

**SHARED LEADERSHIP: CLERGY AND LAITY IN  
THE SMALL RURAL CHURCH**

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The lack of shared leadership between clergy and laity presents a challenge to the small rural church. A model of ministry for engaging the pastor and laity of a small membership rural church in educational, spiritual, and action experiences to help them maximize their human potential as co-laborers in God's vineyard has been developed in this dissertation study. Its purpose is to teach and model an approach to helping clergy, lay leaders and members of the congregation learn to share leadership and work together in order to change the way people think and behave in the areas of worship, mission and evangelism.

The approach used includes the engagement of a church administrative council in a nine week Bible study of selected scriptures to help them gain an understanding of the nature and mission of the church as well as the role of clergy and laity in accomplishing that mission. At varying times in the progression of the study sessions, members of the administrative council are requested to begin modeling certain specified behaviors. Questionnaires are used at specified intervals during the ministry project to gauge progress and provide feedback for follow-up in succeeding sessions as well as evaluation of the project.

This model of ministry is simple enough for any small congregation to adopt and powerful enough to be profitable. Yet, it is adaptable for use in any congregation where the lay leadership can be intimately involved with the congregation.



## **DEDICATION**

This doctoral dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Gwendolyn Walker Hardy, and to the blessed memory of my father, Willis Hardy, both of whom believed that I could do something. Now I know I can! Thank you Mom and Dad for your love and support, prayers and discipline.

A. M. H.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

When I came to Franklin Street United Methodist Church, it seemed like nothing was going on but the bills. There were few activities other than Sunday morning worship. The Sunday school was not operational. Members only came to the church if something of value to them was being provided. They were struggling to pay apportionments as well as other maintenance bills. There was no real communications between members and lay leaders. Individual persons seemed to be just doing whatever they wanted without asking or informing anyone else. There was a climate of general distrust, and no goals had been clarified toward which members could reach. The church was obviously in decline. There had been a steady decline in membership and worship attendance from 110 in 1979 to 73 in 1992, when membership began to increase again, producing a net gain of 17 members by 1996, but worship attendance continued to decline. By 1997, membership decreased to 88, with 50 in attendance in worship.

Behavioral scientists have taught us that when any organized group experiences decline, its sense of security and purposefulness is lost and the organization enters a grieving process. As is the case whenever there is significant loss, members of the organization go into denial. They refuse to face the present. They revert to recalling the way things “used to be.” They become angry and turn their anger inward on the group and its leader or on outsiders as the cause of their problems. When this occurs, the group is ripe for going into depression, passivity, and resignation to its new circumstances.

An innovative leader can help the group experience a “new lease on life” by first coming to some understanding of the problems and helping the group learn how to live again. The leader can help the group regain a vision and sense of purpose and direction.

The leader of a church congregation can help bring balance and discipline to the work of the congregation and help the congregation not only to “live again,” but also to experience healthy growth.

Shared leadership is one of the ways that the leader of a church congregation can help bring balance and discipline to the work of the church and help the congregation not only to “live again,” but also to experience healthy growth. The sharing of leadership can have a phenomenal effect when clergy and laity are able to set aside their differences and concentrate their attention and efforts on the ministry of Jesus the Christ to which they have been called. Struggling together to let go of personal agendas and utilize the gifts and talents of all, they can find common ground that is rich for planting and cultivating. With God’s help, they can then reap a harvest that is plentiful.

There is a serious lack of shared leadership in churches across the United States. Many pastors function as bosses rather than servant leaders. Likewise, many lay leaders consider themselves to be chiefs, while the church is falling apart. If the church is to live out its mandate to lead the world instead of the world leading the church, this trend must change. Called by Christ to do extraordinary things in the world, the church must have an impact on society. This cannot be accomplished with a church divided, where clergy and laity are fighting over who will perform certain tasks, who will get the credit, or who is in charge.

I have serious concerns about the church’s ministry to its members and to the world. Thus, I have attempted to respond to the question: How can I as pastor help clergy and laity work together in a covenant of shared leadership in the areas of worship,

mission and evangelism in service to the church and the world as a living witness for Christ in response to our call as people of God?



## **II. THE MINISTRY SETTING**

The ministry setting is Franklin Street United Methodist Church, a 90-member congregation located in Wytheville, Virginia, Wythe County, in the rural Appalachian southwest (highland) region of the state. Wytheville is located in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains at the crossroads of I-81 and I-77.

At the time of the 1990 census, Wytheville's total population was 8,038. Of that figure, 3,556 were male and 4,482 were female. The median age of town residents was 39.4 years old, with the largest age category being between the ages of 25 and 44 years old. There were 2,179 residents in this group. The next largest age category was 5 to 17-year-olds, comprising 1,229 persons. Slightly more than 20.3 percent of the population was 65 or older. It is generally believed that the population has increased by about 1,000 since the 1990 census.

According to the census report, there were 3,346 households in Wytheville. Family households comprise 50.6 percent, or 2,228 households. Of this number, married-couple families own 1,693.

By race, the census reveals that, of the town's total population, 7,321 are white, 663 are black, 10 are American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut, 39 are Asian or Pacific Islander, 35 are Hispanic, and 5 are of other races.

In 1990, the median value of housing units in Wytheville was \$56,800. Of the 1,753 occupied units, 712 are valued at less than \$50,000, 807 are valued at \$50,000 - \$99,000, 158 at \$100,000 - \$149,000, 56 at \$150 - \$199,000, 19 at \$200,000 - \$299,000, and 1 at \$300,000 or more.

In 1990, Wythe County's \$13,770 per capita income ranked 85<sup>th</sup> in the state, down from 63<sup>rd</sup> in 1980. In 1996, the median family income was \$31,050, with a median household income of \$26,439. The rate of unemployment for the county was 6.5% in 1995. The service industry accounts for 20.4 percent of all earnings. The second largest is state and local government, accounting for 16.9%, followed by retail trade, which accounts for 13.7%. Non-durable goods manufacturing accounts for approximately 12% of per capita income. The construction industry is among the slowest growing sources of income.

Public schools in Wytheville are part of the Wythe County Public Schools system. Located within the town limits are one high school, one middle school and one elementary school, the County Technology Center, and Wytheville Community College. There are two parochial schools, and parents have several choices for a nursery or preschool.

The town land area comprises 14.28 square miles. Primary attractions include a striking landscape of softwood and hardwood trees on lush, green, hilly countryside and the Chautauqua Festival, which brings vendors and spectators from across the United States for several days each year.

Franklin Street United Methodist Church is located one street over from Main Street in Wytheville. It was organized in 1820 as an African American congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church. During the 1968 Session of the Holston Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishop Ellis Finger, assisted by the Reverend Raymon White, provided leadership for a service of worship acknowledging the merger of the districts of the Tennessee Kentucky

Conference, the Central Jurisdiction, which had embraced all of the African American congregations of the Methodist Episcopal Church since 1939, and the Holston Conference of the Methodist Church. The union of the Tennessee Evangelical Union Brethren Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, forming the United Methodist Church in the Holston Conference was consummated at the 1969 Conference, held in Knoxville, TN, with Bishop L. Scott Allen presiding. Franklin Street Methodist Episcopal Church became Franklin Street United Methodist Church.

The church is located in a racially and economically mixed neighborhood, with African American, Caucasian and interracial couples. Annual family income in the neighborhood ranges from about \$10,000 to \$40,000. Families in the area are diverse in their education and employment. Neighborhood families include those with female heads of households who work primarily at minimum wage jobs, retired school principals, teachers, factory workers, accountants, and electrical engineers who work out of the local Sprint Telephone Company office. No schools are located in the neighborhood. Habitat for Humanity has built a home two doors from the church.

Other churches in the area adjacent to Franklin Street include Morning Star Church of God, an African American congregation located directly across the street from Franklin Street, and Wytheville Presbyterian and Wytheville United Methodist, two Caucasian congregations located just down the street from Franklin Street. Bethlehem Baptist, an African American congregation, is across town, and Bethel A. M. E. is located on Main Street. Seemingly attracted by an

extended “praise and worship service,” some African American residents of Wytheville have begun to attend a predominantly so-called White Word Church on the other side of town.

Franklin Street has stood the test of time. However, membership records are available only as far back as 1973. The following is a listing of the number of members of Franklin Street by year, according to available records:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Membership</u>	<u>Worship Attendance</u>	<u>Sunday School Attendance</u>
1973	71	N/A	N/A
1974	70	32	28
1978	108	N/A	N/A
1979	110	75	30
1980	104	N/A	N/A
1981	99	61	23
1984	97	N/A	N/A
1985	97	45	29
1990	75	N/A	N/A
1991	76	37	15
1992	73	30	10
1993	85	N/A	N/A
1994	82	39	9
1995	81	30	8
1996	90	71	18
1997	88	50	13

The peak membership period was 110 members in 1979, with an average of seventy-five (75) in worship and thirty (30) in Sunday school. During the period of the project, an average of fifty (50) persons attended and participated in worship. The seating capacity of the church sanctuary is one hundred forty (140) adults.

In 1985, the pastor of Franklin Street United Methodist Church was paid \$6,921, and the church budget totaled \$11,301. Records indicate that the largest salary paid any pastor was \$9,672, with a total church budget of \$27,468.

The original congregation of Franklin Street was African American as well as all of the pastors. But the racial make up of the congregation changed about twenty (20) years ago, when the first interracial couple joined the church. Presently, four (4) interracial couples are members of the congregation. They appear to be comfortable with membership in a predominantly African American congregation. While, African American members do not appear to have any problems with the congregation being racially mixed, a few seem to become concerned when non-African American members participate in certain activities that are viewed as “reserved” for African Americans, i.e., Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday and Black History celebrations. Franklin Street has no interactive relationship with other United Methodist Churches in Wytheville. The other churches extend invitations to their church activities, but members of Franklin Street do not respond to these invitations. However, some of the women of the church interact with the women of the other United Methodist churches through district and conference United Methodist Women meetings and programs.

The church building is in fair condition, needing repairs and/or remodeling. Nevertheless, it is minimally adequate for worship, Sunday school, and doing the work of

ministry. Franklin Street houses a juvenile delinquency program and a food pantry, emergency assistance, and special health-related seminars. Whenever there is a need for clothing assistance, members bring clothing from their closets for distribution to those who are in need.

#### A. Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of Franklin Street United Methodist Church is episcopal. After Christ, who is the head of the church, comes the bishop, who is responsible for an episcopal area. A district superintendent oversees the local churches in a specific geographical district. A group called the Administrative Council governs Franklin Street, a local congregation within a larger connectional system. Membership on the Council includes a chairperson, the pastor, a lay leader, chairperson of finance, trustee chairperson, pastor-parish relations committee chairperson, chairperson of nominations and personnel, worship chairperson, youth and young adults chairperson, chairperson of membership and records and a recording secretary, all answerable to the charge conference over which the district superintendent presides.

This organizational structure is mandated by the denomination, and is quite workable and sufficient to meet the needs of the congregation when persons in leadership positions take their leadership roles seriously. The different chairpersons report to the Administrative Council and make recommendations concerning issues from whether or not to start a new Sunday School class to what materials should be used for the classes and how much money should be spent. The Council makes the final decision about ministry and the church, about administrative matters and any other decision that concerns the life of the church. The pastor is a member of the Council by virtue of his or

her position as pastor, however, the pastor functions primarily as professional staff support to the Council. The pastor is not a member of the Charge Conference, since it is comprised of member of the church, and the pastor is a member of the Annual Conference.

The Administrative Council, chaired by a lay person who works cooperatively with the pastor, recommends to the Charge Conference (the congregation) a budget and program, with goals and objectives for the year. Upon the approval of the Charge Conference, the Administrative Council is then charged with the responsibility of accomplishing the work.

Shared leadership and cooperative ministry are hallmarks of United Methodist Polity. In Thomas Frank's Polity Practice and the Mission of the United Methodist Church, we read, "Neither the pastor nor a lay president or moderator of the congregation presides over most of the crucial decisions in the life of a local church."<sup>5</sup>

The good health of the church depends on both clergy and laity working together. The organization of the church reminds one of a "dream catcher." All the threads and beads are woven together, and when one is cut, the whole dream catcher falls apart.

The Nominations and Personnel Committee, chaired by the pastor, is critical to the selection of officers and church personnel. In his or her capacity as chairperson, the pastor has the opportunity to influence the selection of the lay leadership team for the church, according to the needs of the church and the gifts and graces of its members. However, this is not always possible because persons who have been in positions for a long time often feel that these positions are for life. Thus, they are reluctant and unwilling to give them up without a fight.

The nine-member Pastor-Parish Relations Committee consults with the pastor and discusses ways that pastoral leadership can help make the ministry of the church more effective. They evaluate the pastor and other church personnel, and have the power to fire all personnel with the exception of the pastor.

The Committee on Finance, comprised of the treasurer, a representative from the trustees, the pastor, the lay leader and other chairpersons, tends to the financial matters of the church. They are responsible for overseeing the budget, raising and disbursing funds, and making recommendations for the spending of church funds.

The nine-member Board of Trustees is responsible for maintaining the buildings and grounds, so that the ministries of the church can be effectively carried out. Trustees are also responsible for maintaining adequate insurance coverage on all church property.

The primary task of the Membership Secretary is “to keep accurate membership records so that the congregation can help its members grow as Christian disciples.”<sup>6</sup>

## B. Theological Stance

The United Methodist Church has established doctrinal and theological standards. However, it is not evident that the majority of the congregation knows or understands what the United Methodist Church says they should believe. Certainly members of the congregation must have a basic belief in God or they would not likely be part of the congregation. While their basic beliefs concerning God appear to be consistent with the theological stance of the United Methodist Church, it is less likely that they know or have “bought into” the specific statements of theological beliefs as interpreted by the United Methodist Church. In the Book of Discipline we read,

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Edward Frank, Polity Practice and the Mission of the United Methodist Church, p. 166.

<sup>6</sup> Evangelism and Discipleship Resources, Guidelines for Leading Your Church 1993-1996.



At the heart of the gospel of salvation is God's incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. Scripture witnesses to the redeeming love of God in Jesus' life and teachings, his atoning presence in history, his triumph over the powers of evil and death, and his promised return. Because God truly loves us in spite of our willful sin, God judges us, summons us to repentance, pardons us, receives us by grace given to us in Jesus Christ, and gives us hope of life eternal.<sup>7</sup>

Although the congregation's understanding of the authority of scripture in matters of faith is not clear, it is evident among the leadership that this is probably an area where more work needs to be done. Due to a lack of structured Bible study and limited attendance at Sunday school, and consequently a lack of knowledge of scripture, it is very unlikely that they understand that the community of believers is the church, and that

We have been brought into existence by the Spirit for the healing of the nations, and through faith in Jesus Christ we are forgiven, reconciled to God, and transformed as people of the new covenant . . . we are initiated and incorporated into this community of faith by Baptism, receiving the promise of the Spirit that re-creates and transforms us. Through the regular celebration of Holy Communion we participate in the risen presence of Jesus Christ and are thereby nourished for faithful discipleship.<sup>8</sup>

The lack of a foundation in the Word of God leads to breakdowns in other areas of the life of the congregation. Thus, I would venture to say that many of the members would fall into the category of "liberal" in terms of theological standing. The term *liberal* is used in the sense that liberal persons are not so concerned with how things are done as long as something gets done. They tend to be much more tolerant, less judgmental and less critical than persons who would very likely be called *moderate* or *conservative*.

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<sup>7</sup> The United Methodist Church, Book of Discipline, "Doctrinal Standards."

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Thomas Frank rightfully asserts that “our theological task is to reflect upon God’s gracious action in our lives and to prepare people to participate in God’s work in the world. Theology is itself a practice and is inseparably bound up with practices.”<sup>9</sup>

The key word here is “participate.” Our present theological stance at Franklin Street United Methodist Church has not naturally led us to share leadership within the church.

### C. Interpersonal Relations

It is quite possible that the state of interpersonal relationships in the church has been the biggest hindrance to shared leadership between clergy and laity. As Leo Buscoglia contends, “Most of us have never felt compelled to examine our relating and explore how what we feel, what we say, and what we do, affect [our relating]. It is imperative that this is done. Our relationships influence our role in church and society.”<sup>10</sup>

Interpersonal relationships at Franklin Street are varied in nature and intensity. In a general sense, the congregation is like a family, in fact, some are related. They fuss, fight and make up. But there are instances when the war has been going on for years, feuding over something that just will not die or the parties involved will not allow it to die, i.e., one member of a family had conflict with a member of another family, and the descendents of these two persons continue the feud. So, the war continues and will be passed down through the generations, until and unless the parties who inherited the conflict decide to resolve it or “just let it go.”

There are, however, some very loving relationships at Franklin Street, relationships where people have made a choice to be in a loving relationship with each

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Edward Frank, Polity, Practice and the Mission of the United Methodist Church.

<sup>10</sup> Leo F. Buscoglia, Loving Each Other: The Challenge of Human Relationships (Ballantine Books, 1984).

other. They trust each other and are vulnerable to one another. Still there are other relationships wherein people tend to exploit so-called friends. One stirs up trouble and gets another to talk about it so the whole congregation will know.

The majority of the members of the congregation get along sometimes for the sake of getting along, and there are cliques. However, when there is a crisis in the community, they are able to put their differences and anger aside long enough to care for those in need. Likewise, members of the congregation rally around each other and provide support and assistance when a member is in need.

Sometimes personal and/or family disagreements and dysfunction overflow into the church and cause problems in communication and cooperation. Customary negative activity includes talking about persons behind their backs, rather than facing each other in conversation about a particular concern. There is little comfort available to aggrieved persons when there is a problem. Nevertheless, the congregation can “put on a good face” when they must show themselves to the public.

Leo Buscoglia provides helpful insight into understanding the nature of relationships that are comparable to those at Franklin Street. He asserts that

In authentic relating, each person is genuinely concerned for the other. This is exhibited in an active show of appreciation and regard demonstrated through words and acts of kindness, consideration and politeness. Too often we assume that closeness gives license for inconsiderate behaviors, thoughtlessness or even rudeness. It is a sad fact that we often have more concern for the feelings of casual acquaintances than we do for family.<sup>11</sup>

Consistent with Buscoglia’s observations, members of the Franklin Street congregation collectively constitute a “family” that worships, fellowships, plays and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

prays together, however, they tend to treat one another as if the other does not matter sometimes. Some members have known each other for as long as fifty years, and seem to believe it is okay to be less than loving in their treatment of one another because the other “won’t mind.” I believe that, in truth, everyone wants to be loved. This presents the challenge for interpersonal relationships in Christian community. We can love those who are not a part of our church, but it seems more difficult when we interact with our church family members.

#### D. Significant Historical Events that Impact the Church’s Present Situation

A number of significant historical events have impacted the church’s present situation in varying degrees. Such incidents have resulted in the members not trusting pastors in financial matters, member resentment of other members, and lack of confidence in themselves and their ability to do more than maintain themselves as a congregation.

Several previous pastors borrowed money from the church and never repaid the loans. There were times when money mysteriously disappeared while in the hands of certain members. Individuals unilaterally made decisions that rightfully should have been left to the Administrative Council. This particular problem seems to have caused the greater damage. It has resulted in some persons leaving the church because they were simply “fed-up” with a small group making all the decisions for the congregation.

Additionally, Franklin Street has received grants from the Annual Conference for renovations, installation of a washer and a dryer in the parsonage, new doors, and a new roof. While these grants were needed, appreciated, and served beneficial purposes for the congregation, they also adversely affected the congregation. Sometimes churches really

need to receive financial assistance, but it is only truly beneficial long term when the assistance is requested and received after the congregation has been diligent in an effort to provide for themselves. Otherwise they become dependent on someone else to take care of too many of their essential responsibilities.

The deteriorating physical condition of the church building contributes to the malaise of some of the members. It is difficult to have pride and feel good about a church if the physical structure is a source of embarrassment.

An area of significant impact is a tradition inherent in the United Methodist Church. Because of the successes, which result from reasonable, sensible exercise of its provisions, we look at the episcopal system as a potential contributing factor to problems in local churches. Historically, as the number of pastors available to serve small, rural parishes increased and the number of once-a-month circuit riders decreased, there was also a change in what was expected of pastors. Greater responsibility and accountability were placed on the now “present” pastor for financial, numerical and ministry successes in the local church. It is my opinion that this, coupled with the desire on the part of the pastor to “move up,” did not always motivate pastors to encourage shared leadership. It was easier to work with one or two members to insure that the work of the church was done and the pastor was seen in a favorable light.

As the New Testament confirms, conflict is historical in the Christian Church. Paul and Peter had disagreements over whether or not they should preach to Jews only (Acts 10:9-11:18). The Biblical account of conflict in the church has impacted the present-day church. Christians have continued to fuss about the same issues down through the years.

In the article, “New Ideas in Church Vitality and Leadership,” Herb Miller contends that “eliminating church quarreling patterns is a complex challenge. People who usually fight are inclined to keep on fighting.”<sup>12</sup> He offers the following procedures as widely accepted tools for reducing destructive, long-term conflict patterns.<sup>13</sup>

- Try to keep discussion of the conflict on the table rather than under the table.
- Dare to discuss in board and committee meetings what people whisper about in the parking lot. Conflict not openly discussed seldom ends.
- Ask people who are involved in conflict to explain and clarify exactly what they want. As much as possible, do this in board and committee meetings and in private conversations. This reduces the natural tendency toward accusing the other side of having bad motives.

The intentional effort to apply Miller’s methods produced good results at Franklin Street.

Another historical occurrence that has impacted Franklin Street’s present situation is in an area of human relationship that we seldom recognize as a serious impediment to peace in the church is failure to listen and hear what is said. Some members “hear what they want to hear” or interpret what they hear in the light of past experience, rather than accept what is said at face value. Miller gives direction for just such a situation when he rightfully contends that we should

Listen carefully, both in private and in public, to the strong feelings expressed by persons on both sides of an issue. Pressure cookers and hot issues cool when steam has an opportunity to vent. Cliques form when insufficient listening happens, because cliques provide a place for people to express strongly held feelings.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Herb Miller, “New Ideas in Church Vitality and Leadership,” in Net Results, Vol. XVII, No. 9, September 1996, p.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.

<sup>14</sup> Herb Miller.

Miller also advises allowing unhappy people to speak for themselves.<sup>15</sup> At Franklin Street unhappy people readily express their unhappiness to others, seemingly in an effort to get others involved in their unhappiness.

Much of the conflict at Franklin Street has resulted traditionally from anonymous criticism and failure to collaborate in decision making. Efforts directed at encouraging collaboration in decision making and ignoring anonymous criticism in official meetings have produced promising result.

Members of Franklin Street United Methodist Church, as is the case with so many other small congregations, are hesitant to challenge situations that negatively affect the congregation and its witness in the community because of fear of losing members. But members must be willing to risk losing a few in order that they may grow and possibly gain many. Miller offers the following suggestion in this area:

If people cannot participate without continuously trying to dominate and over-control the church's decisions and ministry goals, let them leave. Do not insist that we should try to keep them in the church at all costs. The price may be too high. With some people, the greatest danger is not that they will leave but that they will stay and continue their same behavior pattern.<sup>16</sup>

Some members of Franklin Street seem to delight in doing negative things to get attention or to have their way. These persons, of course, significantly impact the church's present situation with regard to shared leadership. Members of the congregation were surprised when I said, "Let them go. Just let them go!"

A final, crucial historical occurrence that impacts the church is the lack of prayer for the congregation and its life and ministry. Members don't pray enough and not

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Herb Miller.

enough members are praying. When asked how much they prayed, some members of the core group admitted that their prayer lives were not what they should have been. Others said that they did not pray for the congregation and its life and ministry. Additionally, none of the core group members reported having “prayer partners,” and only a few of the members of the congregation indicated that they participated with another person in intentional prayer for the church or themselves.



### III. THE MINISTRY ISSUE

#### A. The Issue

There is a lack of shared leadership between clergy and laity of Franklin Street United Methodist Church. Thus, the question: How can the pastor help members of Franklin Street United Methodist Church to work with each other and with the pastor in a covenant of shared leadership in the areas of worship, mission, and evangelism in service to the church and to the world as a living witness for Christ in response to our call as people of God.

Worship is commonly understood as a service of praise, adoration, thanksgiving, and petition directed to God through words, actions and attitudes. However, Melva Costen provides a theological understanding of worship that is most appropriate in the context of this project. She contends that in worship

[African Americans] gather to offer thanks and praise to God in and through Jesus the Christ, and to be spiritually fed by the Word of God! In response to God's call and by God's grace, communities of faith gather to affirm God's providence and power. Under the power of the Holy Spirit, African Americans express their corporate and personal belief that God in Jesus Christ continues to work for good in every aspect of their lives. Aware of the mysterious presence of the living Christ, the community is empowered to live the good news in the world.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, Worship is praise and service to God. It involves a total response of devotion from believers.

In Matthew 28:18 we are given the "great commission" to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." As a way of responding to this commission, the United Methodist Church provides our

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<sup>17</sup> Melva Wilson Costen, African American Christian Worship, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), p. 13.

understanding of mission and evangelism that is consistent with Costen's definition of worship. In the Book of Discipline we read

Mission is witness to the God of grace. Witness has four dimensions: (1) Proclamation. We proclaim the gospel. We tell the story of God's gracious initiative to redeem the world. The imperative for proclamation is found in the gospel itself. Good news cannot be withheld. (2) Evangelism. To proclaim the gospel is fundamental; to invite persons to personal decisions for and commitment to Jesus Christ and his being is equally fundamental. The gospel calls forth response. The invitation to respond is evangelism. (3) Incorporation. We call persons to be incorporated into the body of Christ. All who are "in Christ" share in the mission of Christ. (4) Servanthood. We serve as agents of God's liberating and reconciling grace among the people. Witness is to whole persons and their social context. The wholeness of grace entails justice, mercy, and forgiveness....<sup>18</sup>

Thus, evangelism is a part of the mission of the church

#### B. Motivation for Addressing the Issue

We have our practices and our traditions, our customs and our attitudes. And we're comfortable with those. They fit nice and easy, like an old slipper. And we don't want to change even when the change is good and a mandate from God.<sup>19</sup>

I was motivated to address this issue, first of all, because I believe in the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9). Second, laity were not working together, and in some instances, not working at all. Others seemed to be comfortable with their doing nothing. Leaders and the congregation were either hesitant about accepting new challenges or they wanted to "pass off" to someone else.

The prevailing attitude expressed by members was reflected in statements such as "Get someone else" and "If nobody else will, I will." Also, there appeared to be a gross lack of concern and feelings of responsibility on the part of laity for the church and the spiritual things of God. Laity were not working together for the common good of the

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<sup>18</sup> The United Methodist Church, Book of Discipline, 69. Section 5 – Mission Statement.

<sup>19</sup> Ken Hutcherson, The Church: What We Are Meant To Be (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1998), p. 13.

whole congregation, nor were many of them willing to do what they were capable of doing. Only about three members had demonstrated a willingness to work in the church, and only one of these persons worked without being asked. Some would respond only after being begged. Others said they would work together to accomplish a given task, but they failed to live up to their verbal commitment. More importantly, they were failing to live up to their commitment to Christ and the church.

I firmly believe that

The more time we spend in the Instruction Manual, learning what the New Testament church really looks like from the Lord's point of view, the more we begin to wonder how we've drifted so far from the original design. If we stay away from the Instruction Manual we might think we're doing pretty well. We see church growth and people being saved, and we figure God's got to be pleased. But is he?<sup>20</sup>

I am concerned about what I see in the church. There are some Christians who want the pastor to do it all. They will even say to him or her "That's why you're here." On the other hand, there are some Christians who want to be the chief, the boss in charge of everything. Generally, there appears to be a lack of balance, and because there is no balance, the ministry is fragmented and unfocused.

I am also motivated to address the issue because many historical congregations have left behind basic, biblical teaching of servant leadership. I believe that if we refocus our attention on God and the Word of God, lives will be changed, and we will not have to be so concerned about shared leadership in the church. It will happen. Then our concern can be that of working together to show Christ to hurting people in the community around Franklin Street. There are many in the immediate community who are suffering from alcoholism, loneliness, lack of self-esteem and confidence in their ability to achieve,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

people who need encouragement, and most important of all, people who need Jesus. If we refocus our attention on God and the Word of God, we can be concerned with working together to respond to the needs of others without waiting for someone else to do it, taking care of the elderly, and helping people develop their potential for feeding and clothing themselves, rather than merely applying bandages. Our concern can be for the sharing of whatever we have, making long-term commitments to insure that people have what they need for a quality life physically and spiritually. We can be more of what God has called us to be.

Ken Hutcherson reminds us that

In the New Testament church believers lives were so changed and so radically different from those around them that folks in town started calling them little Christs or Christians. Most people have forgotten where the word Christian comes from or what it means. As far as our contemporary world is concerned, it doesn't mean much of anything. And there is a reason for that. The church today has been caught up in just about everything except what God intended us to be caught up in - the saving, restoring, convicting, eternal Word of Almighty God.<sup>21</sup>

### C. Historical Background to the Issue

In addition to the historical background provided above, in the 1970s Franklin Street was a light in the community. It was a place where people came to have spiritual and physical needs met. The preacher was one of few educated pastors in the area and was involved in political-social activism. Members of the larger community, as well as members of the church, looked up to the pastor as a community leader. Because of the pastor's leadership, the Franklin Street had a good reputation in the community and was a source of pride for the members. It

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<sup>21</sup> Ken Hutcherson, p. 48.

was a flourishing church, a church where people invested time in the ministry and were eager to serve in and participate in its mission. It was a church that was most often filled to its capacity, a church where giving financially was a God-centered issue and people were afraid not to give.

The years have taken their toll. The political and social climate changed, somewhat, in Wytheville, and members of the church had access to other activities that competed with the church for their attention. Additionally, when Franklin Street no longer had the leadership of a pastor who was politically and socially active, the church's level of involvement in the community changed. Over the years, jobs became available to members of the congregation in towns that were great distances from Wytheville, and these members used the weekends to rest before beginning another week with long travel and working hours. Franklin Street eventually became a church where there was less activity in the church and less church involvement in the community. Members of the congregation did not adjust well to their new circumstance; they were reluctant to change with the times. They had, in a sense, lost their identity, their vision, and their familiar place in the community, all-important sources of self-esteem as a congregation in the community. Additionally, the church building fell into disrepair. Interpersonal conflicts also contributed to the decline. Unhappy members talked negatively about the church and generally discouraged others. In due time the vitality of the church suffered.

By the time I arrived, hardly anyone wanted to sing in the choir. Few wanted to serve in the various offices or designated positions of leadership. While

criticism of the pastor generally appeared to be on the decline, too many seemed to be quite comfortable being critical of those few members who were working and the new “young woman” pastor. Franklin Street had one previous female pastor, an older woman who had become pastor of the church after her husband died. Nevertheless, some members of the church remained opposed to having a female pastor. Additionally, my age seemed to be a source of concern and/or hindrance to accepting me as pastor for some members. A few expressed concern for whether or not I was old enough to be effective as a pastor, and another few (mostly females) were simply opposed to me because I am female. Their feelings were manifest in their absence from the church during my tenure and/or addressing me as “Miss” rather than “Reverend” or “Pastor.” Nevertheless, they called on me when they needed me. In the light of concerns for my gender, it is interesting that gender does not appear to play a part in leadership initiative among the lay persons?

When questioned concerning their understanding of mission and evangelism, members of the congregation point to the mission statement from the Book of Discipline that is posted prominently on a wall of the church. However, there is no evidence that they have been actively engaged in intentional evangelism. It appears that membership gains can be attributed to people visiting the church because they were impressed with the pastor and joining because of the pastor’s preaching. Not only have they not actively recruited members, they have also not been aggressive in inviting people to visit the church with the potential for becoming members. Few members even bother to invite their friends

who are members of other churches for occasions other than services with some special thrust or emphasis. While I believe their potential for increasing membership is as great as that of any other church in the community, they have made little effort to reach unchurched people in the community around the church.

The larger community views Franklin Street as a compassionate and caring church, a place where help is available to them. However, people at City Hall would probably view members of the congregation as “trouble makers.” Some of the members have continued, as individuals, to monitor the activities of the city, visit city council meetings, and speak out concerning issues related to racial discrimination and disparity in the provision of city services on the part of the city government. In spite of its problems, Franklin Street would be missed in the community if it no longer existed. Not only would individuals and families who look to the church for assistance with meeting physical needs miss the church, but the community, which uses the building for meetings and special programs related to African American celebrations and other community wide services and activities, would miss it as well.

Franklin Street is a church where it seems that everything else in life has priority over the church. It is a church that has for too long had a survival mentality, a church that does just enough to pay its bills and keep the doors open. No sense of accountability was evident. It appeared that they had no sense of what it really means to “serve the Lord” or work together, sharing leadership without quarreling and confusion.

#### D. Personal History Which Informs My Concern About the Issue

I was told on a number of occasions, when asking and/or encouraging lay persons to adopt a ministry project or perform some ministry task, that “That’s why we’ve got you here!” Various they reminded me that evangelism, mission, preaching, and worship were my jobs. Additionally, it is my belief that a church that is adequate in nurturing and empowering its laity for God’s mission and our ministry as God’s people is a church where laity feel a sense of ownership and interest in the vision of the church and are busy working toward that vision. The church that turns inward toward maintenance only and has no motivation for mission and ministry ends up closing eventually and never quite grasping what it means to be a follower of Christ. This kind of church just exists, paying a bill here and there, leaving one to wonder if its members ever heard the Word concerning being disciples of Jesus the Christ.

#### E. How the Issue Relates to My Model of Ministry

This issue has caused me to struggle with a model of ministry for myself as a single, young woman with many years of pastoral leadership and ministry ahead of me. I am constantly reminded that women have not yet achieved total acceptance as leaders in the church. Our authority as spokespersons for Christ and as leaders or persons with authority to “teach men” continues to be called into question. Thus, it has been necessary for me to consider the potential impact of identifying myself with servanthood. To assume the role of servant could play into the hands of those who would oppress me because they see the role of servant as the only appropriate role for women. Nevertheless, because I believe the most appropriate model for ministry is that of the “servant-leader,” I



am committed to live out God's call to service in spite of any concerns related to stereotypes and gender roles.

Jesus Christ provided the most radical standard of leadership for Christians. What the Lord taught by Word and action should then provide enough drive and initiative for any Christian. We find these words in Matthew 20:25-26 very helpful: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant. . ." (NRSV). Christ Jesus taught Christians this lesson with his life. Thus, every Christian should establish in his or her heart that we have been drawn to the Lord not to be served but to serve, "Just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Matthew 20:28).

Christ calls us to enable others in this model of discipleship, and if we are seeking to be first in showing love, compassion, and concern for the common good, then sharing leadership within the body of Christ should be a priority.

#### F. Contributions Addressing the Issue Can Make

1. Addressing this issue can make a contribution to the Franklin Street United Methodist Church and the wider Christian community by causing persons to take a serious look at what it means to be a servant of Jesus Christ. Individuals and groups can gain a better understanding of what it means and why it is important to move outside of their comfort zones and become more dependent on God as they work together with one another in a spirit of love for the upbuilding and empowerment of the people of God without regard for differences. It also could

- aid clergy and laity by inspiring them to a commitment to put Christ first, above personal desires, and thus, change attitudes and behavior.
2. Another contribution this project can make is that of arousing the gifts of God in individuals and groups and helping them to see each other and situations in the light of God's love and mission for the church. It could encourage persons to take the risk of submitting to share leadership in the small membership rural church. This would move them from a mere survival mentality to confident searching for the will of God for their individual and corporate lives. The bibliography section provides an easily accessible listing of some of the resources available for reading and study by those who would seek to lead congregations in establishing or strengthening situations of shared leadership in particular, as well as related issues.
  3. A third contribution this project could make is related to issues concerning the gender of leaders in Christian ministry. Because women have not yet achieved total acceptance as leaders in the church, and their authority as spokespersons for Christ and as leaders with authority to teach men" continues to be called into question, addressing the issue in this project could serve as a source of encouragement for women in professional ministry as well as women contemplating ministry as a vocation, regardless of their age. It could also provide better understanding of the gender issues surrounding women in pastoral ministry and other leadership positions in ministry. Equally significant, addressing this ministry issue could stimulate creative thinking, teaching and behavior on the part of women and men that is directed toward breaking down the barriers that women

in ministry face as newcomers in a previously male dominated profession. There is also valuable insight into issues related to acceptance as a newcomer whether one is female or male.

The project presented herein is simple enough for any small church to adopt in part or in total and powerful enough to have value.

#### IV. PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE MINISTRY ISSUE

In working to get the Franklin Street United Methodist Church officers to share leadership, I became convinced that as Celia Hahn contends, “If what we really want is for everybody to know they are worthy and valued, we have to have a relationship with them at all times that affirms that.”<sup>22</sup> This can be effectively accomplished if the pastor works along side laity, providing direction and demonstrating as they work. Teaching and modeling servanthood are equally important. Whether or not laypersons are willing to share in the service and leadership of a congregation depends on their understanding of the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Consistent with this assertion is Thomas McAnnally’s contention that

The nature of the church as a transforming community is rooted in the Christian understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. While there are a variety of ways the Spirit works in the continuous creation of the church, one of the most important is through knowledge. Education serves the purpose of transformation by defrocking the illusion that, in fact, change is a threatening reality newly descended on our own times, challenging pastors to be teachers and learners at the same time.<sup>23</sup>

Biblical knowledge and a firm belief in the Word of God will inspire laity to acquire a new attitude. The study of the Word of God is empowering and transforming, and worthy of trying to accomplish in any ministry setting. This is especially true for the small, rural church where change in behavior is so often critical to survival. One of the greatest obstacles to shared leadership is the lack of knowledge concerning not only its appropriateness but also ways it can be accomplished as well. The proper knowledge base can open congregations to unlimited possibilities for shared leadership.

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<sup>22</sup> Celia Allison Hahn, Growing Authority, Relinquishing Control (The Alban Institute, 1994), p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas S. McAnnally, “Ecumenical Gathering Considers Transformation of the Church,” in John Bennet, ed. The Small Church Newsletter Vol. 7, #2 June 1996 (quarterly publication), Missouri School of Religion Center for Rural Ministry, P. O. Box 104685, Jefferson City, MO 65110-4685.

Carl S. Dudley suggests in his book, Making the Small Church Effective, that “members show a strong sense of ownership and deep feelings of belonging.”<sup>24</sup> This may have been true to some degree at Franklin Street, but there was not an apparent “strong sense of ownership.” Laity at Franklin Street participated primarily on special occasions. Many of the members participated in Homecoming, and the church was full at Easter. Additionally, when the church was given a grant to help repair the roof, Franklin Street’s men were slow to come and help with the repairs. Members of other churches were more responsive.

Sometimes the small church does not even appear to be a “single cell of caring Christians,” as Dudley suggests.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, I disagree with Alan W. Wicker, who asserts in his article, “Assimilation of New Members in a Large and a Small Church,” that “members of the small congregation spend more time at church, work harder, know the pastor better, and seem to care more.”<sup>26</sup>

I experienced a small membership church that spent little time at church. Members of the congregation complained about having to sit for an hour for Sunday worship services, and when asked to come back at other times for a meeting or to work at the church, most members made excuses. They seemed to be willing to do only enough to get by. The church was in dire need of repairs and members had to be begged to take care of the repairs.

I was convinced that the congregation did not know me well, nor were they interested in getting to know me. I am a woman pastor, and some members were of the

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<sup>24</sup> Carl S. Dudley, Making the Small Church Effective, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), p. 29.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>26</sup> Allan W. Wicker, “Assimilation of New Members in a Large and a Small Church,” in Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 55, No. 3, pp. 151-156.

opinion that a woman has no place is in the pulpit. My gender played no particular role on my appointment to serve as pastor of Franklin Street. While there may have been some concern on the part of the bishop and/or the district superintendent concerning my acceptance as a female pastor, the overriding concern was to provide pastoral leadership for the congregation. The previous pastor had come to pastor the church on loan from the Virginia Annual Conference because there is a shortage of African American pastors in the Holston Annual Conference. During the course of the project, members of the congregation made progress in the area of my acceptance.

Carl Dudley makes an assertion that could possibly suggest an approach to affecting the attitude of persons who have not yet accepted that women are also appropriately positioned “in the pulpit” and leadership roles implied in that positioning. He asserts that

Adoption is a biblical metaphor to describe the way the outsider becomes part of the family of God. According to Apostle Paul, in his epistles to the Romans, chapter 8, and Galatians, chapter 4, we are adopted in God’s family through the witness of the Holy Spirit. We were not family but now we are. The adopted member of the church must learn to appreciate the artifacts and traditions of the family, the annual feasts and the perennial threats, and the family secrets of their history. It takes time to adopt a child. The whole church must participate.<sup>27</sup>

In spite of the rightness or appropriateness of particular clergy in leadership positions, Nancy Foltz provides for us a caution. She suggests that

Clergy leadership is tied to trust, to getting to know the congregation and letting themselves be known. Clergy should not presume themselves to be at the top, in control or in charge. Instead, they are working with others, and in due time, if fortunate enough, they will be adopted by the lay leaders of their church.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Dudley, pp. 55-56.

<sup>28</sup> Nancy T. Foltz, Caring for the Small Church: Insights from Women in Ministry (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1994), p. 6.

In the meantime precious time may appear to be lost and the ministry of the church put on hold until members come to accept the pastor as someone who is there to work with them. However, it may be necessary for clergy and laity to arrive at the time and place where they can work together as laborers in God's vineyard.

Even in the best of circumstances, the small church has limited resources, therefore, as Foltz observes,

Ministry in the small church is about how the pastor and the congregation minister together. Ministry in the small church is relational and contextual and needs people and place, and no pastor can be in ministry alone, without the support and welcome of the congregation.<sup>29</sup>

In the book Raising Small Church Esteem, Steven E. Burt and Hazel Roper write about a church with low self-esteem and how spending hours in small groups for adult education helped them gain a better understanding of the Bible and its characters and how they are more aware of missions. Some went on to study and become lay preachers and fill in at other small churches. Others reported that these discussion groups had helped them feel "less passive and more empowered" to do the work of ministry.<sup>30</sup> They further suggest that if the church is experiencing low self-esteem, Psalm 30 should be employed in the following manner: believing that "God hears our genuine cries and hastens to answer," study the Psalm using verses 4, 5, 11, and 12 as a vision upon which to set your eyes. They contend that "high esteem is not the result of magic but of the movement of God in the midst of a cooperating church."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>30</sup> Steve Burt and Hazel A. Roper, Raising Small Church Esteem (The Alban Institute: New York, 1992), p. 56.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

If the church is going to move toward being what God has called it to be, we must work on the mutual ministry theory, “where pastor and laity work together for the advancement of Christ’s work in the world.”<sup>32</sup> As Burt Roper reminds us,

Communities often look to the church for something even when it is unclear what that something is. When there is a traumatic death in a community, people automatically look to the church for comfort, however, when life seems smooth and uneventful, people tend to neglect the church. High-esteem small churches have a high profile in the community.

Low self-esteem in the small church has a direct bearing on lack of shared leadership. As Carlyle Fielding Stewart reminds us,

The task invariably is to call the people back to God; to tell them the good news of a crucified, resurrected, and liberating Christ; to provide them with the spiritual and material resources which enhance the realization of their maximum human potential, a potential which, when realized and celebrated, will inevitably lead to the transformation of individual souls, the church, and the collective communities they inhabit [if the church is to be effective].<sup>33</sup>

Eugene Seals and Matthew Parker provide interesting “words of wisdom” concerning the spirit and mindset of congregations that can be helpful to a pastor who seeks to lead a congregation effectively in relevant ministry. They contend that churches must

Have a teachable spirit – successful congregations understand that there is always more to learn. They actively encourage members to develop new skills and to learn more about God and what he wants us to be and do; be selfless – a relevant church has an upward, outward, and inward focus; have cooperation – relevant churches thrive on working together; mobilize laity – volunteer workers should be coming out of the pews in record numbers; and change – a positive outlook toward change keeps the church on the cutting edge.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> James C. Fenhagen, Mutual Ministry (Seabury: NY, 1977), p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Carlyle Fielding Stewart, African American Church Growth: 12 Principles for Prophetic Ministry, p. 149.

<sup>34</sup> Eugene Seals and Matthew Parker, Called to Lead: Wisdom for the Next Generation of African American Leaders.



Bound together in our church families, we must learn to live and work together.  
We accomplish very little single-handedly.

## **V. THE PROJECT**

### **A. Major Terms or Concepts Defined**

The title of this Research Project/Dissertation is “Shared Leadership: Clergy and Laity in the Small Rural Church.” The major terms to be defined in the title are *shared*, *leadership*, and *church*.

The term *shared* is used in the sense of participating in or joining with others to accomplish something. In this case we are concerned with being who God has called us to be as individuals and as a corporate body.

George Barna provides an appropriate definition of leadership. He asserts that *leadership* “is the sum of the spirit and activity generated by the person who seeks to do the right things at the right times for the right reasons to achieve a specific, predetermined set of outcomes.” Thus, leadership is more than just good intentions on the part of persons in charge or those who have been given titles that suggest or imply that one is a leader.

In 1 Peter 2:4-9 we find the Church universal portrayed as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, God’s own people. The Church is the body of Christ with Christ as its head, its life-giving cornerstone or foundation, and each believer is a member of the body, a stone.

The United Methodist Church provides a definition of the church or pastoral charge that is applicable in the context of this project. According to the Book of Discipline, the local church is

Is a community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is a redemptive fellowship in which the word of God is preached by persons divinely called and the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ’s own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the

church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world. The local church is a connectional society of persons who have professed their faith in Christ and been baptized, have assumed the vows of membership in the United Methodist Church, and are associated in fellowship as a local United Methodist Church in order that they may hear the word of God, receive the Sacraments, praise and worship the Triune God, and carry forward the work which Christ has committed to his church.<sup>35</sup>

The church is a fellowship and an institution called into being by God, a community of both belief and action. Thus, when members complain that the church is not doing what God has called it to do, those members are really complaining about what they themselves are not doing.

## **B. Approach to Addressing the Ministry Issue**

### **1. What's Missing from the Current Literature**

While current literature was helpful in the formulation of the ministry issue and invaluable as the actual project progressed, there remains one important aspect of the ministry issue that is not adequately addressed in existing literature. Not enough attention has been given to the uniqueness of the situation of African American congregations. To be sure, African American congregations are not so unlike other congregations that the literature fails to offer excellent insights and invaluable assistance. However, their uniqueness with regard to certain socio-economic indicators must be taken in to account when attempting to define problems as well as offer solutions.

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<sup>35</sup> Part V of Organization and Administration, The United Methodist Book of Discipline, Chapter 1, Section 1 – The Church and Pastoral Charge.

Additionally, Franklin Street United Methodist Church is a predominantly African American congregation with Caucasians as the minority group. Current literature does not appear to address this particular circumstance.

## 2. Ideas and Theories that Inform My Approach to Ministry

John Maxwell, in Developing the Leaders Around You, provides some interesting insights concerning geese that is analogous to my approach to ministry. He reports that scientist have discovered why geese heading south for the winter fly along in a “V” formation.<sup>36</sup> Maxwell asserts that

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately behind it. By flying in “V” formation, the whole flock adds at least a seventy-one percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. People who share a common direction and sense of community get where they are going more quickly and more easily because they are traveling on each other’s thrust.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone. It quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it. If we as people have “as much sense as a goose,” we will get in formation and stay in formation, and so will those who are headed the same way we are.

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back in the “V” formation and another goose flies the point. It pays to take turns doing hard jobs. The geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. This action raises the following question for church leaders: What do we say when we honk from behind?

And finally, when a goose gets sick, or is wounded and falls from the sky, two other geese fall out of formation and follow it down to the ground to help and protect it. They stay with the ailing goose until it either is able to fly again or dies. Then and only then do they attempt to create a “V” group formation on their own, or join with another formation until they catch up with their group. If church leaders had but the sense of a goose, we would stand by each other like that.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> John Maxwell, Developing the Leaders Around You, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8. I have taken the liberty of drawing freely from Maxwell’s book concerning the goose in order to explain a feature of my own approach to ministry, thus, I make no claims to its originality.

John Maxwell also offers another insight that gets at the heart of what I believe about attitudes and behavior. In statements attributed to Paul Meier, Maxwell relates the following: “Attitudes are nothing more than habits or thought, and habits can be acquired. An action repeated becomes an attitude realized.”<sup>38</sup>

Part of a leader’s responsibility to those persons he or she leads is to discern and give expression to a vision for the church’s ministry. The leader is presumably the person with the most combined preparation through theological education, prayer, study of Scripture, experience, and intimate relationship with God to be able to see the “big picture” and give definition to ideas and direction to the work of the church. Therefore, the leader’s vision of mission is a significant determining factor in whether or not the church moves forward in its spiritual and community life and work.

A major part of the responsibility of clergy is evangelism. However, evangelism is not totally the responsibility of clergy. The “Great Commission” (Matt. 28:19-20a) is to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” This command is to disciples, and disciples are followers of Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 we find these words: “All is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” In the New Covenant, as persons reconciled to God, all believers

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

have been given the privilege and responsibility of carrying the message of reconciliation to others that they, too, might be reconciled. As ambassadors of Christ, both clergy and laity are his agents who have been given the responsibility of taking this message out into the community, the world. All who profess faith in Jesus the Christ have been given the responsibility of ministering to one another and leading others to Christ.

Shared responsibility for ministry must be taught. There must be intentional teaching concerning “living and doing” God’s Word in Bible study and from the pulpit to change the lives of the evangelists who will evangelize.

In his book titled The Teaching Ministry, Ronald J. Allen provides insight that appropriately encourages the teaching dimension of ministry. He asserts that

Renewal often begins with discovery. We come upon roots that have been neglected, or misperceived, and we discover afresh that they have the power to bring forth a fresh sense of God’s presence, purpose and power. . .the time is ripe for thinking of ministry as a teaching vocation.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, Paul underscores the importance of the teaching dimension in Christian community and emphasizes the responsibility of all who follow Christ.

### 3. Description of the Project

The project was aimed at changing behavior through the involvement of the Administrative Council, a core group of ten officers, in experiences that require laity and clergy to work together. If a few people have a good attitude about doing church work, or anything else, it can be infectious! Thus, the approach was to get the core group up and sharing leadership, with the hope that it would catch on throughout the rest of the congregation.

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<sup>39</sup> Clark M. Williamson and Ronald J. Allen, The Teaching Ministry.

Changing the way one understands something and what one thinks or believes about a particular action can change behavior. Therefore the major thrust was education and study sessions.

a. Goals and Objectives

The goal of the project was to engage the pastor and laity of Franklin Street United Methodist Church in educational, spiritual, and action experiences which would help them to maximize their human potential as co-laborers in God's vineyard. Lay leaders, members, and the pastor were expected to learn how to share leadership and work together in order to change their thinking from "That's the pastor's job" to "This is our ministry." The hope was that everyone would come to view the work of the church as everybody's work until the work was done. Laity would stand with clergy and clergy would stand by laity.

To accomplish a change in the attitude, understanding and behavior of members of the Administrative Council, and subsequently, the congregation, the following objectives were developed:

By the end of the project, Franklin Street United Methodist Church will experience

1. an increase in self-esteem of members, individual and collectively;
2. spiritual and educational growth;
3. a cooperative spirit and positive outlook toward change;
4. a sense of community and shared ministry;
5. a sense of camaraderie between pastor and lay leadership; and

6. lay leaders, pastor, and members working together, moving in the same direction.

- b. Methodology

The primary problem at Franklin Street United Methodist Church was a lack of shared leadership. Leadership is important to any task, and shared leadership is equally important to the ministry of the United Methodist Church because of its organization and structure. When a leader fails to carry out his or her responsibilities, a breakdown in the system occurs.

In an attempt to lead Franklin Street United Methodist Church in a revitalization effort through teaching and modeling shared leadership, a series of Bible study sessions and questionnaires were designed to be used as tools to aid in moving Franklin Street United Methodist Church in the direction of shared leadership.

The project was centered around a time of Bible study and responding to certain specific questions at the beginning of nine monthly meetings of the Administrative Council. After explaining the proposed project to members of the Administrative Council (the core group) and securing their commitment to participate, the project began October 30, 1997.

The following Scripture passages were used for the Bible studies:

Isaiah 58:6-12 – The People of God

Matthew 5:13 – The Salt of the Earth

Matthew 5:14 – The Light of the World

Matthew 25:31-46 – Faithful Sheep

Mark 4:1-9 – The Sower



Luke 10:25-37 – The Good Samaritan

1 Corinthians 3:9-11 – God's Building

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 – The Body of Christ

2 Corinthians 3:3 – Letter from Christ

While there was a concern for our work at home, on the job, and at play, we were more specifically focused on how we are to work together in the church. Thus, Scripture passages were selected based on the fact that they related in some way to what God desires for people of faith as they live and work together.

In addition to their participation in Bible study led by the pastor at the beginning of each Administrative Council meeting, members of the core group also agreed to serve as Bible study leaders for weekly Wednesday night Bible study that was open to the whole congregation. Having them lead Bible study was a way of helping them gain experience in preparing for Bible study. This gave them first-hand knowledge of what is involved in preparation as well as practice. Having them lead Bible study also was the method employed to begin the overflow of the project effort into the rest of the congregation. This was a way to get other members of the congregation involved and begin a ripple effect throughout the church.

Monthly meetings of the Administrative Council began with the Bible study session at 6:30 p.m. Dismissal usually occurred about 9:00 p.m. One and one-half hours were devoted to Bible study. Having them stay at the church for two and one-half hours was important for helping them become accustomed to spending time at the church. The hope was that this might result in increased willingness to give more time to the ministry of the church in general.

Attendance at the sessions was good. Ten to twelve persons were present at each session. This represented a marked improvement in the frequency and attendance at previous Administrative Council meetings. The Council had previously met infrequently, sometimes every three month, with poor attendance.

During each of the nine study sessions, members of the core group were invited to share God's call for them and the congregation in the light of the particular Scripture studied. Additionally, a clear challenge to make application of the insights gained from each session was made through the use of thought-provoking questions at the end of each session. These questions were aimed at moving participants from their places of comfort into ministry (service). Appropriate combinations of the following questions were asked:

1. What difference does this study make in your life?
2. How has it made a difference?
3. Are there things you will begin to do differently in the future?
4. How will you do things differently?
5. Has your thinking changed?
6. Has your heart been pricked such that you are ready to move into a place of servant leadership?

During each study session, members of the Council also were invited to share God's call for them and the congregation as it pertains to the scriptures and to share ways that pastor and laity can be more effective in the performance of their duties and responsibilities.

The core group was asked and covenanted to pray a prayer, along with the pastor, at each meeting and every day for as many times as they chose. This request was made

because core group members indicated that their prayer lives were weak, and I believe that God's Word and prayer will lead to transformation. A specific prayer was provided so that everyone would pray for the same things. The text of the prayer, with modifications to make it specific to Franklin Street, follows:

Father, in the name of Jesus, we come into your presence thanking you for Franklin Street United Methodist Church. You have called us to be saints in Wytheville, Virginia and around the world. As we lift our voices in one accord, we recognize that you are God, and everything was made by and for you. We call into being those things that are not as though they were. We thank you that we all speak the same thing: There is no division among us; we are perfectly joined together in the same mind. Grant unto us, your representatives here, a boldness to speak your Word, which you will confirm with signs following. We thank you that we have workmen in abundance and all manner of cunning people for every manner of work. Each department operates in the excellence of ministry and intercessions. We have in our church the ministry gifts for edifying of this body till we all come into the unity of the faith and the knowledge of God, unto a mature person. None of our people will be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. We speak the truth in love. We are a growing and witnessing body of believers becoming strong. We have every need met. Therefore, we meet the needs of people who come – spirit, soul and body. We ask for the wisdom of God in meeting these needs. Father, we thank you for the ministry facilities that will more than meet the needs of the ministry you have called us to. Our church is prospering financially, and we have more than enough to meet every situation. We have everything we need to carry out your Great Commission and reach the Wytheville area for Jesus. We are a people of love, as the Holy Spirit sheds love abroad in our hearts. We thank you that the Word of God is living big in all of us and Jesus is Lord! We are a supernatural church, composed of supernatural people doing supernatural things, for we are laborers together with God. We thank you for your presence among us and we lift our hands and praise your holy name!<sup>40</sup>

Since the project is about changing the attitudes of people so that they will do things differently, the prayer was not used as a religious form with no power. Prayer is to be effective and accurate and bring results, for the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power, making it active, operative, energizing and effective; it is sharper than any two-

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<sup>40</sup> T. R. King, Valley Christian Center, Roanoke, VA, wrote this prayer.

edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life and spirit and of joints and marrow exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12 AMP).

It was through prayer in general, and this vision for a church prayer in particular, that we were inviting God to intervene in the life and ministry at Franklin Street United Methodist Church.

In the book, I Asked for Wonders, Abraham Heschel says, “Prayer is the opening of a window to God in our will, an effort to make God Lord of our soul.”<sup>41</sup> It is through prayer that people are transformed. As James informs us, “You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2). Yet, it is not just asking; it is asking rightly: “You ask and you do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:3).

In his book, The Pulpit and the Pew: Conflict in the Lord’s House, Bishop Marshall Gilmore rightfully contends that

“Purposeful prayer is like a rifle shot that is singular, instead of a shotgun blast that spreads and scatters. Purposeful praying takes place where the praying person is being transformed. Where that is in process, prayer is not used in order to get so that what is received is used for purposes out of the realm of the kingdom. Instead, what is received is to the glory of God.”<sup>42</sup>

A praying church, a church with members working together, moving in the same direction, excited about doing the work of ministry is to God’s glory. So we prayed the prayer every time we met. After prayer we moved into our lesson for the evening.

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<sup>41</sup> Abraham Heschel, I Asked for Wonder (New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1988), p. 28.

<sup>42</sup> Marshall Gilmore, The Pulpit and the Pew: Discussions on Conflict in the Lord’s House (CME Publishing House, 1997), p. 98.

## **Session 1 – October 1997**

The Scripture for this session, Isaiah 58:6-12, emphasized “the people of God.” There were twelve persons present. After studying the passage to get an understanding of its message, the discussion centered on the nature of true worship. It is more than religious ritual, coming to church, listening to the preacher. True worship, we discovered, is genuine compassion for not only the poor and helpless but each other as well. We talked about how faith was not real unless it reached beyond ourselves to others.

The core group was asked questions about the lesson, which elicited responses that gave some indication as to how they saw themselves in the lesson. They were asked to share what was helpful to them as people of God in their leadership role at Franklin Street United Methodist Church. How does God want us to serve as God’s people? Answers varied, but of course, there were no wrong answers. This study provided an opportunity for participants to focus intentionally on what it means to be the people of God and whether or not they were being true disciples in their actions at Franklin Street.

At the end of the study session, the Questionnaire #1 was distributed. It contained the following four questions:

- A. What is the vision of our church?
- B. What are your suggestions of ways that Franklin Street can become a more faithful church through sharing leadership responsibilities between clergy and laity?
- C. What is our responsibility to each other as people of God and to the larger community?

D. What are you willing to do to insure that leadership responsibilities are shared between clergy and laity? Instructions were given, along with a request for it to be completed and returned during the following week. The session was closed with prayer.

This and subsequent questionnaires included the following instructions: Please complete these questions as straightforward as you can. Your honest opinion is the “right” answer. There are no “wrong” answers. This information will be used in the evaluation of this ministry project.

### **Session 2 – November 1997**

The Scripture lesson for this session, Matthew 5:13, emphasized “the salt of the earth.” After coming to some understanding of the meaning and message contained in the passage, we discussed how each of us as leader might be a seasoning that has flavor. We asked ourselves whether or not we have value if we have lost our seasoning ability. The group concluded that since we are to affect the world around us, the body of believers where we are must catch the spirit and be concerned about the nature of the message we are sending as leaders. We also discussed what God wants us to be like in the world. We should be different enough and our lives should be “tasty” enough to bring out the best in those whom we lead and to whom we minister as clergy and laity working together.

Question B from the first questionnaire was asked again: What are your suggestions of ways the church can become a more faithful church through sharing leadership responsibilities between clergy and laity? The rationale for asking the question a second time was to see if their answers would be different from previous answers. It

was hoped that their responses would reflect growth as a result of their participation in the first two sessions. Group members responded, reports were made and discussed, and the session was closed with prayer.

### **Session 3 – December 1997**

The session was opened with prayer and twelve persons present. I then asked the group if each group member would agree to lead a lesson. The ensuing discussion was helpful. Some shared just how little knowledge of the Bible they had. Some also shared that this was helpful because it opened the Word to them, a word some did not think they could understand.

The lesson was Matthew 5:14 – “The Light of the World.” After study of the text, we discussed the ways we hide our lights from one another and God’s desire for us to let our lights shine. If we are alive for Christ, we will glow with the light of Christ, showing others our example of being Christ-like. During the discussion, we responded to the following questions:

1. How can we be lights of the world in our church?
2. How can our light be hidden?
3. What does shared leadership have to do with being the light of the world?

We were intentionally trying to do better at being disciples of Christ who shared leadership. The meeting was closed with prayer.

#### **Session 4 – January 1998**

The fourth session began with prayer and ten persons present. The Scripture lesson was Matthew 25:31-46 – “Faithful Sheep.” We talked about what it means to be faithful to God. In the discussion, we also responded to the question, “Is the lack of shared leadership a sign of unfaithfulness?” There were times during the discussion when one could hear in voices and see on faces indications of frustration as group members responded to some of the questions. They appeared reluctant to acknowledge that we are very much responsible for the state of the church for which we have been given charge. We concluded that the way we act is the real evidence of what we believe. After sharing and talking about the scripture lesson, each person was given Questionnaire #2 to take home and asked to answer the following questions as openly as possible:

- A.       What is the church’s current shared leadership situation, as you see it?
- B.       What improvements need to be made?
- C.       How will you help make these improvements?

Questionnaires were to be returned at session #5.

Questionnaire #2 was distributed in the middle of the project in an effort to determine if the teachings were in any way affecting their attitudes concerning shared leadership. Responses would give indication of whether the group members had a better understanding of what shared leader is. It was anticipated that their responses to Questionnaire #2 and Questionnaire #3 would be different.



## **Session #5 – February 1998**

This session was opened with prayer. There were twelve persons present. The lesson was Mark 4:1-9 – The Sower. Three of the persons present had informed me prior to the session that they would not complete the questionnaires. Two of them appeared to have a negative attitude about completing the questionnaire, and one person was angry with the pastor. The person who was angry with the pastor had expressed displeasure with the opportunities that the pastor was providing for the development of the leadership skills of the church lay leader as well as the lay leader's participation in the leadership of Sunday worship and other gatherings of the congregation. The other two persons appeared to be influenced by and following the lead of the angry person. While we did remain on speaking terms, the anger was never resolved.

In this session we talked about the four types of soil in Mark 4:14-20 and asked ourselves which soil best described us. The soil represented to us different ways people respond to God's Word: Some willingly receive; some resist; some are open; some are rocky.

We then responded to the question, "What kind of seed are you sowing in your soil at Franklin Street United Methodist Church?" Some acknowledged that they need an understanding of God's Word if they are to know what God is calling each of them to do. We concluded that the Lord is calling us to plant seed in good soil in our church in order that our seed will grow. We focused on the importance of following through if one would be good seed in good soil. God must have first place in our lives if we are true disciples.

We also talked about shared leadership. This part of our discussion focused on shared leadership as a mandate from God. No one person in the body of Christ can or should do all that the body needs to have done. This is evidenced in the fact that the Lord has given different gifts to different persons to be used together in the Body of Christ. Paul emphasized the importance of each church member when he cautioned us that if a part of the body is taken away, the whole body becomes less effective. To be effective we must use the gifts we have been given and encourage others to use their gifts.

We also spent some time discussing the necessity of specific functions being assigned to specific persons. Although one may have assigned responsibility for a given task, we need to learn to work together and allow our differences to work for us. By so doing we share leadership. Because a person has been appointed to a task does not mean that no one else can aid in the completion of the task.

It was evident during this session that something was changing. People appeared to be trying hard to be different than they were before the sessions began. Some were more cooperative. Even the three persons who refused to complete the questionnaire were becoming more helpful in other ways.

The business meeting was held and adjourned with prayer. Group members formed a circle and held hands as the closing prayer was prayed.

#### **Session #6 – March 1998**

Session #6 was opened with the usual prayer and ten persons present. The lesson was Luke 10:25-37 – The Good Samaritan. We discussed the need to treat each other as

we would treat Jesus if Jesus were physically present at Franklin Street United Methodist Church. We reminded ourselves that Christ bids us to relate to one another always with love.

It became quite apparent during this session that one of the reasons the church is so dysfunctional is that too many people have been hurt by another person in the church, and the conflict has not been resolved. For that reason, they have refused to talk to each other or work together. This was especially rewarding since the motivation for using this particular Lukan passage was to teach this core group of leaders that refusing to love one another, no matter what a person has done, cannot be justified. The objective of this lesson was that they should learn that love means acting to meet the need of another.

Group members were asked how they were meeting the needs of the body of Franklin Street United Methodist Church when key leaders were not getting along with other leaders. They seemed to get a feel for the affect that conflict among leaders has on the whole body. During the discussion, there were responses such as “It causes tears” and “It causes people to take sides when we all should be on the same side.”

When asked what they were going to do about the problem, the general agreement was to “confront the problem and tackle it.” They were cautioned that this would require being intentional. The group seemed to really want to make an effort because it is the right thing to do. Some acknowledged that it would be difficult, but with God’s help it is possible. We concluded that we must depend on prayer. We must ask God to create in us a clean heart and renew the right spirit within us, so that we can serve and not allow our

attitudes about each other to hinder the ministry. The session was closed with members joining hand and praying together.

### **Session #7 – April 1998**

The session was opened with prayer and twelve persons present. It should be noted here that by the time of this session, core group members had led these same studies in Tuesday night Bible study sessions with persons other than the core leadership at Franklin Street. This was a part of the intentional modeling of shared leadership behavior.

Members of the core leadership group also had begun to provide leadership in worship. This was one of the most successful parts of the project. Some were afraid, but they were willing to try. I am convinced that if you show people how to do something and they do it more than once, it can become a part of them. Nevertheless, there were some who resisted.

The lesson for session #7 was 1 Corinthians 3:9-11 – God’s Building. The discussion began with more talk about different individuals with a variety of gifts in the church. This helped to reinforce the lesson from the previous session. It is important for leaders to understand that there is no place for superstars in the ministry of the church, only team members sharing their abilities for the good of the whole.

Verse nine of the scripture lesson assures us that “we are laborers together with God.” The body, officers, teachers, preachers, parents and others must build the church according to God’s standard to meet God’s standards. Only immature, insensitive,

members of the body, those, who do not have a solid foundation in the Word, would reject the sharing of leadership. The church is only as solid as its foundation. The foundation of every believer is Jesus Christ, our base and reason for being.

We asked ourselves “Who is the foundation at Franklin Street United Methodist Church?” If it is indeed Christ, some things should be different, and sharing leadership is one of those things. Persons should be focused on giving God glory in all that they do and be willing to work together without concern for what is or is not someone else’s job.

Discussion revealed that while some persons said that their foundation is Jesus, personal agendas kept coming to the forefront. Some group members seemed to think that the church is a place for fundraisers to fund such things as their daughters’ participation in beauty pageants. Others appeared to believe the church to be theirs and theirs alone; that nothing can be accomplished without their approval of the activity and when it is done. While taking ownership is a desired goal, this attitude does not represent the desired method. If Christ is not the focus, the center of the congregation, problems will come and never leave.

Group members were asked to put what they were learning into action in the time between sessions. They were asked to promote shared leadership by refraining from being negative and being positive in doing the Word of God. They were asked to model Jesus’ thoughts and actions, to teach reconciliation and be reconciled, to teach forgiveness and forgive others, and to pray for solutions to the church’s problems.

A praying church, a church with members working together, moving in the same direction, excited about doing the work of ministry is a church that glorifies God. Those

things that cause dissension, confusion, and disorder in the church do not glorify God. As we are reminded in 1 Corinthians 3:9, we are laborers together with God. Thus, it is our prayer and God's will that we work together.

### **Session #8 – May 1998**

The session was opened with prayer. In the lesson from 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 – The Body of Christ, Paul compares the body of Christ to a human body. He talks about how each part has a certain function that is essential to the proper functioning of the whole body.

Franklin Street United Methodist Church is composed of people with different gifts that all need to be used for the glory of God. After arriving at an understanding of the scripture and its teaching, the discussion centered on the need to avoid allowing differences to divide and the need to focus on the one thing we all have in common: faith in Jesus the Christ. Group members were admonished to stop looking at what someone is doing and discover what each of them can do and do it – “Let your light shine!” – and support the good that each member of the body does.

### **Session #9 – June 1998**

The ninth, and final, session opened with the usual prayer. The Scripture lesson was 2 Corinthians 3:3 – Letter from Christ. In this scripture, Paul uses powerful imagery from Old Testament passages predicting the promised day of new hearts and new beginnings for God's people. In Jeremiah 31:33 we read “This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in

their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

God is inscribing his law upon our hearts rather than on stone. Rebirth takes place when we get it in our hearts and do it. When we turn our lives over to God, God’s Holy Spirit puts in us a desire to do God’s will. This new heart that God places in us makes us responsible to God’s Word. No longer are we content to be and do as we have always done, no longer are we hard-hearted, deaf, and immovable. Now we are open and receptive to all that God is and all that God has in store for God’s church. But first we must get God’s Word on the inside so God can direct our actions inside out, even that of sharing leadership in the church. This is God’s will.

At the end of this session, as was the case for each session, participants were asked, “What is God calling you to do based on the biblical passage studied?” Responses included

- To stop being a hearer only and start being a doer.
- To study the Bible more and be intentional about it.
- Never to forsake doing good; even when I think I have done my part, continue; in due season we will reap if we faint not.
- To keep my heart and mind on Jesus and do all I can for God’s glory.
- When I have a firm foundation in God’s Word, I won’t let what others are not doing hinder me.

- Perhaps when we are totally converted everything and everyone will work like we're suppose to work.
- We've got a long way to go in getting together.
- Seek the Lord with my whole heart and God will give us the desire of our hearts.

During our last session we committed ourselves to seeking the Lord with our whole heart and speaking those things that are not as though they were. We re-committed to praying the "Vision for the Church" prayer at least once every day and as often as we thought to pray it. We committed to "talk answers" to the Franklin Street problems and not talk the problems all of the time.

The answers to our problems are in God's Word, and we must have knowledge of God's Word if we hope to find the answers to our problems. We believe that praying this prayer will open the way for us to receive what we believe, for we walk by faith and not by sight.

Questionnaire #3 was distributed. It contained the following questions:

- A. What is shared leadership between clergy and laity (at Franklin Street United Methodist Church)?
- B. How have I obstructed shared leadership, and what do I intend to do to correct my behavior?

Questionnaire #3 was collected from members of the core group.



## C. Findings

Responses to Questionnaire #1 were used to aid in the development of the following mission statement for Franklin Street:

We acknowledge that personal salvation always involves Christian mission and service to the world. We do this by joining heart and hand; we assert that personal religion, evangelical witness and Christian social action are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing. Our scriptural holiness connects us to the love of God; whereby, we are connected through God with the love of our neighbor, having a compassion for justice and a renewal in the life of the world. Henceforth, we minister to one another spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally, and to our environmental needs by teaching the love of Christ through our word and action.

We, through our love for Christ, seek to preach the gospel, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless and edify the fallen. We seek to nurture and strengthen those in prisons, hospitals, and nursing homes, as well as comfort and care for the sick, the shut-in, the disabled, those who are mentally and socially in need, and always encourage the advancement of people holistically.

Our connectional ties bind us together in faith and service in our global witness, enabling faith to become active in love and intensifying our desire for peace and justice in the world. We accomplish our mission and ministry for the church upon such evangelical premises in the exercise of our responsibility for the moral and spiritual quality of society; asserting our connection between doctrine and ethics in the use of the Book of Discipline and the “General Rules” – which summons us to faith and nurturing in the knowledge and love of God.

We are dedicated to living out this mission statement.

Nine persons accepted questionnaire #2 and nine completed and returned them.

Group members who answered this questionnaire listed the following needed improvements:

1. More interest in the ministry at Franklin Street.

2. Refrain from talking about people who are not doing their job behind their backs.
3. When persons do not do their jobs, they need to be confronted by the Council chairperson in a timely manner in the spirit of love; to be done privately, with one person as a witness.
4. Leaders need to follow through with their responsibilities and ask for help when they are not able to live up to their commitment.
5. When clergy or laity ask for help, the body should respond eagerly.

As we experienced these Bible study sessions, it was necessary to consult the Book of Discipline for guidance and support of the effort. Only three members of the core group owned copies. Two members requested that I obtain copies for them.

Throughout the project, modeling the desired behavior occurred on the part of the pastor, who also asked the core group to do the same. This was an integral part of the teaching.

Change was evident in members of the core group throughout the process. While most members had obviously changed for the better, a few remained suspicious of the project and exhibited little change. Nevertheless, overall, the attempt to make a difference in the leadership style of the leaders through the study of the Word of God and prayer appears to have been a successful endeavor. Getting a commitment from members of the core group to pray, talk the answers to problems, refrain from talking against others, and continue their leadership in Bible study and worship are major accomplishments. The Administrative Council, the core group of ten (sometimes thirteen) has planted seeds that are growing and flourishing throughout the congregation. Changes have begun to occur.

The activities of the project planted the seeds. God will provide the increase in changes, the growth that is needed at Franklin Street United Methodist Church.

While some still appear not to be committed, the majority of the members of the Administrative Council are committed to not letting the church die. They are rallying around the congregation and encouraging positive congregational attitude, activity and ministry that, with God's help, will cause Franklin Street to have a positive, productive presence in the community. It is significant that a clear majority of the members of the core group now realize that in order to be effective leaders, they must study the Word of God and do what the Word teaches.

#### D. Reflections

The studies were helpful because people gained new knowledge and new understanding of the Word of God. I could see people trying, as they learned more of God's Word, to do better than they had done in the past. Having the Bible study was eye opening. I have found that normally people tend to do what they know. And, when they know better, they tend to do better.

This project is designed to help disciples be disciples as God has commanded: to teach us, equip us, and prepare us to share leadership in Christ's Church. A commitment must be obtained from key leaders in the church to be at the Thursday night, 6:30 p.m. meetings.

We cannot make a good attempt to share any kind of leadership unless we learn to love one another and break down the walls that keep us from sharing our abilities freely without grumbling. I have found that one of the primary issues in sharing leadership

between clergy and laity is getting self out of the way. Too often we want to promote ourselves, no matter what, instead of Jesus.

I believe that part of the problem is that people do not know what the denomination encourages and requires in the area of shared leadership or anything else pertaining to working together for the cause of Christ. In “Servant Ministry/Servant Leadership,” Section VI, number. 11, page 110, we read

The United Methodist Church has traditionally recognized that laypersons as well as ordained persons are gifted and called by God to lead the church. The servant leadership of these persons is essential to the mission and ministry of congregations. We have a privilege and obligation. The privilege is a relationship with God that is deeply spiritual. The obligation is to respond to God’s call to holy living in the world.

The experience of this project affirms a fundamental belief that was key in the motivation for this project. When we fail to live according to the teachings of the Word of God and observe things happening in an improper manner over a long period of time, we can get so far “off track” that we become convinced that everything is alright when it really is not. This, I believe, has been the case at Franklin Street. Church leaders have been trying to perform in their assigned leadership roles according to what they believe to be appropriate for officers and leaders without knowledge of the Word of God or knowledge of the mandates of the Book of Discipline.

This, of course, is not totally the fault of lay leadership. In many cases, they have not been trained to work together and share leadership. They have been given a job and charged to perform the demands of the job without adequate understanding of the job or preparation for getting the job done properly. Too often, church leaders attempt to “go on what they know,” without the benefit of a basic foundation in the Word of God.

I believe that when one accepts the responsibility of serving in a leadership capacity, he or she should do his or her best to accomplish the demands of the position. If the Lord has called one to serve in a task, accompanying that call is a strong sense of purpose, passion and commitment. The pastor will never be able to do everything that needs to be done at Franklin Street United Methodist Church or any other church. If this were the case, the ministry would never grow beyond the limitations of one person, the pastor.

When the pastor’s attitude is changed from thinking that a pastor’s only proper role is to preach and administer sacraments, both activities laity are usually restricted from performing, the pastor has experienced a major learning and can come closer to being what God has called pastors to be.

In an effort to build community, the pastor invited members of the congregation to an open house at the parsonage, sent personalized birthday cards to each member, made sure all sick and homebound members received pastoral visits as appropriate, and visited each member of the congregation at least once during the project period.

Modeling servant leadership on the part of the pastor included such things as helping to clean the church, collecting food for the hungry, and singing in the choir.

## E. Projections

A workable plan that would help leaders and the congregation see the benefit of growing in the knowledge of God and proper church function would include a training event for all officers prior to the date of their annual terms of office. This event would begin with biblical interpretation of what it means to *be* the church working together, sharing leadership. This event would highlight areas in the Book of Discipline that are related to proper function for leaders and the Franklin Street United Methodist Church congregation. Each participant would receive a copy of the Book of Discipline for ongoing study and as a reference.

The core group of officers would continue to be engaged in Bible study at the beginning of Administrative Council meetings, with the hope that they will continue to build the foundation of their lives and their work together in the Word of God. Church leaders would deal with problems openly and forthrightly as they occur and encourage the members to avoid letting problems fester for weeks and create confusion and conflict.

A crucial need surfaced during this project: both clergy and lay leadership need training in leadership skills. In the book, The Leader of the Future, Alfred C. D'Crave, Jr. provides a helpful listing of necessary behaviors for church leaders. Church leaders who wish to model and promote shared leadership in the life of a local congregation should

- Act and be unwilling to rationalize inaction with relentless follow-through to ensure that the action is implemented.

- Create and shape change, rather than passively accepting it, and challenge the status quo, refusing to accept the response, ‘We’ve never done that before.’
- Seize the opportunities of the present without compromising the need to invest and build for the future.
- Flourish in a boundaryless work environment by focusing on results knowing that much can be done if it doesn’t matter who gets the credit.
- Think positively, never give up, seek out the opportunity that lurks in every challenge, and realize that things are never as bad as they seem.
- Seek consensus without being paralyzed by the thought of making a mistake.
- Communicate! Communicate! Constantly influencing, encouraging, critiquing and listening.

To this list, I hasten to add that leaders should evaluate and deploy people based on what they believe God is calling them to do. These are all things the core group as well as members of Franklin Street United Methodist Church agreed were not happening and, perhaps, keeping shared leadership from occurring.

The Nominating Committee needs to make persons aware of their duties, the qualifications, and the need for training to equip and prepare laity for their role in ministry. I believe each member in the church should receive a Book of Discipline when received into the church, and go through a study of the book so that each will know there is no time for resting and taking it easy, but now it is time to work.

The city of Wytheville is growing as evidenced by the increase in the number of service industry business and food establishments in recent years. Thus, Franklin Street has the potential for growth if members and the pastor, working together, reach out to the community in an intentional evangelism effort and recruitment program. This could be especially effective among new residents, if the church continues to grow spiritually and as a welcoming congregation. Another area of possible numerical growth is that of interracial couples. Presently only one other congregation welcomes interracial couples.



## VI. EVALUATION

The following is a listing of responses to the three questionnaires used during the project, with commentary.

### Questionnaire #1

#### 1. What is the vision of our church?

Respondent	#1	To move forward in a spirit of love.
	#2	To provide a cohesive church that reaches not only our church family, but those in the community through faithful work of the church.
	#3	To continue God's teachings and to move forward.
	#4	The vision of our church is to unite and be a leader in our community.
	#5	Is to be a light in our community.
	#6	The vision of our church I believe should be to grow spiritually not only in our parish but throughout the community. Let people know Franklin St. will help in community.
	#7	The vision of our church is to grow in love and togetherness.
	#8	I think that our members should participate in the welfare of the church rather than being Sunday Christians.
	#9	To get new members and grow.

While all of the responses were generally appropriate and positive, it is evident that members of the core group have not given sufficient attention to the mission statement that has been displayed on an interior wall of the church for a number of years. Respondent #2 is not specific concerning what "faithful work of the church" means, but it could be interpreted as alluding to the understanding of evangelism contained in the above-mentioned statement.

#### 2. What are your suggestions of ways that Franklin Street can become a more faithful church through sharing leadership responsibilities between clergy and laity?

Respondent	#1	No answer.
	#2	Working with each other more lovingly and discussing problems more objectively. If problems should arise, individual (as a

- member) or person to person contact should be made.
- #3 There must be more cooperation between both and a more even leadership between both clergy and laity.
  - #4 We need trust of one another and our leader.
  - #5 We all need to come together in prayer – unite as one.
  - #6 Better communication – more openness on discussing problems with each other when they arise. Sharing thoughts and ideas to make our church one people will want to be a part of.
  - #7 Try to include all members and attendees in church functions. Give everyone some responsibility; not limit involvement to membership.
  - #8 I think that Franklin Street can become a more faithful church through sharing their love for one another, helping each other when they are in need, rather than talking about their fellow Christian brothers and sisters.
  - #9 No answer.

Responses to this question generally acknowledgment that there are problems in the area of interpersonal relationships and inclusiveness and communications in general. They overwhelmingly espouse the need for improvements in how members care for and relate to one another as well as a need for more trust, sharing, and cooperation between lay persons and lay persons and the pastor. However, responses reflect growth in knowledge and understanding of the mission of the church and the responsibility of lay leadership in carrying out the mission. Respondent #7 advocates the involvement of persons who are not members in the activities of the church. This could be a positive approach to evangelism and church growth. Respondent #7 seems to imply some particular problem in the balance of lay and clergy leadership

3. What is our responsibility to each other as people of God and to the larger community?

- |            |    |   |
|------------|----|---|
| Respondent | #1 | Help one another if it is needed.                                   |
|            | #2 | Love, sharing, caring.  |
|            | #3 | To not only look at Franklin Street's problems or goals but to look |

- at the community also. And get involved in all aspects – social, religious, civic, etc.
- #4 To pray and reach out more to one another.
  - #5 We need to be concerned about each other's well-being. Be sincere and faithful to one another. To the community we need to reach out and help more.
  - #6 Help our church and others in the community. Let people know they are always welcome at our church.
  - #7 Our responsibility to each other is to show love and concern when needed and not separate ourselves.
  - #8 My responsibility to each other is to support one another rather than talking about each other.
  - #9 To go out and try to get people to come to church.

Respondent #3 is insightful in revealing an understanding of the mandate of the church to be active in the world but not of the world. Respondent # 9, focusing on the “larger community” portion of the question, points us toward the “great commission.” Again, the responses are all positive.

#### 4. What are you willing to do to insure that leadership responsibilities are shared between clergy and laity?

- |            |    |  |
|------------|----|--|
| Respondent | #1 | By prayerfully reasoning together.   |
|            | #2 | Contacting others who attend church, not necessarily a member of the church.   |
|            | #3 | I have always tried to work with everyone, however, it's time for everyone else to. There are positions of leadership that I have done in the past, way before others were ever members. |
|            | #4 | To pray and reach out more to one another.   |
|            | #5 | Become closer to each member through prayer.   |
|            | #6 | Get everyone involved. Try to motivate and be a positive example by asking others to help out with different activities.   |
|            | #7 | Encourage everyone to work together and not pull in different directions.  |
|            | #8 | I am willing to help in any way that I can.  |
|            | #9 | No answer  |

It's interesting that respondent #1 gave no answer when asked for suggestions of ways that Franklin Street might become a more faithful church through shared leadership, but

responds well to the question of willingness to insure that leadership responsibilities are shared between clergy and laity. Respondent #3 shows evidence that he or she may be experiencing some difficulty in letting go of some feelings and opinions; seems to be on the defensive. This may also reflect some anxiety about change.

5. What is Franklin Street United Methodist Church's current shared leadership situation, as you see it?

- |            |    |   |
|------------|----|---|
| Respondent | #1 | Nil.  |
|            | #2 | Lacking, but I honestly don't know what suggestions to make things better.  |
|            | #3 | Not good. Not as good as it should be, or can be.   |
|            | #4 | It is not as good as it should be, and can be a lot better.   |
|            | #5 | Poor.   |
|            | #6 | Most leadership is handled through chairpersons at each committee<br>– pastor – lay speakers – administrative council – each chairperson is responsible for letting each member know the going-ons. Pastor tries to get everyone involved. Meetings are held regularly. |
|            | #7 | There seems to be a lack of communication and understanding.  |
|            | #8 | There is so much hatred and evilness in our church that most people are not willing to take a leadership position in the church.  |
|            | #9 | It's not shared – some want to run the whole show.  |

All responses to this question generally reflect an accurate assessment of some aspect the situation. It is evident that the core group understands the problem.

6. What improvements need to be made?

- |            |    |  |
|------------|----|--|
| Respondent | #1 | Redo or remake.  |
|            | #2 | Administrative Council meeting every two months instead of monthly.  |
|            | #3 | Too many people are wanting to be chiefs and not wanting to give others a chance. Young people are not being worked with or being involved. People should look at their own houses before they tell others what to do. |
|            | #4 | Less gossip – more caring and love for one another.  |
|            | #5 | Less talk – <u>more prayer</u> and action in Christian work.   |
|            | #6 | Communication needs to be better all around. Get more people involved.   |
|            | #7 | Allow people to share their feelings through counseling.   |

- #8 There are a lot of improvements that could be made at FSUMC, but before improvement can be made the members need to work together and become a unified church.
- #9 Everybody should try to work together instead of separately

Respondent #1's answer is not clear in its meaning. Nevertheless, it does seem to communicate that improvements are needed. Respondent #3 again seems to reflect strong feeling about some previous occurrences in the church with respect to negative talking, as well as concern for the involvement of youth and young adults. Respondent #6 appears to have uncovered a need for persons to be heard as well as engaged in counseling. The need for a change in interpersonal relationships and the way people are treated is evident generally in the responses. Additionally, it is significant that each respondent indicated a need for improvement.

#### 7. How will you help make these improvements?

- |            |    |   |
|------------|----|---|
| Respondent | #1 | By doing whatever is necessary.   |
|            | #2 | Through prayer and working to improve things as best I can.   |
|            | #3 | I will probably make both clergy and laity upset, but I will work as best as I can, pray and hope people will open their eyes to what is happening at Franklin St. If not we will lose Franklin St. And if I can't I will have to go to another church. |
|            | #4 | Work harder to understand people, and help where I can.   |
|            | #5 | Attend more meetings. Work harder to bring about unity. With God's help we can be that church God is looking for.   |
|            | #6 | Support not only my committee but others also. Help out any way I can.  |
|            | #7 | Cooperate.  |
|            | #8 | I think I could help by taking a more active role and set an example by doing more for the church.  |
|            | #9 | I'll do my best to work with everybody for the best of the church.  |

Respondent #3 continues to reflect strong feelings, maybe even hostility.

Otherwise, the responses seem to lean in a positive direction. Respondent #5 seems to have grasped the need and intent of modeling desired behavior.

## **Questionnaire #2**

A. What is your church's current shared leadership situation, as you see it?

- |            |    |   |
|------------|----|---|
| Respondent | #1 | The pastor is the leader and they work with the laity for the betterment of the church.   |
|            | #2 | Our leadership is excellent for a small church.   |
|            | #3 | Our situation is limited by our low membership. Our leaders are excellent, but often over worked.   |
|            | #4 | Lay leadership is involved in leading worship and participating in the operations of the church.  |
|            | #5 | For many years leadership was shared by older members only!!  |
|            | #6 | Very organized and respected. The pastor brings matters to the officers and they govern and vote on what to do.                             |
|            | #7 | The lay leadership and clergy have a good working relationship, but they are short of help.   |
|            | #8 | Our lay leaders are very involved in all the regular services, as well as special events. Good leadership is evident in our worship.        |
|            | #9 | Evangelism to get new members with different talents and gifts. Pastor to delegate responsibilities to old and new using talents and gifts. |

In spite of the fact that answers to questions in Questionnaire #1 generally support the contention that shared leadership is a problem, responses to this question seem to suggest that things may not be as bad as respondents believed before they completed Questionnaire #2. Responses ranged from excellent to giving excuses for the present situation. This may suggest that evident progress is being made at this point in the project. Respondent #9 does not appear to be responsive to the question asked.

B. What improvements need to be made?

- |            |    |  |
|------------|----|--|
| Respondent | #1 | Our church needs more members to help with the leadership. Our members are elderly and we need young leaders with new ideas. |
|            | #2 | Leadership could be more informed.   |
|            | #3 | We need more members.  |
|            | #4 | The laity must become more active in financial support, evangelism, and participation as leaders in church programs.         |
|            | #5 | New improvements are being made. New people are now taking on leadership in many areas of the church.                        |
|            | #6 | Communication between committees and body of church.   |

- #7 The pastor is too busy. There are not enough volunteers to help her with her responsibilities.
- #8 More church members to get involved. It is always the same group who does all the church work.
- #9 Repair of physical facilities. More room. Stress role of laity.

It is significant that Respondent #7 observes that the “pastor is too busy,” and needs help. Several respondents address issues related to the need for numerical growth, not as an excuse, but as desirable for improvement. It is not clear whether or not this refers to the church in general or shared leadership in particular, or both.

C. How will you help make these improvements?

- |            |    |   |
|------------|----|---|
| Respondent | #1 | Get out there and find new members with new talents.  |
|            | #2 | By praying for myself and all the leadership in our church.   |
|            | #3 | Pray for new members.   |
|            | #4 | I am currently active in many aspects of the life of the church and will continue to be.  |
|            | #5 | I was one of the older members. I worked with the Boy’s Club (Royal Rangers). Also Sunday school, and played drums at church for 30 years (of and on). I now have help in all of these areas. The needs of the church are being filled. Amen! |
|            | #6 | Pray.   |
|            | #7 | Looking at the needs and determining if there are areas where I can help.   |
|            | #8 | By encouraging others to participate in the shared activities.  |
|            | #9 | Prayer, vision, guidance, direction, encouragement.   |

Responses to this question are generally positive. The mood of the answers of Respondent #3 seems to have changed. Maybe the negative feelings and apparent hostility are subsiding at this point. Respondent #5 affirms that progress is being made in that needed assistance is being provided in those areas for which Respondent #3 is responsible.

**Questionnaire #3**

A. What is shared leadership between clergy and laity as you understand it now?

Respondent	#1	That the clergy and laity work together in improvement and setting goals in order to work through problems and reaching future goals. Teamwork.
	#2	The clergy is the lead, but shares and encourages each officer in the church and helps them to fulfill their office.
	#3	Not thinking the pastor does everything. All members looking to see what part they can play in the church.
	#4	See above.
	#5	Working together.
	#6	The preacher brings what he thinks needs to be done before officers and they vote or decide together what to do.
	#7	Answer illegible.
	#8	Both laity and pastor leading the congregation.
	#9	Pastor as enhancer, initiator, mediator, mentor and to use gifts and talents of individuals to their best to further God's kingdom on earth.

This question gets at the heart of the project. Responses reflect varying degrees of understanding the concept shared leadership, indicating growth. It is noteworthy that Respondent #6's response is almost the same as this same respondent's response to the first question of Questionnaire #2. Response has changed from the pastor presenting matters to the officers, who govern and vote on what to do to, to the being included with the officers in the decision making. Respondent #4 does not appear to respond to the question. However, generally the responses reflect an understanding of shared leadership.

B. How have you obstructed shared leadership and what you will do to correct your behavior?

Respondent	#1	People - laity and pastors should work together with a Christian attitude to solve their problems and take their church forward. Not be petty or have a leadership power attitude.
	#2	By criticizing some things that some of the officers do in their position. Put myself in their position and try to see things in their eyes.
	#3	No answer.
	#4	The church is in a state of transition. At this point shared leadership is best effected by an open mind to change and potential growth in spirit and wisdom.



- #5 Make sure my behavior honors the Lord.
- #6 Pray! Pray! Pray!
- #7 I have not.
- #8 Do not feel I have been an obstruction for myself or others in the leadership!
- #9 I have never obstructed shared leadership. Pastor must lead but willing to walk beside, not in front or in behind.

Three respondents (#1, #3, #4, & #5) did not respond to the question asked, with #3 giving no response at all. All respondents, to a greater or lesser degree, previously acknowledged that there was a problem with shared leadership in Franklin Street, but most of the responses to this question suggest that core group members remain unable to see themselves as part of the problem for which they are to assume responsibility for solving.

The project was attempted in response to a need for shared leadership in the areas of worship, mission and evangelism in service to the church and the world. Some progress was made in each of these areas. When I arrived at the church there were only three or four persons singing in the choir. This number increased to eight or nine each Sunday. A little more than halfway through the project, there began to be a noticeable difference in the freedom with which people were comfortable in worship. Lay persons began participating as leaders in worship, and there were more responses of “amen” to the music and the preaching. The expressions on the faces of many of the worshipers were more pleasant. It was as if the Holy Spirit was present in a new way in worship. I believe these changes occurred as a direct result of core group members and members of the church being reminded of what worship is and why we come to worship. They already understood worship as their response to God in thanksgiving and praise for God’s blessings. The activities of the project simply reminded them and helped them to refocus

on the meaning and purpose of worship. In this same vein, core group members were beginning to model the desired behavior of refraining from negative talk and being more cooperative. The change in their behavior had an almost immediate affect on the congregation.

It is also significant that attendance in worship increased, and worshipers actually seemed to enjoy being in worship. Even when the musician was not in attendance for a short while, the choir continued to rehearse and sing, and the congregation enthusiastically sang acappella.

Members of the core group did not initiate an intentional evangelism campaign, however, they lead the congregation in becoming a more welcoming congregation. Additionally, the difference in their attitudes was apparent to the whole congregation, and the congregation became more open and welcoming of visitors and new members. As a result, members started to invite people to church. Some provided transportation for those whom they invited. The pastor extended an invitation to discipleship (for commitment and re-commitment) each Sunday following the sermon. Approximately 20 young persons joined the church. This resulted in the addition of twenty new members, most of whom were young people enrolled at the local technical college.

Changes occurred in the area of mission, however, they were not changes that addressed the systemic need in the community. A food pantry was organized to provide food for persons who were hungry and needed food. A fund was begun to help people in the community to pay utility bills. The church became a site where youthful offenders could meet their requirements for court ordered community service.

In addition to the progress made that is specific to the areas of worship, mission and evangelism, other progress was also made in other related areas. Members of the core group lead Tuesday night Bible study with persons other than those in the core group. A mission statement was developed. Core group members made commitments to pray for the church, to concentrate on finding solutions to problems rather than dwelling on the problems, and refrain from speaking negatively about one another. Directly related to their gaining knowledge in the preparation for worship and Bible study, core group members also made a commitment to continue their leadership in Tuesday evening Bible study, Sunday worship, and other special services at Franklin Street..

Core group members reported that study sessions were helpful because the Word of God was opened to them in those sessions. The approach to this time together allowed them to look critically at themselves as they studied God's Word, consequently, the core group members were less negative in their criticism of others and more receptive and responsive to requests to engage in the activities of the church.

As a result of being engaged in educational, spiritual, and modeling behavior experiences, core group members came to view and understand the work of the church as everybody's work until the work is done. As a result, the Administrative Council has taken on more responsibility; they have "taken charge" of the church. Members of the congregation are more involved. Attendance at Administrative Council meetings has improved. There is lay leadership in the pulpit each Sunday. Exterior and interior building repairs have been made, so that the physical structure is no longer an embarrassment to the members. The increase in worship attendance and participation achieved during the period of the project is being maintained.

The aforementioned accomplishments demonstrate clearly that behavior changed because the understanding and attitudes of members of the core group were changed. This change is also reflected in the congregation. Members are regaining self-esteem as evident in their working together and investing money, time, and energy in the physical facility as well as their growing openness to visitors and potential members. They are becoming more cooperative and experiencing a resurgence of a sense of community. Members of Franklin Street United Methodist Church continue to discover ways that shared ministry can be effective as they intentionally attempt to model this behavior and revitalize the church.

## **VII. CONCLUSIONS**

It is evident in the observable attitude and behavior of the core group that changes are taking place. I believe they are realizing that shared leadership in the church is not just about the pastor or someone asking them to do a job; it is a call from God on their lives. Thus, working together is a spiritual matter and not merely the acceptance or rejection of an offer to serve on a committee or responding to the request of a pastor.

If people can begin to know and understand each other, they will work together for the upbuilding of the church. As people come together to study God's Word and learn of Christ, a true bond is formed. When people know and appreciate one another, they will work together more productively

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