

Fall 2022

Towards a Model of Leadership Development: A Case Study of a Large Evangelical Church in Virginia

Kyle W. Kramer
Southeastern University - Lakeland

Follow this and additional works at: <https://firescholars.seu.edu/org-lead>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Leadership Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kramer, Kyle W., "Towards a Model of Leadership Development: A Case Study of a Large Evangelical Church in Virginia" (2022). *PhD in Organizational Leadership*. 13.
<https://firescholars.seu.edu/org-lead/13>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by FireScholars. It has been accepted for inclusion in PhD in Organizational Leadership by an authorized administrator of FireScholars. For more information, please contact firescholars@seu.edu.

Towards a Model of Leadership Development: A Case Study of a Large
Evangelical Church in Virginia

Submitted to Southeastern University

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Organizational Leadership

Kyle W. Kramer

December 9, 2022

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership
Southeastern University

This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by:

Kyle W. Kramer

titled

**TOWARDS A MODEL OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: A CASE
STUDY OF A LARGE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN VIRGINIA**

Has been approved by his committee as satisfactory completion of the dissertation
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved By:

Joshua Henson, Ph.D., Chair

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership

Bethany Peters, Ph.D., Committee Member

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership

Jennifer Carter, Ph.D., Committee Member

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership

Southeastern University Institutional Review Board Approval:

August 17, 2022

December 9, 2022

Abstract

Ministry leaders are leaving the vocation in record numbers, largely due to a lack of intentional leadership development or preparedness for the challenges they face. These leaders require a formalized process for developing both the cognitive and behavioral aspects of leading in the local church that authentic and spiritual leadership comprise. The exemplar examined in this case study, recognizing similar challenges, implemented a leadership development process derived from components of both authentic and spiritual leadership. Over the span of just 3 years, the church experienced a nearly 20-point increase in employee engagement, earning them the title of *Best Christian Workplace*. According to the Best Christian Workplaces Institute (2022), a 10-point swing in employee engagement is high. The fact that the exemplar experienced a nearly 20-point swing is extremely rare. The purpose of this study was to explore authentic and spiritual leadership development in the local church through the exemplar of this large evangelical church in Virginia. The findings confirmed that the exemplar has not only incorporated components of both authentic and spiritual leadership into their leadership development framework, but that staff and volunteers credit the exemplar's intentional process with much of the success they have enjoyed over the past 3 years.

Keywords: authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, leadership development, local church leadership, ministry challenges, church leaders

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, most of all my wife. You have put up with a lot over the years. From deployments to combat zones all over the world, to the many hours making this Ph.D. become a reality, I cannot thank you enough. You are more than a partner to me; you are the other half of my heart. Without you, I am not whole.

To my father, I know you would be proud of me no matter what, but this accomplishment would not have been possible without the many sacrifices you made for our family. To my mama, your strength and resiliency helped mold me into the man I am today. To my Sparkles, you are the light of my life, and you will always be my little girl. To my son, I am proud of you and the man you are becoming. To my wife, you are and will always be my everything. Elephant shoe. To my King, to You I commit a life of service.

Acknowledgements

To everyone listed below and the ones I may have forgotten, I could not have made it through this process without each of you. I will be forever grateful.

- Alpha Docs! Cohort One, you are the best. Thank you to all of you for your continued encouragement and infectious joy.
- To the faculty at Southeastern University, Dr. Jenny Carter, Dr. Emile Hawkins, Dr. Joshua Henson, Dr. Bethany Peters, Dr. Ric Rhom, and Dr. Leroy VanWhy. Thank you for your “yes” and for your dedication to my success.
- I want to acknowledge a special group at SEU, my dissertation committee. Dr. Joshua Henson, Dissertation Chair, Dr. Jenny Carter, Third Reader, and Dr. Bethany Peters, Methodologist. I would not have made it through this process without your support. I will be forever grateful to you.
- Staff and families of the greatest church on the planet! It is an honor to serve each one of you. Thank you for that gift. Thank you “Dr.” Ufema for letting me think out loud helping me articulate the model.
- My senior pastors. I don’t think I’ll ever fully understand why you put up with my Ph.D. journey, but thank you. You both are special to my family, and we could not be more honored to call you friends.
- The Wardroom, Chief’s Mess, and Crew of Charlie Company. No one achieves any measure of success in life without the sacrifices of people just like you. I am grateful to have served you.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract | iii |
| Dedication | iv |
| Acknowledgements | v |
| List of Tables | ix |
| List of Figures | x |
| Chapter 1 – Introduction | 1 |
| Statement of the Problem | 4 |
| Purpose of the Research | 4 |
| Research Questions | 6 |
| Significance of the Research | 7 |
| Conceptual Framework | 8 |
| Methodology | 9 |
| Participants and Sampling | 10 |
| Data Collection | 10 |
| Data Analysis | 11 |
| Ethical Considerations | 12 |
| Scope and Limitations | 12 |
| Definition of Terms | 12 |
| Summary | 14 |
| Chapter 2 – Literature Review | 15 |
| Leadership | 15 |
| Leadership Development | 17 |
| Authentic Leadership | 21 |
| Spiritual Leadership | 31 |
| Summary | 35 |
| Chapter 3 – Methodology | 37 |
| Research and Interview Questions | 37 |
| Case Study Research | 40 |
| Analysis of Exemplar | 41 |
| Participants and Sampling | 44 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Ethical Considerations | 45 |
| Data Collection | 46 |
| Data Analysis | 46 |
| Analysis Strategy | 47 |
| Data Synthesis..... | 47 |
| Scope and Limitations..... | 48 |
| Summary | 49 |
| Chapter 4 – Findings | 50 |
| Data Collection | 50 |
| Artifacts..... | 51 |
| Interviews..... | 54 |
| Data Analysis | 56 |
| Findings..... | 59 |
| Research Question 1..... | 60 |
| Research Question 2..... | 64 |
| Research Question 3..... | 68 |
| Research Question 4..... | 71 |
| Discussion on Themes and Summary | 73 |
| Committed to Service and Development of Others | 74 |
| United by Common Mission and Vision..... | 76 |
| Driven by Purpose and Calling | 79 |
| Sustained by Courage and Belief..... | 83 |
| Closing | 85 |
| Chapter 5 – Discussion | 87 |
| Research Questions | 89 |
| Research Question 1..... | 89 |
| Research Question 2..... | 91 |
| Research Question 3..... | 94 |
| Research Question 4..... | 95 |
| Implications..... | 97 |
| Implications for EL | 97 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Implications for AL..... | 101 |
| Implications for SL | 102 |
| Framework for Leadership Development | 103 |
| United by Common Mission and Vision..... | 104 |
| Driven by Purpose and Calling | 105 |
| Committed to Service and Development of Others | 105 |
| Sustained by Courage and Belief..... | 106 |
| Limitations | 107 |
| Suggestions for Future Research..... | 108 |
| Summary | 109 |
| References | 111 |
| Appendix A | 121 |
| Appendix B | 122 |
| Appendix C | 123 |
| Appendix D | 124 |

List of Tables

Table 1.....22
Table 2.....26
Table 3.....42
Table 4.....53
Table 5.....54
Table 6.....56
Table 7.....58
Table 8.....73
Table 9.....97
Table 10.....98
Table 11.....100
Table 12.....107

List of Figures

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Figure 1 | 104 |
|----------------|-----|

Chapter 1 – Introduction

One of the most important aspects of building a healthy and growing congregation is the development of leaders who are prepared for the complexities of leading the local church (Han, 2015). Religious institutions, just as secular organizations, benefit from a formalized process for developing staff, specifically organizational leaders (Cooper, 2005; Cullinane et al., 2005; Elkington et al., 2015). This task may be even more difficult for churches, however, as they have historically expressed little understanding of or emphasis on leadership development, outside of the traditional seminary programs that Hernez-Broome and Hughes (2004) suggested fall short of the cognitive and behavioral balance required for efficacy (Thoman, 2011). Researchers have strongly indicated that there is an increased demand for such a leadership development focus in the modern Church (Cooper, 2005; Elkington et al., 2015).

More than 4,000 protestant churches closed their doors in 2019, with the COVID-19 pandemic causing an even greater rise (nearly 20%) in church closures for 2020 (Barna, 2021). According to Barna, evangelical pastors and church leaders were leaving the ministry at a rate of more than 1,500 per month in 2019, increasing at an even larger rate in 2020 due to COVID-19. That same year, Lifeway Research indicated the number of pastors leaving ministry every month was closer to 250 (Dance, 2019). The two organizations differ in the definitions of pastors and the nature of many of those reported departures, but concur that Church leadership were still leaving ministry at a rate higher than one should expect from clergy. Additionally, both research groups agree that COVID-19 has exacerbated the challenge.

More than 90% of ministry staff experience serious stress monthly because they believe they are ill-trained for their chosen profession (Barna, 2021). Lifeway Research reported that the top issue facing pastors in ministry and personally, affecting 77% of respondents, was church staff and volunteer leader development (Earls, 2022). According to Barna (2021), the most cited reason pastors left the ministry pre-COVID was the lack of ability in leading their congregation towards a common vision. Postpandemic, the situation has worsened, with 61% of pastors

suggesting that they were overwhelmed by the combination of emotional and organizational responsibilities required to lead a church (Barna, 2021). Formal and informal ministerial training for today's Church needs to address the growing concerns outlined above (Grieger & Peck, 2016; Han, 2015). Although the departure of ministry leaders may be multifaceted, a strong leadership development program for ministry leaders may provide some solutions.

Leadership development has become a growing field of study whereby leadership theory meets practical application (Day et al., 2014). One of the greatest obstacles to leadership development in the local church is the limited availability of evidenced-based research (Thoman, 2011). The vast majority of researchers studying this topic have relied on decades of biblical and seminary school influences, often neglecting the competency of leadership in favor of the character or religious components. Furthermore, there is almost no literature on exemplars of leadership development within the context of the local church. The few existing studies overwhelmingly concentrate on apostles, disciples, or historical figures as Christian exemplars of leadership, such as Henson (2020) or Munson (2021), but not leadership development on an enterprise level. There is an apparent dearth of literature about churches developing leaders prepared for the complexities of ministry that this research addresses.

Designing leadership development programs that combine organizational leadership with biblical foundations can be challenging (Palmer, 2017; Sparkman, 2017; Thoman, 2011). Researchers have indicated that there is increasing demand from both the local church and the business community for leadership development programs that balance both character and competency due to the inherent moral benefit of such programs (Elkington et al., 2015; Forman et al., 2004; Grieger & Peck, 2016; Han, 2015). Both authentic and spiritual leadership offer potentially significant contributions to the development process for addressing the concerns outlined above.

The authentic leadership model is developmental by nature, helping individuals better understand the complex process of becoming more authentic and ethical (Northouse, 2019). Initially outlined by Bill George, the model includes five

dimensions essential for leadership in any organization: purpose, values, heart, self-discipline, and relationships (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; George, 2003). Although George's five dimensions of authentic leadership mainly included a non-academic interpretation of authentic leadership, several researchers later expanded the philosophy (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Northouse, 2019). Walumbwa et al. (2008) developed an evidenced-based approach to George's philosophy that included self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. The common theme throughout both scholars' interpretations of authentic leadership is an inherent sense of morality manifested in the form of a set of internal values (Hannah et al., 2005), an essential component of leadership within the local church (Puls et al., 2014). Authentic leaders are fundamentally guided by a set of internal values, requiring a deeper examination (Fry & Whittington, 2005). Ethical well-being and authentic leadership alone are insufficient for the kind of spiritual well-being required of leaders in the local church (Fry & Whittington, 2005; Grieger & Peck, 2016; Han, 2015). Authentic leadership as a component of spiritual leadership, however, might prove a more effective construct in ministerial leadership (Thoman, 2011).

Although the core differentiation of *spiritual leadership* is the *spirituality* component of the philosophy, spiritual leadership is not necessarily inherently *religious* (Fry, 2003). Some researchers believe that spirituality is separate from religion, arguing instead that spiritual leadership is the recognition that humans are spiritual beings in need of spiritual development (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Among academics, there also exists a suggestion that the study of spiritual leadership requires a distinction between the secular and religious (van Schalkwyk & Kourie, 2011). Much of the literature on spiritual leadership acknowledges the influences of theology, religion, and associated practices on the development of such a model, but also the influences of such humanistic sciences as philosophy and psychology (van Schalkwyk & Kourie, 2011). There is still a need, however, to explore the distinctly religious influences on spiritual leadership, particularly as they relate to leadership in the local church (Krishnakumar et al., 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Regardless of whether ministry leaders are leaving the community at 1,500 per month or 250, leaders are clearly exiting in significant numbers. Not only are they leaving ministry, but data have indicated an overwhelming majority of pastors felt ill-equipped for the demands of ministerial leadership. Furthermore, COVID has made an already problematic situation even worse (Earls, 2022), with 38% of all church leaders now contemplating an exodus (Barna, 2021). Though an effective leadership development program may not resolve the totality of underlying factors leading to these departures, it could provide significant mitigation. Further, Dahl (2005) and Gortner (2009) argued that leadership development in the local church is, although currently ineffective, extremely necessary for both religious and secular communities.

Elkington et al. (2015) proposed that leadership development within the church is largely like the process of developing leaders in secular organizations, but that vocational ministry must also balance orthodoxy and orthopraxy. More specifically, an effective leadership development process in the church must include both character and competency. By combining components of authentic and spiritual leadership models, it may be possible to achieve an equitable balance between the competency and character aspects of leadership development required for ministry leaders. The results of this study may be used to develop a research-based model of leadership development for evangelical churches in America.

Purpose of the Research

Ministry leaders are leaving the vocation in record numbers due, largely, to a lack of intentional leadership development or preparedness for the challenges they face. These leaders require a formalized process for developing both the cognitive and behavioral aspects of leading in the local church that authentic and spiritual leadership comprise. Secular organizations also experience similar challenges, spending billions of dollars on leadership development programs each year (Hedges, 2014), only to have between 38% and just over 50% of executives in America fail within the first 18 months of transitioning to an executive-level position (Riddle, 2011).

Despite a lack of agreement about what comprises an effective leadership development process, one common theme emerges more than any other. Leadership development requires both formal training and experiential learning that have been grounded in ethical and values-based principles (Kort, 2008; Neck & Houghton, 2006; Rost, 1993; Volckmann, 2012; Winston & Patterson, 2006). Volckmann (2012) suggested that the key to developing leaders was understanding the leadership phenomenon. By implying that leadership is a phenomenon, Volckmann suggested that leadership was both a process and something that leaders can develop in others. Both authentic and spiritual leadership are values-based phenomena that may serve as an archetype for the kind of leadership required in ministry training (Han, 2015).

As stated previously, authentic leadership is developmental by nature, designed to help individuals better understand the complex process of becoming more authentic and ethical (Northouse, 2019). Authenticity and the pursuit of ethicality provide a solid leadership development foundation for pastors, but do not address the specific spiritual wellness required of leaders in ministry that spiritual leadership may afford (Fry & Whittington, 2005; Grieger & Peck, 2016; Han, 2015). Deriving from both humanistic and theologically based philosophies, spiritual leadership bridges the gap between orthopraxy and orthodoxy in a way that authentic leadership alone does not. Leadership in the local church, however, requires a much more focused analysis of the distinctly religious influences on spiritual leadership (Krishnakumar et al., 2015). Few studies exist that perform the magnitude of deep dive that this research proposed, exploring how the combination authentic and spiritual leadership principles at the exemplar may provide a more effective leadership development framework for the local church.

The exemplar in the present research designed a development program derived from George's (2003) original five dimensions of authentic leadership and components of spiritual leadership, including *calling*, and the need for *vision*, and *value congruence* (Fry & Whittington, 2005). Acknowledging Allio's (2005) assertion that great leaders are both ethical and competent, the exemplar's framework contains two main categories (character and competence) of nine total

criteria by which senior leaders evaluate each member of the organization's staff and volunteers. Since implementing this framework in 2019, the church experienced a nearly 20-point increase in employee engagement, earning them the title of Best Christian Workplace based on an overall survey score of 4.0 on a 5.0 Likert scale. Nonprofit organizations earning this distinction demonstrate high employee retention, engagement, and job satisfaction. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation was to explore authentic and spiritual leadership development in the local church through the exemplar of a large evangelical church in Virginia. I sought to answer this question: What lessons can be learned about authentic and spiritual leadership from the exemplar?

Research Questions

The exemplar in the present research is one of the fastest growing churches in America and one of the largest churches in both the Commonwealth of Virginia and United States of America (Outreach Magazine, 2018; Thumma & Travis, 2007). The church began in 2005 with only one campus, roughly 50 people in attendance, and no paid staff. Over the course of nearly 17 years, the church expanded across Virginia, averaging more than 7,000 people across six campuses pre-COVID, and with 82 paid staff and thousands of volunteers.

In 2012 the church launched their first multisite campus, growing to six campuses by the summer of 2017. They additionally planted three semiautonomous family churches. With the addition of each campus and church plant comes the increasingly difficult task of developing and then launching staff and volunteer leaders, while also managing the ever-changing landscape of leadership. Leaders from other large churches across the United States have credited the exemplar's leadership development framework for enabling their success. Exploration of the exemplar's model may prove useful in expanding the body of knowledge in both authentic and spiritual leadership, as well as leadership development in the local church. Through this case study, I also sought to answer the following additional research questions:

- RQ1: In what ways is authentic leadership exhibited at the exemplar? What are the differences, if any, in perceptions of authentic leadership among senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers?
- RQ2: In what ways is spiritual leadership exhibited at the exemplar? What are the differences, if any, in perceptions of spiritual leadership among senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers?
- RQ3: In what ways is leadership development exhibited at the exemplar? What are the differences, if any, in perceptions of leadership development amongst senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers?
- RQ4: Are there any differences in perceptions of authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, and leadership development in those who attended ministry school versus those who had no ministry school experience at the exemplar? If so, what are they?

Significance of the Research

Lack of leadership development is not a problem unique to ministry. Kort (2008) suggested that there is a gap between the number of people serving in leadership roles and the number of people effectively leading in a manner recognizable by any common definition across all professional disciplines, necessitating a system for formally developing leaders. Although the present research centered on challenges unique to the context of a local church, there may be some broader applicability derived from the exemplar's approach such as other nonprofit organizations with similar cultures. Additionally, researchers have also indicated an increased demand from the business community for morality-based development, like that of the exemplar in this research (Elkington et al., 2015; Forman et al., 2004; Grieger & Peck, 2016; Han, 2015).

Designing leadership development programs that combine organizational leadership components with biblical foundations can be even more challenging than nonreligious organizations (Palmer, 2017; Sparkman, 2017; Thoman, 2011). The exemplar in this study designed just such a leadership development program, combining leadership development philosophies with biblical character, based on authentic and spiritual leadership philosophies.

As supported by the literature, there is a lack of evidenced-based leadership development amongst church staff. The exemplar in this case study attempted to bridge the gap between practical and research-based development. The significance of examining the development framework outlined in this research could serve as an exemplar for leadership development for other evangelical churches in America, informing and influencing future hiring practices, promotions, and staff longevity within churches of similar size.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the present study is defined by three constructs: leadership development, authentic leadership, and spiritual leadership. Despite a lack of agreement about exactly what leadership development entails, one common theme emerges more than any other. Leadership development requires both formal training and experiential learning (Kort, 2008; Neck & Houghton, 2006; Rost, 1993; Volckmann, 2012; Winston & Patterson, 2006). Volckmann suggested that the key to developing leaders was understanding the leadership phenomenon, rather than defining leadership. By implying that leadership is a phenomenon, Volckmann suggested that leadership was both a process and something that leaders can develop in others.

The myriad descriptions of, and approaches to, leadership development suggest that the development process is important to organizational success; however, limited evidence about effectiveness has been presented. Ali (2012), Allio (2005), and Cooper (2005) suggested that leadership development is not only effective, but also essential for success. In addition, Crevani et al. (2010), Densten and Gray (2001), and Elkington et al. (2015) suggested that leadership development programs with underlying biblical foundations are among the most effective. One leadership philosophy embodying both developmental and morally-based application is authentic leadership.

George (2003) outlined five dimensions essential for leadership in any organization that he described as authentic leadership: purpose, values, heart, self-discipline, and relationships (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; George, 2003). Although George's initial proposal for authentic leadership mainly

included a nonacademic interpretation, several researchers later contributed to the philosophy (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Northouse, 2019). Walumbwa et al. (2008) condensed the original five dimensions into self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. The conceptual framework also incorporates aspects of the spiritual leadership philosophy, especially the emphasis on calling and the need for vision and value congruence across individual, empowered team, and organizational levels (Fry & Whittington, 2005). Acknowledging Allio's (2005) assertion that great leaders are both ethical and competent, the conceptual framework concentrates on both character and competence.

Methodology

The present research was a single case study, employing two qualitative design strategies recommended by Saldaña and Omasta (2018). These strategies occurred in two phases: (a) analyzing documents, artifacts, and visual materials and (b) analyzing individual interviews. A qualitative study is a research methodology designed to explore context, opinion, and motivation for a problem or theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). More specifically, case study investigators examine an object, individual, group, or bounded system through focused data collection and analysis, such as the exemplar in the present research (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Researchers often select single case designs based on criteria such as criticalness, extremeness, typicalness, revelatory power, or longitudinal possibility (Yin, 2009). According to Yin, one should evaluate five components for determining whether case study methodology is appropriate: (a) the nature of the research questions, (b) propositions, (c) data analysis, (d) linkage between the data and the propositions, and (e) criteria for analysis. Yin also outlined four unique designs when employing case study methodology: holistic (single unit of analysis) single case designs, embedded (multiple units of analysis) single case designs, holistic multiple-case designs, and embedded multiple-case designs. Because I intended to examine both artifacts (some of which include quantitative data) and

individual interviews, a single case study methodology was appropriate for the exemplar, specifically a modified embedded single case study.

Participants and Sampling

The lack of empirical studies on predictors for the leadership development of church staffs necessitated the conduct of the present research. Due to the small sample size, the conclusions from this study are more likely to be accepted as localized to the specific population, but might also have implications for application at other similar-sized churches that employ authentic and spiritual leadership frameworks. The exemplar for this study was a nondenominational evangelical church, with a population sample comprising five groups of three to seven individuals each, totaling 15 to 35 staff or volunteers:

- Senior staff
- Staff – school of ministry
- Staff – non-school of ministry
- Volunteers – school of ministry
- Volunteers – non-school of ministry

The population of interest for this study, staff and volunteer leaders at a large church in Virginia, were slightly more ethnically diverse than comparable churches in Virginia, but still analogous (Gloo, 2020). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), it is important for experiences amongst participants to be as similar as possible. Both the coaching framework and training curriculum in the present research were identical for all participants. In short, their understanding of leadership and training pipelines were nearly identical.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred in two phases: artifact analysis and individual interviews. Artifact analysis consisted of an examination of the last 3 years of staff teachings (transcribed), training curriculum taught within the exemplar's college, and human resources documentation, such as the staff culture guide. I examined each of the artifacts for inclusion of authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, or

leadership development dimensions and used the resultant data to inform the interviews.

For interviews, I developed a semistructured 15-question interview protocol based on components of authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, and leadership development, contrasting the results with information gathered during the artifact analysis. The interview participants were active members of the staff and volunteer leaders who have served during the last 3 years at the exemplar. I briefed them on their rights as described in the consent form before, during, and after the interviews.

Artifact analysis consisted of an examination of the last 3 years of staff teachings, training curriculum taught within the exemplar's college, and human resources documentation, such as the staff culture guide. I examined each of the artifacts for inclusion of authentic or spiritual leadership dimensions, or leadership development. I analyzed the resultant interview transcriptions and artifact analysis by employing the standard coding and theming methodology recommended by Saldaña and Omasta (2018).

Data Analysis

The three coding methods, chosen based on my skills and recommendations from Saldaña and Omasta (2018) for filtering data for this kind of research: *in vivo*, process, and value. Beginning the coding exercise with *in vivo* provided a greater overall context by evaluating participant's own words for key phrases or words of interest (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). During the second pass, I employed process coding. This form of coding helps identify gerund (or "-ing") style words of interest within the participant's language that indicate possible action or interaction tendencies (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The third pass consisted of value coding, enabling the identification of participant patterns for expressing beliefs, attitudes, or values within the language of the interviews (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Upon completing the coding passes, I organized the data into columns and condensed those codes into themes, then categories (Creswell, 2015).

Ethical Considerations

I obtained certification as a Principal Investigator in the Social & Behavioral Research field through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and applied industry best practices from the National Institute of Health (NIH) in the protection of human subject research participants before conducting interviews. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) maintaining oversight of the present research. The only personal details collected were those necessary to reference participants' input or where required for follow-up interviews. Additionally, I transcribed all hardcopy interview notes, consent forms, or other written data containing participant details onto a digitally encrypted drive, using Microsoft's Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) encryption.

Scope and Limitations

There is a lack of evidenced-based leadership development amongst church staff in the body of literature on this topic. The exemplar in this case study attempted to bridge the gap between practical and research-based development utilizing components of authentic and spiritual leadership in developing their leaders. The significance of examining the development framework outlined in this research could serve as an exemplar for leadership development in other evangelical churches. The results cannot be generalized back to all churches that have experienced leadership development, with the potential exception of those that have embraced the principles of spiritual and/or authentic leadership philosophies.

Definition of Terms

Authentic leadership: Unless otherwise specified in the analysis, any reference to authentic leadership relate back to George's (2003) original five dimensions.

Evangelical: The term evangelical refers to a type of Christian who believes that Jesus Christ atoned for the sins of all mankind by dying on a cross and returning to life again, the Bible is the literal word and authority of God, that man is sinful by nature and requires salvation, and all Christians are called to spread the good news of Jesus' saving grace (Stackhouse, 2007).

Large church: The Hartford Institute defines large churches as having an attendance range from several hundred to 1,750. The largest classification the institute includes is *mega churches*, with consistent weekly attendance in excess of 2000. The exemplar in this case possessed a prepandemic weekly attendance in excess of 7,000, dropping by 50% postpandemic. Although the exemplar qualifies as a *mega church*, I used both *large* and *mega church* terms interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

Leader development: My definition of this term was adapted from Winston and Patterson's (2006) definition of leadership development, which is the process of developing one's ability to influence or compel other people towards achieving a common set of goals or objectives.

Leadership: For this research, I adopted the following definition of leadership, adapted from Winston and Patterson's (2006) comprehensive definition of the process of leveraging one's influence to compel other people towards achieving a common set of goals or objectives.

Leadership development: A growing field of study whereby leadership theory meets practical application (Day et al., 2014).

Self-awareness: Agreement between one's perception of themselves and others' perceptions (Bratton et al., 2011).

Local church: Deriving from the Greek word *ecclesia*, reference to the *local church* in this research refers to the assembling of believers from a local community as described in Acts chapter two.

Nondenominational church: Protestant churches that do not claim a connection with an organized denomination or denominational governance structure.

Spiritual leadership: This term comprises "the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate oneself and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (Fry, 2003, p. 694).

Summary

Leadership development is a complex and multifaceted concept, with a variety of research suggesting that it has been overdefined (Ciulla, 2002), cannot be defined (Kort, 2008), or requires no definition at all because it does not even exist (Washbush, 2005). Through the present study, I proposed that not only is leadership development an essential ingredient to preventing such a mass exodus of ministry leaders as currently exists, but that components of authentic and spiritual leadership may provide the template for future evidence-based leadership development practices within the local church. Furthermore, the present case study can serve as an exemplar of leadership development for large evangelical churches across the United States.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

The purpose of a literature review is to establish context and generativity, provide a broad overview of the existing body of knowledge surrounding the research topic, and identify the strategies, collection instruments, and procedures that are most relevant to the study (Terrell, 2016). An effective review serves to bound the research problem and provides a basis with which to compare the findings of a study (Creswell, 2015; Terrell, 2016). In this research, there were three specific sources of data that served as the basis of comparison with findings from the exemplar: (a) scholarly research on leadership development, specifically as it relates to the local church, (b) scholarly research on authentic leadership, and (c) scholarly research on spiritual leadership. Chapter 1 included background of the problem and the framework for conducting this case study. Chapter 2 is a synthesis of the scholarly literature, such that gaps in the conceptual framework begin to emerge, providing a clear need for the present case study.

Leadership

Before discussing leadership development, it is important to define what requires developing. Leadership includes multiple layers of application and interdependencies. Individual leadership, group leadership, and leadership within and between organizations represent just a few of the complexities when attempting to develop these qualities in others. The following section provides a review of common definitions of leadership and associated themes as outlined in the literature.

Leadership at the individual level tends to focus on traits, skills, style, and behaviors (Gandolfi & Stone, 2016; Kort, 2008; Northouse, 2019; Rost, 1993; Summerfield, 2014; Volckmann, 2012; Winston & Patterson, 2006). Leveraging the characteristics outlined above to affect change in others or within organizations requires self-reflection and personal discovery, differentiating the leader from their followers (Griffin & Mathieu, 1997; Lunenberg, 2012; Posner, 2009). Day et al. (2004) posited that defining leadership at the individual level requires marrying the attributes of the leader with a given situation, suggesting that nearly all definitions

of leadership at the individual level are situationally dependent and include followers as a peripheral part of the leadership process (Vroom & Jago, 2007).

Defining leadership at the group level depends upon relationship. Common definitions of group leadership involve team dynamics, group culture, motives, and trust (Lunenbergh, 2012; Platow et al., 2015). Definitions of leadership at the group level rely on covenantal relationships characterized by shared values, relational commitment, and genuine care for other parties as evidenced in the exemplar in the present research (Senjaya & Pekerti, 2010). Values, culture, and motives also underly definitions of organizational level leadership (Ali, 2012). Although definitions of leadership at both the individual and group levels tend to concentrate on the process of understanding behaviors and team dynamics, the definition of leadership at the organizational level begins with culture and intentional design (Ali, 2012; Galbraith, 2014).

Authors on this subject, such as Bass, Rost, Northouse, and Kotter, have produced some of the more comprehensive attempts at defining leadership and navigating these various layers of complexity (Rosari, 2019). Bass (1985) suggested that leadership is a two-way interactive event between parties whereby one party influences another party to fulfill the desires of the first party. Bass and Avolio (1990) expanded this definition by suggesting that the fundamental purpose of leadership might be described as the process of affecting or changing the motivations of other people. Bass and Bass (2008) produced one of the seminal works on the definition of leadership, but purposefully left the question open-ended. Similarly, Northouse (2019) also described leadership as a two-way interactive event; a process whereby a leader leverages influence over individuals or groups to compel them to do something they would not otherwise. By defining leadership as a process, Northouse and Bass and Bass (2008) implied that anyone can develop leadership skills, not just individuals who may appear to possess innate leadership characteristics.

Kotter (1988) defined leadership as a non-coercive process of moving people in a direction of the leader's choosing. Rost (1993), amongst the more than 200 definitions included in the review, defined leadership as an influence

relationship between leaders and followers. Gandolfi and Stone (2016) proposed an *operational* definition of leadership consisting of the following five components: (a) there must be one or more leader, (b) there must be followers, (c) the situation should be action-oriented, (d) situational dynamics should have a legitimate course of action, and (e) there must be goals and objectives. Volckmann (2012) proposed that asking one to define leadership was inherently the wrong question, suggesting instead that scholars seek to understand the *phenomena* of leadership. By defining leadership as a phenomenon, Volckmann implied that leadership is both a process and something those other leaders can teach.

Leadership Development

Leadership is one of the most important predictors of high-performing organizations (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Therefore, the development of others, especially leaders, is a key ingredient to success across organizational boundaries (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Leskiw & Singh, 2007). Researchers almost unanimously agree that leaders and their corresponding development programs, are essential (DeRue & Myers, 2014; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Leskiw & Singh, 2007). There is limited agreement, however, as to what development comprises, except that it can play a positive role in success if implemented correctly and that it is an organizational imperative.

Skilled leaders are critical to the design and implementation of organizational strategy, management of follower attitudes and behaviors, accomplishment of objectives, and team performance (Subramony et al., 2018). Simply, organizations should consider leadership development a strategic imperative. Subramony et al. linked the individual experiences of managers participating in developmental assignments or programs including formal training, mentoring, and action learning with an improvement in overall organizational management skills. They concluded that individuals develop over the course of time, along two dimensions: intra- and inter-personal. The intrapersonal development dimension included cognitive, meta-cognitive, and behavioral skills acquired as leaders move into leadership positions of increased responsibility, psychological processes, such as identity and self-regulation, and contemplative

learning from previous experiences, such as parenting or prior organizational assignments. The authors of this case study examined various levels of organizational experience, from employees in their first year of ministry to executive level leadership.

The interpersonal dimension primarily consisted of the ability of individuals to develop authentic relationships with others (Subramony et al., 2018). Although their cross-sectional study was limited in scope and duration, the findings established a positive relationship between intentional leadership development along both dimensions and workplace performance. The exemplar's conceptual leadership development framework includes elements of both intra- and interpersonal dimensions. If this research is valid, there should be a demonstrably positive link between their development process and work performance.

Kjellström et al.'s (2020) phenomenographic research revealed six categories of understanding leadership development: (a) one's own development, (b) fulfilling a leadership role, (c) personal development, (d) leader and organizational development, (e) collective leadership development, and (f) human development. By defining leadership development in this way, Kjellström et al. made it easier for future programs to tailor the development process more specifically to individuals, rather than attempting a broad, overly simplistic approach. The implications to leadership development activity design as well as informing the practice of tailoring leadership development activities to better match individuals and organizational needs are noteworthy. Although these categories highlight the increasing complexity of defining leadership development, I attempted to address all six areas by combining elements of authentic and spiritual leadership, thereby creating a holistic development program similar to that of the exemplar.

McCauley and Palus (2020) also found that it is not just defining leadership development that has become increasingly complex, but that organizations themselves have become more complex. They proposed that such programs need to become more sensitive to context and supportive of organizational transformation, to yield meaningful results in today's environment. Although more field studies

could yield a stronger connection, their research found that learning environments should reflect tailored development experiences because leadership is not just produced by individuals, but also by shared experiences. Shared learning experiences served as one of the foundational elements in this case study.

Hernez-Broome and Hughes (2004) suggested that developmental programs fail because they often focus too heavily on cognitive developmental strategies without the corresponding behavioral strategies. They proposed that today's leaders must not only develop individual leadership competencies, but also foster an environment of workplace relationship development such as in authentic and spiritual leadership. By balancing the nature of leadership development with the implementation of effective leadership development practices, one can more appropriately nurture and reinforce desired behaviors of both leaders and subordinates (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). In the present research, I explored whether one can effectively bridge the gap between cognitive and behavioral development in the context of the local church by combining authentic with spiritual leadership principles.

Allio (2005) proposed that modern development practices needed to evolve from literacy to increased competency, outlining a distinctly Aristotle-like methodology for leadership development. He suggested that leaders should concentrate more on developing skills in rhetoric and mastering such disciplines as critical thinking, communication, and negotiation. Allio's position was that programs can teach fundamentals about leading but not the actual praxis of leadership. The exemplar in the present research employs a similar methodology in both formal employee training and in their associated ministry school, making it an ideal research candidate.

Day et al. (2014) challenged the claim that leadership development is merely experiential. Their research proved that while leaders possessing specific skills were more likely to hold certain hierarchical positions, there was a great deal more diversity of interpersonal characteristics not commonly developed as a part of experiential learning. As a result, Day et al. recommended a more well-rounded approach to leadership development; one involving authentic selection, training,

relationship-building, and assessments of future leaders, in the context of social systems. Additionally, the research emphasized the importance of conceptualizing leadership as a process rather than a position or title, requiring leaders to plot development trajectories for individuals purposefully, such as the leader profiles employed by the exemplar.

According to Day (2000), the key ingredient in making leadership development work is intentional implementation at all levels of an organization: individual, group, and organizational. While there may be specific practices that effectively contribute to an individual's overall leadership development, the most successful organizations are the ones that understand their responsibility to every level and commit to building a formal development process (Day, 2000). This multilayered approach aligns with that of the church included in this research.

Iordanoglou (2018) posited that there was an apparent need for a more intense and effective leadership development education, focusing not only on the essential skills and competencies needed for the leaders of the 21st century, but also the findings from neuroscience about the way human brain functions and learns. Those findings suggested that leadership training should start earlier and involve more people at every level of an organization, including personal dreams and visions, involve peer to peer coaching and coaching with compassion, and establish close and caring relationships, for a person to feel secure and sustain efforts for change (Iordanoglou, 2018). Iordanoglou's research strongly aligns with the principles of authentic and spiritual leadership, making them strong candidates for inclusion in a conceptual framework.

DeRue and Myers (2014) proposed inculcating formal leadership development principles into nearly every facet of organizational human capital, including career developing, coaching, employee feedback, on-boarding, mission statements, and corporate values. They also discovered that effective leadership development at all levels of an organization should include more than just knowledge and skills, but also motivation and identity. These human capital assets listed above, among other articles, served as the basis for evaluation in this research.

Leaders across organizations in the United States, public and private, secular and faith-based, spend billions of dollars on leadership development programs each year (Hedges, 2014). Between 38% and just over 50% of executives in America fail within the first 18 months of transitioning to an executive-level position (Riddle, 2011). According to a 2021 Barna research report, 38% of pastors considered quitting their profession due to a lack of personal and professional wellbeing. These numbers suggest that though development programs may be plentiful, neither corporate nor religious organizations have a monopoly on development efficacy. They also suggest that there is a strong need for positive leadership development throughout every layer of professional society. A large church in Northern Virginia developed just such an approach to development and is the subject of this research.

According to Rosari (2019), positive leadership and leadership development require four essential elements: (a) a relationship based on influence, (b) a relationship comprised of leaders and followers, (c) intentionality of real change on the part of leaders and followers, and (d) mutual purpose between leaders and followers. These elements, however, are meaningless without active participation throughout the development process on the part of the leaders and followers (Rosari, 2019). These elements serve as the foundation of the exemplar's development process and are the basis of the theoretical framework discussed in the following sections. Specifically, authentic leadership applies a social cognitive framework that naturally aligns with Rosari's concept of positive leadership, making it an ideal model to examine.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership is a modern style of leadership initially proposed by Bill George (2003) as the antithesis to morally corrupt business leaders. He outlined five dimensions that were essential for leadership in any organization: purpose, values, heart, self-discipline, and relationships (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; George, 2003). George's proposed authentic leader is both self-aware and self-regulating, indicating that the leader possesses an understanding of how they behave and how others perceive their actions. Authentic leaders

achieve authenticity and authentic relationship, contributing to an overall positive follower experience. George's initial contribution to the authentic leadership paradigm is highly relevant to the present research as it serves as a cornerstone to the exemplar's conceptual development framework.

Gardner et al. (2005) posited that authentic leadership was an inherently developmental process relying upon the innate positive characteristics of the leader-follower relationship, utilizing a social cognitive framework to inform developmental processes across all spectra of leadership development. These authors' authentic leadership paradigm leverages a personalized self-realization and self-actualization, in the form of authenticity, to establish a veritable relationship between leader and follower. Given this, I proposed that leaders employed by the large evangelical church in Virginia should exemplify behaviors that engender trust and allow followers to confidently infer authenticity in their actions.

Avolio and Gardner (2005) added that authentic leaders must possess the following characteristics: (a) not conforming their leadership style to the expectations others; (b) leading through personal conviction, not ambition; (c) proactively inviting input from others but leading from their own perspectives; and (d) allowing personal values to guide their decisions. As identified in Table 1, authentic and spiritual leadership theories differ from other theories in their inherently moral and positive natures. It is precisely this nature that makes authentic leadership an ideal framework for faith-based organizations (White, 2021), such as the exemplar of the current case study.

Table 1

Comparison of Authentic Leadership Development Theory with Transformational, Charismatic, Servant, and Spiritual Leadership

| Components of authentic leadership development theory | TL | CL(B) | CL(SC) | SVT | SP |
|--|----|-------|--------|-----|----|
| Positive psychological capital | O | O | O | | O |
| Positive moral perspective | X | X | X | X | X |
| Leader self-awareness | | | | | |
| Values | X | X | X | X | X |

| Components of authentic leadership development theory | TL | CL(B) | CL(SC) | SVT | SP |
|--|----|-------|--------|-----|----|
| Cognitions | X | X | X | X | X |
| Emotions | X | X | X | X | X |
| Leader self-regulation | | | | | |
| Internalized | X | | X | | X |
| Balanced processing | X | | | | |
| Relational transparency | X | | | | |
| Authentic behavior | O | O | O | X | |
| Leadership processes/behaviors | | | | | |
| Positive modeling | X | X | X | X | O |
| Personal and social identification | X | X | X | O | O |
| Emotional contagion | | | | | |
| Supporting self-determination | X | X | O | X | X |
| Positive social exchanges | X | O | O | O | O |
| Follower self-awareness | | | | | |
| Values | X | | X | X | X |
| Cognitions | X | | X | | X |
| Emotions | X | | X | | X |
| Follower self-regulation | | | | | |
| Internalized | X | X | X | O | X |
| Balanced processing | X | | | | |
| Relational transparency | O | | O | | |
| Authentic behavior | O | | O | | O |
| Follower development | | | | X | X |
| Organizational context | | | | | |
| Uncertainty | X | X | X | | |
| Inclusion | X | | | | X |
| Ethical | X | | | | |
| Positive, strengths-based | | | | O | |

| Components of authentic leadership development theory | TL | CL(B) | CL(SC) | SVT | SP |
|--|----|-------|--------|-----|----|
| Performance | | | | | |
| Veritable | | | | | |
| Sustained | X | X | | | |
| Beyond expectations | X | X | | | X |

Note. Adapted from Avolio and Gardner (2005). X—Focus. O—Discussed. TL—Transformational Leadership Theory. CL(B)—Behavioral Theory of Charismatic Leadership. CL(SC)—Self-Concept Based Theory of Charismatic Leadership. SVT—Servant Leadership Theory. SP—Spiritual Leadership Theory.

Building on the moral foundation of authentic leadership, Chan et al. (2005) suggested that the nature of authenticity was not merely a sense of individual sincerity, but genuine identity and pervasive values. Furthermore, they proposed that leaders were not either inauthentic or authentic but develop authenticity along a predictive scale and influence followers commensurate with the degree to which the leader's authenticity grows (Chan et al., 2005). The exemplar in this research intentionally designed such an authentic development program, and may, therefore, provide insight into leadership development programs for similar church staffs.

Walumbwa et al. (2008) refined George's original five dimensions to include self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. Their research also revealed a direct correlation between authentic leadership and improved supervisor performance ratings. They discovered that authentic leaders tended to perform better and be higher rated by their subordinates. Additionally, Walumbwa et al. established a positive relationship between authentic leadership and improved follower performance, identifying enhanced follower commitment and citizenship behaviors as major contributing factors. They concluded that inclusion of authentic leadership principles into formal training programs would increase long-term motivation and sustain high levels of workplace performance, resulting in a higher-than average

return on investment. As such, the present research should identify high levels of motivation and performance in the exemplar's employees.

Crawford et al. (2020) also purported that authentic leadership development should be the key goal of operationalizing the theory; however, they also observed a need to reconceptualize the dimensions of authentic leadership, specifically *internalized moral perspective*. What they discovered was that individuals can theoretically score 'high' in *internalized moral perspective* testing, without society deeming one a moral person. Instead, they redefined the moral underpinnings of authentic leaders to *positive moral perspective*. The new dimension considers both a leader's own internalized moral perspective, and the social welfare and perspectives of others (Crawford et al., 2020). The Crawford et al. revised theoretical model of authentic leadership comprised five inter-related dimensions: awareness, sincerity, balanced processing, positive moral perspective, and informal influence. They believed that their reconceptualized dimensions of authentic leadership contributed to an even more positive developmental relationship, indicating that the exemplar should also exhibit similar results.

In their research, Maximo et al. (2019) confirmed that authentic leadership positively increases motivation and performance by improving trust between leaders and followers. They also discovered that leaders, guided by a sense of personal values, were more likely to empower subordinates, involving them in decision-making throughout the organization and contributing positively to the trust-relationship (Maximo et al., 2019). Their results indicated that subordinates experienced a higher level of psychological safety and work engagement. Given these results, employees of the exemplar should also experience both psychological safety and increased trust between leaders and subordinates.

Gardner et al. (2011) stepped back from dimensions and characteristics of authentic leadership, choosing instead to concentrate on the varied definitions of *authentic* and *authenticity* (see Table 2). Their examination of these terms, they believed, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of authentic leadership and its inherent positive qualities. The root word of *authentic* means "to have full power" (p. 1121), suggesting that authentic leaders must possess a

mastery over their mind, will, and emotions (Gardner et al., 2011). By defining authenticity in this manner, Gardner et al. emphasized the importance George's (2003) concept of self-regulation in positive leadership. Particularly relevant to the present research, authentic leadership enhances both the individual leader and follower's development through a shared commitment to embracing one's identity and values, extending beyond just knowing one's true self to genuinely expressing oneself truly. If correct, then examination of the exemplar should indicate a strong sense of personal identity and corporate values.

Table 2

Definitions of Authentic Leaders and Authentic Leadership

| Source | Definition |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Rome and Rome (1967, p. 185) | “A hierarchical organization, in short, like an individual person, is ‘authentic’ to the extent that, throughout its leadership, it accepts finitude, uncertainty, and contingency; realizes its capacity for responsibility and choice; acknowledges guilt and errors; fulfills its creative managerial potential for flexible planning, growth, and charter or policy formation; and responsibly participates in the wider community.” |
| Henderson and Hoy (1983, pp. 67–68) | “ <i>Leadership authenticity</i> is therefore defined as the extent to which subordinates perceive their leader to demonstrate the acceptance of organizational and personal responsibility for actions, outcomes, and mistakes; to be non-manipulating of subordinates; and to exhibit salience of self over role. <i>Leadership inauthenticity</i> is defined as the extent to which subordinates perceive their leader to be ‘passing the buck’ and blaming others and circumstances for errors and outcomes; to be manipulative of subordinates; and to be demonstrating a salience of role over self.” |

| Source | Definition |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Bhindi and Duignan (1997, p. 119) | “In this article the authors argue for authentic leadership based on: <i>authenticity</i> , which entails the discovery of the authentic self through meaningful relationships within organizational structures and processes that support core, significant values; <i>intentionality</i> , which implies visionary leadership that takes its energy and direction from the good intentions of current organizational members who put their intellects, hearts and souls into shaping a vision for the future; a renewed commitment to <i>spirituality</i> , which calls for the rediscovery of the spirit within each person and celebration of the shared meaning, with purpose of relationship; a <i>sensibility</i> to the feelings, aspirations and needs of others, with special reference to the multicultural settings in which many leaders operate in the light of the increasing globalizing trends in life and work.” |
| Begley (2001, p. 353) | “Authentic leadership may be thought of as a metaphor for professionally effective, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices in educational administration. This is leadership that is knowledge based, values informed, and skillfully executed.” |
| George (2003, p. 12) | “Authentic leaders use their natural abilities, but they also recognize their shortcomings, and work hard to overcome them. They lead with purpose, meaning, and values. They build enduring relationships with people. Others follow them because they know where they stand. They are consistent and self-disciplined. When their principles are tested, they refuse to compromise. Authentic leaders are |

| Source | Definition |
|---|--|
| | dedicated to developing themselves because they know that becoming a leader takes a lifetime of personal growth.” |
| Luthans and Avolio (2003, p. 243) | “[W]e define authentic leadership in organizations as a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development. The authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent, moral/ethical future-oriented, and gives priority to developing associates into leaders themselves. The authentic leader does not try to coerce or even rationally persuade associates, but rather the leader's authentic values, beliefs, and behaviors serve to model the development of associates.” |
| Avolio, Luthans et al. (2004, p. 4) as cited in Avolio, Gardner et al. (2004, pp. 802, 803) | Authentic leaders are “those individuals who know who they are, what they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspective, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, resilient, and of high moral character.” |
| Begley (2004, p. 5) | “Authentic leadership is a function of self-knowledge, sensitivity to the orientations of others, and a technical sophistication that leads to a synergy of leadership action.” |
| Ilies et al. (2005, p. 374) | “Authentic leaders are deeply aware of their values and beliefs, they are self-confident, genuine, reliable and trustworthy, and they focus on building followers' |

| Source | Definition |
|---------------------------------|--|
| | strengths, broadening their thinking and creating a positive and engaging organizational context.” |
| Shamir and Eilam (2005, p. 399) | “[O]ur definition of authentic leaders implies that authentic leaders can be distinguished from less authentic or inauthentic leaders by four self-related characteristics: 1) the degree of person role merger i.e. the salience of the leadership role in their self-concept, 2) the level of self-concept clarity and the extent to which this clarity centers around strongly held values and convictions, 3) the extent to which their goals are self-concordant, and 4) the degree to which their behavior is consistent with their self-concept.” |
| George and Sims (2007, p. xxxi) | Authentic leaders are “genuine people who are true to themselves and to what they believe in. They engender trust and develop genuine connections with others. Because people trust them, they are able to motivate others to high levels of performance. Rather than letting the expectations of other people guide them, they are prepared to be their own person and go their own way. As they develop as authentic leaders, they are more concerned about serving others than they are about their own success or recognition.” |
| Walumbwa et al. (2008, p. 94) | “[W]e define authentic leadership as a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and |

| Source | Definition |
|--------------------------|---|
| Whitehead (2009, p. 850) | <p>relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development.”</p> <p>“In this article, a definition of an authentic leader is adopted as one who: (1) is self-aware, humble, always seeking improvement, aware of those being led and looks out for the welfare of others; (2) fosters high degrees of trust by building an ethical and moral framework; and (3) is committed to organizational success within the construct of social values.”</p> |

Note. Adapted from Gardner et al. (2011).

Gardner et al. (2021) explored the tensions between job-based roles and authentic leaders, specifically examining the convergence between knowing one’s authentic self and influencing others. The primary critique they addressed was the contrarian view that authenticity and leadership are incompatible since leadership involves both influencing and being influenced by others in ways that may prevent either party from remaining true to their core values (Gardner et al., 2021). These authors countered, however, that the very nature of authentic leadership is aspirational and developmental, encouraging a relationship between leader and follower whereby both parties resolve conflict in ways that align with their values. If founded, examination of conflict between parties at the exemplar should reveal a strong alignment between personal values and conflict resolution.

It is precisely this practice-based phenomenon that makes authentic leadership an effective leader development philosophy when viewed normatively (Iszatt & Kempster, 2019). Iszatt and Kempster (2019) cautioned, however, that the idealized moral foundation of authentic leadership does not always reflect daily experience. They further suggested that the theory does not do enough to mitigate an individual’s tendency towards inauthenticity (Iszatt & Kempster, 2019)--an area where spiritual leadership may well provide some buffering. This moral resilience

of spiritual leadership makes it an ideal partner for authentic leadership, meriting further exploration (Roof, 2013).

Sanders (2019) examined the application of authentic leadership in church lay training, finding a strong synergy between the spirituality of ecclesial development and authenticity. He concluded that combining authentic leadership with spiritual development not only provides a natural safeguard against the challenges of leading a local church, but may also improve the lives of congregants as well. It is the strong natural alignment of the two developmental models that makes this conceptual framework the focus of this research.

Spiritual Leadership

According to Allen and Fry (2022), interest in spirituality in the workplace and in leaders' individual spirituality has grown significantly since its initial inception, propelled by the emergence of and interest in spiritual leadership research. Despite evidence that spirituality is important to leaders, especially those in local church ministry, most of the existing literature fails to adequately address the intersections of spiritual, leader, and authentic development (Allen & Fry, 2022). Additionally, Allen and Fry also highlighted the importance of integrating spirituality or spiritual leadership into other leadership theories, for more effective development of the whole person. This intersection is important to the present research as it examines the conceptual leadership development process of a local church that concentrates on authenticity and spirituality in their leaders.

Spirituality, as proposed by Mathews (2021), is not an alternative to material well-being but an integral component of every human being's life. The dynamics of spiritual leadership make comparison between the behavioristic or situational models of other leadership theories difficult. Instead, Mathews believed that spiritual leadership should not be viewed as an alternative to other leadership theories, but complementary. He further suggested that integrating spiritual leadership with a more structurally rigid, yet complementary leadership philosophy, such as authentic leadership, might enhance both. Natural congruence between both philosophies is important, as it is the basis of the exemplar's conceptual leadership development model.

Dent et al. (2005) suggested that work has become a lifestyle for many people, with fewer and fewer distinctions between how they live at home and how they operate at work. They proposed that developing spirituality not only improves performance in the workplace, but is also now a responsibility of organizational leadership due to its importance to employees. Examining the relationship between spirituality and leadership, Dent et al. (2005) identified and validated eight areas of difference and/or distinction in workplace spirituality:

- Definition
- Connected to religion
- Marked by epiphany
- Teachable
- Individual development
- Measurable
- Profitable/productive
- Nature of the phenomenon

These authors concluded that most researchers connect spirituality and religion and correlate spirituality and productivity. If true, employees at the exemplar should connect intentional spiritual development with religious development and exhibit signs of increased productivity.

The findings of Nguyen et al. (2018) confirmed that employees are beginning to place a higher importance on the kind of significance and meaning that spiritual leadership brings to the workplace, than just money or benefits. This fact is of particular interest to faith-based organizations such as the exemplar, as their salaries tend to lag those of their secular contemporaries. They found that spiritual leadership had a significant relationship with meaning and calling, membership, and empowerment, with membership having the strongest impact on organizational commitment and citizenship behaviors (Nguyen et al., 2018). Given spiritual leadership's impact on intrinsic motivations such as these, the exemplar should also demonstrate similar propensities.

Zachary (2013) concluded that it is "vital" (p. 780) for leaders to connect with workers to expand their personal spirituality and the spirituality of the

workplace. Specifically, this researcher indicated that organizations could effectively provide an atmosphere conducive to personal satisfaction and organizational commitment by establishing an altruistic working environment (Zachary, 2013). It was clear from the research findings that development of an authentic relationship between leader and follower through altruistic love also resulted in higher organizational commitment. This is of particular interest to the present research, as the exemplar's leadership framework includes both love of God and love of people as two of their nine components.

As discussed in Chapter 1, authentic leadership is a fundamentally developmental philosophy by nature. Scholars have also posited, however, that spiritual leadership enhances holistic developmental and organizational effectiveness by fostering a sense of personal spirituality (Fry, 2009; Fry & Slocum, 2008). Fry (2003) defined spiritual leadership as “comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate oneself and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership” (pp. 694–695). Fry's (2009) concept of personal spirituality enriches leadership by providing individuals with a sense of purpose and identity that transcends traditional workplace motivations.

More succinctly, Fry (2003, 2009) proposed that the primary benefit of spiritual leadership is not in cultivating skills and competencies, but in creating vision, shared membership, and value congruence across all levels of organizations. This connection with values-based leadership between authentic and spiritual leadership indicates there may be natural alignment in integrating both philosophies. More than just creating synergy between leadership models, Fry speculated that the introduction of spiritual leadership could bring concurrence on values throughout the organization through a common sense of calling and social culture.

Fry's (2003) definition of spiritual leadership included three key elements that enhance organizational commitment and productivity:

- *Vision* energizes people by providing meaning to their work and fostering a communal agreement about the direction of the group.

- *Altruistic love* serves as the basis for corporate culture in spiritual leadership; influencing values, beliefs, care, concern, and ways of thinking for both self and others.
- *Faith* strong belief and trust that the desired vision or outcome will occur.

The integration of these three components is at the core of spiritual leadership's strength. Fry (2003) said it this way: "spiritual leadership proposes that hope/faith in the organization's vision keeps followers looking forward to the future and provides the desire and positive expectation that fuels effort through intrinsic motivation" (p. 714). The exemplar's leadership development model incorporates elements of both authentic and spiritual leadership.

Fry's (2003) work on spiritual leadership is one of the most comprehensive and is often considered the gold standard amongst other researchers. Therefore, its importance to the present research is paramount. If Fry's research is correct, the exemplar should reflect a high commitment to the mission and vision, strong value congruence, and a greater sense of intrinsic motivation—specifically, unselfish love--across all levels of the organization.

Tabor et al. (2020) conducted a deeper examination of spiritual leadership's effects on intrinsic motivation, theorizing that spiritual leadership both enhances employees' organizational commitment and mitigates the negative effects of work-family conflict. These scholars hypothesized that employees tended to withdraw commitment from the organization during times of stress or conflict at home, and that spiritual leadership moderated frustrations by replenishing the psychological well-being of their employees (Tabor et al., 2020). Ultimately, their findings confirmed that spiritual leadership improves overall organizational commitment, particularly those who derive meaning and relational value from their work (Tabor et al., 2020) such as employees of a church whose primary mission is inherently altruistic. If true, there should be a demonstrably high commitment to work with the employees of the exemplar.

Fry and Whittington (2005) also explored the benefits of spiritual leadership, discovering a strong connection with authentic leadership. They concluded that authentic leadership also improves the ethical well-being of people

and is a necessary component of spiritual leadership. Spiritual well-being (a necessary element to improved psychological and physiological wellness), however, can only result from an integration of both philosophies. They discovered that individuals experiencing spiritual well-being scored higher on life and workplace satisfaction (Fry & Whittington, 2005). The key to integrating both philosophies is adhering to the following four practices (Fry & Whittington, 2005): (a) knowing oneself, possibly requiring a greater emphasis on emotional intelligence; (b) respecting and honoring the beliefs of others; (c) cultivating an environment of trust; and (d) maintaining an inherently spiritual practice such as prayer or meditation. Furthermore, Fry and Whittington (2005) suggested that achieving values consensus within the authentic leadership paradigm might only be possible *through* spiritual leadership. If effectively integrated into the culture of the exemplar, all four practices should be evident in the research.

Allen and Fry (2022) conducted a correlational analysis of the Spiritual Leadership Survey and the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire in nondenominational mega-churches like that of the exemplar. They aimed to determine whether the two leadership philosophies measured the similar variables. While both instruments adequately identified leaders within their respective disciplines, there was little to no statistical significance amongst the variables. What these authors discovered instead was that the two philosophies are more complementary than similar. This supports the large evangelical church in Northern Virginia's decision to combine both leadership philosophies, and should be evident in the present research.

Summary

As discussed in Chapter 1, there is a strong need for developing leaders who are prepared for the challenges of leading the local church (Han, 2015). Specifically, churches require a strategy that transcends traditional seminary programs, embracing a more research-based approach to leadership development, bounded by authenticity and spirituality. Authentic leadership is a modern developmental process that relies upon the inherent positive characteristics of leader-follower relationships, which is a key ingredient to success in the local

church. The leadership paradigm leverages a personalized self-realization and self-actualization, in the form of authenticity, to inform the developmental processes across all levels of leadership development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leadership presents a stark contrast to most leadership models with its overwhelmingly positive influence on both leader and follower (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), making it an ideal framework for faith-based organizations such as the exemplar.

Spiritual leadership also represents an exceedingly positive developmental path for organizational leaders, when compared with other leadership philosophies. The purpose of spiritual leadership is to foster high employee well-being, organizational commitment, workplace performance, and social responsibility (Fry & Cohen, 2009) amidst the backdrop of blurred boundaries between work and life (Dent et al., 2005). Additionally, the research indicated a causal affect between spiritual leadership and increased psychological and physiological well-being (Fry & Whittington, 2005). As the exemplar combines both authentic and spiritual leadership development philosophies, analysis should indicate a high commitment to mission and vision, strong value congruence, improved employee well-being, and a greater sense of intrinsic motivation (specifically unselfish love) across all levels of the organization.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Creswell (2015) defined qualitative studies as a research methodology designed to explore context, opinion, and motivation for a problem or theory. Case study researchers seek to narrowly focus the research topic and provide an in-depth understanding of a clearly identifiable case (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). More specifically, case studies examine an object, individual, group, or bounded system through focused data collection and analysis, such as the exemplar in the present research (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative data collection and analysis can be more arduous than quantitative data collection due to the open-ended and potentially subjective nature of such instruments as questionnaires (Mayring, 2011). Qualitative research can also provide a more extensive and rich evaluation, particularly when using the case study approach.

The research was a single case study employing two qualitative design strategies recommended by Saldaña and Omasta (2018). These strategies occurred in two phases: (a) analyzing documents, artifacts, and visual materials and (b) conducting and analyzing individual interviews. I structured interview protocols to explore the leadership development process as a shared experience across the church's employees and volunteers, about the exemplar's development process. All artifacts included in this research specifically related to materials either taught broadly across the exemplar's sphere of influence, such as staff teachings or training materials, or used as reference materials for staff and volunteers.

Research and Interview Questions

Through this study, I intended to explore whether and how the exemplar's leadership development process incorporates components of authentic and spiritual leadership and contributes to the overall growth of its leaders. Exploration of the exemplar's model may also prove useful in expanding the body of knowledge in both authentic and spiritual leadership, as well as leadership development in the local church. The research questions are as follows (for the complete interview protocol, to include introductory questions, please see Appendix A):

RQ1: In what ways is authentic leadership exhibited at the exemplar? What are the differences, if any, in perceptions of authentic leadership among senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers? As Neider and Schriesheim (2011) and Roof (2013) recommended, the interview questions (IQ) for RQ1 was derived from the authentic leadership inventory of Walumbwa et al. (2008). The inventory is comprised of 16 items designed to reflect each of authentic leadership's four dimensions. I chose the following IQs as a broad representation of the ALI and adapted them for qualitative analysis.

IQ1: How do you perceive authentic leadership?

IQ2: How has my leader solicited feedback for improving his/her dealings with others? This question, adapted from the ALI, reflects the self-awareness dimension of authentic leadership.

IQ3: How has my leader's willingness/lack of willingness to be transparent about mistakes influenced their ability to lead? This question, adapted from the ALI, reflects the relational transparency dimension of authentic leadership.

IQ4: How does my leader's core beliefs contribute to the way he/she leads? This question, adapted from the ALI, reflects the internalized moral perspectives dimension of authentic leadership.

IQ5: How has my leader demonstrated self-awareness in the way he/she leads others? This question, adapted from the ALI, reflects the balanced processing dimension of authentic leadership.

RQ2: In what ways is spiritual leadership exhibited at the exemplar? What are the differences, if any, in perceptions of spiritual leadership among senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers? The following IQs were based on Fry's (2003) theory of spiritual leadership. Specifically, they were derived from the three principles that define Fry and Whittington's (2005) causal theory of spiritual leadership: vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith. The answers to these questions should not only reflect the presence of all three principles, but also reveal a strong sense of spiritual survival through calling and a sense of life having meaning through membership (Fry & Whittington, 2005). The tenth IQ, designed to evaluate

the spiritual leadership, derives from Pawar's (2014) assertion that a leader's personal spirituality is directly correlated to their level support for spiritual leadership behaviors within the organization.

IQ6: How do you perceive spiritual leadership?

IQ7: In what ways has a sense of common vision played a role in your supervisor's leadership? This question, adapted from the Causal Model of spiritual leadership, reflects the vision dimension of spiritual leadership's values, attitudes, and behaviors.

IQ8: How has your leader demonstrated unconditional love in their role? This question, adapted from the Causal Model of spiritual leadership, reflects the altruistic love dimension of spiritual leadership's values, attitudes, and behaviors.

IQ9: How has faith/hope played a role in your supervisor's leadership? This question, adapted from the Causal Model of spiritual leadership, reflects the hope/faith dimension of spiritual leadership's values, attitudes, and behaviors.

IQ10: How would you describe your leader's personal spirituality and any impacts it may have had in his/her organizational leadership? This question reflects Pawar's (2014) emphasis on the importance of a leader's personal spirituality and the role it plays in the efficacy of spiritual leadership within organizations.

RQ3: In what ways is leadership development exhibited at the exemplar?

What are the differences, if any, in perceptions of leadership development amongst senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers? Day et al. (2014) suggested that leadership development is not merely an experiential process, but that it requires formal training both leader and subordinate. I developed the following IQs to reflect that sentiment. Additionally, IQ13 is specifically intended to address the assertions outlined by Grieger and Peck (2016) and Han (2015), that ministry leaders require a formal development process such as the exemplar's to manage the complexities of leading the local church.

IQ11: How do you perceive leadership development and its importance in your life?

IQ12: How would you describe your leader's commitment to developing you as a leader?

IQ13: In what ways has the exemplar's leadership development process prepared you for the challenges of ministry?

RQ4: Are there any differences in perceptions of authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, and leadership development in those who attended ministry school versus those who had no ministry school experience at the exemplar? If so, what are they?

IQ14: How has formal ministry school prepared you for authentic and/or spiritual leadership?

IQ15: In what ways has formal ministry school developed you as a leader?

These four research questions provided the framework for my interview questions. As familiarity with terms associated with authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, and leadership development may vary among interviewees, I included definitions in the interview question protocol. Additionally, I provided a list of terms before the formal interviews took place. Finally, I conducted a pilot of the interview protocol to evaluate and refine the interview questions and methodology.

Case Study Research

Qualitative research methods can be more experiential in nature than quantitative research, making it an ideal methodology for the present research which intends to explore how the theoretical framework has influenced leadership development within the local church (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth described case study design as a qualitative research methodology that examines multiple sources of information for a single case, bounded by a specified time and place or multiple cases, over a specified period. While the focus may be much narrower than other qualitative research methods, case studies allow one to develop a deeper understanding of a single event or challenge, such as the exemplar in this study, or explore a broader problem-set across multiple cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Researchers often select single case designs based on criteria such as criticalness, extremeness, typicalness, revelatory power, or longitudinal possibility (Yin, 2009). According to Yin, one should evaluate five components for determining whether case study methodology is appropriate: (a) the nature of the research questions, (b) propositions, (c) data analysis, (d) linkage between the data and the propositions, and (e) criteria for analysis. Yin also outlined four unique designs when employing case study methodology: holistic (single unit of analysis) single case designs, embedded (multiple units of analysis) single case designs, holistic multiple-case designs, and embedded multiple-case designs. Because I intended to examine both artifacts (some of which include quantitative data) and individual interviews, a single case study methodology was appropriate for the exemplar—specifically, a modified embedded single case study. Data collection from this kind of research can include observations, interviews, documents, reports, and audiovisual materials (Creswell & Poth, 2018), all of which I included in this research.

Case studies can be *instrumental*, in which researchers examine a problem using the case to help understand a problem, or *intrinsic*, meaning that the case is unique and may provide distinctive insight upon examination (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The conclusions from such cases should result in possible future application within the constraints of the case or identify areas for additional research within the theoretical framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I examined both the broader applicability of leadership development within the local church, but also how the exemplar might add to the body of knowledge regarding authentic and spiritual leadership. Through the present study, I explored the leadership behaviors of ministerial staff and volunteers of a local church in hopes of informing future leadership development practices of other churches. A case study of the present exemplar was necessary, as I relied on the leadership development experiences of church staff and volunteers rather than attempted to quantify their development.

Analysis of Exemplar

The exemplar in the present research is one of the fastest growing churches in America and one of the largest churches in both the Commonwealth of Virginia

and United States of America (Outreach Magazine, 2018; Thumma & Travis, 2007). The church began in 2005 with only one campus, roughly 50 people in attendance, and no paid staff. Over the course of 17 years, the church expanded across Virginia, averaging more than 7,000 people across six campuses pre-COVID, and with 80 paid staff and thousands of volunteers.

In 2012, the church launched their first multisite campus, growing to six campuses by the summer of 2017. They additionally planted three semiautonomous family churches. With the addition of each campus and church plant comes the increasingly difficult task of developing and then launching staff and volunteer leaders, while also managing the ever-changing landscape of leadership within the local church. During the fall of 2017, the senior pastor began to sense that the church's size had outpaced its ability to effectively lead and develop future staff and volunteers. That same fall, senior pastor asked an outside party to conduct an organizational assessment and initiated an employee engagement survey, conducted by an impartial third party. The results of those findings, included in the data analysis section of this research, revealed the need for a consistent leadership development framework, set of cultural values, and clearly articulated mission and vision.

The church, based on components of authentic and spiritual leadership theories, developed a series of documents and trainings to re-orient their staff. The results of the 2022 survey, including both quantitative and qualitative data, showed significant improvement across nearly every area of the survey (Table 3) and earned the exemplar certification as a Best Christian Workplace (BCWI, 2022).

Table 3

Exemplar Employee Engagement Survey Results

| Rank | 2022 | 2019 | Dif | Engagement Survey Question |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|--|
| 1 | 4.52 | 3.87 | 0.65 | Over the past year, [Exemplar] has changed for the better. |
| 2 | 4.56 | 4.05 | 0.51 | Leaders at [Exemplar] exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit (love, joy, peace, kindness, etc.). |

| Rank | 2022 | 2019 | Dif | Engagement Survey Question |
|------|------|------|------|---|
| 3 | 3.73 | 3.25 | 0.48 | At [Exemplar], there is generally good teamwork across departments. |
| 4 | 4.28 | 3.81 | 0.47 | In the last six months, someone has talked to me about my progress. |
| 5 | 4.74 | 4.34 | 0.40 | I am satisfied with my paid time off |
| 6 | 4.10 | 3.72 | 0.38 | Leaders at [Exemplar] model humility |
| 7 | 4.20 | 3.84 | 0.36 | [Exemplar] is well-managed |
| 8 | 4.23 | 3.87 | 0.36 | Leaders at [Exemplar] demonstrate compassion for people at all levels |
| 9 | 3.90 | 3.55 | 0.35 | I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job |
| 10 | 3.43 | 3.09 | 0.34 | [Exemplar] effectively rewards top performers |
| 11 | 4.40 | 4.07 | 0.33 | [Exemplar] provides good job security to staff/employees that perform well |
| 12 | 4.04 | 3.73 | 0.31 | In my area, we feel free to voice our opinions openly |
| 13 | 3.69 | 3.40 | 0.29 | I receive the training needed to carry out my current assignment. |
| 14 | 3.35 | 3.06 | 0.29 | In comparison with people in similar jobs in other organizations, I feel I am paid fairly |
| 15 | 4.37 | 4.09 | 0.28 | Someone at [Exemplar] encourages my development. |
| 16 | 3.86 | 3.58 | 0.28 | I am satisfied with my medical or health plan |
| 17 | 4.45 | 4.18 | 0.27 | In the past year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow |
| 18 | 4.10 | 3.83 | 0.27 | Staff/employees at [Exemplar] are encouraged to experiment and to be innovative |

Note. Adapted from Best Christian Workplaces Institute (2022).

Over the span of just 3 years, the church experienced a nearly 20-point increase in overall employee engagement, from 3.92 in 2019 to 4.11 in 2022. According to the Best Christian Workplaces Institute (2022), a 10-point swing in employee engagement is high. The fact that the exemplar experienced a nearly 20-point swing is extremely rare. The exemplar credits, at least in part, their intentional leadership development process for the increase in employee engagement. The survey results are meaningful to the present research because the BCWI has suggested that increased employee engagement leads to increased employee retention, possibly buffering the loss of ministry leaders described by Barna and Lifeway.

Participants and Sampling

The lack of empirical studies on predictors for the leadership development of church staffs necessitated the conduct of the present study. With a small sample size, conclusions from this study are more likely to be accepted as localized to the specific population, but might also have implications for application at other similar-sized churches that employ authentic and spiritual leadership frameworks. The selection criteria for case studies artificially narrow the sampling size due to the inherently limited scope. I further narrowed the overall potential population to those staff and volunteers that have been actively serving at the exemplar from January 2019 through 2022, and who have participated in the formal leadership development program initiated by the exemplar.

Purposeful sampling is the intentional selection of study participants who are knowledgeable of the specified subject, willing and available to participate, and able to articulate the research focus (Palinkas et al., 2015). Criterion sampling is a more specific form of purposeful sampling, whereby the researcher selects participants that meet a predefined selection criteria relevant to the research study (Palinkas et al., 2015). The exemplar for this study is a nondenominational evangelical church, with a research population sample comprising five groups of three to seven individuals each, totaling 15 to 35 staff or volunteers:

- Senior staff

- Staff – school of ministry
- Staff – non-school of ministry
- Volunteers – school of ministry
- Volunteers – non-school of ministry

The population of interest for this study was slightly more ethnically diverse than comparable churches in Virginia, but still analogous (Gloo, 2020). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), it is important for experiences amongst participants to be as similar as possible. Both the coaching framework and training curriculum in the present research were identical for all participants. In short, their understanding of leadership and training pipelines were nearly identical.

Ethical Considerations

I obtained a certification as Principal Investigator in the Social & Behavioral Research field through the CITI and applied industry best practices from the NIH in the protection of human subject research participants before conducting interviews. The present study was approved by the IRB based on adherence to a set of considerations for working with human subjects.

All interview participants were assigned a number and all data associated with that individual was coded to their corresponding participant number. The only personal details collected were those necessary to reference participants' input, demographic data required for the research, or where required for follow-up interviews. Additionally, I transcribed all hardcopy interview notes, consent forms, or other written data containing participant details onto a digitally encrypted drive using Microsoft's MFA encryption. As Creswell (2015) recommended, I gave participants Informed and Audio Recording Consent Forms, which included details about the research scope, protocols for participation, purpose of the research, confidentiality considerations, and participant's rights. Furthermore, the interview protocol (Appendix A) reminded participants that they had the right to refuse any question or stop the process at any time.

Data Collection

The primary instruments for data collection were the researcher and interview protocol outlined in Appendix A. Data collection occurred in two phases: artifact analysis and then individual interviews. Artifact analysis consisted of an examination of the last 3 years of staff teachings (transcribed), training curriculum taught within the exemplar's college, and human resources documentation such as the staff culture guide. The exemplar also agreed to allow me access two qualitative analyses conducted by management consultants and two employee engagement survey results, which included both qualitative and quantitative data conducted by an impartial third party. I only examined artifacts produced between January 2019 through July 2022.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), analyzing artifacts such as documents and other exemplar-sourced materials adds a layer of objectivity to case study research by examining actual language and written evidence of an intended case. These documents provide a solid foundation from which to compare the responses from participant interviews. I examined each of the artifacts for inclusion of authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, or leadership development dimensions and used the resultant data to inform the interviews.

For interviews, I developed a semistructured 15-question interview protocol based on components of authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, and leadership development, contrasting the results with information gathered during the artifact analysis. Interview participants were active members of the staff and volunteer leaders who had served during the last 3 years at the exemplar. I then analyzed the resultant interview transcriptions and artifact analysis employing a standard coding and theming methodology, as recommend by Saldaña and Omasta (2018).

Data Analysis

Qualitative research analysis evaluates human perceptions and understanding from which researchers may then derive meaning and application (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The following section describes the data analysis strategy and synthesis the case study employed. I then extrapolated application and relevance from the results.

Analysis Strategy

Qualitative research data analysis requires examination of the individual components of a subject's input, synthesis of common themes and codes, and a winnowing of data until the researcher can begin discerning meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For the interview protocol, specifically, I used the multilayered approach suggested by Creswell and Creswell by evaluating each preceding interview before and during subsequent interviews. This methodology allows the interviewer to funnel and filter the participants' responses into usable themes and codes throughout the process. For both interviews and artifact analysis, I followed Creswell and Creswell's (2018, pp. 193–195) five-step process.

- Organize and prepare analysis process.
- Read or look at all the data.
- Code all the data.
- Generate a description and themes.
- Represent the description and themes.

Using Creswell and Creswell's (2018) codebook of expected codes as a reference, I employed three coding methods on both the transcribed interviews and artifacts: *in vivo*, process, and value (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Beginning the coding exercise with *in vivo* provided a greater overall context by evaluating participant's own words for key phrases or words of interest (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). During the second pass, I employed process coding. This form of coding helped identify gerund (or "-ing") style words of interest within the participant's language that indicated possible action or interaction tendencies (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The third pass consisted of value coding, enabling the identification of participant patterns for expressing beliefs, attitudes, or values within the language of the interviews (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Upon completing the coding passes, I organized the data into columns and condensed those codes into themes, then categories (Creswell, 2015).

Data Synthesis

Given the subjective nature of qualitative data analysis, validity and reliability are crucial (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Establishing validity requires

the researcher to verify the accuracy of findings through a varied and objective process. Reliability requires a consistent and repeatable approach across a multivariate spectrum (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For readers to find qualitative research valid and reliable, it is essential for the researcher to ensure readers and research participants find the data accurate. To establish accuracy, I performed member checking, which involved asking all interview participants to review the transcribed and coded items pertaining to their input. To establish validity, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested using interview triangulation and reducing or identifying potential researcher bias. As I work at the church identified in this research, the potential for bias should be closely scrutinized.

To reduce the potential introduction of bias, I did not interview any participants with whom I had a direct reporting relationship or analyze any artifacts in which I was sole author. Additionally, interview participants had the opportunity to review all transcribed interviews and corresponding results for accuracy and intent. To further establish validity, I employed interview triangulation, as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018). Triangulation is the amalgamation of two or more theories, data sources, methods, or investigators in a single study, often resulting in a single concept. I employed a combination of both sources and methods triangulation by evaluating both interviews and artifacts.

Scope and Limitations

As supported by the literature, there is a lack of evidenced-based leadership development amongst church staff. The exemplar in this case study attempted to bridge the gap between practical and research-based development, utilizing components of authentic and spiritual leadership in developing their leaders. The significance of examining the development framework outlined in this research could serve as an exemplar for leadership development in other evangelical churches of similar size. The results cannot be generalized back to all churches that have experienced leadership development, except potentially those that have embraced the principles of spiritual and/or authentic leadership philosophies.

Additionally, some of the data gathered during participant interviews might not have been evident to the follower, and as such, may be limited by follower

perception. Researcher bias is another potential limitation of this study. The mitigations outlined in the data analysis section of this research should significantly reduce the possibility of introducing researcher bias. No mitigation method, however, can fully eliminate bias.

Summary

Through this study, I intended to explore whether and how the exemplar's leadership development process incorporates components of authentic and spiritual leadership and contributes to the overall growth of its leaders. To accomplish this, I chose a qualitative research method to evaluate human perceptions and understanding from which researchers may then derive meaning and application. Employing a case study design recommended by Saldaña and Omasta (2018), the research occurred in two phases: (a) analyzing documents, artifacts, and visual materials and (b) conducting and analyzing interviews.

I ensured reliability and validity by garnering concurrence from participants on the accuracy of their contributions, identifying and mitigating potential bias, and employing interview triangulation. Using Creswell and Creswell's (2018) codebook of expected codes as a reference, I employed three coding methods on both the transcribed interviews and exemplar artifacts, resulting in data synthesis. I then examined the results for boarder applicability across the local church and the body of knowledge regarding authentic and spiritual leadership.

Chapter 4 – Findings

The purpose of this case study was to explore authentic and spiritual leadership development in the local church through the exemplar of a large evangelical church in Virginia. The exemplar implemented a leadership development program that combined both authentic and spiritual leadership development philosophies and, within 3 years, experienced a nearly 20-point increase in employee engagement and satisfaction (BCWI, 2022). The findings of this study proved that an analysis of the exemplar may well expand the body of knowledge in both authentic and spiritual leadership, as well as leadership development for the local church.

This research explored whether and how the exemplar's leadership development process incorporated components of authentic and spiritual leadership and contributed to the overall growth of its leaders. To accomplish this, data collection occurred in two main phases (artifact analysis and interviews) resulting in 327 individual data segments which I further condensed into 120 subcategories, and then into 12 final codes. Creswell and Creswell (2018) proposed that codes typically fall into one or more of three categories: *expected* codes, *surprising* codes, and *codes of unusual or conceptual interest*. The findings from the present case study revealed codes from all three categories, eventually resulting in four themes.

Data Collection

Employing a case study design recommended by Saldaña and Omasta (2018), the findings (just like the data collection methodology) materialized in two phases (a) document and artifact analysis, and (b) interviews. During the artifact analysis phase, I identified 120 individual data segments which were then used to inform the interview phase of data collection. The resultant codes (11) served as a codebook during the interview portion. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), analyzing artifacts such as documents and other exemplar-sourced materials adds a layer of objectivity to case study research by examining actual language and written evidence of an intended case. I used the findings from the artifacts and documents to compare with participant interviews, resulting in the addition of one

more unique code (12 total) and an increase in the specific instances of phrases repeated to five of the original 11 codes.

For the interview protocol, I used a multilayered approach suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018), evaluating each preceding interview before and during subsequent interviews. This methodology allowed me to funnel and filter the participants' responses into usable themes and codes throughout the process, from the 207 individual data segments derived from the initial interview transcripts. I then used the 11 codes from the artifact and document analysis as a guide. For both interviews and artifact analysis, I followed Creswell and Creswell's (2018) five-step process:

- Organize and prepare analysis process.
- Read or look at all the data.
- Code all the data.
- Generate a description and themes.
- Represent the description and themes. (pp. 193-195)

The following sections provide an overview of the data collection methods for each phase, and then describe the findings.

Artifacts

Artifact analysis consisted of an examination of teachings (transcribed), course syllabi from the exemplar's college, and human resources documentation used in onboarding new employees. I only examined artifacts produced between January 2019 through July 2022, when the formal development process began.

Specific documents and artifact transcripts included:

1. Staff Teachings
 - a. Monthly Management Training, including topics such as leadership and management, employee performance feedback, fundamentals of budgeting and fiscal best practices, conflict resolution, change management, fundamentals of professional communication, coaching teams, delegation and empowerment,

developing effective performance goals, church-wide policies and procedures, and collaboration and problem solving.

- b. Transcripts of monthly spiritual teachings for all staff

2. College Syllabi

- a. Fundamentals of Leadership Development
- b. Team Dynamics
- c. Introduction to Organizational Leadership
- d. Leadership Challenges
- e. Spiritual Disciplines
- f. Pastoral Leadership
- g. Hermeneutics
- h. New Testament I & II
- i. Old Testament I & II
- j. Church History I & II
- k. Christian Doctrine I & II
- l. Basics of Apologetics
- m. Homiletics

3. Human Resources Documents

- a. Staff Culture Guide
- b. Employee Handbook
- c. Orientation training modules
- d. Employee ethical and moral values contract

The exemplar also allowed access to two qualitative analyses conducted by management consultants and employee engagement survey results from 2019 and 2022. The employee engagement surveys conducted by the Best Christian Workplaces Institute included both qualitative and quantitative data from the past 3 years, benchmarking both before and after the exemplar's leadership development program. Of particular note, the exemplar increased by 4 points in overall employee participation (1 point higher than the sector average), and scored high in *job satisfaction*, *whether employees would recommend others to work there*, and six other intrinsic motivators.

The results seem to confirm Nguyen et al.'s (2018) assertion that spiritual leadership increases organizational commitment and enhances citizenship behaviors. The BCWI results also seem to reflect Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) conclusion that authentic leadership may result in higher levels of motivation. Over the span of just 3 years the church experienced a nearly 20-point increase in the overall score, from 3.92 in 2019 to 4.11 in 2022 (on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest). Over that same span of time, churches who were already certified as Best Christian Workplace only averaged a score of 4.07. The exemplar was 4 points higher than the national average. Data collected during this phase resulted in 120 individual data segments. Those data segments, once condensed, then resulted in several recurring codes. Table 4 outlines the 11 codes derived from artifact and document data collection. A detailed discussion on each code can be found in the findings section of this chapter.

Table 4

Initial Code Book: Artifact and Document Analysis Phase

| Occurrence | Code |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 24 | Create Opportunity |
| 7 | Develop / Disciple |
| 5 | Heart / Excellence |
| 11 | Purpose / Vision |
| 20 | Generosity |
| 6 | Values / Culture |
| 13 | Leadership |
| 2 | Belief / Faith |
| 14 | Hunger / Drive |
| 5 | Unity / We |

Note. These occurrences represent individual data segments associated with each code.

Interviews

Qualitative research data analysis requires examination of the individual components of a subject's input, synthesis of common themes and codes, and a winnowing of data until the researcher can begin discerning meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For the interview phase of data collection, I developed a semistructured 15-question interview protocol based on components of authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, and leadership development, contrasting the results with information gathered during the artifact analysis. Interview participants were all members of staff and volunteer leaders who had served during the last 3 years at the exemplar. Three of the five volunteers chosen for the interviews previously attended either the exemplar's college or their Leadership Intensive, a 10-week course designed to imbue church culture and leadership principles.

The population sample included 20 total interviewees, comprised of staff and volunteers (Table 5). Senior staff included five total individuals (three men and two women), four of whom had attended formal ministry school. General staff included 10 total individuals (six women and four men), four of whom had attended formal ministry school. Volunteers who had been through formal ministry training included three total individuals (two women and one man); all graduates of the exemplar's college. Finally, the volunteers who had not gone through formal ministry training included two total individuals (one man and one woman).

Table 5

Population Sample Summary

| Participant Groups | Participant | Formal Ministry School |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Senior Leaders | Participant 2 | O |
| | Participant 3 | O |
| | Participant 5 | O |
| | Participant 7 | O |
| | Participant 9 | |
| General Staff | Participant 1 | O |

| Participant Groups | Participant | Formal Ministry School |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| | Participant 4 | |
| | Participant 6 | O |
| | Participant 8 | O |
| | Participant 10 | X |
| | Participant 11 | |
| | Participant 12 | |
| | Participant 15 | |
| | Participant 16 | |
| | Participant 17 | X |
| Volunteers | Participant 13 | X |
| | Participant 14 | |
| | Participant 18 | |
| | Participant 19 | X |
| | Participant 20 | X |

Note. Participants who attended formal ministry school (traditional seminary or Christian college/university (O), Participants who attended the exemplar's college (X).

The interview phase of data collection yielded 207 individual data segments, for a combined total of 327 data segments, which I analyzed by employing a standard coding and theming methodology recommend by Saldaña and Omasta (2018). Table 6 outlines the final codes resulting from both phases of data collection (artifacts and documents, and interviews). One of the initial codes (*purpose / vision*) began to develop as two separate codes (*purpose* and *vision*) during the interview phase, requiring they be split back out. There were also five codes disproportionately affected by repetition as they were intentionally designed into the interview questions. I discarded all instances of direct reference to the IQs, annotating only repetitions where participants discussed data segments related to the codes.

Table 6*Final Codes: Combined List of Codes from Both Phases of Data Collection*

| Occurrence | Code |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 37 | Create Opportunity |
| 37 | Develop / Disciple |
| 32 | Heart / Excellence |
| 31 | Generosity |
| 29 | Vision |
| 26 | Courage / Grit |
| 24 | Values / Culture |
| 24 | Leadership |
| 23 | Purpose |
| 24 | Belief / Faith |
| 20 | Hunger / Drive |
| 20 | Unity / We |

Note. Codes referencing specific IQs during interviews were not included. These occurrences represent individual data segments associated with each code.

Data Analysis

Upon receiving approval from the SEU IRB, I contacted each identified participant to set up in-person interviews. All interviews included the same location and protocol. In total, 20 interview participants contributed to the research. Data analysis involved the following steps:

1. Coding documents and artifacts
2. Transcribing interviews
3. Coding interviews
4. Comparing data segments from documents and artifact with data segments from interviews
5. Coding all data segments together
6. Condensing data segments into subcategories

7. Condensing subcategories into codes
8. Condensing codes into themes

Step 1 of data analysis consisted of coding the multiple documents and artifacts, and then transcribing the voice-memo recorded interviews with the Office 365 cloud software program. Using the Office 365 software allowed me to transcribe directly to Microsoft Word documents and save in MFA-protected storage files. After printing and reading each interview, I performed an initial culling of the interview and identified key data segments, which I then compared with the data segments from the artifact analysis. I then developed a codebook (see Appendix B) based on the data segments from the initial phase of data collection, Research Questions 1–5, and Interview Questions 1–15. The initial data collection revealed 11 codes, which then served as a guide for analyzing the interview phase of data collection. Using the codebook as a guide, I analyzed both data segments together (totaling 327 individual segments), identifying 120 total subcategories, expanding the original codebook to 12, and resulting in four themes.

I employed three coding passes on both the transcribed interviews and artifacts: *in vivo*, process, and value (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The coding exercise began with *in vivo* to provide a greater overall context by evaluating participant's own words for key phrases or words of interest (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). During the second pass, I employed process coding. This form of coding helped identify gerund (or “-ing”) style words of interest within the participant's language that indicated possible action or interaction tendencies (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). During the second coding pass, several repeat phrases began to emerge within both the artifact analysis and the participant interviews. The third pass consisted of value coding, which enabled the identification of participant patterns for expressing beliefs, attitudes, or values within the language of the interviews (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The third pass was the most revealing of each coding pass, indicating a common language throughout the exemplar's documents and development of their leaders specifically linked to both AL and SL. These commonalities are likely a direct reflection of the consistent training and emphasis on cultural language at the exemplar, reflecting both leadership

approaches. The following table (Table 7) outlines the connection between the final codes, IQs, and associated leadership theory.

Table 7

Summary of Findings: Codes to Leadership Theories and IQs

| Code | IQ | Theory |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Create Opportunity | 2, 3, 4, 11, 12 | AL, EX |
| Develop / Disciple | 2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12 | AL, SL, EX |
| Heart / Excellence | 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 12, 13 | AL, SL, EX |
| Vision | 1, 6, 7, 13, 15 | AL, SL, EX |
| Generosity | 4, 6, 8, 12 | AL, SL, EX |
| Courage / Grit | 2, 3, 6, 9, 13 | AL, SL |
| Values / Culture | 1, 4, 10, 11, 14 | AL, SL, EX |
| Leadership | 1, 11, 12, 13 | EX |
| Purpose | 1, 6, 7 | AL, SL, EX |
| Belief / Faith | 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14 | AL, SL |
| Hunger / Drive | 2, 11 | AL, EX |
| Unity / We | 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13 | AL, SL, EX |

Note. Authentic Leadership Theory (AL), Exemplar's Leadership Framework (EL), Spiritual Leadership Theory (SL).

To establish accuracy, I employed member checking, asking interview participants to review the transcribed and coded items pertaining to their input. To establish validity, I employed interview triangulation and reducing, as Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested. Triangulation is the merger of two or more theories, data sources, methods, or investigators in a single study, often resulting in a single concept. I employed a combination of both sources and methods triangulation when evaluating the interviews and artifacts. Further reducing potential bias, I interviewed only participants with whom I had no direct reporting relationship.

Findings

This study was guided by the following research questions to further explore authentic and spiritual leadership development in the local church through the exemplar. The research questions addressed in this case study were:

- RQ1: In what ways is authentic leadership exhibited at the exemplar? What are the differences, if any, in perceptions of authentic leadership among senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers?
- RQ2: In what ways is spiritual leadership exhibited at the exemplar? What are the differences, if any, in perceptions of spiritual leadership among senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers?
- RQ3: In what ways is leadership development exhibited at the exemplar? What are the differences, if any, in perceptions of leadership development amongst senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers?
- RQ4: Are there any differences in perceptions of authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, and leadership development in those who attended ministry school versus those who had no ministry school experience at the exemplar? If so, what are they?

Based on a detailed analysis of both the artifacts and interview transcripts, the exemplar exhibits both authentic leadership and spiritual leadership in a variety of ways. The artifacts and documents specifically included language from both AL dimensions listed by George (2003) and Walumbwa et al. (2008), and Fry and Whittington's (2005) causal theory of SL—most notably, the exemplar's leadership development framework (outlined in Table 8) and Staff Culture Guide. Analysis of those documents revealed intentional language that addressed all five of George's (2003) original dimensions, and all but *relational transparency* of the definition of Walumbwa et al. (2008). *Altruistic love* and *vision* were readily apparent from the documents, as was *faith*. There was no overt correlation to Fry and Whittington's (2005) *hope* component of SL contained in any of the documents. The most repeated word(s) across all the documents (excluding references to specific IQs) was *God/Christ* (27), followed by *authentic* (17), *leadership* (11), and *love* (7).

The first phase of analysis revealed what the exemplar says and how they train, demonstrating an intentionality of becoming authentic and spiritual leaders. The document and artifacts helped me to narrow the focus of the interviews and provided a guide during the final analysis. Phase 1 enabled me to compare what the exemplar says with what they do (interview phase). Phase 2 of analysis, the interviews, allowed me to explore exactly how the exemplar used components of AL and SL through the perspectives of subordinates and volunteers. The following discussion provides a more detailed description and analysis of each RQ and their associated IQs.

Research Question 1

As Neider and Schriesheim (2011) and Roof (2013) recommended, IQs for RQ1 were derived from the Walumbwa et al. (2008) authentic leadership inventory. This inventory, comprised of 16 items, reflects each of authentic leadership's four dimensions. Interview Questions 1–5 represent dimensions of the ALI, adapted for qualitative analysis. Answers to RQ1 yielded 79 of the 207 individual data segments discovered during the interview portion of analysis. All 12 final codes (excluding references to the IQs themselves) were evident in RQ1: *create opportunity* (9), *Develop / Disciple* (12), *Heart / Excellence* (10), *Generosity* (7), *Vision* (7), *Courage / Grit* (3), *Values / Culture* (6), *Leadership* (6), *Purpose* (2), *Belief / Faith* (6), *Hunger / Drive* (5), And *Unity / We* (6).

Interview Question 1. The first IQ provided a general overview of participants' knowledge about authentic leadership and facilitated several follow-on questions exploring interviewee perspectives regarding the importance of authenticity within the context of ministry. Senior staff expressed the most thorough understanding of AL, with Participant 7 explicitly identifying four of George's (2003) five dimensions. Unexpectedly, answers to this question yielded far more than just the exemplar's demonstration of AL. Participant 7 said,

I don't remember exactly the definition but for some reason it's always just kind of stuck in my head. I mean I know there's a more...another version of these...but I think of...a leader who's real...who's uh...who has heart [*Heart / Excellence*]...who leads from a set of personal values [*Values /*

Culture]. I think of a leader who knows their people and knows how to call more out of them [*Develop / Disciple*]. That's what authentic leaders are to me.

The volunteers and staff who graduated from the exemplar's college possessed a similar level of knowledge regarding AL concepts to that of senior leaders. General staff exhibited some level of knowledge about AL, but primarily focused on what it means to be authentic. Participant 15 indicated,

I'm not exactly sure about a definition of authentic leadership...but when I think of authentic or authenticity...I think of...uh...a leader's openness...transparency. I think of...um, I think of someone who's genuine. Who doesn't have a selfish agenda. Authentic, to me, is being who you are in private, in public also. Somebody who does this well is [omitted]. I mean she has a way of being so relatable in the moment with people, they just open up...they trust her [*Heart / Excellence*].

The widest gap in AL understanding, were those volunteers who had no formal ministry training and who had not been formally trained in the exemplar's development process. Participant 14 recalled, "Authentic leadership...to me...is about authenticity. It's about doing what you say and saying what you do...or at least saying what's on your mind."

Interview Question 2. I designed IQ2, adapted from the ALI, to reflect the *self-awareness* dimension of authentic leadership. Responses to this question varied greatly amongst the five groups but, consistent amongst all respondents, was the exemplar's commitment to giving and seeking feedback. What was not readily apparent to 60% of the interviewees was whether *self-awareness* was a value at the exemplar or if the value was more narrowly focused on collecting feedback.

Because this question was not designed to evaluate how leadership incorporated feedback within the organization, the only determinants that researcher was able to make was that the exemplar places a high value on feedback. Unexpectedly, IQ2 revealed that a majority of interviewees believed their leaders were sincere in desiring feedback and in their desires to see subordinates grow both spiritually and professionally. Participant 11 responded as follows:

My leader...yeah. Absolutely. My leader, like every time they speak or something, comes back and asks if it made sense to everyone else. Or, if we're rolling out something new, they usually come ask what I think about it first...especially if it's potentially controversial. But yeah, they also encourage us to do the same thing...I mean, go get feedback from other people about ourselves. It grows us [*Develop / Disciple*]. That's what it is. It's growing. We know they care about growing themselves and growing us [*Unity / We*].

This finding seemed to confirm Crawford et al.'s (2020) more positive definition of AL which included an increase in sincerity.

Interview Question 3. The third question explored the relational transparency dimension of authentic leadership. Not surprisingly, senior staff seemed to have a higher degree of understanding about the effects of transparency on one's ability to lead, but also had the fewest observations about their respective leader's transparency. At least one senior staff member believed their leader to be transparent, but acknowledged that it was only apparent to a small group of individuals. Participant 3 said,

It's really hard, because I believe my leader wants to be transparent...I think, but I also think, in practice, only a few people ever really get to see that. They lead at a really high level...and I've seen them be transparent...but not a lot of people do. And even the times that they are, even amongst us, not everyone sees it all the time. I don't know if there's an answer for that.

Middle managers, though, unanimously received praise from their subordinates about the amount of transparency they displayed with their staff. Both volunteers who had been through formal ministry training and the ones who had not experienced all staff with whom they interact as transparent. Participant 20 stated,

I've served here a long time, but I've also been to some other churches. I can tell you, I've never been anywhere where my senior pastor was as transparent as ours. I think back to when the race stuff was going on...right in the middle of COVID...and I knew then...that was someone I wanted to

follow [*Leadership*]. I knew that I could trust him...and I see that from the staff. I see that in my experience, at least.

Interview Question 4. IQ4 explored the *internalized moral perspectives* dimension of authentic leadership. The findings from the interview portion of this research indicated unanimously for each of the interview groups that core beliefs positively contribute to the way the exemplar's staff and volunteers lead.

Participant 13 stated,

Of course I think my leader have core beliefs [*Belief / Faith*]...I mean we're a church. But I also think it's more than that, you know? He doesn't just talk about the Bible and how he believes, but I see it in the way he interacts with his family too. Actually, it's one of my favorite things...it makes us feel secure because we can know that they are making decisions [*Leadership*]...you know...based on those beliefs. I don't worry about whether they have an agenda.

Additionally, 80% of participants suggested that they felt safer being vulnerable or bringing up challenges with their supervisor due to their commitment to core beliefs.

Interview Question 5. IQ5 explored the *balanced processing* dimension of authentic leadership. Respondents discussed the exemplar's emphasis on the need for all ministry staff and volunteers to constantly grow themselves, never being satisfied with the status quo. More specifically, interviewees indicated that their leaders possessed a strong desire to help their teams become more self-aware, and often recognized gaps in their own leadership, soliciting input from subordinates. Except for one outlier, participants believed senior leaders demonstrate a greater sense of self-awareness, even though individuals lower in the organization may not notice it as much. Participant 8 discussed,

Based on my experience, our staff is much more self-aware the higher you go. I mean...our executive leaders are extremely self-aware, though not everyone has an opportunity to see it play out real world. But...uh...I know our managers, at least most of us...are self-aware...just, it's not everyone. As for the rest of the staff, I think they're still learning to be self-aware. It's

not that they aren't. It's just that I'm not sure they're there yet...you know what I mean?

This apparent difference in self-awareness at each layer of the organization was only shared by one participant. The other participants only referenced middle or executive managers when talking about examples of self-awareness, possibly indicating a gap at lower levels of the staff.

Research Question 2

Interview Questions 6–9 derive from Fry's (2003) theory of spiritual leadership. Specifically, they represent the three principles that define Fry and Whittington's (2005) causal theory of spiritual leadership: *vision*, *altruistic love*, and *hope/faith*. The tenth IQ derives from Pawar's (2014) assertion that a leader's personal spirituality is directly correlated to their level support for spiritual leadership behaviors within the organization. Answers to RQ2 yielded 85 of the 207 individual data segments discovered during the interview portion of analysis. Nine of the 12 final codes (outside of specific references to the IQs themselves) were evident in RQ2: *Develop / Disciple* (12), *Heart / Excellence* (14), *Generosity* (3), *Vision* (14), *Courage / Grit* (6), *Values / Culture* (9), *Purpose* (10), *Belief / Faith* (10), and *Unity / We* (7).

Interview Question 6. Participants' responses to IQ6 provided a general overview of participants' knowledge about spiritual leadership and facilitated several follow-on questions exploring interviewee perspectives regarding the importance of spirituality in ministry. The findings were similar to those of IQ1. Just as with IQ1 and AL, senior staff expressed the most thorough understanding of SL and spirituality in general. Participant 5 commented,

We are all spiritual beings. God designed us that way intentionally and we were meant to live spiritual lives. Spirituality isn't just about religion. But for us...believers, we are called into a spiritual relationship with Jesus...a personal, intimate relationship with Him [*Belief / Faith*]. And He gives us strength, identity. His Spirit...the second we say yes to Him, comes and lives on the inside of us. As a spiritual leader...as believers...we are empowered by His spirit. We can lead and live boldly [*Courage / Grit*].

Also, like responses about AL, volunteers and staff who graduated from the exemplar's college possessed a similar level of knowledge regarding SL concepts to that of senior leaders. One college graduate recalled,

I know spirituality is much bigger than what I'm about to say, but I can't help but think that it's just really hard to separate spirituality from my faith in Jesus [*Belief / Faith*]. I mean...I know we all have a spirit and that we're designed as spiritual beings. But, even then...I was designed...which means...at least to me, that God is responsible for my spirituality. That...for me...ties it back to a faith thing.

General staff exhibited a strong level of knowledge about spirituality as it relates to religion and spiritual gifts but lacked any real understanding of SL as a leadership theory. Participant 8 said, "Spiritual leaders are leaders who lead through the Holy Spirit. They are leaders who lead others into a more intentional relationship with Jesus."

Interview Question 7. Interview Question 7 explored the concept of a *common vision* amongst the exemplar's staff and volunteers. Responses to this question were almost unanimous. Every single interviewee indicated that a sense of common mission and vision were important to the exemplar, and that it had an infectious and unifying effect on the entire organization. Sixteen out of 20 participants recited the exemplar's mission statement almost verbatim, with the other four referencing it in whole or in part. Senior staff highlighted a particular time when vision was not clear at all levels of the organization, discussing the various challenges lack of clarity created:

I don't think the vision here as always been super clear...uh...well, the mission was...just that I'm not sure everyone could tell you...like specifically, where we were going. At least, not at the lowest levels. I feel like now, again...this has been in the last few years...we are all rowing in the same direction [*Vision*]. Think about during COVID. Things were a mess for a lot of people. But we kept on track...I mean we definitely modified things. But even that, it was like...we know what we're called to do and we

went after it [*Purpose*]. I think it actually made people feel more secure, like the net result was unity [*Unity*].

Interview Question 8. Interview Question 8 explored the concept of unconditional love. There was a noteworthy difference between the experiences of the staff and their volunteers. Every member of staff, regardless of education or level in the organization, admired how leaders demonstrated unconditional love in the way they treated employees who left staff negatively and employees experiencing some sort of dramatic life event (death, illness, mental health, etc.). Participant 9 remarked,

I think because of my position...maybe...I get to see more, but we really love people well here [*Heart / Excellence*]. I'm not sure I everyone understands just how well, you know? Like...people that left us poorly...like, I know...well somewhat...I mean I think I know better than most people, just how well they were treated [*Generosity*]. And here's the thing...it's just who our leaders are. It comes natural to them...especially [omitted]. Like it makes me want to be more like that.

Although both groups of volunteers believed staff were committed to unconditional love, only the group of volunteers who had attended the exemplar's college could immediately recall specific examples of *altruistic love* demonstrated by the organization. When asked for additional thoughts about unconditional love at the exemplar, all the volunteers eventually identified at least one example, citing the exemplar's culture of community outreach and COVID-19 response as a few. Additionally, three of the volunteers highlighted their strong belief that the exemplar's staff should be no more responsible for demonstrating *altruistic love* than any other parishioner. Participant 19 stated,

I think that's all of our responsibilities...uh...I mean, we're all Christians. Isn't that what Jesus wanted us to do [*Belief / Faith*]? I know we don't always get it right, but I think if you ask most people around here they would say that's all our job. I mean...wouldn't you say it's like Godly love? So...yeah. I think that's the heart here at [exemplar]. I would say we do that well. It's part of the spiritual pathway we teach...it's the make a

difference...or actually, it's kind of all of them but definitely they make a difference part [*Heart / Excellence*].

Interview Question 9. Interview Question 9 explored Fry's (2003) concepts of *faith* and *hope*. One of the most unexpected responses of all 15 IQs was the bifurcation of these two concepts. Overwhelmingly (100% of respondents), confirmed the presence of *faith* in both the organization as a whole and its staff and volunteers; however, interviewees indicated that *hope* was more of a byproduct of other values at the exemplar—and intrinsic motivations—rather than an intentional design. Participant 7 suggested,

I don't know about the hope part. For sure faith. Absolutely. Well...eh...it's in everything...faith. Hope...hmmm. Yeah, I think hope is a part of how my supervisor leads, but I'm not sure it's intentional...like 'I'm going to grow your hope today!' I think he definitely leads with faith at the forefront [*Belief / Faith*]. And we do big faith here...which I think comes all the way down from our senior pastors [*Heart / Excellence*].

In fact, not one of the participants discussed *hope(ful)* until specifically asked during IQ9, and the documents and artifacts only mentioned the word twice. One of those references was in the staff branding guide and had no correlation to Fry's (2003) definition. Instead, 45% of the interviews, including both staff and volunteers, suggested that their *hope* increased because of their leaders' commitment to *faith*.

Interview Question 10. Interview Question 10 examined Pawar's (2014) assertion that a leader's personal spirituality is directly correlated to their level support for spiritual leadership behaviors within the organization. Except for one outlier, respondents overwhelmingly praised senior leadership's commitment to personal spirituality and its positive effects on the organization. While more junior staff and volunteers affirmed middle management's desire for developing their personal spirituality, they believed there was a large difference between the two management levels within the exemplar. One interviewee (Participant 1) even suggested that they were more spiritually mature than their middle manager, while

also acknowledging their supervisor's improvement in personal spirituality under the mentorship of a senior staff member. Participant 1 stated,

I think this is one where my manager could grow in more. I see spirituality play a huge role in my senior leaders' leadership, but I don't think that's always been the case with my current leader. Like with [omitted]...I always knew he was spending time with God, but with [omitted]...well he's grown a lot too...I should definitely say that...but when he first started leading me...I...honestly...I mean I'm not trying to be arrogant or anything, but I was more spiritually mature. But he's definitely grown since then [*Develop / Disciple*].

Spiritual disciplines play such a significant role in the operation of the exemplar that they dedicate a portion of most of their meetings to growing in these areas. Based on the interview responses, the exemplar may need to more specifically focus on some of these areas for middle managers during their management training. Participant 4 said,

One of my favorite things that [exemplar] does is how much we incorporate spirituality into everything. Like...um...at our O&Is and stuff...we spend the first part of that meeting just praying out loud as a staff [*Values / Culture*]. Our all staffs...those worship moments...so cool...such great moments that our senior pastors prioritize. I can remember lots of times...where...um...spirituality played a huge role in all of my leaders. I think we do that well here. But I think our directors are still growing in those areas. But I think we're on the right track [*Develop / Disciple*].

Research Question 3

Day et al. (2014) suggested that leadership development is not merely an experiential process, but that it requires formally training both leader and subordinate. Interview Questions 11–12 reflect that sentiment. Additionally, IQ13 specifically addressed the assertions outlined by Grieger and Peck (2016) and Han (2015), that ministry leaders require a formal development process such as the exemplar's to manage the complexities of leading the local church. Answers to RQ3 yielded 31 of the 207 individual data segments discovered during the

interview portion of analysis. Ten of the 12 final codes (outside of specific references to the IQs themselves) were evident in RQ3: *Create Opportunity* (4), *Develop / Disciple* (6), *Heart / Excellence* (3), *Generosity* (1), *Vision* (2), *Courage / Grit* (4), *Leadership* (5), *Belief / Faith* (3), *Hunger / Drive* (1), and *Unity / We* (2).

Interview Question 11. Responses to IQ11 provided a general overview of participants' knowledge about leadership development and facilitated several follow-on questions exploring interviewee perspectives regarding the importance of leadership development in ministry. Senior staff and middle managers expressed a thorough understanding of leadership development and the principles used by the exemplar; however, volunteers and staff (regardless of level) who graduated from the exemplar's college possessed the highest level of knowledge regarding the overarching principles of leadership development, including specifics about the exemplar's framework. Participant 19 said,

This is probably...yeah...I would say that we do this really well...like...one of the best things we do. It's reinforced just about everywhere. Everybody uses the same language [*Unity / We*]. I remember taking lots of notes about it when I went through [exemplar] college and I have been using it ever since...the framework. You know...I think most people get the...our core values...part. 'Love God. Love people' [*Values / Culture*]...etc., but the competencies really make the framework [*Develop / Disciple*]. We use it every day on our team.

Volunteers who had not been through the exemplar's leadership development process had an elementary understanding of leadership principles, but praised the exemplar for its commitment to developing staff and volunteers:

I love that the church is so committed to doing that for people. I've been to other churches, and I can't tell you how many times I've been frustrated because there's no formal training [*Develop / Disciple*]. And I know we're rolling something out here soon too...like formal discipleship training [*Create Opportunity*]. I can't wait. That's what we should be doing. Reach the lost...'yes'...but we also can't forget about everyone else too. We have to do both.

Interview Question 12. Interview Question 12 examined leader commitment to the development of their subordinates. Like IQ7, responses to this question were unanimous. Every single interview indicated that their leader exhibited commitment to developing their direct reports as leaders. Most respondents (75%) said it was one of the reasons they enjoyed serving at the exemplar. Fourteen out of 20 participants (including volunteers) said the exemplar was the only place they received formal leadership development of any kind. Participant 11 said,

I've worked in other places...like you know in the corporate world and others...[omitted]. But I've never been any where that developed me like this. There's such an intentionality...I mean it's from top to bottom. I've had managers care about me...care about my work...wanting to see me do better [*Heart / Excellence*]...at other places, but here we actually prioritize it. And it's available to anyone who wants it [*Create Opportunity*]. My direct report constantly asks...uh...what more he can do...what do I need...how he can help me grow [*Develop / Disciple*].

Interview Question 13. Interview Question 13 explored ways the exemplar's leadership development process prepared staff and volunteers for the challenges of ministry. I clarified that the formal development process should include everything from the exemplar's leadership development framework to the supervisor reviews, to one-on-one development, to formal management trainings. Half of the respondents referred to the exemplar's leadership development framework specifically, when responding to this question, calling it a "game changer" in their personal and professional growth. According to Participant 1,

I literally use [the framework] every day...during our staff meetings...during my one on ones with dream teamers. Especially the competencies. I mean, the character too, but the competencies really work. They give you a sense of confidence in any situation [*Courage / Grit*]. I did a welcome a few months ago and we needed to get more people to sign up to serve in Kidspoint to support our move. I used the lessons I learned from Casting Vision to move people [*Vision*]. We needed 15 people to sign up

and we got 18, or something like that. It works. The framework really works. And I think it's incredibly important that we took the time to create something like that...something that balances developing our character and our competencies [*Leadership*].

There was a noticeable drop-off in response to this question from volunteers who had not gone through the exemplar's college. These respondents did not even know that the exemplar had a formal process for developing leaders but acknowledged staff's commitment to developing the nine components listed in their framework. This seems to indicate the need for a more intentional development process for volunteers, as the vast majority have not been through the exemplar's college. Participant 14 said, "That's a really great idea...creating a framework like that. Now that I think about it, I've definitely heard some of those phrases used. I just didn't know that's where they came from. But that makes sense, though."

Research Question 4

Interview Questions 14 and 15 explore the differences in perceptions of authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, and leadership development in those who attended ministry school versus those who had no ministry school experience. Only interviewees who completed formal ministry school completed the last two IQs. Answers to RQ4 yielded 12 of the 207 individual data segments discovered during the interview portion of analysis. Three of the 12 final codes (outside of specific references to the IQs themselves) were evident in RQ4: *Vision* (6), *Values / Culture* (3), and *Belief / Faith* (3).

Interview Question 14. Question 14 examined how formal ministry school prepared individuals for authentic and/or spiritual leadership. Although the individual level of knowledge regarding both philosophies varied amongst interviewees, only graduates of the exemplar's college indicated that their formal education program prepared them for AL and SL. Participant 10 said,

I think our whole first year we talked about different types of leadership. I specifically remember reading about authentic leadership. There was an article called something like 'What's Wrong with Authentic Leadership' or

something. It talked about the fact that everything we say should be true but not everything true should be said [*Values / Culture*]. I love that. I still use it. I don't remember as much about spiritual leadership, but we kind of use it every day...even if we don't always think about it. As we say...we're spiritual tour guides [*Belief / Faith*]. It's kind of like our two tracks on the leadership framework. There's character...spiritual leadership...and competency...authentic leadership. That's how I think of it anyway.

Graduates of more traditional Christian colleges or universities agreed that they felt prepared for spiritual but not authentic leadership, specifically the *altruistic love* and *faith* dimensions. Participant 2 added,

Did they teach us about spiritual leadership...I mean did I learn about spiritual leadership? Yes. Did I learn how to be more authentic or about authentic leadership? No. I don't think...at all. Things like self-awareness just weren't talked about at all...or transparency. I didn't really experience that kind of transparency...like in a formal...or professional place, until I came here. But I don't know if that's even what they were trying to do.

They're a pretty large university. I'm pretty sure they're not thinking about being authentic.

This finding may indicate the need for further research amongst more traditional Christian colleges or universities regarding the incorporation of authentic leadership principles.

Interview Question 15. Interview Question 15 explored how formal ministry school prepared participants for ministry. Again, there was a noticeable difference between responses from those who attended traditional Christian colleges or universities and those who attended the exemplar's college. Participants who attended traditional Christian colleges or universities unanimously agreed that their training enhanced their intellectual (cognitive) knowledge of the Bible and biblical principles but did little to develop them practically for ministry. Three respondents indicated a nearly identical sentiment: "I can say...they developed my head...for sure, just not my heart" (Interview Transcript Three, 2022, p. 8).

Participant 3 indicated,

Yeah well...I went to seminary and all...and I definitely learned how to read the Bible...and how to speak in public...but I had absolutely no idea how to lead teams, or run a campus, or really...even...grow myself...I mean my personal walk with Jesus too. I can tell you...I think I learned a lot for sure...I mean...I'm grateful for those opportunities, but I'm not sure I grew a lot...if that makes sense. I think I grew way more here...over the last few years. Like way more. And now I feel way more capable of helping others move forward too [*Vision*]. I couldn't say that before.

The participants who graduated from the exemplar's college (staff and volunteers) demonstrated a confidence in both the cognitive and practical demands for ministry:

I haven't been in ministry that long, but I can say I absolutely felt ready for ministry leaving [exemplar] college. Some of that I still had to learn...because we only got exposed to some of the challenges in ministry at the college...but, for sure, I felt like a could take on anything. I'd say this...I'd say I think the college did more for my confidence than anything else, but I also knew where to look or who to go to for answers.

Discussion on Themes and Summary

Associated with these RQs, I identified the following four themes from the coding process: *Committed to service and development of others*, *United by common mission and vision*, *Driven by purpose and calling*, and *Sustained by courage and belief*. Table 8 is a comparison of the final themes to the 12 codes.

Table 8

Findings Overview: Codes to Themes

| Theme | Code | Occ. |
|--|--------------------|------|
| Committed to Service and Development of Others | Create Opportunity | 37 |
| | Develop / Disciple | 37 |
| | Leadership | 24 |
| | Vision | 29 |

| Theme | Code | Occ. |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------|
| United by Common Mission and Vision | Unity / We | 20 |
| | | |
| Driven by Purpose and Calling | Purpose | 23 |
| | Hunger / Drive | 20 |
| | Heart / Excellence | 32 |
| | Generosity | 31 |
| Sustained by Courage and Belief | Belief / Faith | 24 |
| | Courage / Grit | 26 |
| | Values / Culture | 24 |

Note. These occurrences represent individual data segments associated with each code.

Committed to Service and Development of Others

Document analysis indicated a strong commitment to developing leaders, as did interviews with both staff and volunteers at the exemplar. More than any other theme, interviewees credited *commitment to developing others* with much of the success the exemplar has enjoyed over the last 3 years. Although closely related to purpose, the participant's commitment to serving and developing others differed in that both are likely a byproduct of the first category rather than a subcategory.

Participants indicated a strong commitment to serve others, not just in their embrace of the exemplar's mission of reaching people far from God, but also in their apparent desire to lead others along their personal journeys. Page 7 of the exemplar's Culture Guide outlined their "what," calling it a "spiritual pathway." This pathway includes four steps of discipleship, helping people:

- Know God – Lost people come to salvation.
- Find Freedom – Saved people get pastored
- Discover Purpose – Pastored people get disciplined
- Make a Difference – Disciplined people then go out and fulfill the Great Commission, as outlined in Matthew Chapter 28

Create Opportunity. This code showed up in the exemplar's leadership framework and was one of the most repeated phrases (18 specific instances) throughout the analysis phase, manifesting similar characteristics to that of SL's *altruistic love*. In the exemplar's Culture Guide, they outlined a leader's responsibility to look for potential in others, add value to their lives by empowering them to do and be more, and always be developing others along with yourself. Interview participants felt so connected to the exemplar through this code that Participant 4 even stated,

I think I can honestly say that the opportunities I have in life...the ones I've had in the last few years...well, I think they've been because of the intentionality of my leader [*Create Opportunity*]. I've been able to do and see so many things because my leaders make sure I get those opportunities. I've been able to meet some really influential people...like [omitted] and [omitted]. I would never have gotten that opportunity had it not been for [leader]. There's just no selfish agenda there.

Develop / Disciple. As discussed in Chapter 1, designing leadership development programs that combine organizational leadership components with fundamentally moral foundations can be challenging, especially those that would be effective in the local church (Palmer, 2017; Sparkman, 2017; Thoman, 2011). Fry's (2003) holistic approach to leadership development outlined in SL includes four main areas: the spirit, heart, body, and mind. According to their academic catalog, the exemplar's college has aligned their entire program around similar principles, defining them as *you the believer* (spiritual), *you the minister* (theological), *you the person* (character), and *you the scholar* (academics). When asked about these pillars and whether they believed the program helped prepare them for ministry, Participant 17 recalled,

We used to hear those four pillars over and over. They are on everything...our walls...all of our materials. But I never really understood just how intentionally everything was designed around them until graduation. When I started to realize just how much of my training...my development [*Develop / Disciple*]...the stuff we learned, was in those four

pillars...it was like...wow. This stuff really works. I started working in ministry and immediately felt like...well, I still had a lot to learn...but...like, I felt confident. It was empowering.

The exemplar's commitment to developing people holistically (using the four principles above) reflects their intentional implementation of SL and may serve as a template for similar organizations to follow.

Leadership. The exemplar's commitment to leadership development was evident from reviewing their documents and conducting interviews. Their commitment to *leadership*, specifically, began to emerge during *in vivo* coding. Two things really stuck out to me that also bore out during interviews: the exemplar's mission statement (*Leading people far from God into a full life in Christ*) and staff motto (Appendix C) outlined a clear responsibility towards leadership praxis. The motto, entitled "I am a Leader," reads as a call to action and represents each of the nine components outlined in the exemplar's leadership framework. It serves as a description for successful leadership within the intent and design of the exemplar's culture. Participant 6 articulated it this way:

Our system is designed to set clear expectations, but also help people along a path. The expectation is that we are all leaders here. That's what we're signing up for. I mean our motto literally starts with the phrase 'I am a leader.' It was so important to us that we changed our original mission statement from 'we exist to reach people far from God...' to 'we exist to lead people far from God...'. To be successful here...we all know that there's an expectation of leadership [*Leadership*].

United by Common Mission and Vision

Both document analysis and participant interviews revealed a strong sense of unity for the Church, but also specifically with the exemplar. One of the exemplar's college syllabi said it this way:

We are not people oriented here at [exemplar]. We are not results oriented here at [exemplar]. We are unapologetically mission-oriented. Mission isn't important here are [exemplar]. Mission is everything. Our mission has been

given to us by the God of the universe and there is nothing more important than fulfilling that.

The overwhelming connection to the exemplar's mission and vision, seemed to inspire unity. Both staff and volunteers derived a sense of community and purpose from the mission, resulting in increased dedication to ministry within the local church but also in their personal lives. Participant 14 described,

I love the mission of [exemplar]. It's a constant reminder that all Christians are called to the same purpose [*Purpose*]...to 'lead people far from God into a full life in Christ.' But that's not just because I'm part of [exemplar]. It's because that's what God called all Christians to do. I work at [omitted]. We have our own corporate mission statement, but I still see my responsibility to 'lead people far from God into a full life in Christ' [personal *Vision*] That's my real mission. That's all our [Christians] mission [*We / Unity*].

The interview participants not only indicated that they derived a sense of purpose and unity from a common mission and vision while serving at the exemplar, but that it also carried over into other aspects of their lives. One of the volunteers (Participant 19) even suggested,

Honestly...I feel more connected...more unified with the body of Christ [*We / Unity*]. What I experience on a Sunday...or throughout the week, I take into my job. I even take...reaching people...leading them into a full life...I take that home too. Pastor [omitted] always says that we should feel a burden...like even going into the Starbucks...'you know, I wonder if they know Jesus'...we should take those moments into everything we do [*Vision*].

Vision. Fry (2003) proposed that vision causes members to experience meaning and purpose. Both the documents and individual interviews of staff and volunteers confirm that the exemplar has successfully created such an environment. Participant 2 responded,

I think vision...common vision...it gets people all rowing in the same direction. I mean...we all know...we're all on the same page [*We / Unity*].

There's a sense of unity in that. There's a sense that...well, confidence...because we're all called to the same mission. We don't just want the same things...we're called to the same things [*Vision*]. We're one team [*We / Unity*].

Participant 2's sentiment was shared by a large majority of interviewees (17) and seems to confirm Fry's (2003) assertion. On page 14 of the exemplar's Culture Guide, they emphasized the responsibility of every member in taking an active posture towards protecting and communicating the vision, even to the point of overcommunication. It says: "VISION LEAKS: It is our job to make sure vision stays in front of people through overcommunication, never becoming diluted through passivity or neglect." This emphasis on communicating and recommunicating vision appears to have had a unifying effect on staff and volunteers.

Unity / We. Unity was one of the easiest codes or themes to identify in this case study. Although the words *unity* or *we* were only mentioned a few direct times during the analysis phase, there were a plethora of other references to similar sentiments. One such reference appears in the culture guide when defining *Pursue Excellence*. The excerpt reads:

Principle: One Team, One Fight

Description:

- We choose collective purpose over personal preference.
- We pursue accountability and feedback in order to grow.
- We are interdependent: we need, trust, and value each other and we believe collaboration is key.

Although not explicitly identifying *unity* the sentiment described in the passage above emphasizes the importance of community at the exemplar. Interviewee phrases such as "lock step," "in line," and "same page" also highlighted the importance of community.

Fry (2003) defined *membership* as the confluence of *altruistic love* and one's sense of calling derived from a common vision; however, *membership*

implies understanding, appreciation, and agreement (Fry & Whittington, 2005).

Unity within the context of the exemplar seems to be deeper. Participant 12 said,

For me...there's a oneness to our team because of the mission. There's this overwhelming sense of...uh...um...like synergy. There's a gravity to what we do...like it's life and death, but with eternity. I think we all get it. I think we...well, most us...uh...understand that the only way to be successful is to be one. What's the verse? I think it's John 17. 'Lord, make them one as we are one.' That to me is worth fighting for and I think our whole team is on the same page.

The exemplar calls this concept *Team One*, requiring members to place a higher emphasis on the mission and larger organization than to their immediate teams.

Driven by Purpose and Calling

The word *driven* most describes the phenomenon outlined in present category. There was also an overwhelming feeling of momentum expressed in a variety of ways throughout the transcripts. Fry (2003) suggested that SL can have a similar energizing affect and result in a level of excellence, whereby other members feel compelled to continually elevate the standard. The participants equally expressed a sense of urgency that the category implies, but also a sense of progress due to common purpose. One of the most prolific themes of the analysis, *purpose* seemed to serve as the overarching intrinsic motivation expressed by both interview respondents and documents. Participant 9 stated,

My job isn't even on the ministry side of things. I think I struggled when I first came here...coming from a corporate background...because I needed to understand...to see my job as having the same importance as people who are doing the actual pastoring. I needed to get to the point that I saw just as much meaning in what I was doing, or my teams were doing, as anyone else here [*Purpose*]. Once, I got there, it helped me get to a whole new level [*Heart / Excellence*]. It changed my approach to everything [*Hunger / Drive*].

Purpose. Both Fry's (2003) definition of spiritual leadership [*calling*] and George's (2003) original five dimensions of authentic leadership [*purpose*] include

similar components, this idea that members can associate participation in organizations with something greater than themselves. Nowhere is that more evident than in the exemplar's mission statement, found in many of their documents including their culture guide: "We exist to lead people far from God into a full life in Christ. We accomplish this in four main ways. We help people know God, find freedom, discover their purpose, and make a difference" (p. 7). Many interviewees (7) explicitly said that the exemplar's mission would be their personal life's mission even if they did not work on staff, and that it gave them a feeling of hunger or urgency. Participant 12 indicated,

We have this clock thing...well...pastor has this clock thing...that ticks over every time we have a new salvation. What I love about this mission...is seeing that clock tick over...or at least...knowing that every week...I mean, every week, more numbers are ticking over. It drives me, you know [*Hunger / Drive*], when...uh...well, let's just say...when things aren't as easy...it keeps me going [*Purpose*]. I don't know how to describe it. It pushes me.

Hunger / Drive. One of the exemplar's competencies is *Convey an Attitude of Hunger*. The idea of hunger showed up in both the documents (culture guide) and interviews. Based on the interviews, both *purpose* and *hunger/drive* seemed inextricably linked at the exemplar. Though it was one of the least repeated codes (20), there was a seemingly complementary relationship between deriving a sense of *purpose* from the common mission and *hunger*. Participant 5 said,

There's an infectious passion amongst people all...uh...there's a sense of urgency [*Hunger / Drive*] when you really think about it. It's a passion, yes, but...what am I trying to say? It's not about ambition. I don't think anyone's doing this...well, anymore...for their own ambitions. We all want to see the lost saved [*Purpose*], so that has an effect on us, creating an urgency. You know how, when people around you are really passionate about something...they can just lift your passion? That's what it's like. That's why our mission is so important.

The organization clearly demonstrated a desire to push beyond the status quo and stretch their teams for more. One participant (Participant 5) described the senior pastor as having a “holy discontent,” where he was never satisfied with mediocre. His passion for reaching the lost permeated the staff and volunteers, having an infectious effect on both cultural language and organizational priorities. According to Participant 5,

There’s just something about this place...which if we’re not careful...can cause us to take on more than we should. It comes from a place of wanting more...being more burdened for what burdens God [*Hunger / Drive*]. So many times, I’ve seen [omitted] tear up...in an authentic...uh...display of feeling burdened for the lost. Every time I see that...it reminds me why we do what we do [*Purpose*]. My heart grows. My passion grows. My relationship with Jesus grows.

Heart / Excellence. This theme was evident throughout the document and artifact analysis phase, represented in such phrases as “heart and soul,” “excellence is in me because it’s in the heart of my God,” and “we do hard work with light hearts.” Interview participants, when talking about core beliefs, suggested that one of the reasons the exemplar has been so successful over its 17-year history is that their core convictions have never changed. Many of them believed that those convictions were at the heart of who they are as an organization, setting a standard for all future staff or volunteers. Participant 3 suggested,

Core beliefs...uh...I know I can trust my leader...basically...because of their commitment to a set of core beliefs. We all believe in the Bible. Right? I know [omitted] is guided by God’s Word, but I also know that commitment...it’s a standard for all of us. And the standard is for them too, not just us. For example, we believe everything we do here we should do to the best of our ability because that’s what God expects of us [*Heart / Excellence*]. So, when my leader gives me feedback, I know I can trust that they are just holding me to that standard...because they have, as a core belief, that God always expects our best.

Generosity. Both selfless and sacrificial, *generosity* was one of the most unexpected codes to materialize. The exemplar's orientation materials encouraged new employees to "live generously" and emphasized that one should "live open-handed" and "open-hearted with our love." While a potential byproduct of *altruistic love* (SL) and *heart* (AL), one normally associates *generosity* with individuals rather than organizations. Participants' responses to IQ8 and IQ9 repeatedly emphasized the exemplar, as well as specific individuals, as being generous. Participant 2 said the following when talking about unconditional love:

We do love well here. I think of the people who have gone through some of the family stuff here...cancer...rare blood disorders...deaths. We love people well. Like the [omitted] family. We rallied around them as a team. As a family. I remember all of us praying for them...and over them. And it wasn't just because it's what we are supposed to do. It's because of that's the heart of our leaders...because that's the heart of Jesus. It never felt forced. It just kept pouring out...so many people giving and giving [*Generosity*] to help them.

Interviewees also mentioned generosity in the context of money, that some of them believed their senior leaders displayed generosity with finances, but most of the comments regarding generosity related more to Fry's (2003) description: "unconditional, unselfish, loyal, and benevolent care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others" (p. 712). It is reasonable to expect such generosity from churches, but interview participants described their commitment to generosity going beyond mere obligation.

I remember a story about giving away this car. I forgot all the details, but there was someone serving all that time at one of our campuses. He didn't have a lot of money but he never complained. Week after week he just gave [*Generosity*] so much of his time. Well...apparently, his small group found out he needed a new car...I guess he was getting rides into church every week...really early in the morning trying to catch rides isn't easy. So, his small group got together with some other folks from the church to get him a new car...everybody pitching in to fix it up so it would be reliable [*Heart* /

Excellence]. Here's the thing...they didn't have to go through the benevolence process at all because everyone just did what the Church should do...help people [*Generosity*].

Sustained by Courage and Belief

One of the most surprising findings was the exemplar's culture of resiliency and grit, backed up by the interviews. Staff and volunteers overwhelmingly credited their leaders' Judeo-Christian beliefs for the courage those leaders routinely displayed during difficult situations. Although courage was not an intentional part of the exemplar's development process, many of the respondents discussed this theme as being an unintentional value at the exemplar. Specific examples from the interviews included stories of staff navigating serious illnesses, mental health issues, and leadership during COVID-19 and racial tensions. When asked whether, the exemplar intentionally trained their leaders to have courage, one of the participants (Participant 5) responded, "I don't know if we intentionally teach it, but we certainly have a lot of courageous people. We have some big-faith people."

Faith. While the exemplar has endured adversity over the past 3 years, and annually pushes their team to meet increasingly aggressive goals, their sense of belief in the vision does not seem to be the source of their faith. Interview Participant 7 responded to IQ9 as follows:

How has my leader's faith impacted their leadership? Well, our faith...for us...is why we do what we do. So...yeah...I would say it's why he does what he does. We've certainly have had stretching moments...where if God didn't come through then things wouldn't work out well [*Faith*]. But I don't think my leader's faith was the thing that grew mine. I will say...they are more confident because of their faith. Like, I think they can face battles because of their faith [*Courage / Grit*]. But...and this is true for my faith too...we have faith because He is faithful. So...does he lead with faith? Absolutely. But that's kind of meaningless if God wasn't who He is. My leader has faith because he believes in God [*Faith*]. I have faith because I believe in God. So, I would say that's how he leads.

While interview participants seem to derive a greater sense of faith from their calling as Fry (2003) suggested, they overwhelmingly propose that their true source of faith comes from their belief in God (as the quote about implies). In the exemplar's culture, faith is at the center of nearly everything they do. Just over one-third of the staff teachings include at least some element of faith. In one teaching, the speaker even credited faith with playing a significant role in nearly every major decision over the exemplar's 17-year journey. He went on to suggest that faith in Jesus, not only assures us of our salvation, but also is the source of our strength and courage in everyday life.

Values / Culture. Values and culture are very important at the exemplar and reflect their intentionality over the past 3 years in redefining and reestablishing alignment amongst its members. They developed a series of aligning and cultural values that now serve as the basis for their culture (Appendix D). In the introduction to the staff Culture Guide, the exemplar states,

Here at [exemplar], we believe that a vision can never advance beyond the health of the culture that carries it. We understand that culture is created by both the collective beliefs and behaviors of its people. Because culture is created, it can be strategically shaped. Rather than allowing our own preferences, hang-ups, or histories define us, we intentionally and consistently create the culture we want to see. This book is your guide to our unity: the mindsets, attitudes, and language we embrace.

These words were reinforced by interview participants and is an emphasis of Year 2 curriculum at the exemplar's college. According to one of the graduates, Participant 10,

In one of my favorite classes, we talked all about developing and fighting for intentional culture. We said...something like...culture is what we do or allow. And that...if we wanted...good...like, a better culture...we need to make sure our values are at the center. One of the problems I've seen...when culture isn't good, is that people aren't practicing the values. What helps us keep a good culture here is that we built it around our aligning values. 'Choose Honor.' 'Live Generously.' 'Develop Leaders.'

Those are some of our aligning values and everybody is committed to them. It keeps us focused on the right things.

Of all the changes the exemplar has made over the last 3 years, aligning their staff with a set of clear values was among the most cited (9) reasons for their success.

Courage / Grit. The final code underlying *Sustained by Courage and Belief* was *Courage / Grit*. Although *resiliency* was a concept implicitly emphasized within the exemplar, listing it as one of their aligning values, *Courage / Grit* emerged as a separate sentiment the more I evaluated language of the interview participants. For example, rather than credit the *resiliency* of their leader or other employees for handling challenges, many participants described *courage*. In response to IQ13, Participant 8 said,

I think our process here gives people the confidence to make decisions and live with the consequences. Here's the thing...before coming here...I think...um...maybe led with instinct...led instinctually. But after being in our environment, I feel like a not only make better decisions in ministry than before, but I can make them with confidence [*Courage / Grit*]...like I know things won't be perfect but we're in a place that is ok with that. It's empowering.

During a recent staff teaching one of the leaders equated what they do at the exemplar to a military formation that is designed to take the brunt of enemy attacks. During this analogy, the speaker challenged the staff and a few volunteers that their "longevity in ministry will not be determined by the amount of success you enjoy, but the level of your willingness to endure in the face of fear and overwhelming odds" [*Courage / Grit*].

Closing

The purpose of this case study was to explore authentic and spiritual leadership development in the local church through the exemplar of a large evangelical church in Virginia. Specifically, I sought to understand the differences, if any, in perceptions of AL, SL, and leadership development among senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers. To accomplish this, I collected data in two main phases: artifact analysis and interviews. I then conducted three coding passes (*in*

vivo, process, and value), resulting in 327 individual data segments, which I further condensed into 120 subcategories, then into 12 codes, and finally into four themes. Chapter 5 discusses implications from the findings and outlines recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

The problem that I aimed to address through this study was the exodus of ministry leaders leaving the vocation, which is largely due to a lack of intentional leadership development or preparedness for the challenges they face (Barna, 2021). In this research, I explored authentic and spiritual leadership development in the local church through the exemplar of a large evangelical church in Virginia, specifically investigating the following question: What lessons can be learned about authentic and spiritual leadership from the exemplar? Few scholars studying this topic have performed the deep dive that this research conducted, exploring how the combination of authentic and spiritual leadership principles at the exemplar may provide a more effective leadership development framework for the local church.

By examining the exemplar in this case study, I attempted to bridge the gap between practical and research-based development. The findings could serve as an exemplar for other evangelical churches in America, informing and influencing future hiring practices, promotions, employee engagement, and staff longevity within churches of similar size. The findings suggest that not only is leadership development an essential ingredient in preventing ministry leaders from departing, but that components of authentic and spiritual leadership (the convergence of those two philosophies) may provide the template for future evidence-based leadership development practices within the local church.

First, this research outlined the background of the problem, provided a brief overview of the data regarding the issue, and identified an appropriate framework for conducting this case study. The data indicated that a significant number of pastors were leaving the ministry due to feeling ill-equipped for the demands of ministerial leadership. Although an effective leadership development program may not resolve the totality of underlying factors leading to these departures, researchers have suggested that effective development programs could mitigate the exodus (Dahl, 2005; Gortner, 2009).

Second, I created a synthesis of the scholarly literature such that gaps in the conceptual framework began to emerge, providing a clear need for the present case

study. The literature review helped establish context and generativity, providing a broad overview of the existing body of knowledge surrounding the research topic (Terrell, 2016). There were three specific sources of data that served as the basis of comparison with findings from the exemplar: (a) scholarly research on leadership development, specifically as it relates to the local church, (b) scholarly research on authentic leadership, and (c) scholarly research on spiritual leadership.

Third, the case study provided an in-depth discussion on the research methodology used in this case study, a single case study that employed two data collection strategies recommended by Saldaña and Omasta (2018): (a) analyzing documents, artifacts, and visual materials and (b) conducting and analyzing individual interviews. The interview protocol explored the leadership development process as a shared experience across the church's employees and volunteers, about the exemplar's development process. All artifacts included in this research were specifically related to materials either taught broadly across the exemplar's sphere of influence, such as staff teachings or training materials, or used as reference materials for staff and volunteers.

Fourth, the research described the analysis of these data. To accomplish this, data collection occurred in two main phases (artifact analysis and interviews), resulting in 327 individual data segments, which I further condensed into 12 final codes. The artifact analysis phase yielded 120 individual data segments, which I condensed further into 11 codes. These codes then served as a guide during the interview protocol phase, a 15-question interview protocol based on components of authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, and leadership development.

The interview phase of data collection yielded 207 individual data segments, for a combined total of 327 data segments across both phases. There were 12 final codes, which I condensed into four overarching themes. One of the initial codes (*purpose / vision*) developed into two separate codes (*purpose* and *vision*) during the interview phase. Creswell and Creswell (2018) proposed that codes typically fall into one or more of three categories: *expected* codes, *surprising* codes, and *codes of unusual or conceptual interest*. The findings from the present case study revealed codes from all three categories, eventually resulting in four

themes. The following sections provide answers to each of the research questions initially posed for this case study; discuss implications for EL, SL, and AL; recommend a framework for leadership development within the local church; and suggest future research topics.

Research Questions

The present case study included four main research questions designed to explore authentic and spiritual leadership development in the local church through the exemplar. Answers to RQ1 through RQ4 are below. Included within each RQ are the answers to each corresponding IQ, as outlined in Table 8. Overall, there were 12 total codes and four overarching themes, each of which contributed to responses from the RQs. Each RQ confirmed the exemplar's incorporation of SL and AL, but also highlighted implications for the application of both principles within a local church.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was designed to determine in what ways authentic leadership was exhibited at the exemplar. Additionally, the research explored the differences in perceptions of authentic leadership among senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers. As recommended by Neider and Schriesheim (2011) and Roof (2013), the IQs for RQ1 derived from Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) authentic leadership inventory. The inventory, comprised of 16 items designed to reflect each of authentic leadership's four dimensions, provided a broad representation of the ALI adapted for qualitative analysis. The responses to each IQ confirmed RQ1's intent, that the exemplar does exhibit authentic leadership.

When asked about their perceptions of authentic leadership, there were clear differences in perceptions amongst the various interview groups. Senior staff and those who graduated from the exemplar's college (regardless of seniority or status) clearly demonstrated a higher level of understanding of both George's (2003) and Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) interpretations of authentic leadership. This is likely due to the intentionality with which senior leaders developed the exemplar's programs, including college curriculum. Authentic leadership is one of the cornerstones of the exemplar's leadership development framework, which they use in everything from

one-on-one conversations to curriculum development, to their individual mid-year and end-of-year reviews. Leaders evaluate every member of staff based on each of the nine components (see Table 9).

When asked whether their leader solicited feedback for improving his/her dealings with others, 100% of respondents answered in the affirmative. One participant (Participant 1) said they believed both self-awareness and the desire for feedback were much stronger at higher levels of the organization, but there were no other discernable differences in perceptions amongst the interview groups. The intent of IQ2 was to explore the *self-awareness* component of AL. More than half (60%) of the interviewees were unable to affirm that their leader reflected *self-awareness* when responding to IQ2, although they believed their leader possessed a strong commitment to giving and receiving feedback. This may indicate that the exemplar's application of AL's *self-awareness* may be incorrect or that the research question was unable to adequately explore this dimension.

IQ5 more explicitly examined the *self-awareness* and *balanced processing* dimensions, yielding more conclusive findings. When asked about how their leader demonstrated *self-awareness* specifically, there were clear differences amongst the various interview groups. The responses to IQ5 confirmed that leaders both recognize gaps in their own leadership but also emphasize continual growth towards *self-awareness* amongst their subordinates [*balanced processing*]. Responses also seemed to indicate that *self-awareness* was much more evident in leaders the more senior one rose in leadership. This finding may indicate a gap in the development of the exemplar's junior staff and volunteers.

When asked about how their leader's willingness or lack of willingness to be transparent about mistakes has influenced the ability to lead, middle managers received the highest praise—mostly related to the number of instances staff and volunteers observed. Members acknowledged the commitment to transparency in their senior leaders, suggesting that it had noticeably improved over the last few years, but proposed that not all situations should become public depending on sensitivity or severity. This acknowledgement seems to indicate that the exemplar understands and effectively employs AL. It suggests the exemplar recognizes that

relational transparency means their leaders must always “promote trust through disclosures that involve openly sharing information and expressions of one’s true thoughts and feelings while trying to minimize” inappropriate disclosures (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 95).

Avolio and Gardner (2005) said that a true demonstration of authenticity means that leaders must embrace personal experiences and beliefs. This suggests that leaders who hope to become authentic leaders within the local church must also embrace their faith. The findings from both the document analysis and interview portions of this research indicated that core beliefs positively contributed to the way the exemplar’s staff and volunteers lead, specifically *Belief / Faith* (24). Interview responses to IQ4 (How does my leader’s core beliefs contribute to the way he/she leads?) overwhelmingly confirmed the presence of AL’s *internalized moral perspective*, with 80% of participants suggesting that they felt safer being vulnerable or bringing up challenges with their supervisor due to their commitment to core beliefs. Psychological safety was a key component of Maximo et al.’s (2019) research on AL, likely further confirming the presence of AL at the exemplar.

Avolio and Gardner (2005) proposed this about authentic leaders: (a) authentic leaders do not conform their leadership style to the expectations others; (b) authentic leaders lead through personal conviction, not ambition; (c) authentic leaders proactively invite input from others but lead from their own perspectives; and (d) authentic leaders allow personal values to guide their decisions. This depiction of AL reflects the essence of what interviewees said of their leaders at the exemplar, suggesting, at least in part, that the exemplar does exhibit AL.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was designed to determine in what ways spiritual leadership was exhibited at the exemplar. Additionally, the research explored the differences in perceptions of spiritual leadership among senior leadership, staff, and volunteers. The corresponding IQs (6–10) were based on Fry’s (2003) theory of spiritual leadership. Specifically, they derived from the three principles that define Fry and Whittington’s (2005) causal theory of spiritual leadership: *vision, altruistic*

love, and *hope/faith*. The tenth IQ explored Pawar's (2014) assertion that a leader's personal spirituality was directly correlated to their level support for spiritual leadership behaviors within the organization. The findings from each IQ confirmed RQ2's intent, that the exemplar does exhibit spiritual leadership.

Fry (2003) proposed that spiritual leadership was necessary for the "transformation to and continued success of a learning organization" (p. 694), entailing two major actions: (a) creating a vision that causes members to experience meaning and purpose and (b) establishing a culture of unconditional love, such that both leaders and followers experience genuine care, concern, and appreciation for people. Both the documents and individual interviews of staff and volunteers confirmed that the exemplar has successfully created such an environment. Answers to the IQs not only reflected the presence of these principles, but also revealed a strong sense of spiritual survival through calling and a sense of life having meaning through membership (Fry & Whittington, 2005).

When asked how interviewees perceived spiritual leadership, there were differences in perceptions amongst the various interview groups particularly with respect to volunteers and staff. Senior staff, followed by those who graduated from the exemplar's college (regardless of seniority or status), clearly demonstrated a higher level of understanding spiritual leadership. General staff exhibited a level of knowledge about spirituality as it relates to religion and spiritual gifts, but not SL as a theory. Volunteers who had not attended the exemplar's college possessed the least knowledge of SL and had challenges articulating a definition. Overwhelmingly, participants associated their responses and understanding of SL with their faith in God. Although they recognized that non-Christians see spirituality very different, they could not separate personal expressions of spirituality from biblical spirituality.

When asked in what ways a sense of *common vision* has played a role in their supervisor's leadership, 100% of participants indicated that a sense of common *mission* and *vision* were important to the exemplar. They further suggested that this commitment had had an infectious and unifying effect on the entire organization over the last few years. Of note, although interviewees

recognized the difference between the two, rarely separated *mission* from *vision*. This is likely due to the prolific use of the exemplar's mission statement throughout both documentation and artifacts, and the absence of a noticeable vision statement. There were no discernable differences in perceptions of *common vision* amongst the various interview groups.

When asked how their leader had demonstrated unconditional love in their role, there were clear differences in the perceptions of interview groups. Every member of staff, regardless of education or level in the organization, discussed how leaders demonstrated unconditional love in the way they treated employees who left staff negatively or when employees experienced some sort of dramatic life event. When asked the same question, volunteers prodigiously extolled the exemplar's culture of community outreach and COVID-19 response.

Staff identified ways in which their leaders demonstrated unconditional love to them personally, whereas volunteers identified ways the larger organization demonstrated unconditional love. These differences may be the result of membership identity distinctions. For example, staff might associate themselves as one collective staff-membership, and volunteers may associate their membership with the larger church body. Based on comments from interview participants, this finding likely confirms Fry's (2003) concept of membership at the exemplar and advances its potential application within the context of local churches.

IQ9 explored how *hope/faith* played a role in supervisors' leadership. In just under half (45%) of the responses to this question staff and volunteers confirmed that their leader's *faith* helped to increase subordinates' *hope*. There were no discernable differences in staff or volunteer perceptions of faith at the exemplar, except that only senior staff expressed hope as a dimension of the exemplar's leadership development process. Instead, respondents believed that hope was more of a byproduct of their leaderships' strong faith. This may be another difference in the application of SL within the context of the local church--faith in God being the most prominent underlying dimension at the exemplar.

When asked about their leaders' personal spirituality and any impacts that it may have had in his/her organizational leadership, both senior leaders and general

staff received high marks. The most surprising finding was the perception of staff and volunteers that middle management were the least mature in this area. Spiritual disciplines play a significant role in the operation of the exemplar. They dedicate a portion of their meetings to growing in these areas every week, prioritize spiritual disciplines such as fasting and prayer throughout the year, and incentivize professional and spiritual growth through their framework. The interview responses, however, seem to indicate a gap in developing some of these areas for middle managers.

Research Question 3

The third RQ was designed to determine in what ways leadership development is exhibited here at the exemplar. Additionally, the research explored differences in perceptions of leadership development among senior staff leadership, staff, and volunteers. The corresponding IQs (11–13) reflected Day et al.'s (2014) suggestion that leadership development is not merely an experiential process, but that it requires formally training both leader and subordinate. Additionally, IQ13 was specifically intended to address the assertions outlined by Grieger and Peck (2016) and Han (2015), that ministry leaders require a formal development process such as the exemplar's, to manage the complexities of leading a local church.

When asked how participants perceived leadership development and its importance in their lives, senior staff and middle managers expressed a thorough understanding of leadership development and the principles used by the exemplar. Both volunteers and staff (regardless of seniority) who graduated from the exemplar's college possessed the highest level of knowledge regarding the overarching principles of leadership development, including specifics about the exemplar's framework. This finding may indicate that the exemplar's college does a better job of intentionally developing these principles in their students than staff teachings.

When asked how they would describe their leaders' commitment to developing them as leaders, 100% of the interview participants indicated that their leaders were committed to developing their direct reports as leaders, with 70% saying that the exemplar was the only place they received formal leadership

development of any kind. Most respondents (75%) said it was one of the reasons they enjoyed serving at the exemplar and why they were so willing to commit so much of their lives to the mission. The findings of Subramony et al. (2018) established a positive relationship between intentional leadership development and workplace performance. The responses from current interview participants regarding IQ12 seemed to confirm that assumption.

Interview Question 13 explored ways the exemplar's leadership development process prepared staff and volunteers for the challenges of ministry. Half of the responses referred to the exemplar's leadership development framework specifically, as being responsible for their personal and professional growth. General staff and volunteers who had been through the exemplar's college had high praise for the program and its impact on preparing them for ministry. Senior staff admitted that the development process had also prepared them for ministry, but believed there were gaps in the specific development of executives for ministry.

There was a dramatic drop-off in response to IQ13 from volunteers who had not gone through the exemplar's college. These respondents did not even know that the exemplar had a formal process for developing leaders, but acknowledged staff's commitment to developing the nine components listed in the framework. This seems to indicate the need for a more intentional development process for volunteers, as the vast majority have not been through the exemplar's college.

Research Question 4

The final RQ was designed to determine whether there were any differences in perceptions of authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, and leadership development in those who attended ministry school versus those who had no ministry school experience. Only interviewees who completed formal ministry school completed the last two IQs. Responses to each of these IQs (14 and 15) yielded unexpected findings, each with implications and recommendations for future research.

When asked how formal ministry school prepared graduates for AL, SL, or leadership development, 100% of the participants believed that they received some principles that they used later in their individual leadership practices. Graduates of

more traditional Christian colleges or universities said they felt prepared for spiritual leadership, specifically the *altruistic love* and *faith* dimensions, but not authentic leadership. Only graduates of the exemplar's college, however, indicated that their formal education program prepared them for all three. As the exemplar's college openly acknowledges that they designed their program based on principles of both AL and SL, this finding may indicate that more traditional Christian colleges or universities have not. This also indicates the need for further research regarding the incorporation of authentic leadership principles into traditional Christian collegiate programs.

Interview Question 15 explored how formal ministry school prepared participants for ministry. Again, there was a noticeable difference between responses from those who attended traditional Christian colleges or universities and those who attended the exemplar's college. Participants who attended traditional Christian colleges or universities unanimously agreed that their training enhanced their intellectual (cognitive) knowledge of the Bible and biblical principles but did little to develop them practically for ministry. This finding seemed to confirm Hernez-Broome and Hughes's (2004) suggestion that traditional seminary programs lack the cognitive and behavioral balance required for efficacy (Thoman, 2011).

Participants who graduated from the exemplar's college (both staff and volunteers) demonstrated a confidence in both the cognitive and practical demands for ministry likely due to design of their program. The exemplar's college is a 2-year associate in ministerial leadership, consisting of both academic courses and a practicum experience. The practicum experience affords students the ability to take information they learn from the classroom [*cognitive*] into real-world practical leadership opportunities [*behavioral balance*]. The combination of both academic and practical development was the most commonly cited reason why graduates expressed confidence for ministry.

Implications

Included below is a discussion regarding the implications of this case study as they relate to the four overarching themes and the three conceptual leadership development frameworks: exemplar (EL), authentic (AL), and spiritual (SL).

Implications for EL

As supported by the literature, there is a lack of evidenced-based leadership development amongst church staff. The exemplar in the present case study attempted to bridge the gap between practical and research-based development by creating a leadership development program, at the heart of which was a framework derived from both authentic and spiritual leadership. The framework included two main categories, character and competence.

The character category included the following four criteria: *Love God, Love People, Be Life Giving, and Pursue Excellence*. The competency category included: *Cast Vision; Communicate Clearly, Often, and Honestly; Create Opportunity; Cultivate an Environment of We; and Convey an Attitude of Hunger*. Each component includes aligning principles, further defining their meaning for members. Table 9 provides an overview of the exemplar's leadership framework and their corresponding aligning principles.

Table 9

Exemplar's Leadership Development Framework and Associated Principles

| EL Component | Aligning Principle |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Love God | Intimacy is Priority |
| | Character Over Talent |
| | Confident in Calling |
| Love People | Choose Honor |
| | Live Generously |
| | Develop Leaders |
| Be Life Giving | My Spirit, My Choice |
| | Celebrate Intentionally |
| | Be Resilient |

| EL Component | Aligning Principle |
|--|--|
| Pursue Excellence | Stay Sharp We are Owners, Not Renters One Team, One Fight |
| Cast Vision | Communicate the Mission Connect People to the Mission Inspire them to Join |
| Communicate Clearly, Often, and Honestly | Create Clear Expectations Provide Consistent Feedback Tell the Truth |
| Create Opportunity | Bring Others with You Look for Potential Empower People |
| Cultivate an Environment of “We” | Be Loyal to the Mission and Team Embrace Collaboration Love Sacrificially |
| Convey an Attitude of Hunger | Always be Growing Pursue Innovation Ask Insatiable Questions |

Although the language is dissimilar, several components of EL map back to the dimensions of both AL and SL. Table 10 compares each component of the exemplar’s framework with both authentic and spiritual leadership.

Table 10

Comparison of the Exemplar’s Framework to AL and SL

| Exemplar’s Leadership Framework | AL | SL |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Love God | | |
| Love People | | x |
| Be Life Giving | x | x |

| Exemplar's Leadership Framework | AL | SL |
|--|----|----|
| Pursue Excellence | x | x |
| Cast Vision | x | x |
| Communicate Clearly, Often, and Honestly | x | |
| Create Opportunity | | x |
| Cultivate an Environment of "We" | x | x |
| Convey an Attitude of Hunger | | x |

As indicated, there are a few components of the exemplar's framework that do not directly correlate to either theory. Some of the notable differences include *Love God* (which does not correlate to either SL or AL); *Love People* (which does not correlate to AL); *Communicate Clearly, Often, and Honestly* (which does not correlate to SL); *Create Opportunity* (which does not correlate to AL); and *Convey an Attitude of Hunger* (which does not correlate to AL).

Additionally, as outlined here in Chapter 5, there are aspects of AL and SL missing from EL. Most notably, there are aspects of Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) AL findings (that authentic leaders enhance *follower commitment and citizenship behaviors*) and Fry's (2003) definition of spiritual leadership (*faith / hope and altruistic love*) missing from the exemplar's framework. The combination of these three dimensions may explain why even though the exemplar's framework does not include *courage*, there is such a strong presence of *Sustained by Courage and Belief* at the exemplar.

The exemplar's authentic leadership environment has created *enhanced followership commitment* [AL] in the form of *courage*, fortified by transcendent *love* [SL] for and *faith* [SL] in God. What is lacking from EL is the intentional development of *courage* that the AL and SL environments have created, which serves as a fortifying element [*spiritual survival*] in the exemplar's leadership development process. Fry (2003) proposed a list of 11 values of *hope/faith* and *altruistic love* as personal affirmations, only one of which are not explicitly

captured in the exemplar's intentional development process. There is a clear gap between EL and SL, notably *courage*. Even though EL does not intentionally develop *courage*, interview participants described it as one of the characteristics of leadership at the exemplar. Table 11 compares the current findings to those of Fry.

Table 11

Comparison of Fry's (2003) Personal Affirmations to EL

| SL Affirmations | EL |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Trust/Loyalty | Love People |
| Forgiveness/Acceptance/Gratitude | Love People, Be Life Giving, Create Opportunity |
| Integrity | Love God, Pursue Excellence |
| Honesty | Communicate Clearly, Often, and Honestly |
| Courage | |
| Humility | Cultivate an Environment of "We" |
| Kindness | Love People |
| Empathy/Compassion | Love People, Be Life Giving |
| Patience/Meekness/Endurance | Be Life Giving |
| Excellence | Pursue Excellence |
| Fun | Be Life Giving |

Fry (2003) proposed that *courage*, as a value of *hope/faith* and *altruistic love*, gives members "firmness of mind and will, as well as the mental and moral strength, to maintain my morale and prevail in the face of extreme difficulty, opposition, threat, danger, hardship, and fear" (p. 712). Although resiliency is one of the principles listed in their conceptual framework, the exemplar does little to develop the sentiment Fry described above. Additionally, their college discusses courageous followership in detail, but the exemplar makes no mention of courageous leadership. To codify *courage* as a permanent component of the exemplar's development process, thereby increasing *resiliency* [EL] and *spiritual*

survival [SL], the exemplar should strongly consider adding *courage* to their development framework and college curriculum.

Implications for AL

Gardner et al. (2005) posited that AL was an inherently developmental process relying upon the innate positive characteristics of the leader-follower relationship, utilizing a social cognitive framework to inform developmental processes across all spectra of leadership development. This authentic leadership paradigm leverages a personalized self-realization and self-actualization, in the form of authenticity, to establish a veritable relationship between leader and follower (Gardner et al., 2005). The basis of that veritable relationship at the exemplar stems from the explicit focus on the *Love God* and *Love People* dimensions of EL, both of which are absent from AL. Further, it is unclear from this research whether AL would work at all within the context of ministry without the two dimensions. The following implications offer potential insight into future AL improvements.

Internalized Moral Perspective. One of the dimensions of AL, *internalized moral perspective*, refers to an “internalized and integrated form of self-regulation” (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 95). Iszatt and Kempster (2019) cautioned that the idealized moral foundation of authentic leadership does not always reflect daily experience, not doing enough to mitigate an individual’s tendency towards inauthenticity or selfishness. The sentiment underlying all four final themes from this research (*Committed to Service and Development of Others*, *United by Common Mission and Vision*, *Driven by Purpose and Calling*, and *Sustained by Courage and Belief*) was a love for or faith in God. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that truly authentic ministry leaders would have, as their *internalized moral perspective*, a love for God [*Love God*]. Staff and volunteers of the exemplar leverage *Love God* and *Love People* as filters for their leadership and decision-making, helping mitigate tendencies towards selfishness.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors/Commitment. Additionally, EL’s *Love God* dimension seems to enhance AL’s *organizational citizenship behaviors* and *organizational commitment* within the context of a local church, meaning that

in order for AL to be effective in a church setting, one should consider incorporating love for God as an underlying principle. Interview participants repeatedly cited belief in God and His calling on their lives as the primary reason for their work performance and commitment to the organization. In fact, most participants said they would serve at a different church if they thought God was calling them elsewhere.

Implications for SL

Spiritual leadership enhances holistic developmental and organizational effectiveness by fostering a sense of personal spirituality (Fry, 2009; Fry & Slocum, 2008). Mathews (2021) believed that spiritual leadership should not be viewed as an alternative to other leadership theories, but complementary. He further suggested that integrating spiritual leadership with a more structurally rigid, yet complementary leadership philosophy might enhance both. This case study confirms that elements of AL and SL can be effective in a ministry setting, when combined. The exemplar's application of this congruence, however, requires *Love God* (which is absent from both AL and SL) to serve as the primary influencing factor throughout their model. The following implications offer potential insight into future SL improvements.

Hope/Faith. Fry (2003) said that *faith* as a principle of SL requires adversity and goals that stretch both the organization and its members, but also a belief in the vision. While interview participants agreed that *faith* required adversity, it was not belief in vision they cited as mitigating these challenges. Rather, members of the exemplar said that their faith lay in Jesus, and it was their belief in His faithfulness that gave them strength, not vision.

Altruistic Love and Vision. Additionally, EL's *Love God* dimension seemed to enhance SL's *altruistic love* within the context of a local church, meaning that for SL to be effective in a church setting they should consider incorporating love for God as the underlying principle and not altruism. According to staff and volunteers, it was *Love God* that created a sense community and purpose, resulting in increased dedication to ministry within the local church and

their personal lives. Fry (2003) said of the process for spiritual leadership, which also seems to be true for the exemplar,

Strategic leaders – through choices about vision, purpose, mission, strategy, and their implementation – are responsible for creating vision and value congruence across all organizational levels as well as developing effective relationships between the organization and environmental stakeholders (Maghroori & Rolland, 1997). Of utmost importance is a clear and compelling vision where the organization wants to be in the near to distant future. The vision should vividly portray a journey that, when undertaken, will give one a sense of calling, of one's life having meaning and making a difference. To do so, it should energize people, give meaning to work, and garner commitment. It also should establish a standard of excellence. In mobilizing people it should have broad appeal, define the vision's destination and journey, reflect high ideals, and encourage hope and faith. (p. 718)

Membership and Spiritual Survival. The interview participants not only indicated that they derived a sense of purpose and unity from a *common mission and vision* while serving at the exemplar, but that it also carried over into other aspects of their lives. This bleed-over affect may be the result of the exemplar combining both mission (believed to have come from God) and vision, in contrast to SL's focus on vision, seemingly increasing *membership* and *spiritual survival*. With such a strong intrinsic motivator in the mission statement (*We exist to help lead people far from God into a full life in Christ*), it is easy to understand why it may be difficult for local churches to separate the two.

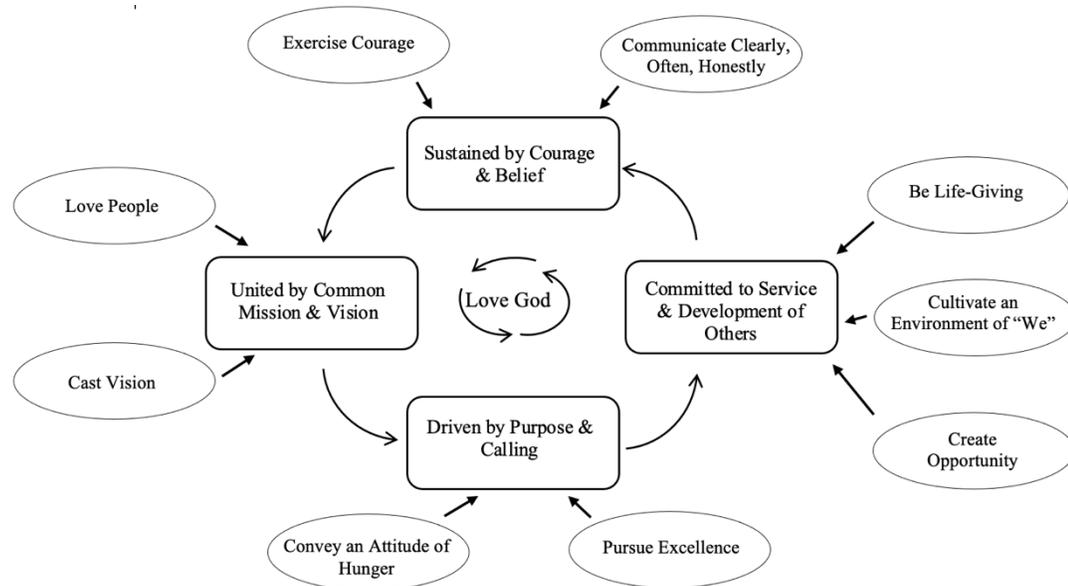
Framework for Leadership Development

The exemplar's framework combined dimensions of SL and AL into their leadership framework, establishing their *Love God* dimension as the overarching core belief. The exemplar's incorporation of this dimension had a converging effect on the Exemplar's Leadership (EL), Authentic Leadership (AL), and Spiritual Leadership (SL). However, the exemplar's model was incomplete. Analysis proved that courage was a byproduct of their model but was not intentionally designed into

the program. Adding *exercise courage* into a revised framework may enhance the sustainability of their framework and improve member longevity. The revised framework represents a new model for developing ministry leaders (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Revised Framework



This next section describes, in detail, the relationships at work in the new model.

United by Common Mission and Vision

The exemplar demonstrates a strong sense of unity that they widely attribute to a commitment to mission. That mission, they believe, has been given to all Christians by Jesus in the book of Matthew: to go and “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19, NIV). This command unites them with all Christians and serves as their internal moral standard [AL: *internalized moral perspective*] guiding all decision-making and behaviors; their reason for existence. This sense of unity surrounding the mission gives meaning to both their work and personal lives and defines direction [SL: *vision*]. As a theme, *United by Common Mission and Vision* is most influenced by the exemplar’s *Love People* and *Cast Vision* dimensions in their development framework. The very core of their mission statement is to reach people [*Love People*]. The exemplar’s core competency of *Cast Vision* helps invite other Christians to take part in that mission, compelling them.

Driven by Purpose and Calling

Neider and Schriesheim (2011) described *self-awareness* as “demonstrating an understanding of how one derives and makes meaning of the world” (p. 1147). Members of the exemplar derive meaning through the calling that they believe God has given them as Christians; that each Christian has been uniquely designed to play a part in accomplishing the mission. Their calling gives them purpose and fuels their desire to see people begin a relationship with Jesus, as well as the Church advance [SL: *organizational commitment* and *productivity and continuous improvement*].

This need to see the global Church grow, propels both staff and volunteers with a holy discontent [*Pursue Excellence*]*—*that the work will not be complete until every lost person comes to know Jesus. As a theme, *Driven by Purpose and Calling* is affected by two main dimensions of EL: *Convey an Attitude of Hunger* and *Pursue Excellence*. All 20 interview participants exhibited a strong desire to fulfill the mission of reaching people for Jesus [*Convey an Attitude of Hunger*], ultimately resulting in the feeling of constantly needing to do and grow more amongst members.

Committed to Service and Development of Others

The exemplar believes they have a responsibility to lead people on a pathway to knowing God, finding freedom from past hurts caused by sin, discovering their God-given purpose, and then making a difference in the lives of others. They have defined leadership as adding value to people’s lives through influence, in the context of relationship. Accomplishing this requires members to cultivate authentic relationships [AL: *relational transparency*] and demonstrate a Christ-like love for people [SL: *altruistic love*], resulting in a commitment to others that transcends Fry’s (2003) definition of *membership*. The interview participants described a deeper connection to the development of others in the form of a divine calling.

As a theme, *Committed to Service and Development of Others* was most influenced by three EL dimensions: *Be Life-Giving*, *Cultivate an Environment of We*, and *Create Opportunity*. *Creating an Environment of We* invites others to

participate in the intentional development of people along a spiritual pathway, helping them appreciate their responsibility to something greater than themselves. *Be Life-Giving* defines the social contract with which members will engage in the development of others [SL: *Value Congruence*]—adding value to people’s lives and discipling them along a path to become more like Jesus. *Create Opportunity* helps leaders connect members’ purpose with the mission. The exemplar sees it as their responsibility to create environments for members to exercise and grow in their calling.

Sustained by Courage and Belief

Undergirding the exemplar’s drive to fulfill their purpose and calling is their core belief in God [SL: *faith/hope*]. Interview participants described having a confidence in facing the challenges of ministry because they believed God was not only with them, but that He was actively directing their destination. Interviewees also noted their belief in the exemplar’s senior leaders as a source of courage. Having observed the transparency of leaders during crises such as COVID-19 and inter-personal challenges amongst staff, many of the staff participants said that their confidence grew by watching executive leaders make mistakes, acknowledge them, and then solicit feedback for improvement [AL: *balanced processing*]. This authenticity, they suggested, reminded staff that though their leaders would inevitably make mistakes, they could trust that authenticity and a core belief in God would guide future decisions.

As a theme, *Sustained by Courage and Belief* was most influenced by *Exercise Courage* and *Communicate Clearly, Often, Honestly*. *Exercise Courage* was an unintentional byproduct of the AL and SL convergence within the exemplar’s context, but not part of their original nine components. The combination of a God-defined mission/vision, altruistic love, and biblical faith with authenticity, seems to have buffeted staff and volunteers from the challenges of ministry. Interview participants discussed feeling emboldened by their leaders’ courage, sustaining them for the future and increasing their personal resiliency. Intentionally incorporating the development of courage into a new framework will solidify the experience of interview participants and establish consistency.

The *Communicate Clearly, Often, and Honestly* dimension is the vehicle on which organizational sustainability rides. Neither *courage* nor *belief* would have been nearly as sustaining at the exemplar had they not taken such painstaking efforts to codify, distribute, and reiterate their culture. Nearly every training the exemplar conducts with members and document they produce, reinforces their framework. The table below represents the new leadership development framework for local church leaders, adapted from the exemplar's original nine components.

Table 12

New Development Model for Leaders in Ministry

Ministry Leadership Development (MLD) Framework

Love God

Love People

Be Life Giving

Pursue Excellence

Exercise Courage

Cast Vision

Communicate Clearly, Often, and Honestly

Create Opportunity

Cultivate an Environment of "We"

Convey an Attitude of Hunger

Limitations

Case studies innately possess limitations in that they narrowly focus on unique situations or events. Exemplars, in particular, are even more limited because the researcher assumes that a case study of the organization will inherently benefit others. The exemplar in this case study attempted to bridge the gap between practical and research-based development utilizing components of authentic and spiritual leadership in developing their leaders. Although the research could serve as an exemplar for leadership development in evangelical churches, generalizing the findings for use in other churches was not the focus. First, nothing in the research focused on or indicated whether the exemplar's leadership development

program was scalable to smaller churches. The MLD Framework is also not limited in any way by size, and may offer a place for Christian nonprofit organizations of any size a place to start.

Second, the research focused on the exemplar's ability to prepare leaders for the challenges of ministry, but did not conduct any research into retention of its staff or volunteers. Employee engagement significantly improved over the span of 3 years, but so did staff transitions. Without further research, there is no way to determine whether EL played any part in employee retention or whether other factors such as COVID-19 contributed.

Finally, the exemplar is a large evangelical church with the distinction of being selected as one of the Best Christian Workplaces (BCWI, 2022); however, neither the church's size nor designation by BCWI indicates the overall health of the congregation. The intent of this research was strictly limited to the demonstration of AL and SL within the exemplar, and any insights such a convergence might have on preparing leaders for local church ministry.

Suggestions for Future Research

There was significant evidence to suggest that organizational commitment increased over the course of 3 years at the exemplar. This case study, however, was not designed to determine the correlation between EL and organizational commitment. Specifically, interview participants overwhelmingly cited their belief in God as being the most significant contributing factor in their commitment to the local church. Future researchers should examine the extent to which either AL or SL contributed to the increase.

Most of the interview responses indicated feeling more connected to the organization and preparation for ministry because of EL, but there was no examination of its effects on longevity in ministry. Just because leaders felt more connected or better prepared does not mean they stayed in ministry any longer than the Barna (2021) study indicates, due to EL. Future researchers should evaluate whether EL improves ministry leader retention.

Leadership in the local church requires a much more focused analysis of the distinctly religious influences on spiritual leadership (Krishnakumar et al., 2015).

The exemplar's emphasis of their *Love God* dimension appeared to influence every aspect of AL and SL that they incorporated into their development program. Although love of God is not a specific emphasis of SL, future studies should evaluate if it is required for SL to be successful in a ministry setting.

While there were some differences in AL and SL perceptions amongst staff, the most dramatic was *self-awareness*. The exemplar's senior leaders and middle management received high marks in this category; however, the rest of staff and volunteers received low marks. There are several possible reasons for the discrepancy. For example, there could be inconsistent development of lower-level staff, poorly designed interview protocol, or incorrect perceptions about junior staff and volunteers. Future researchers should explore the disparity, focusing on effective AL and SL development principles for middle managers when training junior staff and volunteers.

Graduates of the exemplar's college demonstrated a much stronger knowledge of AL and SL principles. Graduates of traditional Christian colleges suggested that their programs developed them for SL but not AL. This finding may indicate that more traditional Christian colleges or universities have not included AL as part of their development, or that such programs have proven ineffective. Future scholars could explore the effectiveness AL development principles within traditional Christian collegiate programs.

Summary

One of the most important aspects of building a healthy and growing church is developing leaders who are prepared for the complexities of leading in ministry (Han, 2015). There is little evidenced-based research into leadership development designed for ministry leaders, and churches have historically expressed little understanding of such programs (Thoman, 2011). The findings of this case study demonstrated that not only is leadership development an essential ingredient to preventing the departure of ministry leaders, but that combining components of authentic and spiritual leadership may provide a template for future leadership development practices within the local church. The research yielded four themes

and 12 corresponding codes derived from the exemplar's framework. These findings highlighted several implications for all three models.

Authentic leadership leverages a personalized self-realization and self-actualization, in the form of authenticity, to establish a veritable relationship between leader and follower (Gardner et al., 2005). The basis of that veritable relationship at the exemplar stems from the explicit focus on *Love God* and *Love People* dimensions of EL, both of which are absent from AL. It is unclear from this research whether AL would work within the context of ministry without those two dimensions.

Spiritual leadership enhances holistic developmental and organizational effectiveness by fostering a sense of personal spirituality (Fry, 2009; Fry & Slocum, 2008). Mathews (2021) believed that spiritual leadership should not be viewed as an alternative to other leadership theories, but complementary. He further suggested that integrating spiritual leadership with a more structurally rigid, yet complementary leadership philosophy might enhance both. This case study confirms that elements of AL and SL can be effective in a ministry setting, when combined. The exemplar's application of this congruence, however, requires *Love God* (which is absent from both AL and SL) to serve as the primary influencing factor throughout their model.

The exemplar's framework, though incomplete, represents a promising template for developing leaders prepared for the challenges of ministry. By combining dimensions from SL and AL into their leadership framework, with their *Love God* dimension at the center, the exemplar has created a complementary development framework for ministry leaders. With the intentional incorporation of *exercise courage*, I believe that the revised framework may provide the antidote to church leadership exodus and improve member longevity.

References

- Ali, A. (2012). Leadership and its influences in organizations – A review of intellections. *International Journal of Learning & Development*, 2(6), 1–13. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijld.v2i6.2690>
- Allen, S., & Fry, L. W. (2022). A framework for leader, spiritual, and moral development. *Journal of Business Ethics*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05116-y>
- Allio, R. J. (2005). Leadership development: Teaching versus learning. *Management Decision*, 43(7–8), 1071–1077. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740510610071>
- Ashmos, D. P., & Duchon, D. (2000). Spirituality at work: A conceptualization and measure. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/105649260092008>
- Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 315–338. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001>
- Barna. (2021). *Pastors share top reasons they've considered quitting ministry in the past year*. <https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry/>
- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. Free Press.
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1990). Developing transformational leadership: 1992 and beyond. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 14(5), 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090599010135122>
- Bass, B. M., & Bass, R. (2008). *The Bass handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications* (4th ed.). Free Press.
- Best Christian Workplaces Institute. (2022). *Engagement Survey Report*. <https://bcwinstitute.org>
- Bratton, V. K., Dodd, N. G., & Brown, F. W. (2011). The impact of emotional intelligence on accuracy of self-awareness and leadership performance. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 32(2), 127–149. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437731111112971>

- Chan, A., Hannah, S. T., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Veritable authentic leadership: emergence, functioning, and impacts. In B. J. Avolio, W. L. Gardner, & F. O. Walumbwa (Eds.), *Authentic leadership theory and practice: Origins, effects and developments* (pp. 3–43). Elsevier.
- Ciulla, J. (2002). Trust and the future of leadership. In N. E. Bowie (Ed.), *The Blackwell guide to business ethics* (pp. 334–351). Blackwell.
- Cooper, M. T. (2005). The transformational leadership of the apostle Paul: A contextual and Biblical leadership for contemporary ministry. *Christian Education Journal*, 2(1), 48–61.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/073989130500200103>
- Crawford, J. A., Dawkins, S., Martin, A., & Lewis, G. (2020). Putting the leader back into authentic leadership: Reconceptualising and rethinking leaders. *Australian Journal of Management*, 45(1), 114–133.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0312896219836460>
- Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE.
- Crevani, L., Lindgren, M., & Packendorff, J. (2010). Leadership, not leaders: On the study of leadership as practices and interactions. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 26(3), 77–86.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2009.12.003>
- Cullinane, J., Enos, H., & Pye, M. (2005). Organizational change in a community of faith. *Strategic Change*, 14(8), 441–448. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jsc.742>
- Dahl, B. (2005). What's cookin' in Christianity's U.S. kitchen: Chef Barna's state of the church. *New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought and Practice*, 13(4), 63–68. <https://search.informit.org/journal/stim2>

- Dance, M. (2019, July 10). Pastors are not quitting in droves. *Lifeway Research*.
<https://research.lifeway.com/2019/07/10/pastors-are-not-quitting-in-droves-2/>
- Day, D. V. (2000). Leadership development: A review in context. *Leadership Quarterly*, *11*(4), 581. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(00\)00061-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(00)00061-8)
- Day, D. V., Fleenor, J. W., Atwater, L. E., Sturm, R. E., & McKee, R. A. (2014). Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25 years of research and theory. *Leadership Quarterly*, *25*(1), 63–82.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.11.004>
- Day, D. V., Sin, H.-P., & Chen, T. T. (2004). Assessing the burdens of leadership: Effects of formal leadership roles on individual performance over time. *Personnel Psychology*, *57*(3), 573–605.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2004.00001.x>
- Densten, I. L., & Gray, J. H. (2001). Leadership development and reflection: What is the connection? *International Journal of Educational Management*, *15*(3), 119–124. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540110384466>
- Dent, E. B., Higgins, M. E., & Wharff, D. M. (2005). Spirituality and leadership: An empirical review of definitions, distinctions, and embedded assumptions. *Leadership Quarterly*, *16*(5), 625–653.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.07.002>
- DeRue, D. S., & Myers, C. G. (2014). Leadership development: A review and Agenda for future research. In D. V. Day (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of leadership and organizations* (pp. 832–855). Oxford University Press.
- Earls, A. (2022, January 13). Your pastor cares when you don't care. *Christianity Today*. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2022/january/lifeway-pastor-need-survey-apathy-covid-ministry-challenges.html>
- Elkington, R., Meekins, D., Breen, J. M., & Martin, S. S. (2015). Leadership as an enabling function: Towards a new paradigm for local church leadership in the 21st century. *In Die Skriflig*, *49*(3), 1–14.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v49i3.1911>

- Forman, R., Jones, J., & Miller, B. (2004). *The leadership baton: An intentional strategy for developing leaders in your church*. Zondervan.
- Fry, L. W. (2003). Toward a theory of spiritual leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 14(6), 693–727. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/the-leadership-quarterly>
- Fry, L. W. (2009). Spiritual leadership as a model for student inner development. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 3, 79–82. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.20127>
- Fry, L. W., & Cohen, M. P. (2009). Spiritual leadership as a paradigm for organizational transformation and recovery from extended work hours cultures. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84, 265–278. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-008-9695-2>
- Fry, L. W., & Slocum, J. (2008). *Maximizing the triple bottom line through spiritual leadership*. Stanford University Press.
- Fry, L. W., & Whittington, J. L. (2005). In search of authenticity: Spiritual leadership theory as a source for future theory, research, and practice on authentic leadership. *International Institute for Spiritual Leadership*. <https://iispiritualleadership.com/in-search-of-authenticity-spiritual-leadership-as-a-source-for-future-theory-research-and-practice-on-authentic-leadership/>
- Galbraith, J. R. (2014). *Designing organizations: Strategy, structure, and process at the business unit and enterprise levels* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Gandolfi, F., & Stone, S. (2016). Clarifying leadership: High-impact leaders in a time of leadership crisis. *Review of International Comparative Management / Revista de Management Comparat International*, 17(3), 212–224. <https://ideas.repec.org/a/rom/rmcimn/v17y2016i3p212-224.html>
- Gardner, W. L., Avolio, B. J., & Walumbwa, F. O. (2005). *Authentic leadership theory and practice: Origins, effects and development*. Emerald Group.
- Gardner, W. L., Cogliser, C. C., Davis, K. M., & Dickens, M. P. (2011). Authentic leadership: A review of the literature and research agenda. *Leadership Quarterly*, 22(6), 1120–1145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.09.007>

- Gardner, W. L., Karam, E. P., Alvesson, M., & Einola, K. (2021). Authentic leadership theory: The case for and against. *Leadership Quarterly*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2021.101495>
- George, B. (2003). *Authentic leadership*. Jossey-Bass.
- Gloo. (2020, April). Gloo partners with Barna Group to power national “State of the Church” research initiative. *Business Wire (English)*.
- Gortner, D. T. (2009). Looking at leadership beyond our own horizon. *Anglican Theological Review*, 91(1), 119–142.
<https://www.anglicantheologicalreview.org/>
- Grieger, E., & Peck, K. (2016). *Designed to lead: The Church and leadership development*. B&H.
- Griffin, M. A., & Mathieu, J. E. (1997). Modeling organizational processes across hierarchical levels: Climate, leadership, and group process in work groups. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 18(6), 731–744.
<https://doi.org/10.1002>
- Han, S. S. (2015). Developing an intentional leadership development process through mentoring in the local church. *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*, 9(2), 112. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl>
- Hannah, S. T., Lester, P. B., & Vogelgesang, G. R. (2005). Moral leadership: Explicating the moral component of authentic leadership. In B. J. Avolio, W. L. Gardner, & F. O. Walumbwa (Eds.), *Authentic leadership theory and practice: Origins, effects and development* (pp. 43–81). Elsevier.
- Hedges, K. (2014). If you think leadership development is a waste of time you may be right. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/work-in-progress/2014/09/23/if-you-think-leadership-development-is-a-waste-of-time-you-may-be-right/>
- Henson, J. D. (Ed.). (2020). *Modern metaphors of Christian leadership: Exploring Christian leadership in a contemporary organizational context*. Springer Nature.

- Hernez-Broome, G., & Hughes, R. J. (2004). Leadership development: Past, present, and future. *Human Resource Planning*, 27(1), 24–32.
<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/h/human-resource-planning.asp>
- Iordanoglou, D. (2018). Future trends in leadership development practices and the crucial leadership skills. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability & Ethics*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.33423/jlae.v15i2.648>
- Iszatt, W. M., & Kempster, S. (2019). Authentic leadership: Getting back to the roots of the “root construct”? *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 21(3), 356–369. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12193>
- Kjellström, S., Stålné, K., & Törnblom, O. (2020). Six ways of understanding leadership development: An exploration of increasing complexity. *Leadership*, 16(4), 434–460.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715020926731>
- Kort, E. D. (2008). What, after all, is leadership? ‘Leadership’ and plural action. *Leadership Quarterly*, 19(4), 409–425.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.05.003>
- Kotter, J. P. (1988). *The leadership factor*. Free Press.
- Krishnakumar, S., Houghton, J. D., Neck, C. P., & Ellison, C. N. (2015). The “good” and the “bad” of spiritual leadership. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 12(1), 17–37.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14766086.2014.886518>
- Leskiw, S.-L., & Singh, P. (2007). Leadership development: Learning from best practices. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 28(5), 444–464. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730710761742>
- Lunenberg, F. (2012). Power and leadership: An influence process. *International Journal of Management, Business, and Administration*, 15(1), 1–9.
<https://www.nationalforum.com/>
- Mathews, J. (2021). Spiritual theory of leadership effectiveness. *IUP Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20(1), 52–74.
<https://www.iupindia.in/405/ijob.asp>

- Maximo, N., Stander, M. W., & Coxen, L. (2019). Authentic leadership and work engagement: The indirect effects of psychological safety and trust in supervisors. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology, 45*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v45i0.1612>
- Mayring, P. (2011). *Qualitative content analysis: Theoretical foundation, basic procedures and software solution*. Klagenfurt.
- McCauley, C. D., & Palus, C. J. (2020). Developing the theory and practice of leadership development: A relational view. *Leadership Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101456>
- Munson, R. H. (2021). *Apostles/evangelists of the first three centuries as exemplars for modern missionaries*. https://www.academia.edu/63468911/Apostles_Evangelists_of_the_First_Three_Centuries_as_Exemplars_for_Modern_Missionaries
- Neck, C. P., & Houghton, J. D. (2006). Two decades of self-leadership theory and research: Past developments, present trends, and future possibilities. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 21*(4), 270–295. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940610663097>
- Neider, L. L., & Schriesheim, C. A. (2011). The authentic leadership inventory (ALI): Development and empirical tests. *Leadership Quarterly, 22*(6), 1146–1164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.09.008>
- Nguyen, P. V., Tran, K. T., Dao, K. H., & Dinh, H. P. (2018). The role of leader's spiritual leadership on organisation outcomes. *Asian Academy of Management Journal, 23*(2), 45–68. <https://doi.org/10.21315/aamj2018.23.2.3>
- Northouse, P. (2019). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (8th ed.). SAGE.
- Outreach Magazine. (2018, October). *Outreach 100: The fastest growing churches in America*. <https://outreachmagazine.com/outreach-100.html>

- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health, 42*(5), 533–544.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Palmer, A. (2017). Leaders by design: Preparing your church for its highest priority. *Outreach*. <https://outreachmagazine.com/>
- Pawar, M. (2014). *Social and community development practice*. SAGE.
- Platow, M. J., Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., & Steffens, N. K. (2015). There is no leadership if no-one follows: Why leadership is necessarily a group process. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 10*(1), 20–37.
<https://www.bps.org.uk/publications/international-coaching-psychology-review>
- Posner, B. Z. (2009). From inside out: Beyond teaching about leadership. *Journal of Leadership Education, 8*(1), 1–10. <https://journalofleadershiped.org/jole>
- Puls, T. R., Ludden, L. L., & Freemyer, J. (2014). Authentic leadership and its relationship to ministerial effectiveness. *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership, 8*(1), 55–75. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl>
- Riddle, D. (2011). *Equipping transitioning leaders for success*. Center for Creative Leadership.
- Roof, R. (2013). Authentic leadership: An empirical test of its antecedents. *Asian Journal of Business Ethics, 3*(1), 57–64.
<https://philpapers.org/rec/ROOALQ>
- Rosari, R. (2019). Leadership definitions applications for lecturers' leadership development. *Journal of Leadership in Organizations, 1*(1).
<https://doi.org/10.22146/jlo.42965>
- Rost, J. C. (1993). Leadership development in the new millennium. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 1*(1), 91–110.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/1935262X>
- Saldaña, J., & Omasta, M. (2018). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life*. SAGE.

- Sanders, D. (2019). An ecological approach for developing authentic leaders in the church: A literature review. *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*, 13(1), 55–69. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl>
- Senjaya, S., & Pekerti, A. (2010). Servant leadership as antecedent of trust in organizations. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 31(7), 643–663. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437731011079673>
- Sparkman, T. (2017). The leadership development experiences of church denomination executives. *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*, 11(1), 54–68. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl>
- Stackhouse, J. (2007). Defining evangelical. *Church & Faith Trends*, 1(1), 1–5.
- Subramony, M., Segers, J., Chadwick, C., & Shyamsunder, A. (2018). Leadership development practice bundles and organizational performance: The mediating role of human capital and social capital. *Journal of Business Research*, 83, 120–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.09.044>
- Summerfield, M. R. (2014). Leadership: A simple definition. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, 71(3), 251–253. <https://doi.org/10.2146/ajhp130435>
- Tabor, W., Madison, K., Marler, L. E., & Kellermanns, F. W. (2020). The effects of spiritual leadership in family firms: A conservation of resources perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 163(4), 729–743. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04379-2>
- Terrell, S. (2016). *Writing a proposal for your dissertation*. Guilford Press.
- Thoman, R. (2011). Leadership development: Churches don't have to go it alone part II. *Christian Education Journal*, 8(1), 27–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073989131100800103>
- Thumma, S., & Travis, D. (2007). *Beyond megachurch myths: What we can learn from America's largest churches*. Jossey-Bass.
- van Schalkwyk, A., & Kourie, C. (2011). Introduction. In *Religion and theology*. Brill.

- Volckmann, R. (2012). Integral leadership and diversity—definitions, distinctions and implications. *Integral Leadership Review*, 12(3), 1–21.
<https://integralleadershipreview.com/7046-integral-leadership-and-diversity-definitions-distinctions-and-implications/>
- Vroom, V. H., & Jago, A. G. (2007). The role of the situation in leadership. *American Psychologist*, 62(1), 17–24.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.1.17>
- Walumbwa, F., Avolio, B., Gardner, W., Wernsing, T., & Peterson, S. (2008). Authentic leadership: Development and validation of a theory-based measure. *Journal of Management*, 34(1), 89–126.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206307308913>
- Washbush, J. (2005). There is no such thing as leadership, revisited. *Management Decision*, 43(7–8), 1078–1085.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740510610080>
- White, P. (2021). Exploring the connections between authentic leadership and Evangelical Christian leadership. In *Transforming vocation: Connecting theology, church, and the workplace for a flourishing world* (p. 54). Wipf and Stock.
- Winston, B. E., & Patterson, K. (2006). An integrative definition of leadership. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 1(2), 6–66.
<https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/>
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Zachary, G. W. (2013). Spiritual leadership: Investigating the effects of altruistic love on organizational commitment. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, 6(2), 767–789.
<https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/search/details?id=28443>

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Participant Number: _____

Topic: *Interview Protocol:* _____ *Church Leadership Development*

Disclosure: The Southeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed and approved the protocol entitled, Case Study Individual Interview Protocol. This approval is issued under Southeastern University's Federal Wide Assurance 00006943 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under the IRB's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact them at irb@scu.edu.

Opening Comment: Thank you for taking time today to participate in this research study. Your involvement will help me better understand how [*Exemplar*]'s leadership framework and formal development process has affected you and the organization and may provide a template for other local churches to follow.

Interview Details: The interview will last approximately 45 minutes and will be recorded to ensure accurate analysis. You will be asked 15 questions of which there are no right or wrong answers. If you do not respond, we will skip that question and move on to the next question.

Key Terms: Key terms were emailed to you to help provide a common understanding before the interview. Did you receive a copy of the terms? Do you have any additional questions or points of clarification?

Your Rights and Confidentiality: As a reminder, what you say during this interview will remain anonymous. The only capacity in which I am here is as researcher and scientist. Your

Appendix B

| Code | Definition |
|--------------------|---|
| Create Opportunity | Bring others with you, look for potential, and empower them to be and do more than they believe is possible. |
| Develop / Disciple | Intentional act of encouraging people to become more Christ-like. Measure success by the value we added to others' lives. |
| Heart / Excellence | We have a responsibility to always be growing ourselves and help others grow in all areas of their lives. |
| Vision | Communicate how we will accomplish the mission and invite others to join. |
| Generosity | We give according to the grace given us, celebrate intentionally, and express gratitude freely. Live open-handed. |
| Courage / Grit | Take things to heart, but not personally. Recognize that we are advancing in a spiritual war which is not for the faint-of-heart. |
| Values / Culture | We value the Fruit of the Spirit more than the Gifts of the Spirit: who we are is more important than what we can do. |
| Leadership | Add value to people through influence, in the context of relationship. |
| Purpose | We are called by God to sacrificially serve His people. Our assignment may change but our calling remains secure. |
| Belief / Faith | Relationship with God is the most important thing about us. We abide in the Spirit and recognize that apart from Him we can do nothing of eternal significance. |
| Hunger / Drive | Teach what we know. Reproduce who we are. What got us here won't get us there. |
| Unity / We | Choosing collective purpose over personal preference. We need, trust, and value each other. |

Note. These definitions were adapted from the exemplar's Culture Guide.

Appendix C

I AM A LEADER

I am a leader.

A force to be reckoned with.

An influencer.

An atmosphere lifter.

A life-speaking, people-encouraging, team builder.

There is no problem too great to overcome –

I am the solution.

My attitude is positive,
my outlook is hopeful,
and my resolve is strong.

I take responsibility for
my spirit.

I lean in, full of faith, and
happy in my grace.

I am hungry for more.

I place purpose over
preference.

I carry a big vision, and

I am in this heart and soul.

I make things better.

Excellence is in me because
it's in the heart of my God.

I love people.

I believe in their potential and
create opportunities for them
to grow.

I'm in love with Jesus,
filled with the Holy Spirit,
and His renown is my reward.

Today I will make a
difference – the kind of
difference that will cause
hell to tremble and heaven
to rejoice.

I am a leader.

Appendix D

CULTURAL VALUES

These values define our culture's character at large, embraced by both our staff and Dream Team.

LOVE GOD

Principle: Intimacy is Priority

Description:

- Our relationship with God is the most important thing about us.
- We abide in the Spirit and recognize that apart from Him, we can do nothing of eternal significance.
- We are committed to prioritizing and cultivating spiritual disciplines.

Principle: Character Over Talent

Description:

- We value the fruit of the Spirit more than the gifts of the Spirit: who we are is more important than what we can do.
- It is Jesus who makes us whole: our integrity is produced through our intimacy.
- We give our all with pure motives: we know that God gives and takes as He sees fit.

Principle: Confident in Calling

Description:

- We are called by God to sacrificially serve God.
- Our assignment will change but our calling remains secure.
- Our confidence comes from what Jesus did for us, not what we can do for Him; we have nothing to prove.

LOVE PEOPLE

Principle: Choose Honor

Description:

- We perceive and receive everyone as treasured by God.
- We honor ourselves, our peers, our leaders, and especially those we serve: honor isn't honor if it only goes up.
- We do not posture ourselves to receive honor; we give it away.

Principle: Live Generously

Description:

- Freely we have been given, and so freely we give.
- We live open-handed with our resources: time, energy, talents, and finances.
- We live open-hearted with our love: people are the point.

Principle: Develop Leaders

Description:

- We are developers, not doers: we get the job done by bringing people along.
- We look for potential, create opportunities, and empower purpose.
- We measure success by the value we add to others, not the value they add to us.

BE LIFE-GIVING

Principle: My Spirit, My Choice

Description:

- Choices lead, feelings follow: we choose joy.
- We are the thermostat, not the thermometer: we set the tone and tenor.
- We do hard work with light hearts: we have the humility to laugh at ourselves.

Principle: Celebrate Intentionally

Description:

- We celebrate each other's grit, audacious risk-taking, and successes.
- We party on purpose (and as often as possible).
- We express gratitude freely, especially for each other.

Principle: Be Resilient

Description:

- We recognize that we are advancing in a spiritual war, which is not for the faint-of-heart: endurance is required.
- We take things to heart, but not personally: we are honest about our insecurities and don't project them onto others.
- We expect challenges, embrace change, and remain flexible: in the face of difficulty, we bounce back quickly.

PURSUE EXCELLENCE

Principle: Stay Sharp

Description:

- We develop our anointing through prayer, fasting, worship, and the Word: we teach what we know, we reproduce who we are.
- We have not arrived and we are hungry for more: who we are today is not who we'll be tomorrow.
- We take personal ownership of our development: mind, body, emotions, skills, and relationships.

Principle: We Are Owners, Not Renters

Description:

- Our role, no matter the job description, is to make the organization better.
- We are sons and daughters: we have trust and permission.
- This is our house, our legacy: we aggressively improve, improvise, innovate, and evaluate. We are leaders and leaders go first.

Principle: One Team, One Fight

Description:

- We choose collective purpose over personal preference.
- We pursue accountability and feedback in order to grow.
- We are interdependent: we need, trust, and value each other and we believe collaboration is key.