948). Thousands of clergy, for instance, volunteered as military chaplains in different military branches and represented the courage and moral guardians of the frontlines (Dorsett, 2012; Holifield, 2007). However, chaplain roles changed during World War II, transitioning from non-combatant, war-related secular duties to training in prestigious chaplain schools nationwide as military counselors and pastoral psychologists (Holifield, 2005; Seddon et al., 2011).

After the war, the U.S. economy prospered in the late 1940s (Feldstein, 1982), revitalizing religion and society (Grant, 2014; Holifield, 2005). American parents of the baby-boom generation renewed their religious commitment (Hadden, 1969) and saw an

increased need for religious services, like pastoral counseling and education (Holifield, 2005, 2007). The increased demand for these religious skills expanded the roles of pastors to be organizational leaders and professional managers, overseeing increased church membership, construction projects, and campaigning efforts to solicit total financial giving (Hudnut-Beumler, 1994).

Holifield (2005) and Abrams (1948) argued pastoral roles in the United States after the war focused on party-political preaching, social involvement, and conceptualized pastoral care (Capps, 1984). Churchgoers perceived U.S. pastors as highly trained professionals, like medical doctors, scientists, and attorneys, esteemed by the U.S. public. A key development after the war was the additional professionalization of the U.S. clergy and the demand for a formal set of governing professional principles (Holifield, 2007; Niebuhr, 1956). Professional or licensed pastoral care and administrative duties quickly evolved in pastoral roles as the profession progressed (Holifield, 2007; Muravchik, 2011; Oates, 1978).

Postmodern Era (1960–Present)

During the 1960s and 1970s, U.S. Christians encountered cultural and societal changes, becoming more politically engaged with the public to reassert core Christian values (Smidt, 2016; Wald et al., 1988). The Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, and politically motivated assassinations created divisions among Christians, particularly pastors, about social and political views and issues of human injustice (Jenkins, 2018; McLeod, 2007; Morris, 1984). Public preaching and the pulpit represented the primary vehicles pastors used to exert their social and political influence (Djupe & Gilbert, 2003). As such, the roles of pastors encompassed a strange dichotomy of being peacekeepers

and political advocates amidst the turbulent sociopolitical atmospheres and advocating for partisan agendas (Jenkins, 2018; Smidt, 2016).

Pastors as Social Activists. In 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. led the march on Washington and delivered one of the most powerful public speeches called "*I Have a Dream*," which captured the imagination of whites and blacks during that time (Ravitch, 1990; Stanford University, n.d.-b). Dr. King stayed active politically during the 1960s and became an influential leader of the Civil Rights Movement (Crawford & Olson, 2001; Fairclough, 1995; Stanford University, n.d.-a). He impacted the influence of the American church in the creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Findlay, 1990). Moreover, in 1967, 60 African American pastors and other civil rights leaders from several southern states met in Atlanta, Georgia, to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which organized impactful, nonviolent protests against racial injustices and segregation (Cho, 2009). Consequently, the mid-1960s portrayed pastoral leaders as national and racial activists participating in political struggles and public issues.

Pastors as Political Representatives. A large body of research conducted during the 1960s placed considerable attention on the development of pastoral roles in American public life, examining how personal political orientations informed the theological context of pastors (Smidt, 2016). Evidence from some studies (Johnson, 1966, 1967) suggested a correlation between a pastor's political affiliation and the congregation's social theology. Johnson (1967) demonstrated a strong link between the congregation's political behavior and the pastor's political party affiliation. The findings in Johnson's study supported the hypothesis that liberal and neo-orthodox pastors proved more likely

to take a stand on certain public issues, like federal aid to education or racial segregation, than their conservative peers, which also impacted the views of the laity.

In another related study, Quinley (1974) offered a contrasting perspective. The study aimed to explore the extent to which the clergy's theological convictions influenced their political attitudes and ethical involvement. The investigation results corroborated pastors proved more politically liberal and ethically active on particular social issues than their parishioners. Furthermore, the literature generally accepts pastoral socio-political involvement as a crucial topic (Crawford & Olson, 2001; Djupe & Gilbert, 2003; Green et al., 1997), appealing to the deduction that a pastor's sociopolitical thinking influences the political behavior in their churches. Green et al. (1997) posited some pastors maintain communitarian or individualist social theologies. These views often influence them in choosing among various political goals, activities, personal lifestyle choices, and levels of commitment toward social justice issues (Holifield, 2007).

Women Pastors and Roles. Female pastoral roles have been an explored topic in recent decades, working toward advancing progressive social values and egalitarianism for marginalized groups based on race, social status, gender, and sexual orientation (Olson et al., 2005). These have been vital topics of academic study in the literature in recent decades, given the economic, cultural, and political contextual changes in American life (Smidt, 2016). To cite an example of the topic's significance, Smidt (2016) conducted a longitudinal study of seven Christian denominations in 1989, 2001, and 2009. Findings from the research revealed female clergy filled a unique ministry gap compared to their male counterparts. The research study concluded female clergy stood likelier to graduate from seminary and serve in smaller congregations. Regarding these

trends, the pastoral office has evolved into being the social and political voice of marginalized people groups and created opportunities for women to be influential community leaders.

Pastors as Executives. There has been an abundance of megachurches in the United States over the last 3 decades (Ellingson, 2009; James et al., 2014). These large churches draw at least 2,000 people for weekly worship services (Greenblatt & Powell, 2007). Extensive disagreement exists about the truthfulness of their message (Greenblatt & Powell, 2007; James et al., 2014; Washington et al., 2014) because megachurch pastors identify as busy, highly visible, entrepreneurial, and governmentally involved (DeGroat, 2020; Dyer, 2012; Thumma & Bird, 2015). Several authors have reviewed the religious legitimacy of megachurch leadership in the literature, arguing for many years that megachurch pastors are largely task oriented, acting as business leaders, city officials, or even governors rather than pastoral leaders (Hare, 1963; MacArthur, 2017; Thumma, 1996; Washington et al., 2014). Researchers have argued many reputable church leaders identify their roles as chief executive officers, primarily expanding their congregation's brand to attain notable popularity (Gauthier et al., 2016; MacArthur, 2017; Washington et al., 2014).

Other researchers have disagreed and have argued megachurch pastors provide essential, faith-based collaborative economic development activities in their communities (English, 2019; English & Dicke, 2020; Richardson et al., 2006). One critical study provided circumstantial evidence that megachurch pastors prove highly influential in generating significant funding for social programs that benefit the community (Richardson et al., 2006). Richardson et al., (2006) argued Bishop T.D. Jakes became

responsible for engaging many organizational volunteers and ministerial staff to produce more than $15 million in funding to support charitable ministries.

21st Century Pastoral Leadership Roles and Roots

This section provides the essential background to understand the lead pastor's role in the present-day church. Discussion includes general lead pastor and ministerial roles, followed by a literature review focusing on pastoral leadership in the AG. Then, the section concludes by revealing the current issues and challenges the denomination faces with minister attrition.

Pastoral Leadership in the Pentecostal Church

North American Pentecostal churches have grown out of "spontaneous revivals at the hands of individuals, often preachers and missionaries" (Vondey, 2012, p. 12) and exhibit a notable focus on the spiritual gifts and employ egalitarian leadership procedures (Vondey, 2012). Most Pentecostal churches are made up of different denominations but operate with a similar organizational structure comprised of lead pastors and ministerial staff (Whitehead, 2019).

Lead Pastors

Lead pastor roles became implanted in the historical constructs of Christian authority, mainly related to the denominations that developed over crucial historical periods (Blumhofer, 1993; Blumhofer, 1989; Holifield, 2005, 2007; Ledbetter et al., 2016; McBrien & Attridge, 1995). Ledbetter et al. (2016) argued current lead pastors from various denominations have similar yet different roles. For example, Benedictine abbots preserve their pastoral tradition as monastery leaders who establish services, handle pastoral care, and act as religious guides. Lutheran ministers act in the spirit of

reform by emphasizing the uniqueness of imagination, excellent preaching, and partnership with the ordinary churchgoer (Ledbetter et al., 2016). Likewise, the reformed understanding of leadership best represents Presbyterian ministers. Believers in the Presbyterian faith conviction expect pastors to be skilled communicators, emotionally intelligent, empowering subordinates, and vision casting (Ledbetter et al., 2016). Responsibilities of pastoral leaders in the Quaker practice include encouraging dialogue, managing conflict empathetically, leading as a servant, and promoting the concept of communal power (Ledbetter et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Ledbetter et al. (2016) explained Methodist ministers pull from their chronological roots to lead. John Wesley's theological teachings inspire Methodist ministers and hold them accountable for their commitment to social justice ministry, missionary efforts, and developing new preachers (Ledbetter et al., 2016). In comparison, church attenders expect Pentecostal pastoral leaders to trust the Spirit of God for governance and leadership direction (Blumhofer, 1993, 1989; Ledbetter et al., 2016). Leadership achievement grounds itself on how well the lead minister yields to the will of the Spirit, which remains the primary responsibility (Blumhofer, 1993, 1989; Ledbetter et al., 2016). Pentecostal pastoral duties involve preaching, pastoral counseling, advancing the gifts of the Spirit, education, and administration (Assemblies of God, 2022; General Council Position Paper, 2019).

Ministerial Staff

The ministerial staff typically includes the assistant or associate pastors and other supporting ministerial roles in the church. Comparable to lead pastors, the ministerial staff must support the lead pastor (Greenblatt & Powell, 2007). Though it remains

difficult to determine how ministerial staff roles developed over the centuries, the researcher will examine critical autobiographies, biographies, and accounts of influential pastoral assistants in the literature.

One significant illustration includes the work of John Wesley, a prominent pastoral theologian in the 1700s (Knight, 2018; McGee et al., 2012; Shelley, 2013). Shelley (2013) claimed Wesley employed assistant preachers and personal assistants as his responsibilities grew, though he did not grant them the right to administer the sacraments of the Anglican Church. Wesley's delineation of pastoral duties became the foundation of the Annual Conference and the genesis of the Methodist movement (Shelley, 2013). Spurgeon (2018), in his autobiography from 1856–1878, said his newly hired assistant pastor came to be responsible for preaching respite, helping with hospital visitations, attending to parishioner needs, and attending church conferences.

Holifield (2007) reviewed indispensable or formative advances in developing pastoral offices. He reported, by 1966, "a third of mainline congregations had multiple staff ministries . . . [including] an assistant pastor, a minister of music, and education director, a minister of counseling, a minister of evangelism, a minister of youth, and a church administrator" (Holifield, 2007, p. 239). Moberg (1984) presented an essential alternative piece of literature and described that the ministerial staff specialized in pastoral duties supervised by the lead pastor.

Pastoral Leadership in the Assemblies of God

In 1914, the AG emerged from extensive Pentecostal activities and systems to create core doctrine and pastoral credentials (McGee et al., 2012). The AG has more than 69 million members across the globe, making it the largest Pentecostal group in the world

(Assemblies of God, 2022). Currently, 12,000 churches and approximately 3 million followers in the United States associate with the AG (North Central University, 2022).

The Early Stages

The beginnings of the AG stem not only from the early North American revivalists and the healing movements of the 1800s, but also the depressing conditions of the era (Blumhofer, 1993; McGee et al., 2012). In the 17th and 18th centuries, John Wesley—the father of Methodism (Knight, 2018)—became an influential theologian who argued for a second experience after salvation called *sanctification* (Knight, 2018; McGee et al., 2012). Wesley believed, after the process of salvation, the Christian believer should aspire to a new spiritual dimension (Knight, 2018). Moreover, the holiness and healing movements in the mid-1800s emphasized the power of holy living, and theological ideas like the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, and instantaneous healing all contributed to the theological foundations of the AG (Blumhofer, 1989; McGee, 1986; McGee et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the somber economic circumstances prevalent in the United States throughout the 19th century, the aftermath of the U.S. Civil War, escalated instances of alcohol misuse, and the prevailing anticipation of Christ's imminent second coming all played a role in the formation and progression of the Assemblies of God denomination (Blumhofer, 1989; McGee, 1986; McGee et al., 2012; Rogers, 2019). The spiritualization of such events, the stress of passionate prayer, and extraordinary personal sacrifice contributed to the emergence of the Pentecostal movement (McGee et al., 2012; Rogers, 2019). The Great Depression also added to the evolution of the AG, but most other similar churches during the 1930s suffered hindrances (Rogers, 2019).

Characteristics of the Assemblies of God

The AG has distinctive characteristics in comparison to other Christian groups. AG churches do not have many consolidated ecclesial offices as the local church stands independent and self-directed (Constitution and Bylaws of the Assemblies of God, 2021; Hoge & Wenger, 2005). AG ministers have less prescribed training requirements to be ordained matched with other similar Christian traditions (Constitution and Bylaws of the Assemblies of God, 2021; Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2016; Hoge & Wenger, 2005). Hence, some scholars argued these considerations reduce leadership value and effectiveness (Brainard, 1996; Lifeway Research, 2015). One critical evidenced-based study concluded there is a significant statistical difference between formal education level and successfully managing organizational relationships (Lifeway Research, 2015). The findings indicated the higher the education level, the better the chances of success in managing extensive relationships (Lifeway Research, 2015). However, this study could suggest leadership methods to improve AG churches' leadership effectiveness.

Assemblies of God Regions and Networks

The AG comprises nine governing regions in the United States: South Central, Northeast, the Gulf, Southeast, Southwest, Great Lakes, North Central, Northwest, and the Language District-Networks (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020a). South Central remains the biggest AG region with active pastors, making up nearly 14% of all AG ministers in the United States (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020d). The roles and duties of lead pastors and ministerial staff within the AG exhibit areas of overlap, although also diverge regarding the decision-making framework. The

Constitution and Bylaws of the AG do not distinguish pastoral duties between lead pastors and the ministerial staff but rather provide ministry classifications, essential qualifications, education requirements, and the eligibility of women and ministers from other organizations (Constitution and Bylaws of the Assemblies of God, 2021). Other AG sources explain how lead pastors and the ministerial staff operate in the local church (General Council Position Paper, 2019; Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, 2020)

Assemblies of God Lead Pastors. The typical responsibilities of AG lead pastors involve leading the church, preaching, teaching, evangelizing, pastoral counseling, managing staff, and providing operational guidance (Assemblies of God, 2021a). Steinberg (1979) detailed that pastors in the AG experience divine selection by God, become anointed, and are the head of the local church "in delegating [all] ministerial leadership" (Steinberg, 1979, p. 3). Moreover, AG lead pastors answer to the congregation for leadership, church administration, the economic health of the organization, and the lead shepherd caring for the local church (Steinberg, 1979). Hamill (1979) advanced the topic and stated AG lead pastors represent the chief staff administrator and are utterly responsible for the church's success and effectively motivating the ministerial staff. Ultimately, the church board, contained of volunteers, assumes the responsibility of appointing the AG pastor, who thereafter undergoes a voting process by the congregation, necessitating a two-thirds majority for successful election (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2009).

Assemblies of God Ministerial Staff. AG ministerial staff in the United States help achieve the lead pastor's objectives and goals (General Council Position Paper,

2019). The ministerial staff also helps the lead pastor with preaching, religious instruction, and pastoral care. That being the case, the position of ministerial staff in the local AG church becomes demanding. Data from the Office of the Secretary-General confirm ministerial staff's challenging role and function. From 1987 to 2020, the AG pastorate faced the most substantial increase in pastoral terminations (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020c), linked to resignations and involuntary endings. The results in Table 1 show the ratio of pastoral additions to dissolutions in 2020 was 0.77, lower than the yearly average of 1.10, meaning the rate of ministers added does not keep pace with the terminated ministers, so for every minister leaving, 0.77 ministers backfill (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020c).

Table 1

Additions and Terminations of AG USA Ministers 2020

Year	Total ministers	Net change	Rate of % change	Ministers added	Ministers terminated	Ratio on additions to terminations
1987	30,538	-	-	-	-	-
1988	30,552	14	0	2,255	2,241	0.96
1989	30,471	-81	-0.3	2,059	2,140	0.96
1990	30,524	53	0.2	2,089	2,036	1.03
1991	30,746	222	0.7	2,162	1,940	1.11
1992	30,893	147	0.5	2,040	1,893	1.08
1993	31,057	164	0.5	2,034	1,870	1.09
1994	31,300	243	0.8	2,347	2,104	1.12
1995	31,752	452	1.4	2,472	2,020	1.22
1996	32,314	562	1.8	2,692	2,130	1.26
1997	32,367	53	0.2	2,414	2,361	1.02
1998	32,337	-30	-0.1	2,212	2,242	0.99
1999	32,304	-33	-0.1	2,110	2,143	0.98
2000	32,310	6	0.0	2,242	2,236	1.00
2001	32,374	64	0.2	2,290	2,226	1.03
2002	32,556	182	0.6	2,253	2,071	1.09
2003	32,372	-184	-0.6	2,272	2,096	1.08
2004	33,036	664	2.1	2,262	1,958	1.16

Year	Total ministers	Net change	Rate of % change	Ministers added	Ministers terminated	Ratio on additions to terminations
2005	33,553	517	1.6	2,448	1,931	1.27
2006	33,622	69	0.2	2,117	2,048	1.03
2007	33,871	249	0.7	2,487	2,237	1.11
2008	34,871	316	0.9	2,441	2,134	1.14
2009	34,504	317	0.9	2,537	2,211	1.15
2010	35,023	519	1.5	2,544	2,025	1.26
2011	35,483	460	1.3	2,450	1,990	1.23
2012	35,867	384	1.1	2,342	1,958	1.20
2013	35,434	-433	-1.2	2,530	1,963	1.29
2014	36,994	1,560	4.4	2,540	2,090	1.22
2015	37,068	74	0.2	2,336	2,152	1.09
2016	37,619	551	1.5	2,522	1,971	1.28
2017	38,002	383	1.0	2,555	2,172	1.18
2018	38,199	197	0.5	2,243	2,046	1.10
2019	38,197	-2	0.0	2,073	2,075	1.00
2020	37,713	-484	-1.3	1,640	2,124	0.77
Total	-	-	-	76,010	68.834	1.10

More concerning, the AG experienced the most sizeable decline in total U.S. ministers, down nearly 484 pastors between 2019 and 2020 (i.e., the year of the COVID-19 global pandemic; General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020c). The undesirable net changes were related to resigned and dismissed AG ministers (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020b). To provide a more precise analysis, the negative outcomes observed within the licensed ministers' group can be attributed to the pastoral terminations. This group predominantly consists of ministerial staff (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020b).

Assemblies of God Pastoral Leadership in the Northwest Region

The northwest region includes AG districts or networks operating in Washington, Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Additionally, the northwest region comprises 792 churches and 2,848 pastors (General Council of the Assemblies of God,

2020d), making it the smallest geography with active ministers, precisely 7.6%. The researcher computed these values by dividing the number of ministers from the regions by the total number of ministers (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020c). Comparing 2020 and 2019, 484 pastors ended their memberships across all AG geographic regions (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020b). The southwest geography indexed the highest for ministers departing offices, around 227, and the Language District-Networks indexed the next highest regarding terminated pastors, about 180.

The northwest region, though, experienced reverse developments. The northwest area indexed at 28, making it the AG region preserving the most pastors (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020d). The researcher completed the analysis of these figures from previously published records and documents, aggregating AG U.S. ministers by credential type, annual change, and region (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020d). Considering the previously mentioned information, the northwest region outperforms other AG regions in keeping their pastors, which has repercussions for the other AG regions (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020b, 2020d). Thus, determining the perceptions of AG lead pastors in the northwest region on the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation could provide other AG regions with much-needed leadership approaches and practices that will improve leadership effectiveness.

Gaps in Research

There remains an opportunity to complement the literature by exploring the perceptions of AG pastors in the Northwest on the impact of their leadership style on

ministerial staff motivation. The phenomenon has not been explored rigorously and clearly in the literature. The literature has lacked guidance about how pastoral leadership style affects ministerial staff motivation. The closest study found included data from Lee (2005), which was slightly dated. The quantitative analysis explored the relationship between the senior pastor's leadership style and associate pastor job satisfaction in Korea. Lee used TL as their underlying leadership theory and investigated the senior pastor's leadership influence on associate pastor job satisfaction, primarily in the Presbyterian, Baptist, Holiness, and Full Gospel churches. Lee's findings indicated TL was associated positively with associate pastor job satisfaction. In contrast, transactional and laissez-faire leadership connected negatively with associate pastor job satisfaction—nevertheless, no hypotheses linked to ministerial staff motivation and the AG.

Another related study examined leadership style and employee motivation in a church setting. The findings exposed a significant relationship between leadership style and employee motivation, directly impacting job performance (Tumbel, 2016). However, the findings undermined the study because it did not clarify the employee titles in the sample population. Tumbel's (2016) study lacked clarity on whether the findings incorporated ministerial staff in the sample selection. Furthermore, other comparative studies examined the association between pastoral leadership styles and congregational health and expansion (Burton, 2010; Calaway, 2015; Luckel, 2013). Burton (2010) and Luckel (2013) studied the leadership practices of pastors from various Christian denominations to determine if any approaches between the constructs would significantly relate to church growth. In contrast, the findings reported negative correlations and none of the leadership behaviors significantly predicted church population growth. Calaway

(2015) conducted a similar study in the AG, but results revealed church leadership style could limit growth and leadership development in the church.

Other researchers have investigated the correlation between leadership style and member commitment (Frisbie, 2016; Heinz, 2017). Frisbie (2016) researched how churches attract and retain young adults and discovered the leadership practices of pastors connected to drawing and keeping the young adult population in the church. Moreover, Heinz's (2017) findings proved comparable with those Frisbie discovered and showed a significant positive correlation between leadership styles, like servant leadership, and affective and continuance commitment. However, unlike Frisbie's research, the sample population did not include the young adult population in the church.

Another critical study exposed the link between ministerial leadership styles and eight quality measures: (a) empowering leadership, (b) gift-orientated ministry, (c) passionate spirituality, (d) functional structures, (e) inspiring works of service, (f) small holistic groups, (g) need-oriented evangelism, and (h) loving relationships (Rumley, 2011). Additionally, Rowold (2008) maintained the idea of positive effects on worshipers' satisfaction levels when the lead pastor applied a transformational leadership style. One more critical study found church members needed effective leadership to be committed to the church. Nevertheless, no specific leadership style proved more effective than others (Owusu, 2016).

The comparative literature, however, has not examined how lead pastors' leadership styles influence the enthusiasm and motivation of ministerial staff, specifically as it relates to achievement, camaraderie, and equity. The more recent literature tackles other issues about pastoral leadership. Wollschleger (2018) affirmed pastoral leadership

style served as a principal contributor to congregational liveliness and fruitfulness. Ward (2012) took a different approach and spiritualized the effectiveness of religious leadership styles. Ward claimed the teachings of Jesus engendered a requirement for the alignment of his conduct, attitudes, interpersonal competencies, and modes of communication. Also, LaMothe (2012) found efficient pastoral leadership methods link to the Bible and are adequate to lead church members in times of societal challenge. Lastly, Ernest Van and Mbengu (2013), along with Bonem and Patterson (2012), argued ministry leaders in the church should imitate spiritual leadership techniques to manage faith-based organizations effectively.

Important empirical studies investigate parallels between lead pastor leadership styles and organizational effectiveness (Fogarty, 2013; Rumley, 2011). However, findings in previous studies remain limited since they did not explore how lead pastors' leadership styles influence ministerial staff motivation. Fogarty (2013) argued transactional leadership predicted ministry volunteer extrinsic motivation, while transformational leadership projected intrinsic motivation. Rumley (2011) concluded transformational and transactional leadership relate to pastoral leadership effectiveness and intersect with church health and flourishing. However, neither of the research examined the influence of leadership style on the motivation of ministerial staff.

Correspondingly, a considerable body of literature on pastoral motivation focused primarily on vocational calling, pastoral roles, and personality types (Bonem, 2011; Carrell, 2013; DeGroat, 2020; Kuruvilla, 2015; MacArthur, 2017; Piper, 2013). Piper (2013) and MacArthur (2017) took a biblical stance and argued pastors ought to be motivated by role distinctiveness, gratitude, and personal suffering. Other scholars

maintained preaching represents one of the most honorable and fulfilling aspects of ministry, which motivates clergy (Kuruvilla, 2015; Lawson, 2013). However, Bonem (2011) investigated the topic from a contrasting lens and explained the advantages and disadvantages of merging secular leadership thinking in churches. Bonem maintained Christian leaders in the church, like secular organizations, should embrace, at times, the managerial side of their roles and strive to motivate their work teams by fostering organizational commitment through collaborative decision making. Bonem (2011) composed the following:

> Ultimately, leadership in Christian organizations is about getting a group of people to discern a God-given direction and commit their lives to accomplish this purpose . . . [and bring] an energy, passion, and excitement that cannot be generated . . . [and this] commitment happens most readily when people feel that their voices have been heard and reflected in the decision-making process. (pp. 6, 153)

Moreover, a small body of literature has investigated pastoral narcissistic behaviors and provided these ministers with the needed resources and tools to change their behavioral habits (Lee, 2022; Puls, 2020a, 2020b). DeGroat (2020) explained some pastors gain motivation from their charismatic disposition and ambitions, rooted in narcissism. Based on the research, “instances of narcissism among pastors are much more common . . . [and] ministry leaders and churches today are obsessively preoccupied with their reputation, influence, success, rightness, progressiveness, relevance, platform, affirmation, and power” (DeGroat, 2020, p. 7). Again, consistent with the other studies

above, these empirical studies have not thoroughly investigated the impact of leadership style on ministerial staff motivation regarding achievement, camaraderie, and equity.

Conclusion

This chapter identified the theoretical framework for the study, which addressed the interconnection between TL and the three-factor model of human motivation, describing the influence of leadership style on staff motivation. Then, a literature survey of the development of leadership in the Christian faith was presented. The review included an exhaustive analysis of past secular and sacred events influencing the development of pastoral leadership roles. Next, the AG denomination and pastoral trends were highlighted. Afterward, the chapter concluded with a summary of the literature gaps and the necessity to inquire into lead pastor perceptions on the influence of their leadership approach on ministerial staff motivation.

Given the rising occurrence of ministerial resignations in the AG, an essential need exists to understand and explore the impact of pastoral leadership style on it. Further research becomes necessary in the realm of pastoral leadership and the motivation of ministerial staff, as the existing literature fails to explore the impact of pastoral leadership styles on ministerial staff motivation sufficiently (Adams et al., 2017; Barna Group, 2017; Visker et al., 2017). The available data stand incomplete, and no preceding study has concentrated on exploring how pastoral leadership style affects ministerial staff motivation, especially in the AG. Furthermore, the accessibility of previous studies proves insufficient, and it remains undetermined whether previous studies have focused on how pastoral leadership styles influence the motivation of ministerial staff. As such,

this research is essential and provides the opportunity to examine a new and relatively unexplored area of research, which may inform the larger body of literature.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter describes the research methodology employed in this study. Schwandt (2015) explained methodology includes the theory of inquiry, process, and validity. In addition, this section details the methods used to conduct this qualitative phenomenological study. As such, the following areas are presented: (a) the research design, (b) population and sample, (c) instruments applied to collect the data, (d) validation of the instruments, (e) methods taken to safeguard the confidentiality of participants, (f) data-collection procedures and analysis, and (g) the limitations. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the lived experiences of lead pastors in the northwest region of the Assemblies of God (AG) regarding the effect of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. By exploring the perceptions of lead pastors, this study delivers insight into what leadership styles lead pastors found most effective in motivating their ministerial staff.

Research Questions

Three overarching research questions guided this study to explore which leadership styles or approaches proved most effective in motivating ministerial staff:

1. What leadership styles or approaches do AG lead pastors perceive most helpful in motivating ministerial staff?

2. What leadership styles or approaches do AG lead pastors perceive to be least helpful in motivating ministerial staff?
3. In what ways do AG lead pastors perceive their leadership style influences employee motivation among the ministerial staff?

Research Design

Creswell and Creswell (2013) explained the "research design means the plan for conducting a study" (p. 49). The research procedure included (a) characteristics and philosophical assumptions, (b) research methodology, (c) role of the researcher, (d) data collection procedures, (e) data analysis steps, and (f) strategies for ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). The research design anticipated ethical issues, expected outcomes, discussion, significance and contribution, limitations, recommendations, and conclusions (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research "is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) clarified "qualitative research is more concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants' perspective . . . [and] seeks to take into account subjectivity in data analysis and interpretation" (p. 12). Also, qualitative designs serve as representational because they occur in real-world settings due to the researcher interviewing participants with open-ended questions in their natural environment (Patton, 2014). The qualitative study design appeared more appropriate than other approaches because it sought to inquire about the lived experiences of lead pastors

in the northwest region of the AG regarding the effect of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation.

Qualitative researchers collect data procedurally by interviewing, observing, and gathering other data related to the study participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). Babbie (2016) argued "qualitative data analysis is the nonnumerical assessment of observations made through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and other qualitative research techniques" (p. 381). Therefore, the suitability of the qualitative research method for this study became apparent because of the emphasis on learning the meaning of the lived experiences of participants regarding the problem or issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). The study involved conducting interviews with lead pastors affiliated with the AG denomination in the northwest region of the United States. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of their personal experiences and the significance they attributed to various phenomena.

Phenomenological Methodology

There are five qualitative approaches to inquiry: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2014). To illuminate the phenomenon, the researcher adopted a phenomenological design. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) elucidated that the "aim of phenomenology is for the researcher to transform lived experience into a description of its 'essence' allowing for reflection and analysis" (p. 24). Moustakas (1994), influenced by Husserl's *transcendental phenomenology*, argued phenomenology attempts to eliminate prejudices and

presuppositions by reaching a transcendental state of openness to understand the natural world.

The current study defined leadership style and motivation of ministerial staff as phenomena. The incidence of the phenomena became exposed using the phenomenological inquiry to identify "the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants in a study" (Creswell, 2014, p. 245). The phenomenological method helped comprehend the perceptions and lived experiences of AG lead pastors on the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Moustakas (1994) suggested perception is the primary source of information, which is inviolable. As such, the current study examined the phenomena among AG pastors in the northwest of the United States.

Population

A population describes a group, most likely individuals, "about whom . . . [researchers] want to draw conclusions" (Babbie, 2016, p. 116). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) clarified a population is primarily "based on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, location, grade level, position, and time of year" (p. 129). The population for this qualitative phenomenological study included AG lead pastors in the northwest region of the United States, comprising the Northwest Ministry Network, Oregon Ministry Network, Alaska Ministry Network, Montana Ministry Network, Wyoming Ministry Network, and the Southern Idaho Ministry Network. The population included male and female lead pastors who were licensed or ordained with the AG and actively engaged in church pastoral ministry.

According to the latest data released by the AG General Secretary's Office, approximately 792 churches and 2,868 pastors operate in the northwest region of the United States. Seventy-nine percent of AG churches in the northwest region operate in the Northwest, Oregon, and Wyoming ministry networks (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 2020a). In the northwest region, there are 89% ordained AG pastors.

Sample

Approval was received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Northwest University in Kirkland, Washington, to interview a sample of AG lead pastors who met the study criteria. Participants were selected using the criterion sampling approach (Creswell & Poth, 2016; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2014). Patton (2014) and Creswell and Poth (2016) maintained criterion sampling stems from predetermined criteria established by the researcher.

Therefore, the researcher developed criteria to identify study participants to improve the chances of a quality sample population. Participants who exhibited meaningful experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Polkinghorne, 1989) and met the current AG pastoral leadership proficiencies and standards were selected. The study participant criteria included model lead pastors selected by the researcher based on demonstrating Criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and at least four of the remaining criteria (e.g., 6–10):

1. Participant held a license or ordination with the AG at the time of this study.
2. Participant had a minimum of 5 years of ministry experience as a lead pastor.
3. Participant ranged in age from 35–60 years old.
4. Participant served as the lead pastor of a council-affiliated church (e.g., the Deacon Board governs the church).

5. Participant supervised at least three ministerial staff.
6. Participant received AG coaching within the last 5 years.
7. Participant was a Certified AG Coach (AGC); Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3.
8. Participant displayed evidence of other leadership training through the AG Network (e.g., conferences, workshops).
9. Participant demonstrated a transformational leadership (TL) approach (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015) grounded in the following four key dimensions and characteristics of TL leaders. District officials from the AG used the TL four dimensions and characteristics of TL leaders to locate prospective research participants in their district networks: (a) *idealized influence:* the lead pastor cultivated camaraderie through idealized influence by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015); (b) *inspirational motivation:* the lead pastor inspired followers to take calculated risks and achieve extraordinary results to accomplish greatness (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015); (c) *intellectual stimulation:* the lead pastor developed followers' skill sets and abilities that help them attain higher levels of motivation and self-efficacy successfully (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015); and (d) *individualized consideration:* the lead pastor acted as a coach,

considering all individuals to create an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment where ideas matter, trust abounds, and voices are heard (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

10. Participant had been recognized by peers in one or more of the following ways: (a) the lead pastor had been formally recognized with leadership awards from the district network or other organizations; (b) they were currently serving or has served as a presbyter in their respective network; (c) they had other formal recognition that denoted leadership excellence (e.g., promotions, committee opportunities, positive feedback); (d) or they were a member of any professional or pastoral leadership organization involving leadership quality and aptitude.

Compared to quantitative research, qualitative inquiry usually produces smaller sample sizes, allowing the researcher to obtain data-rich information central to the significance of the study (Patton, 2014). Polkinghorne (1989) and Dworkin (2012) proposed qualitative researchers collect interview data from 5–30 participants in phenomenological studies. Yet, other researchers suggested stopping data collection when themes become saturated, or no new information revealed original properties despite the number of participants (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2014). For this qualitative study, the researcher conducted interviews with participants and stopped data collection when categorical themes revealed no new information. The researcher employed the data process suggested by (Bazeley, 2021) to arrive at the aforesaid process, called data saturation.

Participant Selection Criteria

The study required participants to meet certain criteria to increase the likelihood of a robust sample population. The researcher based the chosen criteria on the current AG pastoral leadership competencies and standards. As such, the study participant criteria included 16 model lead pastors who AG district officials recommended based on demonstrating the criteria depicted in Table 2.

Table 2

AG Northwest Lead Pastor Criteria by Participant

	Participant															
Criteria	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
1. Licensed or ordained minister with the AG	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Has a minimum of 5 years experience as a lead pastor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3. Between 35–60 years of age	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4. Pastor of council affiliated church	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5. Supervises at least three ministerial staff	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6. Received AG coaching with last 3 years	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7. Certified coach (AGC); Level 1–3			X	X												
8. Evidence of other leadership training through the AG	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9. Evidence of transformational leadership approach	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10. Recognition by peers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Participants

Because the goal of the study centered on exploring the perceptions of lead pastors regarding how their leadership style influences ministerial staff motivation, the researcher solicited input from seven AG district officials or denominational leaders who had experience and the network capability to help identify prospective lead pastors who exhibited TL characteristics. The district officials or denominational leaders from the AG used the four dimensions and characteristics of TL leaders (i.e., idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration) provided in the researcher's Selection Criteria Checklist (see Appendix A) to locate prospective research participants in their district networks.

Upon receiving the list of potential research participants from AG's district representatives, the researcher conducted a comprehensive follow-up procedure with each participant. This process aimed to ascertain and confirm the presence of the four dimensions associated with transformational leadership. Consequently, the researcher contacted approximately 50 potential participants identified by the AG district officials and met the research criteria. Half of the potential participants responded to the research invitation, but only 17 participants scheduled interviews. Of the 17 participants, 15 were White/European, one was Hispanic Latino/origin, and one was Black/African American. Regrettably, a potential participant, who voluntarily identified as Black/African American, withdrew from the planned interview because of unforeseen circumstances.

Instrumentation

In qualitative studies, the role of the researcher during in-depth interviews functions as the instrument (i.e., the human interviewer; Seidman, 2006). Moreover, other

influential researchers have stated the human researcher represents the instrument of examination and brings their experience, background, training, skills, interpersonal competence, etc., to the study (Patton, 2014; Yin, 2011). Creswell (2014) also affirmed:

> Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. They may use a protocol—an instrument for collecting data—but the researchers are the ones who actually gather the information. They do not tend to use or rely on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers. (p. 185)

In accordance with the aforementioned description, the researcher gathered data from several sources, encompassing interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2011).

The researcher interviewed 16 lead pastors from a representative sample, indicative of all AG networks in the northwest region of the United States. A representative AG district official or leader recommended each lead pastor based on the selection criteria (see Appendix A). Every interview followed a semistructured format, consisted of 10 open-ended interview questions, and lasted approximately 1 hour. An interview protocol (see Appendix B) guided the interviews. All interviews included audio recording online using the Zoom software platform and transcribed in Otter.ai. Finally, the data were stored, organized, and analyzed in NVivo. NVivo functions as an established, password-protected qualitative software tool for researchers (Hilal & Alabri, 2013) to use for coding, organizing, archiving, and protecting data.

About the Researcher

Creswell (2014) and Moustakas (1994) explained phenomenological researchers operate within diverse philosophical worldviews that frame and impact how researchers interpret meaning. The phenomenological paradigm emphasizes subjectivity and the intentionality of consciousness (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher brought their philosophical assumptions to the study associated with the social constructivist paradigm. Creswell (2014) asserted:

> Social constructionists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experience—meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied. (p. 8)

The researcher acknowledged the study contained certain ontological and philosophical presumptions. The study employed a distinct worldview that diverged from participants' perspectives of reality. Study participants consisted of full-time lead pastors affiliated with the AG denomination. Nevertheless, the researcher has professional expertise in marketing within the food and beverage sector, whereas their practical involvement in vocational ministry was quite restricted. Hence, it is plausible the researcher's perception and comprehension of the significance and ranking of staff motivation varied.

Additionally, relevant life experiences that promoted the research remained present. The researcher's initial vocational ministry experience appeared undesirable

compared to previous life experiences. Due to past negative experiences, there became interest in learning more about helpful leadership styles and practices. The researcher attempted a personal bracketing strategy to mitigate personal bias. Moustakas (1994) explained the researcher brackets their prejudices in a way that "everything else is set aside so that the entire research process is rooted solely on the topic and question" (p. 82). As a matter of course, the researcher implemented various strategies to maximize the information's reliability, validity, and accuracy. Creswell and Poth (2016) stated additional approaches for validation in qualitative research, such as collaboration with study representatives and participants as well as clarifying researcher bias, were strategies the researcher implemented.

Interview Protocol

The researcher interviewed a representative sample of participants using a predetermined interview protocol (see Appendix B), including open-ended questions (Creswell, 2014). Open-ended questions exist in qualitative research "to build upon and explore . . . participants' responses . . . [and] to have the participant reconstruct his or her experience within the topic of study" (Seidman, 2006, p. 15). Each participant was asked 10 open-ended questions in separate interview settings. The researcher crafted intentional questions to help explore and investigate the research topic in greater depth.

Participant responses were video recorded using Zoom, uploaded to Otter.ai for transcription, and then uploaded to NVivo to store, organize, and analyze the data. Zoom entails a virtual communications platform that enables users to connect securely via video, audio, or telephone (Zoom Support, 2022c). Otter.ai is a web-based, password-protected software program allowing users to transcribe and edit conversations, importing

audio and downloading (Otter.ai, 2022b). All interview data were video recorded in Zoom and stored on Zoom's Video Cloud Recording Storage. Hence, no files or transcripts became perpetually stored on the researcher's personal computer. The researcher represented the only one with access to the username and password for the Zoom Video Cloud Recording Storage.

Other Qualitative Documents

The researcher employed administrative strategies before the interviews to affirm the willingness of each participant to volunteer. The researcher prepared and distributed a set of documents containing participant materials to each eligible participant using DocuSign, provided they satisfied the study criteria and expressed their willingness to take part. The participant packet included the Letter of Invitation (see Appendix C), the Demographics Worksheet (see Appendix D), and the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix E). The consent forms were sent electronically to participants via DocuSign. DocuSign refers to a reliable, cloud-based electronic signature and document software service that supports transactions with document sharing and electronic signature.

DocuSign provides a digital verification trail with a certificate of completion, which provides nonrepudiation for all forms and documents created and undersigned through the software (DocuSign, 2023). Once the researcher retrieved the signed consent forms electronically, he signed them using DocuSign and stored them in his email inbox under a DocuSign folder. The storage email inbox connected to the researcher's cloud-based NU 365 Microsoft OneDrive, had password-protection, and required two-factor authentication (2FA). Only the researcher accessed the storage email inbox from their home computer. The computer entailed a Mac Desktop safely stored in the researcher's

home office, locked by a key, and password protected. All files and forms with the original signatures associated with the research project remained securely stored on the researcher's NU 365 Microsoft OneDrive. The home computer was exclusively accessible to the researcher, who maintained it within a secure home office environment. The computer's security measures included password protection and 2FA. The researcher completed these procedures before interviewing the study participants.

Field Testing

The researcher employed a pilot test of two AG pastors in the northwest region to enhance the credibility of the instrument and resolve whether adequate data presented itself during the interviews. The pilot test assisted the researcher in refining the interview approach by incorporating more consistent participant briefing strategies. Pioneering work on the benefits of field testing has been examined and discoursed earlier by Sampson (2004), Yin (2009), and Creswell and Creswell (2013). Influential researchers have ascertained pilot testing in qualitative studies refines the research instruments and other processes associated with observer bias, data integrity, research procedures, and data collection methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1989; Sampson, 2004; Yin, 2009, 2011). Moreover, Bazeley (2021) suggested qualitative researchers benefit from pilot testing, verifying the effective use of research protocols with the people who will eventually become the research focus.

Interview Protocol Field Test

Before the field test interviews, the researcher emailed the packet of documents mentioned above to the field test participants via DocuSign. Once the researcher emailed the field test participants with the documents and received the signed forms back via

DocuSign, the researcher scheduled the interviews. Field test participants who met the study criteria had their video recorded during the interviews using Zoom technology (see Appendix E).

In this study, the field tests impacted the quality and useability of the interview protocol used by the researcher. The researcher utilized participant briefing and debriefing procedures as a mental script to use in combination with the interview protocol on the day of the test interview. Consequently, the researcher included these tactics in the final study approach to increase transparency and interview efficacy.

Reliability and Validity

Rigorous qualitative research methodologies include strategies for ensuring the study's reliability, validity, trustworthiness, and credibility (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Patton, 2014). According to Patton (2014), the credibility and legitimacy of qualitative inquiry remain heightened when measures are taken to minimize investigator bias, such as maintaining neutrality, and employing systematic data collection processes. External audit procedures, meticulous research, multiple data sources, and triangulation illustrate strategies to enhance the study's credibility and trustworthiness (Patton, 2014; Yin, 2011). Accordingly, the researcher comprehended the importance of bringing rigor and credibility to this qualitative study and included these strategies in the research design.

To enhance the validity of this qualitative inquiry, particular qualitative tactics were employed. These strategies encompassed research procedures that have been validated and standardized, as outlined by Creswell (2014) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010). First, the researcher used mechanically recorded information to

compile accurate records (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Then, the researcher recorded verbatim interview accounts of phrases in participants' language to ensure accuracy (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). After this, the member-checking strategy enhanced and adjusted the instruments based on the test participants' feedback. Following the aforementioned processes allowed for triangulation of the data sources to help establish themes in the data to build coherent justification (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2014). Yin (2011) supported that member checking is the "procedure whereby . . . [the] draft materials are shared with the study's participants . . . to correct or otherwise improve the accuracy of the study, at the same time reinforcing collaborative and ethical relationships" (p. 310).

Data Collection

The study included a detailed data collection procedure containing effective research instruments, field testing, participant interviews, and other qualitative documents to support the study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) and Creswell (2014) argued data collection methods contain measurement techniques, extensive interviews, in-depth observations, and analyzing documents. The researcher emailed and distributed a prepared, informed consent and other documents to each participant before the interviews (Seidman, 2006). The consent form included the three overarching ethical principles listed in the Belmont Report: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1978). Once the researcher received the consent forms from each study participant, the researcher scheduled the interviews.

Sequence of Activities

First, the study gained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and the IRB granted permission to start collecting data. Then, the AG district representatives were contacted by phone (see Appendix F). A Selection Criteria Checklist was sent (see Appendix A) to the AG district representative via electronic transmission through DocuSign to assist in recommending prospective study participants (see Appendix G). Next, the researcher received a list of recommended names for potential participants (see Appendix A). After this, the researcher electronically transmitted the field test participants the research documents for the study via DocuSign (see Appendices C, D, and E). Then, the researcher scheduled and conducted the one-on-one interviews with the field test participants.

Following this, the researcher proceeded to electronically transmit the project materials to study participants using DocuSign (see Appendices C, D, and E). Subsequently, the researcher arranged individual interviews with study participants. Then, the researcher sent participants a secure Zoom link email with the planned interview day and time. Each interview followed the same structure the day of the meeting and the researcher: (a) welcomed, (b) debriefed the purpose of the study, (c) verbally reviewed the consent form (see Appendix E), (d) followed the interview protocol for all interviews (see Appendix B), (e) video recorded the interview using Zoom, and (f) closed the interview with a debrief of what happens next with the data, and then thanked the participant.

Next, the researcher conducted a systematic analysis. First, the researcher downloaded the audio files from the Zoom Cloud. Then, the researcher uploaded the

audio files to Otter.ai for transcription and then entered, stored, and organized them in NVivo which were subsequently analyzed to create a thematic analysis. The researcher completed the following steps: (a) familiarization; (b) coding; as well as (c) generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and summarizing the results.

Participant Recruitment Strategies

The researcher recruited participants through the Northwest Ministry Network, Oregon Ministry Network, Alaska Ministry Network, Montana Ministry Network, Wyoming Ministry Network, and the Southern Idaho Ministry Network. The researcher partnered with AG district officials as third parties to help gain "access to potential participants" (Seidman, 2006, p. 46). The researcher contacted the respective AG district representatives by phone (Seidman, 2006). During this call, the researcher briefly introduced himself, discussed the research project's purpose, and determined if the AG representative's interest in helping gain access to potential participants (see Appendix F). If so, the researcher sent a Selection Criteria Checklist (see Appendix A) to the AG district representative via electronic transmission through DocuSign to assist in recommending prospective study participants. Appendix G provides the email template.

Upon receiving contact information from the AG district representative via Appendix A by electronic transmission using DocuSign, initial communication was established with each participant via email (see Appendix H). The study commenced with a concise introduction, followed by a description of the researcher's participant recruitment method, and concluded with a statement of the study's objective (Seidman, 2006). The researcher emailed interested participants the research documents for the study via DocuSign (see Appendices C, D, and E). Once the researcher received the

signed documents from each participant via DocuSign, the researcher scheduled the interviews.

Interview Data Collection Procedure

First, the researcher electronically transmitted the packet to participants using DocuSign, including Appendices C, D, and E. Then, the researcher used Zoom technology to video record participant interviews. Zoom's security features protected all data collected during the interview. For example, before the interview began, the participant received a secure Zoom meeting ID requiring a meeting passcode (Zoom, 2022a). Another security protocol implemented before the meeting included using a virtual waiting room to authorize participation (Zoom Support, 2022a). Once Zoom verified, authorized, and accepted the participant from the virtual waiting room, the meeting host employed in-meeting security options to lock the meeting from outside disruptions (Zoom Support, 2022b). Finally, the researcher recorded and stored all data in Zoom, protected on Zoom's Video Cloud Recording Storage, and password-protected (Zoom, 2022b). The researcher implemented security features by enabling Zoom's Video Cloud Recording and audio transcripts, which both had encryptions (Zoom, 2022b).

The researcher downloaded the audio files from Zoom to a personal home computer, which is a securely maintained Mac desktop computer safeguarded by a physical lock and password authentication. The audio files were then uploaded from the Mac desktop to the virtual Northwest University (NU) 365 Microsoft OneDrive and then permanently deleted from the Mac desktop. The NU Microsoft 365 OneDrive represents a password-protected storage drive on the cloud and occasionally requires 2FA to gain access. After this step, the researcher uploaded the audio files to Otter.ai for transcription

from the NU Microsoft 365 OneDrive. All interview transcriptions took place in Otter.ai, which represents a cloud-based transcription software application that is safe and password-protected. All transcript files remained encrypted and stored on Otter's Cloud Storage (Otter.ai, 2022a). Subsequently transcribing the interviews, the researcher uploaded the files into NVivo, which also has password protection, to create a thematic analysis (Babbie, 2016; Bazeley, 2021). Upon saturation showing, the researcher finished interviewing and collecting data.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological inquiry approaches research from a subjective perspective and seeks to describe the universal meaning for individuals based on their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). There remain two main approaches to phenomenology, hermeneutical and transcendental phenomenology (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). The hermeneutical method of inquiry focuses on interpreting the "lived experiences" or "texts of life." In contrast, the transcendental approach draws less on the researcher's interpretations of those lived experiences and orients toward the descriptions of the experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Interview Data Analysis Procedure

The researcher based the data analysis strategy on the hermeneutic methodology. Smith et al. (2009) clarified that phenomenological hermeneutics refers to a data analysis technique that attempts to provide its author's original intention and meaning. The researcher applied the hermeneutical phenomenological approach to interpret the interview transcripts. The hermeneutical methodology means the researcher attempts to

"put themselves in the author's place, to reveal what the author themselves may not have fully understood" (Bazeley, 2021, p. 313). Hermeneutic interpretation assisted the researcher with understanding the narrated experiences of participants and ascribed meaning (Bazeley, 2021). Alvesson and Sköldberg (2017) posited hermeneutic interpretation "proceeds from the notion of a coherence of meaning" to comprehend the underlying meaning (p. 153).

In this manner, the researcher interpreted participants' shared and lived experiences using the phenomenological hermeneutic strategy (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2009). Data analysis helps qualitative researchers analyze data effectively by coding, annotating text, and exploring associated themes (Babbie, 2016; Bazeley, 2021). A code structure from the information gathered classifies thoughts and interprets the text in its environment (Bazeley, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

Coding the Research Data

The researcher coded data in NVivo, a well-regarded, password-protected qualitative software tool for researchers (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). The coding for the research project was completed confidentially and organized safely in NVivo. All media files and transcripts coded and produced in NVivo had encryption while in storage (NVivo, 2021). The researcher employed the following coding procedures to ensure the protection of participants' rights:

1. All coding sources remained intact in NVivo. The researcher did not copy or view the interview excerpts or quotes outside the password-protected software (Bazeley, 2021).

2. Information about the source of a quote always remained confidential and pointed back to a pseudonym (Bazeley, 2021).
3. Changes to the source(s) became immediately reflected in the coded text segments (Bazeley, 2021).
4. A coded segment appeared together with similar coded materials; all kept confidential in NVivo (Bazeley, 2021).
5. The researcher coded passages with multiple codes (if necessary), and any queries created from these codes remained private in NVivo (Bazeley, 2021).

Furthermore, the study followed a phenomenological coding approach for the data collected in NVivo, including personal bracketing, highlighting meaningful statements, meaning units, textual descriptions, and structural descriptions (Bazeley, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 2012). The researcher generated a variety of codes based on chosen excerpts to construct structural descriptions that aligned with the investigator's research goals and interview protocol. Then, the researcher organized codes to form emergent themes based on the data collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

After this step, the researcher used phenomenological data analysis techniques, transforming participants' shared experiences into interpretive analysis (Bazeley, 2021; Smith et al., 2009). Next, the researcher coded the data and segmented it into statements or *natural meaning units* (Smith et al., 2009) and *clusters of meaning*, turning joint statements into themes (Bazeley, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 2012). Once several themes emerged from the interview transcripts, the researcher used the procedural data step of *horizontalization* to highlight essential statements and quotes that provided comprehension of how participants experienced the phenomenon. Creswell and Creswell

(2013) stated *horizontalization* describes the process whereby the researcher goes through the interview transcripts to highlight important statements and quotes that "provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (p. 82).

Lastly, information collected about participants remained stored on multiple cloud servers, including the researcher's NU 365 Microsoft OneDrive, DocuSign's cloud server connected to OneDrive, Zoom's Video Cloud Recording Storage, Otter's Cloud Storage, and NVivo, which holds password-protection and requires 2FA. Participant information included demographic forms, interview transcripts, and other materials connected to the study. Only the researcher reviewed these research records and protected the secrecy (i.e., confidentiality) of these records.

Limitations

Effective qualitative research designs factor criticisms related to the inquiry that diminish credibility (Patton, 2014). Creswell and Creswell (2013) affirmed "study limitations stem from two main areas: the chosen methodology and the study population" (p. 366). The research study stayed limited to the AG in the northwest region of the United States without much consideration for the remaining AG regions. The absence of a bigger sample size in this research study represents a notable and discernible limitation, making it difficult to generalize. However, it is important to note "sample size in qualitative research generally follows the guidelines to study few individuals or sites, but to [also] collect extensive detail about the individuals or site studies" (Creswell & Creswell, 2013, p. 301).

Another study limitation included using the qualitative research method to produce meaningful insights about the research gap investigated. The study remained

limited to gathering and evaluating data controlled in the AG northwest region, and no comparative studies became available to contrast future findings and conclusions. A significant drawback or limitation of this research included its restriction to the AG denomination and, therefore, did not allow for greater exploration of the issue. These study limitations help strengthen future research as investigators consider other methods.

Another study disadvantage was the lack of participant diversity—the volunteers primarily identified as white Europeans/Americans. However, the research population was representative of the investigated geographical population (Deloitte, 2020). Furthermore, the researcher attempted to work with district officials to recruit participants who were not white males. Still, for unforeseen reasons, those participants were not available to participate in the research study.

Summary

To summarize, this chapter discussed the purpose of the study, research questions, and a synopsis of the research methodology. The researcher outlined the study design, population, sample, instrumentation, data-collection procedures, and data-analysis approaches. Many summarized processes depend upon recognized methods by previous seminal works and studies—moreover, the researcher considered important limitations and techniques to enhance the reliability and credibility of the study. Chapter 4 presents the data and the findings for this inquiry, and Chapter 5 ascertains the key findings, researcher conclusions, implications, and future research recommendations.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Overview

This qualitative phenomenological study described the lived experiences of lead pastors in the northwest region of the Assemblies of God (AG) regarding the effect of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. The most effective way to gather rich data on the lived experiences of exemplary AG lead pastors from the selected population necessitated implementing a qualitative phenomenological design method. This chapter starts with the purpose statement, overarching research questions guiding the study, a review of the research methodology, and an examination of the data collection and analysis procedures. As a final point, this chapter presents the data, meaningful findings, and a summary of the results.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the lived experiences of lead pastors in the northwest region of the AG regarding the effect of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. By exploring the perceptions of lead pastors, this study delivers insight into what leadership styles lead pastors found most effective in motivating their ministerial staff.

Research Questions

Three overarching research questions guided this study to explore which leadership styles or approaches proved most effective in motivating ministerial staff:

1. What leadership styles or approaches do AG lead pastors perceive most helpful in motivating ministerial staff?

2. What leadership styles or approaches do AG lead pastors perceive to be least helpful in motivating ministerial staff?
3. In what ways do AG lead pastors perceive their leadership style influences employee motivation among the ministerial staff?

Research Method and Data Collection Procedures

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological method to describe the lived experiences of lead pastors in the northwest region of the AG regarding the effect of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation (Creswell, 2014). The suitability of employing the qualitative research methodology for this study became apparent due to the exploration of participants' subjective interpretations of their lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). Interview questions were developed to examine multiple cases and align the study with the overarching research questions. The interview questions underwent a pilot testing phase, during which the researcher administered to two AG head pastors who satisfied the predetermined selection criteria. Data obtained from the pilot-test interviews were not included in the study findings.

The researcher carried out 16 virtual interviews of AG lead pastors in the northwest region who met the selection criteria. An interview protocol was employed with preexisting questions to ensure consistency between the interviews. Every participant involved in the study provided their informed consent by completing a form that outlined the purpose and procedures of the research. Additionally, the researcher gave participants the task of filling out a questionnaire that consisted of several inquiries and cues aimed at gathering demographic data. Findings from each participant contributed to the entire study. To ensure participants' views remained accurately

documented, each interview was video recorded, and each participant was given a pseudonym for identification purposes regarding data collection and analysis.

Population

The population for this qualitative phenomenological study included AG lead pastors in the northwest region of the United States, comprising the Northwest Ministry Network, Oregon Ministry Network, Alaska Ministry Network, Montana Ministry Network, Wyoming Ministry Network, and the Southern Idaho Ministry Network. The population included male and female lead pastors licensed or ordained with the AG and actively engaged in church pastoral ministry.

Sample

The researcher identified criteria to participate in this study to improve the chances of a robust sample population. The chosen criteria represented participants who displayed meaningful experiences of the phenomenon in the study (Polkinghorne, 1989) and the current AG pastoral leadership proficiencies and standards. The sample included model lead pastors exhibiting Criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and at least four of the remaining criteria (e.g., 6–10):

1. Participant held a license or ordination with the AG at the time of this study.
2. Participant had a minimum of 5 years of ministry experience as a lead pastor.
3. Participant ranged in age from 35–60 years old.
4. Participant served as the lead pastor of a council-affiliated church (e.g., the Deacon Board governs the church).
5. Participant supervised at least three ministerial staff.
6. Participant received AG Coaching within the last 5 years.

7. Participant was a Certified AG Coach (AGC); Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3.
8. Participant displayed evidence of other leadership training through the AG Network (e.g., conferences, workshops).
9. Participant demonstrated a transformational leadership (TL) approach (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015) grounded in the following four key dimensions and characteristics of TL leaders. District officials from the AG used the TL four dimensions and characteristics of TL leaders to locate prospective research participants in their district networks: (a) *idealized influence:* the lead pastor cultivated camaraderie through idealized influence by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015); (b) *inspirational motivation:* the lead pastor inspired followers to take calculated risks and achieve extraordinary results to accomplish greatness (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015); (c) *intellectual stimulation:* the lead pastor developed followers' skillsets and abilities that help them successfully attain higher levels of motivation as well as self-efficacy (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015); and (d) *individualized consideration:* the lead pastor acted as a coach, considering all individuals to create an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment where ideas matter, trust abounds, and voices are heard (Avolio,

1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

10. Participant had been recognized by peers in one or more of the following ways: (a) the lead pastor had been formally recognized with leadership awards from the district network or other organizations; (b) they were currently serving or has served as a presbyter in their respective network; (c) they had other formal recognition that denoted leadership excellence (e.g., promotions, committee opportunities, positive feedback); and (d) or they a member of any professional or pastoral leadership organization involving leadership quality and aptitude.

The pool of participants who satisfied the predetermined criteria for the study and willingly opted to partake in the interviews demonstrated a typical distribution across the demographic characteristics of the Pacific Northwest region. The subsequent section provides a comprehensive analysis of the demographic information pertaining to participants.

Demographic Data

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews using Zoom for this qualitative phenomenological study. The researcher recruited study participants who met the study criteria (see Appendix A) to participate in the study. Lead pastors from the northwest region of the AG participated in 16 interviews conducted by the researcher. Figure 1 depicts the geographical positions of the individuals included in the research. Areas characterized by a darker shade of blue indicate higher levels of participant representation. Participants from the Alaska Ministry Network, Southern Idaho Ministry

Network, and the Wyoming Ministry Network did not meet the study criteria and were not selected for interviewing.

Figure 1

Geographic Representation of Sample Population

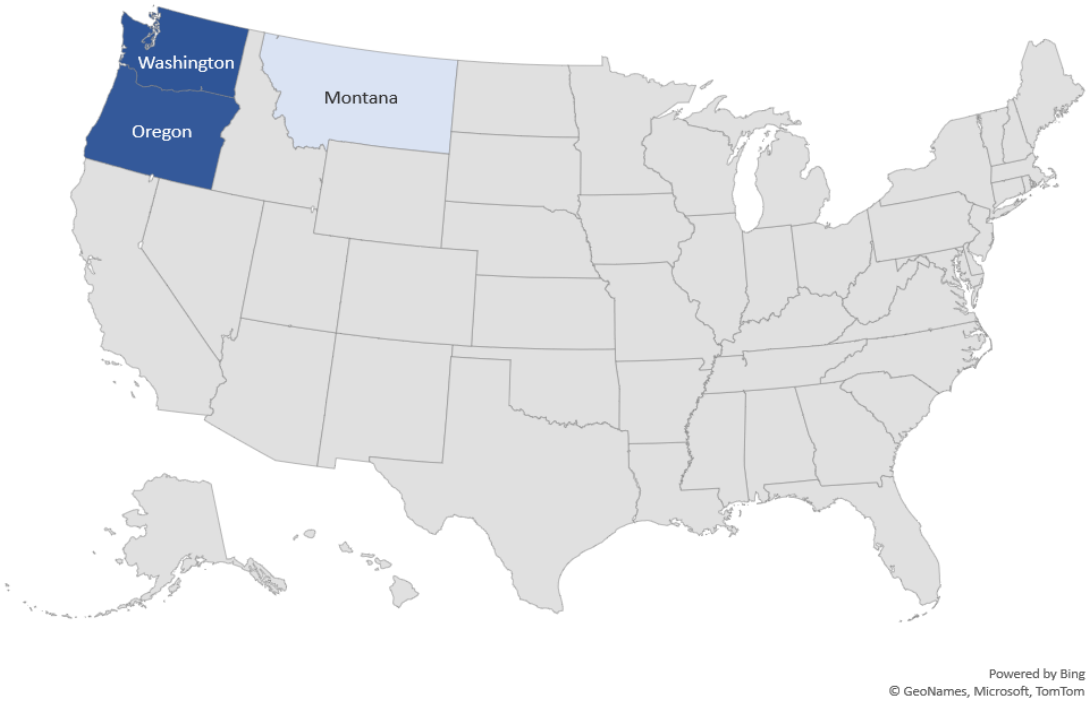

Table 3 provides a demographic summary of the research participants at the time of the study, including race/ethnicity, age, AG credential level, AG ministry network, staff supervised, years of experience as a lead pastor, and accountability to the board of deacons. The age range of participants encompassed individuals between the ages of 35 and 60. Apart from a single person, all others self-identified as White/European American. Participant P identified as Hispanic/Latino origin. The researcher used pseudonyms ranging from A to P to protect the anonymity of each participant (Seidman,

2006). The study did not divulge the participants' genders to safeguard the identity of each participant.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Participant	Race or ethnicity	Age	AG credential level	AG ministry network	Staff supervised	Years experience as lead pastor	Accountable of board or deacons
Participant A	W	47–52	Ordained	Northwest	3+	11+	Yes
Participant B	W	41–46	Ordained	Northwest	11+	3+	Yes
Participant C	W	47–52	Ordained	Northwest	6+	3+	Yes
Participant D	W	59–60	Ordained	Oregon	11+	11+	Yes
Participant E	W	53–58	Ordained	Oregon	11+	11+	Yes
Participant F	W	47–52	Ordained	Northwest	11+	11+	Yes
Participant G	W	53–58	Ordained	Montana	6+	11+	Yes
Participant H	W	35–40	Ordained	Oregon	3+	11+	Yes
Participant I	W	59–60	Ordained	Oregon	11+	11+	Yes
Participant J	W	41–46	Ordained	Oregon	3+	11+	Yes
Participant K	W	47–52	Ordained	Montana	11+	11+	Yes
Participant L	W	35–40	Ordained	Montana	6+	6+	Yes
Participant M	W	47–52	Ordained	Oregon	6+	11+	Yes
Participant N	W	41–46	Ordained	Oregon	3+	3+	Yes
Participant O	W	53–58	Ordained	Oregon	11+	11+	Yes
Participant P	H	35–40	Ordained	Northwest	3+	6+	Yes

Table 4 presents a detailed breakdown of participants' demographic data. The following is a breakdown of participant demographics within the study population. The disclosure of pertinent details on each participant validates the research's adherence to the established selection criteria.

Table 4

Participant Demographic Breakdown

Demographic category	Demographics	*n*	%
Race/ethnicity	Hispanic Latino/origin	1	6.25
	White/European American	15	93.75
	Black/African American	0	0
	Asian	0	0
	American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0
	Aboriginal	0	0
	Other, specify	0	0
Age	35–40	3	18.75
	41–46	3	18.75
	47–52	5	31.25
	53–58	3	18.75
	59–60	2	12.50
AG ministry network/region	Alaska	0	0
	Montana	3	18.75
	Northwest (Washington)	5	31.25
	Oregon	8	50.00
	Southern Idaho	0	0
	Wyoming	0	0
Year of experience as lead pastor	3–5	3	18.75
	6–10	2	12.50
	11 or more	11	68.75
AG credential level	Licensed	0	0
	Ordained	16	100
Ministerial staff supervised	3–5	5	31.25
	6–10	4	25.00
	11 or more	7	43.75
Accountable to board of deacons	Yes	16	100
	No	0	0

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Interview responses were analyzed in NVivo, and the hermeneutic analytical approach was employed in the coding process to identify commonly used words, similar phrases, and quotes (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Next, a thematic analysis was conducted as a methodological approach to discern and document recurring patterns within the data. The process of thematic analysis enabled the discernment of overarching themes that recurred consistently among participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Subsequently, codes were analyzed and organized into coherent categories, referred to as themes. As mentioned previously, the data analysis involved an extensive method of converting the qualitative data (i.e., content) obtained from interviews into a quantitative format (Boyatzis, 1998; Wilkinson, 2000).

The researcher quantified the number of responses within each category (i.e., theme) and then summarized the percentages of responses for each theme, creating the frequency of occurrence for each theme (Blaxter, 1983; Lowery et al., 1993; Wilkinson, 2000). The results were afterward shown in a tabular format (Wilkinson, 2000). Seminal studies have highlighted instances demonstrating the significance of converting qualitative theme data into quantitative analysis to facilitate a more comprehensive interpretation of underlying meanings (Boyatzis, 1998; Jang & Barnett, 1994; Ryan & Bernard, 2000; Schnegg & Bernard, 1996). Therefore, the present study's environment justified using participant frequency to identify meaningful themes. This methodology offered the researcher a versatile and reliable method to determine the predominance of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

Table 5 does not attempt to gauge significance, discrepancies, or correlations, but rather reports the frequency with which each theme occurred. Instead, Table 5 displays the scoring guide and frequency classification used during the analysis.

Table 5

Scoring Range for Analysis

Scoring range	Frequency threshold
75%–100%	Very frequent
50%–74%	Frequent
26%–49%	Moderately frequent
1%–25%	Infrequent

The researcher determined a scoring range for the above analysis based on the study's criteria, the researcher's experience, the need for consistent interpretation, and the necessity of providing clarity to the intended audience. Highly meaningful themes were those that obtained scores ranging from 75%–100% (e.g., *Very Frequent*) in terms of participant frequency. Furthermore, the researcher identified themes that scored between 50%–74% (e.g., *Frequent*) as meaningful. As such, six meaningful themes emerged from the interview responses: (a) Developing and Investing in People, (b) Downward Empowerment and Ownership, (c) Authoritarian and Perfectionist Approach, (d) Teamwork, (e) Psychological Safety, and (f) Treating People Fairly. These six themes (i.e., categories), shown in Table 6, illustrate the shared experiences that lead pastors perceive to influence ministerial staff motivation.

Table 6

Emerging Themes of the Shared Experiences of Lead Pastors

Theme	Name	Number of participants	Code count	% of participants frequency
Research Question 1		16	367	100
Theme 1	Develop and Invest in People	16	66	100
Theme 2	Downward Empowerment and Ownership	8	22	50
Research Question 2		15	48	93.75
Theme 3	Authoritarian and Perfectionist Approach	9	18	56.25
Research Question 3		16	280	100
Theme 4	Teamwork	16	48	100
Theme 5	Psychological Safety	12	25	75
Theme 6	Treating People Fairly	12	20	75

Note. Total code count = 695

Theme 1, Develop and Invest in People, revealed a participant frequency of 100.00% and fell in the *Very Frequent* range. The researcher did not include any targeted inquiries regarding leadership development. Yet, Theme 1 unexpectedly emerged as the most significant theme of Research Question 1 (RQ1), which focused on the leadership styles or approaches that AG lead pastors found most effective in motivating their ministerial staff. For instance, every participant discussed matters related to the leadership development of the ministerial staff during the interviews, which holds meaning. Theme 2, Downward Empowerment and Ownership, revealed a participant frequency of 50% and fell in the *Frequent* range. The theme of Downward Empowerment and Ownership was atypical in nature due to its emphasis on relinquishing power, which was understood as distinct from the biblical concept of discipleship.

Theme 3, the Authoritarian and Perfectionist Approach, displayed a participant frequency of 56.25% and fell in the *Frequent* range. The authoritarian and perfectionist theme had an unforeseen result, given the unique organizational position of the lead pastor as the key decision maker. Theme 3 exhibited the highest percentage of participant responses among the other themes in Research Question 2 (RQ2), which contemplated the leadership styles or approaches AG lead pastors perceive as least helpful in motivating ministerial staff.

Theme 4, Teamwork, was the most meaningful theme linked to Research Question 3 (RQ3), which factored the ways AG lead pastors perceive their leadership style influenced employee motivation among the ministerial staff. Theme 4 presented a participant frequency of 100% and fell in the *Very Frequent* range. All participants discussed teamwork-related matters during the interviews as a perceived meaningful approach to foster ministerial staff motivation. Theme 4 was relevant due to its connection with the conceptual framework of the study and its perceived adoption by participants from aspects of business. Similarly, Theme 5, Psychological Safety, was found to have a participant frequency of 75%, indicating a high occurrence. This theme aligned with the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. Seventy-five percent of participants discussed the importance of psychological safety among the ministerial staff during the interviews, making it the most dominant theme in RQ3 behind Theme 4, Teamwork.

Theme 6, Treating People Fairly, exhibited a participant frequency of 75% and fell in the *Very Frequent* range. Treating people fairly as a theme proved interesting because every participant perceived a relationship between ministerial staff motivation

and organizational equity, which implied the importance of power distribution among human resources.

The data analysis process resulted in six meaningful themes, and the frequency of themes reflected the importance of the connection between the lead pastor's leadership style and ministerial staff motivation. Table 7 displays a detailed account of the frequency of emerging themes by participant at the time of the study.

Table 7

Emerging Themes

Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Code frequency
Totals	43	31	81	55	45	28	61	49	19	38	51	59	33	36	27	39	695
Research Question 1	23	18	46				30	29	9	22	25	30	13	17	13	20	367
Theme 1: Develop and invest in people	1	2	8	7	5	5	2	6	1	4	2	8	1	6	4	4	66
Theme 2: Downward Empowerment and Ownership	3	-	4	4	1	-	-	-	-	5	3	1	-	-	1	-	22
Research Question 2	4	1	4	7	0	1	4	4	1	3	5	6	2	2	3	1	48
Theme 3: Authoritarian and Perfectionist Approach	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	3	6	2	1	1		18
Research Question 3	16	12	31	18	23	7	27	16	9	13	21	23	18	17	11	18	280
Theme 4: Teamwork	1	2	4				3	1	-	4	3	9	4	2	2	2	48
Theme 5: Psychological Safety	2	2	4	1	3	1	3	1	-	1	1	4	-	-	-	2	25
Theme 6: Treating People Fairly	-	1	1	2	2	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	2	4	3	20

Note. Numbers in the table denote the number of times each participant spoke about the individual theme.

RQ1

Participants believed building a highly developed ministerial staff to help people become enthusiastic and motivated was meaningful. Interview questions were purposely crafted to reveal the shared realities of participants, addressing RQ1: What leadership styles or approaches do AG lead pastors perceive most helpful in motivating ministerial staff? As a result, two overarching themes surfaced: Developing and Investing in People and Downward Empowerment and Ownership.

Theme 1: Developing and Investing in People

The theme of Developing and Investing in People emerged as the most prevalent factor in lead pastors' perceptions of how their leadership style influences the motivation of ministerial staff within this category. All participants referenced the prioritization of developing and investing in ministerial staff. Developing and investing in people as a theme represented a meaningful percentage of the coded material as a perceived necessary leadership approach to motivate ministerial staff (see Table 8). The theme produced the most frequencies in its category and was referenced 66 times among participants as a perceived pastoral leadership approach influencing ministerial staff motivation. Participants recognized developing and providing training opportunities for ministerial staff was a key motivating factor. Some participants displayed positive gestures, like lifting their eyebrows or looking up, when discussing the prominence of developing and training the ministerial staff. A few participants expressed their thoughts instantaneously with purposeful responses.

Table 8

Theme 1: Developing and Investing in People

Theme	Name	Number of participants	Code count	% of participants frequency
Theme 1	Develop and Invest in People	16	66	100

Several participants observed the advantageous effects of training and offering opportunities to ministerial staff to enhance their motivation and support organizational objectives. In some AG church organizations, lead pastors afford developmental training opportunities to their ministerial staff throughout the year based on their passion for their job. Certain lead pastors within other AG church organizations provide training opportunities according to their professional and educational qualifications. Participant B explained the joy experienced in developing people in their ministerial staff, saying:

> One thing that I love the most is the joy in the journey of developing people [the ministerial staff]. Specifically, when you see the light bulb come on with their faith and following Jesus and the journey of discipleship; those are the things that encourage me from a pastoral lens.

From Participant B's response, developing people (i.e., the ministerial staff) and "seeing them grow," demonstrated their passionate joy and a perceived approach used to motivate the ministerial staff. Participant C provided a detailed explanation on the use of their educational background to augment the growth of their ministerial staff by means of ongoing leadership training. Participant C explained:

> My doctorate is in educational leadership. I take quite a bit of time to do leadership development with my team every week as a group. I'm giving them

> three main nuggets from the last leadership book that I read. I'm giving them the nuggets, and they're taking notes, and then I'm giving them an action step. Their action step is to put one of those leadership lessons into action and I will follow up with them on our next one-on-one to see how that worked for them. So weekly, they're getting some type of leadership content.

Because Participant C had a formal education background in educational leadership, they proved more mindful of offering their ministerial "leadership lessons" that could be implemented. Participant C acknowledged the provision of weekly leadership content, implemented within their ministry departments, served as a source of motivation for the ministerial staff.

The aforementioned participant impressions are not limited solely to lead pastors who possess a strong enthusiasm for their roles or remain influenced by their professional or formal education. Some participants drew more on a mentoring and systematic approach, discussing the importance of developing and investing in people to motivate. Within particular church organizations, the lead pastor establishes a rapport with their ministerial staff and formulates a customized leadership development plan, or curriculum, specifically designed for each member based on their talents. Participant F said:

> One thing that I've tried to do is have a concept of where the people I lead are at; the goal isn't that they can become my number two, but how do you raise that young leader to do greater things, to do more than what you did? There's a different way to mentor and develop if the goal is for them to do more, not to be your assistant. I hope that motivates them and I also hope it passes on where they have that same philosophy with the people that they lead. It's one of the things we

> have, a couple of systems that we teach developmentally, the apprenticeship and then a discipleship-making pathway. We teach those two systems. As people [the ministerial staff] learn them, they grow and people like to feel like they are growing.

Participant F communicated that the primary goal of leadership development included releasing the ministerial staff "to do more than what . . . [they] . . . did." Participant F perceived developing the ministerial staff to go beyond the scope of a lead pastor role served as motivation. Participant H discussed developing and investing in their ministerial staff by unleashing their passions and pastoral gifting. Participant H shared:

> Another way you can keep people [the ministerial staff] is if they have a gift and desire to grow. If it's speaking, finding ways to help them do that. The challenge with it is that everyone comes in at different levels [regarding preaching skills]. Some of my staff I've had come up and preach, it's great, and then I want to develop them and get them better. Then for some, we've given it a try, but they're not ready yet. I'm trying to find different venues for them to grow if that's what they really feel passionate about speaking.

Participant H viewed finding "different venues" for the ministerial staff to practice their public speaking and preaching skills motivated the ministerial staff to grow. Participant N articulated leadership development involves "finding, building, and giving" the ministerial staff a chance to grow. Participant N said:

> My favorite thing about leadership has really been finding, building, and giving people a chance. Then, working to develop them [the ministerial staff] and

> watching them use their gifts that the Lord has given them, as well as apply the things they've learned and maybe the light bulb goes on for them.

Participant P described providing resources and training materials to the ministerial staff as very beneficial. Participant P said:

> I think one is investing in them [the ministerial staff]. Know what ways we can invest in them and provide any resources and training that they need to enter new seasons with knowledge and understanding of the times. That is one of the things that I feel has been good, just making sure that we've provided them the resources or training or sending them off, or we see something that will be beneficial for them.

Another crucial observation that emerged among participants about the development and motivation of ministerial staff was the significance of providing accessible opportunities to pursue formal education in collaboration with the church. Participant L explained their church organization prioritized the growth and investment of their ministerial staff through the provision of an opportunity to obtain formal education in the field of ministry. Participant L clarified:

> It's [the ministry training school] very grassroots. We call it our training school. We use the curriculum from Global University. We are underneath an umbrella of one of their study groups. The only requirement [teaching at the school] is that you've already gone through all of the programs, which I and all of our pastors have.

Participants identified as J, G, N, and P provided their opinions on the importance of establishing pathways for participating in formal education through joint initiatives

involving the church. Study participants recognized the need to implement organizational methods and allocate resources to support ongoing ministerial education, leading to a discernible enhancement in motivation.

Theme 2: Downward Empowerment and Ownership

Another meaningful theme that surfaced and linked to RQ1 includes Downward Empowerment and Ownership regarding a leadership approach motivating ministerial staff. Participants A, C, D, E, J, K, L, and O referenced downward empowerment and ownership as a theme, representing a substantial percentage of the coded material as a perceived essential leadership stance motivating ministerial staff.

Half of participants provided responses related to constructs related to downward empowerment and ownership (see Table 9). Participants said downward empowerment and allowing ownership within their organizations were vital factors motivating their ministerial staff. Participants perceived their ministerial staff desired the opportunity to have the autonomy to make decisions over their ministry departments. Many participants exhibited enthusiastic and confident responses when deliberating the shared meaning of providing their ministerial staff opportunities to make decisions impacting their ministry responsibilities.

Table 9

Theme 2: Downward Empowerment and Ownership

Theme	Name	Number of participants	Code count	% of participants frequency
Theme 2	Downward Empowerment and Ownership	8	22	50

Fifty percent of the participants expressed their thoughts regarding the relationship between a leadership style characterized by downward empowerment and facilitating ownership and the motivation of ministerial staff. Interview findings indicated the ministerial staff exhibits motivation stemming from a sense of empowerment and ownership, facilitated by delegating decision-making authority and learning from past errors. Participant A discussed the motivational relevance of allowing high-level ministerial staff the freedom to make organizational decisions and take ownership. Participant A said:

> High-level leaders [the ministerial staff] want to have a lot of room to express their ideas, to run with their ideas. I think that's a big part of it, providing space and freedom to them, for them to lead and make mistakes.

Participant A perceived allowing the ministerial staff the freedom to incorporate their ideas and learn from their mistakes supports ministerial staff motivation. Per the accounts of Participants A, G, J, K, L, and M, it is evident within certain church cultures, the promotion of church environments that view mistakes as valuable learning opportunities serves as a motivating factor for the ministerial staff.

However, Participants B and F expressed their thoughts regarding downward empowerment, ownership, and decision making while acknowledging the presence of generational tensions within their respective church organizations. For instance, Participant F said "People [referring to Millennials] buy into what they give voice to." Participant F also discussed their opinions about how younger generations desire the freedom to make organizational decisions without the appropriate experience or understanding of the church's past. Participant F encountered challenges reconciling the

concept of downward empowerment, which involves delegating decision-making authority as a means of motivation, with the existing organizational structures within the church.

However, participants made other statements that indicated they could facilitate downward empowerment options for ministerial staff through the implementation of shared preaching. Certain participants dedicated their time to designing, arranging, and planning for prominent ministerial staff members to deliver teachings from the pulpit, intending to foster inspiration. Participant D discussed how sharing the pulpit on Sundays promoted downward empowerment and ownership. Participant D said:

> One of the things I do that is quite different is I share the teaching. We use a team. I use my pastors to speak on Sundays. [I preach about two thirds of the time or a third of the time, and I will cover those]. This year, it might be 33 weeks [for me]. I do give them a lot of opportunities. It's not just about Sundays, but other opportunities when we have a speaking context where they can jump in.

Implementing downward empowerment and ownership in church leadership also necessitates a degree of emphasis on shared accountability. Ministerial staff have a sense of inspiration and motivation when decision-making authority aligns with the corresponding level of responsibility. Participant E explained, "They're going to know what they are responsible for. I don't ever want to give responsibility without giving the authority to make decisions." Participant J similarly disclosed:

> One of the things I think that my style [leadership style] is good and bad, I would say, is that I put a lot of trust in people, and I can delegate a lot of responsibility to people and trust them to get it done. But if there's a problem, I do come in. But

> that's the good part, that I feel like we empower a lot of people [the ministerial staff] to be able to walk in their ministries and their callings.

Lead pastors skillfully navigate the balance of empowering subordinates while maintaining effective decision-making processes and allocating shared duties, ultimately resulting in positive outcomes for the church. The transfer of duty warrants placing trust in the occupational calling of ministerial staff as a necessary means of motivation. Participant O conversed on the topic pertaining to downward empowerment and ownership. Participant O said:

> [The ministerial staff] have the freedom to be able to have the vision over their own personal ministry emphasis. I didn't hire them to puppet or pastor through them. I hired them to be congruent with the vision, first and foremost, and know what that vision is solidly, but then to pastor their way with their DNA, with their passions, and with their personalities. People [the congregation] connect to personalities. I'm the one that's visible in the pulpit on Sunday mornings, but there's other personalities that other people are going to connect with easier or better than mine. That's very profound. We allow our staff to be able to minister their way.

Certain participants exhibited commonalities in their responses regarding the notions of downward empowerment and church policy. The prevailing leadership culture influences the formulation of organizational management policy within a church setting. It mostly focuses on establishing guidelines and standards for the safety of the ministerial staff rather than exerting control. Participant K shared this unique perspective on downward empowerment as it pertained to organizational policy. Participant K stated:

> The other thing is that we do not govern by policy. We govern by people. Policy is only used if needed. Otherwise, we allow the leaders [the ministerial staff] to be leaders, to make the best decision in the moment. There's a lot of empowering downward for people to make the right decisions and we are supportive and working with them in there. There's a time and place for policy. Policy is not used to control. It's used to keep safe. It's a very limited tool, so we allow leaders to be leaders. They want to make decisions and we empower downward very well.

Participant K perceived using organizational policy to control people inhibits downward empowerment, an approach seen as motivating ministerial staff. Participant L said the following in the context of one-on-one meetings with the ministerial staff. Participant L referenced and shared:

> When I came here [as a lead pastor], there were a lot of people [ministerial staff] who would sit down in my office and cry, and they tell me all these different things about leaders of the past. Basically, they were looking for approval on every jot and tittle of everything, and I said, 'Hold on a second, you don't need to give me all this. I don't need to necessarily have my finger on all of this as I trust you. You have given me no reason not to trust you. I'm trusting you with all of this. I don't have to see all of this.' That was revolutionary to a lot of them. The feel around our team and, the leadership structure and what people feel in my leadership has a lot to do with creating a level playing field.

Participant L perceived trusting the staff and making the playing field level contributed to ministerial staff motivation. This meant Participant L not only recognized providing the

ministerial staff with ownership opportunities demonstrated a “revolutionary” concept, but a needed and necessary approach to motivate them effectively.

Participant interview responses and mutual stories of downward empowerment and corporate ownership highlighted its perceived significance on ministerial staff motivation. Participants offered candid and thought-provoking responses when reflecting on the shared meaning of downward empowerment and ownership related to ministerial staff motivation.

RQ2

Understanding what leadership styles lead pastors perceived as least helpful in motivating ministerial staff underscored the second research question grounding the study. The researcher deliberately constructed interview questions to surface participants’ shared realities, addressing RQ2: What leadership styles or approaches do AG lead pastors perceive to be least helpful in motivating ministerial staff? Consequently, one overarching theme emerged: the Authoritarian and Perfectionist Approach.

Theme 3: Authoritarian and Perfectionist Approach

One meaningful theme that surfaced and associated with RQ2 included the authoritarian and perfectionist leadership style. Nine participants referenced an authoritarian and perfectionist style, which became Theme 3, representing a meaningful percentage of the coded content as a perceived leadership approach that demotivated ministerial staff (see Table 10). The prevalence of authoritarian leadership was highest among its respective classifications, with participants indicating it decreased motivation among the ministerial staff. Participants shared being authoritarian and expecting perfection from their ministerial staff served as the least helpful approach in motivating

the ministerial staff to achieve the organization's mission. Most participants had difficulty discussing their leadership weaknesses or approaches that did not produce favorable outcomes, which proved unsurprising.

Table 10

Theme 3: Authoritarian and Perfectionist Approach

Theme	Name	Number of participants	Code count	% of participants frequency
Theme 3	Authoritarian and Perfectionist Approach	9	18	56.25

The presence of vertical leadership structures in churches, characterized by hierarchical power, micromanagement, and authority, has potentially hindered innovation and motivation among the ministerial staff. Certain lead pastors use a democratic or coaching paradigm, placing less importance on perfection while motivating ministerial staff. Participant O expressed micromanaging the ministerial staff instead of trusting them to execute their job responsibilities decreased ministerial staff motivation in the workplace. Participant O shared and expressed:

> I think one of the contexts with that question you asked [regarding leadership styles that are least effective in motivating ministerial staff], not to just extract the negative of it, but the worst thing that a pastor [the lead pastor] could ever do is micromanage people [the ministerial staff] that he put in a job description that he should have been able to trust from the very beginning, from the vetting of it.

Ministerial staff flourish within church settings characterized by a high level of trust between lead pastors and their pastoral staff, particularly when church leadership provides guidance and mentorship. Participant C provided this perspective on how their

leadership approach emphasizes coaching over control. Participant C said this of their management style, “I try to not be a micromanager and really use a coaching approach. I’m a certified [Assemblies of God] leadership coach and I have over 150 hours of coaching leaders.”

Participant C explained they do not micromanage and “try not to give prescriptive answers” when interacting with the ministerial staff. Participant C perceived ministerial staff motivation would follow by encouraging creativity and the liberty to make choices. Participant D responded similarly to Participant C saying, “I’m not a micromanager. I’m not lording over people [the ministerial staff]; I lead with a lot of energy, a lot of encouragement.” However, Participant C and two other participants asserted there are instances where different managerial techniques are required based on individual circumstances and personalities. Participant C expressed certain ministerial staff members would benefit from further project guidance to have a sense of support and achievement. For these ministerial staff, the absence of instruction among ministerial staff suggests the acceptance of a nonpresent leadership approach. On the one hand, ministerial staff who prefer liberty to nurture their creativity may perceive the provided instructions as micromanagement.

Participant K communicated a unique perspective about how their organizational culture embraces collaboration instead of a hierarchical structure. Participant K said:

> Because of collaborative culture, we are not defined by narrow policies and job descriptions. We have been able to adjust and move rules and put the right people in the right place on the bus to continue to leverage momentum. Perfection is not our goal. That’s it! We define what it means to be good enough, not perfect.

> Perfection is not our goal, so I don't have to be perfect. I can be 'me' and I'm working on being the best version of 'me' I can be. But, even the best 'me' is not perfect. That allows room for me to be myself.

Ministerial staff members can fulfill the vision and goal of the church by striving for a state of being "good enough" rather than aiming for perfection. This approach can effectively harness momentum within their ministry, according to Participant K.

Participant N responded candidly and perceived that when performance, perfection, and results take precedence over caring for people, ministerial motivation reduces in the office. Participant N said:

> I say it that way, just from my own personal testimony, because I tend to be internally programmed and systematic. It's about the numbers; I'm very practical and a forward-moving kind of person. I like things to be really measurable. In that, I've found a weakness to be making it more about the results [perfect outcomes] and the numbers than the people.

Moreover, some participants had difficulty articulating their thoughts about leadership styles they deemed ineffective. Participants reflected on past leadership approaches that did not support ministerial staff motivation. For instance, Participant L displayed a lot of sentiment and remorse during their response regarding a past authoritarian leadership style or approach that did not work well. However, Participant L admitted to a more practical leadership approach when motivating their ministerial staff. Participant L said:

> I'll be honest. I don't know that I've experienced that [referring to ineffective leadership approaches]. But to provide more context, I haven't always led this way. I didn't lead this way in my previous church. This has been a heart change in

> me. This has been a radical shift in how I've done ministry. I can tell you all the other leadership styles [an autocratic method] that didn't work. If you [as a lead pastor] care about yourself, you can't do what we're doing, and there's some days I have to dial it back. When I mean dial it back, I mean I need to remember how I'm doing ministry, and how God's called me to lead and who has called me, because there's times when the ugly flesh wants to raise its ugly head and you want to take the reins. Do this and lead like I used to; top-down, follow me. This is my way or the highway, an authoritarian way of doing things. I'm the guy who has the final say on everything. You have to fight to stay consistent in that [a collaborative leadership style]. I cannot do this leadership style [a collaborative one] in my own power. I will naturally revert to a narcissistic way of doing things.

Participant M explained how their leadership approach has evolved over the years in pastoral ministry. Participant M explained a leadership approach focusing strictly on performance and numbers over people hinders ministerial staff motivation. Participant M had said,

> Leadership styles develop over the years. I'm certainly no exception. For example, I've become much more relaxed in my 50s than when I was in my 30s and 40s. When I was younger, I was much more driven to see the results in numbers because that's how we tangibly measure success in ministry. So, to answer your question, my leadership is least effective when "health" [of the ministerial staff] is not the top priority and focus. When we shift our attention to performance and numbers [perfect results], then we get out of balance, and the team is less motivated.

Participants found relevance in the interview responses and shared stories highlighting the motivational repercussions of pursuing an authoritarian leadership style. Participants offered authentic and insightful responses as they deliberated on the shared understanding of authoritarian leadership as a demotivating approach to constructing their ministerial team in connection to the motivation of staff members inside the ministry.

RQ3

Investigating the strategies and practices that lead pastors perceived to be most supportive in motivating ministerial staff grounded RQ3. The researcher created interview questions to identify participants' shared realities, addressing RQ3: In what ways do AG lead pastors perceive their leadership style influences employee motivation among the ministerial staff? Thus, three vital themes surfaced: Teamwork, Psychological Safety, and Equitable Treatment.

Theme 4: Teamwork

All participants referenced Theme 4, Teamwork, which signified a meaningful percentage of the coded material and linked to RQ3. Teamwork as a theme produced the most frequency in its category and referenced 48 times among participants as a perceived pastoral leadership practice motivating ministerial staff (see Table 11). Participants expressed cultivating and fostering a team-focused or team-first work environment has motivated ministerial staff. Numerous participants expressed enthusiasm and discussed how they have used teamwork effectively to inspire and motivate the ministerial staff.

Table 11

Theme 4: Teamwork

Theme	Name	Number of participants	Code count	% of participants frequency
Theme 4	Teamwork	16	48	100

Collaborative efforts within some church organizations allow the leadership team and ministerial staff to work together to attain the church's aims and objectives. All participants in the study reported witnessing the positive results of engaging in interdepartmental collaboration within ministry teams, which served to enhance motivation among the ministerial staff. Within some AG church organizations, the lead pastor establishes environments wherein varied ministry teams work closely on church projects, mutually solve problems, facilitate reciprocal learning, and engage in the church's vision process.

Participant C shared ministerial staff motivation increases when lead pastors bring people into the vision process, where leadership explores and communicates shared ideas. Furthermore, Participant D perceived collaborating with the team to solve organizational problems motivated the ministerial staff. Participant D had this to say as a perceived organizational and leadership practice that motivated the ministerial staff:

> I enjoy working together with a team and navigating. I'm definitely not an isolated lone ranger type leader; that's not my style. I can lead that way; I can lead real strong and make a strong decision and call and set the pace. But I'd rather lead with a team and then to come at the challenge or an opportunity to collaborate.

Participant I provided their viewpoint and referenced when the ministerial staff became highly motivated to work as a team. Regarding the matter, Participant I stated:

> And he [a pastoral mentor] said, most important of all, you're [the lead pastor] not trying to sell your vision, you're meeting with your guys once a year [in the context of a retreat], and they are crafting the vision and the goals for the church. That way, it's not you trying to promote your vision. It's them [the ministerial staff] trying to implement their vision that they've worked together to come up with. I think that really motivates staff. Rather than trying to motivate them to follow your [the lead pastor's] vision, bring them [the ministerial staff] into the vision process; so that they understand their day-to-day work and then they realize why they crafted it [the vision]. We are doing church as a team and that's a big motivator that has worked well for me.

Participant I explained the ministerial staff became motivated when they related their "day-to-day work" to the vision that they helped create. Additional examples of teamwork involve ministerial staff and church leadership gathering in settings outside of the office environment to foster a feeling of community and inclusion, inspiring individuals. Participant C shared how teamwork outside of the office proves essential. Participant C said:

> And so, even forming my launch team [the ministerial staff that started the church] this past year and having times when we got together and did a barbeque, and then spent two hours on vision casting, meeting, and brainstorming, where people felt honored to be a part of [the team].

Participant L also spoke about how teamwork outside the office builds trust and camaraderie between the team, motivating the ministerial staff. Participant L explained:

> [Motivating the ministerial staff] has a lot to do with the groundwork that we set for teamwork. There's that old adage I believe is super true. Teamwork truly does make the dream work. Around here, it's taken us a year to create team chemistry. What we found, is that it's worth building trust with each other and building that relationship and spending time with my staff. I even took [the ministerial staff] out on my drift boat. We spent a half day doing that. Yes, we took office time, and we went out on the boat. We did that to build team trust and camaraderie. It takes a lot of time and energy to do this. It takes a whole team away from [working in the office]. [Some members in the congregation] say you're cutting down the effectiveness of the team, you're cutting back the effectiveness of what people can get done. Here's what I found, and I'm a very task-oriented person, but I have found that [the ministerial staff] will always do more than the task will do for you. If you can invest in people and build trust, it's amazing how much people want to get done for you. Teamwork energizes people when we do things together and we know that we're going to rise and fall together.

Participant E referred to a past job experience to express their understanding of the importance of teamwork and inclusion. Participant E said:

> Well, I can tell you, when I was in the steel industry, I never sat in my office. I had a really nice office. I had an office on the second floor of one building, and I had three plants in there. But I never went into the offices all that much. I was

> tucking my tie in, went up, and I always went out in the plant. I worked [alongside as a team] with the guys and got in trouble with all the unions.

Participant E recognized working alongside teammates in the ministry office on top of their traditional leadership responsibilities inspired and motivated the ministerial staff to perform and achieve the organization's mission.

In the context of church leadership cultures, implementing a leadership approach that regarded subordinates as equals, despite their title and pay grade, increases team effectiveness, fosters cooperation, and promotes a shared focus. When the joint mission of the church and the leadership cultures are compatible, ministerial staff experience a sense of unity and belonging. The antecedents participants exhibited highlight the significance of leadership culture in enhancing team performance through the promotion of togetherness. For instance, Participant J perceived treating all ministerial staff members as equal teammates regardless of pay grade and work status motivated them to run their ministries effectively. Participant J said:

> We've been able to have a good workforce in that [overtime] because I don't treat people as lesser, whether they're on our volunteer staff or if they're full-time paid positions. They all come to staff meetings, they're all part of the table, they all have their portions, and they all have their ministries to run.

Participant K provided an account whereby they recounted an instance of leadership employing cooperation and collaboration to evaluate the quality of their sermons, which resulted in a perceived increase in motivation among the ministerial staff. Participant K explained:

> We are a very collaborative and high-feedback culture. We have five gatherings, and our weekend starts on Wednesday. I preach Wednesday night [to the ministerial staff] and then there is an open team meeting, which means anybody can come to that. My message and my delivery are reviewed by everybody on [the ministerial staff]. My job is to listen and then make changes before Saturday. We're a high-feedback culture and I want to establish that culture personally.

Participant L explained how the office culture demonstrates team-focus and that there are no silos within the organization, which the participant perceived as a barrier to ministerial staff motivation. Participant L articulated:

> It doesn't matter who I am. It doesn't matter that I'm the lead pastor; it doesn't matter who sits around the table. We all have to be willing to do this and say, 'Lord, it's yours.' We have a lot of cross over with our team. There's no silos here. There's no lanes that we run in or say, 'Well, that's his lane. You don't need to run in that lane.' We do a lot together and because of that, it's broken down a lot of barriers. There's a barrier-less leadership and that's created a lot of freedom.

Participant M understood communicating the team's value in recognizing ministry wins impacted ministerial staff motivation. Participant M said:

> I work hard to communicate how valuable my team is. My leadership simply points out the wins and accomplishments the team is making in people's [the congregation's] lives. As a leader, one of my roles is to help the team connect the dots between our daily work and lives being changed.

Participant G said they surveyed the ministerial staff before the interview to find out what organizational and leadership strategies motivated the ministerial staff. Participant G said:

> [The ministerial staff] told me how I motivate them. They said, 'I feel like you care for the staff and the health of the staff, not just the health of the church.' They said it's highly motivating. Here's some other things. They said, 'It motivates me how much you [the lead pastor] bring the team together, that we can all get on the same page. When we're working together, we start reaching our goals faster with more intention. When we celebrate wins [as a team] continually, it motivates me to stay on mission and keep what we, as a team, are working towards.'

This participant's experience illustrates a leadership culture that effectively collaborates as a cohesive unit to accomplish the church's purpose. Moreover, this church culture fosters an environment where ministerial staff can freely express their opinions without apprehension or mistreatment.

Another meaningful theme that surfaced and linked to RQ3 includes psychological safety concerning practices that motivate ministerial staff. Twelve participants referenced psychological safety as a theme, representing a substantial percentage of the coded material as a perceived essential leadership practice that motivated ministerial staff.

Theme 5: Psychological Safety

Twelve participants referenced the concept of psychological safety, identified as Theme 5, representing a substantial percentage of the coded content. Participants

referenced the theme 25 times as a perceived pastoral leadership practice motivating ministerial staff (see Table 12). Participants expressed promoting a work environment that emphasizes voicing ideas, asking questions, addressing concerns without repercussions, and learning from mistakes without fear of mistreatment helps motivate ministerial staff. Many study participants responded about psychological safety and shared stories of how fostering it in the workplace motivated the ministerial staff.

Table 12

Theme 5: Psychological Safety

Theme	Name	Number of participants	Code count	% of participants frequency
Theme 5	Psychological Safety	12	25	75

The presence of a psychologically secure work environment, prioritized and established by lead pastors in certain church organizations, has a discernible impact on the motivation of ministerial staff and can enhance the overall effectiveness of the church. Church organizations and leading pastoral teams illustrate the importance of advancing a psychologically safe workplace culture. Participant A discussed the implications of creating a psychologically secure work environment to cultivate ministerial staff motivation. Participant A said:

> A big part of that [motivating the ministerial staff] too is creating space for leaders [the ministerial staff] to succeed and fail, and creating a safe place that if things don't go the way they want them to, that we can talk through it and try to be as much as possible the learning organization and that they have space and

> freedom to be able to try new things, innovate, be creative, and hopefully we all will benefit from that.

Participant C offered a distinct viewpoint regarding the subject issue, according to their organizational church form. Participant C shared:

> I want [the ministerial staff] to bring their voice and their influence, and their creativity to the team. Since I can't reward them and compensate them in financial ways that they need and really deserve, I have to make sure that I'm compensating them in other ways and intrinsically [motivating the ministerial staff internally], that I'm helping their leadership ability. I'm giving them opportunities to lead that they probably wouldn't get in other mega-churches. They're just too young. I'm giving them opportunities to have a platform and a voice.

Participant C believed the church should grant their ministerial staff a voice, given that they do not offer competitive compensation relative to the marketplace. Participant E shared a related belief and explained ministerial staff motivation increases when people have the space and capacity to learn from past successes and failures. Participant E had this to share about how psychological safety becomes realized within their ministerial staff to promote workplace motivation:

> Give people [the ministerial staff] the latitude to make mistakes, or to make a decision, and to go with it. When it doesn't pan out, not to hammer down, but simply say: 'What did you learn from it? What would you have done different?' We create a discipleship culture that [the ministerial staff] is engaging in people's lives and everybody is engaging in some level of accountability on their spiritual

> walk. I think that creates a healthy work environment where [the ministerial staff] will not be afraid. If I [the ministerial staff] mess up, I'm not in trouble.

Participant F provided a biblical account of psychological safety and motivating the ministerial staff that proved crucial. Participant F said:

> The role of the leader [the lead pastor] is to see the gold inside of somebody [the ministerial staff] and pull it out. Jesus saw that in Peter. It's just too easy to see what people aren't than what they can become. Most of them have a voice in their head. If [the lead pastor] can make it safe enough and build enough relationship that they allow you to get to that place where you can speak to that, if you can change that narrative in their head, that script that they've been living in, that's unbelievable because then they [the ministerial staff] can soar.

Participant G shared a story about a time when the environment did not generate psychological safety, resulting in a negative outcome among the staff. Participant G said:

> I wanted my team to fight and disagree with each other so that we could get the best ideas [for ministry projects], but I didn't create enough safety for them to really share what they thought or felt. [The ministerial staff] would hate coming into a staff meeting, especially the leadership team, because it felt like it was going in a little corral with a horse, try to give it medicine and get the tar beat out of them [from the ministerial staff's perspective]. Everyone else felt that, too. I'm trying to make the team have conflict in a healthy way, but I'm not leading that in a healthy way. Everyone was wrestling with this. This took me over a year to really figure out. You have to create emotional safety [psychological safety] so that [the ministerial staff] can argue and feel like they can disagree or be honest. I

> didn't create enough emotional safety for that to happen. I wanted the right thing, but I did it the wrong way.

Regarding psychological safety and the ministerial staff, Participant H said, "I don't shoot them down or crush them [when offering new ideas or asking questions]. I try to keep it where it can be a safe environment where they could ask questions." Participant B presented an opposing viewpoint on the subject under discussion and recognized the challenge or equilibrium involved in creating a secure environment for ministerial staff to express their views on church affairs to remain motivated. Participant B said:

> I entered into the ministry under a very clear, like Boomer style of leadership—so structure and hierarchy. I knew where I fell on the pecking order. The more I watch Gen Z, or the younger millennial leaders, join the workforce, there's this assumption we [the ministerial staff] all get a say, we all get to speak into whatever. I've trained our staff that there's tension here. Every voice matters, but not every voice gets to speak into every matter. Because that becomes a demotivator, I would say some of the younger workforce feel like they should be able to speak into anything and everything. That's kind of a disconnect from how I was starting in ministry. If we are going to continue with motivation, learning the language of what motivates and demotivates [the ministerial staff], then how do we? How do we make sure that there's proper clarity and lines of communication to where [the ministerial staff] feel like they can speak into stuff? I do think that motivates them. So, if you never let anybody speak into it, you're always giving tasks to be motivated. Finding the right ways and right spaces, they

> can speak into things that are on our shoulders to help create that clarity for them [the ministerial staff].

Although there is a differing perspective presented on the topic of generational differences in relation to a psychologically safe work environment among ministerial staff as a source of motivation, the dominant viewpoint participants expressed emphasized the importance of cultivating a psychologically secure environment through fair treatment within the ministerial context.

The final theme that arose and corresponds to RQ3 is the equitable treatment of individuals in connection with an organizational practice aimed at encouraging ministerial staff. Twelve participants referenced treating people fairly as a theme and represented a substantial percentage of the coded material as a perceived essential leadership practice that motivated ministerial staff.

Theme 6: Treating People Fairly

Twelve participants frequently discussed Treating People Fairly, Theme 6, which denoted a meaningful percentage of the coded content. Participants referenced the theme 20 times as a perceived pastoral leadership practice motivating ministerial staff (see Table 12). Participants expressed treating people justly and providing them with an appropriate compensation package have been advantageous in motivating ministerial staff. Many participants responded and provided many instances of how their organization strives to treat people equitably.

Table 13

Theme 6: Treating People Fairly

Theme	Name	Number of participants	Code count	% of participants frequency
Theme 6	Treating People Fairly	12	20	75

The church's organizational commitment to fostering a leadership culture that actively cultivates a fair and inclusive atmosphere contributes to fulfilling its goal. Several leaders in the AG church interpret the concept of organizational equity primarily by providing their employees with a suitable compensation package, including vacation time. Participant B provided an informative example of how their organization treats ministerial staff justly, providing them with an appropriate wage package. Participant B said:

> I would say our approach to even [equitable] compensation would be an example of that [responding to a question regarding motivational organizational approaches]. About 3 years ago, our HR [human resources] department walked through the process of creating what we call our salary grid. We update [the salary grid] every year, every 2 years, where we're looking at data for similar roles across the nation, taking into account our own zip codes, and making sure that every employee in the position is compensated competitively based on real data, not just on me. I think investing in our team [the ministerial staff] through our retirement plan and program, providing a match, and different things like that [motivates the ministerial staff].

Participant D shared a similar response and said, “We pay well. I think we do compensate well, and we do take care of our team [the ministerial staff].” Participant E shared:

> Because we have five pastors [associates on staff], we have the opportunity to take a break, so you don’t have to preach every single Sunday. You get a Sunday when you [the ministerial staff] can go worship the Lord or take Sunday off. Pay is an important thing. We pay [the ministerial staff] well. Time away is important, so vacation is a big deal. We want people to take their vacation and really vacate, you know, get out of Dodge, don’t make phone calls, don’t check emails. The work environment is critical.

Participant E expressed how being right sized in terms of having adequate resources provides ministerial staff with opportunities to take breaks and sufficient vacation.

Participant G perceived that the “Golden Rule” for treating each other in the office and providing people with equitable work benefits served as motivating practices contributing to ministerial staff motivation. Participant G expressed:

> The Golden Rule [regarding the fair treatment of employees], do unto others as you’d have them do unto you, that’s how we do it [the ministerial staff]. We are very generous. It’s a value at our church. We are generous with people coming in and people going out. We pay benefits. We want to be in the upper echelon of paying the best we can, giving the best benefits that we can give.

Participant H elaborated on the topic and affirmed that providing people with extra vacation time for exceptional work performance motivated the ministerial staff. Participant H explained:

> The hardest thing, and the truth about ministry, is that you [the ministerial staff] get paid a little less [compared to the marketplace]. Maybe you can't give a raise, but you can give them an extra week of vacation. Or you can say, 'Hey, you've been pushing too hard, let's give you time off the next two days, get an extra 4-day weekend or something and go spend time with your family.' Those kind of things I've seen go a long way [motivating ministerial staff].

Participant I also said, "You must pay them [the ministerial staff]. You [the lead pastor] need to be in a position usually to where you can afford to bring in those kinds of people." Some participants said flexibility with paid or personal time off (PTO) requests motivated the ministerial staff. For instance, Participant K shared:

> Number one, we want to pay them a livable wage. We pay well and we give lots of PTO. Most of our leaders [the ministerial staff] start with 5 weeks PTO and we're a "yes" culture. [The ministerial staff] get whatever they want [in terms of PTO time]. I just ask they don't do it on Easter or Christmas Eve, and we can flex on that. That's typical so that they feel taken care of and they feel valued.

Participant K expressed being a "yes culture" and flexible has motivated the ministerial staff. Furthermore, Participants N and O provided thorough responses regarding their organizations' strategy, ensuring lead pastors treat ministerial staff justly and provide them with a suitable compensation package. Participant N articulated:

> What we do is add value in a person's [the ministerial staff] life. So sure, their salaries are part of it or their hourly wage, let's do the best we can within our budget. On top of that, are we [the leadership team] also incentivizing values that we're putting into them [the ministerial staff]? How are we taking care of them?

> Are we offering them medical benefits? What kinds of perks do we give them in terms of matching and retirement programs? For instance, there was no retirement system at all at the church when I got here, for the school or church. It's free to give people a 403b and allow them to contribute. [The leadership team] decided at a certain point when someone is vested and they're full-time, to match [their retirement contributions] based on their number of years, 1%, 2%, 3%, or 4%. Doing that, and then retroactively instituting that for those who have been there for that amount of time, really added value. It cost us very little. They felt so valued by what turned out to be a small administrative thing.

Participant O perceived creating an adequate "sabbatical fund" has been an organizational leadership practice that has contributed to ministerial staff motivation and pastoral career longevity. Participant O stated:

> Every full-time Assemblies of God minister on the staff, after 10 years, gets a sixth week of vacation. It's nonoptional, fully paid, as well as remunerated on your income during the time that you're [the ministerial staff] gone. That's budgeted. We have [a specific] budget for that. It's called the sabbatical fund. The church knows about it and everybody appreciates it. That has created longevity [referring to the ministerial staff's tenure at the church].

Participant P divulged how their organization encourages communal rest outside of the office to motivate their ministerial staff. Participant P said, "What unites us is Christ, that we get to do life together. That has helped motivate them [the ministerial staff]. There are moments of deep rest, where I'm [the lead pastor] caring about their resting. Are they resting well?" Participant J shared a surprising approach to treating ministerial staff

equitably by encouraging and motivating them to further their formal ministry education and making it part of their pay package. Participant J said:

> We try to help them [the ministerial staff] further their education. Our church pays for it. If someone wants to get more courses under them, we pay for their courses; we pay for their study books. We make that part of their salary package.

Participant J surmised that when staff members receive education incentives from their present salary packages, such as tuition reimbursement or remission, they stay motivated to advance.

Summary

This section presented the data and findings from the interviews conducted among AG pastors in the northwest region. Six essential themes emerged from the interview responses: (a) Developing and Investing in People, (b) Downward Empowerment and Ownership, (c) Authoritarian and Perfectionist Approach, (d) Teamwork, (e) Psychological Safety, and (f) Treating People Fairly. These themes exposed and illustrated the shared experiences lead pastors perceived to influence ministerial staff motivation. Chapter 5 presents the unexpected findings, implications of the study, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks and reflections.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Overview

This chapter lays out the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research. The researcher repeats the purpose statement, research questions directing the study, methodology, population, and sample. The chapter resumes with a summary of the findings, conclusions, and unexpected discoveries. The chapter closes with actionable implications, future research suggestions, and concluding remarks and reflections.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the lived experiences of lead pastors in the northwest region of the Assemblies of God (AG) regarding the effect of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. By exploring the perceptions of lead pastors, this study delivers insight into what leadership styles lead pastors found most effective in motivating their ministerial staff.

Research Questions

Three overarching research questions guided this study to explore which leadership styles or approaches proved most effective in motivating ministerial staff:

1. What leadership styles or approaches do AG lead pastors perceive most helpful in motivating ministerial staff?
2. What leadership styles or approaches do AG lead pastors perceive to be least helpful in motivating ministerial staff?

3. In what ways do AG lead pastors perceive their leadership style influences employee motivation among the ministerial staff?

Research Method and Data Collection Procedures

This qualitative study used a phenomenological method to describe the lived experiences of lead pastors in the northwest region of the AG regarding the impact of their leadership styles on the motivation of ministerial staff (Creswell, 2014). The appropriateness of employing the qualitative research methodology in this study became evident due to its emphasis on comprehending the meaning of participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). Interview questions were established to examine multiple real-life cases to center the study around the overarching research questions. Interview questions were pilot tested with three AG lead pastors who met the selection criteria.

The researcher carried out 16 virtual interviews of AG lead pastors in the northwest region who met the selection criteria. An interview protocol with predetermined questions to ensure consistency between interviews was used. Each participant completed an informed consent document and a demographic questionnaire, which included questions and prompts to collect demographic information. Data obtained from each participant made a significant contribution to the overall findings of the study. The presentation of participant responses to the interview questions in accordance with the frequency of theme occurrence in the data provided support for the findings drawn in this study. To ensure participants' views remained accurately documented, each interview was video recorded, and each participant was given a pseudonym for identification purposes regarding data collection and analysis.

Population

The population for this qualitative phenomenological study included AG lead pastors in the northwest region of the United States from the Northwest Ministry Network, Oregon Ministry Network, Alaska Ministry Network, Montana Ministry Network, Wyoming Ministry Network, and the Southern Idaho Ministry Network. The population included male and female lead pastors licensed or ordained with the AG and actively engaged in church pastoral ministry.

Sample

The researcher identified criteria to participate in this study to improve the chances of a robust sample population. The chosen criteria represented participants who displayed meaningful experiences of the phenomenon in the study (Polkinghorne, 1989) and the current AG pastoral leadership proficiencies and standards. The sample included model lead pastors exhibiting Criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and at least four of the remaining criteria (e.g., 6–10):

1. Participant held a license or ordination with the AG at the time of this study.
2. Participant had a minimum of 5 years of ministry experience as a lead pastor.
3. Participant ranged in age from 35–60 years old.
4. Participant served as the lead pastor of a council-affiliated church (e.g., the Deacon Board governs the church).
5. Participant supervised at least three ministerial staff.
6. Participant received AG Coaching within the last 5 years.
7. Participant was a Certified AG Coach (AGC); Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3.

8. Participant displayed evidence of other leadership training through the AG Network (e.g., conferences, workshops).
9. Participant demonstrated a transformational leadership (TL) approach (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015) grounded in the following four key dimensions and characteristics of TL leaders. District officials from the AG used the TL four dimensions and characteristics of TL leaders to locate prospective research participants in their district networks: (a) *idealized influence:* the lead pastor cultivated camaraderie through idealized influence by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015); (b) *inspirational motivation:* the lead pastor inspired followers to take calculated risks and achieve extraordinary results to accomplish greatness (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015); (c) *intellectual stimulation:* the lead pastor developed followers' skillsets and abilities that help them successfully attain higher levels of motivation as well as self-efficacy (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015); and (d) *individualized consideration:* the lead pastor acted as a coach, considering all individuals to create an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment where ideas matter, trust abounds, and voices are heard (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

10. Participant had been recognized by peers in one or more of the following ways: (a) the lead pastor had been formally recognized with leadership awards from the district network or other organizations; (b) they were currently serving or has served as a presbyter in their respective network; (c) they had other formal recognition that denoted leadership excellence (e.g., promotions, committee opportunities, positive feedback); and (d) or they were a member of any professional or pastoral leadership organization involving leadership quality and aptitude.

Discussion of Findings

The study's findings revealed the leadership style senior pastors within AG employed elicited a certain degree of motivation among ministerial staff in AG-affiliated churches across the northwest region. Although this study identified some areas of agreement and distinction regarding the literature, additional pastoral leadership styles and organizational practices participants recognized, suggest unique elements within church leadership that can support and impact ministerial staff motivation. As a result, similarities and crucial distinctions between the study's findings and the literature are explored.

Drawing from the literature on pastoral leadership style and ministerial staff motivation, some leadership approaches and practices were anticipated in this study. It was expected that certain participants would express the significance of vocational calling regarding the motivation of ministerial staff members. One participant recognized the significance of vocational calling as a perceived source of motivation for ministerial staff instead of leadership tactics aimed at inspiring individuals. The individual

participant believed leadership methods designed to inspire individuals particularly corresponded with the notion of exemplary business models. Although vocational calling and spiritual salience are commonly regarded as crucial elements for a successful pastorate (Dunbar et al., 2020; Wilson & Hoffmann, 2013), scholars have contended business principles also play a significant role in contemporary churches. The perspective indicated herein is substantiated by the ministerial recruitment criteria established by pastoral search committees, the anticipated qualities for pastoral positions, the focus on organizational efficiency, and the demand of business management expertise in pastoral employment (Burnham, 2015; Chatira & Mwenje, 2018; McIntosh, 2021).

In addition, much like professionals in the business sector, pastors significantly emphasize preemployment benefit packages. These packages include annual compensation, retirement provisions, paid holidays, medical and dental benefits, disability insurance, and coverage for dependents, among others (Clergy Financial Resources, n.d.). However, despite these varying opinions, the researcher exclusively focused on themes that accentuated distinctive aspects of pastoral leadership styles that influenced the motivation of ministerial staff. The subsequent part compares the analysis of significant themes for the study, as derived from the researcher's examination of the data assessment.

The participant stories deliver insight into the lived experiences of AG lead pastors as a subsection of ordained lead pastors. The following section describes the key findings from the study and how AG lead pastors perceive the connection between their leadership approach and motivating their ministerial staff effectively. In as much as leading ongoing leadership development in AG churches remains a challenge for lead

pastors, the study's findings will appeal to any AG lead pastor who strives to create a workplace environment conducive to fostering effective ministerial staff motivation.

Finding 1: Assemblies of God Lead Pastors Recognized Developing and Providing Their Ministerial Staff With Training Opportunities Motivated Them

All participants expressed leadership development opportunities are necessary for ministerial employees to enhance their motivation effectively. The gravity of developing ministerial staff was evident in the data analysis and aligned with the literature. Helbig (2022) argued employers must train and develop business employees to create a high-performance workplace, which improves employee retention, productivity, engagement, and overall employee morale. Although experts have differing opinions regarding the suitability of business principles in church leadership models (Bonem, 2011; Grandy, 2013), the importance and focus on cultivating a motivated and high-performing ministerial staff emerged from participants' collective experiences and narratives. Every participant revealed developing and investing in ministerial staff became a meaningful impetus for achieving their organization's mission, largely based on their belief that the Bible teaches it. Analyzing participants' perceptions revealed a meaningful relationship between follower motivation and leadership approaches that establish organizational pathways that promote intellectual stimulation and development.

Although the study did not specifically focus on the themes of transformational leadership style or specific cultural contexts, the analysis of the collected data revealed cultivation of a transformational leadership style inside church organizations had a meaningful impact on follower motivation, which is consistent with existing literature. The literature revealed influential leaders develop followers' skill sets and abilities

through intellectual stimulation and achievement, helping them attain higher levels of motivation and self-value (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Nielsen et al., 2019; Sirota & Klein, 2013). Furthermore, Lee (2005) and Tumbel (2016) confirmed the association between pastoral leadership style and employee motivation in church institutions.

The research completed by Lee (2005) is important because of its relevance to this study. Lee's findings demonstrated certain transformational elements contribute to associate pastor workplace satisfaction and, to a certain extent, motivation. One paramount area of alignment between Lee's study and the current study's findings is the significance of associate pastor personal growth and ongoing development in pastoral roles. For instance, Lee maintained associate pastor job satisfaction came to be related to intrinsic factors like the opportunity for individual vocational development and the feeling of worthwhile accomplishment and achievement, which embody the study's integrated framework about idealized influence and achievement (Sirota & Klein, 2013; Sirota et al., 2005). Additionally, Lee's findings indicated a highly positive and significant correlation between lead pastor transformational characteristics and associate pastors' intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Lee argued lead pastors can help associate pastors actualize their purposes by implementing a transformational leadership approach.

However, some distinctions exist between Lee's (2005) findings and the current study's results. Lee found associate pastor job satisfaction was highly positive as it related to intrinsic influences, not hygiene or maintenance factors, meaning intrinsic factors led to job satisfaction more than external factors. Nevertheless, the analysis of the current study's data confirmed the equal magnitude of supporting ministerial staff motivation from both a developmental and administrative standpoint. Supporting

ministerial staff motivation through leadership development is explored later in this section.

Some of the broad conclusions drawn from this current study's findings support the role of a lead pastor requires a predisposition for developing leaders' skillsets and abilities through intellectual stimulation and achievement, helping the ministerial staff attain greater levels of motivation, engagement and self-efficacy (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Datche & Mukulu, 2015; Sirota & Klein, 2013). Participants in the study expressed and explained the joy experienced in developing people (i.e., the ministerial staff). For instance, one participant held a doctorate in educational leadership and perceived offering ministerial leadership lessons would improve ministerial staff motivation. Another participant took more of a mentoring approach, discussing the prominence of developing and investing in people to motivate them. Other participants in the study clarified their church organization emphasized developing and investing in their ministerial staff by offering an opportunity to pursue formal ministry training. The following section delivers insight into how the study's findings reinforce the literature and discusses why AG lead pastors perceive downward empowerment and ownership motivate ministerial staff.

Finding 2: Assemblies of God Lead Pastors Perceived Downward Empowerment and Allowing Ownership Within the Organization Motivated Ministerial Staff

Whereas the study did not focus on presumptions of transformational leadership style or diverse cultural contexts, analysis of the collected data revealed cultivation of a leadership style characterized by transformational attributes within religious institutions meaningfully impacted the motivation of ministerial staff who follow such leaders. This finding aligns with previous scholarly works, and the literature supports the idea that

transformational leaders motivate and inspire followers to take calculated risks, accomplishing extraordinary results through achievement and inspirational motivation (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Moriano et al., 2014; Sirota & Klein, 2013). Half the participants articulated their perceptions and shared giving space and freedom to innovate or make decisions created enthusiasm and motivation. These findings are consistent with those reported in the existing literature (McCall, 2019; Rumley, 2011) and echoed more recently by Culbertson (2021), in which transformational leadership factors in a church setting indicated a positive moderate correlation between coaching, inventive thinking, and positive ministry outcomes.

Participants, moreover, acknowledged empowering ministerial staff with personal decision making regardless of result served as instrumental to innovation and learning. Participants exhibited a growing recognition of the value of using downward empowerment and organizational learning as leadership strategies to enhance motivation among ministerial staff in employing important ministry projects. These practices are consistent with the perspective of Bass and Avolio (1994) and Sirota and Klein (2013), who noted influential leaders inspire followers to take evaluated risks and attain exceptional results to accomplish greatness. Numerous participants expressed their perspectives regarding the significance of AG lead pastors' ability to acknowledge and embrace the lessons from experimental decision-making activities, even if they do not result in successful outcomes. Participants articulated as the level of responsibility among ministerial staff grows, their knowledge of leadership techniques that view failure as an opportunity for learning would enhance the generation of innovative ideas inside the organization, thereby facilitating the church in accomplishing its purpose. Moreover,

these leadership strategies enable AG lead pastors to establish an organizational culture and atmosphere that nurtures downward empowerment, ownership, creativity, and innovation.

Because of the recent ministry challenges connected to the COVID-19 global pandemic, study participants recognized a need and the motivational benefits of providing their ministerial staff with avenues to innovate in their decision making over the ministries they oversee. This current study's results, in practice, led to the conclusion that an apparent advantage exists in pursuing a pastoral leadership approach using downward empowerment to motivate the ministerial staff. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize a notable constraint when reaching the previously stated conclusion.

Given the relatively small sample size and research design associated with this study, the conclusion stands as preliminary, directional, and limited to the population studied. Despite these limitations, the findings of this research exist as meaningful because they provide AG lead pastors and respective district networks with leadership approaches essential to influencing the positive trajectory of ministerial staff motivation. The subsequent section presents how the study's findings align with the literature and discusses why AG lead pastors perceive an authoritarian leadership style demotivates the ministerial staff.

Finding 3: Assemblies of God Lead Pastors Perceived an Authoritarian Leadership Style and Expecting Perfection Among the Ministerial Staff Demotivated Them

Half the participants perceived an authoritarian leadership style and expecting perfection from the ministerial staff demotivated them to accomplish their organization's mission because it stifled collaboration. Participants described the challenges with

authoritarian leadership styles from experiences, which they explained created fear and uncertainty among the ministerial staff when centralized power increased in authority positions. A multitude of such approaches exists in the literature regarding the correlation between demotivation and the authoritarian and perfectionist style of management (Altheeb, 2020; Caillier, 2020; Stoeber et al., 2017).

For example, Altheeb (2020) discovered an authoritarian leadership style emphasizing complete control over organizational decision-making processes and solving techniques did not enhance employee motivation. The similarities in findings with this study suggest that the experiences of AG lead pastors in church settings shed light on a few possible explanations for why the authoritarian leadership approach remains least effective as a leadership style as perceived by participants. Participants expressed micromanagement techniques that take advantage of opportunities with minimal consideration of counsel and advice from the ministerial staff stifle individual importance, consideration, and motivation. These examples noticeably portrayed the participants' attitudes and beliefs about the importance of not practicing an authoritarian and perfectionist leadership style to foster motivation among the ministerial staff.

Simultaneously, it becomes equally important to call attention to differences between the literature and the findings connected to this study. Although there appears to be good agreement between this current study's findings and Altheeb's (2020) work, a critical distinction endured. It is important to consider the work Altheeb completed originated in a work environment where committee assignments were prevalent, involving individuals from different departments based on their expertise. As a result,

under such a work culture, the findings of authoritarian leadership already proved insignificant on a motivational level.

Conversely, study participants in the current study, who were lead pastors affiliated with the AG, observed and articulated situations in which authoritarian leadership dynamics resulted in reduced levels of engagement and motivation in the pursuit of ministry objectives. These circumstances occurred within a work culture or environment that had been historically shaped by autocratic leadership structures and organizational systems. Nevertheless, it is imperative to incorporate a fundamental clause that autocratic leadership can be desirable in organizations, environments, and societies that prioritize high power distance (Hofstede et al., 2010). In contexts characterized by high power distance, followers tend to underscore and embrace social structures that maintain substantial inequalities in power and hierarchical arrangements (Blair & Bligh, 2018; Geert, 1980).

Results of this current study and Altheeb's (2020) study contrasted with the findings from Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy's (2012) and Solaja et al.'s (2016) research. Their research found, in some instances or organizational situations, the authoritarian leadership approach contributed to job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness depending on the knowledge and expertise of the leader. The authoritarian management approach appears beneficial in circumstances requiring timely and resolute decision making. Conversely, one may presume the presence of authoritarian leadership could possess an adverse effect on employee motivation, particularly in circumstances that need collaborative efforts.

Despite these differences, this current study's findings support that the authoritarian leadership style remains a perceived ineffective leadership approach by the study participants to motivate members of the ministerial staff. Participants acknowledged an authoritarian and perfectionist approach to management was least effective in motivating their staff to achieve the church's mission. As such, the main conclusion from the data analysis is cultivating a transformational leadership culture within churches is essential for achieving long-term organizational goals. The following section presents how the study's findings reinforce the literature and explain why AG lead pastors perceive cultivating a team-focused atmosphere motivates the ministerial staff.

Finding 4: Assemblies of God Lead Pastors Alleged Cultivating and Fostering a Team-Focused Atmosphere Motivated Ministerial Staff

All participants acknowledged nurturing a team-focused work environment motivated the ministerial staff to achieve their organization's mission. These findings align with the literature and the study's theoretical framework, in which teamwork and camaraderie heighten follower motivation (Sirota & Klein, 2013; Sirota et al., 2005). Leaders cultivate camaraderie through idealized influence by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015; Sirota & Klein, 2013; Sirota et al., 2005). Furthermore, findings are consistent with a more recent study by Musinguzi et al. (2020) that provided compelling evidence that idealized-influence behavior and intellectual stimulation were positively related to team motivation. Participants acknowledged teamwork on important ministry

projects became a meaningful motivator in creating a supportive work atmosphere. Participants from the current study reinforced the relevance of a team-focused work environment and further affirmed the need for ongoing collaboration with the ministerial staff to create engagement.

Results of the current study demonstrate consistency with previous studies that showed transformational characteristics supported team effectiveness, team efficacy, team motivation, positive team learning, and group performance (Lai et al., 2018; Wiyono, 2018). A couple distinctions were identified in some of these reports, strengthening and opposing the findings from this study. A vital strength of Lai et al.'s (2018) work supports the current study's findings, revealing 3 of the 4 components of transformational leadership—namely intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and inspirational factors—led to the promotion of collective promotion focus (i.e., teamwork cohesiveness and effectiveness). Each participant shared individual stories and beliefs that their ministerial staff thrived when team cohesiveness remained a space where teammates could collaborate, share ideas, and draw inspiration to achieve the church's mission. There remains a distinction between the study's findings and Lai et al. (2018), in which teamwork effectiveness appeared predicated on regulatory focus and project performance rather than team motivation. Despite the aforesaid distinction, the overall results from the data analysis remain compatible.

This analysis leads to some practical conclusions, the most important of which AG lead pastors support ministerial staff motivation by giving precedence to a team-focused work environment. As AG lead pastors perceive that promoting teamwork among ministerial staff is a strong motivator, the role of a lead pastor necessitates the

ability to foster camaraderie through idealized influence. The conclusion substantiates the literature, in which teamwork and camaraderie strengthen follower motivation (Chitiga, 2018; Sirota & Klein, 2013). Participants also discussed how being a team outside the church office proved crucial in motivating the ministerial staff. Participants expressed having the team together for an event (e.g., a barbeque) in which people felt honored to participate and then spending 2 hours on vision casting, meeting, and brainstorming was a motivating factor. One participant received feedback from their ministerial staff before the interview and shared team cohesiveness, mutual goals, and celebrating organizational wins motivate staying on mission and working towards the end goal.

The following section demonstrates how the findings of this study advance the literature. It discusses why AG lead pastors support a psychologically safe work environment, ensuring that organizational processes are in place that construct a highly effective, motivated ministerial staff. Psychological safety describes a collective belief held by team members that it is acceptable to take risks, express ideas, communicate concerns, speak up to questions, and acknowledge mistakes without fear of adverse penalties (Gallo, 2023).

Finding 5: Assemblies of God Lead Pastors Perceived Ministerial Staff Were Motivated by a Work Environment That Emphasized Voicing Ideas, Asking Questions, Addressing Concerns Without Repercussions, and Learning From Mistakes Without Fear of Maltreatment

Of the 16 participants, 12 reported psychological safety had a significant role in motivating ministerial staff, particularly from a practical and organizational perspective. Research asserted organizational leaders can establish a safer and high-performance work

culture by prioritizing psychological safety skill development (De Smet et al., 2021). The literature has applied extensively the connection between organizational equity and effective motivational leadership practices (Sirota & Klein, 2013). Individual consideration and equity can be achieved, for instance, when leaders act as mentors, treating individuals fairly and creating an inclusive workplace where ideas are valued, trust thrives, and diversity is celebrated (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Sirota & Klein, 2013; Sirota et al., 2005).

Participants perceived a work environment concentrating on psychological safety motivated the ministerial staff to accomplish their organization's purpose. The literature reinforces organizational leaders create a high-performance workforce by advancing psychological safety in the workplace (Agarwal & Farndale, 2017; De Smet et al., 2021; Edmondson, 2018; Gallo, 2023). The connection between high-performing teams and psychological safety advances the argument that a psychologically safe workplace influences a motivated, high-performance labor force. A good example of this relationship is found in Edmondson (2018), who studied factors related to high-performance work systems, creativity implementation, and psychological safety at work. Edmondson explored a model of psychological safety as a mediator between high-performance team structures and creativity. The research showed organizations must consider creating a culture that shares knowledge, discusses concerns, admits mistakes, and without fear of punishment to create value and thrive over the long term. There was extensive discussion among participants in this study regarding psychological safety and ways to enhance ministerial staff motivation.

In as much as AG lead pastors perceived a psychologically safe work environment as a motivating factor for ministerial staff, it is evident a lead pastor's role requires an aptitude for cultivating individual consideration and equity. The role of the lead pastor is to serve as a mentor, considering the individual, treating them justly, and creating an inclusive working environment where ideas matter, trust flourishes, and voices remain heard (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Sirota & Klein, 2013; Sirota et al., 2005). Participants shared the implications of creating a psychologically safe work environment to cultivate ministerial staff motivation.

Participants stated creating a safe place for the ministerial staff to innovate and try new things without fearing punishment was a motivating factor for their ministerial staff. Moreover, one participant in the study explained their church must allow their ministerial staff to have a voice since they do not compensate as competitively as the marketplace to foster motivation. Participants believed ministerial staff motivation increases when people have the space and capacity to learn from past successes and failures. Participants articulated further a psychologically safe workplace promoted ministerial staff motivation. The following section reveals how this study's findings validate the literature and discusses why AG lead pastors believed treating ministerial staff justly and offering them an appropriate compensation package motivated them.

Finding 6: Assemblies of God Lead Pastors Thought Treating Ministerial Staff Justly and Providing Them With an Appropriate Compensation Package Motivated Them

Of the 16 participants, 12 reported providing fair and equitable treatment to the ministerial staff motivated their pursuit of their objective. Participants provided a range of justifications based on their beliefs, encompassing various factors such as ensuring fair compensation for ministerial employees and addressing workload concerns. Daneshkohan et al. (2015) and Sirota and Klein (2013) explained treating employees fairly or equitably on the basic conditions of employment motivated employees. Equitable treatment in the workplace includes but is not limited to treating employees with respect, offering a reasonable workload, satisfactory compensation, and providing good fringe benefits (e.g., paid time off, health insurance, retirement incentives; Sirota et al., 2005).

Results obtained from study participants, and other research findings, indicated team members are more inclined to experience motivation and engagement in their jobs when they perceive fair treatment inside the workplace (Hassan, 2013; Sirota & Klein, 2013; Ushakov, 2021; Wu et al., 2013). Hassan (2013) argued perceptions of distributive fairness in the workplace resulted in job engagement and mitigated turnover. However, Hassan explored these constructs and connections mediated by organizational identification, limiting the consideration of other mediators like trust in leadership. The previous distinction could explain why participants perceived the effectiveness of fostering an equitable work environment influenced ministerial staff motivation, where high levels of leadership trust remained presumed.

Participants in the study elaborated on how their organization strives to compensate the ministerial staff appropriately, including vacation, retirement, and other work-related perks. Research confirms the importance for church-related employers to offer employees equitable benefits that serve as a motivational factor (Kasenga & Hurtig, 2014; Salah, 2016). Salah's (2016) findings were consistent with the current study's participants' beliefs, indicating specific employee benefits and reward systems favorably impact worker behavior, motivation, satisfaction, performance, and productivity. These characteristics came to be represented in participants' shared stories regarding organizational practices believed to influence ministerial staff motivation.

Finally, it remains challenging to draw any concrete or directional conclusions based on the results shown here, as ministerial staff perceptions of organizational fairness and equitable compensation may vary from church organization to church organization or district network. The next section presents the unexpected findings from this study resulting from data analysis.

Unexpected Findings

In contrast to the anticipated outcomes outlined in the interview protocol, the researcher uncovered six unforeseen discoveries during the research analysis, deriving from in-depth interviews. The first unforeseen finding revealed AG lead pastors perceived leadership development and investing in ministerial staff as essential to motivation. The surprising discovery in the research was the significance attributed to the development of ministerial staff as a source of motivation, even though the interview questions did not explicitly address this aspect. Another unexpected finding was emphasizing downward empowerment and ownership in motivating ministerial staff.

Downward empowerment and ownership as a perceived motivator proved unusual because it dealt with relinquishing leadership power to motivate the ministerial staff regarding important decision-making aspects. Newland et al. (2015) explored how transformational leadership motivates followers in untraditional business domains.

The findings revealed when followers sense power relinquishment from leaders, it becomes motivating as it acts in the team's best interest. The third surprising finding in the research data showed AG lead pastors believed a top-down, authoritarian leadership style demotivated the ministerial staff. Authoritarian leadership style as a perceived demotivator proved noteworthy since it suggested the ministerial staff became motivated when the top shared power with the lower levels of the organization regarding decision making. Additionally, the concept of shared power holds meaning due to the distinct position held by the AG lead pastor within the organization, wherein they serve as the primary decision maker regarding all administrative matters.

The over-prioritization and emphasis on teamwork became the fourth unexpected finding. During the interviews, all participants engaged in discussions about teamwork-related subjects. The interview method did not explicitly reference or address the concept of teamwork, however there was a noteworthy overemphasis and business-related knowledge of teamwork as a perceived motivation. Furthermore, the perceived importance of teamwork as a motivator was fascinating because of its association with the study's conceptual framework.

Similarly, the fifth unforeseen finding, psychological safety, was related to the conceptual framework that grounded the study. Psychological safety as a perceived motivator was highly unexpected since the language used, according to the researcher's

professional experience, reflected the typical terminology used by human resource representatives in the secular marketplace (Edmondson, 1999). Lastly, finding six revealed the precedence given to treating people fairly. Participants' perceptions of equity as a supposed motivator was unexpected due to the compatibility with the study's conceptual framework and its connection to biblical principles in managing relationships. The study found the frequent occurrence of the notion of workplace equity to have a favorable influence on motivation among ministerial employees, despite the underlying assumption that equitable treatment would already be inherent in ministerial office settings.

Implications for Action

The topic of how the leadership style of AG lead pastors affects the motivation of ministerial staff is an area with limited available data. The existing literature, to some extent, has overlooked the connection between lead pastor leadership style and ministerial staff motivation. The implications for this research study deliver additional information on AG lead pastors. The information provides a practical approach for other AG lead pastors considering practical leadership styles that cultivate ministerial staff motivation. Lead pastors must consider leadership practices as theorized by the full range leadership model (FRLM) and Sirota's three-factor theory.

Moreover, the research conducted in this study yields significant implications for church policymakers, practitioners, and academics within the AG community. First, transformational dimensions of leadership provide lead pastors with multiple methods of effective management that are measurable in church environments, as with business organizations (Bonem, 2011; Grandy, 2013). Next, effective cooperation with the

ministerial staff predicates itself on recognizing that the position of the lead pastor requires an orientation towards fostering a sense of interaction through the demonstration of idealized influence. Idealized influence implies a discernible distinction between a lead pastor who exemplifies actions that match the church's ideals and garners the ministerial staff's admiration, respect, and trust. Lastly, the importance of psychological safety in the church office is relevant. One implication is church policymakers may benefit from adopting a cultural framework that stresses the integration of psychological safety compliance with the church's organizational values.

Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of these findings appears in the subsequent part, revealing the meaningful implications for effective pastoral leadership practices and strategies that may positively impact the motivation of ministerial staff.

Implication 1: Assemblies of God District Networks and Church Policymakers Should Prioritize Practical Transformational Leadership Training

AG district networks and church policymakers must prioritize implementing practical transformational leadership (TL) training based on the premise that serving as a lead pastor requires a propensity for intellectual stimulation. Participant P exemplified the significance of prioritizing training by emphasizing the concept that "[lead pastors] can invest in them [the ministerial staff] and provide . . . resources and training that they need to enter seasons with knowledge and understandings of the times." As such, the researcher recommends AG district networks and church policymakers prioritize implementing real-world TL training for lead pastors within their districts. Through practical TL training, AG district networks and church policymakers have the potential to facilitate intellectual stimulation among AG lead pastors, improving the development of

their followers' abilities and skills, as well as aiding them in attaining elevated levels of motivation (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Furthermore, based on the conclusion that the role of a lead pastor requires an inclination towards intellectual stimulation, the researcher advises AG district networks and church policymakers to prioritize introducing real-world TL training for lead pastors in their respective districts (Fogarty, 2013). AG church networks and church policymakers should contemplate hiring TL training consultants outside ministerial leadership structures and integrating TL approaches found in the marketplace considered best-in-class to increase the motivation of their staff. Through TL real-world training, leaders in various organizations within the AG can collaborate harmoniously to prioritize the growth of their respective church organizations effectively.

Implication 2: Assemblies of God District Networks and Church Policymakers Must Emphasize Teamwork and Advance Growth Areas in the Organization

It becomes necessary for AG district networks and church policymakers to place emphasis on teamwork and promote growth areas within the organization. Participant G presented the results of a previous staff survey and elucidated that their ministerial staff maintains high levels of motivation through collaborative efforts towards common objectives, functioning as a cohesive and efficient team. Effective teamwork bases itself on the understanding that the role of the AG lead pastor necessitates an inclination toward nurturing camaraderie through idealized influence. Based on the examination of the data and the researcher's expertise in the field, the researcher proposes AG lead pastors consider conducting surveys of their ministerial staff, perhaps using a 360-degree

methodology, to assess the present level of team cohesiveness and address areas of potential development within the organization. The 360-degree process involves gathering feedback and self-evaluation data about managers, subordinates, and peers, and using this information to enhance organizational outcomes and boost staff motivation (Vuong & Nguyen, 2022).

AG district networks and church policymakers can implement a 360-degree assessment system with the ministerial staff to receive confidential and anonymous evaluations to improve team effectiveness. By doing so, the lead pastor, through idealized influence, promotes camaraderie by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Creating a team-focused work environment, emphasizing teamwork and camaraderie, will strengthen followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Sirota & Klein, 2013; Sirota et al., 2005).

Implication 3: Assemblies of God District Networks and Church Policymakers Should Establish Comprehensive Organizational Policies That Improve a Psychologically Safe Environment

District networks and church policymakers should establish comprehensive organizational policies aimed at enhancing a psychologically safe environment. The aforesaid recommendation centers on the understanding that the position of a lead pastor requires the ability to promote individualized consideration and equity actively. Participant A provided an illustrative instance showcasing the application of

individualized consideration and equity within their church leadership context, emphasizing the significance of church leaders in fostering such principles explaining the practice of creating “space for leaders [the ministerial staff] to succeed and fail” and learn as much as possible from it.

Consequently, a recommendation from the previously mentioned implications involves AG lead pastors collaborating with their corresponding human resource departments to develop robust organizational regulations that promote a psychologically secure atmosphere. Therefore, the findings suggest AG networks and church policymakers should implement a formalized process for communicating new ideas and addressing complaints. Based on the researcher’s analysis of the data and professional experience, the researcher recommends AG district networks and church policymakers contemplate the establishment of a continuous, web-based, transparent feedback platform that facilitates constructive interaction with the ministerial staff. Some other examples include the implementation of an anonymous hotline where the ministerial staff can report safety concerns, observations, improvement ideas, employee conflicts, perceived discrimination, perceived harassment, perceived bullying, and perceived financial fraud.

Although the implementation of a web-based platform remains currently restricted to specific regions in terms of data availability, there is potential for individual churches to get directional benefits from the research findings. By adopting enhanced feedback mechanisms that align with the principles of psychological safety, AG lead pastors overseeing churches in different locations across the United States can establish a professional environment that embodies personalized attention and fairness (Avolio,

1999; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Sirota & Klein, 2013; Sirota et al., 2005).

Future Recommendations

As this qualitative study concentrated on the lived experiences of AG lead pastors in the northwest region of the AG, future researchers should consider exploring the perceptions of AG lead pastors in the other respective AG regional networks to determine the similarities and distinctions with this study's findings. At the time of this research study, the northwest region of the AG retained the highest number of ministers compared to the other AG geographic locations in the United States. As such, it is crucial to understand how other AG lead pastors in different networks perceive the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation.

Because this qualitative research design focused on the lived experiences of AG lead pastors, future researchers should consider a mixed-methods or quantitative methodology. Mixed-methods or quantitative approaches could provide researchers with quantitative data, giving insight into the types of lead pastor leadership styles that ministerial staff perceive to be highly motivating. Examining and investigating how the ministerial staff perceives the influence of their lead pastor's leadership style on ministerial staff motivation becomes necessary using a different methodological procedure.

A third recommendation for future researchers includes investigating and researching other faith-based organizations to explore if there are consistencies or inconsistencies in the data analysis across denominational boundaries (e.g., the Roman and Eastern Catholic rites, Baptist traditions, nondenominational churches). A parallel

qualitative study exploring the lived experiences of lead pastor leadership styles and ministerial staff motivation in various faith convictions would be highly insightful.

A fourth recommendation for future researchers is to extend the study by interviewing the ministerial staff in addition to the lead pastors of the church. By interviewing both the lead pastors and the ministerial staff, researchers can cross-analyze the data between the lead pastors and the ministerial staff, validating the perceptions of lead pastors and the ministerial staff.

A final suggestion for prospective researchers is to employ a qualitative research design in cultures that place considerable emphasis on high and low power distance. It is essential to comprehend effective leadership approaches between lead pastors and the ministerial staff in cultural contexts characterized by a large power distance, as adherents tend to value and uphold social structures that maintain substantial power and hierarchical disparities.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

This section provides remarks and reflections regarding those whom this study impacts the most: AG ministerial staff and their families working tirelessly to support the church's mission. Participants in this research shared incredible life experiences that the results could not fully encapsulate. Their stories shed light on how participants understand their perceptions of their leadership style and the motivation of ministerial staff. AG lead pastors without adequate knowledge about how their leadership approach supports ministerial staff motivation assume motivational factors exclusively stem from vocational calling. However, this research suggests otherwise. This study and the existing literature on the topic reveal ministerial staff, much like employees in the marketplace,

require effective, transformational leadership approaches and practices that conjure enthusiasm and motivation.

During the interviews, there were countless moments when participants' experiences produced strong emotions that amazed the researcher. Participants' perceptions about their lives helped provide the researcher with the importance of this study and the need to do more to motivate AG ministerial staff to pursue and achieve greatness. There is limited research on the demographics of this study. Still, nothing is more valuable than listening to people's experiences and speculating on how I can support ministerial service and motivation.

Although this study nominally contributes to the literature on the subject, it has had a lasting impact on the researcher's perspective. There remains an unyielding commitment to partner with church leaders and district networks and leverage these findings to inspire other leaders to acquire the leadership skills needed to motivate their ministerial staff effectively. We should celebrate lead pastors who remain silent but work tirelessly to achieve leadership excellence, acknowledging their contributions and dedication.

To the AG lead pastors in the northwest region who voluntarily participated in this study: your stories and ministry successes will inspire others to read this work. They will keep the researcher, and future investigators, motivated to produce more. I became humbled and appreciative that each AG lead pastor allotted time in their busy schedules to meet with me to interview. I hope I accurately captured their perceptions and sentimentalities in sharing their stories.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT SELECTION CRITERIA CHECKLIST

Northwest UNIVERSITY

A Qualitative Study Exploring Lead Pastor Perceptions of the Influence of their Leadership Style on Ministerial Staff Motivation

Michael P. Freitas, Ed.D. (Doctoral Candidate)

PARTICIPANT SELECTION CRITERIA CHECKLIST

RESEARCH SCOPE: Welcome to a qualitative studying exploring lead pastor perceptions of the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. This research study examines the connection between pastoral leadership style and ministerial staff motivation. Michael Freitas, a doctoral candidate, at Northwest University is conducting this study.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please help identify and recommend a lead pastor in your district network that meets the selection criteria below. Once completed, please provide the name and best contact information for the recommended pastor below:

SELECTION BENCHMARK CHECKLIST: (Must meet all)

- ☐ Is licensed or ordained with the AG?
- ☐ Has at least five (5) ministry experience years as a lead pastor?
- ☐ Between the ages of 35 and 60?
- ☐ The lead pastor of a council-affiliated church (e.g., the church is governed by the Deacon Board)?
- ☐ Has ministry staff supervisory responsibilities for at least three (3) ministerial staff?

LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS CRITERIA CHECKLIST: (Check a minimum of four that apply to the nominated lead pastor)

- ☐ Has received AG Coaching within the last five (5) years?
- ☐ Is a Certified AG Coach (AGC); Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3?
- ☐ Evidence of other leadership training through the AG Network (e.g., conferences, workshops, etc.)?
- ☐ Displays a transformational leadership approach grounded in these four pillars:

(Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

Examples:

- *Idealized Influence:* The lead pastor cultivates camaraderie through idealized influence by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

- *Inspirational Motivation:* The lead pastor inspires followers to take calculated risks and achieve extraordinary results to accomplish greatness (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

- *Intellectual Stimulation:* The lead pastor develops followers' skillsets and abilities that help them successfully attain higher levels of motivation as well as self-efficacy (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

- *Individualized Consideration:* The lead pastor acts as a coach, considering all individuals to create an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment where ideas matter, trust abounds, and voices are heard (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

☐ Recognition by peers for leadership excellence in one or more of the following ways?

Examples:

- The lead pastor has been formally recognized with leadership awards from the district network or other organizations.
- The lead pastor has and had served as a presbyter in their respective district network.
- The lead pastor has other formal recognition that denotes leadership excellence (e.g., promotions, committee opportunities, positive feedback, etc.).
- The lead pastor is a member of any professional or pastoral leadership organization involving leadership quality and aptitude.

Please recommend the lead pastor in your district network who exhibits the benchmarks and selection criteria above:

_____	_____	_____
Name of Lead Pastor Recommendation	Phone	Email

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Northwest UNIVERSITY

A Qualitative Study Exploring Lead Pastor Perceptions of the Influence of their Leadership Style on Ministerial Staff Motivation

Michael P. Freitas, Ed.D. (Doctoral Candidate)

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR THE RESEARCHER

Interviewee: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____
Interviewer: _____ Assigned Pseudonym: _____

Research questions:

1. What one thing do you love the most about your role as a lead pastor?
2. Can you tell me about your history with the organization?
3. How do you understand the meaning of leadership?
4. What leadership qualities do you possess that prioritize ministerial staff motivation? Or what do ministerial staff see in your leadership style that influences motivation?
5. Tell me about a time when your leadership style was most helpful in motivating your ministerial staff?
6. Can you describe an example of when your leadership style was least effective in motivating your ministerial staff?
7. What is your organization's strategy to retain top talent in your ministerial staff?
8. How is conflict addressed with the ministerial staff?
9. In what manner do you see a connection between your leadership style and the motivation of ministerial staff?
10. Is there anything you would like to add that I have missed?

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF INVITATION

Northwest UNIVERSITY

A Qualitative Study Exploring Lead Pastor Perceptions of the Influence of their Leadership Style on Ministerial Staff Motivation

Michael P. Freitas, Ed.D. (Doctoral Candidate)

LETTER OF INVITATION

Dear Prospective Study Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study because you meet the selection criteria. The researcher of this study is Michael Freitas, a doctoral candidate in Northwest University's Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. Approximately 16 Assemblies of God (AG) lead pastors from the AG Northwest region will be registered in this study. Participation should require around one (1) hour of your time in the form of an interview and is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalties.

Purpose: The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to explore lead pastor perceptions of the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. This study explores the lived experiences of research participants and encapsulates the essence of their experiences to understand better how pastoral leadership style influences ministerial staff motivation. Results from the study will be reviewed in a doctoral dissertation.

Sample Population: The selected study population includes Assemblies of God pastors who lead churches in the AG Northwest region of the United States. This includes ministers associated with the Northwest Ministry Network, Oregon Ministry Network, Alaska Ministry Network, Montana Ministry Network, Wyoming Ministry Network, and the Southern Idaho Ministry Network. Criteria to participate in the study have been established to improve the chances of a quality sample population. The chosen criteria are based on participants who exhibit meaningful experiences of the phenomenon being studied and demonstrate the current AG pastoral leadership proficiencies and standards. Therefore, the study participant criteria will include model lead pastors based on demonstrating criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and at least four (4) of the remaining criteria (e.g., 6-10). See below for the study criteria:

1. Participant is licensed or ordained with the AG at the time of this study.
2. Participant has a minimum of five (5) years of ministry experience as a lead pastor.
3. Participant is between 35 and 60 years of age.
4. Participant is the lead pastor of a council-affiliated church (e.g., the church is governed by the Deacon Board).
5. Participant supervises at least three (3) ministerial staff.
6. Participant has received AG Coaching within the last five (5) years.
7. Participant is a Certified AG Coach (AGC); Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3.
8. Participant displays evidence of other leadership training through the AG Network (e.g., conferences, workshops, etc.).

9. Participant demonstrates a transformational leadership approach grounded in these four pillars: (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

    a. **Examples:**

        i. *Idealized Influence:* The lead pastor cultivates camaraderie through idealized influence by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

        ii. *Inspirational Motivation:* The lead pastor inspires followers to take calculated risks and achieve extraordinary results to accomplish greatness (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

        iii. *Intellectual Stimulation:* The lead pastor develops followers' skillsets and abilities that help them successfully attain higher levels of motivation as well as self-efficacy (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

        iv. *Individualized Consideration:* The lead pastor acts as a coach, considering all individuals to create an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment where ideas matter, trust abounds, and voices are heard (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

10. Participant has been recognized by peers in one or more of the following ways:

    a. **Examples:**

        i. The lead pastor has been formally recognized with leadership awards from the district network or other organizations.

        ii. The lead pastor has or had served as a presbyter in their respective district network.

        iii. The lead pastor has other formal recognition that denotes leadership excellence (e.g., promotions, committee opportunities, positive feedback, etc.).

        iv. The lead pastor is a member of any professional or pastoral leadership organizational involving leadership quality and aptitude.

Procedure: To be a voluntary participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview regarding your pastoral leadership practices that promote or detract from motivating ministerial staff. The researcher will use an interview protocol to guide the study during the

interview. **There will be no alternatives to the research protocols other than the one mentioned above**. Zoom technology will be used to video-record the interviews. Zoom is a virtual communications platform that entitles users to connect securely via video, audio, telephone, etc. All data collected and submitted during the interview will be protected by Zoom's security features. For example, before the interview begins, you will receive a secure Zoom meeting ID requiring a meeting passcode. In addition, another security protocol will be implemented before the meeting, where the researcher will use the virtual waiting room to authorize your participation. Once the participant is verified, authorized, and accepted from the virtual waiting room, the meeting host will employ in-meeting security options to lock the meeting from outside disruptions. All recorded data in Zoom will be stored and password-protected on Zoom's Video Cloud Recording Storage. The researcher will implement this security feature by enabling Zoom's video cloud recording and audio transcripts, which will both be stored encrypted.

Risks, Inconveniences, and Discomforts: The Northwest University Institutional Review Board has approved this study. No deception is involved, and participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. It is expected that participation in this study will provide me with no more than minimal risk or discomfort, which means that I should not experience it as any more troubling than in my everyday daily life. However, there is always the chance that there are some unexpected risks. The foreseeable risks in this study include an accidental disclosure of your private information or discomfort by answering embarrassing questions. If I feel uncomfortable or distressed, I can tell the researcher, and he will ask me if I want to continue. If the content of the interview causes me significant distress, I can contact the crisis hotline at (800) 273-8255, www.psychologtoday.com, or text 988. Participation in this study is voluntary, and I may elect to discontinue the study at any time and for any reason. I may print this consent form for my records. By interviewing, I am permitting the use of my responses in this research study.

Potential Benefits: Although you will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, your participation will help improve knowledge about how pastoral leadership styles and practices help motivate ministry staff. Your participation may also benefit administrators and pastoral staff at other organizations attempting to become more innovative in their approaches.

Confidentiality: The researcher involved with the study will keep my personal information collected for the study strictly confidential. Any information obtained from this study that can be identified with me will remain confidential and be disclosed only with my permission or as required by law or court order. My identity will be kept strictly anonymous by assigning a pseudonym. All data, research artifacts, and transcripts with pseudonyms are kept in secure locations and are password-protected files on cloud-based programs.

Respectfully,

Michael P. Freitas

Michael P. Freitas, Ed. D (Student)
Northwest University
Center for Leadership Studies
6710 Building #250

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHICS: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Northwest UNIVERSITY

A Qualitative Study Exploring Lead Pastor Perceptions of the Influence of their Leadership Style on Ministerial Staff Motivation

Michael P. Freitas, Ed.D. (Doctoral Student)

DEMOGRAPHICS: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

The following demographics, Race/Ethnicity, and Gender are the standardized, NU-approved categories. Any variation from these categories is based on the APA 7th Edition. Involvement in providing participant demographics is entirely optional. However, the information below will help the researcher validate research participation.

Race/Ethnicity[1]

Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Hispanic/Latino origin
- ☐ White/European American
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Aboriginal
- ☐ Other: _____

Gender[2]

Please check:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

[1]APA Manual, 7th Edition, Section 5.7
[2]APA Manual, 7th Edition, Section 5.5, p.138
[3]APA Manual, 7th Edition, Section 5.3
[4]Constitution & Bylaws of the Assemblies of God

Age[3]

- ☐ 35-40
- ☐ 41-46
- ☐ 47-52
- ☐ 53-58
- ☐ 59-60

AG Credential Level[4]

- ☐ Licensed Minister
- ☐ Ordained Minister

AG Ministry Network/Region

- ☐ Alaska Ministry Network
- ☐ Montana Ministry Network
- ☐ Northwest Ministry Network
- ☐ Oregon Ministry Network
- ☐ Southern Idaho Ministry Network
- ☐ Wyoming Ministry Network

Ministerial Staff Supervised:

- ☐ 3-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11 or More

Years of Experience as Lead Pastor:

- ☐ 3-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11 or More

Accountable to the Board of Deacons

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other (e.g., District Network, etc.)

[1]APA Manual, 7th Edition, Section 5.7
[2]APA Manual, 7th Edition, Section 5.5, p.138
[3]APA Manual, 7th Edition, Section 5.3
[4]Constitution & Bylaws of the Assemblies of God

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT

Northwest UNIVERSITY

A Qualitative Study Exploring Lead Pastor Perceptions of the Influence of their Leadership Style on Ministerial Staff Motivation

Michael P. Freitas, Ed.D. (Doctoral Candidate)

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Welcome to a qualitative studying exploring lead pastor perceptions of the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. This research study examines the connection between pastoral leadership style and ministerial staff motivation. Michael Freitas, a doctoral candidate, at Northwest University is conducting this study.

To qualify for participation, you must meet the criteria listed below. Completion of this study takes approximately one (1) hour of your time in the form of an interview. The interview will take place virtually using Zoom. Your responses will be video-recorded in Zoom and treated confidentially. Your interview responses will not be linked to any identifying information about you should you agree to participate in this study. In addition, you be asked to complete a Study Participant Demographic questionnaire, which includes questions related to age, race, gender, etc. The questionnaire will be administered by the researcher.

All data collected and submitted during the interview will be protected by Zoom's security features. For example, before the interview begins, the participant will receive a secure Zoom meeting ID requiring a meeting passcode. Also, during the meeting, the researcher will implement in-meeting security options as the meeting host to lock the meeting from outside disruptions. All data recorded in Zoom will be stored and protected on Zoom's Video Cloud Recording Storage and password-protected. The researcher will implement this security feature by enabling Zoom's video cloud recording and audio transcripts, which will be stored encrypted. See https://explore.zoom.us/en/trust/security/ for more information.

Sample Population: The selected study population includes Assemblies of God (AG) pastors who lead churches in the AG Northwest region of the United States. This includes ministers associated with the Northwest Ministry Network, Oregon Ministry Network, Alaska Ministry Network, Montana Ministry Network, Wyoming Ministry Network, and the Southern Idaho Ministry Network. Criteria to participate in the study have been established to improve the chances of a quality sample population. The chosen criteria are based on participants who exhibit meaningful experiences of the phenomenon being studied and demonstrate the current AG pastoral leadership proficiencies and standards. Therefore, the study participant criteria will include model lead pastors based on demonstrating criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and at least four (4) of the remaining criteria (e.g., 6-10). See below for the study criteria:

1. Participant is licensed or ordained with the AG at the time of this study.
2. Participant has a minimum of five (5) years of ministry experience as a lead pastor.
3. Participant is between 35 and 60 years of age.
4. Participant is the lead pastor of a council-affiliated church (e.g., the church is governed by the Deacon Board).

5. Participant supervises at least three (3) ministerial staff.
6. Participant has received AG Coaching within the last five (5) years.
7. Participant is a Certified AG Coach (AGC); Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3.
8. Participant displays evidence of other leadership training through the AG Network (e.g., conferences, workshops, etc.).
9. Participant demonstrates a transformational leadership approach grounded in these four pillars: (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

    a. **Examples:**

        i. *Idealized Influence:* the lead pastor cultivates camaraderie through idealized influence by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

        ii. *Inspirational Motivation:* the lead pastor inspires followers to take calculated risks and achieve extraordinary results to accomplish greatness (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

        iii. *Intellectual Stimulation:* the lead pastor develops followers' skillsets and abilities that help them successfully attain higher levels of motivation as well as self-efficacy (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

        iv. *Individualized Consideration:* the lead pastor acts as a coach, considering all individuals to create an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment where ideas matter, trust abounds, and voices are heard (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

10. Participant has been recognized by peers in one or more of the following ways:

    a. **Examples:**

        i. The lead pastor has been formally recognized with leadership awards from the district network or other organizations.

        ii. The lead pastor has and had served as a presbyter in their respective district network.

        iii. The lead pastor has other formal recognition that denotes leadership excellence (e.g., promotions, committee opportunities, positive feedback, etc.).

        iv. The lead pastor is a member of any professional or pastoral leadership organizational involving leadership quality and aptitude.

Statement of Understanding: By participating in this study, I understand that:

a) **Voluntary Status:** I am being invited to participate in a research study conducted by the researcher identified above. I am being asked to volunteer since I meet the requirements for participation in this study. Participation is voluntary, so I can choose whether I want to participate. I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Before making my decision, I will need to know what the study is about, the possible risks and benefits of being in this study, and what I will have to do in this study. The researcher will discuss the study and give this consent form to read. I will be asked to sign this form if I decide to participate.

b) **Purpose:** The study in which I am being asked to participate is designed to explore lead pastor perceptions of the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation.

c) **Procedure:** To be a voluntary participant in this study, I will be asked to participate in an interview regarding my pastoral leadership practices that promote or detract from motivating ministerial staff. The researcher will use an interview protocol to guide the study during the interview. **There will be no alternatives to the research protocols other than the one mentioned above.** Moreover, I fully understand that I will be video-recorded via Zoom and the security involved.

d) Commitment and Compensation: My total participation in the study will take approximately one (1) hour. I will not receive financial compensation for participation in the study.

e) Possible Risks & Benefits: I understand that there are possible risks and benefits associated with this study. The Northwest University Institutional Review Board has approved this study. No deception is involved, and participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. It is expected that participation in this study will provide me with no more than minimal risk or discomfort, which means that I should not experience it as any more troubling than in my everyday daily life. However, there is always the chance that there are some unexpected risks. The foreseeable risks in this study include an accidental disclosure of your private information or discomfort by answering embarrassing questions. If I feel uncomfortable or distressed, I can tell the researcher, and he will ask me if I want to continue. If the content of the interview causes me significant distress, I can contact the crisis hotline at (800) 273-8255, www.psychologtoday.com, or text 988. Participation in this study is voluntary, and I may elect to discontinue the study at any time and for any reason. I may print this consent form for my records. By interviewing, I am permitting the use of my responses in this research study.

Although I will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, my participation will help improve knowledge about how pastoral leadership styles and practices help motivate ministerial staff. My participation may also benefit administrators and pastoral staff at other organizations attempting to become more innovative in their approaches.

f) Confidentiality & Consent: The researcher involved with the study will keep my personal information collected for the study strictly confidential. Any information obtained from this study that can be identified with me will remain confidential and be disclosed only with my permission or as required by law or court order. My identity will be kept strictly anonymous by assigning a pseudonym. All data, research artifacts, and

transcripts with pseudonyms are kept in secure locations and are password-protected files on cloud-based programs.

g) Alternative to Research Protocol: The researcher will guide the interview using a pre-determined Interview Protocol. Each participant will be asked ten (10) open-ended questions intentionally to help explore and investigate the research topic in greater depth. **There is no alternative to the research protocol.**

h) Data Security, Storage, and Destruction Plan: Information collected about you will be stored on multiple cloud servers, including the researcher's NU 365 Microsoft OneDrive, DocuSign's cloud server connected to OneDrive, Zoom's Video Cloud Recording Storage, Otter's Cloud Storage, and NVIVO, which are password-protected and requires 2FA (two-factor authentication). This includes demographic forms, interview transcripts, and other materials connected to the study. The consent form will be electronically sent to you via DocuSign. Once the researcher retrieves the signed consent forms electronically, the researcher will sign them using DocuSign and store them in his email inbox under a DocuSign folder. The storage email inbox is connected to the researcher's cloud-based NU 365 Microsoft OneDrive, is password-protected, and requires 2FA (two-factor authentication). Only the researcher can access the storage email inbox from their home computer. The computer is a Mac Desktop safely stored in the researcher's home office, locked by a key, and password projected. All files and forms with the original signatures associated with the research project will be securely stored on the researcher's NU 365 Microsoft OneDrive for (3) years and then destroyed per federal IRB regulations (Office for Human Research Protections, 2018). The researcher is the only person with access to the home computer during the (3) years of storage, which will be locked in a home office, protected by password and 2FA (two-factor authentication). Only the researcher will review these research records, and they will protect the secrecy (confidentiality) of these records. Your research records will not be released without your permission unless required by law or court order. The researcher will take appropriate steps to protect any information they collect about you. The results of this research will be published or presented in the researcher's doctoral dissertation. There is no plan for other scholarly dissemination. **As such, all files/forms and documents associated with the study will be destroyed on 3/1/2026. Therefore, all files/forms and documents associated with the study will be disposed of by the researcher, who will permanently delete all files/forms and documents, which will be irreversible. No hard copies or hard drive disks will be connected to this research study.**

This document explains your rights as a research subject. If you have questions regarding your participation in this research study or have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please get in touch with the faculty supervisor: Dr. Rowlanda Cawthon, Dean of the College of Business, at rowlanda.cawthon@northwestu.edu. Concerning your rights or treatment as a research subject, you may contact Professor Cheri Goit at irb@northwestu.edu.

New Information: During this study, the principal researcher may discover information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in the study. The principal researcher will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

Conflict of Interest: The principal investigator has complied with the Northwest University Potential Conflict of Interest in Research policy.

Consent: I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalization. I understand the procedures described above and fully understand the rights of a potential subject in a research study involving people as subjects. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this consent form. Before beginning the interview, please read this consent form in full. If you understand all information contained in this form and agree to participate freely in this study, please click the "I Agree" box below. You may exit the survey at any time.

☐ I agree to participate ☐ I do not agree to participate

Participant Name Printed	Participant Name Signed	Date

I explained the research to the subject or legal representative and answered all their questions. I believe they understand the information described in this document and freely consent to participate.

Signature of Principal Researcher	Date	Time

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APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PHONE COMMUNICATION

Northwest UNIVERSITY

A Qualitative Study Exploring Lead Pastor Perceptions of the Influence of their Leadership Style on Ministerial Staff Motivation

Michael P. Freitas, Ed.D. (Doctoral Candidate)

INTERVIEW PHONE COMMUNICATION SCRIPT FOR THE RESEARCHER

Phone Script:

May I please speak with_____?

My name is Michael Freitas, and I am a doctoral candidate at Northwest University. I am conducting a qualitative study exploring lead pastor perceptions of the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. This qualitative study explores the lived experiences of lead pastors in the Northwest region of the Assemblies of God regarding the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. Therefore, the study objective will be to fill the gap in the literature that overlooks the perceived impact of pastoral leadership styles on ministerial staff motivation.

I am looking for pastors in your District Network who fit the study criteria. Would you happen to have fifteen minutes where I could walk you through the study population criteria?

1. **If YES,** go through the study selection criteria checklist (see APPENDIX A and read them read the phone script below):
    a. The population criteria are as follows:
        i. The chosen criteria are based on participants who exhibit meaningful experiences of the phenomenon being studied and demonstrate the current AG pastoral leadership proficiencies and standards. Therefore, the study participant criteria will include model lead pastors based on demonstrating criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and at least four (4) of the remaining criteria (e.g., 6-10). See below for the study criteria:

            1. Participant is licensed or ordained with the AG at the time of this study.
            2. Participant has a minimum of five (5) years of ministry experience as a lead pastor.
            3. Participant is between 35 and 60 years of age.
            4. Participant is the lead pastor of a council-affiliated church (e.g., the church is governed by the Deacon Board).
            5. Participant supervises at least three (3) ministerial staff.

6. Participant has received AG Coaching within the last five (5) years
7. Participant is a Certified AG Coach (AGC); Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3.
8. Participant displays evidence of other leadership training through the AG Network (e.g., conferences, workshops, etc.).
9. Participant demonstrates a transformational leadership approach grounded in these four pillars: (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

    a. Examples:

        i. Idealized Influence: The lead pastor cultivates camaraderie through idealized influence by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

        ii. Inspirational Motivation: The lead pastor inspires followers to take calculated risks and achieve extraordinary results to accomplish greatness (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

        iii. Intellectual Stimulation: The lead pastor develops followers' skillsets and abilities that help them successfully attain higher levels of motivation as well as self-efficacy (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

        iv. Individualized Consideration: The lead pastor acts as a coach, considering all individuals to create an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment where ideas matter, trust abounds, and voices are heard (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

10. Participant has been recognized by peers in one or more of the following ways:

    a. Examples:

i. The lead pastor has been formally recognized with leadership awards from the district network or other organizations.

ii. The lead pastor has and had served as a presbyter in their respective district network.

iii. The lead pastor has other formal recognition that denotes leadership excellence (e.g., promotions, committee opportunities, positive feedback, etc.).

iv. The lead pastor is a member of any professional or pastoral leadership organizational involving leadership quality and aptitude.

b. Thank you for providing me the contact information for lead pastor_____. I will email you (see Appendix D) the Selection Criteria Checklist (see Appendix A) via DocuSign, where you could assist in recommending the lead pastor. This is greatly appreciated; thank you.
c. Once you receive the email via DocuSign, I would greatly appreciate it if you could fill it out and email it back to me. Thank you.

2. **If NO,** ask for a better time to discuss.
   a. When would be a better time to call back to discuss the study?

Thank you for your time today_____. It was great speaking with you. Bye.

APPENDIX G

DOCUSIGN FORM

Dear "__NAME OF AG DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE_____" at the

Assemblies of God "_NAME OF DISTRICT_____" Network,

My name is Michael Freitas, and I am a doctoral candidate at Northwest University. I am conducting a qualitative study exploring lead pastor perceptions of the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. By exploring the perceptions of lead pastors, this study focuses on delivering insight into what leadership styles lead pastors found most helpful to motivate their ministerial staff. After this research is complete, I expect to understand what pastoral leadership styles and approaches motivate ministerial staff successfully to recommend actionable insights.

I am reaching out to you to gain access to potential study participants who are model lead pastors in your district network meeting specific study criteria. The chosen criteria are based on participants who exhibit meaningful experiences of the phenomenon being studied and demonstrate the current Assemblies of God (AG) pastoral leadership proficiencies and standards. Therefore, the study participant criteria will include model lead pastors based on demonstrating criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and at least four (4) of the remaining criteria (e.g., 6-10). See below for the study criteria:

1. Participant is licensed or ordained with the AG at the time of this study.
2. Participant has a minimum of five (5) years of ministry experience as a lead pastor.
3. Participant is between 35 and 60 years of age.
4. Participant is the lead pastor of a council-affiliated church (e.g., the church is governed by the Deacon Board).
5. Participant supervises at least three (3) ministerial staff.
6. Participant has received AG Coaching within the last five (5) years.
7. Participant is a Certified AG Coach (AGC); Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3.
8. Participant displays evidence of other leadership training through the AG Network (e.g., conferences, workshops, etc.).
9. Participant demonstrates a transformational leadership approach grounded in these four pillars: (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

    a. **Examples:**

i. *Idealized Influence:* The lead pastor cultivates camaraderie through idealized influence by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

ii. *Inspirational Motivation:* The lead pastor inspires followers to take calculated risks and achieve extraordinary results to accomplish greatness (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

iii. *Intellectual Stimulation:* The lead pastor develops followers' skillsets and abilities that help them successfully attain higher levels of motivation as well as self-efficacy (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

iv. *Individualized Consideration:* The lead pastor acts as a coach, considering all individuals to create an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment where ideas matter, trust abounds, and voices are heard (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

10. Participant has been recognized by peers in one or more of the following ways:

    a. **Examples:**

        i. The lead pastor has been formally recognized with leadership awards from the district network or other organizations.

        ii. The lead pastor has and had served as a presbyter in their respective district network.

        iii. The lead pastor has other formal recognition that denotes leadership excellence (e.g., promotions, committee opportunities, positive feedback, etc.).

        iv. The lead pastor is a member of any professional or pastoral leadership organization involving leadership quality and aptitude.

If you could kindly assist me with identifying and providing me access to model lead pastors in your AG district network that meet the criteria above, please follow the instructions below:

1. First, if you have any questions or concerns about the research project or seek further clarification, please contact the researcher at (503) 989-9805.
2. Please open the attached PDF document via DocuSign titled APPENDIX A: Dissertation Selection Criteria Checklist.
3. Please use this form to recommend lead pastors in your AG district network. Please use one form per lead pastor.
4. Once completed, please return the form via DocuSign to the researcher (Michael P. Freitas) at Michael.freitas@northwestu.edu.

Promise of Confidentiality

The researcher involved with the study will keep my personal information collected for the study strictly confidential. Any information obtained from this study that can be identified with me will remain confidential and be disclosed only with my permission or as required by law or court order. My identity will be kept strictly anonymous by assigning a pseudonym. All data, research artifacts, and transcripts with pseudonyms are kept in secure locations and are password-protected files on cloud-based programs.

Blessings,

Michael P. Freitas

Michael P. Freitas, Ed. D (Student)
Northwest University
Email: Michael.freitas@northwestu.edu.
Mobile: 503-989-9805
Center for Leadership Studies
5520 108th Ave. NE
Kirkland, WA 98033
503.989.9805

APPENDIX H

PARTICIPANT EMAIL

Dear Reverend "_____,"

My name is Michael Freitas, and I am a doctoral candidate at the Center for Leadership Studies (CFLS) at Northwest University. I am conducting a qualitative study exploring lead pastor perceptions of the influence of their leadership style on ministerial staff motivation. By exploring the perceptions of lead pastors, my research focuses on delivering insight into what leadership styles lead pastors found most helpful to motivate their ministerial staff. After this research is complete, I expect to understand what pastoral leadership styles and approaches motivate ministerial staff successfully to recommend actionable insights.

I am reaching out to you because "___NAME OF ASSEMBLIES OF GOD DISTRICT REPRSENTATIVE___" of the Assemblies of God "___NAME OF DISTRICT____" identified and recommended you as a potential study participant since you most likely meet the study criteria below. The chosen criteria are based on participants who exhibit meaningful experiences of the phenomenon being studied and demonstrate the current AG pastoral leadership proficiencies and standards. Therefore, the study participant criteria will include model lead pastors based on demonstrating criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and at least four (4) of the remaining criteria (e.g., 6-10). See below for the study criteria:

1. Participant is licensed or ordained with the AG at the time of this study.
2. Participant has a minimum of five (5) years of ministry experience as a lead pastor.
3. Participant is between 35 and 60 years of age.
4. Participant is the lead pastor of a council-affiliated church (e.g., the church is governed by the Deacon Board).
5. Participant supervises at least three (3) ministerial staff.
6. Participant has received AG Coaching within the last five (5) years.
7. Participant is a Certified AG Coach (AGC); Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3.
8. Participant displays evidence of other leadership training through the AG Network (e.g., conferences, workshops, etc.).
9. Participant demonstrates a transformational leadership approach grounded in these four pillars: (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

    a. **Examples:**

i. *Idealized Influence:* The lead pastor cultivates camaraderie through idealized influence by awakening followers with a shared vision, sense of mission, need for realization, belonging, and affiliation (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

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iv. *Individualized Consideration:* The lead pastor acts as a coach, considering all individuals to create an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment where ideas matter, trust abounds, and voices are heard (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2015).

10. Participant has been recognized by peers in one or more of the following ways:

    a. **Examples:**

        i. The lead pastor has been formally recognized with leadership awards from the district network or other organizations.

        ii. The lead pastor has and had served as a presbyter in their respective district network.

        iii. The lead pastor has other formal recognition that denotes leadership excellence (e.g., promotions, committee opportunities, positive feedback, etc.).

        iv. The lead pastor is a member of any professional or pastoral leadership organizational involving leadership quality and aptitude.

Please be advised that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will take approximately one (1) hour of your time. Study participants will not receive financial compensation for participation and can discontinue participation at any point without repercussion. Though,

participants will benefit from this research project. For example, although you will not receive any monetary benefits from participating in this study, your participation will help improve knowledge about how pastoral leadership styles and practices help motivate ministerial staff. Also, your participation may benefit administrators and pastoral staff at other organizations attempting to become more innovative in their approaches.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, I kindly request that you provide me with your telephone number and let me know the best time to reach out to you to schedule a 15-minute meeting. The overarching goal of this meeting would be to answer any questions or concerns you might have with respect to participating in this study.

Promise of Confidentiality

The researcher involved with the study will keep my personal information collected for the study strictly confidential. Any information obtained from this study that can be identified with me will remain confidential and be disclosed only with my permission or as required by law or court order. My identity will be kept strictly anonymous by assigning a pseudonym. All data, research artifacts, and transcripts with pseudonyms are kept in secure locations and are password-protected files on cloud-based programs.

Blessings,

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APPENDIX I

IRB PROPOSAL

Michael,

Thank you for the submission of revisions to IRB Proposal #2211.

The revised proposal provides evidence that you fully understand the requests by the IRB to provide a brief statement that explains DocuSign security and details that explain the security involved in safely storing research associated documents in your personal email inbox.

Please consider this email formal notification of IRB approval for this research project.

You may begin collecting data. If data collection is revised in any way, please notify the IRB committee as soon as possible.

We are pleased to be a part of your research journey and wish you all the best.

Please let me know if you would still like to meet tomorrow morning.

Sincerely~Cheri Goit

Professor Cheri Goit RN, MN
Associate Professor | Northwest University
Institutional Review Board Chairperson
425.889.5762 office
Cheri.goit@northwestu.edu