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## Factors Associated with Attracting and Retaining Church Membership: A Phenomenological Study

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Factors Associated with Attracting and Retaining Church Membership:

A Phenomenological Study

A Dissertation by

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Irvine, California

School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

March 2018

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A Phenomenological Study

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to offer the following acknowledgments: First, to my family – daughter’s Aprile Corley and Brea Corley – who are the major reasons why I took on this project as I wanted to be an example of ambition for you two to always remain determined to reach your goals. Thank you for your unending love, patience, and support for your father. I love you both immeasurably. Thanks to my parents, James and Liberty Corley – thanks mom and dad for your love, patience, and time to study for days - days at a time without hearing from me. Thanks to my best friend – Bridget Hill whose love, late night proofreading, and encouragement for the past 4 ½ years have helped lead to this accomplishment. Your constant encouragement kept me through some tough times and allowed me to see through the rough spots along the way.

Second, to the two congregations who have supported me throughout this project - Grace Church, Spring Valley, California and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California who completely supported me on this doctoral journey. I am so thankful for many in these congregations who have offered prayers, focus groups interviews, and encouragement throughout this project’s four year duration.

Third, the professors - Bruce Newlin, Ed.D., Phil Pendley, Ed.D., and Carlos V. Guzman, Ph.D. – who encouraged me to the very end of this process. I could not have made it without your consistent support.

Finally, to God – whose guidance and support can never be repaid...except by giving to others as you have given to me. You led me to a faith in Christ and then you taught me how to love Jesus... through your life example... and, because I have learned

to love Jesus, I now have a deep love for his Bride – the Church. May this project honor you by helping other churches.

*“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” Colossians 3:17 (King James Version).*

## ABSTRACT

Factors Associated with Attracting and Retaining Church Membership: A

Phenomenological Study

by

Anderson W. Corley

**Purpose:** Christian churches in American continue to struggle to maintain membership.

This project is a combination research paper and contextual project that uses research gathered in the field to help evaluate the reality of what has taken place in membership and retention in this context. As such, this project aims to explore ministry practices that attract and retain church membership in Christian churches as perceived by active church leaders in the church.

**Methodology:** This qualitative phenomenological study explores the practices that support membership and retention in Christian churches from the stakeholders' perspective. The project examines the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders at two established Grace Church International, Inc. church affiliates in the Southern California District; Grace Church, Spring Valley, California and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California through a series of voluntarily focus group meetings.

**Findings:** The findings in this study provide the results of the lived experiences of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders at their respective churches that were perceived to attract and retain church membership. The data being presented represents the results of all the coded focus group meetings, observations, and

artifacts that were collected. The findings relate to the research questions used in the study.

**Conclusions:** This study considered the lived experiences of the study participants that attract and retain church membership. Based on the findings of this study as supported by the literature, it is concluded that of greatest importance to attract and retain church members of all participants were relationship building, prayer, assimilation, and hospitality (friendliness).

**Recommendations:** It is important that church leaders understand how the aforementioned factors affect membership and retention in Christian churches to help us to better comprehend the context of membership and retention in Christian faith organizations. It is equally important to help church leaders build successful strategies for their congregations that have been demonstrated and implemented in successful churches. Therefore, the researcher suggests that church leaders implement practices to address the four previously mentioned factors in their church to attract and retain church members.



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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Centuries ago, as followers of Jesus Christ, Christians were given an enormous commission to preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. This commission is commonly known to Christians as “The Great Commission” as stated in Matthew 28:19-20 of the Holy Bible (Carver, 2015; Life Application Study Bible, 2007). In the passage of scripture, Jesus Christ tells the disciples prior to his ascension back to heaven:

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you; and know I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Life Application Study Bible, 2007)

In fulfillment of this commission, the church is given a mission to tell people about Jesus and his salvation, and teach the word of Jesus Christ to both the saved and the unsaved. After Jesus’s ascension and the establishment of the Christian church over 2000 years ago, the Christian church continues to have an impressionable influence on society worldwide (McBride & Giem, 2006). As such, many scholars, professors, sociologist, and philosophers having studied relationships and interactions among family, marriage, religion, community, and America’s social problems have concluded that Christianity does play a role in society (D’Souza, 2007; Fagan, 1996; McBride & Giem, 2006).

From a universal perspective the impact of the Christian church on society is seen through its involvement in world relief, aid, humanitarianism, and economic development. Christian organizations, such as World Vision, Maranatha, and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), have provided worldwide relief and aid in the

form of medical services, HIV/AIDS counseling and medical care, community development, water purification, orphanage services, economic aid, shelter, food, educational opportunities, first responders during disasters and catastrophic crisis to suffering people around the world countless times (Adventist Development and Relief Agency [ADRA], 2005; Evans, 1979; McBride & Giem, 2006; World Vision, 2006). Much of the involvement to the society as referenced above is related to Christianity's commitment to caring for others (McBride & Giem, 2006).

Locally, the interaction between Christianity and secular society has been seen through the strong connection between the Christian church, society, and its contribution to the organization of, and the standard of living of American people in areas such as laws, the economy, politics, arts, morals, education, culture, and building strong networks in the home (D'Souza, 2007; Fagan, 1996; McBride & Giem, 2006). The American church is credited with strengthening the family unit particularly when the foundation of the family is governed by religious doctrine (Bergin, 1991; Fagan, 1996). Attending church on a consistent basis plays a major role in providing an escape from the cyclical poverty of inner-city life, thus contributing immensely to the formation of personal moral criteria and sound moral judgment (Fagan, 1996). Giving leverage to this assertion, McBride and Giem (2006) relied on Shah and Woodberry (2004) and Weber (1930) who wrote that a focus on an individual judgment or morals before God, Christianity provides a sense of accountability in people that results in a fervent commitment of servitude to the community and the needs of others. Religious practice generally inoculates individuals against a host of social problems including suicide, drug abuse, pre-marital



births, crime, war, and divorce (Bergin, 1991; Fagan, 1996; Larson, Larson, & Gartner, 1990; McBride & Giem, 2006; and Raspberry, 1993).

While the contributions of the Christian churches to American society are extensive and pervasive, it is also important to note that the Christian Church may have provided some dysfunctional elements to society such as gender bias (Amoah, Safo, & Amoah, 2015; McBride & Giem, 2006; McDuff, 2001). A passage of scripture found in Genesis 1:26 (The Holy Bible, 1982) states, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness’...” (p. 1). McBride and Giem (2006) argued that the connotation of the scripture implied that women are not created in the full image of God, in comparison to their male counterparts; therefore, making them inferior to men and undeserving of ordination, equal pay, or equal status in society. They believed that the biblical writings had influence to the viewpoints of man concerning gender inequality of women and wages for work. Although many efforts have been previously made to demonstrate that women are equal to men, an example of modern day gender inequality of women that is felt more closely across society is seen in pay equity (Gerhard & Woolley, 1963; Siniscalco, Damrell, & Nabity, 2014). The Equal Pay Act (EPA) of 1963 enacted under the administrative of President John F. Kennedy intended to strengthen pay discrimination, and attempt to remedy a serious and systemic problem of employment bias toward women in private industry (Gerhard & Woolley, 1963; Siniscalco et al., 2014). Prior to the EPA, women earned around 59 cents for every dollar paid to men (Siniscalco et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). Almost 52 years after the act became law, women are only being paid on average, 77 to 80 cents for every dollar in comparison to males doing the same jobs in the workplace (Siniscalco et al., 2014;

Tufarolo, 2016; U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). The gender wage gap has slowly narrowed, but it has not disappeared as illustrated by a 20% to 23% gender pay gap that appears to exist in today's society (Siniscalco et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). Thus, showing that gender inequality of women and wages for work in society may have been possibly propagated by theological sociocultural perceptions found in biblical writings (Amoah et al, 2015). McBride and Giem (2006) proclaimed that it is difficult to change cultural behavior built on scriptural foundation.

In spite of the churches dysfunctional elements to society, research has shown robust benefits to participating in church, but, in recent years there has been a steady decline in attracting and retaining members in Christian churches throughout the United States (Dyck, 2010; Fischer-Nielsen, 2009; Hampson, 2015; Jackson, 2009; Joyce, 2015; Kinneman & Lyons, 2007; Luftman & Bullen, 2004; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010 & 2015; Pond, Smith, & Clement, 2010; Rainer, 2012; Waggoner, 2006). Rainer (2012) indicated that of the 300 million people living in the United States, less than 20% of the U.S. population attends church on a regular basis. Even more troubling is the fact that approximately 7.5 to 7.9 million people are no longer attending church annually; equating to about 150,000 people leaving churches on a weekly basis in communities (Grant, 2015; Rainer, 2012). As such, Audette and Weaver, (2016); Dyck, (2010); Fischer-Nielsen, (2009); Hampson, (2015); Joyce, (2015); Kinneman and Lyons, (2007); Luftman and Bullen, (2004); Pew Research Center Religion and Public Life, (2010 & 2015); Pond et al. (2010); Rainer, (2012); and Waggoner, (2006) provided that there is wide-spread public focus on the issue of church membership, coupled with

numerous varying points of view in regard to the “falling-off” of attendance in Christian organizations.

## **Background**

### **Exploration into Factors Leading to the Eroding Public Interest in the Christian Church**

First and foremost, one of the most important interests for every Christian is to be affiliated with a local community church where they can worship God, learn about him, be in fellowship with other believers and serve god (Morris & Clark, 1987). In spite of the importance of going to church and serving God researchers have pointed out in their research that membership and retention is declining at a rapid pace (Dyck, 2010; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010; Pond et al., 2010; Rainer, 2012; Waggoner, 2006). Current research has provided some clues as to why churches have lost ground in attracting and retaining members by speculating that declining public interest to attend a church, church leader waywardness, changing public values, and social issues are among other reasons that may have impacted individual’s desire not to become part of a local community church (Dyck, 2010; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010; Pond et al., 2010; Rainer, 2012; Waggoner, 2006). An investigation into these issues and their effect on membership and retention in the Christian church suggested that these trends will continue to adversely affect churches locally and throughout the United States. Additionally, research provided basic descriptive information to possible approaches that may get people to return to church that includes technology, outreach, and effective pastoral leadership might be factors to get people to return to church (Black, 2011; Callalhan, 2010; Davis, 2007; Fischer-Nielsen, 2009;

Hunter, 2003; Kinneman & Lyons, 2007; Luftman & Bullen, 2004; Riley, 2009; Schaller, 1987).

In light of the factors that are deemed to have led to the erosion of the church, and those factors that are believed to be potential breakthroughs toward advancing the church, there is a need to investigate factors that motivate individuals to attend and remain connected as church members. As such, this study will focus on the declining public interest to attend church, church leader waywardness, changing public values, social issues, technology, outreach, and effective pastoral leadership as a way to possibly improve church membership and retention.

### **Impact of Social issues on Membership and Retention**

Research showed that in reality, Americans are not attending church as often as they have done in the past (Grant, 2015). Grant (2015) and Grossman (2016) indicated that approximately 34% percent of Americans have only attended a worship service for a holiday, wedding, or for some form of ceremonial event. Additionally, Audette and Weaver (2016), Cheyne (2010), and Joyce (2015) commented that the majority of Americans continue to hold religious beliefs, value religious ideals, and engage in religious practices, however, the religiously unaffiliated population in the United States continues to rapidly increase. Further, Cheyne (2010) found that the religiously unaffiliated population to be pervasive across American society particularly among young adults.

Statistics showed that fewer young adults today resonate with a particular faith, and young adults are less likely to be affiliated with a church than their parents' and grandparents' were at a comparable point of time in their lives (Audette & Weaver, 2016;

Pond et al., 2010). Adding significance to Audette and Weaver's (2016) and Pond et al. (2010) work, Joanne C. Beckman (2000), Professor of American Religious History at Duke University said that sociologists have estimated that a full 42% of the young adult generation have permanently abandoned church, do not belong to any religious organization, and claim no denominational ties to organized religion. Consequently, these statistics as well as literary sources demonstrate the need to examine this phenomenon so that the Christian church can implement practices to attract and retain people to reduce the decline in membership rates.

A difference in opinion in regard to political and/or social issues is believed to have contributed to the departure of about 52% of people who departed the church (McConnell, 2007). One such issue, is acceptance or non-acceptance, of homosexuality among clergy and Auxiliary members (McConnell, 2007; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010; Stackhouse, 2003). Pew Forum and several other authors provided their opinion to explain why church membership and retention in Christian faith organizations is declining, of which, homosexuality by ordained ministry leaders was specifically brought to the forefront (McConnell, 2007; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010; Stackhouse, 2003). The results of a Pew Forum study revealed that a cultural shift toward the acceptance of homosexuality has occurred, and that this social issue has impacted the worldview of people, particularly young adults, which ultimately has had a negative impact on membership and retention in churches (McConnell, 2007; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010).

The issue of homosexuality is more widely supported among people between the ages of 18 to 29 than in other generational groups (Arnold, 2009; McConnell 2007; Pew

Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). Accordingly, nearly two times as many young adults indicated that homosexuality should be accepted by society as compared to other participant's age 65 years and older by a margin of 63% versus 35% (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). The study noted that young adults were also considerably more accepting of homosexuality than those between 30 to 49 years of age by 51%, and by the age group between 50 to 64 by 48% (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). Homosexual pastors are serving in Christian churches across the United States (Stackhouse, 2003). These findings suggested that acceptance of homosexuality in Christian churches has occurred, and church leaders might consider evaluating how they will deal with societal issues regarding homosexuality in order to draw people back to the church (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010).

### **Impact of Church Leaders Behavior on Membership and Retention**

The conduct of some pastors and church leaders is believed to have altered people's interest to continue to regularly attend church services (McConnell, 2007; Rainer, 2012; Waggoner, 2006). Rainer (2012) published research on the effect of pastors and church leaders wayward behaviors when cast upon their congregations is damaging, and exposed that 15% of those surveyed indicated that they felt displeasure with the church due to a moral or ethical failure of the church leadership.

Goodall (2008) wrote in his Christianity Today editorial that a survey of Christian ministers revealed that there is a problem in Christian ministry. Moreover, the response rate to his survey revealed that 12% of pastors admitted to extramarital intercourse, and nearly 23% acknowledged some form of sexually inappropriate behavior while performing church ministry (Goodall, 2008). Reflecting on why some pastors behave

immorally, Pastor Fred Craddock (2007), in a commentary concerning the well-known Evangelical Pastor Ted Haggard's fall from grace, said that it (meaning sexual improprieties and misapplication of money among other immoral acts) - stems from the fact that many pastors never learned how to deal with positive applause from people. Furthermore, Goodall (2008) rationalized that practicing and teaching Christianity in the absence of applying ethical behavior is a travesty to leading a church in which irreparable damage comes to a minister's life, his family, and the congregation whenever sexual impropriety is committed. As such, a church cannot flourish and grow in numbers without trust (Dobbs, 2016).

### **Exploration into Factors Leading to a Solution to the Erosion of Christian Church**

Numerous reasons have been given for the decline in church membership, but little research has been done to identify solutions to reverse or improve the trend. Black (2011), Callahan (2010), Davis (2007), Fischer-Nielsen (2009), Hunter (2003), Kinneman and Lyons (2007), Luftman and Bullen (2004), Riley (2009), and Schaller (1987) recognized the challenge congregations are encountering and offered advice on how to address the epidemic of diminishing membership and retention by incorporating technology, outreach, and effective pastoral leadership.

### **Effects of Technology on Retention**

Churches must rise to the challenge of current technology (Van den Heever, 2008). Technology is an innovative use of communication within the Christian community and can further the Christian agenda to reach the public (Van den Heever, 2008). Technology has a way of connecting people with common interests and ideas through the World Wide Web (WWW) instead of meeting in-person (Niemand &

Rensleigh, 2003). Arthur and Rensleigh, (2015), Black, (2011), and Riley, (2009) pronounced that online evangelism through technology is a way to communicate with people that do not regularly attend church services. Therefore, online technologies is said to be a key factor in the development of churches and their ability to attract and retain membership in the church (Arthur & Rensleigh, 2015).

Even though the WWW and Internet might be an effective medium to attract and retain church membership, Fischer-Nielsen (2009) acknowledged the difficulty churches experience in getting individuals to become part of their organization. Larson (2000) states that churches are failing to utilize the web and internet to its full potential. As a way to offset this shortfall, Arthur and Rensleigh (2015) proposed the use of online technology to create an environment where the faith community can gain access to resources that include pastor's commentary, church activities and daily devotionals which can be utilized to incite current and potential members to become engaged in the church. Online technologies encourage the sharing of human knowledge and teaching of the biblical word. Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009) advanced Wilson's (2000) position that religious organizations should seek to use technological advancements to help move churches into the 21st century. As such, the Internet should be used as a communication strategy to reach people seeking spiritual growth (Arthur & Rensleigh 2015; Fischer-Nielsen, 2009; Riley, 2009).

### **Effects of Outreach Practices on Retention**

Many Christian congregations are not actively engaging in proactive outreach ministry to attract and retain church membership (Hunter, 2003). Kinneman and Lyons (2007) provided that working to build meaningful and personal relationships is a strategic



method that church leaders can institute to attract people. Watson and Stepteau-Watson (2015) emphasized that outreach ministries should be created to reflect, improve, and enhance the quality of life in the communities to attract and retain church members. For this reason, a good definition for outreach ministry is actions that involve taking the gospel out to everyone in our communities (Ford, 2012). Further, it involves purposefully creating ideas and positive ways to reach out to the community, for example creating community outreach services that include health-care assistance and wellness projects (Ford, 2012; Osinski, 2005; Watson & Stepteau-Watson, 2015). Some churches have started to offer outreach ministerial services that help to meet the housing needs of those that are displaced by providing extended-stay motels, low-income housing and apartments (Osinski, 2005).

Church leaders are inspired to enthusiastically take the initiative to contact people where they are – meaning churches should develop and implement outreach services as a membership strategy (Hunter, 2003; Osinski, 2005) as the need for Christians to connect with people in their own neighborhoods is paramount (Johnson, Payne, & Wilson, 2008; Osinski, 2005).

### **Effects of Pastoral Leadership Practices on Retention**

Pastors are commissioned by God to serve people beyond numbers, finances, or entertainment (Luong & Wescott, 2015). In doing so, Luong and Wescott (2015) asserted that church leaders should focus on the spiritual well-being of the congregants and reaching out to the unsaved. Pastors and church leaders teach their churches to influence society (Jackson, 2009). By their commission, pastors are set apart mainly to teach the word of God and religious practices, but overall they are appointed to provide

leadership within the community (Luong & Wescott, 2015). Luong and Wescott proclaimed that in order for a pastor to lead effectively, a pastor's character must reflect that they are knowledgeable of the scriptures and the confessions of the church. Pastors must not only be strong spiritual leaders but also be strategic thinkers knowing how to direct their congregation, missionary activities, and other programs. Furthermore, pastors must also know how to build coalitions, inspire people, and train people to work together in unison towards a shared purpose. Above all, a pastor must be an effective orator in preaching, teaching, and evangelizing (Luong & Wescott, 2015). In a study written by Mehta and Mehta (1995) the researchers found that a positive relationship existed between pulpit ministry and membership retention. The attributes of pulpit ministry were: the relevance of messages, pastor's speech, and the quality of the message being delivered (Mehta & Mehta, 1995). Mehta and Mehta explained that the message, pastor's speech, and the quality of the message being delivered bear significant importance to retaining church membership, and noted that the three attributes can be major areas for church administrators to target for improving church membership and retention. Consequently, preaching, teaching, and delivering Sunday sermons is the job of pastors and ministers, and the idealized influence of a pastor, minister, or a church leader is vital in holding the attention of people while in church, attract visitors who choose to attend church services, and to bring transformational change to faith organizations.

### **Transformational Leadership and Charismatic Leadership**

The charisma of church leadership is important to attracting and retaining members in Christian churches (Mehta & Mehta, 1995). More specifically, in a faith based setting, the charisma of pastors, ministers, and other clergy are at the heart of

creating change. The theory on charismatic leadership identifies charismatic leaders as competent people who adopt their causes, and these leaders communicate philosophical goals that have moral overtones which insights interest (House, 1976). They communicate high expectations (Bass & Riggio, 2006; House, 1976), while simultaneously exhibiting confidence in their ability to meet their own expectations (House, 1976). Consistent with charismatic leadership behavior traits described by House (1976) transformational leaders set out to empower and nurture people to change (Northouse, 2010). Further, transformational leaders work to raise the consciousness of individuals and get them to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of others interests (Northouse, 2010). The concept of transformational leadership creates a culture in which people feel free to try new things (Northouse, 2010). In order for charismatic leaders to create transformational change, the leader must be viewed as a strong role model by the people they are leading, this includes church leadership (Northouse, 2010).

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Christian church leaders lack knowledge concerning best practices that will attract and retain membership. The literature delineating possible reasons for the progressing downturn in membership in Christian churches is voluminous. Multiple studies have highlighted reasons why people are unwilling to commit to, and remain with a church organization (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015; Rainer, 2012; Waggoner, 2006). These studies are significant because they explain factors that are critical to the sustainability of Christian churches. It is extremely important that church leaders learn what factors contribute to individuals choosing to attend church if they want to increase and retain membership.

While a great deal of research has been done on the reasons people are leaving the church or not joining one, and some research has provided ideas for solutions, more research needs to be done to determine which strategies have the greatest potential for increasing and retaining church membership in Southern California Independent Churches. Church leaders need to identify strong strategies that focus on helping their churches become more effective in attracting new members to their congregation and in retaining present members in the congregation.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders that attract and retain church membership at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California and to determine what similarities and differences that exist between the groups.

### **Research Questions**

#### **Research Questions**

1. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders?
2. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders?

### **Research Sub-Questions**

3. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?
4. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?
5. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?
6. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?
7. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?
8. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?
9. What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what attracts new church membership.
10. What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what retains church membership.

### **Significance of the Problem**

The problem of attrition in Christian churches must be examined and addressed if churches are to continue evolve effectively. Since people beyond the church members are served by the church in every community, communities would be stronger with

healthier, vibrant churches (Bergin, 1991; Fagan, 1996; Ford, 2012; Larson, Larson, & Gartner, 1990; Raspberry, 1993).

Church leaders - both auxiliary and pastoral - would greatly benefit from understanding those factors that lead to bringing congregants to their church. This is true whether the congregation is governed by a Methodist, Church of God and Christ, Apostolic, Baptist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Christian, Lutheran, Independent, Non-Denomination etc. paradigm of authority. Therefore, it is important that we learn those practices that support attracting and retaining church members. If churches intend to support individuals, families, and the community it is imperative for the leaders to understand the factors that support church membership and retention. This study will help pastors build successful strategies for their congregations that have been demonstrated and implemented in growing churches. In essence, this study is intended to be a model that can be replicated by other churches worldwide.

### **Definitions**

The following terms will appear throughout this study.

*Christian.* People who said they made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today, and also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to heaven because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior (Kinnaman & Lyons (2007).

*Church.* Used to indicate a place of worship (Fagan, 1996).

*Churchgoer.* Indicates an individual attending a synagogue, any other place of worship, or religious institution (Fagan, 1996).

*Church Membership.* Church membership is defined as belonging to a particular congregation and/or denomination for (a) spiritual gains; (b) access to the package of programs and services provided by the congregations to worshipers, including Sunday services; (c) operating efficiency of the congregation as an organization; and (e) regular attendance and involvement in governance of the church (Association of Religion Data Archives, 2010; Ghorpade, Lackritz, & Moore, 2012).

*Congregation.* A congregation is a family, a group or groupings of people that gather to worship God together (Callahan, 2010).

*Disciple.* A follower of Jesus Christ (Gallaty, 2013).

*Discipleship.* The process of following Jesus Christ and becoming more like God (Gallaty, 2013).

*Membership Retention.* The word retention is a derivative of "retain" which comes from an Old French root meaning to keep attached to one's person, to keep in service. Retention theology therefore studies the Word of God to determine how best keep people connected, or attached, to each other; and keep people in service, to retain current membership and increase the number of new members (Krauska, 2008)

*Transformation.* Involves changing an individual, a group of people, or an organization to better state (Johnson, 2009).

*Transformational Leadership.* An approach to leading whereas leaders and followers work together to raise the level of motivation and morality of people in an organization, with hopes of accomplishing more than what could be achieved in a traditional leader/follower formulation (Northouse, 2007).

*Worldview.* Worldviews are the most fundamental and encompassing views of reality shared by a people in a culture (Hiebert, 1994).

### **Delimitations**

This study is limited to the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders of Grace Church, Spring Valley, California and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. Collected demographic information included position in ministry, length of service in ministry, and religious denomination. All focus groups meetings for this qualitative phenomenological study were conducted in person and relied on the honest communication of all participants in response to questions. Due to the small sample size, generalizability is limited.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study was organized as a qualitative phenomenological study based on the voluntary participation of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders of Grace Church, Spring Valley, California and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. The study is comprised of two central research questions and eight research sub-questions that provided the basis for a more detailed series of questions in a focus group setting that were posed to participants at a location of their choosing. The questions pertained to their experiences at helping their churches become more effective in attracting new members to their congregation, and in retaining present members in the congregation, while serving as ministry leaders. These focus group meetings took place August 2017 through January 2018, and were recorded for transcription accuracy. Results of the focus group meetings were coded by the researcher in an effort to identify emerging themes that provided a basis for the researcher's findings and conclusions.



This phenomenological study is organized into five chapters, including a bibliography, and appendixes. Chapter I provided an overview of this study. It included an introduction, and discussed the significance of the study to the problem that the study seeks to explore. Chapter II is a review of literature relative to attracting and retaining church membership in Christian churches, a theoretical framework for growing and retaining membership, and an exploration of potential strategies to bring people back to church. Chapter III describes the methodology for this phenomenological study, and the survey instrument used to collect data. Chapter IV presents an analysis of the collected data, and the findings of the study. Finally, Chapter V summarizes the study, draws conclusions, implications for practice, and suggests further areas of research.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Most of us know someone who no longer attends church (Rainer, 2012). The common myth is that people are more open to the Gospel at times of change or when a crisis arises such as a death in the family, divorce or separation, financial trouble, job loss, injury or health problems, pregnancy, miscarriage, unplanned birth, or because of a sudden relocation (Callahan, 2010; Carver, 2015; House, 1976). On the contrary, tremendous amounts of social change have seemingly impacted individual's perspectives resulting in faltering faith organizations (Rainer, 2012). This review of literature is intended to provide a framework for this study by looking into some of the differing views that may or may not support attracting and retaining members at Christian churches.

The framework that guides this study begins with a review of books, studies, and other literary materials to support the fact that Christian churches around the United States are experiencing detrimental losses in attendance and membership (Campolo & Campolo, 1995; Dyck, 2010; Pew Center Religion & Public Life, 2010, 2014; Pond et al., 2010; Rainer, 2012; Schaller, 1987; Schwartz, 2005; Waggoner, 2006). This literature review focuses on Christian church attendance in the United States, declining public interest to attend a church, changing public values and social issues, effects of technology on Christian church attendance, pastoral leadership in U.S. Christian Churches, Christian Church Outreach in the United States and existing efforts to improve church enrollment and attendance. This literature review will provide the background and context for the study to follow.

## **History of Christian Church Attendance in the United States**

### **Christian Church Attendance during Colonial Times**

The movement of Christianity from Europe to North American was a highly concentrated migration of people that extended over centuries according to Mark Noll, professor of history at Wheaton College (Illinois) (Noll, 2002). Claude Fischer (2010), Professor of the Graduate School in Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley said that historical record shows that America was not initially Christian, but evolved into a Christian nation over centuries.

Fischer (2010) opined that across the American landscape, however, colonists were primarily “un-churched” and “un-Christian.” Largely dispersed around in separate households (unlike the Puritans who resided closely together in villages), most Americans did not have a local church to attend and little access to organized religion (Fischer, 2010). Even where there were churches to attend, many people attended irregularly or simply attended worship services because the church was one of the few places for people to gather together in a newly-developed society (Fischer, 2010).

Despite church attendance being dismal in the early days of the colonial period, it became more consistent after 1680 (Fischer, 2010). Similar to colonies in the north, this consistency was attributed to the growing multiplication of churches, new clerical codes and bodies, and a religion that became more organized and uniformly enforced. Fischer (2010) alluded toward the end of the colonial period, church attendance grew to about 60% during the colonial period.

As far as determining church growth and membership, Eskridge (2012) stated that given the ambiguity involved in defining exactly what—or who—an evangelical is, it is

an enigma to ascertain a precise estimate to the exact numbers of Christian's in the U.S. that attend worship services. He further alluded that with so many different Christian denominations, independent churches, evangelical constituencies of varying sizes within "mainline" Protestant denominations, and non-denominational churches, there is no single entity that can possibly serve as a representative gatekeeper (or census-taker) for the movement. For this reason, Eskridge (2012) professed that the best approach to an evangelical headcount is a judicious triangulation of various polling and survey data. Barrett and Johnson (2001) stated that church growth is composed of two major categories: quantitative growth (measurable, numerical, statistical), and qualitative growth (non-measurable), this referring to a church's quality of life, spirituality, maturity, self-support, caring ministries, outreach, evangelism, et alia. The former (quantitative growth) is easy to tabulate because churches can count items such as membership, workers, and baptisms (Barrett & Johnson, 2001). The latter (qualitative growth) however is seldom enumerated by churches (Barrett & Johnson, 2001). But, qualitative aspects can be measured by researchers by creating their own variables and then compiling their own data (Barrett & Johnson, 2001).

While Kurian (2011) provided estimates from research prepared by Dr. Todd M. Johnson of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, who assembled data based on three different methods; an examination of historical events, documents in scholarly literature on the history of Christianity, and on data collected by churches and governments (as cited in Kurian, 2011). Kurian estimated that in the period between 1600 and 1700 there were between

100,000 to 370,000 Christians (figures for the number of Christians in millions) in America (Kurian, 2011).

### **Christian Church Attendance during the 1800s**

By the 1800s Dr. Johnson estimated that there were 5.60 million Christian's living in America (as cited in Kurian, 2011).

### **Christian Church Attendance during the 1900s**

In the 1900s, the number of Christian's in attendance rose to 78.81 million (Kurian, 2011). Barrett and Johnson (2001) put forward a much higher number of people affiliated with church at approximately 373.5 million Christian followers.

### **Christian Church Attendance during the 2000s**

Barrett and Johnson (2001) indicated that Christian church affiliation accented to nearly 70 million people by the 2000. While, Barrett and Johnson suggest that a more modest attendance of about 259.30 million people by the 2000s.

### **Declining Public Interest to Attend**

Several studies highlighted the impact of the attrition in membership in Christian Churches, and the declining interest of individuals to remain with a church organization (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010, 2015; Waggoner, 2006, 2010).

These studies were significant because they attempt to explain factors that are critical to the sustainability of Christian churches in the United States (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010, 2014; Rainer, 2012; Waggoner, 2006).

### **Waggoner's Study**

In his *Lifeway Research* study, Waggoner (2006) established that 59% of former church members stopped attending church purportedly as a result of changing life

circumstances, and disenchantment with the pastor and/or congregational leadership (Waggoner, 2006). In taking a closer look at the specific reasons provided in the study by participants for not attending church services, Waggoner (2006) noted:

- Nineteen percent of the survey participants said that they became too busy to attend church.
- Seventeen percent of the survey participants indicated that family responsibilities became their priority.
- Seventeen percent of the survey participants said that they had relocated too far from their church home.
- Fifteen percent of the survey participants indicated work requirements impeded their ability to attend church.
- Twelve percent of the survey participants stated that they had experienced a change in their relationship such as a divorce as the reason that they stopped attending church.

According to Waggoner (2006) these reasons seemed adequate enough to suggest that the church had no culpability for the dwindling membership and retention problem it is experiencing, and that the issue may be a result of issues outside of the churches span of control and influence. However, Waggoner put forth a more general reason behind the broad assertion that changing life circumstances is the reason for the downturn in churches. Instead, he suggested that the downturn in church attendance was due to personal choices made by individuals (Rainer, 2012; Waggoner, 2006). Television viewing became a regular practice in most homes, resulting in a breakdown of the tradition that had once marked Sundays, and the attendance for evening service

evaporated (Campolo & Campolo, 1995). As such, the reasons given by Waggoner, Campolo and Campolo (1995) may be plausible explanations as to why people are opting to forgo attending church and the ensuing attrition in faith organizations.

Adding to Waggoner's (2006) line of reasoning, Schwartz (2005) theorized that people have too many other ways to spend their free time. Schwartz hypothesized that people have too many choices, thus, making the task of decision-making difficult. He theorized that as a result of people having so many options to choose from, it is difficult for people to make choices, and decision making is significantly reduced by the multitude of choices available to people (Schwartz, 2005). Schwartz speculated that people have lost their freedom to make choices because they are given too many options to choose from (Schwartz, 2005). He said that the more choices people have, the more freedom they have, and the more freedom they have, the more welfare they have to experience freely (Schwartz, 2005). The consequence of having too many choices leads to a state that Schwartz characterized as "paralysis" which is a state that leads to three unfortunate outcomes:

- Individuals regret the decisions that they make as a result of all the available options.
- Individuals weigh the opportunity costs of all the available options, and they become confused over the options.
- Individual expectation of the product or purchase are escalated which leads to stressful situations in some instances.

The speculation is that if the church is to recover, it must find a balance between evangelism and social issues (Rainer, 2012).

## **Pew Research Center's 2010 Religion & Public Life Study**

The Pew Research Center's 2010 Religion Landscape study chronicled shrinking membership and retention in faith organizations as well (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). The 2010 study on religion and public life in the United States spoke directly to the issue at hand by revealing that the group of people who are increasingly leaving the Christian faith, and the church, is the "Millennial" generation (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010).

At this juncture, the different generational groups must be clarified before continuing any further. The generational groups are *Traditionalists*, *Baby Boomers*, *Generation X*, *Generation Y*, and *Generation Z* (Birkman, 2010; Bursch, 2014). Birkman, (2010) and Bursch (2014) addressed the generational groups in their work by distinguishing overlaying, but continuous birth ranges for each generational group. They established that Traditionalists are the first generational group, born before 1946; followed by Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964 (Birkman, 2010; Bursch, 2014; Pond at el., 2010); Generation X, born between 1965 and 1979 (Birkman, 2010; Bursch, 2014). According to Pond at el. (2010) the birth range for Generation X extends to 1980. Followed by Generation Y or the *Millennial* group of individuals born between 1980 and 1995 (Birkman, 2010; Bursch, 2014). The millennial birth range falls between 1981 and extends to 2000 according (Pond at el., 2010). Generation Z is a relatively new category that is not yet recognized in most circles because those individuals were born after 1996 and are just now having their life experiences charted (Bursch, 2014). Dyck (2010) added that the millennial generational group was born after 1980, with some members slightly older in the group. Terminology used to delineate the group of people who



frequently departed from the church in the Pew Forum study differed from the designation used in the Lifeway Research study in that the Pew Forum study referred to the group as the Millennial and the Lifeway Research study referred to the group as the “adult group” (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010; Waggoner, 2006). The studies were in line where they reported that the age demographics of people departing the church as young adults around 30 years old, maybe slightly younger or older by a year or so (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010; Waggoner, 2006). These terms will be used interchangeably in this study.

The results of the 2010 Religion Landscape study showed a shift in cultural and social norms that has seemingly affected the perspective of primarily young adults, and has caused membership retention to deteriorate in today’s churches (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). To be more precise, the study showed a cultural shift in the religious attitudes in Millennial and Generation Z had occurred (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). Religious views among these two groups of young adults were found to be considerably lower than the older generational groups of people according to the study (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). In fact, it was discovered that fewer Millennial and Generation Z adults are trying to draw a connection to any denomination of the Christian faith (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). In support of the aforesaid, statistics in the findings indicated that one-in-four adults in Generation Z are unaffiliated with any specific denomination (Schaller, 1987; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). The research also revealed that Millennials were significantly more unaffiliated with any specific Christian denomination than Traditionalist were at a comparable point in their

lives. Generation X affiliation was estimated to be about 20% in the late 1990s, while Baby Boomers affiliation rates were about 40% when they were young adults (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). Specifically, the results of the study showed that approximately 13% percent of Baby Boomers were unaffiliated in the late 1970s (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). Another finding in the study pointed out that Millennials attended religious services at lower rates today than older people in their prime, and that young adults do not feel that religion is important to their lives (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010).

The Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life (2010) study also brought to light the possibility that social and political changes may have obstructed the views of young adults concerning the aspects of sexuality by suggesting that young adults are more empathetic and supportive toward homosexuality than preceding generations (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). Purportedly, almost twice as many young adults felt that homosexuality should be accepted by society as did study participants aged 65 and older; approximately, 63% compared to 35% of young adults (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). Consequently, Campolo and Campolo (1995) described the reality of the situation churches are dealing with, homosexuality, as a condition that comes from being in a fallen world. Young adults were found to be considerably less opposed to accepting homosexuality than those in the age group of 30 to 49, about 51% reportedly (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). According to the results, approximately 48% of adults aged 50 to 64 held tolerant views toward the acceptance of homosexuality (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010).

Clearly, the religious attitudes and beliefs held by young adults are different when compared to prior generational groups (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). The study advanced to explain that nearly one-third of the unaffiliated young adult population is under age 30, approximately 31%. This fact compared with 20% of the total population, suggests that young adults are less concerned with religion than older groups (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). Adding to the issue of religious association the study also reported that one-in-four adults under age 30; approximately 25%, are unaffiliated, and that these people described their religious affiliation as atheist, agnostic, or belonging to no particular religious domination (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). This compares to 15% of those surveyed in their 40s (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010), about 14% in the 50 year old age group (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010), and fewer than 10% of those age 60 or older claiming to be unaffiliated with a Christian faith organization (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). The study concluded that by and large, the greater percentage of young adults who are not affiliated with a Christian faith denomination is due to the fact that young adults have made a personal decision to leave Christianity without becoming involved with a new faith (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010), or even a new Christian faith organization (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010).

### **Pew Research Center's 2014 Religion & Public Life Study**

Following up on the first comprehensive study on religion in America, conducted in 2007, the 2014 report presents similar findings (Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015). Among the key findings of the Pew Research Center's second United States

Religious Landscape Study, the number of U.S. adults who do not identify with any organized religion is growing (Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015). In a study that involved more than 35,000 Americans, in numerous religious denominations throughout the country, evidence was produced to show a drop in Christian affiliation is extremely prominent among young adults, and among Americans citizens of all ages (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015).

Additionally, the report indicated that the percentage of young adults (ages 18 and older) who proclaimed Christianity had dropped from 78.4% in 2007 to 70.6% in the 2014 (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015). The study also showed consistent plunges in a number of categories such as the category centering on the percentage of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated that described themselves as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” surged from 16.1% to 22.8% (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015). A change in Christian growth along with a rise in people who identified themselves as being not affiliated with any religion attributed to this decrease according to the Pew Forum (2015) study (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Christians Decline as Share of U.S. Population; Other Faiths and the Unaffiliated Are Growing*

	2007	2014	Change*
	%	%	%
<b>Christian</b>	<b>78.4</b>	<b>70.6</b>	<b>-7.8</b>
Protestant	51.3	46.5	-4.8
<i>Evangelical</i>	26.3	25.4	-0.9
<i>Mainline</i>	18.1	14.7	-3.4
<i>Historically black</i>	6.9	6.5	-
Catholic	23.9	20.8	-3.1
Orthodox Christian	0.6	0.5	-
Mormon	1.7	1.6	-
Jehovah's Witness	0.7	0.8	-
Other Christian	0.3	0.4	-
<b>Non-Christian faiths</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>+1.2</b>
Jewish	1.7	1.9	-
Muslim	0.4	0.9	+0.5
Buddhist	0.7	0.7	-
Hindu	0.4	0.7	+0.3
Other world religions**	<0.3	0.3	-
Other faiths**	1.2	1.5	+0.3
<b>Unaffiliated</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>+6.7</b>
Atheist	1.6	3.1	+1.5
Agnostic	2.4	4.0	+1.6
Nothing in particular	12.1	15.8	+3.7
<b>Don't know/refused</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>-0.2</b>
	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*Note.* Figures may not add to 100% and nested figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Adapted from “Religious Landscape Study,” by Pew Research Center, 1997, (website). Retrieved from [http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/pr\\_15-05-12\\_rls-00/](http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/pr_15-05-12_rls-00/)

<sup>a</sup>The Change\* column displays statistically significant changes; blank cells indicate that the difference between 2007 and 2014 is within the margin of error. <sup>b</sup>The “other world religions” category includes Sikhs, Baha’is, Taoists, Jains and a variety of other world religions. The “other faiths” category includes Unitarians, New Age religions, Native American religions and a number of other non-Christian faiths.

The ascending growth rate and decline in affiliation has resulted in what authors of the study referred to as a lack of “generational replacement” in the churches (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015). Generational replacement is not working

in faith organizations according to the Authors (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015). Ideally, for generational replacement to be working properly, as the millennial generation enters adulthood, they are expected to exhibit a higher level of interest in religious affiliation (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015). Unfortunately, the millennial generation has displayed less interest, including less connection with Christian churches, than older generations (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life (2015). The Pew Study Generational Replacement Growth graph shows a considerable drop off from generational group to generational group among Christians, and depicts the current growth rate of 56% (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Generational Replacement Helping Drive Growth of Unaffiliated, Decline of Mainline Protestantism and Catholicism*

	<b>Silent generation (born 1928-1945)</b>	<b>Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964)</b>	<b>Generation X (born 1965-1980)</b>	<b>Older Millennials (born 1981- 1989)</b>	<b>Younger Millennials (born 1990- 1996)</b>
	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Christian</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>56</b>
Protestant	57	52	45	38	36
<i>Evangelical</i>	30	28	25	22	19
<i>Mainline</i>	22	17	13	10	11
<i>Historically black</i>	5	7	7	6	6
Catholic	24	23	21	16	16
Other Christian groups	3	3	4	3	3
<b>Other faiths</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Unaffiliated</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Don't know/refused</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Note.* Figures may not add to 100%, and nested figures may not add to subtotal indicated, due to rounding. Adapted from “2014 Religious Landscape Study,” by Pew Research Center, 2015, (website). Retrieved from [http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/pr\\_15-05-12\\_rls-01/](http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/pr_15-05-12_rls-01/)

<sup>a</sup>The “other Christian groups” category includes Mormons, Orthodox Christians, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and a number of smaller Christian groups.

The study also indicated that 36% of young adults (those between the ages of 18 to 24) are religiously unaffiliated, as are 34% of slightly older group members between 25 to 33 years of age (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015) (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Unaffiliated Make up Growing Share across Generations*

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Change</b>
Silent generation (b. 1928-1945)	9	11	+2
Baby Boomers (b.1946-1964)	14	17	+3
Generation X (b. 1965-1980)	19	23	+4
Older Millennials (b. 1981-1989)	25	34	+9
Younger Millennials (b. 1990-1996)	n/a	36	n/a

*Note.* All changes are statistically significant. Adapted from “Religious Landscape Study,” by Pew Research Center, 2015, (website). Retrieved from [http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/pr\\_15-05-12\\_rls-02/](http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/pr_15-05-12_rls-02/)

<sup>a</sup>Percent of each generation that identifies current religion as atheist, agnostic or nothing in particular.

Further, less than six-in-ten young adults identified with any sect of Christianity, compared with seven-in-ten among the older Baby Boomer and Generation X groups (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015). Schaller (1987) also accepted the concept of a lack of replacements as a probable reason for the numerical decline in church attendance. In his book, *It's A Different World: The Challenges for Today's Pastors*, Schaller (1987) wrote that the primary reason in the numerical decline has been the inability of the church to attract replacements for those who are lost. Consequently, generational replacement is an intriguing argument to consider because the study reported that about a third of older millennial adults currently in their late 20s and early 30s have left their particular religion and describe themselves as having no vows to any religion increased nine percentage points since the 2007 report (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015).

## **Rainer's Study published in Churchleader**

Thom Rainer (2012) published findings of research in Churchleader magazine in which he chronicled the issue of congregants' suspicion of church leadership; and why attracting, building strong relationships, maintaining those relationships, and enhancing those relationships were problematic in churches. In the findings of Rainer's study, he proposed that many church members questioned the church's motivation behind its actions in several ways:

- Congregants questioned what gives rise to the action of the church and the direction of the church.
- What do the church's actions have to do with following Jesus Christ?
- People wondered how living a Christian lifestyle could influence how society reacts to change.
- Congregants questioned if the motivation of the church originated in God's will for mankind.
- Is there other unknown agendas being concealed by the pastor's motivation?
- Is the church secretly operating for its own self-interest or to fulfill God's purpose?
- People questioned for whom is the church as a whole is trying to please, God or themselves.

Nearly identical findings were revealed in the Waggoner (2006) study in that the motive of congregational leadership is where many faithful church people grow suspicious. The principal point made by Rainer (2011), as did the Waggoner study, is



that negative perceptions of the church leaders were a reason for the gradual attrition in membership and retention in churches.

### **Changing Public Values/Social Issues**

Research showed that in reality, Americans are not attending church as often as they have done in the past (Grant, 2015). Grant (2015) and Grossman (2016) indicated that approximately 34% of Americans have only attended a worship service for a holiday, wedding, or for some form of ceremonial event. Additionally, Audette and Weaver (2016), Cheyne (2010), and Joyce (2015) commented that the majority of Americans continue to hold religious beliefs, value religious ideals, and engage in religious practices, however, the religiously unaffiliated population in the United States continues to rapidly increase. Further, Cheyne (2010) found that the religiously unaffiliated population to be pervasive across American society particularly among young adults.

Statistics showed that fewer young adults today resonate with a particular faith, and young adults are less likely to be affiliated with a church than their parents' and grandparents' were at a comparable point of time in their lives (Audette, 2016; Pond et al., 2010). Adding significance to Audette and Weaver (2016) and Pond et al. (2010) work, Joanne C. Beckman (2000), Professor of American Religious History at Duke University said that sociologists have estimated that a full 42% of the young adult generation have permanently abandoned church, do not belong to any religious organization, and claim no denominational ties to organized religion.

Differences between church leadership and congregants' perspectives on religion, ethical, or political beliefs contributed to the departure of about 52% of people who departed the church because they disagreed with the church's stance on certain political

or social issues according to McConnell (2007). One of those issues is the political and social acceptance of homosexuality among clergy (McConnell, 2007; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010; Stackhouse, 2003). More pointedly, Pew Forum and several other authors provided opinions to explain why membership and retention in Christian faith organizations is declining, of which, homosexuality by ordained ministry leaders was specifically brought to the forefront (McConnell, 2007; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010; Stackhouse, 2003). The results of the Pew Forum study show that a cultural and social movement in that acceptance of homosexuality has occurred, and that this social issue has impacted the worldview of people, particularly young adults, which ultimately has had a negative impact on membership and retention in today's churches (McConnell, 2007; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). The issue of homosexuality is more widely supported among people between the ages of 18 to 29 than in other generational groups (Arnold, 2009; McConnell 2007; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). Accordingly, nearly two times as many young adults indicated that homosexuality should be accepted by society as compared to other participant's age 65 years and older by a margin of 63% versus 35% (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). The study noted that young adults were also considerably more accepting of homosexuality than those between 30 to 49 years of age by 51%, and by the age group between 50 to 64 by 48% (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010).

In an article written by Rick Hampson (2009), the author chronicled how the head pastor of a local congregation stated that a consistent drop in church membership occurred in his church almost every year since the church was established in 1988 due to

homosexuality activities among the clergy (Arnold, 2009). The head pastor declared that many people do not understand the concerns over the proper interpretation of scripture among conservative church members regarding homosexuality, and disclosed that for this reason membership had dropped 12.37% since its founding, with losses in each year except two (Arnold, 2009). In a differing opinion, Steig (1997) commented that homosexual lifestyles are incompatible with Christian teachings and is opposed in the faith. He maintained that that followers of the faith should embody unyielding principles that premarital, extramarital, and deviant sex, including homosexuality and lesbian relationships are unacceptable acts.

Nevertheless, these findings suggested that a social shift toward the acceptance of homosexuality in Christian churches had occurred, and church leaders might consider evaluating how they will deal with societal issues regarding homosexuality in order to draw people back to the church (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). McConnell (2007) summarized the stance taken by young adults on political and social issues by saying, “clearly, the reasons people leave the church are a reflection of both their past experiences in church and the new opportunities that are available to them as young adults” (“Why do most young people leave?” section).

Transitions in life and circumstances are named as a few of the reasons people chose to leave the church (McConnell, 2007; Waggoner, 2006). Waggoner (2006) published a study involving 469 non-churchgoers that indicated that approximately 59% of former church members reported that they stopped attending church as a result of these changing life circumstances. The most frequent reasons people explained that prevented them from attending, and remaining committed to church were:

- Busy work schedules (Cheyne, 2010; Merritt, 2016).
- Lack of employment and financial resources (Waggoner, 2006).
- College (Waggoner, 2006).
- Moved or relocated too far away from the church (Waggoner, 2006).
- Relationship circumstances (McConnell, 2007; Waggoner, 2006).

Similarly, McConnell (2007) concluded in his research that how people use their time and the relationships they enter into can lead them away from church. About 22% of people in the study said they became too busy, and 17% chose to spend more time with friends outside of church (McConnell, 2007). Consequently, these statistics as well as literary sources demonstrate the need to examine this phenomenon so that the Christian church can implement practices to attract and retain people to reduce the decline in membership rates.

### **Technology as it Affects Christian Church Attendance in the United States**

#### **Value of Technology in the Church**

Online technologies are an accepted part of today's culture so churches need to understand the impact technology has on society and also will have in the future (Arthur & Rensleigh, 2015). Accordingly, church leadership need to have foresight and evaluate how they will best use technology in the church to connect with the public (Arthur & Rensleigh, 2015; Van den Heever, 2008). Niemand and Rensleigh (2003) asserted that technology has a way of connecting people with common interests and ideas through the WWW instead of meeting in-person. According to Arthur and Rensleigh (2015), Black (2011), and Riley (2009) online evangelism through technology is a way to communicate with people that do not regularly attend church services. Online technologies can be a

key factor in the development of churches and their ability to attract and retain membership in the church as technology is an innovative method of communication with the Christian community, and in furthering the Christian agenda to reach the public (Arthur & Rensleigh, 2015; Van den Heever, 2008). Dr. (Pastor) Rick Warren, founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California stated at a church ministry conference “Every time there is an advance in technology, The Kingdom advances. ... Technology has a huge impact on our mission ... not the ‘what’ of our mission, but the ‘how’. ... Technology is the frontline of evangelism” (as cited in Arthur & Rensleigh, 2015, p. 81).

As such, churches must rise to the challenge of using available technology sources such as online evangelism because evangelizing online is not just a short-lived movement of usage by people attempting to maintain their Christian faith, but an effective medium to learn the word of God to receive salvation (Arthur & Rensleigh, 2015; Black, 2011; Riley, 2009; Van den Heever, 2008).

### **Types of Technology Used in Churches**

Churches can reach a vast number of people by taking advantage of a vibrant online information highway, and develop initiatives on various platforms such as Google, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Netflix, and LinkedIn to reach a robust public audience (Davis-Young, 2016; Fischer-Nielsen, 2009; Van den Heever, 2008). Technology can provide access to a variety of information resources that people make use of on a daily basis such as email, blogs, forums, podcasts, polls, wikis and other online social networks offer substantial benefits to reaching the public (Arthur & Rensleigh, 2015; Van den Heever, 2008).

## **Advantages of Technology in Churches**

Online technologies encourage the sharing of human knowledge and teaching of the biblical word (Arthur & Rensleigh, 2015). Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009) advanced Wilson's (2000) position that religious organizations should seek to use technological advancements to help move churches into the 21st century. As such, the internet should be used as a communication strategy to reach people seeking spiritual growth (Arthur & Rensleigh 2015; Fischer-Nielsen, 2009; Riley, 2009). Global Media Outreach (2014) reported that over half of those surveyed in their study that made a decision to seek religion over the internet have subsequently shared their faith with others online. As such, online evangelism is just the beginning, and as much as 34% of the public is reading their bibles online daily (Black, 2011; Global Media Outreach, 2014). Consistent with this claim, one-in-five Americans share their faith online each week (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). These findings are remarkable because they suggest that online evangelism is not just a short-lived trend as people use social media as an attempt to maintain their Christian faith, and quite possibly reconnect with others (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). Arthur and Rensleigh (2015) made note of Larson's (2000) opinion that churches are failing to utilize the WWW and Internet capabilities to its full potential. Hence, online technology is a means to potentially create an environment where the faith community can gain access to resources that include pastor's commentary, church activities, and daily devotionals which can be utilized to incite current and potential members to become engaged in the church (Arthur & Rensleigh, 2015). Consequently, WWW and Internet applications can provide robust communication opportunities for the church to communicate at the same

level as private and public institutions (Van den Heever, 2008). In that sense, technology represents a way for Churches to get the public's attention, especially young adults (Van den Heever, 2008). In light of this information, it is futile for churches not to use online technologies since young adults find technology to be a necessity to communicate (Arthur & Rensleigh, 2015).

### **Disadvantages of Technology in Churches**

Even though the WWW and Internet can be an effective medium to attract and retain church membership, Fischer-Nielsen (2009) acknowledged the difficulty churches experience in getting individuals to become part of their organization. Readings (2014) wrote that because social media is another form of technology, it can be harmful to churches if not used right. In the case of social media and how it relates to technology, Readings alluded that technology allows people to instantly post their personal thoughts to their social media accounts, in which mistakes are can be widely publicized when they are made- thus leading to false doctrine. Lee (2006) suggested that as another problem confronting churches as they engage in the process of adopting communication technologies to their organizational settings is determining what influences these technologies may have on creating and cultivating a sense of community inside of the church. Putnam (2000) added to this line of reasoning by claiming that there has been a reduction in the number of people who meet face-to-face to share community in church settings.

## **Pastoral Leadership in U.S. Christian Churches**

### **Ineffective Pastoral Leadership**

The conduct of some pastors and church leaders is believed to have altered people's interest to continue to regularly attend church services (Churchleaders, 2016; McConnell, 2007; Waggoner, 2006). Rainer (2012) wrote that the effect of pastors and church leaders wayward behaviors when cast upon their congregations is damaging, and exposed that 15% of those that he surveyed indicated that they felt displeasure with the church due to a moral or ethical failure of the church leadership.

While Waggoner (2006) revealed in his study that disenchantment with the pastor and/or congregational leadership among parishioners may be contributing to their unwillingness and changing desire to attend church services. According to the study, some parishioners were wary of their pastors and/or leader's honesty, integrity, and motives behind building church membership (Waggoner, 2006). The motives of church leadership alone accounted for 37% of surveyed participant's justification for leaving church (Waggoner, 2006). Of the population that participated in the study, approximately 17% stated that church leaders seemed hypocritical, 17% in terms of being judgmental of others, 7% mentioned that this accounted for their lack of interest, and 12% alleged that their church is unable to provide assistance to its member's and to the community because it was governed by leadership that discouraged involvement (Waggoner, 2006).

Goodall (2008) wrote in his Christianity Today editorial that a survey of Christian ministers revealed that there is a problem in Christian ministry. Moreover, the response rate to his survey revealed that 12% of pastors admitted to extramarital intercourse, and



nearly 23% acknowledged some form of sexually inappropriate behavior while performing church ministry (Goodall, 2008). Reflecting on why some pastors behave immorally, Pastor Fred Craddock (2007), in a commentary concerning the well-known Evangelical Pastor Ted Haggard's fall from grace, said that it (meaning sexual improprieties and misapplication of money among other immoral acts) - stems from the fact that many pastors never learned how to deal with positive applause from people. Furthermore, Goodall rationalized that practicing and teaching Christianity in the absence of applying ethical behavior is a travesty to leading a church in which irreparable damage comes to a minister's life, his family, and the congregation whenever sexual impropriety is committed. As such, a church cannot flourish and grow in numbers without having supreme trust in its pastor as a leader (Dobbs, 2016).

### **Effective Pastoral Leadership**

Pastors are commissioned by God to serve people beyond numbers, finances, or entertainment; instead church leaders should focus on the spiritual well-being of the congregants and reaching out to the unsaved (Luong & Wescott, 2015). Pastors and church leaders teach their churches to influence society (Jackson, 2009). By their commission, pastors are set apart mainly to teach the word of God and religious practices, but overall they are appointed to provide leadership within the community (Luong & Wescott, 2015). Luong and Wescott (2015) proclaimed that in order for a pastor to lead effectively, his character must reflect that he is knowledgeable of the scriptures and the confessions of the church. Pastors must not only be strong spiritual leaders but also be strategic thinkers knowing how to direct their congregation, missionary activities, and other programs. In addition, a pastor must also know how to build coalitions, inspire

people, and train people to work together in unison towards a shared purpose. Most importantly, the pastor must be an effective orator in preaching, teaching, and evangelizing (Luong & Wescott, 2015). In a study written by Mehta and Mehta (1995) the researchers found that a positive relationship existed between pulpit ministry and membership retention. The attributes of pulpit ministry were: (a) the relevance of messages, (b) pastor's speech, and (c) the quality of the message being delivered (Mehta & Mehta, 1995). Mehta and Mehta explained that the message, pastor's speech, and the quality of the message being delivered bear significant importance to retaining church membership, and noted that the three attributes can be major areas for church administrators to target for improving church membership and retention. Consequently, preaching, teaching, and delivering Sunday sermons is the job of pastors and ministers, and the idealized influence of a pastor, minister, or a church leader is vital in holding the attention of people while in church, attract visitors who choose to attend church services, and to bring transformational change to faith organizations. The charisma of church leadership is important to attracting and retaining members in Christian churches (Mehta & Mehta, 1995). Church leaders must use their own special abilities and style received through their individual callings to do ministerial work that only few people possess to give them the capacity to do extraordinary things (House, 1976).

### **Charismatic Leadership**

In a faith based setting, the charisma of pastors, ministers, and other clergy are at the heart of creating change. According to Mehta and Mehta (1995) the charisma of church leadership is important to attracting and retaining membership. The *charisma or idealized influence* is one of four major components of charismatic leadership, the

charisma or idealized influence of church leaders is being focused upon in this study. Charisma and idealized influence as it relates to charismatic leadership will be used interchangeably in this research. The theory on charismatic leadership identifies charismatic leaders as competent people who adopt their causes, and these leaders communicate philosophical goals that have moral overtones which interests interest (House, 1976). They communicate high, while simultaneously exhibiting confidence in their ability to meet their own expectations (Bass & Riggio, 2006; House, 1976). Further, they affect results in a deepened sense of trust in the leader's philosophy, unwavering commitment, greater loyalty, an emotional connection, and improved commitment from people toward achieving organizational goals (House, 1976). Accordingly, charismatic leader's display personality traits and a range of behaviors such as being strong role models for the beliefs and values that they want their people to adopt to effectuate change (House, 1976). The theory of charismatic leadership identifies charismatic leaders as competent people who adopt their causes, and communicate their philosophical goals that have high moral overtones which excites the interest of others (House, 1976). Charismatic leaders communicate remarkable expectations (Bass & Riggio, 2006; House, 1976), while simultaneously exhibiting confidence in their ability to meet their own expectations (House, 1976). Further, they affect results in a deepened sense of trust in the leader's philosophy, unwavering commitment, greater loyalty, an emotional connection, and improved commitment from people toward achieving organizational goals (House, 1976).

However, in order for charismatic leaders to create change, the leader must be viewed as a strong role model by the people they are leading; this includes church leadership (Northouse, 2010). People, who possess charismatic leadership personality traits are said to be dominant, display a strong desire to influence others, self-assurance in themselves, and more importantly- they have a strong sense of one's own moral compass (House, 1976). The model of charismatic leadership consists of three fundamental classifications that when combined influence change (Northouse, 2010). These classifications are: personality characteristics, behaviors, and effects on followers (Northouse, 2010) (see Figure 1).

<u>Personality Characteristics</u>	<u>Behaviors</u>	<u>Effects on Followers</u>
Dominant	Sets strong role model	Trust in leader's ideology
Desire to influence	Shows competence	Belief similarity between leader and follower
Confident	Articulates goals	Unquestioning acceptance
Strong values	Communicates high expectations	Affection toward leader
	Expresses confidence	Obedience
	Arouses motives	Identification with leader
		Emotional involvement
		Heightened goals
		Increased confidence

*Figure 1.* Personality characteristics behaviors, and effect on followers of charismatic leadership. Adapted from “Leadership Theory and Practice” by P. G. Northouse, 2010 (5th ed.). Copyright by Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Charismatic leaders show a distinct collection of behaviors and activities when functioning in their leadership roles (Conger, 1989). Accordingly, charismatic leaders display personality traits and a range of behaviors such as being strong role models for the beliefs and values that they want their people to adopt to effectuate change (House, 1976). The theory on charismatic leadership identifies charismatic leaders as competent people who adopt their causes, and these leaders communicate philosophical goals that have moral overtones which insights interest (House, 1976). They communicate high

expectations (House, 1976; Bass & Riggio, 2006), while simultaneously exhibiting confidence in their ability to meet their own expectations (House, 1976). Further, they affect results in a deepened sense of trust in the leader's philosophy, unwavering commitment, greater loyalty, an emotional connection, and improved commitment from people toward achieving organizational goals (House, 1976). Consistent with charismatic leadership behavior traits described by House (1976), transformational leaders set out to empower and nurture people to change (Northouse, 2010). Further, these leaders work to raise the consciousness of individuals and get them to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of others interests (Northouse, 2010).

Again, charismatic leaders must be viewed as compelling leaders to create change; the leader must be viewed as a persuasive, captivating and fascinating role model by the people they are leading such as congregants in a church (Northouse, 2010). In a study to determine what distinguishes charismatic leaders from others, Jung and Sosic (2006) found that charismatic leaders were contently self-monitoring, engaged in impression management, motivated to attain social power, and motivated to attain self-actualization. They provide a vision and sense of mission to their followers, are highly respected, and followers usually place a great deal of trust in their guidance (Northouse, 2010). In essence, charismatic leadership describes people who are special and have the capacity to convince others to want to follow the vision they put forth (Northouse, 2010).

### **Transformational Leadership**

Consistent with charismatic leadership behavior traits described by House (1976), transformational leaders set out to empower and nurture people to change (Northouse, 2010). Further, transformational leaders work to raise the consciousness of individuals

and get them to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of others interests (Northouse, 2010). The concept of transformational leadership creates a culture in which people feel free to try new things (Northouse, 2010). The transformation comes from people feeling good about themselves and that their contributions are important to the greater common good of the masses, so it is imperative that people know that they contribute to the greater purposes of the organization to create effectuate (Northouse, 2010). Through this process, church leaders as transformational leaders must work with people to build trust and foster collaboration with others (Northouse, 2010).

Transformational leaders find ways to create a seismic shift from the downward spiral in church attrition congregations throughout the world. Transformation involves changing the past of an individual, a group of people, or an organization to better state (Johnson, 2009). It is a process whereby a person or an organization engages with others to create a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2010). In doing so, leaders and followers of those leaders work together to raise the level of motivation and morality of people, or an organization, with hopes of accomplishing more than what could be achieved in a traditional leader/follow scenario (Johnson, 2009; Northouse, 2010). Transformational leadership is an approach that creates a climate where people turn challenging opportunities into remarkable successes (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). The previously mentioned strategies tell us that leaders should do several things:

- Engage people in proactive outreach ministry (Hunter, 2003).
- Work toward building meaningful relationships (Kinneman & Lyons, 2007).

- Develop effective programs that entertain and excite people in ways that appeal their culture is a strategy to bring people back to church (Campolo & Campolo, 1995).
- Technology is a strategy to attract and retain people in church (Black, 2011; Riley, 2009; Fischer-Nielsen, 2009).
- The element of prayer and living in the grace of God is the foundation for church growth (Callahan, 2010; Davis, 2007).

These strategies involve developing the transformational leadership skills in the individuals who will provide the leadership to effectuate church programs that are intended to attract and retain members. Transformational leadership has a lot in common with charismatic leadership, but charisma is only part of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). It is said that charismatic leadership is a product of transformational leadership, and is often described in ways that make it similar to transformational leadership (Northouse, 2010). The transformation comes from people feeling good about themselves and that their contributions are important to the greater common good of the masses, so it is imperative that people know that they contribute to the greater purposes of the organization to create change (Northouse, 2010). Through this process, church leader's as transformational leaders must work with people to build trust and foster collaboration with others (Northouse, 2010).

To elaborate on the definition of transformational change and its relation to idealized influence of charismatic church leaders, Bass and Riggio (2006), House (1976), Howell and Avolio (1993), Northouse (2010), and Kouzes and Posner (2002) acknowledged the following components of charismatic leadership: (a) charisma, (b)

vision, (c) innovation, (d) communication, (e) self-accountability, and (f) team building as influences to change. Idealized influence along with inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration are necessary to affect change (Northouse, 2010). Idealized influence is described as the charisma within a person that embodies effective leadership (Northouse, 2010). There is an inherent expectation that leaders display high moral conduct, ethical character, and aspire to be exemplary roles model for subordinates to emulate for change to occur (Northouse, 2010; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Jung & Sosic, 2006). Another facet of charisma, is that leaders who set positive examples are trusted and respected by their subordinates, and their subordinates want to emulate their behavior (Bass & Riggio, 2006). When leaders openly convey their expectations, the motivation level of followers is heightened, followers are more engaged, and have aspirations to share in the vision of the organization (Northouse, 2010). In essence, the leader plays a supportive role in intellectual stimulation (Northouse, 2010). Idealized influence is the action of the leader to act as a strong role model for followers where followers identify with the leader and they seek to emulate the leader (Northouse, 2010). This is the point when the idealized influence of transformational leaders changes the leader to a role model for their followers to admire, respect, and trusts the direction they are being lead into (Bass & Riggio, 2006). People identify with the leader and want to emulate them as they can be trusted and counted on to do the right things, demonstrating high standard of ethical and moral conduct (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The attributes presented by Bass and Riggio, Howell and Avolio, Jung and Sosic (2006); House, Kouzes and Posner, and Northouse are vital to any pastor,



minister, or church leader in a spiritual setting to be able to lead a congregation to change.

## **Christian Church Outreach in the United States**

### **Why Outreach is Important to Church**

We read in Matthew 28:19-20 that before Jesus Christ's ascension He commanded Christians to preach the gospel to all nations (Life Application Study Bible, 2007). In fulfillment of this charge, many Christians engage in outreach activities evolving from Jesus's instructions given in the book of Matthew to tell people about salvation (Life Application Study Bible, 2007; McBride & Giem, 2006). McGavran (1990) advocated that evangelism (outreach) is an essential and irreplaceable part of Christian faith organizations. He further advised that the practice of evangelism as a part of church ministry cannot be ignored as a way to reach the public (McGavran, 1990). Evangelism is a process according to Carver (2015) in which Fasipe (2010) defined the process as primarily being a mission used to share the gospel of Jesus Christ to non-churchgoers including people who have never heard about Jesus. Additionally, he inferred that evangelism included any attempts to tell people about Christ and challenges them in such a manner to make a choice to confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (Fasipe, 2010). As such, Carver (2015) posited that we must consider ourselves to be conduits of outreach in our communities. As conduits of the church or congregation for that matter must love its community and be willing to make sacrifices for the sake of reaching out to people to join a church organization (Harney, 2011).

It is hard to find congregations that actually engage in proactive outreach ministry. Hunter (2003) suggested that engaging people in proactive outreach ministry

may attract and retain church membership, while Kinneman and Lyons (2007) provided that working to build meaningful and personal relationships is a strategic method that church leaders can institute to attract people. Watson and Stepteu-Watson (2015) emphasized that outreach ministries should be created to reflect, improve, and enhance the quality of life in the communities to attract and retain church members. For this reason, a good definition for outreach ministry is actions that involve taking the gospel out to everyone in our communities (Ford, 2012).

The development of effective outreach ministry programs and services that entertain and excite people in appealing ways can draw people back to church (Campolo & Campolo, 1995). Accordingly, Ghorpade, Lackritz, and Moore (2012) seemed to believe that outreach programs play a role in church growth and satisfaction and professed that the ability to provide ministry programs and services is essential to congregation member relationship, growth, and retention. Further, the value placed on them by congregational members play a part in their commitment level to attracting people (Ghorpade et al., 2012). Specific to the ideas of ministry services and programs is that the focus should primarily be on the needs of the community (outreach), and less on the needs of their congregation's own members (Garland, Wolfer, & Myers, 2008).

Outreach is universal among churches, but somehow many churches are not experiencing a robust harvest as most churches have hit a growth plateau or are experiencing decline in members (Harney, 2011). Miller (1987) asserted that it seems as though most of the non-churchgoers at some point in time attended church but decided to break away. This tells us that churches are not doing a good job. Instead they are settling for the status quo and not properly utilizing outreach in attempting to reach new church

members (Miller, 1987). In other words, if the church does not provide customized outreach and care, people will continue to break away from the church (Miller, 1987).

### **Methods of Church Outreach**

Outreach can be an effective tool to build membership and attract new church members if faith organizations institute creative strategies (Campbell, 2013; Harney, 2011; Hunter, 2003; Kinneman & Lyons, 2007). Thus, church leaders must learn to move forward with minds open to try new things (Harney, 2011). Harney (2011) stated that society is consistently evolving; therefore, churches must adapt to change in order to stay relevant, grow, and survive. Failure to implement innovative outreach methods that reflect changes with the culture and surrounding environment can result in the church becoming increasingly less attended by people according to Harney (2011). The way to avoid becoming irrelevant is to make innovative outreach part of the church culture (Campbell, 2013; Harney, 2011; Hunter, 2003; Kinneman & Lyons, 2007).

Church outreach ministries involves purposefully creating ideas and positive ways to reach out to the community, such as community outreach services that include health-care assistance and wellness projects (Ford, 2012; Osinski, 2005; Watson & Stepteau-Watson, 2015). Health-care assistance and wellness programs are relatively new outreach ideas that surfaced in the last decade (Watson & Stepteau-Watson, 2015). In response to the increasing concerns of widespread obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and cancer, the outreach ministerial activities promoting wellness programs and healthcare assistance are appropriate for this epoch (Watson & Stepteau-Watson, 2015).

Additionally, some churches have started to offer outreach ministerial services that help

to meet the housing needs of those that are displaced by providing extended-stay motels, low-income housing and apartments (Osinski, 2005).

Churches that have active ministry programs that are connected to those in their communities address the social and economic needs of the public, and strengthen the fabric of their neighborhoods (Garland et al., 2008). Ghorpade et al. (2012) advocated that effective ministry programs and services could be attached to programs that provide services to:

- Visiting shut-ins and caring for the sick;
- Conducting funerals for both congregational members, and non-members;
- Support groups that address the various needs of single people, married couples, people going through dissolution;
- Wellness and health, bereavement;
- Involvement in political activism and social justice;
- Prayer groups;
- Membership recruitment and activities;
- Choir and music ministry programs;
- Children, teen, and young adult religious education programs;
- Fellowships with other congregations, clubs, and other social activities by church leaders and their members.

Similarly, Senter (2009) and Kinneman and Lyons (2007) called ministry education both the major component of Christian education programs and a new approach in ministry programs and services. Kinneman and Lyons suggested that education that teaches potential congregants how to make positive contributions to

society should be sought as well as strategy to incite people to come to church. In support of these assertions, Grossman (2016) presented a Life Way Research survey conducted by McConnell (2007), Executive Director of Life Way, who released data documenting other activities that could be used to inspire people to visit church. Events such as concerts (51%), sports or exercise programs (46%), or neighborhood gatherings (45%) garnered the most interest in drawing people back to the church.

It can take an infinite number of new ideas just to find one idea that works for the church to become more successful in the areas of outreach, the willingness to accept being vulnerable is hard to do because many people like traditions with doctrine (Carver, 2015; Harney, 2011). Church leaders should be willing to develop and implement creative outreach solutions such as evangelism through the arts as a creative strategy to attract new members (Campbell, 2013; Fasipe, 2010; Harney, 2011; Hunter, 2003).

Various methods have been used by Christians to evangelize to non-church goers, out of which music is one method noted by Fasipe (2010) and Schaller (1987) to disciple to people. In fact, music is declared to be a blueprint for numerical growth (Schaller, 1987). While Fasipe (2010) made a reference that musicians can use music to attract people to church who are interested in music and musical instruments. Fasipe stated that the act of music making in the context of missionary work and evangelism introduces the word of God to non-church goers and can stimulate church growth. Further, Christians are not only speaking the word of God to the disinterested, but they are also to presenting the word of God in song (Fasipe, 2010). Music combined with outreach methods can have a profound effect on people receiving the message of God's words through music (Fasipe, 2010). As a result, music has immense appeal on people. Music can be used in

missions and evangelism to attract people (Fasipe, 2010). Fasipe noted that people respond emotionally to music as such church leaders can use the power of music in evangelism to foster an atmosphere in which people respond out of enthusiasm.

Intrinsically, music becomes a way to reach people outside of the church as God's words are delivered through musical expressions (Fasipe, 2010). In addition to outreach through arts such as music, Kinneman and Lyons (2007) and Schaller (1987) urged churches to advance art, painting, dance, sculpture, and theater as a strategy to engage people outside of church as well as other forms of art that give expressions to the human conditions should be utilized (Kinneman & Lyons, 2007; Schaller, 1987).

### **Benefits of Outreach**

Church leaders are inspired to enthusiastically take the initiative to contact people where they are – meaning churches should develop and implement outreach services as a membership strategy (Hunter, 2003; Osinski, 2005) as the need for Christians to connect with people in their own neighborhoods is paramount (Johnson et al., 2008; Osinski, 2005).

Carver (2015), Callahan (2010), Cheyne (2010) and Egli (2005) proclaimed that outreach is a good strategy to improve church attendance for several reasons such as people are inclined to come to church when faced with a crisis, personal trauma, or distressing life changing events that causes concern. Hudson, Purnell, Duncan, & Baker (2015) provided that religion and participating in religious practices can protect against depression. Secondly, Carver (2015) and Miller (1987) noted that some non-churchgoers consider being involved in good relationships as being more important than their jobs or money. The author's had the same opinion that the church's display of being a

community overflowing with love enabled non-church goers to believe that the good relationships that they are seeking can be found within the confines of the church (Miller, 1987). As such, good relationships which are formed in a church setting can be a key element in keeping new church members in the church is dependent upon whether or not the new church member has a friend at the church (Miller, 1987). Third, Miller (1987) added that most non-church goers come to church through the advice of friends and acquaintances. Grossman (2016) expanded on Miller's (1987) assertion through his Life Way Research study that looked at what might draw people to church, and wrote that 51% said a personal invitation from a close acquaintance, or family member could draw them to church. Consequently, there is power in extending an invitation (Osinski, 2005; Rainer, 2011). This is supported by studies by Grossman (2016) and Rainer (2011) that reported 41% of former church members would return back to church, if they were simply invited by someone such as a friend or acquaintance to come to church.

### **Barriers Concerning Outreach**

Currently, church leaders are responding only to people who take the initiative to visit the church (Hunter, 2003). This approach does not work well because people, even those interested in fellowship, will not initiate contact with a church (Hunter, 2003). Church leader's stagnation to initiating outreach to those in their neighborhood can be caused by the communication barriers that can be challenging to most Christians. More to the point is that socially, Christians face major communication barriers when trying to communicate in biblical and theological terms the importance of discipleship to those who do not consistently attend church (Johnson et al., 2008). Johnson et al. (2008)

envisioned that Christians will draw people into the church in ways that are imaginative and artistic but do not compromise biblical doctrine.

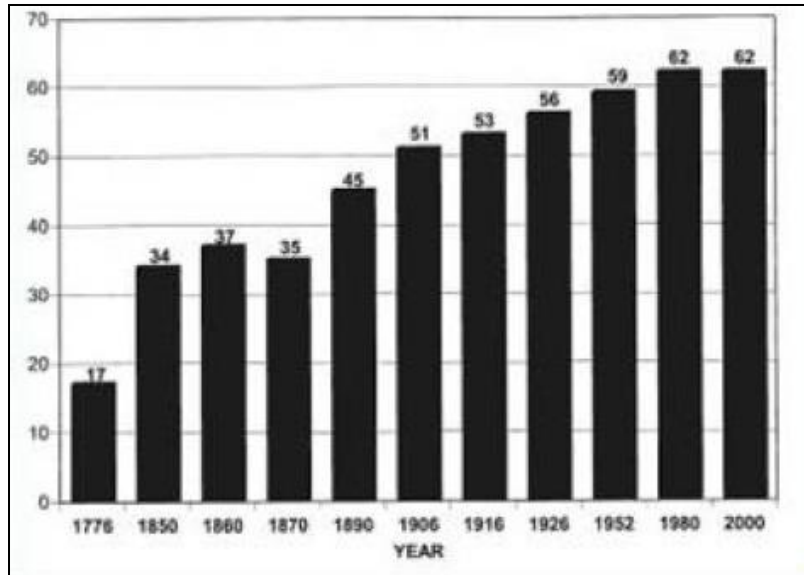
In general, the majority of outreach methods that are practiced to invite people to church are impersonal, outdated, and for many years have become generally ineffective (Carver, 2015). Harney (2011) declared that most churches are reluctant to change the manner in which they employ outreach and are not open to change (Harney, 2011). McBride and Giem (2006) concluded that if outdated outreach (evangelistic) practices used by church leaders are not modified to respect a person's individuality and allow people the free reign to make their own personal choices, then outreach ministry will continue to be difficult for church leaders.

Finally, in order to effectively achieve the outreach purposes, the manner in which Christians approach people is crucial to attracting new members (Hong, 2007). Many non-church goers feel antagonized and harbor hostility towards the "forceful" way church people approach them when they are attempting to outreach through evangelizing (McBride & Giem, 2006). As a result, many churches in American are not drawing people to church, and are not growing people in the Christian faith (Harney, 2011).

### **Christian Church Membership Retention in the United States**

Historian's Finke and Stark (1999) collected evidence on church membership and attendance during the period 1776 through 2000, and provided statistical data on what they termed as "religious adherence." A summarization of their research is noted in the book *The Churching of America* (see Figure 2)





*Figure 2. Rates of Religious Adherence, 1776-2000. Adapted from “The Churching of America” by R. Fink and R. Stark, 1999, (website). Retrieved from <https://madeinamericathebook.wordpress.com/2010/03/26/a-christian-america-what-history-shows/>*

The consensus among the two historians of religion is that an upward trend toward religious involvement would continue into the 20th century. This apparent stability, however, was masked by an unpredicted downward trend according to facts provided in the study conducted by the Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life (2011).

In their comprehensive study, the Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life (2011) revealed that the number of Americans claiming Christianity had dropped from 96% in 1910 to 79.5% in 2010. The results of the study revealed a total Christian population of 246,780,000 million Christian people living in the United States as of 2010 (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010). Accordingly, Christians are listed as the world’s largest religious group, followed by Muslims, the second-largest group (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010).

Result from a Gallup Poll of over 174,000 participants centering on Religious Identification in the United States, showed a 5.1% decline between 2008 through 2015 (Newport, 2012). Newport (2012) reported that the poll results showed that about 5% of Americans identify with a non-Christian religion, while 20% have no formal religious identification, which is up five percentage points since 2008.

These results are based on interviews conducted each year since 2008 as part of Gallup Daily tracking (Newport, 2012). Data were collected by telephone interviews made from 2008-2015 on the Gallup U.S. Daily survey, on a random sampling of adults, aged 18 and older in the United States. The sample size of those interviewed was over 350,000 for the years 2008 through 2012, and over 170,000 for the years 2013 through 2015 (Newport, 2012). The 2015 sampling size consisted of interviews conducted through December 20, 2015 (Newport, 2012) (see Table 4). Newport (2012) maintained that the trends in the data show that the percentage of Americans identifying with Christianity has deteriorated, and the percentage with no formal religious identification has increased. The plummeting numbers in the U.S. population identifying as Christian over the past eight years is a trend that has been evident for decades (Newport, 2012). Gallup surveys conducted in the 1950s, showed that over 90% of the adult population claimed to be Christians, with only a minute percentage claiming that they held no religious identification or identified with a religion other than Christian (Newport, 2012).

Table 4

*Religious Identification in the U.S., 2008-2015*

	<b>Christian religion</b>	<b>Non-Christian religion</b>	<b>None</b>
	%	%	%
2008	80.1	5.3	14.6
2009	80.0	4.8	15.3
2010	79.1	4.4	16.4
2011	77.9	4.7	17.5
2012	77.3	4.9	17.8
2013	76.8	5.3	17.8
2014	75.7	5.2	19.0
2015 <sup>a</sup>	75.2	5.1	19.6

*Note.* Adapted from “Percentage of Christians in U.S. Drifting Down, but Still High, by F. Newport, 2015, (website). Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/187955/percentage-christians-drifting-down-high.aspx>.  
<sup>a</sup>Through December 20, 2015.

The number of people who stated that they are Christians is highest among the older generation of Americans and progressively decreased in younger generational groups. The trend reflected the high number of "nones" -- those without a formal religious identity -- in the younger generations between ages 18 to 39 (Newport, 2012) (see Table 5).

Newport (2012) wrote that in the future shifts are expected to occur within the religious identification of younger aged groups because historically Americans become more aware of and identify with a religion as they mature during their 30s and 40s, get married, and start a family. However, if this pattern does not occur in the same way it has in the past the percentage of Christians nationwide will likely continue to decline according to Newport (2012).

Table 5

*Religious Identification in the U.S. by Age, 2015*

	<b>Christian</b>	<b>Non-Christian</b>	<b>None</b>
	%	%	%
18-24	62	7	31
25-29	62	7	32
30-34	67	7	26
35-39	71	6	23
40-44	74	6	21
45-49	79	5	16
50-54	81	4	15
55-59	81	4	15
60-64	82	4	14
65-69	83	4	13
70-74	85	4	11
75-79	88	3	9
80-84	89	4	8
85-89	88	4	8
90+	86	4	10

*Note.* Adapted from “Percentage of Christians in U.S. Drifting Down, but Still High,” by F. Newport, 2015, (website). Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/187955/percentage-christians-drifting-down-high.aspx>

<sup>a</sup>Through December 20, 2015

In another estimate, Eskridge (2012) suggested that a general estimate of the nation’s evangelicals could safely be said to range somewhere between 30 to 35% of the population, or about 90-100 million Americans. While these percentages reflect the estimated number of Americans who identify themselves as Christians, they do not reflect the number of Christian that regularly attend church worship services in the United States because it is difficult to determine a precise estimate (Eskridge, 2012).

### **Research Gap**

An extensive investigation of literature and further research using the Leatherby Library ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis Global database was conducted. An advanced

search using “church membership” as the subject of the search in the document title in the first “Select a Field” area, and “church growth” as the co-subject of the search in the document title in the second “Select a Field” area, or “church attendance” as another co-subject of the search in the document title in the third search box in the “Select a Field” area menu was conducted. The search results produced 15 dissertations and theses. An extensive look at each of the studies revealed that not a lot of research has been done on this topic. The search criteria did not include a date range, however, the dissertations and theses found in the Leatherby Library ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global database ranged in date from 1979 to 2016. Alarming, only 15 studies were found spread across a 37-year period illustrating that there has been little research conducted on the topic of understanding factors associated with attracting and retaining church membership and revealed that there is an enormous need for further research.

Of the 15 studies, eight bear at least one factor, or some form of resemblances to this study. However, the factor or resemblance that was studied were all examined by the respected author’s under a different context making this study different from those studies. Consequently, technology, outreach, pastoral leadership, access to the package of ministry programs and services provided by the congregations to their members, and evangelism efficiency of the congregation as an organization have emerged as being potentially helpful factors to consider that may curb attrition in church’s as they have not been largely studied and may be suitable starting points to a solution to bring people back to church (Black, 2011; Callalhan, 2010; Davis, 2007; Fischer-Nielsen, 2009; Hunter, 2003; Kinneman & Lyons, 2007; Luftman & Bullen, 2004; Riley, 2009; Schaller, 1987).

## Summary

The literature review points to the importance of finding a strategy to curb losses in membership and retention among church goers in faith organizations to attract and retain Christian followers. It highlighted possible factors associated with attracting and retaining church membership in Christian Church's which include: (a) declining Christian church attendance in the United States, (b) declining public interest to attend a church, (c) changing public values and social issues, (d) effects of technology on Christian church attendance, (e) pastoral leadership, and (f) Christian church outreach in the United States.

Unquestionably, Christian church attendance in the United States is on a decline according to conclusive findings in four major studies (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010, 2015; Rainer, 2012; Waggoner, 2006). As a result, church leaders are inspired to enthusiastically take the initiative to contact people where they are – meaning churches should develop and implement outreach services as a membership strategy (Hunter, 2003). It is hard to find congregations that actually engage in proactive outreach ministry, which may be a contributing factor to the inability to attract people (Hunter, 2003).

Churches must consider initiating contact with the public to arouse public interest to attend a church (Hunter, 2003). Rainer (2011) proclaimed that there is power in extending an invitation. This is supported by research conducted by Grossman (2014) who reported that 41% of former church said that they would return back to church, if they were simply invited by someone such as a friend or acquaintance to come to church. For a church to grow, it has to be entertaining and exciting in ways that appeal to a

generation of people that were reared on the high-energy qualities of television (Campolo, 1995).

Information technology should be fully integrated in faith organizations as a strategic approach to effectuate change in Christian church attendance, facilitate church programs, and stream media events for public viewing (Black, 2011; Fischer-Nielsen, 2009; Riley, 2009). Accordingly, online evangelism is a way to communicate with people (Black, 2011; Global Media Outreach, 2014; Riley, 2009). It is not a coincidence that advocates have strongly urged that the Internet should be utilized as a strategy to communicate with people (Fischer-Nielsen, 2009; Riley, 2009). Since churches are having difficulties in reaching people, and people are often not interested in visiting Christian websites, churches should explore meeting people by going to their locations on the internet (Nielsen, 2009). Churches should refrain from isolating themselves on their own websites; but instead, take part in the fluent online exchange of information and develop initiatives on various platforms such as Facebook and YouTube as a way to reach the public (Fischer-Nielsen, 2009). Information technology is a strategy to retain and increase church members can be invaluable (Luftman & Bullen, 2004).

Huber (1998) said that the single greatest component to the relative health of a church is its Pastoral Leadership. He said that this fact is identified in scriptures, with an emphasis placed upon the high qualifications of and care in choosing a church's pastoral leaders (Huber, 1998). Accordingly, Huber (1998) stated that any process of revitalization for the church has to address the health, needs, and performance of its leadership in U.S. Christian Churches, and Christian Church Outreach in the United States.

As a result of changing public values and social issues, the old formulas for getting people into the churches are not working anymore (Campolo & Campolo, 1995). We need to understand why people are leaving the churches, and identify ways to bring them back to Christianity. It is important to understand more about those factors that support church growth if churches are to successfully embrace and support the community, families and individuals in their efforts to preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to bring people back to the Christian church.

A Synthesis Matrix (see Appendix A) provides a correlation between major elements, variables, and subsections used in the study. The matrix allowed the researcher to draw comparisons and conclusions from the materials reviewed that may or may not support membership retention in Christian churches. The data presented in the synthesis matrix includes a description of the comparative data collected from findings in the reading materials. Once collected the comparative data were summarized in this review of literature as an explanation of major elements, variables, and subsections of research presented in the review of the literature. The key findings within the conceptual framework of the review of literature include the following:

- Studies conducted by researchers concerning with the attrition in Christian churches.
- Doctrines associated with the Christian faith used in this phenomenological study.
- Key definitions used in the study.



Each of these key areas were researched and considered to have contributed to support the fact that declining membership retention in Christian churches, specifically, in the millennial generation is having an adverse effect on the community.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### **Overview**

Methodology is how one conceptualizes the entire research process (Creswell, 2007). This chapter introduces and describes the methodology that was used to address the research questions outlined in Chapter I. The purpose statement and research questions are restated as part of Chapter III, and a description of the research design follows. Additionally, this chapter consists of a description of the population as well as an explanation of the sample selection process. A detailed discussion pertaining to instrumentation follows that touches on reliability, validity, and the relevance of the field test that was performed as a precursor to the actual study. Following the discussion on instrumentation, this chapter explains the data collection process as well as the process by which the data were scored and analyzed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations and an overall summary.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders related to ministry practices that attract and retain church membership at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California.

### **Research Questions**

#### **Research Questions**

1. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders?

2. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders?

### **Research Sub-Questions**

3. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?
4. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?
5. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?
6. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?
7. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?
8. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?
9. What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what attracts new church membership?
10. What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what retains church membership?

## **Research Design**

Creswell (2007) defined qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The qualitative methodology chosen for this study was a phenomenological study aimed at exploring the lived experiences of church leaders that support membership and retention in Christian churches from the stakeholders' perspective at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. Creswell further explained that a qualitative design enables researchers to identify and describe the essence of human experiences foundational to the phenomenological method. Therefore, this methodology was appropriate for the purpose of this study, as it sought to describe practices that support membership and retention practices in Christian churches from the stakeholders' perspective when faced with cultural issues. Patton (2015) noted that phenomenological studies “focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (p. 104). Additionally, Patton noted that the phenomenon studied in a phenomenological study can be used to examine the culture of a group of people.

A qualitative phenomenological methodology was the most appropriate framework with which to undertake this study.

For the purposes of this study, observations, and a series of face-to-face focus group meetings were conducted that addressed different aspects of the research questions (see Appendix B). After the meetings were concluded, the researcher analyzed the transcription of the meetings and created codes for emergent themes. These codes,

therefore, generated the data that addressed the research problem. Observations were conducted using generous support and assistance from individuals in which the researcher developed a holistic picture in order to provide a comprehensive and complete understanding of identifying strong strategies that focus on helping Christian churches to become more effective in attracting new parishioners, and retaining present parishioners in their congregations.

### **Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) defined a population as “a group of individuals that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of the research” (p. 129). Thus, a population can be any size and come from any particular area. The population is all licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders at Grace Church International Churches in the State of California.

### **Target Population**

A target population for a study is the entire set of individuals chosen from the overall population for which the study data are to be used to make inferences. The target population defines the population to which the findings of a survey are meant to be generalized, and it is important that target populations are clearly identified for the purposes of research study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The target population for this study consisted of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders at Grace Church International Churches in Southern California. There are 42 Grace Church Congregations in Southern California with approximately 210 licensed and/or ordained pastors, 168 ministers, and 504 auxiliary leaders.

## Sample

A convenience sampling method was used to gather data. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described convenience sampling as a strategic selection used when a sampling is selected on a group of subjects on the basis of being accessible or expedient to the researcher. Using the convenience sampling method was the best choice for this study because it would not have been possible to include all of the Grace Church International, Inc. affiliate churches, or Christian churches in the state of California for that matter. In this phenomenological study Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California churches will be used as the convenience sample. These churches serve in the local community and were selected based on their geographic locations and the fact that relationships with congregational members through social visits make them accessible.

The sample size for this homogeneous study was small due to the fact that the research problem pertained specifically to ministry practices that attract new church membership in a *growing church* as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders; and ministry practices that retain church membership in a *growing church* as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders in a ministry setting. The sample for this study included all licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. There are five licensed and/or ordained pastors, six ministers, and seven auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and there are five licensed and/or ordained pastors,

three ministers, and 15 auxiliary leaders at Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California.

Patton (2015) contended that “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample depends on what you want to know” (p. 311). For the purpose of this study, the researcher sought to describe the practices of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders that support membership, and retention in Christian faith organizations in order to provide useful insight to other Christian churches in the community, and throughout the United States who might aspire to grow their ministry. The small sample size for this study reflects the broader issue that there is need to address the concern and conditions of Christian faith organizations dealing with declining membership, and retention.

The opinions of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California are relatively few but were vital to the larger purpose of the study. Flick (2002) relied upon the assertion made by Atkinson and Hammersley’s (1998) that investigation of a small number of cases, perhaps just one case, in detail can be used in an qualitative study to identify themes, ideas, perspectives, and beliefs. For this reason, approximately 41 people will be asked to participate in a semi structured focus group for this study from the two churches. Each congregation will be asked to solicit three to five licensed and/or ordained pastors, three to five ministers, and three-to-five auxiliary leaders to voluntarily participate an in-depth focus group meeting. Roberts (2010) contended that qualitative research can also focus on organizational processes. In other words, researchers may look at the essential character or nature of something, not the

quantity. Other qualitative researchers have identified small sample sizes as necessary when engaging in time-consuming interactions with participants, such as lengthy interviews (Patten, 2012). Therefore, the small sample size for this study not only underscored the problem outlined in Chapter I and supported by the literature reviewed in Chapter II but also provided the researcher with an opportunity to study each participant's experience thoroughly. Furthermore, Creswell (2007) noted that a qualitative approach is better when the researchers are attempting to answer questions that relate to how things are or what they entail so as to create understanding. In this case, the concern and conditions of the Christian faith organizations dealing with declining membership, and retention.

### **Sample Selection Process**

The sample for this study were licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. The researcher used a convenience sampling strategy to study the experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders located in the Southern California District geographical region at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. These participants were selected based on their accessibility to the researcher and upon their knowledge of implementing practices that support attracting new members, and retaining current membership; geographical location; and position in ministry. The process included the following steps:



1. Identify licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders located at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California.
2. Contact licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders located at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California to secure participation in the study (see Appendix C).
3. Provide confidentiality assurances and informed consent documents (see Appendix D) to the participants.
4. Schedule and conduct the focus group meetings.

## **Instrumentation**

### **Instruments**

The most complex and important instrument in this research study was the researcher himself, who determined processes and executed the development of instruments and the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The researcher ensured that steps were taken to address and reduce the effect of researcher bias so as to produce a reliable study.

The secondary data collection instrument used to gather data from research participants was a list of questions developed as a phenomenological interview. These questions were designed in March 2017 by the researcher to provide a more in-depth discussion of each broad research question. The questions addressed factors that attract and retain membership in Christian churches. Therefore, qualitative data sets were gathered through the use of in-depth, semi-structured focus groups. A focus group

protocol was developed, including background and follow-up questions, and was written in alignment with the research questions.

Patton (2015) indicated that the sequence of interview questions beginning with experiential or contextual questions regarding the subjects' activity in the area being researched produces a desirable introduction to the more probing questions that are designed to pertain to the study's research questions. The researcher used the variables in the research questions and purpose statement to develop the series of questions that focused on the research topic. Questions ranged from demographic questions to open-ended questions designed to elicit honest responses that would provide the researcher with a clear picture of the lived experience of each participant. The researcher ensured all questions were meaningful to the respondents based on the respondents' sampling profile, correlated each question to the research questions, avoided the use of biased or leading language, and applied standard language rules (Fink, 2009).

The focus group meetings were conducted August 2017 through January 2018 at locations selected by the participants, which included participants' church sites preferred by the participants. The researcher used the Rev Transcription program to record the meeting, which were then remotely transcribed by Rev Transcription and returned to the researcher electronically. Additionally, the researcher electronically sent the transcription of the focus group meetings to each participant to check for accuracy in meaning and content. Once the transcription was approved by each participant, the researcher analyzed each meeting response for emergent themes.

## **Reliability**

While one of the hallmarks of the research process lies in the expectations of its objectivity, the issue of reliability and validity must be addressed. In this study, as is true of all qualitative research, the researcher was the most complex and pertinent data collection instrument that analyzed the data that, in turn, informed the study itself. The researcher in this study approached the topic based on his experience and interest to examine this phenomenon so that the Christian churches can implement practices to attract and retain people to reduce the decline in church membership rates.

The researcher conducted a field test prior to contacting participants; triangulated data to increase credibility by gathering documents as artifacts to supplement the data from the focus group portion of the study; and developed an audit trail that ensured accurate documentation of focus group meetings and artifacts, such as events, and conferences. Additionally, the researcher worked collaboratively with another researcher to design the study and provide peer review and debriefing, and engaged external auditors to examine the study and review the coding process, which resulted in robust, detailed descriptive data (Brantlinger, Jiminez, Klinger, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005).

Inter-coder reliability indicates that at least 10% of the data will result in 80% or higher accuracy when double-coded by a separate researcher (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2010). Inter-coder reliability addressed and solidified the validity of the analysis of the collected data. In order to ensure that the data were analyzed in a manner that reflected accurate results, the process of inter-coder reliability was conducted in the following sequence:

- Step 1: Primary researcher selected 10% of the collected data.

- Step 2: Primary researcher coded 100% of the collected data using the NVivo program.
- Step 3: Primary researcher gave the themes developed in the coding process to second researcher/coder.
- Step 4: Secondary researcher/coder scanned the data (before coding) to validate the themes already identified by the main researcher. If more or fewer themes were identified by the second coder, a discussion was necessary to consider coding themes.
- Step 5: Secondary researcher/coder then coded the information using themes developed.
- Step 6: After coding data, secondary researcher/coder gave coded information back to primary researcher to compare primary researcher and secondary researcher/coder data frequencies (number of references) for each theme (Lombard et al., 2010).

Besides keeping meticulous records of data collection, which included a verbatim transcription of each focus group session, a procedure known as *member checking* was utilized in an attempt to limit researcher bias and self-reporting errors, where each participant of this study was asked to check the focus group meeting transcription for accuracy in content and meaning (Creswell, 2002). Furthermore, the researcher used a peer researcher, known as an external audit (Creswell, 2002), to conduct a review of the study's methodology and coding process, gaining feedback on strengths and weaknesses. An external audit process was conducted throughout and at the conclusion of the study,

thus, maintaining this protocol was the best approach to sustain the reliability of the field research.

### **Field Test**

The focus group protocol developed by the researcher was designed to directly correlate to the research questions of this study. The protocol was field tested with an informed and experienced test group of voluntary participants, composed of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders, during the winter of 2017. The field test was conducted to ensure accuracy of the correlation between questions, responses, and research questions. A pilot focus group meeting was also recorded using the Rev Transcription program. Following the field test, feedback was solicited from each field-test participant on the researcher's methods for conducting the focus group meeting, questions, length of focus group meeting, and recording process. The researcher made adjustments based on that feedback.

### **Validity**

Prior to the field test being conducted, an external audit of the research questions was conducted to strengthen the validity of the focus group questions and the data collection process. This external audit process addressed the issue of interviewer bias and validity of interviewing skills through expert feedback (Creswell, 2002). This process preceded the data collection process, and focus group questions were revised and resubmitted to limit leading language and eliminate the potential for biased question presentation.

A study requires multiple sources of information including interviews, documents, reports, and other sources of information (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, this

study will include focus groups, observations, artifact collection, literature review, and document analysis. The use of multiple sources of data ensures that there is triangulation of the data. To strengthen internal and external validity of this study, the data will be analyzed to determine if themes and/or patterns exist in the culture being studied.

To gather data for an analysis related to increasing and sustaining membership in Christian churches, approximately six months will be spent conducting participant observations in a congregational setting. The observations will be performed at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. As churches are open mainly on Sunday for church services, once a week for bible study, and once a week for choir rehearsals an average of three hours per week will be used to conduct participant observations. The researcher will rotate attendance at the two churches in order to perform observations and collect artifacts.

For the purposes of this study, instruments included conferences, revivals, Christian Leadership Academy, outreach programs, and food bank program that give evidence of external support systems specifically designed to attract and retain people. The researcher also used existing literature to analyze the rules, community, and division of labor that serve as barriers or support systems for growth and retention in Christian churches.

In Chapter II, the literature reviewed indicated that a great deal of research has been done on the reasons people are leaving the church or not joining one, and some research has provided ideas for solutions, more research needs to be done to determine which strategies have the greatest potential for increasing and retaining church membership in Southern California Independent Churches. In addition, multiple studies

found that people are unwilling to commit to, and remain with a church organizations (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010, 2015; Rainer, 2012; Waggoner, 2006). These studies are significant because they explain factors that are critical to the sustainability of Christian churches in the United States. After conducting a comprehensive review of the literature pertaining to licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders knowledge of implementing practices that support attracting new members, and retaining current church members, the researcher developed two overarching research questions and eight research sub-questions that provided the foundation for the phenomenological research questions developed for this study. Because the purpose statement and research questions were supported by an in-depth review of the literature, the questions were aligned to the purpose statement and research questions and addressed the research problem as contextualized by the literature review in Chapter II. This study, therefore, focused on the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders' knowledge of implementing practices that support attracting new members, and retaining current church membership, which required that a comprehensive set of oral questions be designed to address the study's purpose.

A field test was conducted to ensure accuracy of the connection between focus group questions, responses, and research questions. This field test was conducted with licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders. Following the field-test process, the researcher contacted the study participants Senior Pastor's to set up initial interview appointments. An email was sent to the Senior Pastor's at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California

requesting access to recruit, and to select subjects for this study from their church (see Appendix E). Senior Pastors were informed through e-mail of the study's purpose and research questions prior to the focus group meetings. Confidentiality assurance and consent forms were also emailed to the pastors who provided them to participants prior to a focus group meetings, which includes a request for permission to meet with volunteers in the study. Senior Pastor's announced the study request during their church services. Licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California were informed, and asked to voluntarily participate in a focus group meeting by their respective Senior Pastors. A follow-up phone call was made the week and the day prior to each focus group interview to ensure that the participants were willing to engage in the face-to-face interviews for the study.

### **Data Collection**

A request for approval to conduct this study was submitted to the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) for approval prior to data collection and the necessary coursework for protecting human research participants was completed (see Appendix F). No data were collected for this study until approval was received from the BUIRB.

Data were collected from licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California at the time of the study. All participants were informed by their respective Senior Pastors of the study's purpose and research questions prior to the interviews. Confidentiality assurance and consent forms were also given to the



participants two weeks prior to the interviews, which included requests for permission to interview participants and to gather documents that would triangulate the data garnered from the interviews. On the day of each focus group interview, the researcher reiterated the study's purpose and research questions prior to the interviews to ensure that the participants were willing to engage in the face-to-face interviews for the study.

Each participant's identity was protected by using a pseudonym rather than the participant's actual name. Signed consent forms, data, and research records were stored in locked cabinets at the researcher's residence and were shredded and disposed of following the defense of the study.

Meetings were confirmed through each church's senior pastor in the week prior to the focus group meetings were recorded using the Rev Transcription application and subsequently sent to the Rev processing center for transcription. The Rev Transcription service e-mailed the researcher the completed transcription, and the researcher submitted the transcribed interview to each participant so as to ensure that the transcribed interview reflected the participant's honest and clear responses as intended during the interview itself. Once the interview transcription was reviewed by the participant, the researcher analyzed the data using NVivo research and coding software for themes that correlated to the research questions.

After the interview process, the researcher collected documents such as conference brochures, revival pamphlets, Christian Leadership Academy materials, outreach program agendas, and food bank program literature to further delineate emergent codes that responded to the research questions presented (see Appendix G). The researcher asked the participants for permission to access documents that pertained

to the study as outlined in the previously e-mailed consent form. The artifacts were also analyzed using the NVivo research and coding software. Archival data provided necessary triangulation to support the study's validity.

### **Data Analysis**

The data required personal testimonies through focus group meetings both open-ended and focused, on-site direct observations, field notes, and digital recordings. These multiple sources of evidence were critical to establishing triangulation (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative analysis “examines a story, a phenomenological study, a set of interviews, or a collection of field notes” (Patton, 2015, p. 570) to interpret meaning and draw conclusions. The primary focus of this study was to better understand the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders’ knowledge of implementing practices that support attracting new members, and retaining current church membership in a ministry setting. In this study, data were collected through in-depth focus groups, observations, and artifact collection which were analyzed for the purpose of drawing conclusions based on the research questions of this study.

The focus groups were recorded using the Rev Transcription IOS application. After each focus group meeting, the researcher submitted the recording to the Rev Transcription service and waited for the documented interview. Once the transcription was complete and was reviewed by the participants for accuracy, the data analysis process began.

Coding is the process of synthesizing data for themes, ideas, and categories and then marking similar passages of text with a code label so data can be counted to determine high-frequency themes (Patton, 2015). Coding of data was completed for each

interview transcription and analyzed for frequency of themes using NVivo coding software. Although NVivo assisted the researcher in organizing and sorting themes (Patton, 2015), the researcher was responsible for actively reading the transcription, analyzing the data, and identifying emergent themes. NVivo was the vehicle by which the researcher stored the data that were gathered. The data collected for this study were coded for emergent themes (Patton, 2015) that described the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders' knowledge of implementing practices that support attracting new members, and retaining current church membership. Coded transcriptions and emergent themes were peer reviewed for accuracy of coding analysis. Each of the focus group questions correlated with the broader research questions. The codes that emerged after the focus group meetings were analyzed and compared to the study's research questions. As codes emerged for each research question, this qualitative analysis resulted in the study's findings (Patton, 2015). These findings are discussed in detail in Chapter IV of this study.

### **Limitations**

This study's limitations include the small sample size and limited geographical locations. The sample size and geographic area for this study consisted of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders at two non-denominational Grace Church International churches located in Southern California. Due to time constraints, the relative scarcity of churches in the community that were experiencing robust growth, and the nature of the study, the sample size were small. In-depth and time-consuming focus groups meetings took place with participants, which limited the size of the sample. In addition, statistics showed that people are less likely to be

affiliated with a church than their parents' and grandparents' were at a comparable point of time in their lives (Audette & Weaver, 2016; Pond et al., 2010). According to Professor Beckman (2000), Professor of American Religious History at Duke University, sociologists estimated that a full 42% of the young adult people have permanently abandoned church, do not belong to any religious organization, and claim no denominational ties to any religion. This in part defines the problem studied. Other limitations relate to interviewer bias.

These researchers fostered sound working relationships with congregational members through periodic social visits to maintain a relationship which made these churches accessible. As such, the interviewer was aware of the inherent bias that existed with the topic. To mitigate bias, the researcher conducted a field test prior to the study, worked collaboratively with a peer researcher to review transcriptions, and engaged external auditors to examine the focus group questions as well as the transcriptions of the focus group meetings. In addition, valid data depended on honest answers from those interviewed, and limitations related to forthright and honest answers to focus group questions were addressed by assuring participants through a confidentiality agreement signed by both the researcher and the participant prior to each focus group meeting. The study design involved self-reported data and self-coding, which introduced the potential for researcher bias. A process was instituted to mitigate these limitations.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the methodology that was used to conduct this study was described. After a review of the purpose statement and a restatement of the research questions, the qualitative research design was described as an appropriate method to

explore the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders' knowledge of implementing practices that support attracting new members, and retaining current church membership in Grace Church, Spring Valley, California and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. Following this discussion the population, target population and sample were identified followed by a discussion of instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and limitations. Chapter IV presents the data generated from the study will be analyzed to determine the findings which contribute to the development of building strong Christian churches in the communities.

## CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experience of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders that attract and retain church membership growth in their congregations. The researcher examined two established Grace Church International, Inc. church affiliates in the Southern California District to determine what similarities and differences exist between the groups; Grace Church Spring Valley, located in Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, located in Panorama City, California. Chapter IV of this study reviews the purpose and research questions, methodology, and population/sample and concludes with a presentation of the data.

### **Purpose Statement**

As a phenomenological study, Patton (2015) provided that phenomenological studies “focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (p. 104). Patton also explained that the phenomenon being studied in a phenomenological study can be used to examine the culture of a group of people. As such, this study explores what licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders have lived and learned during their tenure in ministry. Observations, and a series of face-to-face focus group meetings were conducted that addressed different aspects of the research questions that explored the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders that attract and retain church membership at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California to determine what similarities and differences that exist between the groups.

## **Research Questions**

### **Research Questions**

1. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders?
2. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders?

### **Research Sub-Questions**

3. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?
4. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?
5. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?
6. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?
7. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?
8. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?

9. What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what attracts new church membership?
10. What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what retains church membership?

### **Methodology**

This study was organized as a qualitative phenomenological study to examine the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. A qualitative phenomenological methodology was the most appropriate framework for this study to determine what similarities and differences that exist between the groups that attract and retain church membership. For the purposes of this study, the researcher conducted observations, and a series of face-to-face focus group meetings that addressed different aspects of the research questions. The focus group meetings were recorded and transcribed using the REV application and transcription service. Following the receipt of the transcribed data from the transcription service, the researcher analyzed the transcripts of the focus groups meetings and created codes for emergent themes using NVivo coding software. These codes, therefore, generated that the data addressed the research questions. Observations were conducted using generous support and assistance from individuals in which the researcher developed a holistic picture in order to provide a comprehensive and complete understanding of identifying strong strategies that focus on



helping Christian churches to become more effective in attracting, and retaining present parishioners in their congregations.

### **Population/Sample**

The population for this study consisted of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders at Grace Church International Churches. There are 42 Grace Church Congregations in California with approximately 210 licensed and/or ordained pastors, 168 ministers, and 504 Auxiliary leaders. The target population defines the population to which the findings of a survey are meant to be generalized, and it is important that target populations are clearly identified for the purposes of research study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). A target population for a study is the entire set of individuals chosen from the overall population for which the study data are to be used to make inferences. The target population defines the population to which the findings of a survey are meant to be generalized, and it is important that target populations are clearly identified for the purposes of research study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The target population for this study consisted of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders at Grace Church International Churches in Southern California. There are 42 Grace Church Congregations in Southern California with approximately 210 licensed and/or ordained pastors, 168 ministers, and 504 Auxiliary leaders.

The researcher used a convenience sampling method to gather data for this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described convenience sampling as a strategic selection used when a sampling is selected on a group of subjects on the basis of being accessible or expedient to the researcher. In this study, Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California churches were used as

a convenience sample. The sample for this study included all licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. There are five licensed and/or ordained pastors, six ministers, and seven Auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and there are five licensed and/or ordained pastors, three ministers, and 15 Auxiliary leaders at Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California.

### **Presentation of the Data**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California; and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California to determine what similarities and differences that exist between the groups that attract and retain church membership. The central research questions asked:

1. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders?
2. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders?

The data was organized to reflect codes that emerged in response to the eight research sub-questions. The data being presented in this chapter represents the results of all the coded focus group meetings, observations, and artifacts that were collected. The findings relate to the 10 research questions are revealed and presented in this qualitative phenomenological study as they relate to the results from the lived experiences of

licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders at their respective churches to determine what similarities and differences exist between the groups that attract and retain church membership.

The raw answers from the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders were coded and presented in a table format. Saldana (2009) stated that coding is key to research, as it allows the researcher to capture and interpret thoughts expressed by the participants that are similar and/or distinct, based on the researcher's perspective, or which may be a matter of understanding the semantic nature of word usage. Artifacts were collected as support for theme.

The focus group meetings were audio recorded, as approved by the BUIRB guidelines. The recorded interviews were transcribed by Rev, a professional transcription service. The relevant data was extrapolated and coded for this study. The researcher ensured additional confidentiality by assigning each church, licensed and/or ordained pastor, minister, and auxiliary leader with a pseudonym. In addition, the churches (participants) are referred to simply as Church A and Church B to protect participant identification.

### **Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor's Groups**

Licensed and/or ordained pastors at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California; and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California participated in the first set of focus group meetings, which were held separately at their churches. The focus group meetings were conducted in-person and in the city where the pastoral leader is pastoring his church. At least three to five licensed and/or ordained pastors were needed from each church for each focus group session. Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, was

represented by three licensed and/or ordained pastors, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California was represented by four licensed and/or ordained pastors. A total of seven licensed and/or ordained pastors participated in the study.

The licensed and/or ordained pastoral leaders listened to an IRB approved script inviting them to take part in the research study, and all seven licensed and/or ordained pastors signed an Informed Consent form which denoted their willing agreement to participate in the study. The data collection method used was an in-person focus group discussion with each of the aforementioned pastoral leadership groups. The Licensed and/or Ordained Pastors were given the aliases:

Church A: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A; Church A: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B; and Church A: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor C.

Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A; Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B; Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor C; and Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor D.

These licensed and/or ordained pastoral leaders all indicated that they became involved in church leadership after being approached by someone in a position of authority that identified their leadership potential. All of the licensed and/or ordained pastors have amassed over 20 years of service in ministry work. They are all experienced pastors and assistant pastors at non-denominational Christian churches (see Appendix H).

## **Research Questions**

### **Research Questions**

Two main research questions guided the study. Research Question 1 asked licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders: *What ministry practices*

*attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders?* The results to Research Question 1 is expounded upon in Research Sub-Question 3 for licensed and/or ordained pastors, Research Sub- Question 5 for ministers, and Research Sub-Question 7 for auxiliary leaders who were interviewed in the study.

Research Question 2 asked licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders: *What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders?* The results to Research Question 2 is expounded upon in Research Sub-Question 4 for licensed and/or ordained pastors, Research Sub-Question 6 for ministers, and Research Sub-Question 8 for auxiliary leaders who were interviewed in the study.

### **Research Sub-Questions**

Data for the research sub-questions are presented in numerical order and by position, i.e., ordained pastoral leaders, ministers, and the auxiliary leaders.

#### **Ordained Pastoral Leaders**

**Research sub-question 3:** Licensed and/or ordained pastoral leaders were asked to explain, *What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?*

Seven out of seven licensed and/or ordained pastoral leaders felt that presenting a friendly attitude towards visitors is a ministry practice that attracted new congregants to a growing church when visitors arrived at their church services. Therefore, being friendly is, in terms of a strategy, a form of outreach. One participant, Church A: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A, stated the following:

Do not be overly aggressive. Some people visit a church and simply just want to observe the services. I always advocate to congregants to see what a visitors needs are first, such as a prayer or maybe they are dealing with a family crisis that requires counseling. Christians have to really be sensitive to visitors when they walk through the church doors. Christians should be sensitive enough to see if a visitor is having a hard time, that they may just need a hug, or need to know that someone is there for them.

This theme was supported by comments made by Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor D, who advocated the importance of showing people love when they first come to the church and welcome them to the church. Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor D expressed in her commentary that,

Everyone who comes to church has their own impressions of church members and operations. The majority of people have a mindset that church is only interested in receiving tithes and offerings. They believe that the churches motivation is purely financial.

Occasionally church organizations can be perceived as intimidating to visitors that have never attended a worship service or do not attend church regularly. By creating a friendly atmosphere upon a visitors arrival can alleviate nervousness and any false perceptions of church leaders and members. Church B Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor D stated that Church B has always had a practice of locating the new people as they come into the church and make sure that church leaders greet them and introduce themselves to visitors. Church B Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor D said that *“this form of outreach would keep people coming to the church by showing them the love of God and having an*

*open door to making people feel more accepted.*” Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor D also added that remembering the names of visitors when they return for a subsequent visit will also keep people coming back to the church. Additionally, showing excitement for church visitors is another common theme emerged in both licensed and/or ordained pastoral leader focus group meetings.

Nearly one-third of participants replied that word of mouth expanded the growth of Church B. Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A described a time when a visiting pastor spoke at their church and told the congregation a form of outreach is to talk to with people about their hobbies, as an example of how to draw people to the church. Essentially, people are drawn to each other when they discover that they have commonalities. Strategically, this is a practice that attracts new church members as they return to engage in more conversation about the hobby that they have in common with someone that is already a member of the church. Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B stated that approximately 90% to 95% of new members came to their church by word of mouth. Table 6 is codes for ministry practices that attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors.

Table 6

*Codes for Ministry Practices that attract new Church Membership in a Growing Church as Perceived by the Licensed and/or Ordained Pastors*

Practices Used To Attract New Congregational Members By The Licensed and/or Ordained Pastors	Frequency
Show people that you are friendly	15
Recruit to help the church grow; outreach Preaching the gospel, sharing the word of God, and having an excitement for it, and greet people	9
Word of Mouth	6

**Research sub-question 4.** Licensed and/or ordained pastoral leaders were asked to explain, *What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?*

Resoundingly, 100% percent of licensed and/or ordained pastoral leaders responded that prayer is a retention strategy that retains current membership. Church A: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A stated that,

Prayer is the foundation of everything of all operations at [Church A]. We pray over every prayer request. We have prayer services on Wednesdays and Fridays mornings in the office, prayer services on Saturday morning, and Sunday mornings before church services commence.

Meeting the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of people is an expectation that most people have of the church. Church A has found that providing prayer services to their current members has proven effective in retaining church membership.

Many participants noted that simply following up, and reaching out to people to let them know that they are cared for retains current church members. Church A Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A, explained how her keeping in contact with a new visitor resulted in the visitor becoming a stable and committed member of the church. Church A Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A said,

... I engage in a lot of outreach that other congregants are unaware of. A young lady that was visiting the church, became a consistent member, because I continued to reach out to her. After reading the young lady's prayer request, I called her and asked, "What are your needs?" She needed help with her rent and the church could not help her at the time because we had several entire families



approaching us needing help, and she was a single person. I explained to her that our first priority was to make sure that the families with young children were assisted, but we were not going to ignore her situation. We gave her some resources along with helpful information. I called her almost every other day inquiring about her wellbeing, and because I kept in contact with her and she became a constant congregant. She is now attending bible study regularly and she will be participating in the next baptism services. I still continue to contact her to let her know that I am praying for her. This is how I retain people who are already in the church by seeing to their needs and trying to help them with their needs.

Additionally, when discussing this theme, Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A maintained that meeting the needs of people; socially and emotionally is an important factor to retaining current church membership. Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A stated,

Emotionally, everyone goes through some form of a tragedy at some point in their lives. Through my emotional tragedy, the church met my needs. Therefore, I believe that whenever a person is experiencing emotional difficulties the church can be a support through biblical teaching, preaching, and providing various forms of social interaction to retain members.

Even though churches emphasize the importance of meetings the needs of visitors in order to attract new members, the church leaders from both churches recognizes that this form of in reach is critical to retaining their current congregants.

Overwhelmingly, all of the participants maintained the importance to making people feel comfortable in a church setting. In doing so, creating a familial atmosphere appeared frequently as a practice that retained church membership. as stated by Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A their church is unique in that there are four generations of families that have made Church B their home. Family of origin; a person's upbringing and/or the environment in which she or he was raised played a major role in church membership retention. Similarly, Church A: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A explained that a lot of times people go into churches and feel ostracized as if they do not belong at that particular church. In order to alleviate the feeling of isolation, creating a familial atmosphere for everyone is paramount. This may help to keep people's drive and desire to want to be at the church on-going.

As to assimilation in the church, nearly all of the participants acknowledged the importance of involving new and current members of the church in order to attract and retain membership. Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B adopted the traditional notion that *"If you don't use them [meaning people] you will lose them [meaning people]."* Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B continued his commentary by saying that he had to figure out how to get people into an active role at their church. This sentiment was also shared by Church A: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B, who stated that,

A lot of people don't give the churches the benefit of the doubt when the church is trying to get to know them, meaning that they feel that the church is not allowing them to become active in ministry fast enough. Creating a balance between getting to know a congregants capabilities and allowing them to move forward in

the ministry can become problematic in retaining church members. That is one of the main reasons why people leave churches, because they feel as if they are not being used quickly enough.

Table 7 is codes for ministry practices that retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors

Table 7

*Codes for Ministry Practices that Retain Church Membership in a Growing Church as Perceived by the Licensed and/or Ordained Pastors*

Practices Used To Retain Congregational Members By The Licensed and/or Ordained Pastors	Frequency
Follow-up; and reach out to people	5
Prayer	13
Atmosphere	6
Assimilation; putting people to work inside of the church	4

### **Minister Groups**

Ministers at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California; and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California participated in the second set of focus group meetings, which were conducted separately at their churches. The focus group meetings were conducted in-person and in the city where the pastoral leader is pastoring his church. At least 3 to 5 ministers were needed from each church for each focus group session. Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, was represented by three ministers, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California was represented by four ministers. A total of seven ministers participated in the study.

The ministers listened to an IRB approved script inviting them to take part in the research study, and all seven ministers signed an Informed Consent form which denoted

their willing agreement to participate in the study. The data collection method used was an in-person focus group discussion with each of the aforementioned ministerial groups. The focus group meetings were audio recorded, as approved by the IRB guidelines. The recorded meetings were transcribed by Rev, a professional transcription service. The relevant data was extrapolated and coded for this study. The researcher ensured additional confidentiality by assigning each minister the following aliases:

Church A: Minister A; Church A: Minister B; and Church A: Minister C.

Church B: Minister A; Church B: Minister B; Church B: Minister C; and Church B: Minister D.

All seven minister's indicated that they became involved in church leadership after being approached by a pastor or bishop and were asked to lead some form of ministry in the church. All of the ministers have 20 or more years performing work in a ministry setting. They are all experienced ministers at non-denominational Christian faith churches (see Appendix I).

**Research sub-question 5.** Ministerial leaders were asked to explain, *What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?*

The most prominent code that appeared are those regarding the participants' view of the sustaining power of the friendly acceptance extended both by the congregation and by church leaders in which ministerial leaders believed that the more friendlier and approachable that they were to visitors, the more profound the impact their positive behaviors had on attracting new church members to their churches. Church A: Minister B claimed that being approachable is a pivotal form of outreach, and recited a quote that

is often used at church during the Welcome and Announcement segment of service that states, “First time, you are a visitor’ the second time (you come to our church) – you are family.” Church A: Minister B professed that being part of a family is important to visitors. She said that you have to be approachable, friendly, and you have to know how to get people's attention - by talking to them. This was succeeded by Church B: Minister B who discussed how talking to, and greeting visitors as they visit the church is an effective way to attract new church members. Consequently, talking to visitors, be engaging, and informing them of ministry opportunities is a technique used to attract potential church members. Church A: Minister C stated that she always informs the women in ministry to show themselves friendly, and provide new church members with a sense of purpose, by getting them involved in church activities. When people are presented with an opportunity to become involved it is compelling and they take ownership in what they are doing, which can result in a visitor becoming part of the church according to Church A: Minister C. Thus, talking to visitors, being engaging and friendly, and presenting opportunities to become involved in church activities and ministries are tactical measures to attracting potential church members.

The other theme that emerged was the use of various social events that take place at the church as a platform to reach the public. Five out of seven participants indicated that they openly talked to people about taking part in community service events hosted at the church, or going to a church concert. Participants at Church A shared how they used events such as anniversary services, women's tea events, church food banks, vacation bible school, and other different programs to invite people to come to their church. More specifically, Church A: Minister B explained that because she deals with oppressed

people at work, she has told clients about the church's food bank as a vehicle to meet their needs as well as to attract members. Artifacts that were collected as support for this theme included an informational flyer depicting several church events including, anniversary services, women's tea events, church food banks, vacation bible school. Additionally, Church B: Minister D shared how he used an outreach project called, "EDGE" to attract new congregational members to the church. The minister explained that Project Edge entailed going into local area high schools to spread the word of God. During the presentations, he provides pizza to all of the high school students who are in attendance while he introduces them to the gospel and invites them to church. Project Edge is a strategy to encourage the students to visit the church, and to invite their friends and families to visit Church B. Church B: Minister C added that the heart behind Project Edge is to save souls. She stated that if someone does not have a church they are welcome to come to Church B, but if they are already attending a church with their family, they are encouraged to continue going to their church, as family is important.

Other meaningful themes presented by the participants concerned the relevancy of the ministers' connecting with the parents of minor children who are attending the church, because the parents transport their children to church. Social media such as Twitter and Facebook is routinely used as a medium to inform those parents of activities in the church, upcoming events, agendas, programs, as well as various flyers are sent to parents as informational in hopes to persuade them to attend services with their children.

Table 8 is coded for ministry practices that attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers.

Table 8

*Codes for Ministry Practices that Attract new Church Membership in a Growing Church as Perceived by the Ministers*

Practices Used To Attract New Congregational Members By The Ministers	Frequency
Being friendly, and really welcoming to people.	9
Outreach, invite people to church.	6
Sharing church events with clients, customers, and to the public.	7
Assimilation; make use of peoples time by giving them something to do in the church.	4

**Research sub-question 6.** Ministerial leaders were asked to explain, *What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?*

The decision of the congregational members to remain a part of these churches varied somewhat but, mainly, it was based on several common factors: (a) the friendliness of the congregation, (b) love, (c) encouragement, and (d) support during challenging circumstances. However, the prominent factor was the friendliness of the congregation that keeps current church members engaged were mentioned a total of 24 times. Church A: Minister A said that people want to know that others care for them and that the friendliness of the church is a major aspect to retaining congregational members, because people want to feel as though they can connect with leadership and other members in the church. Another participant, Church B: Minister B expressed a similar view of the hospitality of Church B and stated:

Having a friendly disposition, being a good listener, and accepting congregants for who they are retains church membership. Oftentimes, church members come

to church with numerous problems, and we must have an ear to listen to them in order to provide answers and to pray for them effectively. However, the main element is to be friendly, listen to what they have to say, and provide support and encouragement.

Church B: Minister C speaks of showing love to church members, providing a word of encouragement, and if someone expresses that they are experiences difficulties offering prayer and support retains church members. The emphasis on love and friendliness strongly suggests that genuine hospitality can result in committed church members. Listening to what they have to say to let them know that we are people that genuinely care about what they are going through inspired congregational members to remain.

Assimilating church members into the church was cited with great frequency. Participants indicated that getting current congregants involved in various aspects of church operations is a factor that the ministers felt retains church membership. As stated by Church A, Minister C:

If a segment of church members continue to keep doing all the work and never allow or encourage other members to become actively involved the inactive members do not feel as if they are connected or a part of the church. It is my experience that church members desire to have a connection with God and other people in addition to having a purpose. If congregants are actively connected with the ministry, the church not only receives help within the church, it also retains church membership.



Involving church members in ministry, church events, administration, and/or other daily church activities enhances congregant's sense of belonging and provides the people with a purpose is a strategy to retain members. Oftentimes, people are committed to a church if they feel that they are involved in something meaningful. Church B: Minister A said that whenever new families come to the church she tries to get them involved in church activities together as a family by providing the parents work in areas of the church where they can help their children, such as the nursery and the children's church worship services. The participant further stated that staying connected with parents and being consistent with their children is important, and stated:

Staying connected to the parents to get them involved in church events and consistently reaching out to children who have not attended church services for an extended period of time is crucial, because they appear to get overlooked. As ministers, we have to let them know that we love them. (Church B: Minister A)

Involving the parents in the children's ministry keeps the parents interested and both the parents and children feel that they are rooted in church operations and it is a strategic tool to retain families in the church.

In conjunction with keeping current congregants involved in church as a retention strategy, most participants expressed that building relationships across the diverse groups is a component to retaining church membership. Church B: Minister C felt that bridging the gap between various demographic groups inside of the church can lead to an increase in church membership retention. She said that building relationships is a way to retain current church members and get everyone involved. Church B, Minister C stated that

Church B created a mentorship program that matched the elderly members to youth members based upon a particular need and commonalities. Church B, Minister C stated:

Over the years, we recognized that the elderly felt separated from church activities. We created a mentorship program whereas the elderly can share their experiences and wisdom with the youth. We used the mentorship program to bridge the gap between the generational groups to enrich relationships.

The church is comprised of various generational groups, cultures, and ethnicities, creating programs or events that bridge the gap between the diverse groups has helped retain church members.

Table 9 codes for ministry practices that retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers.

Table 9

*Codes for Ministry Practices that Retain Church Membership in a Growing Church as Perceived by the Ministers*

Practices Used To Retain Congregational Members By The Ministers	Frequency
Showing yourself friendly.	24
Love.	8
Encouragement; and being supportive to others.	6
Acceptance of each other's differences.	3
Assimilation; make use of peoples time by giving them involved in the church.	3

### **Auxiliary Leader's Groups**

Auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California; and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California participated in the final set of focus group meetings, which were conducted separately at their churches. The focus group meetings were conducted in-person and in the city where the pastoral leader is pastoring his church. At

least three to five ministers were needed from each church for each focus group session. Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, was represented by three Auxiliary leaders' ministers, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California was represented by five Auxiliary leaders. A total of eight Auxiliary leaders participated in the study.

Auxiliary leaders listened to an Institutional Review Board approved script inviting them to take part in the research study, and all eight signed an Informed Consent form which denoted their willing agreement to participate in the study. The data collection method used was an in-person focus group discussion with each of the aforementioned Auxiliary leader groups. The focus group meetings were audio recorded, as approved by the Institutional Review Board guidelines. The recorded meetings were transcribed by Rev.com, a professional transcription service. The relevant data was extrapolated and coded for this study. The researcher ensured additional confidentiality by assigning each Auxiliary leader the following aliases:

Church A: Auxiliary Leader A; Church A: Auxiliary Leader B; and Church A: Auxiliary Leader C.

Church B: Auxiliary Leader A; Church B: Auxiliary Leader B; Church B: Auxiliary Leader C; Church B: Auxiliary Leader D; and Church B: Auxiliary Leader D.

All of the participants from the auxiliary leader's groups became involved in church leadership at different times in their lives and in many different ways. All of the auxiliary leaders have varied years of experience ranging from five to 24 years in ministry. They are all serving at non-denominational Christian faith churches (see Appendix J).

**Research sub-question 7.** Auxiliary leaders were asked to explain, *What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?*

The analysis of the data indicated a strong commonality among the participants toward practices that impact church growth. Specifically, four themes emerged to be common across all participants. They included: (a) being friendly to visitors; (b) utilization of social media and technology; (c) work toward building relationships; and (d) inclusivity/transparency, which was repeated many times in the discussions. All participants acknowledged the importance to engage in a meet-and-greet session with visitors, which often included a handshake and/or a hug as a method to express affection and gratitude towards visitors that visit their respective churches. Church B: Auxiliary Leader A was succinct in stating,

I think the meet and greet is most important component to attracting new congregational members. I think when people first come into the church, greeting and having a conversation makes them feel like they are part of the church. When they return to the church and you ask them a question based upon the prior conversation, such as “how is your daughter doing?” they realize that you remembered them and that you were paying attention to the conversation. It’s building a personal relationship which makes people coming back.

Being friendly and remembering a part of a visitor’s conversation is a form of engagement, which is one of many factors that influence a person’s decision to join a church.

Two participants, Church A: Auxiliary Leader A; Church B: Auxiliary Leader C considered the use of social media and technology in faith ministries high in importance, and pointed out the benefits of utilizing social media and technology to attract people that are visiting the church. Church A: Auxiliary Leader A explained how quality sound had a tremendous impact of attracting people to church and stated:

I have to ensure that the message of the sermons and songs are delivered through sound. Equalizing the sound so that there is not too much bass or too many highs in sound quality, as well as ensuring that the bass not too loud must be taken into account. Additionally, making sure that the music team have the right type of microphones to avoid feedback and distortion in the sound quality, among other things. It is imperative that the audio and media team make sure that the sermons and songs being delivered through sound is clear and precise so it can be heard properly and lead to reaching potential church members.

The music is a critical factor. If people are unhappy with the music, they will not invite guests to church. People attend church services to hear the preached word and worship songs, ill-equipped sound equipment or an inefficient audio and media department can have an adverse effect on people enjoyment in worship services. Oftentimes, visitors do not return to a church due to the lack of being able to clearly hear the music and/or worship services being delivered in the church.

Furthering the importance of audio and media services in the church, Church B: Auxiliary Leader C explained the need to stay abreast of changes in media and said that technology is a way to entice people when they come to church. The participant stated:

Church is not place that is filled with dull people, they are emotionally expressive.

I make creative uses of technology through video and media that display their various emotions. For example: I created a video of church members playing volleyball, eating, and taking pictures (selfies). We created a short video to show that we are a family. We played the video during a church service, and also posted the video on YouTube and Facebook. (Church B: Auxiliary Leader C)

Utilizing technology such as audio and media to capture church member's attention and allow them to freely express their emotions, creates an atmosphere that can be compelling to potential church members. Some churches have invested in state-of-the-art video, lighting and sound equipment to put on weekly productions that resemble being at a local theater. Both Church A and B has provided that entertainment, such as musical performances, videos, guest speakers and contests motivate people to consistently attend worship services. Live plays, skits, or video presentations that are related to the sermons received favorable remarks by Church A and B participants to attract potential church members.

The findings also indicated that building strong relationships was frequently mentioned by the focus group participants. Building teams and relationships is a code that emerged six times as a way to attract visitors that come to the church. Church B: Auxiliary Leader D spoke of building relationships, and stated the following:

Creating a welcoming atmosphere to remove any awkwardness that visitors may feel when they come to the church (especially for the first time), allows the church to initiate building a relationship. Introducing the visitors to various groups, church events, and inviting them to lunch or coffee assists in establishing

a relationship. Building relationship is a major way to attract people to become a congregational member.

Another participant, Church B: Auxiliary Leader E described her efforts for cultivating new friendships by showing kindness to others in this manner:

I invite everyone that I know to come to church. For example, I invite my swim team and my volleyball team to visit the church. I present the church as a place that is both welcoming and fun. I normally accomplish my goals of bringing visitors to the church by smiling and being welcoming.

A person's first impression of a church's hospitality determines whether or not if they will return to the church. Participants indicated that removing obstacles to the development of deep and lasting relationships are positive measures if local churches want to successfully increase church membership.

Six of the eight participants referred to the inclusivity and transparency of the Pastor as a factor to attract people to a church. The code appeared a total of six times.

Church B: Auxiliary Leader E described her experiences in this way:

People decide to join church because of the pastor leading the church. I think [Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor's A and B] are approachable and genuine. [Church B Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor's A and B] authenticity is displayed in the way that they talk to people and it makes visitor's feel comfortable and want to join the church. Both [Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor's A and B] openly admit that they make mistakes and have shortcomings, such genuine admittances eliminates barriers between the pastoral staff and visitors and helps them in their decision to join the church.

Table 10 codes for ministry practices that retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders.

Table 10

*Codes for Ministry Practices that Attract new Church Membership in a Growing Church as Perceived by the Auxiliary Leaders*

Practices Used To Attract New Congregational Members By The Auxiliary Leaders	Frequency
Being friendly to visitors.	16
Social media and technology.	8
Relationship building.	7
Inclusivity/Transparency.	4

**Research sub-question 8.** Auxiliary leaders were asked to explain, *What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?*

Participants seemed to place significant value on building relationships with current congregants. Three participants discussed the value of internal relationships within the church. Church B: Auxiliary Leader D described his feelings in this way:

I have noticed that the relationship among the congregants at [Church B] has matured. We have grown in our knowledge of each other and we know how to handle each other's temperaments. We have grown closer together as a church family. I have found that the relationships here at [Church B] are nourishing. It is the loving brotherhood and sisterhood that keeps me attending [Church B].

Church A: Auxiliary Leader C echoed a similar regard for nurturing friendships among church members by noting that relationships between congregants are the foundation that stabilizes the church membership, and these friendships inside of a church are building



blocks to retaining members. These sentiments were provided by Church A: Auxiliary Leader C in the discussion:

The church is a community which is comprised of diverse individuals with different mindsets and hearts. As congregants, we have to remain open and impartial in order to keep the church family vibrant and interested in the continuity of the church. Communication is a vital aspect of building healthy relationships among current congregants. For example, if there is a family that is struggling, the church members should know about it and send help. This helps build relationships and can prevent people from leaving the church.

Additionally, Church B: Auxiliary Leader C described a church evening service in which the atmosphere was conducive to easily developing relationships within the church, which is highly prized at Church B. He conveyed his feelings this way in which he said:

[Church B] does a wonderful job building the relationships amongst the current members. We have events such as family and game nights. [Church B] “Harvest Night” event is a night where church members come together and listen to music, drink coffee and enjoy each other’s company. Inviting the church members to enjoy a regular night out allows the church members to have a chance to get to really know each, create lasting bonds, and solidify congregational relationships in the church. (Church B: Auxiliary Leader C)

A lot of effort and attention can be spent on attracting new members to join the church; however, it is important to focus internally on creating practices to build relationships

amongst church members. The vitality and stability of a church can be affected by the retention of church membership.

Five out of eight participants indicated that prayer and the teaching of scripture helped to retain congregational members. The church's mission is always connected to prayer and the teachings of the bible. Participants from both Church A and B stated that the church foundation is built upon prayer and the church members continue to come to bible study, Sunday school and Sunday services to learn the bible teachings. Prayer allows church members to communicate with God. Oftentimes, corporate prayer provides a way for church members to come together and pray for various issues which can lead church sustainment. Additionally, congregants have a natural inclination to learn the teachings of the bible to further their spiritual growth. Providing an effective teaching ministry can be essential to church member retention.

Assimilating people into the culture of the church was a prominent theme among the participants in which seven out of eight participants made mention of this particular theme. Church B: Auxiliary Leader B, D, and E all expressed the need to encourage church members to get involved in ministry work. Church A: Auxiliary Leader A speaks of getting current church members involved in the praise and worship team at church by stating;

There are several methods that I employ to get church members involved in the praise and worship ministry at [Church A]. I conduct music conferences and workshops where people can learn about the music ministry as well as take their musical talents to the next level. In order to encourage church members to remain on the praise and worship team I have social gatherings to get to know the current

praise and worship team members and to further develop our relationships. I endeavor to let church members know that they are not only wanted, but it is an opportunity to be a part of something great.

One individual cannot operate a church efficiently. Thus, church leaders who fail to delegate and encourage others to participate in ministry often experience burnout, become ineffective, and their members feel devalued. Therefore, encouraging others to participate in church activities and ministry work, then empowering them is important to the development of church members as well as the overall growth of the church.

Ministry involvement, even in an entry level position, gives new believers purpose in the church.

Table 11 codes for ministry practices that retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers and illustrates that the focus group participants identified that building relationship internally as a ministry practice to retain church membership in a growing church.

Table 11

*Codes for Ministry Practices that Retain Church Membership in a Growing Church as Perceived by the Auxiliary Leaders*

Practices Used To Retain Congregational Members By The Auxiliary Leaders	Frequency
Building relationships.	13
Prayer and teaching the scriptures	9
Assimilation; putting people to work and giving them an opportunity to grow.	6

**Research sub-question 9.** Licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders were asked, *What similarities and differences exist between the*

*perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what attracts new church membership?*

A review of both Church A and B licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers and auxiliary leader's responses revealed an existence of numerous similarities. Being friendly to visitors and the strength of prayer was widely discussed most frequently. Building a rapport and relationship with potential church members through personal interaction and engagement before, during, and after the church service seemed to have had a hypnotic appeal in the participant's opinions as a practice to increasing church membership. Both Church A and B recognized that many people have become disillusioned with organized religion and regard church members as unwelcoming. The fear of being ostracized is prevalent among people who visit the church. Church A and B participants have expressed the importance of remembering the awkward feelings of their visitors and place high value on being friendly, welcoming, and emphatic are the first steps to attaining new church membership.

The other thread of codes that emerged pertained to the importance of prayer to increase church membership. Participants in all focus group interviews emphatically expressed that people are drawn to the church through acts of love, time spent together, and servanthood. Church A and B participants admitted that Christians should serve others, pray for others, and take time to listen and care for others and one of the missions of the congregation to reach out and meet the needs of their visitors. All participants stated that these goals can be accomplished through individual and corporate prayer. While the focus group interviews produced many similarities between the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary church leaders groups to attract new church

membership; virtually no differences was uncovered in the way the groups felt toward attracting members to the church. Table 12 is coded for similarities and differences that exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what attracts new church membership.

Table 12

*Codes for Similarities and Differences that Exist between the Licensed and/or Ordained Pastors, Ministers, and Auxiliary Church Leaders that Attract new Church Membership*

Similarities And Differences That Exist Between The Licensed and/or Ordained Pastors, Ministers, And Auxiliary Church Leaders Regarding Practices Used To Attract Congregational Members	Frequency
Being friendly, and really welcoming to people.	21
Prayer.	19

**Research sub-question 10.** Licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders were asked, *What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what retains church membership?*

The analysis indicated several commonalties among the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders that had an impact on retaining church membership. Church A and B focus group participants described building relationships, assimilation, and inclusivity/transparency most often.

An emphasis on building relationships was mentioned repeatedly as the prominent dynamic that causes church members to remain at their respective churches. Creating opportunities for congregants to fellowship inside and outside of worship services as relationship building practices was routinely mentioned. Activities such as small groups meetings, volunteer activities, group meals and potlucks, youth events, book clubs, and

other numerous practices were mentioned as approaches to build strong relationships in the church. Additionally, one participant mentioned that if there are obstacles hindering people from building relationships, it is helpful to learn what they are so that they can be removed in effort to move forward.

Assimilation was also a code which was stated nine times by the participants. Assimilation was referred to as involving congregants in church activities and providing them with opportunities to get involved in the church. Allowing church members to get involved in various aspects of the church to enhance their spiritual growth can influence a church members desire to remain at a church was noted. Assimilation is a core component of church membership retention and can lead to healthy church growth. Both Church A and B participants stated that when members has been attending church consistently and display an eagerness to establish a relationship with the church and God, they should be given opportunities to become involved in church activates, ministerial services, and/or auxiliaries in their area of interest as soon as possible or else they will leave the church.

Participants corroborated the importance of the pastoral staff's sincere interpersonal engagement with church members before, during, or after the church service. Moreover, the fluid expression, charisma, and transparency of the pastoral staff's one-on-one interactions with congregants, sermon delivery, and help in crisis situations provided stimulation that make church members feel that they are important to the church. The various churches described their relationships with their pastoral staff as one that is personable and results in having strong personal interaction among congregants.

One striking difference that was uncovered through observations and the focus group discussions centered on attracting and retaining church members among the youth in which Church A licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders specifically admittedly said that are trying to build the youth ministry, and find the right person(s) to lead the ministry. Church A licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leader participants admitted that Church A lacks a youth ministry and having a vibrant youth membership is influential to attracting potential church members and retaining current members as parents accompany their children to church. They have been languishing in this area for over two years. Church A licensed and/or-ordained pastors, ministers and auxiliary leaders professed that Church A has lost a number of congregants due to the lack of a youth ministry, as some of the youth opted to go to another church that had a strong youth ministry. After a while their parents followed them to other churches to maintain the unity of their families. In contrast, Church B has a large and robust youth ministry; with over 30 youths in attendance, whose membership is consistently increasing. All demographic groups are vital to the sustainment of a church organization. Table 13 is codes for similarities and differences that exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what retains church membership.

Table 13

*Codes for Similarities and Differences Exist between the Perceptions of the Licensed and/or Ordained Pastors, Ministers, and Auxiliary Church Leaders Regarding what Retains Church Membership.*

Similarities And Differences That Exist Between The Licensed and/or Ordained Pastors, Ministers, And Auxiliary Church Leaders Regarding Practices Used To Retain Congregational Members		Frequency
Building relationships.		23
Assimilation; putting people to work and giving them an opportunity to grow.		16
Inclusivity/Transparency		9

### Summary

Chapter IV presented the collected data and findings for this study. The chapter began with the purpose statement, research questions, and summary of the methodology procedures used in the study. This study explored the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders that attract and retain church membership at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California to determine what similarities and differences that exist between the groups.

The population/sample and data collection produces used in the research were described in which the target population for this study was licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders at Grace Church International Churches in Southern California. There are 42 Grace Church Congregations in Southern California with approximately 210 licensed and/or ordained pastors, 168 ministers, and 504 auxiliary leaders. Seven licensed and/or ordained pastors, seven ministers, and eight auxiliary leaders eight participated in this study; totaling 22 participants.



An analysis of qualitative data was presented for the purpose of drawing conclusions based on the research questions of this study. The main research questions asked, *What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders?* and *What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders?*

The following eight sub-research questions were written to gain a more intimate understanding of the two central questions:

3. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?
4. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?
5. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?
6. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?
7. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?
8. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?
9. What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what attracts new church membership?

10. What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what retains church membership?

These questions dove deeper into the lived experiences of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders to further define the problem studied.

Questions were presented to each participant in a semi structured, face-to-face focus group interview. The focus group interviews were recorded using the Rev application and were transcribed using the Rev Transcription service. The transcribed materials were then analyzed for emergent themes, or codes, by the researcher using the NVivo software as a tool by which to organize the codes to identify themes that correlated to the research questions.

Findings indicated that the most frequent code revolved around the participants' views of welcoming and being friendly to guests. To expound on this code, a participant explained that when people visit a church, they find the atmosphere intimidating. Visitors experience a range of emotions to include anxiety, nervousness, uncertainty, fear, and in some cases reluctance. These range of emotions can be related to not knowing what to expect from church members, clergy, and worship services upon their arrival; as a result it is imperative that visitors experience a welcoming and friendly environment. Thanking visitors for coming, and extending to them an invitation to visit again has positive effects on attracting new church members to a church.

Additionally, a majority of the participants mentioned preaching and prayer as contributing factors to attracting and retaining church members in a church. Specifically, preaching sermons that are encouraging, inspirational, informative, comforting and

provoking will motivate congregants to invite their friends to church; as well as, motivate current church members to in the church. Also, if both preaching and prayer services are relevant to the church members everyday circumstances, based on biblical principles, and personable, and well-presented both visitors and current congregants will be motivated to remain and invite their friends and other family members. Also, many participants repeatedly mentioned the importance of building strong and lasting relationships both internally and externally to retain members and grow the church. Participants spoke of assimilation in that effective churches are those that are constantly reaching out to the community, and people in church to get them involved in the church. These churches make human resources a priority to help attract and retain church membership.

Artifacts were collected over a six month period that supported the findings. Artifacts included flyers related to activities in the church, upcoming events, agendas, and program materials. Chapter V reports conclusions, implications, as well as recommendations for future study.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and Auxiliary leaders at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California; and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California to determine what similarities and differences that exist between the groups that attract and retain church membership. The central research questions asked:

1. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders?
2. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders?

These research questions were guided by the following eight sub-research questions that narrowed the scope in the study.

3. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?
4. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?
5. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?
6. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?

7. What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?
8. What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?
9. What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what attracts new church membership?
10. What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what retains church membership?

The qualitative methodology was used to describe the essence of the experience of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary; and observations, from a series of semi-structured, face-to-face focus group meetings were used to collect data. The population for this study consisted of seven licensed and/or ordained pastors, seven ministers, and eight auxiliary leaders participating in this study; totaling 22 participants were used as a convenience sampling for this study. These participants were selected based on their accessibility to the researcher and upon their knowledge of implementing practices that support attracting new members, retaining current membership, geographical location, and position in ministry.

Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary of major findings of the study as related to the review of literature. Implications for action are discussed as well as recommendations for further research are provided. This chapter culminates with remarks and reflections on the research process.

## Major Findings

The major findings of this study are organized by the sub-research questions. The summary of the findings begins with the specific sub-research question, major findings of the sub-research question based on the results of the data are provided, and support from the literature review is given.

### Research Sub-Question 3

Research Sub-Question 3 asked: *What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?*

The major findings indicated that being the model of hospitality (friendliness) is paramount for a congregation to follow to attract new church members to come to church. The literature to support the finding indicated that 41% of former parishioners said that they would return back to church, if they received a friendly invitation to come to church (Grossman, 2014).

Romans 15:7 speaks of the importance of hospitality, and stated, “Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory” (Life Application Study Bible, 2007). The scripture tells us that Christians are to welcome people into their hearts without biases, show hospitality by sharing meals and other activities; as well as, accepting people without judgement. Also, consciously make efforts to become familiar with other people to create new bonds, alleviate differences, and discover commonalities for fellowship. In doing so, the Body of Christ accepts people.

Consequently, bringing people into a relationship with Jesus Christ and into the fellowship of a church is the fundamental purpose of the Christian ministry. As such, the

Christian church's primary task is to reach the lost and bring people into a relationship with God. Church hospitality fulfills a person's need to feel connected and ensures them that they are not alone. Based upon the findings in the focus group meetings, the licensed and/or ordained pastors are aware of the impact that hospitality (friendliness) has on church attendance, and it is an important strategic approach to reaching to the public and increasing growth.

#### **Research Sub-Question 4**

Research Sub-Question 4 asked: *What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the licensed and/or ordained pastors?*

The major findings indicated that prayer was cited most often by the licensed and/or ordained pastors to retaining church members. This was consistent with comments provided by Davis (2007) and Callahan (2010) in the review of literature where the reference to the power of "prayer" as a strategy to reduce the number of church people leaving the church was made. Davis explained that the element of prayer is the power behind the church. While Callahan mentioned that strong, healthy congregations promote the basic elements of prayer and living in the grace of God bear significant importance to retaining church membership.

The power of prayer is reaffirmed in Matthew 18:19-20, which stated, "... if two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask; my Father in heaven will do it for you. 20. For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them" (Life Application Study Bible, 2007). Christians are collectively the Body of Christ, these scriptures inform Christians that as they agree in their beliefs and pray in faith the results are limitless, because Christ's Holy Spirit is with them. As such,

corporate church prayer has positive effects on building close bonds, creating a sense of community within the church family, and fostering hope which is paramount to retaining church members.

### **Research Sub-Question 5**

Research Sub-Question 5 asked: *What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?*

Displaying a friendly disposition and exhibiting hospitality to visitors, again, were the most cited factor pertaining to ministry practices that attract new church membership. Similarly, Marple (2001) asserted in the review of literature that hospitality is a vital part of the Christian mandate for welcoming all who come to participate in worship which gives credibility to these findings. As such, the ministers interviewed, as a whole, felt that a visitor will forego the enrichment, encouragement, and help from other Christians if they do not feel the friendliness and acceptance of the congregation when they visit the church.

The Apostle Paul emphasized the importance of hospitality in Romans 12:13, which stated, “When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be ready to be hospitable” (Life Application Study Bible, 2007). The scripture informs Christian’s to be selfless. In doing so, comfort people who are troubled, help those are experiencing challenges, and make a concentrated efforts to meet the need of others. People experience numerous struggles in their lives and use these struggles as an excuse to not to attend church services. Exhibiting friendliness to visitors when they arrive to church can be a catalyst to draw visitors from the hardship of their struggles and attract them to the church.



## **Research Sub-Question 6**

Research Sub-Question 6 asked: *What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the ministers?*

Mirroring the ministry practices that attract church membership, being friendly was referenced with the most frequency. All seven participants made a reference to the benefits of presenting a friendly attitude as the most important factor they experienced toward retaining church membership while serving as a ministry leader. The ministry leaders expressed that the friendliness experienced from the congregation gave more meaning to the worship experience.

In the review of literature, Marple (2001) provided support to this finding in that the author noted the importance of building a bond with other congregational members by stating that hospitality can play an important role in building relationships earlier in the Chapter II of this study. Simple acts of kindness such as a pleasant smile, a handshake, and/or a hug create a friendly and familial atmosphere that makes congregants feel that they are a part of the church family.

A compelling argument is made in scripture to the importance of being friendly is mentioned by King Solomon in which he stated, “A man that hath friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that is closer than a brother” (Life Application Study Bible, 2007). The scripture explains in Proverbs 18:24 that it can be disadvantageous to the purpose of the church to appear harsh or stoic. As Christians it is imperative to extend themselves to display congeniality to develop lasting friendships.

### **Research Sub-Question 7**

Research Sub-Question 7 asked: *What ministry practices attract new church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?*

The findings indicated that being friendly and building relationships in the community were cited with the most frequency. In the literature, Watson and Steptau-Watson (2015) lends support to the findings by emphasizing that outreach ministries should be created to reflect, improve, and enhance the quality of life in the communities to attract and retain church members. In addition, Ford (2012) mentioned that churches should purposefully create ideas and positive ways to reach out to the community. These finding triangulate the data in Chapter II with these findings in the study. While observing church services at both churches it was observed that a very similar aspect of both ministries is their strategy for connecting with people who visit their Sunday services. During the service, guests are invited to fill out a visitor's welcome card which is given directly to them by the ushers during the welcome and announcement briefing of the service. The completed card is deposited into the offering bucket. The guest are informed that a "thank-you" letter will be mailed to them as a display of appreciation for their visit; as well as an offer to answer any questions the visitor may have about the church. Additionally, visitors are treated with refreshments after church services. Every guest is given a pamphlet that explains a little about the church, such as the churches statement of faith, mission statement, leadership chain (among other things about the church are explained in the pamphlet). Finally, the guest are warmly invited to return again to fellowship. The vision of the church includes caring not just about themselves and their church family but caring about those in the community. These small acts of

kindness build relationships and can help visitors to remember their experience at the church in a positive way and hopefully make them return to attend future services.

The idea of building relationships in the church as a way to attract people to attend church services is cemented in the epistle letter of Colossians 3:12 and 14, in which the Apostle Paul stated, “12. Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourself with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience....14. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony” (Life Application Study Bible, 2007) .

### **Research Sub-Question 8**

Research Sub-Question 8 asked: *What ministry practices retain church membership in a growing church as perceived by the auxiliary leaders?*

The major findings that emerged among auxiliary leaders pertained to building strong relationships inside of the church with other members. Kinneman (2007) made a passing reference that faith organizations need to close the gap on generational differences. In doing so, he suggested that the faith community should create strategies that strengthen bonds among church members, especially between the various generational groups. Kinneman (2007) encouraged churches to work toward building meaningful relationships to entice young adults to stay in church.

Through building meaningful relationships with young adults, the assumption is that they will remain in church when they have a personal relationship with other adults inside the church. Education that teaches congregants how to make positive contributions to society should be sought after as well as reverse mentoring programs to diminish the hierarchal atmosphere in the church is a suggested strategy toward building

strong relationships inside of the churches. In addition, leaders are urged to eliminate the “community club” culture if it exists in their churches by facilitating practices that foster a deeper intimate relationship with God in order to keep people actively interested and committed to the church.

Building relationships to unite the generational groups in the church is exemplified in the biblical writings of the Old Testament Prophet Joel, “Then after doing all those things, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on servants-men and women alike,” (Life Application Study Bible, 2007, Joel 2: 28-29). These scriptures illustrate that God is impartial as such, there is an expectation for Christians to also be impartial and bring all generational groups together as a family.

### **Research Sub-Question 9**

Research Sub-Question 9 asked: *What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what attracts new church membership?*

No major findings were uncovered in terms of differences in perceptions between the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what attracts new church membership. There were many similarities revealed by the various groups which are covered in the above responses. Pointedly, participants perceived relationship building, prayer, assimilation, and hospitality as best practices to attract church members. However, assimilation, for the most part emerged as a theme that permeated throughout every interview session and was as much of a finding

pertaining to reaching out to the public to get them actively involved in the church. Ford (2012); Osinski (2005); and Watson and Stepteau-Watson (2015) provided that church outreach ministries involves purposefully creating ideas and positive ways to reach out to the community.

Assimilation in the church is not a foreign concept in biblical terms as the Gospel of Saint John stated, “We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned to us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work,” (Life Application Study Bible, 2007, John 9:4). The bible expression explains that Christians are tasked to take part in activities and various roles in the church. Generally, people desire to have a meaningful purpose and are seeking ways to fulfill those purposes in the tasks that they chose to embark. Informing church visitors of the various ministry opportunities and community activities that they can participate in are way to assimilate and attract potential congregants into the church culture.

#### **Research Sub-Question 10**

Research Sub-Question 10 asked: *What similarities and differences exist between the perceptions of the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what retains church membership?*

No major findings were uncovered in terms of differences in perceptions between the licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders regarding what retains church membership. There were many similarities revealed by the individual groups which are covered in the above responses. In short, participants perceived relationship building, prayer, assimilation, and hospitality as best practices to retain church members. During the focus group meetings licensed and/or ordained

pastors, ministers, and auxiliary church leaders responded that assimilating congregants into a role in the church is vital to member retention and church growth. The participants indicated in the meetings that people should be integrated into a role once they have shown a desire to learn, eagerness to be involved in ministry work, and want to experience personal growth in God's word. Waggoner (2006) pointed out in his study that 12% of the study participants alleged that their church is unable to provide assistance to its member's and was governed by leadership that discouraged involvement was the reason that they left their churches.

Historical biblical writings found in the Book of Nehemiah suggests that God's people demonstrated an eagerness to become actively involved in church operations and activities, "At last the wall was completed to half its height around the entire city, for the people has worked with enthusiasm," (Life Application Study Bible, 2007, Nehemiah 4:6). In the Book of Nehemiah, the children of Israel united to rebuild the destroyed walls of Jerusalem. The Israelites was not distracted nor discouraged by the enormity of the task, but instead the importance of becoming involved in fortifying the city of Jerusalem encouraged their enthusiasm. As such, the involvement of church members in ministry work should not be discouraged, but instead encouraged and utilized as a way to retain church members.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of this study as supported by the literature, it is concluded that of greatest importance to attract and retain church members of all participants were relationship building, prayer, assimilation, and hospitality (friendliness). The participants' honest sharing of their meaningful experiences gave life to the findings of

the broader research literature. The participants interviewed in focus group meetings were appreciative of the research being conducted. The responses of these 22 participants have been invaluable to the findings in this study.

As a whole, the research provided by the study participants expressed the immense power of building relationships toward attracting and retaining church members in a church. Throughout our lives we constantly interact with people on a daily basis and those interactions can evolve into relationships. The relationships that are built with others can affect our lives physically, emotionally, or spiritually. As related to a church setting, relationships can have the power to entice people who visit a church to return for a subsequent visits, as well as encourage current members to remain in the church. Consequently, relationships building was cited with great frequency as an element that supported building a vibrant church based on the findings. The findings also point to the impact of prayer toward retaining church members in a church. Growing churches make prayer a top priority. To this point, churches that understand the importance of prayer have structured times of prayer into their weekly schedule for church members to receive prayer for various reasons, which also includes corporate prayer.

The findings regarded hospitality as a fundamental component toward attracting and retaining church members to positively influence church growth. Focus group participants believed that hospitality is in need of much greater emphasis in the ministry. In other words, there is no such thing as too much hospitality in the church. In fact, the more benevolence and acceptance you show to people; the more likely they will return. This idea also holds true for current congregation members as well.

Assimilating visitors and congregants into ministry and church activities brought a positive meaningful difference to their lives according to focus group participants. Reaching out to people to find their interests, experience, and talents to get them involved in different aspects of ministry, church activities, or projects creates an aura of belonging to something meaningful. Additionally, assimilating visitors and non-active church members into the church's culture nurtures a connection and familial atmosphere.

The literature review in Chapter II revealed the importance of finding a strategy to curb losses in membership and retention among churchgoers in faith organizations to attract and retain Christian followers. The findings in this chapter described the factors that support enticing people to want to attend church, and those already actively attending church to remain a member and continue to attend worship services at their respective church. It highlighted four factors associated with attracting and retaining church members in Christian churches: (a) relationship building, (b) prayer, (c) assimilation, and (d) hospitality. The implementation of these factors will help to secure current and future stability of the Christian church.

### **Implications for Action**

Based on the results of this study, implications for action are tied to the two conclusions drawn from the findings. The first implication for action requires that congregational leaders attempt to utilize the major factors identified in this study at their churches. Pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders described several specific factors during the interview process that provided insight into attracting and retaining members in two area churches. Those major factors were relationship building, prayer, assimilation, and hospitality.



Based on a perspective of the church at large, it is without question that the relevancy of the church remains mostly unchallenged in most factions of society as the church is generally regarded as an important aspect of the American value system. Therefore, it is important to understand how these factors affect membership and retention in churches to help us to better comprehend the context of membership and retention in Christian faith organizations. It is equally important to help church leaders build successful strategies for their congregations that have been demonstrated and implemented in successful churches. The researcher suggests that church leaders implement practices that address relationship building, prayer, assimilation, and hospitality to attract and retain church members. For example, when it comes to implementing practices that address relationship building to attract and retain church members - church leaders should encourage members to seek each other for advice and counsel when problems arise as well as hold events such as pot-lucks, morning coffee etc. to allow congregational members to get to know each other outside of the church environment.

Praying together and encouraging each other to live in the grace of God will help retain church members; and assimilating visitors and non-active church members into either a ministry role, project, or activity once an interest in ministry is identified will connect people with the church. Finally, church leaders should extend as many acts of hospitality, kindness, and friendliness to people both inside and outside of the church as possible. Simply thanking visitors for coming to church, offering visitors an invitation to return, and inviting people whom you encounter in your day-to-day interactions in public places is a positive way to reach out to the community. Also, greeting congregational

members with a hug is one of many positive expressions church leaders can extend to make current members feel loved, important, and a valued part of the church.

Another implication for action involves a spiritual perspective. Pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders described many aspects of prayer and scriptures verses in the focus groups meetings. Based on the perspective of stakeholders at large, attracting and retaining people in Christian church's as it relates to attracting and maintaining church members must address if the purposes of the church is to continue evolve effectively. Every church leader would benefit from understanding how relationship building, prayer, assimilation, and hospitality lead to attracting and retaining church members. This is true whether the congregation is governed by a Methodist, Church of God and Christ, Apostolic, Baptist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Christian, Lutheran, Independent, Non-Denomination etc. paradigm of authority.

In conclusion, if churches intend to support individuals, families, and the community it is imperative for the church leaders to understand the factors in this study that are assumed to support attracting church membership and retention. As such, the results of this study has both theoretical and practical significance in providing assistance to churches in the local community it serves, and at large. The researcher assumes that the implementation of the factors identified in the study; relationship building, prayer, assimilation, and hospitality will give the church a brighter future to be influential in the work of Jesus Christ in its own context.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

It is recommended that future research surrounding this topic be completed in the following six areas:

- The church members' responses were limited to the two Grace Church Congregations that received an invitation to participate in the study and of which the pastors of those churches allowed for the study to be conducted at their respective church. Future studies could address this limitation by conducting the study at more Grace International churches. Grace International Church, Inc. is a worldwide fellowship of churches and has over 2,700 churches around the world, there are 42 affiliate congregations in California alone.
- This study could be replicated in different international church's that are not affiliated with Grace International Church, Inc. throughout the country in efforts to strengthen and validate the findings.
- The sample population in this study consisted of respondents from two non-denominational Christian churches. Future studies could be expanded to respondents from other Christian denominations.
- Explore the significance of the competent as they relate to church leaders building meaningful relationships, prayer, assimilation, and, hospitality to the resuscitation of languishing congregations.
- Identify former churchgoers and identify how building meaningful relationships, prayer, assimilation, and, hospitality may have caused them to leave their church home.
- Explore the creation of a model for developing the skills necessary for church leaders to create and sustain a culture that addresses relationship building,

prayer, assimilation, and hospitality. Creating a model on how to deliver these skills would be worth the effort.

- Examine the quality of the Pastors charisma and personality to determine if a relationship exist between the factors: building meaningful relationships, prayer, assimilation, and, hospitality.

### **Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

Approximately 4 ½ years ago I arrived home from work to find waiting in my mailbox a notice promoting a new Doctor of Organizational Leadership program at Brandman University. I began to consider the possibility of pursuing a doctoral degree. After further exploration I determined that this program would best match my interests, as a result, on August 31, 2013, I embarked on the doctoral journey. This project and degree is important for two distinct reasons.

First and foremost, as a divorced father raising two daughters, who were teenagers at the time I started this study, I wanted to set a high standard in educational excellence and to continuously be an example of what a parent should be for my daughters. I have always articulated the importance of God, personal integrity, loyalty, and the value of education in our home.

Secondly, this project is important because it originates from a conviction to do what God had pre-ordained. When I began this study, I was attending religious worship services at another church where I has just been given a role as Outreach Ministry Director. The church was a non-denominational congregation located San Diego, California. The church was founded in 1974, and drew people from all walks of life. For

six years I observed firsthand a high rate of attrition from the faith that appears to validate much of this work.

The churches robust years were prior to 2006, where approximately 150 parishioners attended Sunday services regularly. In the years that followed, the church continued to see many members leave the church, and at the time of this writing, the church had languished to 12 faithful followers. Nevertheless, the congregation maintained its faith that God will provide restoration to their declining membership. In spite of their enthusiasm for Christ, evangelism, and vitality in discipleship the membership continued to decline. Unfortunately, in late December 2014, amidst financial misfortune, an inability to attract and/or retain members, the church officially closed its doors to the public. The outreach efforts I had taken were too late.

Relying on the Prophet Paul's proclamation in Romans 11:29 (New Living Translation) that stated "*God's gifts and His call can never be withdrawn*" I felt a sacred obligation to fulfill this calling to stabilize churches by clarifying the cause(s) of attrition in the Christian churches. I suspected that the Lord was guiding me to do this project out of concern for the congregations around the world, and a need to turn around the despair churches are experiencing as a result of this condition.

As to the program – during the past four years of this journey there have been many significant opportunities, challenges, and discoveries along the way. One of the benefits of this process has been the cohort approach to the Organizational Leadership program. Having the opportunity to interact with men and women with diverse experience has been an invaluable resource and encouragement. Though most of my cohorts were in the education field or educators their experiences brought me new insight

and perspectives where were very helpful to my development and learning. I am so grateful to have has this opportunity.

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APPENDIX A

Synthesis Matrix

Sources↓ Variables→	Introduction	Definitions	History of Christian Church Attendance in the U.S.	Declining Public Interest to attend Church in the U.S.	Changing Public Values/Social Issues.	Technology as it Affects Christian Church Attendance in the U.S.	The Effects of Pastoral Leadership Practices on Retention in Christian Churches	Charismatic Leadership & Transformational Leadership	Christian Church Outreach in the U.S.	Christian Church Membership Retention in the U.S.	Methodology
Adherents, 2005											
ADRA, 2005	✓										
Amoah, Safo, & Amoah, 2015	✓										
Arnold, 2009					✓						
Arthur & Rensleigh, 2015.						✓					
Association of Religion Data Archives, 2010		✓									
Atkinson & Hammersley M, 1998											✓
Audette & Weaver, 2016	✓				✓						
Barrett & Johnson, 2001			✓								
Bass & Riggio, 2006								✓			
Beckman, 2000					✓						
Bergin, 1991	✓										
Birkman, 2010				✓							
Black, 2011				✓		✓		✓			
Brantlinger, Jiminez, Klinger, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005											✓
Bursch, 2014				✓							
Callahan, 2010				✓				✓	✓		
Campbell, 2013									✓		
Campolo & Compolo, 1995.				✓				✓	✓		
Carver, 2015	✓								✓		
Cheyne, 2010					✓				✓		
Conger, 1989								✓			
Craddock, 2007							✓				
Creswell, 2007											✓
Davis, 2007				✓				✓			

Davis-Jones, 2010											
Davis-Young, 2016						✓					
Dobbs, 2016							✓				
D'Souza, 2007	✓										
Dyck, 2010	✓			✓							✓
Egli, 2005									✓		
Eskridge, 2012			✓							✓	
Evans, 1979	✓										
Fagin, 1996		✓									
Fasipe, 2010									✓		
Fink, 2009											✓
Finke & Stark, 1999										✓	
Fischer, 2010,			✓								
Fischer-Nielsen, 2009	✓			✓		✓		✓			
Flick, 2002											✓
Ford, 2012									✓	✓	
Garland, Wolfer, & Myers, 2008									✓		
Gallaty, 2013		✓									
Gerhard & Woolley, 1963	✓										
Ghorpade, Lackritz, & Moore, 2012		✓							✓		
Global Media Outreach, 2014						✓					
Goodall, 2008.								✓			
Grant, 2015	✓				✓						
Grossman, 2016					✓				✓		
Hampson, 2015	✓				✓						
Harney, 2011									✓		
Hiebert, 1994		✓									
Hong, 2007									✓		
House, 1976								✓			
Howell & Avolio, 1993								✓			
Huber, 1998						✓					
Hudson, Purnell, Duncan & Baker, 2015									✓		
Hunter, 2003				✓				✓	✓		
Jackson, 2009	✓							✓			
Johnson, 2009								✓			
Johnson, Payne, & Wilson, 2008									✓		
Joyce, 2015	✓				✓						
Jung & Sosic, 2006.								✓			
Kinneman, & Lyons, 2007	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓		

Kouzes & Posner, 2002								✓			
Krauska, 2008		✓									
Kurian, 2011			✓								
Larson, Larson & Gartner, 1990	✓										
Larson, 2000						✓					
Lee, 2006						✓					
Life Application Study Bible, 2007	✓								✓		
Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2010											✓
Luftman & Bullen, 2004	✓			✓							
Luong & Westcott, 2015							✓				
McBride & Giem, 2006	✓								✓		
McDuff, 2001	✓										
McGavran, 1990									✓		
McConnell, 2007					✓		✓		✓		
McMillan & Schumacher, 2010											✓
Mehta & Mehta, 1995							✓	✓			
Merritt, 2016					✓						
Miller, 1987									✓		
Morris & Clark, 1987				✓							
Newport, 2012										✓	
Niemand & Rensleigh, 2003						✓					
Noll, 2002			✓								
Northouse, 2010		✓						✓			
Osinski, 2005									✓		
Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009						✓					
Patten, 2012											✓
Patton, 2015											✓
Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2010	✓			✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2015	✓			✓							✓
Pond, Smith & Clement, 2010	✓			✓	✓						✓
Putnam, 2000						✓					
Rainer, 2011					✓		✓				
Rainer, 2012	✓				✓					✓	
Rasperry, 1993	✓										



Riley, 2009				✓		✓		✓			
Readings, 2014						✓					
Roberts, 2010											✓
Schaller, 1987				✓					✓		
Schwartz, 2005				✓							
Senter, 2009									✓		
Shah & Woodberry, 2004	✓										
Siniscalco, Damrell, & Nabity, 2014	✓										
Stackhouse, 2003					✓						
Steig, 1997					✓						
The Holy Bible, 1982	✓										
Tinsley & Weiss, 2000											✓
Tufarolo, 2016	✓										
United States Department of Labor, 2016	✓										
Van den Heever, 2008						✓					
Waggoner, 2006a	✓			✓			✓				✓
Waggoner, 2006b				✓							
Watson & Stepteau-Watson, 2015									✓		
Weber, 1930	✓										
Wilson, 2000						✓					
WorldVision, 2006	✓										

## APPENDIX B

### QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The interviewee and researcher will meet prior to the interview to get acquainted and to review the purpose of the study and the goals of the interview. The researcher will confirm that the subject has agreed to the research process and the interview will begin with the following preliminary questions:

#### **Interview Script:**

*[Interviewer states:] I truly appreciate you taking the time to participate in my study. I know you could be doing other things – I really appreciate your help. To review, the purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders that attract and retain church membership at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, and Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. The questions are written to elicit this information but please feel free to share stories or experiences as you see fit throughout the interview. Additionally, I encourage you to be as honest and open as possible for purposes of research and since your identity will be remain anonymous.*

*As a review of our process leading up to this interview, you were invited to participate via letter and signed an informed consent form that outlined the interview process and the condition of complete anonymity for the purpose of this study. Please remember, this interview will be recorded and transcribed, and you will be provided with a copy of the complete transcripts to check for accuracy in content and meaning prior to me analyzing the data. Do you have any questions before we begin? [Begin to ask interview questions]*

1. Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.
2. How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?
3. What is your current role or position in your church?
4. Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch?

Following the introductory questions, the following questions will be asked to acquire the data for the study:

5. What are the major strategies you have used to implement church practices to attract new congregational members in your church?
6. What are the major strategies you have used to implement church practices to retain current congregational members in your church?
7. Regarding church practices that attract new church membership in a growing church, please describe the factors that you believe influence potential churchgoers decision to join a church.
8. Regarding church practices that retain church membership in a growing church, please describe the factors that you believe influence your decision to remain at your church home?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to add to this interview?

## APPENDIX C

### RESEARCH STUDY INVITATION LETTER

April 20, 2017

Dear Prospective Study Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study. Please read this carefully as this form provides you with information about this study. The main investigator of this study is Anderson W. Corley, Doctoral Candidate in Brandman University's Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. Participation should require one hour or less of your time. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this study. Additionally, your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

**PURPOSE:** This study is about church membership retention. You were chosen to participate in this study because you serve in a leadership capacity at Grace Church, Spring Valley, California, or Grace Harvest Church, Panorama City, California. Approximately 41 church leaders will be invited to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to identify ministry practices that attract and retain church membership in Christian churches. This study uses responses from a questionnaire to determine the factors associated with licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leader's perception on churchgoer intention to stay or leave a church organization.

**PROCEDURES:** If you decide to participate in the study, you will be invited to participate in an in-person semi-structured interview, conducted by the primary researcher, using a questionnaire. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. It should take about 1 hour to complete the interview and questionnaire. You do not have to return the consent form. A copy of the interview protocol is included with this letter. Again, participation in this focus group is voluntary and return of the completed questionnaire will constitute your informed consent to participate.

**RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS:** There are no known major risks to your participation in this research study. It may be inconvenient for you to avail yourself for up to one hour. Some interview questions will ask you to describe personal leadership experiences and may cause mild emotional discomfort.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS:** There are no major benefits to you for in participating in this research. But, knowledge may be gained which may help improve membership retention in churches. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, congregants, church leaders, and other churches of best practices for transforming church culture to bring people back to the Christian churches. The results of this study will be used to develop a common language for leading and implementing change for the congregations to successfully embrace and support the community, families and

individuals in their efforts to preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to bring people back to church.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:** There is no financial compensation for your participation in this research. There are no costs to you as a result of your participation in this study.

**ANONYMITY:** Records of information that you provide for the research study and any personal information you provide will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study. You will be assigned a participant number and will be reported as "group" responses. The recorded interview session will not reference your name in document title or URL. During the recording, the researcher will not refer to you by name. This will also hold true for any school name, school district name, county, or state. Any names used by the participant during the recorded session will be redacted from the transcript. The results of this study may be published in a dissertation, scientific journals or presented at professional meetings. In addition, your individual privacy will be maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this study. All the data gathered during this study, which were previously described, will be kept strictly confidential by the researcher. Data will be stored in locked files. All information will be held in strict confidence and will not be disclosed unless required by law or regulation.

You are encouraged to ask any questions, at any time, that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may contact the investigator, Mr. Corley, by phone at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email corl4601@mail.brandman.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, and 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Very Respectfully,

Anderson W. Corley  
Investigator

## APPENDIX D

### **Informed Consent Form**

**RESEARCH STUDY TITLE:** A Phenomenological Study Aimed To Understand Factors Associated with Attracting and Retaining Church Membership.

**BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY**  
**16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD**  
**IRVINE, CA 92618**

**RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR:** Anderson W. Corley, Doctoral Candidate

**TITLE OF CONSENT FORM:** Research Participant's Informed Consent Form

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:** The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study will be to identify and describe ministry practices that attract and retain church membership in Christian churches according to licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and auxiliary leaders.

In participating in this research study, you agree to partake in a recorded semi-structured interview, which will be conducted in an in-person, focus group platform. The interview will take up to one hour, and will be audio-recorded. During this interview, you will be asked a series of questions designed to allow you to share your experiences in a leadership role at a successful Christian church.

I understand that:

- a) There are no known major risks or discomforts associated with this research. It may be inconvenient to spend up to one hour online. However, the session will be held at the participant's church location to minimize this inconvenience. Some interview questions may cause mild emotional discomfort.
- b) There are no major benefits to you for participation, but a potential may be that you will have an opportunity to share your expertise to help improve membership retention in churches. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, congregants, church leaders, and other churches of best practices for transforming church culture to bring people back to the Christian churches. The results of this study will be used to develop a common language for leading and implementing change for the congregations to successfully embrace and support the community, families and individuals in their efforts to preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to bring people back to church.
- c) Money will not be provided for my time and involvement.

- d) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Anderson W. Corley, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Mr. Corley may be contacted by phone at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email at corl4601@mail.brandman.edu.
- e) I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.
- f) I understand that the study will be audio-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project.
- g) I understand that the audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio and electronic interview transcripts will be kept for a minimum of five years by the investigator only on a cloud-based server.
- h) I also understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call of the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, and 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights.

I have read the above and understand it and hereby voluntarily consent to the procedures(s) set forth.

<b>Signature of Participant or Responsible Party</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Signature of Witness (if appropriate)</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Signature of Principal Investigator</b> <b>Brandman University IRB September 2014</b>	<b>Date</b>

APPENDIX E

Email Correspondence

From: [REDACTED]  
To: [REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
Date: Tue, 25 Jul 2017 22:43:37 +0000  
Subject: Permission for Church Participation  
Dear [REDACTED],

The licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and lay leaders of Grace Harvest Church, Paoranna City, California are invited to participate in a research study about factors associated with attracting and retaining church membership. Participation in the study is voluntary. The participants will be asked to participate in an in-depth interview (focus group) at the church. No identifying information will be collected, so the respondents will be ensured anonymity.

I believe that this study is a worthwhile endeavor, not just for your church but for addressing the overall declining membership and retention in the Christian religion as a whole. The results will allow for a better understanding of the factors affecting a church member's intention to leave, or stay in church. Also, the knowledge obtained could be critical in continuing the progress of your church.

The study will be conducted by Anderson Corley, Ed.D, candidate at Brandman University in Irvine, California. Thanks in advance for allowing me to come to your church to compete this important work.

Sincerely,

Anderson W. Corley  
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]  
To: [REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
Date: Mon, 10 Jul 2017 14:20:33 +0000  
Subject: Re: Permission for Church Participation  
Anderson, how will the focus group(s) be contacted or organized? As a pastor, it's my concern when allowing membership information to be utilized or access!

On Jul 7, 2017, at 2:11 PM, CORLEY, ANDERSON W  
Dear [REDACTED],

The licensed and/or ordained pastors, ministers, and lay leaders of Grace Church, Spring Valley, California are invited to participate in a research study about factors associated with attracting and retaining church membership. Participation in the study is voluntary. The participants will be asked to participate in a focus group at the church, or by telephone conference call. No identifying information will be collected, so the respondents will be ensured anonymity.

I believe that this study is a worthwhile endeavor, not just for Grace Church, but for addressing the overall declining membership and retention in the Christian religion as a whole. The results will allow for a better understanding of the factors affecting a church member's intention to leave, or stay in church.

The study will be conducted by me, Anderson Corley, Ed.D, candidate at Brandman University in Irvine, California. Thanks in advance for helping me compete this important work.

Sincerely,

Anderson W. Corley  
[REDACTED]



APPENDIX F

**NIH Certificate**



APPENDIX G

**Artifacts**

**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: [REDACTED]  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: [REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: [REDACTED]  
To: [REDACTED]  
Sub: [REDACTED]

**Baptism**

**Baptism Class Sunday, July 9<sup>th</sup> After Service  
Baptism Service Sunday, July 23, 2017**

Hello saints many of you voiced that you would like to make a public confession of your faith and be baptized. We need a count of how many would be attending the Baptism Class this Sunday, **July 9<sup>th</sup>** after service in Grace Café.

It is important for you to please contact the office staff A.S.A.P!

- Grace Office [REDACTED]

**Thank you in advance for your cooperation!**



**Sunday, July 23,**

**Galatians 3:27**

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ  
(have been clothed with) Christ

**Baptism  
SIGN-UP**

**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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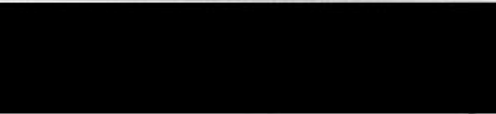
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**Saturday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> 9AM**  
**Day Spa & Luncheon**  
**(All services 20% Off \* Mall Shopping 15% Off)**

Let the pampering begin mark your calendars and get ready to take a deep breath sit back and relax. You don't want to miss this great deal and Spa Experience **Free** Continental Breakfast, **Free** Lunch, **Free** Sauna & Stream Room

Ladies we need to give a count to the Spa of how many ladies will be attending, so please sign-up and along with your guest by Sunday, July 16<sup>th</sup>.

# Ladies of GRACE



**Saturday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> 9AM –1PM**

**Day Spa & Luncheon**

**(All services 20% Off \* Mall Shopping 15% Off)**

Let the pampering begin mark your calendars and get ready to take a deep breath sit back relax. You don't want to miss this great deal and Spa Experience

**Free Continental Breakfast, Free Lunch, Free Sauna & Stream Room**

**See Prices Below:**

Basic 1Hour Massage \$85.00

1/2 Hour Massage \$55.00

Basic 1Hour Facial \$75.00

½ Hour Facial \$55.00

Full Body Massage \$105.00

Spa Manicure \$25.00

Manicure \$20.00

Spa Pedicures \$45.00

Pedicure \$40.00

Shampoo/Blow-dry \$35.00

Make-up Application \$45.00

Acrylics, Silks & Gel Nails (See Brochure or visit website for pricing)

**For other services see brochure or visit [www.Aviasalonanddayspa.com](http://www.Aviasalonanddayspa.com)**



**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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**FREE FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT**  
Featuring the Shack  
**JOIN US THIS THURSDAY, JULY 20<sup>TH</sup> @ 7PM**  
**FREE HOT DOGS, POP CORN AND BEVERAGE...**

**FREE FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT**

**JOIN US THIS THURSDAY, JULY 20TH @**

BASED ON THE WORLDWIDE BEST SELLER

SAM  
WORTHINGTON

OCTAVIA  
SPENCER

TIM  
MCGRAW

# THE SHACK

FROM THE PRODUCER OF *THE BLIND SIDE*

**Make it a family night; come and  
popcorn, hot dogs, and beve  
Join us in the Chapel..**



**GRACE CHURCH**

8487 Paradise Valley Rd.

Spring Valley, CA 91977

**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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**From:**  
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**Subject:**



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**To**  
**Su**



**LADIES OF GRACE ANNUAL HAT SUNDAY/HATTITUDE PART II**

**Sunday, June 23, 2017 @ 10am**

Ladies it's that time again for our **Annual Hat Sunday/Hattitude Part II and Hat Contest**.  
Are you sophisticated, fun, creative or playful, show your personality wear your hat and enter our annual hat  
contest.

**Contest open for Women, Men and Children, wear your best hat and win a prize...**



*Ladies of*  
**GRACE**  
ANNUAL HAT SUNDAY

**Sunday, July 22<sup>st</sup> @ 10am**

Are you sophisticated, fun, creative or playful, show your personality and wear your favorite hat to win a prize, contest open of Women, Men and Children.



*PART II*



**BEST HAT CONTEST**



**8487 Paradise Valley, Rd.  
Spring Valley, Ca 91977**

**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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Subject:



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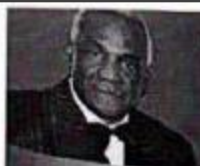
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**Interfaith United Ministries, Inc,  
29<sup>th</sup> Annual Holy Convocation**

**Tuesday, July 25<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm**

Pastor Shanell will be the special guest speaker, asking Grace members to come out and support our Pastor **Holy Convocation**, will be hosted at Higher Praise Christian Fellowship, 4071 Beta Street, San Diego, CA.



*Bishop Joseph Coney, Jr.*

**& INTERFAITH UNITED MINISTRIES, INC.**



*29th Annual 2017*

# Holy Convocation

**THEME: LIFT HIM UP**

ST. John 12:32

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SUNDAY A.M.

SUNDAY P.M.



Pastor  
Shanell  
Morrison



Evangelist  
Jackie  
Haynes



Apostle  
Phillip  
Washington



Bishop  
Stephen  
Rosa



Bishop  
Fred D.  
Collins



Bishop  
John W.  
Jacques

July 26, 27, 28, 2017 ~ 7:00pm Nightly • Sunday, July 30, 2017 ~ 10am



YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS THIS POWERFUL WEEK OF  
ANointed WORSHIP SERVICES AND SPEAKERS

**HOST CHURCH: HIGHER PRAISE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**  
4071 BETA STREET - SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92113



Master  
Christopher  
Johnson  
Minister of  
Music

For more information contact Bishop Joseph Coney at (619) 246-9797

**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL  
SATURDAY, AUGUST 5TH  
10am - 1pm**

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE TUESDAY, JULY 25, 2017  
CONTACT THE OFFICE NO LATER THAN 10AM TOMORROW MORNING**

**Saturday, August 5<sup>th</sup> 10am-1:30pm: Vacation Bible School CAMPOUT 2017** for ages 5-12. The best weekend of the summer to help kids discover the light of Jesus Christ. Call the church office to register your child  
**Registration deadline Tuesday, July 25, 2017.**

**GRACE OFFICE:**  
619-472-2569  
[gracechurchsv@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gracechurchsv@sbcglobal.net)



Registration Now Open!

**Elementary School Age: 5-12**

**Register By July 23, 2017**

Give your children a new enthusiasm for God's Word--and for Jesus! As we engage kids with fun, surprises, you'll see amazing things happen. The delighted smiles...the memorable Bible points...they all add up to making a life-long difference in the lives of your children!

**It's relational!**

Amazing Bible adventures, cool crafts, great music, and snacks you can sink your teeth into. Help children discover that Jesus is the light of the world!

**It's life-changing!**

You'll see God work miracles in your kids and through our volunteers...and literally watch lives change as kids embrace Operation Kid-2-Kid and dive into Daily Challenges. Your children won't just learn God's Word--they'll live it.

*Jesus Light My Path!*

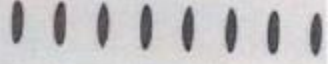


**Sign your child Up Today!**

**For Registration Forms**

**Contact:**

**GRACE CHURCH**  
 8487 Paradise Valley Rd  
 Spring Valley, CA. 9197



**Phone: 619-472-2569**  
**Fax: 619-472-2004**  
[gracechurchsv@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gracechurchsv@sbcglobal.net)

**GETTING S'MORE OF JESU**

**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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**CHURCH UNDER THE TENT**

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 6, 2017 @ 10AM**

Greeting Grace family,

In the name of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, due to the water damage in the sanctuary, this **Sunday, August 6, 2017 @ 10am** we will have church under a tent on the church lawn. With that said come ready to worship, and dress casual.

**-PSALM 8:3-4-**

*\* When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,  
\*\* What is man that You are mindful of him,  
And the son of man that You visit him?*

*This message is sent on behalf of:  
Pastors Zac & Shanell Morrison*

**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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**PSALMS DANCE & CREATIVE ARTS NETWORK PRESENTS  
4TH ANNUAL INSPIRED 2 DANCE CONFERENCE  
"PRESSING TOWARDS THE MARK" (PHIL. 3:14)**

**August 26, 2017**

Each year Dancers and Creative Artist come away being impacted with Powerful, Creative, and Transformation! **Phil. 3:14** Tells us to Press Towards the Mark of the High Calling! This year our assignment is to Push and Press you for more of God in your Calling!

With Special Guest: Minister Lisa Furtrell-Williams, an Ordained Minister with PhD in Theology from International Miracle Institute! A Business Owner of Real Silk Worship Flags and Flag Ministry Teacher!!!

**Conference Includes: 8am Zumba and Dance Intercessions**

- **9am General Sessions- Guest Speaker**
- **10:am Dance Classes and Workshops**
- **12 Noon Free Lunch and Materials**

**Conference Classes & Workshops:**

Zumba, Hip-Hop, Worship, Praise Dance, Flags, Choreography, and Mime.

How to start a Dance Ministry, Pressing towards the Mark in Finance, Prayer, & Spiritual Growth.

**Free Dance Concert 3pm - 5pm**

With special guest ministries and Class Demonstrations!  
(Register your Dance Ministry team to minister and participate!)

Hotels: Days Inn El Cajon CA or Best Western Plus Spring Valley CA.

**Registration:**

- Children registration 15.00 (12 and under) (3) or more \$10.00
- Teens and Adults \$25.00, or (3) or more (\$20.00)

Register at Eventbrite under Inspired 2 Dance or click on the link below.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/inspired-2-dance-iv-conference-hosted-by-psalms-dance-network-tickets-34805713827?aff=es2>

**FOR GRACE MEMBERS:** Please pre-register at the Information Center to receive discount.

For more info



Grace Church  
8487 Paradise Valley Rd  
Spring Valley, CA, 91977  
(619) 472-2569 ofc  
(619) 472-2004 fax  
[www.gracespringvalley.org](http://www.gracespringvalley.org)



**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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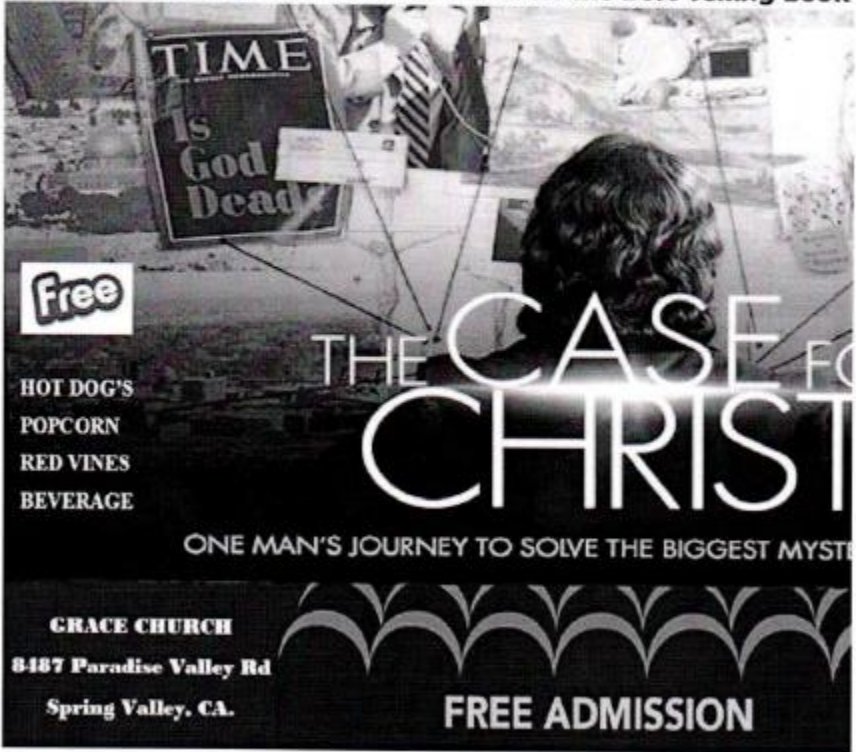
**Thursday, August 17<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm**

Last movie of the summer featuring **The Case For Christ**  
join us for an awesome time of free food, and beverages. Invite a friend!



Featuring

*The Case for Christ* is based on the best-selling book



**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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**B.I.C MEN'S MINISTRY BBQ DINNER FUNDRAISER**

**Saturday, August 19<sup>th</sup> 11am – 3pm**

Please support the Men of Grace in their fundraising efforts by purchasing a **presold ticket for \$10.00**. Money needs to be turned in Friday Night & Saturday Morning.

**Brothers**  **Chris**



FUNDRAISER

SATURDAY, AUGUST 19TH

11AM-3PM

PURCHASE PRESOLD TICKETS FOR \$10.00

RIBS • CHICKEN • LINKS • BEAN BEANS • POTATO SALAD...



GRACE  
3487 Paradise Valley Rd.  
Spring Valley, Ca 91977



Phone: 619-472-2569  
E-mail: [facebook.com/  
gracechurchspringvalley](https://www.facebook.com/gracechurchspringvalley)

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**You're Invited to Voices of Victory Christian Ministries  
Women's Fellowship Gathering "Together We Thrive"**

**Saturday, September 16, 2017 @ 9am**  
2778 Sweetwater Springs Blvd.  
Spring Valley, CA. 91977

Free Admission - Open to everyone!  
**Please RSVP By: September 9th, Call Pastor Shanell [61-438-4451](tel:61-438-4451)**

Lunch will be provided following the fellowship!

**Speakers:** Elder Charlene Waddell, Pastor Shanell Morrison, Pastor Constance Patterson.

Come and be blessed, looking for a great time of fellowship. The Lord will do great and mighty things for us during this gathering.

*You are invited to join us!  
Voices of Victory Christian Ministry  
A Fellowship Gathering!*



*Together We Thrive*

*September 16, 2017  
9:00 a.m.*

*2778 Sweetwater Springs Blvd. Ste. A-C  
Spring Valley, CA 91977*

For more information you may contact:  
First Lady Joyce Moore @ 619-729-2145

Lunch will be provided following the fellowship!

**RSVP by: September 9, 2017**

*Therefore encourage and comfort one another and build up one another, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11*

**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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Greeting Grace family,

*"The flooding in Houston and vicinity is really bad, actually terrible, and evidently there is more to come. , the damage and loss is pretty unbelievable."* As you know our Grace headquarters is in Houston, our main campus that sits 10,000.00 was flooded, but praise be to God our 2<sup>nd</sup> campus **Grace Church The Woodlands** sit's 1,200.00 is ok, and is being used for a **Hurricane Relief center** to help those effective by this disaster.

As a friendly reminder on Sunday we asked for those who can, to bring a sacrificial offering this Sunday, to help with the hurricane victims, there are so many families in need. Can you find it in your heart to give? Come prepared to give even if it's; a \$1.00 every little bit helps! 100% of your giving will go to the hurricane victims. Thank you in advance, God Bless!

# **RELIEF CENTER GRACE CHURCH**

**FREE SUPPLIES AVAILABLE!**

**CLOTHES, BABY ITEMS, SHOES,  
PRE-PACKAGED FOOD, HYGIENE KITS,  
BLANKETS, TOWELS, BEDDING,  
AND MORE!**

**10AM-5PM**

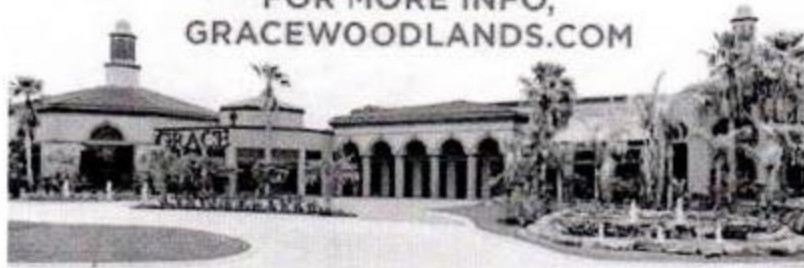
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**TAKE NORTH EXIT: GRAND PKWY WEST/SPRINGWOODS VILLAGE PKWY  
ONTO N FWY SERVICE RD**

**TAKE SOUTH EXIT: 72 NORTH FWY SERVICE RD**

**FOR MORE INFO,  
[GRACEWOODLANDS.COM](http://GRACEWOODLANDS.COM)**







This message was sent on behalf of our Seniors Pastor's

**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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**“BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY”**

**Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup> @ 10am**

"Seven out of 10 unchurched people would visit a church if a friend invited them. **What are we waiting for?** The church offers hope, grace, truth, joy and the message of eternal life -- all of which we want our family & friends to experience. Let's take a risk and prayerfully offer an invitation!" **What are you waiting for?** Invite someone to church!

**~GRACE IS THE PLACE, A PLACE TO BELONG~**



JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL  
SUNDAY SERVICE

*You're Invited  
to*

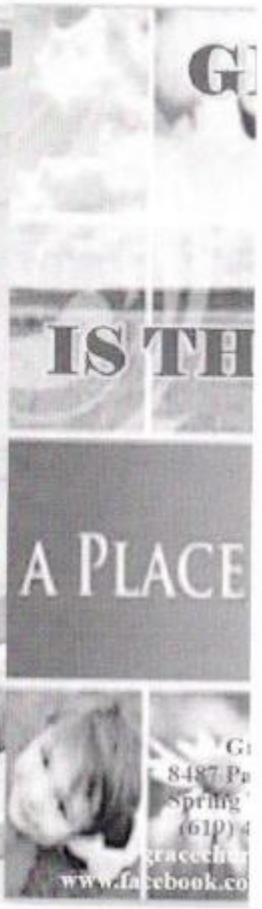
NATIONAL  
BACK TO  
**CHURCH**  
SUNDAY

*Our Doors Are Open!  
Sunday*

*September 17th*

*10am*

*A place that offers hope, grace, truth,  
joy and the message of  
eternal life!*



IS THE

A PLACE

Grace Church  
8487 Pe  
Spring  
(610) 4  
gracechur  
www.facebook.co

**Every, Monday - & Thursday 10am -11am& Sundays after service Twelve Basket Food Distribution Ministry.** If you are someone you know need food please spread the word.

Mark 10:45

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

volunteer  
*do good, feel good*

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**GRACE INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE  
SCHEDULE, INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION**



***HERE'S WHAT WE HAVE PLANNED  
FOR CONFERENCE THIS YEAR!***



*A Special Message from  
Guest Speaker Jimmy Evans*

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## Monday, October 9

7:00 pm Evening Session  
Speaker: Jimmy Evans  
Ordination, New License & License Upgrade  
Recognition

## Tuesday, October 10

8:30 am Prayer Service  
9:30 am General Session  
Speaker: Tom Lane  
10:30 am General Session  
Speaker: Tom Lane  
11:30 am General Session  
Speaker: Jimmy Evans  
12:30 pm Special Session (with box lunch - Cost \$10)  
Speakers: Mark & Michele Sherwood  
7:00 pm General Session  
Speaker: Jimmy Evans  
International Ministries Emphasis

## Wednesday, October 11

8:30 am Prayer Service  
9:30 am Business Meeting  
10:30 am Women's Session  
Men's Breakout Session #1  
Room #1 - Larry Ihrig  
Room #2 - Don Beasley  
Room #3 - Matt Schlesinger  
10:50 am Break  
11:30 am Men's Breakout Session #2  
Room #1 - Larry Ihrig  
Room #2 - Don Beasley  
Room #3 - Matt Schlesinger  
7:00 pm General Session  
Speaker: Steve Riggle



*A Special Message from  
Guest Speaker Jimmy Evans*

**ATTN: SENIOR PASTORS**

*RECEIVE A SPECIAL GIFT FOR  
BRINGING THE MOST MINISTRY  
LEADERS TO CONFERENCE.*

**Click Here to Register**

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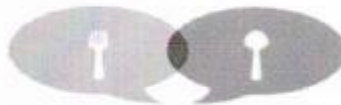


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*Ladies of*  
**GRACE**



*Chat n Chew*

**BOOKCLUB**

**Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup> @ 10am**

**Ladies of Grace Monthly Fellowship**

Join us for our **Chat N Chew Fall Book Club Kickoff!** Please sign-up at the Information Center and pay \$8.00 for your book.

*~Becoming a Woman of the Word~*

Pay by **Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup>** and receive a **free Gift!**

*Ladies don't miss out on this powerful time of fellowship and study to dig deeper into the word of God!*

When you passionately read the Bible and pursue God's Word, you uncover the truths, encouragements, and exciting revelations God has for your heart. Join the Ladies of Grace as we read and study bestselling author Carol Ladd as she shares fresh ways to embrace Scripture and its ability to empower you. Learn to:



- Read the Bible with new eyes
- Glean insights to build your confidence
- Discern and delight in God's plans and hopes
- Rest in the Lord's promises during life's storms
- Meditate on and pray verses for all of life's needs

Whether you're new to reading the Bible or have studied it for years, this is an exciting, one-of-a-kind quest for wisdom, joy, and peace—God's gifts that will adorn and transform your heart and love for the word of God...

*Ladies of*  
**GRACE**

JOIN US  
 SATURDAY  
 OCTOBER 28TH  
 10AM

*Chat n' Chew*  
 BOOK CLUB



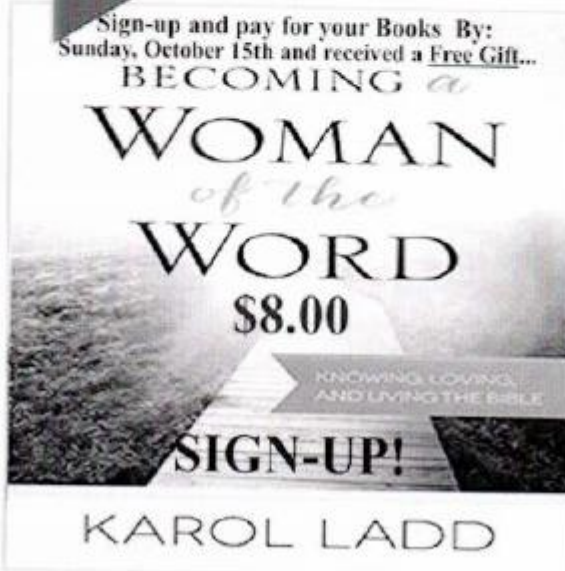
Sign-up and pay for your Books By:  
 Sunday, October 15th and received a Free Gift...

BECOMING a  
**WOMAN**  
*of the*  
**WORD**  
**\$8.00**

KNOWING, LOVING,  
 AND LIVING THE BIBLE

**SIGN-UP!**

KAROL LADD



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Grace church In Partnership with Father's House International



**Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup>  
6pm – 8pm**

Grace family, get excited and join us for a night of Fun, Food, Games, Prizes & Music. Bring your children, invite family, friends and neighbors to this free **Community Outreach event**. Bring (3) or more non-perishable items for our **Thanksgiving Food Drive Kickoff** and get a free gift!



Grace Family we need your help to make this event a success, join us for an important **Planning Meeting** after service in **Grace Café October 8<sup>th</sup>**. We're asking all ministry leaders to please be in attendance.

**How Can You Help? (Volunteer please sign-up at the Information Center)**

- Candy Donations
- Welcome Booth
- Set-Up Crew (4pm-6pm)
- Game Booth workers or (If you have a game that would be great for the Fall Festival, please contact Vanessa Olivera's or Pastor Shanell)
- Food Booth Workers (Food preparation, sales, & Clean-up)
- Security – (We have everything you need, Vest, Walking Talkies, and Flash Lights)
- Clean-Up Crew
- Invite, Invite, Invite!

Also on this night we will start our Thanksgiving Food Drive Kick-Off :  
 Everyone that brings (3) or more Non-Perishable items will receive a free gift. One Can Makes A Difference.

**GRACE**

**CHILDREN'S MINISTRY**

**FAMILY FALL FESTIVAL**  
**COMMUNITY EVENT**  
**Tuesday, October 31, 2017**  
**6pm- 8pm**

**THANKSGIVING**

Can Canned Food  
**DRIVE IT**

BRING 3 OR MORE NON-PERISHABLE ITEMS AND GET A FREE GIFT

**ONE CAN MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

Join us for a fun night of Fun, Food, Games, Prizes & Music. Bring your children & invite your friends & neighbors. All Are Welcome!

**NO SCARY COSTUMES...**

**Grace Church**  
 8487 Paradise Valley Rd  
 Spring Valley, Ca  
 (619) 472-2569 (Office)  
 gracechurchsv@shoebat.net

Grace Church in partnership with Fathers House International

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*Ladies of*  
**GRACE**



*Chat n' Chew*

**BOOKCLUB**

**Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup> @ 10am**

**Ladies of Grace Monthly Fellowship**

Join us for our **Chat N Chew Fall Book Club Kickoff!**

FYI: If you have not paid for your book by the deadline which was this past Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup>  
Books have gone up to

**\$10.00**

We encourage you to please pay for your books this week Thursday night Bible Study @ 7pm -8:30pm or  
Friday 9:30am – 1pm, if not see you on Sunday.

After **October 23<sup>rd</sup>** you will also be charged for shipping.

*~Becoming a Woman of the Word~*

Pay by **Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup>** and receive a **free Gift!**



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

## FAMILY FALL FESTIVAL

COMMUNITY EVENT

Tuesday, October 31, 2017

6pm - 8pm

### THANKSGIVING



BRING IN OR MORE  
NON-PERISHABLE  
ITEMS AND GET A  
FREE GIFT

ONE CAN MAKES A  
DIFFERENCE

Join us for a fun night of  
Fun, Food, Games, Prizes  
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*Ladies don't miss out on this powerful time of fellowship and study to dig deeper into the word of God!*

When you passionately read the Bible and pursue God's Word, you uncover the truths, encouragements, and exciting revelations God has for your heart. Join the Ladies of Grace as we read and study bestselling author Karol Ladd as she shares fresh ways to embrace Scripture and its ability to empower you. Learn to:

- Read the Bible with new eyes
- Glean insights to build your confidence
- Discern and delight in God's plans and hopes
- Rest in the Lord's promises during life's storms
- Meditate on and pray verses for all of life's needs
- 

Whether you're new to reading the Bible or have studied it for years, this is an exciting, one-of-a-kind quest for wisdom, joy, and peace—God's gifts that will adorn and transform your heart and love for the word of God...

Ladies of  
**GRACE**

**JOIN US**  
**SATURDAY**  
**OCTOBER 28TH**  
**10AM**

Chat n' Chew  
**BOOK CLUB**

Sign-up and pay for your Books By:  
Sunday, October 15th and received a Free Gift...

**BECOMING a**  
**WOMAN**  
*of the*  
**WORD**  
**\$8.00**

KNOWING, LOVING,  
AND LIVING THE BIBLE

**SIGN-UP!**

KAROL LADD

**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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*Thanksgiving Basket of Blessings  
Can Food Drive*

**Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm**

Join us in Grace Cafe for basket preparation, calling all men of Grace to please be present... The Ladies are more than welcome to come and help

**Thanksgiving Service & Basket of Blessing Distribution**

**Sunday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> @ 10am**

B.I.C. Men of Grace are blessing 30 families with Thanksgiving meals, join us and be a blessing by donating to our **Basket of Blessing Can Food Drive**. Baskets given out **Sunday, November 19<sup>th</sup>** after service. Please adhere to the items listed below!!!

**FYI:** We need a lot of items in order to feed 30 families your donations are appreciated, please won't you consider being a blessing to a needy family!

**Thanksgiving Basket Items Still Needed**

Non-Perishable Items Deadline: Thursday, Nov. 16, 2017

1. Canned items

- Corn (9 needed)
- Green beans (9 needed)
- Mix veggies (30 needed)
- Gravy (15 needed)
- Cranberries (30 needed)
- Candied yams (30 Needed)

2. **Instant Mashed Potatoes and stuffing mix**

- Mashed Potatoes or Sliced Potatoes (24 needed)
- Stuffing Mix (16 needed)

3. Dessert - (Jell-O, pudding, and mixed fruit cups (30 Needed)

Perishable Items Deadline: Sunday November 19, 2017

1. Rolls (30 needed)
2. Butter (30 needed)
3. Produce (Celery, Onions...) (30 needed)
4. Pies, cakes or other desserts (30 needed)
- 5.

**Basket of Blessings Distributon Information**

If you are referring a family for a Thanksgiving Basket, you must provide and complete the necessary information and submit a **Thanksgiving Referral Form**. Please see the attached form and submit by:

- **Tuesday 10am – 1pm**
- **Wednesday 10am-1pm**
- **Thursday 6:30pm – 7pm or immediately forming bible study!**
- **Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm – Join us in Grace Cafe for basket preparation, calling men of Grace to please be present...**

*Per application Referral Form please present proper identification at the time of basket pick-up!  
Thanks for your support and cooperation!*





# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

## FAMILY FALL FESTIVAL

COMMUNITY EVENT

Tuesday, October 31, 2017

6pm - 8pm

### THANKSGIVING



BRING 6 OR MORE  
NON-PERISHABLE  
ITEMS AND GET A  
FREE GIFT

ONE CAN MAKES A  
DIFFERENCE

Join us for a fun night of  
Fun, Food, Games, Prizes  
& Music. Bring your  
children & invite your  
friends & neighbors.  
All Are Welcome!

**NO SCARY COSTUMES...**

**Grace Church**

8487 Paradise Valley Rd  
Spring Valley, Ca

(619) 472-2569 (Office)

[gracechurchsv@shcglobal.net](mailto:gracechurchsv@shcglobal.net)

Grace Church in partnership with Fathers House International

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Hello Grace Family,

It has come to our attention, that you we're informed to contact the church office with the names of families who need a Thanksgiving Food basket. If you are referring a family for a Thanksgiving Basket, you must provide and complete the necessary information for **Thanksgiving Referral Form**. Please see the attached form or pickup and submit by:

- **Tuesday 10am – 1pm**
- **Wednesday 10am-1pm**
- **Thursday 6:30pm – 7pm or immediately forming bible study!**

If you've already submitted names on Sunday we will honor your referrals however, you must submit your Thanksgiving Referral Forms. If you do not submit your referral form we will not fill the order.

*I Am  
Blessed...  
To Be A  
Blessing* ✨



**GRACE CHURCH**

**THANKSGIVING BASKET RECIPIENT APPLICATION  
REFERRAL FORM**

**REFERRED BY:**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPLAIN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH AND/OR KNOWLEDGE OF THE FAMILY:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**EXPLAIN WHY YOU FEEL THIS FAMILY NEEDS ASSISTANCE AT THIS TIME:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**RECIPIENT INFORMATION**

NAME (HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD): \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME (SPOUSE) \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME(S) CHILDREN: \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (H) \_\_\_\_\_

SOURCE OF INCOME: \_\_\_\_\_

ARE YOU/OR THE RECIPIENT ABLE TO PICK UP THE BASKET? YES: \_\_\_\_\_ NO: \_\_\_\_\_

*PLEASE PRESENT PROPER IDENTIFICATION AT TIME OF BASKET PICK UP.*

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BEING CONTACTED BY OUR OUTREACH AND FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE? YES: \_\_\_\_\_ NO: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED: \_\_\_\_\_

*GRACE CHURCH  
8487 PARADISE VALLEY RD SPRING VALLEY CA. 91977  
OFFICE (619) 472-2569 FAX (619) 472-2004  
E-MAIL ADDRESS: gracechurchsv@sbglobal.net*

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**GRACE HOLIDAY CHOIR**

**STARTING TONIGHT @ 7PM**

If you like to sing come join the **Grace Holiday Choir**, Rehearsals are every Friday @ 7pm, in the sanctuary.



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# *Christmas Pajamas Party*



*And all is Calm*

## *Annual Holiday Brunch & Cookie Exchange*

Saturday, December 23, 2017

10am

Ladies of Grace, are you ready for some holiday fun and excitement, don't forget to join us this Saturday, at our *Christmas Pajamas Party*. Wear your PJ's and join us in Grace Chapel for fun, food and fellowship! Please sign-up at the Information Center.

**What to Bring:**

- Dish to Share
- Cookies
- \$10.00 Gift
- Christmas PJ's

There will be a Cutest Christmas PJ Contest, winner will receive a prize. If you have any questions please contact your Team Leader, Minister Fale or Pastor Shanell.



*Ladies of*  
**GRACE**

*Holiday Brunch & Cookie Exchange!*

*Pajamas Party*

Saturday, December 23, 2017 @ 10am



**Potluck**  
Everyone Brings Something to the Table.



**SIGN-UP  
HERE!**

*'Tis the night before Christmas & all is clear*  
Wear your PJ's and join us for some exciting, fun, food, fellowship, Cookie Exchange, Christmas PJ Contest and \$10.00 Gift Exchange!

Grace Church 8487 Paradise Valley Rd, Spring Valley, Ca 91977 (619) 472-2569

CORLEY, ANDERSON W.

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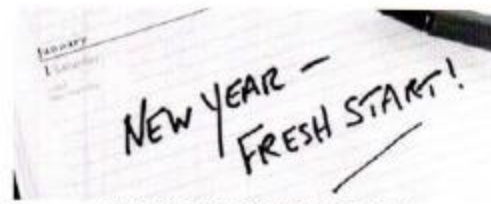
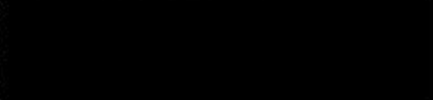
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**CHURCH CLEAN-UP**



**SATURDAY, JANUARY 6<sup>TH</sup>**

**9AM - 10PM**

Come on join the fun, it's **Church Clean-up!** just 1 hour, to clean our sanctuary. Come and enjoy the awesome fellowship, Coffee, donuts as you clean.

*(Haggai, 1:3-4,9)*

Take care of the house of God, and then God will take care of your problems and lift you up!



**CORLEY, ANDERSON W.**

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You are cordially invited to celebrate Pastor Shanell Morrison's "Sensational All White 60th Birthday Party" Join us for a wonderful evening of music, song and dance.

Family, friends and colleagues from around the way have been invited to share in what will be a memorable time of praise, laughter and fun.

For your enjoyment here are several items of note:

AYCE catered meal!  
Dessert and candy bar!  
Beverage bar!  
Games and prizes  
Traveling photo frame  
70's nostalgia, trivia games and prizes

**ATTIRE:** All white or white combination attire

Gifts: The birthday committee is asking for a birthday gift of \$60.00 to celebrate sixty sensational years. As always, any monetary gift you give to celebrate Shanell's birthday is welcomed and appreciated!

**If you have an questions please feel free to contact:**

Pastor Zac Morrison or Minister Fale McKinnie

**This message is sent on the behalf of:**  
Pastor Zac Morrison



**JANUARY 14, 2018**

**UP COMING EVENTS**

*Saturday Jan 27th is Sounds and Grounds at 6pm in Robinson Hall. we will be featuring Lynn and the Ducketts set in a lounge setting with pastries, coffee, and of course live music! Be sure to tell your friends and family about this special night!*

*Sunday Jan 28th Pastor Randy Woolstrum will be ministring during our morning worship service. Make sure you are here, bring a friend, co-worker, and family member.*

*Be saving your gently used clothes for our Grace Restored Project #6 Angel Bin. Our goal is to reach \$1,000 and we can't do it without you. Please start bringing in your clothes and shoes. See Pastor Marques for more info.*





APPENDIX H

**Licensed and/or Ordained Pastoral Demographics**

Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
Church A: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A	Initially, my pastor recognized my capabilities as they related to counseling, administration, evangelizing, preaching and teaching. After a while, he also recognized that God was calling me into a leadership position.	43	Pastor	Christian Non-denominational
Church A: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B	I began ministering in the church as a volunteer when I was very young. One of the older deacons at the church became a surrogate dad and began to show me various aspects of church ministry. He saw that I had leadership qualities, and that's how I became involved. Over time, I began to serve in different levels as a church leader, leading into my position as the Senior Pastor.	40	Pastor	Christian Non-denominational

Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
Church A: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor C	A pastor approached me, and asked me to serve in the usher ministry. Being asked to become an usher was exciting to me. It gave me a sense of belonging and being part of a family. I expressed my devotion to the pastor's request by availing myself completely. I became his right hand, every time he was at the church working, I was alongside him working as well. Throughout this time, I built a passion, and a desire to do more for God.	20	Assistant Pastor	Christian Non-denominational
Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A	My introduction to church began with my younger sister who was a devoted member of CHURCH B. I was 20 years old when my sister passed away at the age of 14. After her passing, I wanted to know why she was so committed and passionate about the church. In order to understand her devotion, I decided	26	Pastor	Christian Non-denominational

Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
	to visit the church and became aware of the work that my sister had performed. this created my foundation in serving and doing activities for the church.			
Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B	My grandfather started CHURCH B in 1952, the church was passed down to my parents, and I became a third generation pastor of the church in August 2015.	47	Pastor	Christian Non-denominational
Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor C	I had established a close relationship with Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B at work. When I first met Pastor B at work, I was not a Christian. Pastor B invited me to church on several occasions. After numerous invitations, I decided to visit the church and became a member a short time afterwards. The church family was welcoming and I attended church consistently. At the age of 28 Pastor B encouraged me to begin working in the youth ministry. Over time I became an Assistant Pastor.	23	Assistant Pastor	Christian Non-denominational

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Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor D	I became friends with Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor A, B, and C at work. I was not a Christian at the time and was somewhat emotionally guarded. However, through a courtship with Pastor C, I began to visit the church and later became a member. At the age of 28, Pastor A and B encouraged me to work in the youth ministry alongside Pastor C and over the years I became an Assistant Pastor at CHURCH B.	22	Assistant Pastor	Christian Non-denominational

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APPENDIX I

**Minister's Demographics**

Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
Church A: Minister A	I became involved in church leadership after being asked by the Bishop to head the children's Sunday School ministry. Later, my teaching ministry evolved into teaching adults bible study and Sunday school, and eventually. However, it all began by the Bishop acknowledging that I was called into ministry and that is how I became involved in church leadership.	20	Minister	Christian Non-denominational
Church A: Minister B	There was a need in the church for an Usher board leader, so I was asked by the Bishop to become the instructor for the ushers. After a time, I took on the responsibility of becoming the children's Sunday School teacher and choir director.	20	Minister	Christian Non-denominational



Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
Church A: Minister C	Initially, I was a very shy person. In attempt to bring me of out of timidity, I was approached by the pastor's wife to teach Sunday School. I gave it a try and found it to be enjoyable. Soon thereafter, my brother (who was a youth minister) asked if I could assist him with the youth ministry. As I became more comfortable and less timid, the Senior Pastor asked if I could head the Women's Department and I have been serving in that role to this current day.	27	Minister	Christian Non-denominational
Church B: Minister A	I was eleven years old when I began helping in the church as my Grandfather was the pastor of the church. He would take me to community rest home to perform skits. Additionally, I was assisting my mother with the children's ministry. Working alongside my mother in the children's ministry	34	Children's Minister	Christian Non-denominational

Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
	Created a desire to Work intimately with the children, where I could do more hands-on. I was in the sixth grade and began teaching 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> grade and 6 <sup>th</sup> graders in the children's ministry and I have been working in the children's ministry ever since.			
Church B: Minister B	The Pastor asked me to head the Usher board.	22	Minister	Christian Non-denominational
Church B: Minister C	The Pastor asked if I could become a bible study teacher assistant for the Wednesday night bible teacher. Due to the large number of students, the Bible Study teacher could not handle all of the students by herself. As a result, I started by leadership role in the church by teaching the youth Bible study class.	17	Assistant Youth's Minister	Christian Non-denominational

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Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
Church B: Minister D	Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B asked if I would teach Sunday School class on the Sundays that he had to preach the sermon. That is how my journey to becoming a minister began.	4	Youth's Minister	Christian Non-denominational

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APPENDIX J

**Auxiliary Leader’s Demographics**

Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
Church A: Auxiliary Leader A	My personal passion for sound and video proficiency led to my involvement in church leadership. Being self-taught in the technical aspects and augmentation of sound and video, I saw the church’s need for a sound technician and asked Church A Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B for the position as Sound and Media Technician.	5	Sound Technician and Media	Christian Non-denominational
Church A: Auxiliary Leader B	Singing, and going to church is something that I have done since I was a young child. I never sought to become Praise and Worship leader, I’m merely fulfilling my God-given calling. I was searching for a church home and I was invited to sing with Church A’s praise and worship team. After performing with the Team for a short	22	Music Ministry	Christian Non-denominational

Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
	<p>Period of time, I was asked by Church A licensed and/or ordained pastor B to co-lead the praise and worship team and I have been doing so since that time.</p>			
<p>Church A: Auxiliary Leader C</p>	<p>In 2004, I started training as a deacon at a church in the Bay Area. Shortly thereafter, I moved to San Diego and joined a church. I informed the Pastor of my previous deacon training and he immediately started my training as a deacon. Unfortunately, my training remained incomplete and I was never became an ordained deacon. Two years later, I joined Church A. After leading numerous church activities, Church A Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B informed me that there was a dire need for someone to head the men's group auxiliary</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>Men's Ministry Team Leader</p>	<p>Christian Non-denominational</p>

Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
	(Brother-in-Christ), And I accepted the Position.			
Church B: Auxiliary Leader A	I became involved in the audio and video department when Church B Licensed and /or Ordained Pastor B was looking for someone to run the media for the worship services. I previously informed the Church B, Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B about my computer experience and capabilities of putting things that are associated with the media onto computers. Church B Licensed and/ or Ordained Pastor B explained that my skills to create a program that can project various aspects of the worship services onto a projector screen was needed. Happily, I accepted the opportunity.	23	Media Team	Christian Non-denominational

Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
Church B: Auxiliary Leader B	Church B: Auxiliary Leader A and I were looking for a church home. We were floating around town visiting numerous churches. Upon arriving at Church B, both Auxiliary Leader A and I became comfortable. After several months, I became a greeter and it later evolved into leading the “greeter” ministry team at CHURCH B.	20	Usher	Christian Non-denominational
Church B: Auxiliary Leader C	My older sister and I moved to the United States from Guam in 2001 and we visited several different churches. My sister found CHURCH B in the phone book. I was attending Church B services for quite some time and Church B Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor B noticed my willingness to help out in the church and after learning	17	Worship Leader (Music, Instruments and Guitars)	Christian Non-denominational

Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
	<p>That I played guitar for my church in Guam he asked me to bring my guitar at the next worship service. Ever since that time, I played guitar as part of the praise and worship team. Soo after that I started co-leading the audio and auxiliary by recording church events, creating short narrative and music videos and placing several aspects of the worship services onto social media.</p>			
<p>Church B: Auxiliary Leader D</p>	<p>I became a member of Church B through a relationship with Church B: Auxiliary Leader E who was already an active member of CHURCH B. My introduction to church leadership began with my volunteer work with the youth ministry at Church B. After a while, I became involved with the audio and media auxiliary by</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>Worship Team (Music).</p>	<p>Christian Non-denominational</p>



Aliases	Please explain how you became involved in church leadership.	How many years have you been serving as a church leader in a congregational setting?	What is your current role or position in your church?	Is your Church a Christian denomination? If so, what Branch
	volunteering my technical knowledge of audio equipment, this later progressed into becoming part of the audio and media team leadership.			
Church B: Auxiliary Leader E	Church ministry has always been a part of my life from early childhood. My mother was pregnant with me when my father located CHURCH B. Also, Church B: Licensed and/or Ordained Pastor's A and B are my godparents. At an early age, I became part of the youth ministry and as I grew older, I became a leader in the youth ministry.	22	Youth Ministry Leader	Christian Non- denominational