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Anglican Elders?
Shared Pastoral Leadership in Anglican Churches

By
Christopher David Edward Moll

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

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Covenant Theological Seminary

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Abstract

Because the Church of England is historically clerical, the incumbent pastor formally shares the pastoral burden or cure of souls with the Bishop. Evangelical Anglicans are impelled by both Scripture and mission to consider the New Testament pattern of plural local leaders or elders. This research explored the experience of Anglican ministers and church planters who established locally-shared shared pastoral leadership through a Ministry Leadership Team (MLT).

The purpose of the research was to explore the benefits of shared leadership for making and maturing disciples. In surveying the literature advocating the benefits and biblical precedents of shared leadership, it was noted that in contrast to other evangelicals, Anglicans apply the biblical data using the Normative Principle derived from the work of Richard Hooker. Four questions guided the research: (1) How does the local church's shepherding ministry strengthen the work of making disciples? (2) What are the benefits of a ministry leadership team in the work of making disciples? (3) What practices have promoted collaborative working between members of the ministry leadership team, with particular regard to the work of making disciples Church? (4) How is the pastors' Anglican self-identity manifest in the practice of shared local ministry leadership?

Nine UK pastors were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire with the data analyzed using the constant comparative method. Common and clear benefits are articulated by the respondents. The lay offices of churchwarden and PCC were also re-evaluated with respect to the responsibilities outlined in the New Testament for church officers. The respondents exhibited a clear and confessional Anglican identity. Possible

models for accommodating a MLT within the existing parochial structures are explored.

Finally it was noted that in these theologically complementarian churches, the role and place of female pastoral leaders was not fully resolved.

To Christa, with love

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All Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version
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Chapter One: Introduction

The Church and Making Disciples

The church has a double identity and a single mission. Called out from the world by God's grace, she is to be a holy people; sent back into the world, the church is to bear witness to that same grace. It is as a people both called and sent that the church is given the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. Veteran pastor John Stott explains that "the mission of the church is modeled on the mission of Christ. He himself said so. 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' (John 20:21)."¹

Christ called his church to make disciples, not mere converts. That means bringing men, women and children to a mature faith in Christ by "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."² Paul also explained that his ministry had maturity as its goal, "Him [Christ] we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."³ Similarly, in his letter to the Ephesians he writes that the ascended Jesus gave his church gifts "for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Living Church: The Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), 20.

² Matthew 28:18–20.

³ Colossians 1:28.

we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”⁴ Finally, in the opening chapters of Revelation, the Spirit of Jesus desires believers to endure to the end and be worthy of being addressed as the one who conquers.⁵ The mission of the church is to make disciples that will last.

Christendom and Making Disciples

The world into which Jesus sends the church is constantly changing. In Great Britain the shift from a Christian to post-Christian culture is marked. British church planters and trainers Steve Timmis and Tim Chester state that “it may be time for the US church to learn from the European church’s experience of being on the margins of the culture.”⁶ Stuart Murray, another planter and trainer, describes post-Christendom as “the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence.”⁷ He goes on to list seven transitions that mark this shift. Christian churches have moved from the center to the margins of society. Christians have gone from being in the majority to the minority, from settlers to sojourners because they no longer feel at home in culture. As the culture

⁴ Ephesians 4:11–14.

⁵ Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21.

⁶ Steve Timmis and Tim Chester, *Everyday Church: Mission By Being Good Neighbours* (Nottingham: IVP, 2011), 18.

⁷ Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 19.

becomes more diverse, Christians transition from privilege to plurality where Christians' privileges are eroded; from control to witness as the church's direct influence through control gives way to the indirect influence of witness; from maintenance to mission because the illusion of maintaining a Christian status quo has been shattered; and from institution to movement.

Murray's analysis rings true. For instance, the 2011 population census reveals that the overall proportion of the population saying they were "Christian" fell from seventy-two percent in England and Wales in 2001 to fifty-nine percent in 2011; the percentage saying that they had "No Religion" rose from fifteen percent to twenty-five percent in the same time.⁸ In 2013 just ten percent of the UK population were church members, and church attendance was less than half that figure.⁹ The Church of England report, *Mission-Shaped Church*, is correct in stating that Britain is a post-Christendom culture in which "the Christian story is no longer at the heart of the nation."¹⁰

Regrettably, many churches have failed to recognize this fundamental cultural shift and have not adapted their ministry accordingly. The situation is especially acute in the historic churches, that is churches that were founded in Christendom, when they enjoyed a place at the center of society, with influence, privilege, control, and the sense of being

⁸ Peter Brierley, "Geography, Christians and Those With No Religion," *Future First*, no. 34 (2014): 2, accessed October 7, 2015, http://www.brierleyconsultancy.com/s/510217_FUTURE_FIRST_Issue-34.

⁹ Idem, "Church Attendance," *Future First*, no. 33 (2014): 2, accessed October 10, 2016, http://www.brierleyconsultancy.com/s/508632_FUTURE_FIRST_Issue-33.

¹⁰ Church of England, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), 11.

‘at home’ in the culture.¹¹ They are institutions rather than movements; their task maintenance more than mission. While revival and renewal form a constant backdrop to the history of the Western church,¹² the churches as a whole were organized for chaplaincy to a Christian culture rather than pioneering mission to a non-Christian culture. The historic churches therefore find themselves ill-adapted to their environment and are failing to make disciples. Since 1989, Methodists, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans have been closing the most churches in England Church: 1,101 Anglican churches, 1,715 Roman Catholic churches, and a devastating 3,247 Methodist churches.¹³ The number of newer churches, that is those born in post-Christendom, remains static. If the historic churches fail to adapt, they will do worse than fail to make disciples; they will fail to survive.

Leadership and Making Disciples

Mission is the task of the whole church, but the responsibility for equipping the church to carry out her mission lies with the church’s leadership.

In any organization, leaders provide the direction and the culture for the members or workers to pursue goals. Business economist Jim Collins commends the value of discerning an overarching focus, that he dubs a “Hedgehog Principle,” to drive all other

¹¹ As noted above, Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 19.

¹² Richard F Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1979), *passim*.

¹³ Peter Brierley, “Churches: Geography and Growth,” *Future First*, no. 37, Supplement (2015): 1-6.

activity.¹⁴ In a similar way, church leaders Rick Warren and Tim Keller give examples of leadership by articulating their churches' vision and unifying principles.¹⁵ These vision and focus statements articulate what it means for a church to make disciples in its context.

Culture affects both the style and the structure of leadership. Keller notes that it "has a pervasive impact on every aspect of how a Christian community is ordered -- how people relate to each other, how leadership is exercised, how pastoral oversight and instruction is done."¹⁶ While he then illustrates his point with reference to differences between American and Korean culture, the point holds for the differences between Christendom and post-Christendom culture. A clerical ministry suits a Christendom context in which "to be born was to be born into the church." Chester and Timmis continue, "So the church's mission to the surrounding society was pastoral rather than evangelistic."¹⁷ When seventy percent of the UK population has no intention of attending a church service, and these figures are even higher for young people,¹⁸ then a leadership and ministry structured for Christendom will fail, as it has done in the UK.

¹⁴ Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't* (London: Random House Business, 2001), 95; Idem, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great* (London: Random House Business, 2006).

¹⁵ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church - Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 75-154; Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 291-335.

¹⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 96.

¹⁷ Timmis and Chester, *Everyday Church*, 25.

¹⁸ Ibid., 31.

The Church of England and Making Disciples

Here, then, is the cost if a church or denomination fails to adapt its leadership and its methods to a changed culture: it will be found wanting in the urgent mission of making disciples and may ultimately fail to survive at all. Specifically, a church born in Christendom will fail in post-Christendom unless it takes account of the new context.

An acute example is the Church of England, which was born of the sixteenth century Magisterial Reformation in England. For centuries this church enjoyed privilege, control, and dominance in the life of the nation. It is unsurprising, therefore, that “The Church of England bases a significant part of its identity on its physical presence in every community, and on a ‘come to us’ strategy.”¹⁹ Yet the recent census data show that the population does not consider itself to be “us”: just eighteen percent of the UK would consider themselves to be “Anglican,” and just sixty percent of the UK would say they are “Christian.”²⁰

The church’s clerical structure has remained unchanged despite its history of revival. The Restoration firmly rejected the Westminster Assembly’s (1643-1653) attempt to improve the Articles of Religion,²¹ coming down firmly in favor of an episcopal and clerical leadership. Wesley’s class system could not be accommodated within the church and instead formed the basis of Methodism; it remains today that an

¹⁹ Church of England, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 11.

²⁰ Peter Brierley, “UK Religion,” *Future First*, no. 30 (2013): 2-3 accessed October 7, 2016, <http://www.brierleyconsultancy.com/s/ff30.pdf>. Note these figures are for the whole UK (England, Wales, Scotland).

²¹ Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading Its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009), 30.

incumbent is instituted into a parish to share the ‘cure of souls’ only with the bishop. The Church of England is structurally clerical.

The call for change comes from those most closely associated with the mission of the church, namely evangelicals within the Church of England. Stott is not alone in writing from both scripture and mission that Christian oversight is pastoral and plural, “There is no biblical warrant for the so-called one-man band, in which a single pastor, like a single musician, plays all the instruments.”²² The church needs, he says, to recover the concept of the pastoral team in the leadership of the church. The need arises from both scripture and the demands of local ministry, as church leader and evangelist David Watson explained thirty-five years ago, “No one can claim that the familiar picture of the parish priest, working faithfully but single-handed in, say a parish of 20,000, comes anywhere near the rich concept of Christian ministry put forward in the New Testament.”²³

Stott, Watson, and all who have followed them have had to contend with the existing structures for local lay leadership. A means of sharing pastoral ministry must either colonize those lay structures or risk coming into conflict with them. The first option, then, is to share pastoral leadership with the existing lay officers so that they become a ministry leadership team sharing the minister’s leadership as fellow elders. The lay officers are churchwardens and the parochial church council (PCC), who have care of the fabric and finance of the church, and the rules governing their appointment make no

²² Stott, *The Living Church*, 81.

²³ David Watson, *I Believe in the Church* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978), 245.

provision for ensuring the office holders are suitable to exercise an eldership ministry.²⁴

A second option is informally to share elder ministry with ministry leaders such as leaders of home groups, who share in the teaching ministry and act as the first line of pastoral care. But if the group is informally constituted, decision-making still rests with the PCC, and without authority to make and enforce decisions, plural oversight and the exercise of pastoral discipline are limited. A third option is to appoint and name a ministry leadership team²⁵ whose role is explicitly to share the minister's pastoral leadership in guarding, overseeing, leading, and shepherding the congregation. Where the authority of this team is formally recognized by the local church, conflict with the PCC may be resolved by ensuring that a number of the leadership team are also on the PCC. Watson described such a structure in his church in York in the 1970s.²⁶ The concept of a ministry leadership team similar to a board of elders is found today in churches that are reaching a culture that has moved even further from its Christian roots. Several new-start church plants establish plural elders rather than the normal pattern of churchwardens and PCC.

This study will focus on the experience of leaders in Anglican Churches with a recognized plural ministry leadership team. The research will explore how shared local eldership benefits the church's mission of making disciples. Since the leaders sit on the fault-line between a Christendom denomination and a post-Christendom mission field,

²⁴ See below Chapter One 'Definition of Terms' and Chapter Two 'The evangelical Anglican understanding of Presbyteral Ministry' for more on these officers.

²⁵ See 'Definition of Terms' below for more on this term.

²⁶ Ibid., 295.

their perception of the benefits of shared eldership will be a rich source of insight into the possible shape of Anglican mission in Britain today. Their experience will also be vital for any historic church working out how to adapt to mission in contemporary Britain.

Problem and Purpose Statements

The purpose of this study is to explore how ministers explain the benefits of a shared pastoral leadership team for the task of making disciples in contemporary Britain. Leadership has been identified above as a critical component of effective mission, and it has been noted also that some Anglican church leaders working in twenty-first century Britain perceive a shared model of eldership has benefits for the church's mission. The aim of this study is to listen to their experience of making disciples in a church using shared pastoral leadership. To that end, the following research questions guided the qualitative research.

1. How does the local church's shepherding ministry strengthen the work of making disciples?
2. What are the benefits of a ministry leadership team in the work of making disciples?

(The shared pastoral leadership structure will have been provided by questionnaire).

3. What practices have promoted collaborative working between members of the ministry leadership team, with particular regard to the work of making disciples Church?
4. How is the pastors' Anglican self-identity manifest in the practice of shared local ministry leadership?

Significance of the Study

The introduction has highlighted the crisis facing the historic churches of the West as they seek to minister to a post-Christendom society. The difficulties are not restricted to the Church of England. While any church must adapt to the changing mission context, the situation is especially acute for older churches whose pastoral leadership was developed for maintenance rather than for mission in a post-Christian society. This study will research one particular set of responses to that challenge, and the findings can be expected to benefit all who want to adapt their ministry practice to a changing environment.

First, the study will highlight some themes in the task of making disciples; as this task becomes more demanding, so the contribution of church leaders becomes vital in enabling the whole church to be a disciple-making church. The experience of the participants will give important insights into the challenges facing disciples and those who would seek to build them up for faithful living in post-Christian Britain.

Second, the study will explore the how the experience of shared, collaborative leadership reflects the missionary call to be both called by God and sent into the world.

Third, it will be noted that other evangelical traditions have long believed plural eldership to be required by the New Testament texts. Anglican theological method, even among conservative evangelical Anglicans, draws on scripture, tradition, and reason (that is, the insights of common grace). The Anglican subjects of this study will be a rich source of reflection on the identity of contemporary, Anglican evangelical disciple-making churches.

Definition of Terms

In order to gain the most from this study, the reader will need to become familiar with Anglican church polity. Since the focus of this study is the local congregation, many of the regional and denominational terms and structures may be skipped over.²⁷ The following is a thematic introduction to the terms and the polity they describe. An alphabetical listing of the same terms is given as Appendix A.

Anglicanism and The Church of England

Anglicanism – a theological ethos that is loyal to the so-called formularies: the Book of Common Prayer (1662), the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, and the Ordinal.

Ordinal – Form of service for ordaining Bishops, Presbyter (priests) and Deacons.

Anglican Communion – the chief institutional expression of Anglicanism, thirty-seven provinces or national churches that trace their roots to the Church of England and are in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury (England).

The Church of England – the established national church in England. When it comes to discussing churches and denominations, the Anglican churches in Great Britain (the Church of England, the Church in Wales, and the Scottish Episcopal Church) are national in character, and because the churches and pastors in this study minister in England, their relationships are to the Church of England, or to AMiE.

²⁷ For more on these, the interested reader may consult Timothy Briden and Brian Hanson, *Moore's Introduction to English Canon Law*, 3rd ed. (London: Mowbray, 1992); Timothy Briden and Kenneth M MacMorran, *A Handbook for Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councillors* (London: Mowbray, 1996).

The Free Church of England and more recently the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE) – other Anglican groups. All the pastors interviewed within this study identify as Anglicans, whether or not the congregations they serve are currently within the Church of England.

England – distinguished from the rest of the UK because of its different legal and ecclesial framework. From the point of view of culture and society, the countries of Great Britain, namely England, Wales and Scotland, form a single entity, and it is appropriate to speak of British Society or the challenges of ministering in Britain.²⁸

Anglican Evangelical – term preferred by conservative evangelicals within British Anglicanism to show that they identify first with other evangelicals and then with Anglicans. In this study, Anglican Evangelical and Evangelical Anglican will be used interchangeably.

Evangelical – a Christian who holds to the sufficiency of scripture, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the centrality of the cross, and the need for personal faith.

Conservative evangelical – an evangelical who espouses complementarian views on gender and ministry and holds to a traditional definition of marriage.

Complementarian – conservative evangelical theological position holding that men and women have different and complementary roles in ministry, and that headship or leadership within the church should rightly be exercised by suitably qualified men only (cf. egalitarian).

²⁸ Ireland and the other Islands making up the British Isles are excluded as not pertinent to this research.

Egalitarian – theological position holding that the equality of men and women entails no difference in role (cf. Complementarian).

Ordained and Lay Officers in the Church of England

The Church of England recognizes three orders of ministry namely bishops, presbyters (priests) and deacons.²⁹

Deacon – one of three orders of ministry in the Church of England. They are ordained to a ministry of mercy, and most will be ordained as a presbyter after one year. Because there is no permanent diaconate in the Church of England, deacons are in effect probationary presbyters.

Presbyters – second of the three orders of ministry, also known as priests. Although the English word “priest” was known to be derived from, and to be a contraction of, “presbyter,” it is avoided by evangelicals because of its association with a sacerdotal ministry.³⁰ In this study, presbyter will be used in preference to priest when referring to ordained Christian leaders, unless the word is found in a direct quotation. The ordinary translation of the Greek term πρεσβύτερος will be elder.³¹

²⁹ Canon C1 ‘Of Holy Orders in the Church of England.’

³⁰ John R. W. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Leicester: IVP, 1992), 274.

³¹ Except in this section and its coordinate in Appendix A, Greek terms will be transliterated for ease of reading. Discussion of Greek text only involves individual words, and English translation is always provided.

Bishops – the third order of ministry, which oversees presbyters and congregations within a diocese. The bishop is considered the “chief pastor” of the diocese,³² and the cure of souls is shared between the bishop and the incumbent. In this study we will use bishop to refer to an official in a denomination, and use overseer as translation for the Greek term ἐπίσκοπος.

Incumbent – the appointed leader of a congregation and may be named rector, vicar, priest in charge or minister-in-charge without any difference in role.³³

Curate – an assistant minister in their first ordained post.

Non-stipendiary minister (NSM) – also called a self-supporting minister, an ordained bi-vocational minister.

Readers – laypeople licensed by the bishop with the incumbent’s consent; they may preach, lead services, and if appropriately trained, take funerals. They may assist in the administration of the sacraments but may not preside.

Churchwardens and members of the parochial church council (PCC) – lay leaders from the congregation. Their roles are described in more detail in the next chapter.³⁴

Electoral roll – members who may choose churchwardens and elect PCC members. The Church of England has no formal membership.

³² Canon C18 ‘Of Diocesan Bishops.’

³³ The differences are historic and before the twentieth century were often significant. See for example the works of Jane Austen and Anthony Trollope.

³⁴ See Chapter Two, ‘Lay Officers in the Church of England.’

Parishioner – any person living in the ecclesiastical parish, the geographical area served by the parish church. Most Church of England churches are parish churches.

A proprietary chapel – in the Church of England, this is an independently owned chapel that operates as a Church of England church. Unlike a parish church, a proprietary chapel is not required to be governed by churchwardens and PCC, although some form of governance is required if it is to operate as a charity.

Other Terms

Congregational Elder – an office holder in churches constituted with an eldership. Except in quotations, the single term ‘elder’ will be reserved for the translation of the Greek πρεσβύτερος.

Lay Elder – a member of an identified ministry leadership team in an Anglican church (see below).

Collaborative ministry (CM) and collaborative leadership (CL) – sometimes used interchangeably in sources. In this study, collaborative ministry (CM) means that every member of the body is to exercise ministry for the common good. Collaborative leadership (CL) refers only to church leadership that is carried out in a collaborative or plural way.

Ministry leadership team (MLT) – a team of leaders who exercise collaborative leadership within the congregation. In this study, MLT will be used for Anglican Churches and eldership for others, except in quotations.

Pastor and minister – used interchangeably to describe the senior minister of a church.

Church – one or more congregations under local leadership.

Association, a network or a denomination – various groups of churches.

Governance – one of the tasks of boards. John Carver's definition is an apt summary:

“The purpose of governance is to ensure that, usually on behalf of others, that an organization achieves what it should achieve while avoiding those behaviors and situations that should be avoided.”³⁵

Shepherding – by contrast, the pastoral care of the flock with an emphasis on individuals.

The terms governance and shepherding correspond to Timothy Witmer's categories of macro-shepherding and micro-shepherding respectively, and unless used in quotation, governance and shepherding will be the preferred terms.³⁶ Models of church pastoral leadership may lean more to governance, or to shepherding, or attempt to embrace both equally.

Making disciples – bringing men, women, and children to mature faith in Christ, and in a local church this is done through relationships. Pastor Greg Ogden describes the discipling relationship, in which one or more believers assist or invest in each other in order to grow to maturity in Christ, when he calls it “an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip, and challenge one another

³⁵ John Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), xxviii.

³⁶ Timothy Z Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2010), 103, 104. See Chapter Two, ‘Other Evangelical Perspectives on Collaborative Eldership’.

in love to grow toward maturity in Christ.”³⁷ Making disciples, then, is the work of enabling people to come to faith and maturity in Christ.

Summary

The present chapter has introduced the background problems that the study addresses, explained the key terms, and outlined the research questions. The following chapter will review relevant literature to provide an informed background for the research interviews to be described in chapter three.

³⁷ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few At a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003), 129.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore how ministers explain the benefits of a Ministry Leadership Team for the task of making disciples. The study's research questions given above are:

1. How does the local church's shepherding ministry strengthen the work of making disciples?
2. What are the benefits of a ministry leadership team in the work of making disciples?
(The shared pastoral leadership structure will have been provided by questionnaire).
3. What practices have promoted collaborative working between members of the ministry leadership team, with particular regard to the work of making disciples Church?
4. How is the pastors' Anglican self-identity manifest in the practice of shared local ministry leadership?

The subjects to be interviewed identify as evangelical, Anglican, and aspiring to be effective ministers. In order to ground the research so that it coincides with anticipated concerns, the following areas of literature will be surveyed. First, many New Testament passages mention local church leaders; this study will focus on whether these data suggest a plural and collaborative form of local leadership. Second, this survey will overview how evangelical Anglicans have conceived of shared local church leadership. Third, this overview will be compared with the reflection of non-Anglican evangelical traditions on the nature of shared local leadership. Finally, insights will be sought from the literature of management on the challenges of collaboration in service and leadership.

New Testament Passages about Local Church Leaders

The key words to describe those in church leadership in the New Testament are elder (*presbuteros*), overseer (*episkopos*) and shepherd (*poimēn*).³⁸ Two further terms of note are the participles describing those who lead, *hoi proistamenoi* and *hoi hēgoumenōn*. This section will briefly review the main passages in which these words occur, and comment on their contribution to the plural and collaborative nature of local pastoral leadership.

Elder (*presbuteros*) and words from the same root occur in seventy-three verses of the New Testament, and refer variously to people who are older, to ancestors of the Hebrew nation, to lay Jewish leaders, to the heavenly elders,³⁹ and to Christian leaders.⁴⁰ Christian elders appear without introduction in Acts 11:30; C K Barrett, professor of New Testament at Durham University wrote, “It is assumed, without explanation, that they exist and that they are leading members of the churches.”⁴¹ Second, elders are found in widespread churches, namely in Jerusalem;⁴² in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch;⁴³ in

³⁸ As noted above in Chapter One, Greek terms in the main text are transliterated for ease of reading.

³⁹ Older persons: Luke 1:18, 15:25; John 8:9; Acts 2:17; Philemon 9; 1 Timothy 5:1–2; Titus 2:2–3; Hebrew ancestors: Matthew 15:2; Mark 7:3, 5; Hebrews 11:2; Lay Jewish leaders: Matthew 16:21; 21:23; 26:3, 47, 57; 27:1, 3, 12, 20, 41; 28:12; Mark 8:31; 11:27; 14:43, 53; 15:1; Luke 7:3; 9:22; 20:1; 22:52, 66; Acts 4:5, 8, 23; 6:12; 22:5; 23:14; 24:1; 25:15; Heavenly elders: Revelation 4:4, 10; 5:5–6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4.

⁴⁰ Christian leaders: Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22–23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1, 5; 2 John 1; 3 John 1.

⁴¹ C. K. Barrett, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1985), 52.

⁴² Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18.

⁴³ Acts 14: 23.

Ephesus,⁴⁴ in the towns of Crete,⁴⁵ among Peter's readers in Asia,⁴⁶ and among the recipients of James, wherever they might be.⁴⁷ Third, they are mentioned in the plural in each case except for the author of 2 John and 3 John who introduces himself as 'the elder.'⁴⁸ Commentator F. F. Bruce explains that the latter "was given the affectionate and respectful title 'the elder' both because he was older than the other members of the circle and because his personal knowledge of The Way went back so much farther than theirs."⁴⁹ Raymond Brown lists five possible senses in which the author is 'the elder.' He rejects the view that John is the principal of a college of elders because of the way he resists Diotrephes' desire to put himself first.⁵⁰ However, Brown also suggests that the author John the Elder is a second generation figure.

Eldership is often distinguished from the office of deacon (*diakonos*). Although the latter Greek word has a general meaning of 'servant,' it clearly applies to an office in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 which lists qualifications for those appointed to the office.⁵¹ Philippians 1:1 addresses the letter to the overseers (*episkopoi*) and deacons (*diakonoi*). In Acts 6:1-6, the Seven are appointed to free up the Twelve from the need to serve

⁴⁴ Acts 20:17, 1 Timothy 5:17, 19.

⁴⁵ Titus 1:5.

⁴⁶ 1 Peter 5:1,2 cf. 1:1.

⁴⁷ James 5:14.

⁴⁸ 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1.

⁴⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1970), 136.

⁵⁰ Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 649. See below for more on 3 John 9 and Diotrephes.

⁵¹ The reference to 'their wives' (*gunaikas*) in verse 11 may refer either to deacons' wives or to 'women' that is, female deacons. Thus ESV margin.

(*diakonein*) at tables, but the Seven are never called ‘deacons.’ It may be that this passage introduces the office of deacon in the church because, unlike that of elder, it was unknown in Judaism.⁵² Roger Beckwith, former Warden of Latimer House theological center in Oxford, England, disagrees. He notes that although the appointment of the Seven has been seen as the start of the diaconate since the time of Irenaus, in Acts 11:30 the presbyters have responsibility for poor relief. For Beckwith, therefore, the Seven were the first appointed elders, as opposed those who inherited the role from the synagogue.⁵³

Elders are also to be overseers: both Paul’s speech to the Ephesian elders at Miletus and 1 Peter’s teaching to elders⁵⁴ combine the vocabulary of eldership (*presbut-*) with that of oversight (*episkop-*): the elders at Miletus are told to ‘Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (*episkopois*)’⁵⁵ while Peter urges the elders to be ‘exercising oversight’ (*episkopountes*).⁵⁶ Other occurrences of the *episkop-* root affirm that the terms for elder and overseer are used interchangeably: in Titus 1:5-9, the apostolic delegate is given instructions to appoint elders (*presbuteroi*) in every town, and given a list of character qualifications for those overseers (*episkopoi*). Timothy is given a similar list for those who aspire to oversight (*episkopē*) in 1 Timothy 3.1-7; finally, the letter to the Philippians is addressed

⁵² Joseph Barber Lightfoot, “The Christian Ministry,” in *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians: A Revised Text With Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations* (London: Macmillan, 1898), 189.

⁵³ Roger Beckwith, *Elders in Every City: The Origin and Role of the Ordained Ministry* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 42-44.

⁵⁴ Acts 20:18-35; 1 Peter 5:1-4.

⁵⁵ Acts 20:28.

⁵⁶ 1 Peter 5:2.

to the overseers (*episkopoi*) and deacons, in contrast to other letters which are addressed to the whole church.⁵⁷ Joseph Hellerman, Professor of New Testament language and literature at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University states, “The most straightforward way to interpret our New Testament evidence for positions of church leadership takes ‘overseer’ (Greek *episkopos*) as interchangeable with the more familiar ‘elder’ (Greek *presbuteros*), a Greek term for church leaders occurring elsewhere in Acts and the epistles (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1).”⁵⁸ In this he follows a tradition stretching back at least as far as Bishop and New Testament scholar J. B. Lightfoot of the nineteenth century.⁵⁹

The terms for shepherd (*poimēn*) and elder (*presbuteros*) also overlap: the elders of the church in Ephesus are charged to ‘to care for (*poimainein*) the church of God’⁶⁰ which is also described as the flock (*poimnion*) of which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers (*episkopois*).⁶¹ Peter teaches the elders of his churches to ‘shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight (*episkopountes*)’;⁶² the verb is *poimanate*, a second person plural imperative. Once again, the references to the local church leaders as shepherds addresses them as a collective. The pastoral metaphor is also found in Ephesians 4:11 in which the gifts of the ascended Christ are given to, among others,

⁵⁷ Philippians 1:1.

⁵⁸ Joseph Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry: Power and Status in the Early Church and Why it Matters Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2013), 127. Cf. also p. 193.

⁵⁹ Joseph Barber Lightfoot, “Excursus: The Synonymes ‘Bishop’ and ‘Presbyter’,” in *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians: A Revised Text With Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations* (London: Macmillan, 1898).

⁶⁰ Acts 20:28.

⁶¹ Acts 20:28, 29.

⁶² 1 Peter 5:2.

'pastors and teachers' (*poimenas kai didaskalous*). Christ himself is the ultimate Shepherd⁶³ and the Overseer of our souls.⁶⁴ The theme of leader as shepherd has a long biblical pedigree, as Timothy Laniak, associate professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, demonstrates in his thorough biblical-theological study.⁶⁵ For the purposes of this project, it should be noted that where local church leaders are addressed in pastoral terms in the New Testament, they are addressed in the plural; only Christ the Chief Shepherd is the sole pastor of the flock.

Further terms to describe or address church leaders in the New Testament also appear synonymous with eldership and appear in the plural. The church in Thessalonica is urged to 'respect those who labor among you and are over you (*proistamenous*) in the Lord and admonish you;'⁶⁶ the Hebrews are commanded to 'Remember your leaders (*hoi hēgoumenōn*), those who spoke to you the Word of God,' which probably refers to the community's now-absent founding leaders.⁶⁷ In relation to the present leadership, the church is charged to 'Obey your leaders (*tois hēgoumenois humōn*) and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.'⁶⁸ Finally, Romans 12:8 lists among the spiritual gifts, 'the one who leads (*ho*

⁶³ Hebrews 13:20, 1 Peter 2:25.

⁶⁴ 1 Peter 2:25, 5:4.

⁶⁵ Timothy S Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 20 (Leicester: Apollos, 2006).

⁶⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:12.

⁶⁷ Hebrews 13:7; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-12*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47b (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 527.

⁶⁸ Hebrews 13:17.

proistamenos).’ Although this word might also be translated ‘gives aid’ (so ESV margin), leadership is the preferred meaning because same word occurs in connection with those who lead the Thessalonian church, and in passages describing the qualities of the elders or overseers.⁶⁹ It is to be noted that when a relationship between believers and leaders is described, the latter are listed in the plural; when the qualities of an individual leader are in view, then and only then, is the singular used.⁷⁰

The sense in which *ho proistamenos* stands out as a leader may bring to mind Diotrephes ‘who likes to put himself first (*ho philoprōteuōn*)’.⁷¹ For Bruce, “The language suggests a self-appointed demagogue rather than a constitutional *presbuteros* or *episkopos*.⁷² Brown comments that the ‘liking-to-be-first Diotrephes’ is not a ‘would-be’ leader because his refusal to welcome the brothers, stopping those who want to do so, and putting them out of the church implies an actual exercise of authority.⁷³ Colin Kruse agrees that Diotrephes not only loved to be first but had actually succeeded in being recognized as such.⁷⁴ Karen Jobes comments that ‘loves to be first’ (*ho philoprōteuōn*) occurs only here in the New Testament, “but the cognate adjective *philoprōtos* is found more widely in Greek writings in the sense of loving to lead by controlling others. This

⁶⁹ 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:4–5, 12; 5:17; Titus 3:8, 14. So Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 768–769; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 659–660.

⁷⁰ 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Titus 1:5–9 and, depending on what view is taken on translation, Romans 12:8.

⁷¹ 3 John 9.

⁷² Bruce, *The Epistles of John*, 152.

⁷³ 3 John 10; Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 717.

⁷⁴ Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI & Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans & Apollos, 2000), 226.

stands in sharp contrast to Jesus' teaching that the one who wishes to be first must be servant of all (Matthew 20:27; Mark 9:35; 10:44).⁷⁵ She concludes, "We don't know if Diotrephes was a rightly ordained leader of the church or just a member with a forceful personality, but it hardly matters. Motivation for leadership borne from a need for control over others is always destructive in a church community and ordination is no excuse for it."⁷⁶ That Diotrephes was a forceful leader seems clear; whether he was the only leader, or whether he was failing to lead with fellow-elders cannot be determined from the text because it is not about them: it is about him and his egocentric lust for power, which he had confused with zeal for the gospel.⁷⁷

In this connection, Hellerman sees the example of Christ in Philippians 2:6 as providing the model of leadership that draws away from status and privilege. He argues that Paul "intentionally subverts the social values of the dominant culture in the Roman colony at Philippi in order to create a radically different relational environment among the Philippians Christians."⁷⁸ In contrast to the dominant Roman honor culture and its preoccupation with status and privilege, the Philippian church was to be a place where the honor game was off-limits, a community in which persons with power and authority use their social capital not to further their own personal or familial agendas, but to serve

⁷⁵ Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, and 3 John*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 313. The Greek has been transliterated.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, Revised ed., Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 342.

⁷⁸ Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry*, 11.

their brothers and sisters in Christ.⁷⁹ Can such an attitude be sustained? “What was needed to guarantee that Jesus’ example would become a reality among the Philippians was a social context -- a way of doing church -- that would encourage a Jesus-like use of authority on the part of leaders and others with status in the Philippian church.” And that context is a plural leadership.⁸⁰

Although Paul gave the family as his model for church life in Philippi, he did not follow this through with the culturally normal leadership structure. “Families in the ancient world universally functioned under the aegis of strong one-man leadership, in the person of the family patriarch.”⁸¹ Instead, the church was to be led in plurality. Hellerman comments, “From what we can tell, for example, none of Paul’s congregations had a solitary (or ‘senior’) pastor figure. All were led by a plurality of overseers. And Paul modeled team leadership in his own life and ministry, as well, partnering with Timothy, Silas, and others to spread the gospel throughout the Roman Empire.”⁸² His argument, then, is that plural leadership is biblical, not because the New Testament gives a prescription for church polity, but because the plurality approach offers much hope for raising up healthy, effective pastoral leaders and for significantly curbing authority abuse in churches.⁸³

⁷⁹ Ibid., 106.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 169-170.

⁸¹ Ibid., 194.

⁸² Ibid., 193.

⁸³ Ibid., 266.

Paul's example of choosing Timothy and Silas as co-workers invites a brief reflection on the nature of teamwork in other areas of biblical leadership. Aubrey Malphurs, senior professor of leadership and ministry at Dallas Theological Seminary, notes that while he cannot find any passage that commands believers to work in teams, it is effectively modeled throughout the Old and New Testaments; he cites the examples of Moses and his fellow judges, Jesus and his disciples, Paul with Barnabas, Mark, Silas, and Timothy, and Paul's use of the body metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.⁸⁴ In a similar vein, Stephen Macchia, founding president of Leadership Transformations Inc., finds 'countless' examples of teamwork in the Bible, beginning with Adam and Eve, Noah and his family, and including Moses with his co-workers Aaron and Joshua.⁸⁵ Macchia goes on to note that many so-called teams do not function as a team so much as a group.⁸⁶ He does not appear to apply this to the biblical examples, because although Moses delegated decisions to the lesser judges, the harder cases were his alone, as anointed leader; so also in the cases of Moses with Aaron and Joshua, David and fellow heroes, and Jesus and the Twelve there is no hint of parity between the leader and his fellows: the decisions are the leader's alone.⁸⁷ Thus up to Pentecost at least, the biblical examples of teams would be better described as a group operating under a gifted leader

⁸⁴ Moses: Exodus 18; Jesus' disciples: Mark 3:13-19; 6:7; Paul and coworkers: Acts 11:25-26; 13:2-3, 5; 15:40; 16:1-3; The body: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Cited in Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 210.

⁸⁵ Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team: Five Traits of Vital Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005).

⁸⁶ Ibid., 39-40.

⁸⁷ Exodus 17:10; 18:13-26; 2 Samuel 23:8-39; Mark 3:13-19.

rather than a team functioning in a collaborative way. By contrast, the leaders of the New Testament churches are addressed as a unity, with no apparent leader among them. Letters are addressed either to churches or to individuals.

From these data alone, it might seem that up until Pentecost, team leadership in the Bible meant a strong, anointed leader supported by the people he chose, and that after Pentecost, leadership as a team would refer to elders acting as a collective of equals. This structure, however, does not take account of the apostles and their delegates, who display signs of both parity and primacy. In Acts, decisions are reached and communicated by ‘the apostles and elders’ of the church in Jerusalem;⁸⁸ yet the key figures in Acts are Peter and Paul. And while Paul gathers co-workers around him, he is the lead missionary. A word study suggests that he took over from Barnabas because the order ‘Barnabas and Paul’ gives way to ‘Paul and Barnabas.’⁸⁹ What of Paul’s apostolic delegates Timothy, Titus, Erastus, and Epaphras, sent to churches on his behalf?⁹⁰ Bishop Lightfoot, in a dissertation arguing that episcopacy arose universally within two centuries of the close of the New Testament, asserts that the delegates acted as a link between the apostle’s general authority and the elders’ particular responsibility for the church in a particular place.

...with less permanence but perhaps with greater authority, the position occupied by these delegates nevertheless fairly represents the functions of the bishop early in the second century. They were in fact the link between the Apostle whose superintendence was occasional and general and the

⁸⁸ Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22–23; 16:4.

⁸⁹ Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2, 7; 14:14; 15:12, 25 cf. Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22–23; 16:4.

⁹⁰ 1 Timothy 1:1–3, Titus 1:5, Acts 19:22, Colossians 1:7.

bishop who exercised a permanent supervision over an individual congregation.⁹¹

Alexander Strauch's plea for a return to the New Testament pattern of plural local church leadership considers neither the apostolic delegates nor James to be local church pastors in the traditional sense.⁹² He does not allow them as exceptions to the rule that local church leadership in the New Testament was always plural.

By contrast, pastoral theologian and church leader Gene Getz is convinced of the need for a primary leader. He does not point to a specific text, but a perspective from the whole Bible:

It's God's design - from the time He chose men like Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and Nehemiah in the Old Testament, and Peter, Paul, Timothy, and Titus in the New Testament - to always have a key leader in place to lead his people. Why would we think differently when it involves elders/overseers in a local church?⁹³

He points to the emergence of Peter with John, and then Paul, as primary leaders among the apostles; among missionary teams, it was 'Paul and his companions'; in Jerusalem, it was 'James and the elders at Jerusalem;' in a similar way Timothy and Titus were primary leaders in the churches they served.⁹⁴

Getz sounds a note of caution about the assumption of a single church in each town. He notes that the Greek word for church, *ekklēsia*, is used over a hundred times in the

⁹¹ Lightfoot, "The Christian Ministry," 199.

⁹² Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, Revised and expanded ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995), 105. He adds that even if the messengers (*aggeloi*) of the churches in Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14 are human rather than angelic, "the reference still doesn't disclose ...whether or not the representatives are the sole leaders of their local churches."

⁹³ Gene A. Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God's Plan for Leading the Church: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Perspective* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 223.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

New Testament. When it refers to a church, it may either refer to the universal church or to the church in a locality.⁹⁵ According to Getz, the biblical authors use the word *ekklēsia* to refer to all the believers in a community and not simply to a congregation:

In most instances, New Testament writers were referring to all professing believers in a particular *city* or *community*. Luke cited “the church at *Jerusalem*” (Acts 8:1) and “the church at *Antioch*” (13:1). Describing Paul’s first missionary journey, Luke references “each church” in “*Lystra, Iconium and Antioch [Pisidia]*” (14:21-23).⁹⁶

Getz’ point is that ‘the church’ is a church in a community, even if it is composed of several house-church gatherings. In a similar way, Guy Prentiss Waters, Associate Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, in advancing an argument for Presbyterian church government, points out that during the apostolic period the church existed in several congregations but was spoken of as ‘the church’ in the singular. “Meeting places for the church, Acts and the Epistles tell us, were private dwellings.”⁹⁷ It seems to him reasonable to conclude that the congregations were collectively governed by the apostles and individually governed by groups of elders.

Edward Adams, Lecturer in New Testament Studies at King's College London, challenges a strong consensus in New Testament and Early Christian studies that the early Christians met ‘almost exclusively’ in houses. He contends that the evidence is “not as extensive or exclusive as usually thought,” and that many other venues existed and were used as meeting spaces. Some of these imagined spaces for Christian worship are

⁹⁵ Except in Acts 7:38 where *ekklēsia* refers to the community of Israel gathered in the wilderness; in Acts 19:32 to the riot in Ephesus and in 19:39 to the ‘regular assembly’ of that city.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 49. Emphasis original.

⁹⁷ Guy Prentiss Waters, *How Jesus Runs the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011), 123.

quite novel, such as Roman barns and warehouses, shops and workshops, inns, bathhouses, gardens, open urban spaces, and burial sites.⁹⁸ David Balch, writing in the Journal of New Testament Studies in 2004 had already suggested that “Archaeological investigation of *domus* in Pompeii and Herculaneum does not sustain the current consensus that early Pauline house churches were necessarily small or that they were private. The size of many Christian assemblies may indeed have been small, but Pompeian *domus* could have accommodated numbers far greater than 40 persons.”⁹⁹ When Allan Chapple, former principal and later senior lecturer in New Testament at Trinity Theological College in Perth, Australia, investigated how Paul’s letter to the Romans would reach its intended audience, he concluded that Phoebe was to deliver *Romans* to a number of house churches as well as to an assembly of the whole church which would be convened by Prisca and Aquila.¹⁰⁰ These studies suggest that the city churches met in houses churches *and* had some sort of city-wide identity. Further they suggest that the New Testament and archaeological evidence is insufficient to give one priority over the other.

That finding may explain the differing, if equally confident, assertions of writers on plural leadership. Malphurs agrees that the church existed at two levels: the house-church

⁹⁸ Edward Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?*, The Library of New Testament Studies 450 (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 189. Thanks to Professor Steve Walton, Professorial Research Fellow in New Testament, St Mary’s University, Twickenham, UK for this reference.

⁹⁹ David L. Balch, “Rich Pompeian Houses, Shops for Rent, and the Huge Apartment Building in Herculaneum as Typical Spaces for Pauline House Churches,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 1 (2004): 41.

¹⁰⁰ Allan Chapple, “Getting Romans to the Right Romans: Phoebe and the Delivery of St Paul’s Letter,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 62, no. 2 (2011): 208.

and the citywide church, and that the elders were likely the pastors of the house churches. He concludes from this observation that “it’s not wrong, as some argue, to have a single leader of a local church that is probably today’s equivalent of a house church.”¹⁰¹ Getz believes the churches in a particular city “were composed of all believers who lived within a particular geographical location. Though they may have met for teaching, fellowship, and worship at different locations throughout a particular city, they were still considered *one church* led by a *single body of elders*. ”¹⁰² The differences between Getz and Malphurs illustrate the difficulty of distinguishing Paul’s charge to Titus to appoint elders in every *town* in Crete,¹⁰³ and Paul and Barnabas’ actions in appointing elders in every *church* in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.¹⁰⁴ For Getz, however, the ambiguity is divinely ordained. “God wants believers in various cultural settings to be able to create a multiple leadership plan that will function effectively regardless of whether we live in the first century of the church or the twenty-first.”¹⁰⁵

Taken as a whole, the New Testament data suggest that church leadership was plural, and that elders, shepherds and overseers were synonymous. Whether this provides a binding polity or a wise pattern depends on one’s hermeneutic: Anglicans who employ the Normative or so-called Hooker Principle will reach different conclusions to other

¹⁰¹ Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 25.

¹⁰² Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 211. Emphasis original.

¹⁰³ Titus 1:5.

¹⁰⁴ Acts 14:23.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

evangelicals who are guided by the Regulative Principle. They will be introduced in the next section.

The Evangelical Anglican Understanding of Presbyteral Ministry

The focus of this study is the practice of plural leadership within Anglican churches. It is vital therefore to define the Anglican understanding of presbyteral or elder ministry. The task is complicated by the enormous theological breadth of the Church of England and the Anglican Church worldwide. Anglican theologian and author Gerald Bray admits, “Few branches of the Christian church have as much difficulty defining themselves as the Anglican one has.”¹⁰⁶ Since the research interview subjects for this research aim to pursue evangelical ministry within the UK, the major concentration will be on the evangelical Anglican understanding of Presbyteral ministry.

History is an essential component of evangelical Anglican self-identity. Anglican pastor and author John Stott is typical of many others when he responds to the question “Why I am still an Anglican” with a defense on the basis that the Church of England is historical, confessional, and liturgical.¹⁰⁷ The importance of history stems from Richard Hooker, whose theological method is foundational to Anglicanism.

¹⁰⁶ Gerald L. Bray, “Why I Am an Evangelical and an Anglican,” in *Why We Belong*, ed. Anthony L Chute, Christopher W Morgan, and Robert A Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 65.

¹⁰⁷ Stott, *The Living Church*, 167-177. Similarly Bray, “Why I Am an Evangelical and an Anglican;”; Idem, “The Pastor as Evangelical and Anglican,” in *The Renewed Pastor: Essays on the Pastoral Ministry in Honour of Philip Hacking*, ed. Melvin Tinker (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2011); David Holloway, “What is an Anglican Evangelical?,” in *Restoring the Vision: Anglican Evangelicals Speak Out*, ed. Melvin Tinker (Crowborough: MARC, 1990), 18; Richard Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical?* (London: Continuum, 2007), 165; Alister McGrath, “Evangelical Anglicans: A Contradiction in Terms?,” in *Evangelical Anglicans: Their Role and Influence in the Church Today*, ed. R T France and Alister McGrath (London: SPCK, 1993), 10; David Atkinson, “Evangelicalism and Pastoral Ministry,” in *Evangelical Anglicans:*

Richard Hooker (1554-1600)

The Church of England was born when Henry VIII broke with the Church of Rome with the Act of Supremacy in 1534, and continued into the reign of his son, Edward VI (1547-1553). During this time, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, was the architect of the English Reformation. When in 1553 the staunchly Roman Catholic Queen Mary succeeded her half-brother, she launched five years of vigorous persecution of Protestants, including Cranmer himself who was burned at the stake in 1556. Other English Reformers fled to exile in Geneva, returning only after the accession of Elizabeth I on the death of Mary in 1558. Elizabeth held a delicate balance between the pressure for further Protestant reform, and the threat of Catholic invasion. The resultant moderate Calvinist consensus, known as the Elizabethan Settlement, lasted until James VI of Scotland succeeded to the English throne in 1603 to rule as James I of England. Continuing tensions between Puritan reformers and supporters of a strong monarchy and episcopate came to a crisis in the English Civil War of the mid-Seventeenth century.

Richard Hooker (1554-1600) was a lawyer whose multiple volumes of *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594-1597) were written during the reign of Elizabeth I. According to Nigel Atkinson, vicar of St John's Knutsford, Chester, Hooker's standing as the first 'Anglican' theologian is largely accepted by all shades of scholarly opinion.¹⁰⁸ The shades of scholarly opinion do not, however, agree on what Hooker was arguing against.

Their Role and Influence in the Church Today, ed. R T France and Alister McGrath (London: SPCK, 1993), 152-153.; Packer (but not Wright) in J I Packer and N T Wright, *Anglican Evangelical Identity: Yesterday and Today* (London: Latimer Trust, 2008).

¹⁰⁸ Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition and Reason: Reformed Theologian of the Church of England?* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), xiv.

Brad Littlejohn of New College Edinburgh, introduces the current state of Hooker studies with a taxonomy of four position:¹⁰⁹ the ‘via mediaists’ represent the classical nineteenth and twentieth century position of the Oxford Movement scholars that Hooker was seeking a *via media* or middle way between the Church of Rome, from which England had broken, and the influence of Geneva brought by the returned Marian Exiles. (The Catholic threat to England receded after Sir Francis Drake’s defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588). Peter Lake, Nigel Voak and the ‘via mediatorists’ take the view that while Hooker did not reject Reformed thought, he was consciously developing a new theological method. The so-called ‘soft reformists’ such as Paul Avis see Hooker in greater continuity with the Reformers, although offering his own twist. Finally, the ‘hard reformists’ led by Torrance Kirby and Nigel Atkinson assert that Hooker is clearly and consciously Reformed in his thought. Atkinson argues that Hooker was opposing Calvinist church order as advocated by Thomas Cartwright and Walter Travers, who sought to impose Presbyterian church order on the Church of England. Hooker defended the Church of England’s Reformed pedigree by showing that his own position was closer to that of the Reformers, and that the Puritans, by out-reforming the Reformers, had gone beyond them.¹¹⁰

The trouble, says Littlejohn, is that Hooker scholars are still talking past each other. His contention is that Hooker should be triangulated against the other continental

¹⁰⁹ W. Bradford Littlejohn, “The Search for a Reformed Hooker: Some Modest Proposals,” *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 16, no. 1 (2014): 68-82. He is referring to Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought From Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1988); Atkinson, *Hooker and the Authority of Scripture*; Nigel Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹¹⁰ Atkinson, *Hooker and the Authority of Scripture*, 130.

Reformers (including Calvin himself), and not simply his English Calvinist opponents Thomas Cartwright and Walter Travers. To do this would place not just Hooker, but the theological tradition that followed, under scrutiny: “For a figure such as Hooker, such evaluation has implications not only for other historians, but for an entire theological tradition, the Anglican communion, that looks to Hooker as one of the architects of its identity.”¹¹¹

For Atkinson, Hooker was persuaded of the full sufficiency and authority of Scripture but emphasized that it was given for a particular purpose. Rome erred in adding to the sources; Puritans erred in overextending the scope of Scripture.¹¹² In the words of Richard Turnbull, Principal of Wycliffe Hall Theological College, Oxford, “Hooker argued that tradition had a valuable role to play in those areas of church life upon which Scripture was silent. The Puritans were in error to oppose the tradition when Scripture did not speak.”¹¹³ According to Atkinson, this places Hooker in line with classical Reform and against the Puritans who argued that Scripture had to direct explicitly in the minutiae of life.¹¹⁴ Anglican pastor and theologian Paul Bradshaw summarizes the ‘Hooker Principle’ (also known as the Normative Principle) as saying that historical tradition commands authority but it is a secondary authority:

[The Hooker Principle is:] The evangelical conviction that God has provided clearly and definitely in some areas of church life, but has left others more open and flexible. The aspects in which revelation firmly

¹¹¹ Littlejohn, “Search for a Reformed Hooker,” 79.

¹¹² Atkinson, *Hooker and the Authority of Scripture*, 99-100.

¹¹³ Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical?*, 26.

¹¹⁴ Atkinson, *Hooker and the Authority of Scripture*, 130.

operates concern salvation in Christ; the areas in which the church has a freedom to act concern the structures and customs of the church.¹¹⁵

Hooker's position is in contrast to the Roman Catholic view in which the church's tradition is of at least equal weight to Scripture; and also contrasts with the Presbyterian Puritan view that tradition should be of no weight.¹¹⁶ This principle continues to set Anglicans apart from other evangelicals. For example, Steve Cowan's editorial introduction to a symposium on church order between Anglican, Presbyterian, and Baptist authors explains:

Where one comes down on the issue of church government will depend to some degree on the principles of interpretation with which one approaches the biblical text. In particular, it clearly matters whether one believes that church practices should be limited to what the Scriptures explicitly teach or command, or whether one believes that the churches are free to adopt any practice that the Scriptures do not forbid.¹¹⁷

Anglican pastor, biblical commentator, and former Theological College Principal Alec Motyer agrees that when evangelical Anglicans look to Scripture for an understanding of ministry, it is for a set of principles rather than a firm pattern. “Within the Anglican circle at any rate there seems to be agreement that we search in vain for a pattern of ministry which we can reproduce today, and thereby claim New Testament authority for what we do.”¹¹⁸ A corollary of this approach is that changes in historical

¹¹⁵ Timothy Bradshaw, *The Olive Branch: An Evangelical Anglican Doctrine of the Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press for Latimer House, 1992), 143.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 147.

¹¹⁷ Paul E Engle and Steve B Cowan, eds., *Who Runs the Church? Four Views on Church Government*, Counterpoints: Church Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 16.

¹¹⁸ Alec Motyer, “The Meaning of Ministry,” in *Restoring the Vision: Anglican Evangelicals Speak Out*, ed. Melvin Tinker (Crowborough: MARC, 1990), 236.

circumstance would also lead to flexibility and adjustment in church government.¹¹⁹ Jesuit ecclesiologist Avery Dulles agrees. “A historical study of the development of Christian ministry would probably show that the church in every age has adjusted its structures and offices so as to operate more effectively in the social environment in which it finds itself.”¹²⁰

Hooker was willing to retain the episcopacy on the basis that it had existed for 1500 years; continental reformers Luther and Calvin did so on the basis that it was not contrary to Scripture.¹²¹ The evolution of church order from the New Testament to the sixteenth century can be traced following Beckwith and Lightfoot, introduced above. As noted above, Lightfoot showed that within the New Testament, the offices of bishop (*episkopos*) and elder (*presbuteros*) were synonymous.¹²² Yet by the close of the second century, the office of bishop was separate from the presbyterate, emerging from the presbyters rather than the apostles. “The episcopate was formed not out of the apostolic order by localization but out of the presbyteral by elevation: and the title, which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them.”¹²³ The evidence for how this came about is fragmentary, but Lightfoot cites plentiful sources from the Fathers of the episcopate’s early history and widespread

¹¹⁹ Bradshaw, *The Olive Branch*, 144.

¹²⁰ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1974), 152.

¹²¹ Atkinson, *Hooker and the Authority of Scripture*, 131.

¹²² Lightfoot, “Excursus,”

¹²³ Idem, “The Christian Ministry,” 196.

adoption.¹²⁴ As the sacerdotal view of ministry grew, so church polity hardened into three separate orders of ministry: bishops, presbyters, and deacons.¹²⁵ Beckwith states that in the face of doctrinal disputes, the Eucharist may have been focused in the hands of the bishop because of the need for church discipline, which centered on exclusion from and readmission to the Lord's Table. Putting it in the hands of the bishop prevented the excommunicated from setting up their own tables.¹²⁶ The presiding presbyter thus held the functions of directing worship, ordinations, and discipline. As the church grew, presbyters were dispersed to outlying parishes and regained some of their rights in the direction of worship and the exercise of discipline, but not in the practice of ordination.¹²⁷ A consequence of the presbyters' dispersal was that they now found themselves working alone. "Thus congregations with a sole presbyterate, instead of the plural presbyterate usual from New Testament times in the towns, became normal. The sole presbyterate afterwards spread to towns as well."¹²⁸ This is the pattern that Cranmer and Hooker inherited. While Cranmer's Ordinal reformed the purpose of the clerical ministry to one of Word and teaching, the singular nature of the presbyterate was not affected. Thanks to Hooker, clericalism, that is the sole presbyterate, survived the Reformation almost unscathed.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 208-227.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 263.

¹²⁶ Beckwith, *Elders in Every City*, 57.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 58-59.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 77.

Cranmer's Ordinal: A Ministry of the Word

Cranmer departed from the inherited Sarum view of priesthood when he made the Church of England's ministry one of Word and sacrament, beginning with his 1550 Ordinal (Order of Service for Ordinations). Roman Catholic theological lecturer Edward Echlin deduces, as much from Cranmer's omissions as from his additions, that he did not consider Christian ministry to continue the priestly ministry of Aaron.¹²⁹ For instance, the New Testament readings chosen for the 1550 Ordinal's ordering of Priests were Acts 20 and 1 Timothy 3, which emphasize that the ministry is one of teaching, leadership, and sanctifying, as opposed to being a sacerdotal ministry.¹³⁰ In the giving of the instruments (chalice and paten), the words of the prayer altered the traditional meaning, and in the 1552 revision, the giving of the chalice and paten was removed altogether so that only the Bible was given.¹³¹

Cranmer's use of the 'priest' has troubled evangelical readers. Stott's characteristically limpid comment may usefully be repeated:

It may be asked why in the sixteenth century some Reformed churches retained the word 'priest' as a designation of their ministers, including the Church of England. The answer is primarily one of etymology. The English word 'priest' was known to be derived from, and a contraction of, 'presbyter.' It therefore translated *presbyteros* ('elder'), not *hierus* ('priest'). So 'priest' was kept only because its meaning was theologically unexceptionable and because 'presbyter' was not yet a word of common English currency. ... today few people know that 'priest' is a contraction of 'presbyter,' and even fewer are able to perform the mental gymnastic of

¹²⁹ Edward P. Echlin, *The Story of Anglican Ministry* (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1974), 97-98.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 90.

¹³¹ Ibid., 107.

saying ‘priest’ and thinking ‘presbyter.’ It would therefore be conducive to both theological clarity and biblical faithfulness to drop the word ‘priest’ altogether from our vocabulary. We could then follow the wisdom of such united churches as those of South India, North India, and Pakistan, and refer to the three orders of ordained ministry as ‘bishops, presbyters and deacons.’¹³²

The role of bishops became a critical issue in the seventeenth century as attitudes changed from understanding the episcopate as one possible type of church government in the Elizabethan Church to viewing it as a Divine Institution, under the Stuarts.¹³³ The key issue became the validity of presbyteral, as opposed to episcopal, ordination. Attempts by Archbishop Ussher (1581 – 1656) to reiterate that the difference between bishops and presbyters was only one of office failed to hold the day, and the backlash against the Commonwealth was so decisive that by 1662 episcopal ordination was firmly entrenched. Bradshaw notes, “The bishops had made episcopal ordination necessary *de facto*; it only remained for them to revise the Ordinal and make it necessary *de jure*, and victory over the Puritans would be complete.”¹³⁴

Most of the changes to the Ordinal for 1662 were devised to exclude a Puritan interpretation of the Ordinal. Ephesians 4:7-13 replaced the bible reading from 1 Timothy 3 because Puritans felt the latter showed bishops and presbyters belonged to the same order. The reading from Acts 20, to which Ussher had made appeal to show that the church at Ephesus was ruled by many elders in common and that the Church of England

¹³² Stott, *Contemporary Christian*, 274. Also the discussion of Article XXIV ‘Of Speaking in the Congregation in such a Tongue as the People understandeth’ in Gerald L. Bray, *The Faith We Confess: An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles* (London: The Latimer Trust, 2009), 130.

¹³³ Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Anglican Ordinal: Its History and Development From the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: SPCK for the Alcuin Club, 1971), 61.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 70. Emphasis original.

intended her presbyters to do the same under the presidency of the bishop, was dropped.¹³⁵ Finally, the word ‘pastors’ was removed from the rite for presbyters so that Puritans could not claim that they as well as bishops were to rule their flocks. The Church of England thus set its face against all attempts to reform the presbyterate into anything resembling a Presbyterian plural eldership.

It should not be thought that all Puritans were resolutely anti-clerical. Richard Baxter, author of *The Reformed Pastor*, takes Acts 20:28’s “take heed of all the flock” as his point of departure to commend the use of humiliation and catechesis in pastoral ministry.¹³⁶ Timothy Witmer, writing from within the Presbyterian tradition and in favor of plural pastoral eldership, is struck by Baxter’s reluctance to draw his fellow-elders into the work of pastoral care. “Baxter did not see the ruling elder as a key partner in the work of shepherding the flock.”¹³⁷ David Sceats, Director of Local Ministry Development in the Diocese of Litchfield in the Church of England, disagrees with Baxter’s high view of the ordained ministry:

There are certainly times when, in common with his peers, the language he uses of the dignity and honour of the ministry is so exalted that it is hard to escape the conclusion that he is describing something remarkably similar in practice (if not in concept) to the priesthood he so vigorously criticises in those who espouse the ‘prelatical’ or ‘romish’ factions.¹³⁸

Sceats continues that Baxter “was able to assume as part of the unchanging fabric of things the continuation of a ‘professional’ ministry whose members would be drawn

¹³⁵ Ibid., 90-91.

¹³⁶ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974).

¹³⁷ Witmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 62.

¹³⁸ David Sceats, “Gildas Savianas Redivivus - the Reformed Pastor, Richard Baxter,” *Anvil* 10, no. 2 (1993): 140-141. Thanks to Revd. Dr Lee Gatiss for this reference.

from the educated classes (and therefore whose interests would coincide with those of the lesser gentry who exercised local leadership as magistrates)."¹³⁹

Evangelical Anglicans have not all accepted the base-line of the 1662 Ordinal, and the influence of Reformers and Puritans remains strong. For instance, Anglican Timothy Bradshaw looks to the “classical reformed Anglican position inherited from the time of the Reformation, set out by early English reformers, notably Cranmer, and Elizabethans such as Jewel, Field, Hooker and Whitgift”¹⁴⁰ when he disagrees with Bishop Handley Moule, P T Forsyth (a Congregationalist) and Bishop Lightfoot, who imply a very individual model of the ministry of the Word. Just because the ministry is clerical, that does not mean it ought to be so. Instead he proposes that “teams of pastors, teachers, evangelists, carers and others, with varying complementary strengths, rather than the single bearer of that responsibility, may be the truly evangelical apostolic ideal of ministry.”¹⁴¹ Veteran pastor and evangelist Michael Green also does not accept the 1662 settlement when he says the problem of clericalism disappears if we take a broad view of ministry as “a shared and multiple local leadership such as prevailed in the corporate presbyterate of the early church.”¹⁴² Richard Turnbull's attempt to define Anglican evangelicalism appeals to the prayer book of Edward VI and the sixteenth century, not 1662. “There is a core Anglican identity which lies in the Protestant Reformation settlement and the particular emphasis, understanding of Church doctrine … which that

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Bradshaw, *The Olive Branch*, 130.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 169.

¹⁴² Michael Green, *Freed to Serve: Training and Equipping for Ministry*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), 93-94.

embodies.¹⁴³ Anglican evangelicalism, for him, is historically and theologically moderately Calvinist, depends on the doctrines of substitution and incarnation, and embraces an episcopal form of government. This is closer to Hooker than to the Restoration of 1662.

The foregoing has shown that while the Church of England's local church leadership is clerical and solitary because of tradition, evangelical Anglicans are not content to let matters rest there. Three twentieth-century developments have added impetus to the call for change, namely the charismatic movement, the call for women's ordination, and the liberal church's response to denominational decline.

David Watson, evangelist and vicar of St Michael-le-Belfroy in York, was a leading Anglican influenced by charismatic renewal. He was also an articulate exponent of the principle that ministry involves the whole body and not merely the 'parish priest.'¹⁴⁴ He proposed a return to the New Testament pattern of shared ministry and shared leadership:

Although there might well have been a presiding elder [in the New Testament churches], there is never the slightest hint of a solitary leader (such as the vicar, the minister, the pastor), even in the smallest and youngest churches. ... Nowhere is there any suggestion of a one-man ministry except in the sad and telling comment about Diotrephes, 'who likes to put himself first.'¹⁴⁵

In addition, the role of elder is too demanding for a single person to fulfill:

¹⁴³ Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical?*, 46.

¹⁴⁴ Watson, *I Believe in the Church*, 245.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 271. He is citing 3 John 9.

The role of an elder is a demanding and challenging one: he is to lead, to teach, to work hard, to set an example, to tend the flock of God, to encourage, to pray for the sick, to have authority over others and to exercise discipline, to evangelise and to be well thought of by outsiders.¹⁴⁶

Timothy Bradshaw points out that the function of the ordained ministry is to serve the whole congregation and release its ministry. A consequence would be ministries and teams in the local church. “Teams of pastors, teachers, evangelists, carers and others, with varying complementary strengths, rather than the single bearer of that responsibility, may be the truly evangelical apostolic ideal of ministry.”¹⁴⁷

Both Watson and Bradshaw appear at times to conflate Collaborative Ministry with Collaborative Leadership. Collaborative Ministry (CM) is the notion that every member of the body is gifted for ministry and was a particular fruit of the charismatic renewal movement of which Watson was a leading part. Collaborative Leadership (CL) is the idea of plural leadership, which was a radical departure for Anglicans, as observed above.

It will be noted from the above that the natural unit of the church for Anglican evangelicals is the local church rather than the diocese. Watson was advocating collaborative leadership within the local church, not among the presbyters in a diocese. Not only does the size of English dioceses make such collaboration impractical, evangelicals reject the underlying theological rationale that the diocese rather than local church is the basic unit of the church. Article XIX of the 39 Articles of Religion appears

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 272.

¹⁴⁷ As cited above, Bradshaw, *The Olive Branch*, 169.

at first sight to be decisively in favor of identifying the church with the local congregation:

XIX Of the Church

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred; so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.¹⁴⁸

Bray explains that the word ‘congregation’ is difficult. “To us it suggests a parish church, but it is doubtful whether Cranmer intended it in that sense.” Indeed, Cranmer’s mention of the great patriarchates of the ancient world suggests that he thought more in terms of national or regional churches, which were ‘congregations’ in the sense that they were churches because they had gathered around the Word of God.¹⁴⁹ The point being made in the Article is that, as against the claims of the Church of Rome, the church is defined confessionally not institutionally. As former professor of Systematic Theology at Wycliffe College, Toronto, W. H. Griffith Thomas pithily states, “There are in reality only two views of the Church; that represented by the New Testament, and that seen in Roman Catholicism. … In the New Testament conception Christianity determines the Church; in the Roman Catholic, the Church determines Christianity.”¹⁵⁰ John Woodhouse, former Principal of Moore Theological College in Sydney states that it is in a congregation rather than a denomination that a confessional church is visible, and the

¹⁴⁸ Article XIX ‘Of the Church’.

¹⁴⁹ Bray, *The Faith We Confess*, 107.

¹⁵⁰ W. H. Griffith. Thomas, *The Principles of Theology an Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 6th revised ed. (London: Vine Books, 1978), 278.

Article states that the *visible* church of Christ is a congregation.¹⁵¹ For this reason, evangelical Anglicans are congregationally oriented; the basic unit of the church is the local congregation because the basic definition of the church is confessional. The basic unit is therefore a local church, not a group of congregations let alone a diocese. For evangelical Anglicans in England, genuine collaborative ministry across a diocese or even a deanery is impractical as well as theologically incoherent. The Diocese of Bath and Wells, for example, has over 500 churches grouped in over 200 parishes, overseen by two bishops; and like the rest of the Church of England, this diocese represents a very diverse range of theological positions. In no sense can this realistically approximate even to the city-church of the New Testament. If presbyteral ministry is to be shared, it must be done locally, and this would be a departure from the historic Anglican practice that grew up in Christendom.

The distinction between CM and CL became important as the debates around women's ordination gathered pace in the second half of the twentieth century. The rediscovery of CM enabled lay men and women to become active in ministry, and raised the question of whether women could also exercise a ministry of leadership. Michael Green's suggestion of a broad view of ministry as "of a shared and multiple local leadership such as prevailed in the corporate presbyterate of the early church"¹⁵² means that CL provided a way to sidestep the institutional bar on the ordination of women as

¹⁵¹ John Woodhouse, *Unity That Helps & Unity That Hinders* (Sheffield: Reform, 2001), 34-35. Emphasis added.

¹⁵² Green, *Freed to Serve*, 93-94. He was writing before the Church of England agreed to ordain women to the Presbyterate (1994). The Episcopate was opened to women in 2014. Women could already be ordained Deacon at the time Green was writing.

presbyters. Contemporary conservative, i.e. complementarian, Anglican evangelical churches remain opposed to the ordination of women. The inclusion or not of women in the Ministry leadership team plays no part in driving those churches towards plural pastoral leadership. However there remains for this group the question of how they accommodate female pastoral leadership within their CL structure. If they are included as lay elders, does this undermine their understanding of eldership as male-only? And if they are excluded from the MLT, in what sense can the MLT be said to lead the ministry if a key player is excluded? These questions are not addressed in the literature consulted but arise within the research interviews in this project.

Among evangelical Anglicans, the fruit of CM was the mobilization of a trained and empowered laity, as explained by Anglican minister Gillian Summers:

Across the years, evangelical Anglicans have accumulated a wide experience of a trained and biblically literate laity, committed to mutual pastoral care and to evangelism. They have evidence to convince others that it actually works. At their best, evangelicals have never lost sight of the New Testament understanding that the ‘servant’ role of the authorized church leader is to teach others and equip the whole body of Christ to be ministers of the Gospel.¹⁵³

Non-evangelicals in the Church of England have also discovered lay leadership but for different reasons. Writing ten years after Summers, Andrew Dawswell states, “One of the most radical developments in the Church of England over recent years has been the widespread emergence of a new layer of leadership and ministry, variously termed the leadership team, pastoral team, ministry team or eldership.”¹⁵⁴ Leslie J.

¹⁵³ Gillian Summers, “Evangelicals and Patterns of Ministry,” in *Evangelical Anglicans: Their Role and Influence in the Church Today*, ed. R T France and Alister McGrath (London: SPCK, 1993), 163.

¹⁵⁴ Andrew Dawswell, *Ministry Leadership Teams: Theory and Practice in Effective Collaborative Ministry*, Grove Pastoral Series (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2003), 3.

Francis, Director of the Welsh National Centre for Religious Education and Professor of Practical Theology, University of Wales, Bangor, UK, cites dozens of references in support of his claim that “collaborative ministry has been a major theme in church thinking, ecumenically and internationally, over the past two decades.”¹⁵⁵ He admits that “The practical case for collaborative ministry begins with the recognition that the aging profile of clergy, the declining vocations of full-time stipendiary ministry, the eroding economic base on which the churches operate, and the drift of the population away from church membership and church attendance all conspire to undermine the sustainability of traditional forms of ministry.” Another possible motivation is the reduction of clergy stress.¹⁵⁶ The theological justification, following Robin Greenwood, practical theologian and author, also vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Monkseaton, Newcastle (UK) is the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁵⁷ Dawswell notes that while he agrees with Greenwood, the theological method is so vague that a wide range of conclusions could be reached.¹⁵⁸ Greenwood would not claim to stand within the evangelical tradition, yet his definition of a Ministry Leadership Team bears striking similarity to the model described decades earlier by evangelicals:

Ministry Leadership Teams consist of those in ordained and licensed ministry and others who, together and in diversity, lead, encourage and build up the work of the whole Body of Christ.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Leslie J Francis, Susan H Jones, and Mandy Robbins, “Clergy Personality and Collaborative Ministry: The Way Ahead for Stable Extraverts?,” *Pastoral Psychology* 53, no. 1 (2004): 33-36.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 35.

¹⁵⁷ Robin Greenwood, *Practising Community: The Task of the Local Church* (London: SPCK, 1996); Idem, *The Ministry Team Handbook* (London: SPCK, 2000).

¹⁵⁸ Dawswell, *Ministry Leadership Teams*, 12. Dawswell admits he agrees with Greenwood.

¹⁵⁹ Greenwood, *The Ministry Team Handbook*, xi. This is cited in Dawswell, *Ministry Leadership Teams*, 3.

The point is that the wider church has caught up, for pragmatic reasons, with what the evangelical Anglicans have been saying for theological reasons: that leadership should be biblical, local, plural, and adapted to local context. Stott's commentary on Acts offers a fair summary. "Although no fixed ministerial order is laid down in the New Testament, some form of pastoral oversight (*episkopē*), doubtless adapted to local needs, is regarded as indispensable to the welfare of the church."¹⁶⁰ Anglican minister Gillian Summers agrees. "Flexibility and plurality are the hallmarks of the New Testament leadership and structures: they emerge from the local church in response to the needs of the community."¹⁶¹ For Motyer, although the New Testament data leave us with more questions than answers, five principles emerge:

Flexibility to local congregation's needs, rather than a fixed job description;

Function so that 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 concentrate on character;

A distinct norm for leadership namely 'companionate leadership' that is neither dominant, nor leadership from behind;

The dominance of the local church, a paradigm seen in Acts 6; and Collegiality.¹⁶²

Summers encapsulates the role of presbyters as "teaching and oversight, 'companionate leadership.'"¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: To the Ends of the Earth*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 236.

¹⁶¹ Summers, "Evangelicals and Patterns of Ministry," 163.

¹⁶² Motyer, "Meaning of Ministry," 238ff..

¹⁶³ Summers, "Evangelicals and Patterns of Ministry," 163.

Interim Conclusion

The following interim summary can be offered: for evangelical Anglicans, the ordained ministry of Presbyters is one of Word and sacrament, of teaching, eldership and enabling; and the focus of that ministry is the local church. Scripture and mission impel evangelicals towards the New Testament pattern of plural ministry and leadership. The late twentieth-century movements for charismatic renewal, women's ordination, and collaborative ministry as a response to church decline have only intensified the momentum for change.

Models of Shared Local Leadership in Anglican Churches

Since shared local eldership is not a normal part of Anglican church polity, any attempt at instituting formal shared pastoral leadership within a local church will be an innovation that must take account of the existing legal framework.

Lay Elders in a Church Plant

Some churches are, for one reason or another, not required to utilize all the normal structures of a parish church in the Church of England. For example a single congregation meeting at a specific time ('the evening congregation') or another meeting in a different location ('the church plant') may be led by a team dedicated to the oversight of that body of believers under the overall aegis of the larger church's PCC.¹⁶⁴ Another situation might be a church plant established outside the normal parish structures by a

¹⁶⁴ The nature and role of the PCC are described below.

Bishop's Mission Order within the Church of England or a church outside the Church of England altogether and under the oversight of another Anglican grouping, such as AMiE. Proprietary Chapels in the Church of England are also not legally bound to be governed by a PCC. In each of these situations, it is feasible to establish a Ministry Leadership Team (MLT) that fulfills the need for shared pastoral leadership.

In the case of a more normal parish church, there are already lay officers with whom the minister must share aspects of ministry and leadership. Any attempt to institute a Ministry Leadership Team (MLT) will need to take account of the existing structures that shape the life of a parish church in the Church of England.

Lay Officers in the Church of England

Responsibility for the local church is shared between the incumbent and the churchwardens and PCC. Readers are licensed to carry out ministry in the local church, and in many evangelical churches other lay leaders will share in the ministry of the Word as Bible teachers in larger or smaller settings. These roles are outlined below.

The office of churchwarden is an ancient one. Until the separation of civil and ecclesiastical parishes in the early twentieth century, churchwardens bore responsibilities within the parish as well as within the church itself. Churchwardens are still chosen annually by parishioners, although in practice the elections are by members of the church's electoral roll. As the senior lay leaders responsible both to the congregation and to the bishop, their formal responsibilities are to "be foremost in representing the laity and in co-operating with the incumbent; they shall use their best endeavours by example and precept to encourage the parishioners in the practice of true religion and to promote

unity and peace among them. They shall also maintain order and decency in the church and churchyard, especially during the time of divine service.”¹⁶⁵ It may be noted that they are not required to teach or administer discipline, although their ‘endeavours by ... precept’ might have a bearing on the spiritual health of the congregation. Nor are churchwardens subject to the criteria for eldership laid out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. They are required only to be sixteen years of age or more, be actual communicants, and willing to serve.¹⁶⁶

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is the decision-making body of the church. Where the church is a registered charity, PCC members are also trustees, and the operation of the PCC is governed by law. The duties of the PCC are “cooperation with the incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical,”¹⁶⁷ and it makes financial and legal decisions on behalf of the church. The PCC is responsible for drawing up a budget, administering the church’s financial and other assets, and regulating the employment of staff and clerks (but not the incumbent).¹⁶⁸ The incumbent may only change the time and form of services in consultation with the PCC, and appointments of leaders working with children and vulnerable adults must be approved by the PCC for insurance purposes. However the PCC does not have formal responsibility for the ministry of the Word, or for discipline,

¹⁶⁵ Canon E.1 of churchwardens. Their other responsibilities for allocation of seats and dispersal of alms have fallen into disuse Briden and MacMorran, *Handbook*, 63-69.

¹⁶⁶ Church of England, *Church Representation Rules*, 2011 ed. (London: Church House Publishing, 2011), 11, 63. This is a minimum, of course

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 15-25. Also the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956, s. 2 as substituted by the Synodical Government Measure 1969, s.6.

¹⁶⁸ Briden and Hanson, *Moore’s Introduction*, 35.

nor indeed for recruitment and deployment of volunteers. The members of the PCC are elected for three years, with one third of elected members rotating every year. They must be on the electoral roll of the church and not be disqualified from being a charity trustee.¹⁶⁹ Unlike churchwardens, PCC members are not required to be actual communicants.

Readers are laypeople licensed by the bishop to assist the incumbent in ministry. Lawful ministries for readers are to visit the sick, teach in Sunday school and elsewhere, to lead services and preach, and to share in distribution of the Lord's Supper. They may, if authorized, conduct funerals.¹⁷⁰ Readers are to be baptized and confirmed, and must satisfy the bishop that they are a regular communicant of the Church of England.¹⁷¹ In order to progress a nomination for someone to be admitted as a reader, the bishop must be satisfied that the person is “of good life, sound in faith, a regular communicant, and well fitted for the work of a Reader.”¹⁷² There is no expectation that readers share in leadership, and in the case of a vacancy in the parish, leadership does not devolve to the readers but falls to the rural dean and the churchwardens.¹⁷³ Neither does any leadership role fall to non-stipendiary ministers (NSM) in such a situation.

In addition to readers, other members of the congregation will assist the incumbent in ministry, such as visiting the sick, teaching in Sunday school and home

¹⁶⁹ Church of England, *Church Representation Rules*, 55-56.

¹⁷⁰ Canon E.4 Of Readers para 2 & 2A.

¹⁷¹ Canon E.4 Of Readers, para 1.

¹⁷² Canon E.5 Of the nomination and admission of Readers, para. 2.

¹⁷³ A Deanery is a group of 10-20 local parishes. The Rural Dean is administrative leader of the Deanery, its Clergy Chapter and Synod.

groups, leading services and occasionally preaching. It is a clear fruit of the growth of CM that church members may be involved in this way without the need to be licensed as readers. There is, however, no recognized mechanism for the local church to ratify these appointments, which are the incumbent's to make.

None of the above roles constitute a collaborative local eldership. Churchwardens and PCC are not required to meet the same standards as readers, let alone ordained presbyters. The lay officers are required only to 'cooperate' with the incumbent, which falls short of collaboration. This brings to mind the Old Testament model of 'leader and assistants' rather than the New Testament model of plural leadership.¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, readers and NSMs are required to meet a standard, but they not formally expected to collaborate with the incumbent in pastoral leadership. Where there is Collaborative Leadership (CL) between the incumbent, churchwardens, and PCC, it covers governance, fabric, and finance, rather than pastoral matters, and equally while the incumbent, readers, and any NSMs exercise Collaborative Ministry (CM), it does not imply the decision making and responsibility are shared between them.

Any attempt at pastoral CL in the Church of England must take account of these legal structures. The following section explores some possible solutions. It will be seen that converting these lay offices into something resembling local, plural eldership is far from straightforward.

¹⁷⁴ See above 'New Testament Passages about local Church leaders'. The point is the asymmetry between the incumbent and the lay officers, not that ministers in any way claim parity with anointed leaders like Moses.

Possible Solutions

Anglican evangelicals in the Church of England have improvised in a number of ways to introduce collaborative leadership without creating a conflict with the existing legal structures. Such a flexible and context-driven approach is consistent with the Hooker or Normative Principle outlined above. Several possible models are mentioned below, each having their own advantages and disadvantages.

Incumbent and Wardens as a Plural Eldership

In this model, the incumbent and churchwardens act as the church's plural eldership. There is much to commend this model: the incumbent and churchwardens are the senior ordained and lay members of the church respectively, and all are *ex-officio* members of the PCC. As a group, they are entirely congruent with the church's legal structures. The weaknesses are that because churchwardens are not required by canon law to meet the criteria for eldership, they cannot be removed for falling short of those criteria. It is up to the incumbent and the PCC to ensure that only suitable candidates are elected as churchwardens, and the ability to work this model depends heavily on the incumbent's personal political power. This may reduce the wardens' ability to act as check and balance on the incumbent's power.

A second weakness is that this group is small. For instance, an associate or assistant Minister may be exercising significant pastoral leadership within the congregation but be excluded from the leadership team of vicar and wardens. That may be desirable if the leadership team's role is chiefly one of governance modeled on a

board,¹⁷⁵ but if the leadership's role is to collaborate on the spiritual and shepherding ministry, its effectiveness is compromised if key pastoral leaders are excluded.

Standing Committee as a Plural Eldership

In this model the Standing Committee of the PCC acts as the plural leadership of the church. Once again, membership is coherent with the existing structures because the incumbent and churchwardens are members *ex officio*, and the Standing Committee has powers to act by delegation from the full PCC. As a larger body than just incumbent and wardens, it may now include some staff members and other ministry leaders from the congregation. It is not necessary to include the PCC Secretary and Treasurer in the Standing Committee although this may commonly be the case.¹⁷⁶ The weakness is that such a body may only be informally constituted, and there is no legal means to exclude members unsuited to the exercise of pastoral leadership. Once again, this model depends on the ability of the incumbent to persuade the church to elect a PCC or the PCC to elect a standing committee competent to provide Collaborative Leadership to the church.

PCC as a Plural Eldership

A PCC is not a small body. Depending on the size of the church, there are between six and fifteen elected members. In addition the clergy, readers, and

¹⁷⁵ See below 'Collaborative Management'.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 80-81. The PCC Secretary is not like a Church Secretary in other denominations: their role is to assist in the running of the PCC rather than of the church.

representatives to the deanery synod are members ex-officio.¹⁷⁷ The strength of using the PCC as a CL structure is that it is large enough to be able to include all or most of the pastoral leaders in a congregation and that its size can dilute the otherwise greater power of incumbent and other staff members. But there is the same weakness as before: in order for the whole PCC to act as a Collaborative Leadership structure, and if every member is to meet the same requirements, then the church must be in a position to ensure that only suitable candidates are proposed for election. The church, or pastor, can only do this by persuasion as the legal criteria are much broader than those for eldership in a congregation.

Staff Team as a Plural Eldership

In a multiple staff church, paid staff -- and especially full-time paid staff -- wield significant power. The larger the church, the harder it is for lay people to grasp all that is going on, and therefore the greater the staff advantage. In a multiple-staff church, the staff team may in practice act as the collaborative leadership of the church because they lead the work and take the decisions at a staff meeting. The disadvantage would be in the area of accountability. The staff would not be well placed to challenge the incumbent if they are also answerable to him for their employment; staff may be members of the PCC, but may also be employed by the PCC; lay leaders in the congregation are not able to participate in the church's pastoral leadership if they are not present at the staff meeting;

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 15.

finally, and perhaps crucially, the PCC, as decision making body of the church, is not included in deliberations that may set the leadership and direction of the church.

Home Group Leaders and Service Leaders as a Plural Eldership

One more possible candidate for CL is the gathering of those who share in the ministry of the Word as preachers, teachers of Sunday School, and leaders of home groups. Such a constituency recognizes the implicit authority within the church of those who are engaged in Word ministry. In a church that practices CM, leaders of small groups are the front line of pastoral care in a church. The use of small group leaders as an eldership is attractive because it brings together those involved in both leadership and pastoral care. Wise appointments to those roles require both biblical maturity and moral probity in the small group leaders.

A possible weakness of this approach is that the organization may be more hierarchical than collaborative. With small groups, for instance, primary pastoral care is given in groups, with more difficult cases referred upward to the minister. In a larger church, the small groups may be organized into clusters with a coordinator but the same principle of delegation remains. A system designed to enable difficult cases to be referred up the chain and for messages to be passed from the church leadership down the chain may not be conducive to genuine, collaboration between the pastoral leaders and the incumbent. Wise incumbents often consult small group leaders, but in practice rarely collaborate with them. David Watson's 'elders' were in fact area group leaders with

oversight of several home groups, but they were subject to a separate process of appointment compared to the elders on his MLT.¹⁷⁸

In the same way, those who share in public ministry of preaching and leading at services also exercise CM because they share the incumbent's ministry. The exercise of such a ministry does not in itself constitute collaborative leadership unless they meet together to collaborate in pastoral care.

Ministry Leadership Team as a Plural Eldership

A final proposal is the Ministry Leadership Team (MLT) which is a hybrid of several models. The MLT is identified as the team giving *leadership* in the area of *ministry*, which is not formally the PCC's remit. As a *team*, the MLT is expected to work collaboratively. It may therefore contain both paid and volunteer ministry leaders. The key element is the relationship of this team to the PCC and other formal structures. As a leadership structure, the MLT needs authority to make decisions and see them through, and as decision making authority is vested in the PCC, there must be overlap between the MLT and PCC if conflict is to be avoided. David Watson's model was to choose a MLT such that most members were also on the PCC, so that PCC could with confidence support MLT decisions and still retain an element of accountability. He explains:,

a strong representation [by elders on the PCC] would seem important to avoid any possibility of tension between the two groups. However since the PCC must inevitably deal with more administrative and financial matters, and since the elders attend more to the pastoral and disciplinary

¹⁷⁸ Watson, *I Believe in the Church*, 294.

aspects of the work, it is unlikely that all elders will be, or need to be, on the PCC.¹⁷⁹

In this sense it is an extension of the Incumbent and Wardens model:

In some churches it might be right for the Churchwardens or the Standing Committee to form the first eldership. What is important is that the elders should be marked for their *spiritual* maturity and not necessarily for their official position in the church.¹⁸⁰

Watson's elders were nominated by him and compared with the church's nominations. "The church is not a democracy, and the elders have always been ultimately my appointment, although checked by the congregation in the way described."¹⁸¹ Since Watson wrote, the greater emphasis on accountability of ordained leaders and the benefit of non-staff elders mean that were he writing today, Watson might well express himself less forcefully.

Governance, Shepherding, Collaboration and Cooperation

The foregoing bears witness to evangelicals' desire to change the dynamics of local church leadership from governance to shepherding and from cooperation to collaboration. The PCC of a Church of England church is tasked with the overall responsibility of running the church as an organization, ensuring that there are adequate budgets, policies, and facilities. This is the narrower sense of 'governance.' The work of looking after the spiritual health of the congregation and individuals within it falls chiefly to the pastor and locally that is the incumbent. Evangelicals are impelled by both

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 295.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 292.

scripture and mission to share the work of shepherding with others and therefore explore the various models of MLT. The tension between governance and shepherding will emerge also in what follows, as first non-Anglican evangelical and then secular perspectives are sought on shared leadership.

It was also noted above that the PCC was to ‘cooperate’ with the incumbent and that this level of interaction falls short of collaboration between equal partners. Collaboration in CL is made harder by the inequality in power and competence between paid and voluntary staff. The evangelical and secular texts surveyed below will also shed some light on the nature of collaboration that may be desirable.

Conclusion

For historical reasons, the Church of England consistently set its face against plural eldership in favor of a strongly clerical and episcopal hierarchy. The legal structure of the Church of England reinforces that orientation with the appointment of lay officers whose functions are geared to maintenance of the parish church. Evangelical Anglicans, driven by both scripture and mission, look for ways to share pastoral leadership within the local church. While there is no easy place for a Ministry Leadership Team (MLT) within a parish church, evangelicals not deterred. It likely that their efforts are inspired by a vision of shared leadership informed by both non-Anglican evangelical voices and by the cultural context in which they minister. The next section turns to the insights of non-Anglican evangelical approaches to shared pastoral leadership.

Other Evangelical Perspectives on Collaborative Eldership

Richard Hooker's Normative Principle, in which there is freedom to use the insights of tradition and reason in the areas where Scripture does not give a clear command or prohibition, was elaborated in the context of debate with Puritans who espoused the Regulative Principle, in which a clear biblical warrant is required for everything that is done in corporate worship. Dr. Mark Dever, Senior Pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington DC, explains:

Clear warrant can either take the form of an explicit biblical command, or a good and necessary implication of a biblical text. The Regulative Principle has historically competed with the Normative Principle, crystallized by the Anglican minister Richard Hooker. Hooker argued, along with Martin Luther before him, that as long as a practice is not biblically forbidden, a church is free to use it to order its corporate life and worship. In short, the Regulative Principle forbids anything not commanded by Scripture, whereas the Normative Principle allows anything not forbidden by Scripture.¹⁸²

Paige Patterson, President of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, puts it more succinctly when he says, "The church is the house of God. It is unthinkable that God has left its government up to the traditions of men."¹⁸³

The following section will explore the findings of non-Anglican evangelical traditions on the nature of local church leadership, especially collaborative eldership. In

¹⁸² Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 77. See also D. A. Carson and others, *Worship By the Book*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 54-55.

¹⁸³ Paige Patterson, "Single-Elder Congregationalism," in *Who Runs the Church? Four Views on Church Government*, ed. Paul E Engle and Steve B Cowan, Counterpoints: Church Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 68.

the light of their commitment to the Regulative Principle, this will draw heavily on the biblical material introduced in the first section of Chapter Two.¹⁸⁴

Dever: Elder-Led Congregational Baptist Church

Beginning with the Regulative Principle, Dever notes the interchangeable vocabulary of elders, shepherds and overseers in the New Testament and the pattern of plural elders in a singular church. He concludes, “The pattern is a plurality of elders in each local church.”¹⁸⁵ Elders are distinguished from staff, who are paid to carry out the elders’ direction and deacons who assist the elders as required. The church is elder-led but staff-executed. “The elders work together to determine the spiritual direction of the church, and the staff work together to fulfill the vision or direction set corporately by the elders.”¹⁸⁶ More vividly, “The elders decide on the destination. The staff drive the bus. The deacons make sure we’ve got enough gas to get there.”¹⁸⁷

For congregational Baptists, the New Testament pattern of plural elders in a single congregation is decisive, and Paul’s exhortation that Titus should establish elders in ‘every town’ (*kata polin*)¹⁸⁸ is better read distributively to mean that elders should be appointed in ‘each’ town:

¹⁸⁴ See above ‘New Testament Passages about local Church leaders’.

¹⁸⁵ Dever and Alexander, *Deliberate Church*, 132.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 168.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 169.

¹⁸⁸ Titus 1:5.

In other words, any Baptist who argues a single group of elders should lead more than one house congregation is unwittingly making an argument for Presbyterianism, not for historic Baptist congregationalism. If one sharpens the point by arguing a single individual should lead a number of house churches, then he has stumbled into arguing for an episcopalianism by divine right, which not even the Episcopilians argue.¹⁸⁹

Dever acknowledges that after the New Testament there arose an episcopate. “It seems that competent and noted pastors like Ignatius of Antioch were gradually recognized not only as the first among equals, as Timothy at Ephesus or James at Jerusalem might have been; they came to assume a formal office that was eventually recognized as an episcopate distinguishable from local church eldership.”¹⁹⁰ He further notes that Calvin found the same from his careful reading of the patristic period and quotes Calvin’s comment. “In each city, these [elders] chose one of their number whom they specially gave the title ‘bishop’ in order that dissensions might not arise (as commonly happens) from equality of rank. . . . The ancients themselves admit that this was introduced by human agreement to meet the need of the times.”¹⁹¹

Nevertheless, the dominant pattern for Baptists was a single elder or pastor leading a congregational church. Citing anecdotal evidence, Dever gives the following reasons for the re-emergence of plural-elder led churches within reformed Baptist circles. First, the idea of elders in local churches has been raised by prominent advocates outside the Southern Baptist constituency, such as John MacArthur, John Piper, and Wayne Grudem; second was a sense of frustration with current structures. “Many Southern

¹⁸⁹ Mark Dever, *By Whose Authority? Elders in Baptist Life* (Washington, DC: 9Marks, 2006), 10.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 14.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 16-17. He is citing John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV.iv.2.

Baptist churches increasingly sense that the present structures are simply not working.”

Third was that as a result of a significant controversy within the denomination, pastors looked outside it for seminary education and leadership. “As these outside voices gained fresh respect, we gave more consideration to their arguments and practices. Subjects we had not discussed for a century or more once again became topics of conversation — like church government and the role of elders.”¹⁹² Thus the Baptists re-examined their Baptist heritage -- and found ‘elders aplenty!’ And they returned to the Bible and also found plural elders biblical.

There are practical benefits of plurality. First, it can balance pastoral weaknesses by bringing together a team with differing gifts. Second, it diffuses congregational criticism because leadership is shared by the elders rather than focused on the pastor. “This provision alleviates the pastor from bearing all the criticism, because now leadership and decision making responsibility are shared among the group.”¹⁹³ It also defuses a sense of ‘us versus him’ that can breed in adversarial debates about the direction of the church. A plural eldership adds pastoral wisdom from mature elders; it also indigenizes leadership by rooting leadership in non-staff members and protects the church should the pastor be removed for whatever reason. Finally, a plural eldership enables corrective discipline. “Performing corrective church discipline requires a leadership structure that won’t buckle under the spiritual and relational pressures of the process.”¹⁹⁴ Within elders’ meetings, Dever aims at parity between elders so that he has

¹⁹² Ibid., 23-24. He cites among those outside voices Gene Getz, mentioned below.

¹⁹³ Dever and Alexander, *Deliberate Church*, 133.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 134.

only one vote, but he recognizes the disparity in knowledge between staff and non-staff elders. For that reason he ensures that staff elders are in a minority on the board and that non-staff elders are given good warning of issues for discussion.¹⁹⁵

Getz: Plural Elders with a Point Leader

Gene Getz is founder and leader of the Fellowship Bible Church Network of churches. Church management consultant John Kaiser amusingly notes how Getz' position changed from an unalloyed commitment to plurality to now include the idea of a main congregational leader. In an annotated bibliography, he remarks:

Previous bouts of Elderitis Pluralis (inflammation of the elders) from the 1st ed. of Getz' *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* left their mark. However he recovered nicely from this malady and has written an exegetical treatise on the need for a primary pastoral leader. This book marks a long philosophical journey from his first edition.¹⁹⁶

Getz' first question asks what the New Testament writers meant by the word 'Church.' In an appendix he notes that of the more than 100 uses of the word *ekklēsia*, 82 refer to local churches as opposed to the universal church.¹⁹⁷ He deduces that church refers to believers in a community and not simply a congregation. The so-called 'supra cultural principle' to draw from this is that it is the church in a single city that is to be led by elders.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 179-180; Dever, *By Whose Authority?*, 38.

¹⁹⁶ John Edmund Kaiser, *Winning on Purpose: How to Organize Congregations to Succeed in Their Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 175-176. Kaiser is commenting on Getz, *Elders and Leaders*.

¹⁹⁷ Kaiser, *Winning on Purpose*, 48-49.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 49, 211. See footnotes 96 and 102 and above 'New Testament passages about local Church leaders'.

However the detail of how the church in each town works depends on the context. “God wants believers in various cultural settings to be able to create a multiple leadership plan that will function effectively regardless of whether we live in the first century of the church or the twenty-first.”¹⁹⁹ Thus the church in Jerusalem met in the Temple courts, while in Gentile cities it met in homes; in one place a single board led several house churches while in Crete Titus was over several house-churches, each with elders.²⁰⁰

Elders are distinguished from Deacons, whose function is to assist the elders:

Though these “Acts 6” men are not identified as “deacons,” this unique event serves as a model in clarifying why official leaders with this title were appointed in various churches. As the seven men in Jerusalem *assisted the apostles* in meeting unique cultural need at that time, just so “deacons” were later commissioned in the churches to *assist elders/overseers in carrying out their shepherding responsibilities*, which included helping them to meet unique cultural needs.²⁰¹

Every church must have elders; only the larger ones also need deacons, whose duties are fleshed out in different ways according to the cultural need at the time.²⁰²

Elders are identified with overseers but not to be confused with the Apostles or their delegates. Every major city in the Roman Empire with a significant Jewish population had a council of elders, a Sanhedrin. It is not a surprise therefore to see elders in the first Christian churches if they took over the pattern from the synagogue. But, notes Getz, “Elders in the church may have had the *same title* as leaders in Israel, but they had

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 211.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 214.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 102. Emphasis original.

²⁰² Ibid., 103.

totally *new functions*.²⁰³ Romans, however, would have been more familiar with the title *episkopos* to refer to a superintendent or leader of a colony.²⁰⁴ For a mixed church, Paul used both terms, although the functions were the same. Timothy and Titus were given the responsibility to appoint elders in Ephesus and Crete. It is not so clear how elders were appointed in the other churches. Other apostolic representatives might have done so, but there is no evidence.²⁰⁵

When Paul addressed the elders of the Ephesian church at Miletus, he urged them to remain diligent in their tasks, namely: accountability, to keep watch over themselves; oversight, to manage the whole church well; shepherding, to care for believers in the face of false teaching; and faithfulness, never to let their guard down but faithfully to warn the flock.²⁰⁶ Getz does not accept the distinction between those who manage and those who teach because the overseer/elder is to both manage (*proistēmi*) and shepherd (*poimainō*) the church. But those who spend more time in this task should be financially looked after.²⁰⁷ The six essential functions of church leadership in the New Testament are teaching biblical truth, modeling Christ like behavior, maintaining doctrinal purity (in a loving and gentle way), disciplining unruly believers, overseeing financial matters, and praying for those who are ill.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ Ibid., 185.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 186.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 205-206.

²⁰⁶ Acts 20:17-38; Ibid., 91.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 132-4, 186.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 191-200.

Elders are to function as a unified team of godly men.²⁰⁹ However, although this follows from the observation that Peter and Paul referred to elders in the plural, Getz warns against reading contemporary concerns into the biblical data. “To understand how plurality in leadership worked in the New Testament culture, we must avoid superimposing our contemporary, Western forms on first-century churches.”²¹⁰ Specifically he means that ‘church’ refers to a single congregation rather than the body of believers in a community, as noted above. Whatever the unit of ‘church’ that is chosen, the pattern is that it should be led by a plurality of elders, provided there are sufficient qualified men.²¹¹ The practical benefits for the church are that plural eldership is more effective, gives a model of unity, and supports the primary pastor and his family.²¹² Decision-making by the elders can be by consensus, but this only works if objectors are willing to speak out. Gaining support for an idea provides a stronger agreement. The weakness of staff-led churches, or staff-dominated elder boards, is that they may cut out valuable experience, such as business acumen, that non-staff elders bring to the leadership.²¹³

When there is a plurality of leadership, someone needs to function as the primary leader. This is the pattern seen with the apostles among the early church, and in God’s people elsewhere in Scripture:

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 181.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 211.

²¹¹ Ibid., 215.

²¹² Ibid., 242.

²¹³ Ibid., 309-310.

It's God's design – from the time He chose men like Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and Nehemiah in the Old Testament, and Peter, Paul, Timothy, and Titus in the New Testament -- to always have a key leader in place to lead his people. Why would we think differently when it involves elders/overseers in a local church?²¹⁴

In the post-biblical development, the primary leader became so strong that it gave rise to the three-tier system of bishops, elders, and deacons. Ignatius, for example, adopted this system in the face of a deteriorating church situation. Getz comments that this system caught on, but:

On the other hand, just because Ignatius developed an approach to leadership that was and still is out of harmony with biblical principles, it does not mean that a body of elders/overseers in a particular local church do not need a primary leader. ... Practically speaking this means a primary shepherd should be a servant-leader.²¹⁵

The biblical pattern, according to Getz, is of a primary leader who both leads and serves. “I led the elders,” and together “we led the church.”²¹⁶ The primary leader is accountable to the elders yet when they are making decisions, he is one of the elders and as the church’s lead pastor, he is their leader and pastor. It is dysfunctional for the pastor not to be a member of the church board.²¹⁷ However, as the church and staff grow numerically, staff should report to the primary leader and through him to the elders; they must not report to the elders individually.²¹⁸ These comments may be compared with the work of Carver, Kaiser, and Malphurs mentioned below.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ Ibid., 223.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 225.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 255.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 258.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 314.

²¹⁹ See ‘Collaborative Management’ below.

Getz' work is framed as a list of supra-cultural principles, but he remains resolutely flexible on form because he considers the diversity of the biblical data to be deliberate:

The facts are, the biblical story is open-ended. There are many details that are missing - and by divine design. God wants every local church to develop "forms" that enable elders to do the very best possible job "managing" and "shepherding" the church within a particular culture.²²⁰

Patterson: Single-Elder Congregationalism

Paige Patterson, in his essay advocating single-elder led congregationalism, takes the argument from pattern even further. He observes the pattern in the Old Testament of single leaders, and in the synagogue of a ruler, and deduces a universal human trait:

This [the fact of a ruler over the synagogue] is understandable given that the psychology of human leadership demonstrates that a leader emerges by way of election, coup, selection by some group, or by other natural means in almost every social endeavor in life. This ordering seems to be a part of the psyche of humanity.²²¹

Samuel E Waldron, pastor of Reformed Baptist Church of Grand Rapids responding from a congregational and plural-elder perspective, notes that "The New Testament gives not a single example of any local church with only one elder." It is 'abnormal,' he says, to have single elders because they need to exist in some kind of council.²²² Patterson, in his response to Waldron's article proposes that because some New Testament churches had plural elders, and some had none, this "seems to suggest

²²⁰ Kaiser, *Winning on Purpose*, 305.

²²¹ Patterson, "Single-Elder Congregationalism," 151

²²² Waldron in Paul E Engle, and Steve B Cowan, eds. *Who Runs the Church? Four Views on Church Government*. Counterpoints: Church Life. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004, 169.

that some have had only one.”²²³ He returns to his psychological argument to refute the idea of parity between plural elders. “This ‘first among equals’ is precisely what generally emerges in congregations with multiple elders today. This testifies to the innate difficulty of ‘shared leadership’ or any approaches where all elders are perceived as equal.”²²⁴ In the end, Waldron is unable to show evidence that the multiple elders in New Testament had parity, but, equally, Patterson admits he can’t show evidence they did not.²²⁵

Ryken: Shepherds of God’s Flock

Philip Ryken, Minister of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, warns against new ways of ‘doing church’ that abandon biblical patterns. “We are living in post-Christian times,” he says.²²⁶ But in the scramble to find a pattern of ministry, he counsels the church to return to the New Testament and find there a pattern that will endure. In his view, it is that a church should be a teaching church, a worshiping church, and a caring church (sharing responsibilities, including financial burdens). Such a church will also be a growing church.²²⁷ Then as now the church faces challenge in two areas: life and doctrine. In response, he says, “God’s plan was to place the church under the care

²²³ Patterson’s response to Waldron in *Who Runs the Church?*, 203, 239.

²²⁴ Patterson response in Ibid., 240.

²²⁵ Ibid., 241.

²²⁶ Philip Graham Ryken, *City on a Hill: Reclaiming the Biblical Pattern for the Church in the 21st Century* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 15.

²²⁷ Ibid., 23-30.

of shepherds.”²²⁸ Because the biblical terms for shepherd, elder, and overseer are synonymous, the biblical pattern for church leadership is one of collaboration rather than stratification:

This is a clue that the biblical pattern for spiritual leadership is not hierarchical, but collegial. God does not intend for bishops to rule the pastors, who in turn govern the elders. Instead, God has invested spiritual authority in a group of men -- use whichever term for them you like -- who together give wise counsel, spiritual oversight, and personal care to God’s people. *A Christian church has a team of shepherds who provide loving pastoral care for every member of the church family.*²²⁹

Such shepherding will require a list of members and, unpopular in the U.S. culture for which he writes, the exercise of discipline.²³⁰ In the more challenging contemporary mission environment, this role of the elders is as vital as ever. “In order to become [in the 21st century] a teaching, worshiping, caring church that is growing by the power of the Holy Spirit, a congregation needs pastors and elders who reach the lost, teach God’s Word, and serve God’s people faithfully and passionately, even at great personal cost.”²³¹

Prentiss Waters: Two-office Presbyterianism

Waters writes to provide a contemporary statement of Presbyterian church order. He follows James Bannerman’s distinction between *jure humano* (‘the form of government for [the] church should be left to the discretion and judgment of its members, and should be adjusted by them to suit the circumstances of the age, or country, or civil

²²⁸ Ibid., 98.

²²⁹ Ibid., 99. Emphasis original.

²³⁰ Ibid., 103-104.

²³¹ Ibid., 110.

government with which they stand connected') and *jure divino* ('the form and arrangements of ecclesiastical government have not been left to be fixed by the wisdom of man, nor reduced to the level of a question of mere Christian expediency, but have been determined by Divine authority, and are sufficiently exhibited in Scripture'), and argues firmly for the latter.²³² He discerns two offices in the church, namely elders and deacons, while recognizing that others have found three offices.²³³ Both agree that there is a difference in role between the teaching elder, or minister, and the ruling elders. Together, all are accountable for the spiritual health of the sheep: but the duty of preaching and of administering the sacraments falls to the minister. Because Waters places less emphasis on the shepherding ministry of the elders than Ryken above, and Witmer below, it is not clear to what extent Waters considers the shepherding ministry to be shared by the ruling elders. Nevertheless, Waters argues that congregations are to be ruled by a body of elders, and that within that body there is a distinction to be drawn between the teaching elder and the ruling elders.

Strauch: Biblical Eldership

Alexander Strauch is introduced only as a gifted Bible teacher and an elder at a church in Littleton, Colorado, where he has served for over forty years. His concern in

²³² Waters, *How Jesus Runs the Church*, 42-43. He is citing James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ: A Treatise on the Nature, Powers, Ordinances, Discipline and Government of the Christian Church*, 2 vols. (London: Banner of Truth, 1960), 2:202-4.

²³³ For a three-office view, see Robert S. Rayburn, "Ministers, Elders, and Deacons," in *Order in the Offices: Essays Defining the Roles of Church Officers*, ed. Mark R. Brown (Duncansville, PA: Classic Presbyterian Government Resources, 1993).

Biblical Eldership is to restore a biblical pattern of eldership to the church.²³⁴ Even among those churches that have an eldership in place, there are many who do not practise it in a biblical way. Strauch attacks what he calls ‘board elders,’ whom he distinguishes from shepherd elders, those who share in the work of pastoring the church. “A true biblical eldership is not a businesslike committee. It’s a biblically qualified council of men that jointly pastors the local church.”²³⁵ He reserves stronger words for clericalism, which he blames for some of the worst havoc wrought on the church.²³⁶ The remedy is to return to the Bible’s pattern. “Christians who profess the Bible to be God’s infallible Word agree that they must establish their church practices and doctrines on the teachings of the Bible.”²³⁷ In support he cites Motyer’s observation in a Bible commentary that there should not be any other leadership than an eldership group, which is curious because Motyer is both an Anglican and an advocate of the view that the New Testament gives principles rather than patterns.²³⁸

Strauch notes the consistent use of the plural when describing elders or church leaders.²³⁹ He finds these data conclusive. “On the local church level, the New Testament plainly witnesses to a consistent pattern of shared pastoral leadership. Therefore,

²³⁴ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*.

²³⁵ Ibid., 31.

²³⁶ Ibid., 101.

²³⁷ Ibid., 103.

²³⁸ Ibid. He cites Alec Motyer, *The Message of James: The Tests of Faith*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 189. See ‘The evangelical Anglican understanding of Presbyteral Ministry’ above.

²³⁹ See above ‘New Testament Passages about local Church leaders’.

leadership by a plurality of elders is a sound biblical practice.”²⁴⁰ Although the apostolic delegates Timothy, Titus, Erastus, and Epaphras had authority, they were not local church pastors in the traditional sense of the word.²⁴¹ Strauch does not consider James, the leader of the Jerusalem Council, to be an elder. Nor are the angels of the churches in Revelation decisive. Even if they are human, “the reference still doesn’t disclose the official position of the human representatives (or messengers) or whether or not the representatives are the sole leaders of their local churches.”²⁴² The biblical pattern is for a team of elders as leaders.

The New Testament’s pattern of plural eldership shows discontinuity with the patterns of both the Old Testament and Roman society. Plural eldership is also a contrast to the way God raises up leaders at particular times, such as Moses. “To argue for pastoral oversight by a plurality of qualified elders is not to deny that God raises up extraordinarily gifted men to teach and lead his people. Certainly there are great evangelists [etc.] … but this is a different matter from the governmental or organizational structure of the church.”²⁴³ Nor is the pattern of eldership to be brought over from the Old Testament. In this, Strauch opposes Robert S Rayburn, then minister of Faith Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Tahoma, Washington, who argues that following the pattern of eldership in the Old Testament, elders in the New Testament church should

²⁴⁰ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 37.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 105.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid., 106. Note that a similar distinction between extraordinary and ordinary offices of the church is made by Waters, *How Jesus Runs the Church*, 85.

also rule and govern.²⁴⁴ Strauch asserts, “The apostolic elder is not the Old Testament elder in a new age.”²⁴⁵ Elders are to shepherd, and not to rule only, hence his resistance to ‘board elders’ encountered above. The New Testament pattern is also at variance with the surrounding culture. One-man oversight was commonly practiced in both the Jewish synagogue and in Greco-Roman society, so that “Paul’s choice of the elder structure of government was intentional. He was not simply accommodating himself to current social norms.”²⁴⁶ Whether the elder structure was borrowed from the synagogue is hard to say and not important because unlike synagogues, churches never had a chief ‘ruler.’²⁴⁷ This may be compared with Beckwith who notes in his *Elders in Every City* that first century synagogues would have had teaching elders, community rulers, synagogue elder, and synagogue servant.²⁴⁸ The synagogue ruler was not normally a teaching elder, but might be founder or benefactor, whose principal responsibilities would be as the organizer of worship. As there was no synagogue ruler in Christian congregations, it seems obvious to Beckwith that one of the elders should be chosen and emerge as the ‘bishop’ among presbyter-bishops.²⁴⁹

The mode of collaboration is of a council of equals, “a collective form of leadership in which each elder shares equally the position, authority, and responsibility of

²⁴⁴ Rayburn, “Ministers, Elders, and Deacons,”

²⁴⁵ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 108.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 116.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 121-122.

²⁴⁸ Beckwith, *Elders in Every City*, 33-37.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 55.

the office.”²⁵⁰ The benefits of this arrangement are that it has biblical warrant, that strengths and weaknesses of individuals can be balanced out, the load is lightened by being shared, and there is accountability that protects against abuse of power. “Only when there is genuine accountability between equals in leadership is there any hope of breaking down the horrible abuse of pastoral authority that plagues many churches.”²⁵¹ Instead, elders are to work together in servant leadership, first taught by Jesus Christ and modeled by the Twelve.²⁵² Jesus’ lessons are that God hates pride; it is hard for people to understand principles of love and servanthood; and that these are essential qualities for the church. The lessons are demonstrated in the life of Paul, the once-proud Pharisee whom Christ called to be his humble servant.²⁵³ The elders, and indeed the whole church, are to be exemplars of this servant-hearted community life:

I am convinced that one of the reasons the apostles chose the elder system of government was because it enhanced the loving, humble-servant character of the Christian family. ... Eldership, then, enhances brotherly love, humility, mutuality, patience, and loving inter-dependence -- qualities that are to mark the servant church.²⁵⁴

This coheres with Hellerman’s idea mentioned above that, drawing on Paul’s letter to the Philippians, plural leadership is the social context or ‘way of doing church’ that encourages a Jesus-like use of authority.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 39.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 43.

²⁵² Ibid., 85.

²⁵³ Ibid., 92-93.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 114.

²⁵⁵ Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry*, 169-170. Cf. ‘New Testament Passages about local Church leaders’ above.

Waldron: Plural Elder Congregationalism

Waldron's argument for congregational government with plural eldership is that it stands in a firmly biblical and Puritan tradition. "The Puritan movement and Reformed tradition of which it was a part believed that the Bible provides a divinely mandated church government." The Regulative Principle is found in the Westminster Confession of the Presbyterians, the Savoy Declaration of the Congregationalists, and the 1689 (or second London) Confession of the Baptists, all which sets him at odds with Anglicans who hold to the Normative Principle.²⁵⁶ The Regulative, or Puritan, Principle still allows for contextual adjustment, however. "We are given a model for church government in the Scriptures to which we are neither to add nor subtract. ... though the written Word of God is sufficient to tell us how to worship God and govern the church, the circumstances and implementation of the biblical order are left to our sanctified common sense."²⁵⁷

Although he agrees with Lightfoot that episcopacy was widespread by the time of the ante-Nicene Fathers, Waldron asserts that the norm previously was plural elder-led congregationalism. "It is certainly true that the Apostolic Fathers manifest a church in transition to episcopacy. All the evidence, however, is consistent with the idea that the starting point of that transition and development was plural-elder congregationalism."²⁵⁸ Waldron further notes the overwhelming New Testament evidence for plurality; his

²⁵⁶ Waldron, "Plural-Elder Congregationalism," 189-191.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 203.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 199; Lightfoot, "The Christian Ministry," noting that Anglican Peter Toon refutes Waldron's reading of Lightfoot and the Fathers in his response (pp. 224-225).

argument for parity stems from the way the words for “elder,” “overseer,” and “shepherd” all refer to the same office in the New Testament.²⁵⁹

An elder is expected to be a member of a ruling council (implied in the title Elder); to be an overseer, meaning watchman or guardian; a shepherd; a leader or one who governs (Hebrews 13:7, 17); a teacher (Ephesians 4:11), a steward (Titus 1:7); and a parent managing his own household (1 Timothy 3:4-5). The holders of this office have genuine authority to wield within the congregation. The democracy of the church is supplemented with the aristocracy of the eldership.²⁶⁰

Summerton: Plural Government in Brethren Churches

Neil Summerton writes from within the Brethren tradition of the UK that these churches are in something of a crisis which “can be traced to deficiencies in government, leadership and ministry -- in a phrase, to widespread fault in the practice of eldership.”²⁶¹ Briefly tracing the history of the movement, he notes its commitment to plural government and leadership (as opposed merely to plural ministry), against the dominant background of monarchical government and monarchical ministry in churches. “Nevertheless,” he writes, “throughout the history of the church, generally in association with spiritual revival, the principle of plural or group ministry has always tended to reassert itself. It may readily be seen since the Reformation in groups such as the

²⁵⁹ Waldron, “Plural-Elder Congregationalism,” 214.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 218.

²⁶¹ Neil Summerton, *Eldership & Ministry in the Local Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 17.

Anabaptists, the Pietists, the Moravians, the Methodists, and others emerging from the first and second Evangelical revivals.”²⁶² Plural ministry is also seen in dissenting groups before the Reformation, namely the Lollards, Hussites, Waldenses.²⁶³

Although Summerton describes the elders’ task as government, he does not have in mind governance so much as pastoral care. The first of the five duties of elders is to pastor the flock. “The essence of the pastoral task can be understood in the metaphors of the shepherd and shepherding. Peter exhorts elders, ‘Tend the flock of God that is in your charge … willingly … eagerly … being examples to the flock.’ (1 Peter 5:2-3)” Drawing on the deep vein of Old Testament metaphor in which leaders were viewed as shepherds, he continues, “The pastoral care of God’s people entails protecting them, feeding them, healing them, rescuing them, restoring them, and carrying them spiritually, the whole being done with loving care and gentleness, even when exercising legitimate authority inherent in the elders’ right to rule the flock.”²⁶⁴ He notes that in a plural eldership, shared pastoral care entails a degree of organization.

The remaining tasks for elders are teaching the flock, which in the Brethren tradition unused to paid pastors, will mean ensuring continuity and consistency as opposed to the use of visiting or incompetent speakers,²⁶⁵ ordering or ruling the flock, which includes admission to the fellowship, officiating at marriage, and regulating

²⁶² Ibid., 16.

²⁶³ Ibid., 16-17.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 50-51. Compare also Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*.

²⁶⁵ Summerton, *Eldership & Ministry*, 57-64.

worship,²⁶⁶ and pastoral discipline in which the ultimate sanction is to silence false teachers or exclude. There are checks and balances to the exercise of this authority. Excommunication is only for serious and flagrant breaches or major doctrinal issues, and elders must be subject to Scripture themselves. There must be due and fair process, and elders must not act alone, and their rule is subject to final confirmation by the congregation.²⁶⁷ Elders are to lead, that is steering, encouraging, and enabling. As they do this together, plural elders “must above all find appropriate ways by which they can come to a common vision from the Lord for the congregation for which they are responsible.”²⁶⁸ Finally, elders are charged to pray.

Because of the importance he places on collective leadership, Summerton includes a substantial section on the dynamics of collective leadership. Elders need to know themselves and each other, their gifts, strengths, and weaknesses. He wisely counsels that this takes time to discern. “It is important that elders (and, I would recommend, their spouses) should give time, despite the press of other things, to prayer, fellowship, and relaxation together, without the impediment of any agenda.”²⁶⁹ Trust can issue in stability in the face of differences. “This maturity includes the ability to accept and stand behind the actions of colleagues even when those actions are not quite as one would have done things oneself.”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 67-69.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 72.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 79.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 85.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 86.

Witmer: the Shepherd Leader

Timothy Witmer, professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, is also concerned to restore the importance of the pastoral task to local church leadership, when he asks, “Are the elders or leadership team a ‘board of directors’ making decisions, or is it a team of shepherds caring for the flock?”²⁷¹ His starting point is to observe that leaders are pictured in the Bible as shepherds, and that in the New Testament churches, a number of men were charged together with the responsibility of shepherding the flock.²⁷²

Witmer’s contention is that shepherding gives a comprehensive matrix for ministry, which can be further divided into those aspects that concern the whole congregation, and those that are primarily focused on individuals:

Macro-shepherding refers to important leadership functions that relate to the entire church. It has in sight the elders’ responsibility to provide “oversight” to the flock as a whole. Its concern is to address the corporate concerns of the congregation. ... Micro-shepherding, on the other hand, refers to the *personal* ministry of the elders among the sheep. It has in view the particular sheep for whom they have been given responsibility ... The micro focus is on developing relationships with the sheep and the exercise of shepherding functions on a personal level.²⁷³

The term governance is used below and in the research that follows to describe the activities Witmer names as macro-shepherding, and shepherding to relate to Witmer’s micro-shepherding. Witmer’s burden is that elders tend to see their calling as one of

²⁷¹ Witmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 3.

²⁷² Ibid., 40. Witmer draws on Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*.

²⁷³ Witmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 103, 104. Emphasis original.

governance rather than shepherding, so that the pastor or paid pastor-teacher is responsible not only for the share of governance but also for all the shepherding.

Witmer also noted that a post-modern culture's resistance to hierarchy might lead it to dispense with leaders and the use of authority altogether. This is throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and stems from a failure to return to the biblical pattern of shepherding.²⁷⁴

Belcher: No Leaderless Churches

The Emerging Church movement grew out of a reaction to institutionalism and in response to frustration at its inability to be effective in mission. Pastor Jim Belcher explores whether a third way between traditional and emerging church models is possible.²⁷⁵ He wants to begin with the Bible and the imperative of mission, but retain the check of tradition to warn against cultural accommodation.²⁷⁶ Membership, he writes, is important for all ages. But that does not mean the leadership can be dispensed with. "As enticing as the idea of leaderless groups and home churches are, it is hard to get around the biblical teaching of official elders and deacons."²⁷⁷ Elders are to guard the integrity of Word and sacraments, protect the church's vision, train people to be co-ministers, and

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 99.

²⁷⁵ Jim Belcher, *Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009).

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 174.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 175.

exercise godly discipline where needed.²⁷⁸ It is this last aspect in particular that Belcher believes to be a stumbling block for the Emerging or so-called liquid church. “I wonder if the liquid church is so popular, in part, because leaders want to avoid certain challenges to the people they are trying to reach.”²⁷⁹

Interim Conclusion

The writers surveyed above seek a biblical pattern for ministry out of their commitment to the Regulative Principle, and share a concern for effective ministry and mission. Themes of agreement are the plural and local nature of eldership, the twin responsibilities of management and pastoral care of the church, and the assumption that elders are to work collaboratively. Yet they do not speak with a single voice; some favor a point leader; others are committed to the parity of elders; some lean more towards the task of governance; and others more to the work of shepherding.

While the church may have particular theological or missiological reasons for embracing plural local leadership, it is not unique in exercising it. Many different forms of collaborative leadership are being explored both in business and in nonprofit. The following section will explore some of the available recent research on specific issues in seeking genuine collaboration among leadership teams.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 176.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 177.

Collaborative Management

On first inspection, the analogies between a board of elders and a board of company directors suggest that the literature of board management would be fruitful. An overview of the influential work of John Carver shows that while the field is promising, it is open to critique when applied to churches. A second focus, then, is not so much on the structure of the leadership as its behavior. A board can operate effectively as a team, a concept that is now so well-established in the workplace that it is beginning to develop in new directions, which will briefly be explored. One of these new directions is collaboration, a concept that embraces working across more significant divides. In the third sub-section, the vocabulary of collaboration will be outlined by drawing on research in a variety of industries. Finally, it will be established that when democratic decision-making is sought in the face of imbalances in power between participants, specific strategies must be deployed to enable collaboration to take place.

Carver: Boards That Make a Difference

Management consultant John Carver has written extensively on the function and behavior of governance boards in both profit and nonprofit sectors. The board is the topmost level of accountability within an enterprise, which acts on behalf of the owners. Thus the board's role is best summarized as "ownership one step down rather than management one step up."²⁸⁰ Boards act as trustees for the owners. In nonprofit situations the owner may be the community rather than the actual financial backers. Carver's main

²⁸⁰ Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference*, 6.

concern is to separate management and oversight. “Boards are groups of people that oversee one person, whereas managers are single persons who oversee groups.”²⁸¹ The board’s role, then, is not to be involved in management that is the responsibility of the staff, who should report to the board only and entirely through the CEO. The board provides direction by the articulation of values and the framing of policy. This separation of governance from management is crucial according to Carver.

Kaiser: Winning on Purpose

John Kaiser is a management consultant who specializes in advising churches. Writing as President of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Canada, he had previously led the network Growing Healthy Churches. His approach to encouraging churches to organize for mission overlaps with Carver’s work on boards. Kaiser is clear that individuals, rather than teams, must be called to account for performance, similar to Carver’s model in which a board holds the CEO alone responsible for performance. Kaiser accepts that this view “runs counter to the preference for team and community favored by some respected writers addressing current postmodern/emergent/missional issues.”²⁸² The pastor holds the staff accountable for application, and the board holds the pastor accountable for both application and interpretation.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Ibid., 27.

²⁸² Kaiser, *Winning on Purpose*, 21.

²⁸³ Ibid., 73-77.

The pastor is the only link between the board and the congregation & staff. “This provides both a healthy connection and a healthy separation between governance by the board and management by the staff.”²⁸⁴ The leader’s role is to ensure clarity and unity of purpose, while deploying variety in its execution. “Diversity of agenda is deadly, diversity of background is helpful, and diversity of role is essential.”²⁸⁵ Although the execution depends on a team, accountability is focused on the pastor as leader. “A primary leader is essential to church-wide accountability. There can and should be many leaders *in* the congregation, but accountability requires that there be one leader *of* the congregation. … Groups don’t lead; they are led.”²⁸⁶ Kaiser notes the biblical examples of primary leaders such as Moses and Joshua. He cites the example of Getz, who originally advocated a plurality of elders with the pastor as ‘one among many.’ As noted above, Getz now has room for a primary leader. “The New Testament definitely teaches and illustrates that where there is a plurality of leadership, someone needs to function as the primary leader of the team.”²⁸⁷

Against Carver, Kaiser asserts that the pastor’s relationship to the board should not be like that of a CEO to their board:

The most profound difference between Accountable Leadership [i.e. Kaiser] and Policy Governance [i.e. Carver] is the positioning of the senior pastor. Carver would exclude the pastor from the board and therefore from decisions on mission and boundaries. That exclusion is

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 47.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 82.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 95-96. Emphasis original.

²⁸⁷ Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 217. Cited in Kaiser, *Winning on Purpose*, 97. See above ‘Getz: Plural Elders with a Point Leader’.

antithetical to a senior pastor as the primary spiritual leader of a congregation in any biblical sense.²⁸⁸

The pastor leads the board by inspiring their vision. “It is essential that as the spiritual leader of the congregation, the senior pastor be not only a full voting member of the board but a key officer on the board as well. … the pastor should not normally be the chairperson as accountability is enhanced by designating a separate person to keep the board on task.”²⁸⁹ The senior pastor leads the board to ensure that it provides the congregation with good governance, then monitoring performance against those principles, but the staff works for the senior pastor, not for the board or the congregation. The clearer and cleaner this line of accountability, says Kaiser, the more secure and collaborative the staff team can become.²⁹⁰

Malphurs: Being Leaders and Strategic Leadership

Aubrey Malphurs, Senior Professor of leadership and ministry at Dallas Theological Seminary, agrees that plural leadership is attractive. But in his view the biblical material is not conclusive, and it is a matter of discretion. “The issue is over power and trust. Some are comfortable giving power to a single, competent, godly leader. Others want to spread out the power over a number of leaders, usually lay leaders, called elders.”²⁹¹ For Malphurs, the problem with a board-led church is that lay people do not

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 175.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 101.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 117, 122.

²⁹¹ Malphurs, *Being Leaders*, 25.

know how to lead a church; that is the pastor's role.²⁹² The elders' role cannot be read from the New Testament into the board room, because the relationship between house churches and city churches is not that clear. The role of elders appears to be shepherding rather than governance. "When studied in the light of the city church and house church patterns, it is likely that these elders were the pastors of the house churches that made up the city churches."²⁹³ If there is to be a board, the pastor has three relationships with it. As leader of leaders, the pastor leads the board, but as a member of the board, they are equals with the other board members, and as an employee, the pastor is subject to the board. Like Carver and Kaiser, Malphurs suggests that policies should be made and that these are "beliefs and values that consistently guide how the church board will make its decisions."²⁹⁴

Teams

The value of teams in the workplace is well established.²⁹⁵ Malphurs, noted above, observes that even in surveying biblical material, the benefit of teams boils down to common sense. "The reason that we see teams so often in the Bible is not complex -- the simple truth is that all of us can do more than one of us."²⁹⁶

²⁹² Ibid., 26.

²⁹³ Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 213.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 213f..

²⁹⁵ For example, Katzenbach, D. K. and J. R. Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 1992).

²⁹⁶ Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 201.

The issue, then, is not whether teams are a good idea, but how they can work effectively. Business consultants Katzenbach and Smith draw the distinction between a Team and a Work Group. “A working group relies primarily on the individual contributions of its members for group performance, whereas a team strives for a magnified impact that is incremental to what its members could achieve in their individual roles.”²⁹⁷ Stephen Macchia, Founding President of Leadership Transformations Inc. describes Katzenbach and Smith’s maturing process in the formation of true teams in the following way: The first level is the Working Group where members interact primarily to share information, best practices, or perspectives and to make decisions to help each individual perform within his or her own area of responsibility. The Pseudo-Team, second, is a group for which there could be a significant, incremental performance need or opportunity, but it has not focused on collective performance. Pseudo-teams are the weakest of all groups in terms of performance impact. Third is the Potential Team which is trying to achieve goals, but typically it needs more clarity about purpose, goals, or work-products and more discipline in hammering out a common working approach. The Real Team is “a small number of people with complementary skills who are equally committed to a common purpose, goals, and working approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.” Finally, the High-Performance Team is one where the team members’ deep commitment to one another’s goals typically transcends the team.²⁹⁸ Macchia also accepts the distinction between a group and a team. “Often, though we call ourselves a team, we are

²⁹⁷ Katzenbach and Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams*, 88-89.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 91-121; Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team*, 45-46.

simply a work group. We have banded together to offer our services to a ministry, but we are really there for our own self-interests. Work groups focus their attention on accomplishing goals through individuals who work on their own, whereas a team seeks to accomplish tasks interdependently.” By contrast, “A healthy team works collectively, cooperatively, and complementarily, with each member contributing to the strength and vitality of the whole.”²⁹⁹

In order for a team to function in a healthy way, the following qualities need to be present. Trust between team members; empowerment so that each has a voice and can speak up; accountability of a leader to keep the team on track; and an attitude of service among the members.³⁰⁰ Management author and consultant Patrick Lencioni considers the dysfunctions that undermine the health of a team.³⁰¹ They are, he says, a pyramid in which the earlier faults build towards the last. Absence of trust stems from unwillingness to be vulnerable within the group. Fear of conflict may lead to artificial harmony. A lack of commitment flows from ambiguity about purpose. Avoidance of accountability happens because there is no clear plan of action by which others can be called to account. Inattention to results is the consequence of putting individual needs above the team’s.³⁰² Positively, the members of a truly cohesive team trust one another, engage in unfiltered conflict around ideas, commit to decisions and plans of action, hold one another

²⁹⁹ Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team*, 39-40.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.; Eric R. Molicki, “Effective Leadership of Staff Teams” (D. Min. diss., Covenant Theological Seminary, 2011).

³⁰¹ Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002).

³⁰² Ibid., 188-189.

accountable for delivering against those plans, and focus on achievement of collective results.³⁰³ He goes on to outline strategies for overcoming each of the dysfunctions. For example, “The most important action that a leader must take to encourage the building of trust on a team is to demonstrate vulnerability first.”³⁰⁴

James Lawrence, Director of Leadership for the Church Pastoral Aid Society in the UK, draws attention to the tensions that arise when a team’s membership crosses the generations.³⁰⁵ Each age-group may be characterized by the hopes and expectations, summarized in the following table:³⁰⁶

| | Gen Y 1984-2000 | Gen X 1964-1983 | Baby Boomers 1946-1963 | Traditionalists 1925-1945 |
|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Key Question | What is my choice? | How does it feel? | Does it work? | Is it true? |
| Expect leaders to | Collaborate and involve me from the start | Consult/understand me | Be competent and professional | Give teaching and direction |
| My first commitment is to | My friends | People as people | My area of work | The organization |
| Working together | I am looking for fun in my team | I need a team to do anything | I see the need to work in a team | I would prefer to work on my own |

³⁰³ Ibid., 189-190. Also Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 229-230.

³⁰⁴ Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, 201.

³⁰⁵ James Lawrence, *Engaging Gen Y: Leading Well Across the Generations*, Grove Leadership Series, vol. 8 (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2012).

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 14. Lawrence credits the table to Bishop Graham Cray, then Bishop of Maidstone but no citation is given.

| | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Disagreement | Navigate around it | Get it out in the open and discuss it | Decide according to what is most efficient | Avoid confrontations |
| Description | Connected | Involved | Busy | Faithful |

Table 1 How Different Generations Want to Lead

Leaderless Teams

If the members of a healthy team take responsibility for the whole team's ethos and performance, can a team perform even better without a leader? Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom are entrepreneurs and innovators. They observe that most organizations are strongly centralized and require coercive systems of management.³⁰⁷ But many systems in business and in nature operate very well as decentralized, leaderless systems. In the natural world, a spider is strongly centralized and will die if decapitated, while a starfish can survive the loss of any limb and in any case does not have a head. In a similar way, the Internet functions very well but has no 'head.' And while the Montezuma Indians were easily conquered, the Apache, being a decentralized society, were not. In a fast changing world, the hallmarks of a decentralized society, namely flexibility, shared power, and ambiguity may confer an advantage.³⁰⁸ They describe the features of the New World in which business must operate. For example, they say, "The best knowledge is often at the fringe of the organization." And that is why motor manufacturer Toyota

³⁰⁷ Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations* (New York: Portfolio, 2006).

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 21.

encourages assembly-line workers to make suggestions.³⁰⁹ Decentralized organizations are very strongly value driven, to the extent that values *are* the organization. “Ideology is the fuel that drives the decentralized organization.”³¹⁰

Open systems depend on the goodwill and good intentions of the members. “In open systems, the concept of ‘neighbor’ takes on more meaning than just the person next door.”³¹¹ Brafman and Beckstrom quote Steve Cook, founder of Intuit, with approval when he comments, “Wikipedia proves that people are basically good.”³¹² A better option seems to be the hybrid organization such as Amazon or eBay which are examples of “a centralized company that decentralizes the customer experience.” Decentralization is achieved through the user-generated review system that builds reputation, but centralization is necessary for PayPal because it turns out that when it comes to money, people aren’t basically good.³¹³ The so-called Sweet Spot is the right balance between centralization and decentralization.

Teaming

Amy Edmondson is Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management at the Harvard Business School. She proposes that in a fast-changing world, the noun ‘team’

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 204.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 206.

³¹¹ Ibid., 80.

³¹² Ibid., 91.

³¹³ Ibid., 164.

needs to give way to the verb ‘teaming.’³¹⁴ She continues. “Teaming is teamwork on the fly. It involves coordinating and collaborating without the benefit of stable team structures, because many operations, such as hospitals, power plants, and military installations, require a level of staffing flexibility that makes stable team composition rare.”³¹⁵ The four Pillars of Effective Teaming reflect practices that quickly and surely build towards team-like performance. Teaming requires speaking up, “honest, direct conversation between individuals, including asking questions, seeking feedback, and discussing errors.”³¹⁶ It also requires collaboration, “a way of working with colleagues that is characterized by cooperation, mutual respect, and shared goals,” and experimentation, a tentative, iterative approach that recognizes the novelty and uncertainty inherent in every interaction between people, as well as reflection, which relies on the use of explicit observations, questions, and discussions of processes and outcomes.³¹⁷

Edmondson’s governing paradigm is that of learning. To succeed in today’s challenging environment, organizations need to be able to learn.³¹⁸ Creating a learning climate encourages psychological safety, which is crucial for collaboration. The leader’s role is frame the work as a learning task not an execution task and put aside thoughts such as, “We haven’t done this before.” They must acknowledge their own fallibility,

³¹⁴ Amy C. Edmondson, *Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, and Compete in the Knowledge Economy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 2.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 13.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 52.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 52-54.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 1.

saying, “I may miss something and need to hear from you,” and leaders must model curiosity by asking a lot of questions.³¹⁹ Learning is a helpful paradigm for taking collaboration out of the sphere of management and into other sectors -- including education itself.

Lank: Collaborative Advantage

Just as teamwork is now established as beneficial to a group of individuals, so collaboration between groups is here to stay. Management consultant and business lecturer Elizabeth Lank writes, “Succeeding as a single organizational entity is increasingly dependent on succeeding as a participant in different collaborative processes. Competitive advantage is now dependent on establishing collaborative advantage.”³²⁰ She notes the wide vocabulary for cooperation: alliance, partnership, network, coalition, co-operative, consortium, group, virtual corporation, extended enterprise, association, community, joint venture, collaborative, federation, collective, constellation.³²¹ When organizations work together, there can be a Collaborative Advantage, which Lank defines as, “the benefits achieved when an organization accomplishes more than it would have done independently, by developing effective working relationships with other organizations.”³²² She identifies the three primary forms

³¹⁹ Amy C. Edmondson, “How Do You Build a Psychologically Safe Workplace?,” <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/Building-a-psychologically-safe-> (accessed December 30, 2015); Idem, *Teaming*, 111-112, 217.

³²⁰ Elizabeth Lank, *Collaborative Advantage: How Organizations Win By Working Together* (Basingstoke, England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), xii.

³²¹ Ibid., 6.

³²² Ibid., 7.

of internal collaboration as Communities of Purpose, Communities of Practice, and Communities of Interest.

Another format for collaboration is a Virtual Enterprise (VE), which Drissen-Silva and Rabelob define as “a dynamic, temporary and logical aggregation of autonomous enterprises that collaborate with each other to attend a given business opportunity or to cope with a specific need.”³²³ A crucial component of collaboration is sharing information, and the authors describe the creation of a Decision Support System (DSS-VE) to enable rapid but distributed decision-making so that VE members can act collaboratively as they share the same goal.³²⁴ The point is that in order to enable collaboration across enterprises within a VE, some mechanism is needed for overcoming the organizational obstacles to collaboration. In this case it is the DSS-VE.

In the public sector, Chris Ansell and Alison Gash of the University of California, Berkeley introduce Collaborative Governance, a new form of governance that “brings public and private stakeholders together in collective forums with public agencies to engage in consensus-oriented decision making.”³²⁵ The very organizational design of Collaborative Governance aims to reduce power imbalances. “Collaboration also implies that non-state stakeholders will have real responsibility for policy outcomes. Therefore, we impose the condition that stakeholders must be *directly engaged* in decision

³²³ Marcus Vinicius Drissen-Silva and Ricardo J. Rabelob, “A Collaborative Decision Support Framework for Managing the Evolution of Virtual Enterprises,” *International Journal of Production Research* 47, no. 17 (2009): 4833-4844.

³²⁴ Ibid., 4846.

³²⁵ Chris Ansell and Alison Gash, “Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 18, no. 4 (2008): 543.

making.”³²⁶ There is an example of steps being taken to achieve a better experience of collaboration.

Carole Orchard, Associate Professor & Coordinator, University of Western Ontario, studied the collaboration of health professionals. She noted that while groups of professionals may claim to work collaboratively, the reality does not always bear this out. In a joint paper she presents a scale for measuring the degree of collaboration.³²⁷ A guiding study had identified three barriers to collaboration which might be overcome by four attributes of collaborative practice identified by Orchard *et al.*: coordination (the ability to work together to achieve mutual goals), cooperation (the ability to listen to and value the viewpoints of all team members and to contribute one’s own views), shared decision making (a process whereby all parties work together in exploring options and planning patients’ care in consultation with each other, patients and relevant family members), and partnerships (the creation of open and respectful relationships in which all members work equitably together to achieve shared outcomes).³²⁸ In other words, deliberate strategies were deployed to overcome knowledge and power imbalances in order to enable better collaboration.

³²⁶ Ibid., 546. Emphasis original.

³²⁷ Carole A. Orchard and others, “Assessment of Interprofessional Team Collaboration Scale (AITCS): Development and Testing of the Instrument,” *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions* 32, no. 1 (2012): 58-67.

³²⁸ Ibid., 59-60.

Siemens: the Collaboration Space

Lynne Siemens of the University of Victoria, writing with Yin Liu and Jefferson Smith of the University of Saskatchewan, describes the terrain of interdisciplinary collaboration in academic research.³²⁹ They note that collaborations may be characterized by different levels of contribution:

At a minimum, researchers may exchange informal communication as they explore common research areas, often spanning a range of disciplines and content areas. Collaboration deepens when two or more individuals formally work together to accomplish joint objectives ... As a result, the nature of the collaborations may range from relatively little task interdependence to a fully integrative process where researchers work closely together on all aspects of the project.³³⁰

Instead of searching for a right or wrong way to collaborate, Siemens *et al* suggest a conceptual framework in which research teams can negotiate which point in the so-called Collaboration Space they wish to occupy.

³²⁹ Lynne Siemens, Liu Yin, and Jefferson Smith, “Mapping Disciplinary Differences and Equity of Academic Control to Create a Space for Collaboration,” *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 44, no. 2 (2014): 49-67.

³³⁰ Ibid., 50.

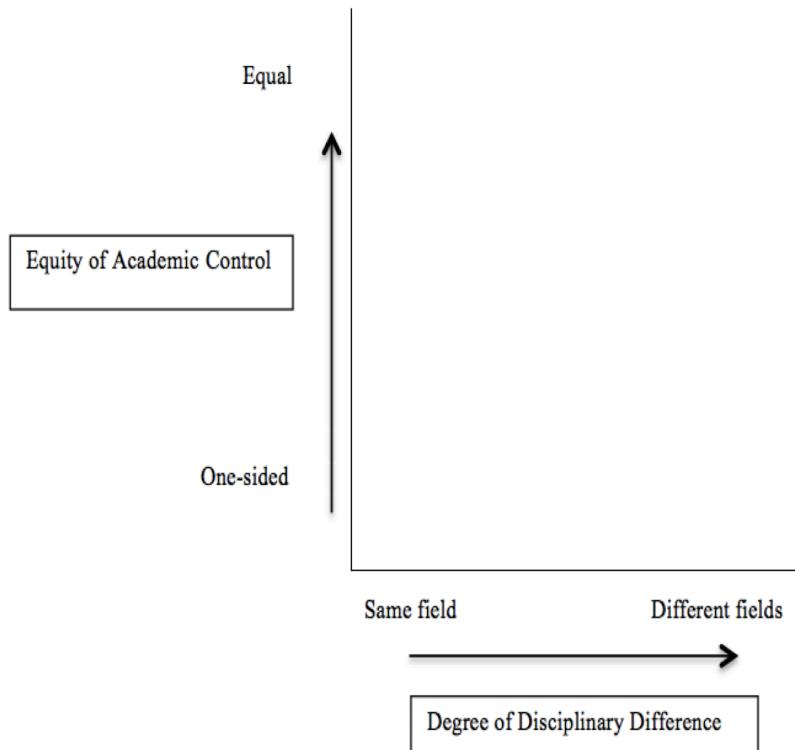


Figure 1. Dimensions of collaboration space

Figure 1 Dimensions of Collaboration Space³³¹

The horizontal axis of the collaboration space plots the degree of disciplinary difference. Teams may be working in the same field or in very different fields. The vertical dimension is the degree of equity of academic control. For instance, in faculty-oriented research projects, the faculty member directs and controls all research activities, including defining and communicating the research question and objectives, articulating key research tasks, obtaining grant funding, and hiring staff. While graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and technicians may be active members of these projects, they may not be viewed as “true” collaborators, and thus do not participate in the larger project

³³¹ Ibid., 53.

decisions.³³² With peers there is a more true collaboration, but such collaboration also comes with advantages and disadvantages. As a result, teams need clear agreements on how they will collaborate.³³³ They must negotiate which point in the collaboration space they should occupy to achieve the best framework for their project.

Negotiation about the collaboration space is an example of meta-negotiation. Karl Umble is an evaluation specialist at the North Carolina Institute for Public Health, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Working together with University of Georgia professors Ronald Cervero and Christine Langone, he examines the value of making a distinction between meta-negotiation and substantive negotiation.³³⁴ The former concerns how the discussion will take place and can be further subdivided into discussions that are (a) about power relations, and (b) about what he calls frame factors, that is, the intellectual and resource boundaries. Although the distinction is theoretically helpful, in practice the boundary between meta-negotiation and substantive negotiation can be fluid. And in other cases, such as the health study examined in Umble's research, the frame factors are established "not by course-related meta- negotiations but rather by historic processes and organizational relationships."³³⁵

³³² Ibid., 56.

³³³ Ibid., 57-58.

³³⁴ Karl E. Umble, Ronald M. Cervero, and Christine A. Langone, "Negotiating About Power, Frames, and Continuing Education: A Case Study in Public Health," *Adult Education Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2001): 128-145.

³³⁵ Ibid., 142.

Cervero and Williams: Working the Planning Table

Another example of meta-negotiation is presented by Cervero and Arthur Wilson's research into educational planners' needs.³³⁶ Planners cannot be neutral about the power and political imbalances. They need to ask "who benefits?" and "who should benefit?"³³⁷ Planners have an ethical commitment to 'democratic planning' undertaken in the face of structural inequalities, in order for stakeholders to have a "substantive" role in making decisions about educational programs.³³⁸ The outcomes are either educational (a program), or political (confirmation or reversal of the social order).³³⁹ Four concepts structure the theory of how educational planners negotiate interests on behalf of stakeholders. Power is about capacity to act in a particular discussion and not inherent power or authority.³⁴⁰ Interests are the motivations that lead people to act in certain ways. "People with interests plan programs."³⁴¹ Ethical commitments inform whether the discussion at the planning table should benefit those present and represented or others. In the field of education, an ethical commitment to democratic principles might mean the inclusion of learners at different stages of the planning process.³⁴² Negotiation, finally,

³³⁶ Ronald M. Cervero and Arthur L. Wilson, *Working the Planning Table: Negotiating Democratically for Adult, Continuing, and Workplace Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

³³⁷ Ibid., 20. Emphasis original.

³³⁸ Ibid., 3.

³³⁹ Ibid., 3, 87.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 3, 85.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 89.

³⁴² Arthur L. Wilson and Ronald M. Cervero, "Democracy and Program Planning," *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education* no. 128 (2010): 82.

“is the social activity in which people interact at the planning table in order to reach agreement about what to do in relation to the educational program.”³⁴³ The form of negotiation can be influenced by the balance of the other factors, namely interests and power: “(1) *power relations* enable and constrain people’s access to and capacity to act at the planning table, (2) people represent *interests* at the table, (3) *ethical commitments* define who should be represented at the table, and (4) *negotiation* is the central practical action at the table.”³⁴⁴

Parties with common interests but disparate power can treat each other as allies in the consultation mode. Parties with different interests but similar power will need to engage in bargaining in order to reach agreement. Disputes are expected where neither interests nor power are similar. An important meta-negotiation issue in achieving an equitable resolution is about who should be present at all. “Because of the importance of negotiating power relations and interests in influencing decisions, it really matters who gets to the planning table.”³⁴⁵ The relationship between power, interests and mode of substantive negotiation may be represented in a Table as follows:

| | Power - similar | Power - different |
|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Interests - similar | Democratic Negotiation | Consultation |

³⁴³ Cervero and Wilson, *Working the Planning Table*, 94.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 84-85. Emphasis original.

³⁴⁵ Wilson and Cervero, “Democracy and Program Planning,” 84.

| | | |
|------------------------------|------------|---------|
| Interests - different | Bargaining | Dispute |
|------------------------------|------------|---------|

Table 2 Power, Interests, and Negotiation

The planners' ethical commitment to democratic principles drives them to strive for situations in which those with least power are empowered so that their interests are fairly represented. This commitment means recognizing that different situations require different forms of negotiation. For example, if faced with a bargaining situation, leaders would need to use a negotiating strategy that would enfranchise the interests of all stakeholders in constructing a program.³⁴⁶ Whereas the participants in Siemens' study decided where on the collaboration space they wanted to work, the planners in Cervero's study need to discover where on the power-interests grid they find themselves.

Participants in a discussion may choose to level the playing field in order to achieve a fairer outcome. In practice it may not be easy for negotiators fully to leave their social setting behind. Juanita Johnson-Bailey, assistant professor in the Department of Adult Education and in the Women's Studies Program at the University of Georgia, explores the issue of power dynamics in workshops.³⁴⁷ The workshop format promises the hope of removal from the real world in order that participants can hold discussions and learn from one another in a collaborative way. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero do not agree. "Our view, on the other hand, is that workshops are the real world because the power relationships that structure our social lives cannot possibly be checked at the door

³⁴⁶ Cervero and Wilson, *Working the Planning Table*, 100-101.

³⁴⁷ Juanita Johnson-Bailey and Ronald M. Cervero, "Negotiating Power Dynamics in Workshops," *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education* no. 76 (1997): 41-50.

to the workshop setting.”³⁴⁸ Johnson-Bailey and Cervero suggest how workshop leaders can mitigate unhelpful interactions arising from power imbalances. Such mitigation becomes more explicit in the concept of methodological leveling. Erin DeLathouwer, Wendy Roy, Ann Martin, and Jasmine Liska, all from the University of Saskatchewan, describe the use of learning communities in which university faculty and students collaborate to enable learning.³⁴⁹ Students engaged in a learning community tend to persist in the university system and tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement in the learning process.³⁵⁰ However students are anxious about taking part in multi-disciplinary forums with faculty. The researchers conducted a workshop in which participants experience the learning communities format from both student and faculty points of view. This deliberate strategy to overcome structural barriers to collaboration is called methodological leveling, which they conclude “leads to a sense of belonging that enables students and faculty to take risks essential for authentic learning.”³⁵¹ Power imbalances that were an obstacle to effective collaboration were deliberately addressed by methodological leveling.

Another example of methodological leveling because of an ethical commitment is seen in Dever’s account of the relations between staff-elders and non-staff elders at Capitol Hill Baptist Church. It will be recalled from above that Dever is an advocate for

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 42.

³⁴⁹ Erin DeLathouwer and others, “Multidisciplinary Collaboration Through Learning Communities: Navigating Anxiety,” *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching V* (Hamilton, ON: Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2012): 27-32.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 28.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

elder-led congregational church polity, including the ethical commitment to the parity of elders. However non-staff elders find themselves at a disadvantage compared to staff who are able to devote significantly more time and energy to their ministry:

One of the problems that usually needs to be overcome in elders' meetings is the disparity in knowledge between staff and non-staff elders. Simply because it is their job to be dealing with pastoral situations day in and day out, staff elders will usually have come into an elders' meeting having thought about the issues for discussion quite a bit more than elders with full-time vocations.³⁵²

In order to level the playing field, it became the practice to ensure that papers for discussion were circulated well in advance of an elders' meeting. Dever remarks that this "narrowed the knowledge gap between staff and non-staff elders, it made the non-staff elders feel more a part of the conversation, it enabled the non-staff elders to contribute with more wisdom, it headed off any potential rift between staff and non-staff elders, and it made our meetings a lot more productive."³⁵³

Summary of Literature Review

Four areas of literature have been reviewed. First, the New Testament data confirm that local leaders of the early churches were plural within a locality and could be interchangeably described by the terms bishop, elder, and shepherd. Second, the Anglican understanding of ministry is strongly influenced by historical development both before and after the Reformation. The separation of the episcopate from the presbyterate and the scattering of presbyters into a sole pastorate survived the Reformation unscathed.

³⁵² Dever and Alexander, *Deliberate Church*, 179. See also "Dever: Elder-Led Congregational Baptist Church" above.

³⁵³ Ibid., 180.

Biblically inspired reform restored the emphasis of ministry as one of Word and prayer, but resistance to Puritans' concerns made the Church of England's 1662 Ordinal firmly episcopal. Contemporary Anglicans, impelled by mission and encouraged by the debates over every-member ministry and women's ordination, have recovered an appetite for shared local leadership, but the existing legal structures make its implementation imprecise. Other evangelical traditions who interpret the New Testament data as definitive for church government have come to various conclusions on the role of elders, whether there should be a lead pastor, and on the character of the relationship between them. Finally, secular perspectives were examined in models of corporate governance, leading to a review of barriers that affect collaboration and decision-making.

Four themes that emerge from the review may be noted here.

First is the hermeneutic employed to make the transition from the New Testament data to present-day practice. Evangelical Anglicans are committed to the Normative, or 'Hooker' Principle, named after its likely architect, Richard Hooker. Under this view, the New Testament gives general principles, to be applied in the light of context. Other evangelicals who are committed to the Regulative Principle have a hermeneutic under which the biblical data are a pattern for church government to be directly followed. While there are undoubtedly stronger and weaker forms of the two principles in evidence, they remain important in explaining some of the differences between Anglican and non-Anglican evangelical practice. If, as seems likely, denominational boundaries are fluid, and church leaders read and study more widely than within their own traditions, it may be expected that Anglican evangelicals would be influenced by writers with a stronger commitment to the Regulative Principle than their own.

A second useful distinction to make is between collaboration and cooperation. While no clear scale of degrees of working together was found, it is clear that there are more and less equitable ways to work together. It was seen that in a Church of England church the PCC is to ‘cooperate’ with the incumbent, and that way of working falls short of the degree of collaboration and equity inherent in the model of eldership espoused by a church in the Brethren tradition, for example. Teams and boards are affected by the differences in power and interests that members bring to the discussion. The discussion that frames the rules for the negotiation itself is a meta-negotiation and must take account of the imbalances. One useful technique introduced was methodological leveling, in which deliberate steps are taken in order to improve both the conduct of the negotiation and the chances of success.

Finally, a distinction between governance and shepherding began to emerge. In Carver’s model, the board’s role is to provide direction at the level of values and policy. In a church setting, this would imply that the board does not share in the actual work of ministry, understood as the ministry of the Word in public and in private, the administration of discipline in all its forms, and the encouragement of individuals in their Christian discipleship. The latter, which may be called shepherding, is the work of the pastor and those with whom they share that task. For some writers, the role of elders is to give direction as a board; for others it is to share with the pastor in the work of shepherding. Anglican evangelicals who choose to develop a Ministry Leadership Team must decide where in the continuum between governance and shepherding they wish to be positioned.

The next chapter will introduce the methodology to be used to investigate how Anglican evangelical pastors explain the benefits to their ministry, with an emphasis on the shepherding aspect of the elder's role.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how ministers explain the benefits of a Ministry Leadership Team for the task of making disciples. The assumptions in this study are that pastors and churches have consciously adopted such a leadership structure; that it is a departure from historical Anglican practice; and that they have experienced pastoral and evangelistic benefits from doing so. In order to explore their experience of the advantages of shared leadership for the task of making disciples, the research invited the subjects to describe the challenges faced in making disciples, the advantages of operating with an acknowledged shared leadership, and finally how their innovation fits with their denominational self-identity. The following research questions serve as areas of focus for the qualitative research:

1. How does the local church's shepherding ministry strengthen the work of making disciples?
2. What are the benefits of a ministry leadership team in the work of making disciples?

(The shared pastoral leadership structure will have been provided by questionnaire).

3. What practices have promoted collaborative working between members of the ministry leadership team, with particular regard to the work of making disciples church?

4. How are the pastors' Anglican self-identity manifest in the practice of shared local ministry leadership?

This chapter will outline the approach used for the research undertaken, including the design of the study, selection of the participants, data collection and analysis, the writer's position, issues of confidentiality, and the limitations of the study.

Design of the Study

Sharan B. Merriam's book *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach* explains how qualitative research is better suited to the study of whole, complex systems. "In contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts (which become the variables of the study), qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form a whole."³⁵⁴ Those data are accessed through the experiences of the people involved, an insight expressed in a later edition. "Qualitative researchers are interested in *understanding the meaning people have constructed*, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world."³⁵⁵ In the context of our study, the churches adopting shared leadership operate with a large number of variables such as location, church size and age, composition of the congregation, experience and gifts of the pastor, to name but a few. It would be not be feasible to control for variables in a quantitative study, and thus a qualitative study is needed.

Merriam identifies four features of qualitative research: a focus on meaning and understanding; the writer as primary instrument; an inductive process; and rich

³⁵⁴ Sharan B. Merriam, *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach*, The Jossey-Bass Social & Behavioral Science Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988), 6.

³⁵⁵ Idem, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, Revised and expanded ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 13. Emphasis original.

description.³⁵⁶ The focus on meaning arises from the nature of reality being studied from the perspective of those involved. This is known as an emic view. Whatever the underlying philosophy, a case study is used “to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved.”³⁵⁷ Because the aim is discovery rather than confirmation of a thesis, a researcher is well placed to elicit the data through interview, observation, and questioning that responds immediately to the participants’ statements. The writer’s position is discussed further below. Because the research seeks to discover rather than confirm, analysis is inductive and will look for themes and trends that emerge from the data. The literature reviewed above in Chapter Two both informs and will in turn be informed by the findings of Chapter Four. Finally Merriam notes that qualitative research is characterized by rich description, that is, words rather than tables. A particular challenge faced in this study is to make the description rich without compromising the confidentiality of the participants’ identity and ministry setting.

This study employed a basic qualitative research design in order to allow participants to describe their perspective on shared leadership and Anglican identity. The primary source of data gathering was semi-structured interviews, with a questionnaire and documents used to harvest information on the particular church’s leadership structure. A focus group with an additional group of participants was originally intended for the end of the research, but because of the logistical challenge of gathering the participants, two interviews over Skype were used instead.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 14-19. This updates Merriam, *Case Study*, 6-8.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 19.

Participant Sample Selection

This research requires participants who are able to communicate in depth about the advantages of plural local leadership for the task of making disciples in contemporary Britain. The purposeful study sample consisted of a selection of pastors leading churches that have explicitly adapted their organization to the task of evangelism. In order to minimize the variables, a sampling method that Merriam names as ‘typical’³⁵⁸ was used to identify participants who are not in any way extremely unusual from each other. All the pastors invited to participate identify as evangelical and Anglican and were leading established churches or church plants. All the participants were serving in churches that had appointed and identified a Ministry Leadership Team of some type. And despite variations in size and staffing, all shared an outwardly focused theological vision. All were invited to participate via an introductory letter, followed by a personal phone call, and gave written informed consent before their interviews. Altogether they met Merriam’s criterion that they should be “people who know most about the topic.”³⁵⁹

Data Collection

This study utilized semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. Nine pastors were interviewed for one hour each. The open-ended nature of interview questions allowed the writer to build upon participant responses to complex issues in order to explore them more thoroughly. Merriam explains, “This format allows the writer

³⁵⁸ Merriam, *Design*, 78.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 94.

to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic.”³⁶⁰ Ultimately, these methods enabled this study to look for common themes, patterns, concerns, and contrasting views that emerge from “an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved.”³⁶¹ A pilot test of the interview protocol was performed to help evaluate the questions for clarity and usefulness in eliciting relevant data. Initial interview protocol categories were derived from the literature and evolved from the explanations and descriptions that emerge from constant comparison during the interviewing process.

Before the interview, each participant was asked to complete a one page demographic questionnaire and provide an explanation of, or documents that set out, their church's shared leadership structure. Each interview was audio recorded by the writer and simultaneous field notes made. Transcripts of the interviews were made within forty-eight hours if possible, and reviewed against the recording by the writer on return. Interview protocol and data analysis are described below.

Pre-Interview Questionnaires

The following list contains the items on the questionnaires given to each participant before the interviews. The analysis in Chapter Four describes the relevance of the demographic data to the research.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 90.

³⁶¹ As cited above, Merriam, *Case Study*, 19.

Demographic Questionnaire

You are asked to provide the following demographic information to help with analysis only.

1. Your name, age and family situation (Your name and situation will remain confidential and will not form part of the final report.)
2. When was the church you are now serving established, and when did you become the minister? (Please state if you were the founding pastor)
3. How long have you been in ordained ministry? How much (if any) of that time was spent in a non-Anglican church?
4. Where did you receive theological training for ministry?

Shared Leadership Questionnaire

Please describe your Ministry Leadership Team (which may have another name in your church). It may be easier for you to supply any documents to hand that describe your church's structure and add information as necessary below.

1. What are the main responsibilities of the Ministry Leadership Team?
2. When was this structure established? How, if at all, would you say the format has changed over that time?
3. Who belongs to the team? If it is as a result of another office (e.g. Churchwarden) please indicate. Who appoints the other members of the Ministry Leadership Team, and for how long do they serve?
4. With what other decision-making bodies must the Ministry Leadership Team interact, for example PCC or Church Council or Trustees?

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews lasting one hour were utilized for primary data gathering. As the format is open-ended enough to build upon participant responses, an interview guide only was prepared. Questions were refined in light of previous interviews and of the data as it was collected and simultaneously analyzed as described above.

We recall our research questions from earlier:

1. How does the local church's shepherding ministry strengthen the work of making disciples?
2. What are the benefits of a ministry leadership team in the work of making disciples?
(The shared pastoral leadership structure will have been provided by questionnaire).
3. What practices have promoted collaborative working between members of the ministry leadership team, with particular regard to the work of making disciples church?
4. How are the pastors' Anglican self-identity manifest in the practice of shared local ministry leadership?

Interview Guide

In order to establish a common vocabulary for the discussion, participants were invited to comment on the following three definitions:

Making Disciples

At the heart of discipling is a relationship in which one or more believers assist or invest in each other in order to grow to maturity in Christ. ... it is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip, and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. That includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well. (Greg Ogden. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few At a Time*. InterVarsity Press, 2003, p. 129)

Governance

The purpose of governance is to ensure that, usually on behalf of others, an organization achieves what it should achieve while avoiding those behaviors and situations that should be avoided. John. Carver. *Boards That Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations.* 3rd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006, p. Xviii

Shepherding

[Shepherding] refers to the personal ministry of the elders among the sheep. It has in view the particular sheep for whom they have been given responsibility ... The micro focus is on developing relationships with the sheep and the exercise of shepherding functions on a personal level. (Timothy Z Witmer. *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church.* Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub., 2010, 104)

Guide questions for each Research Question:

RQ1. Shepherding and Disciple-making

I am interested in your church's experience of making disciples. Please tell me about some examples in your church of people who have become disciples, or grown as disciples of Jesus Christ, through the ministry of the local church and its members?

How did you and your fellow-leaders get involved in those discipling relationships? What was your telling contribution?

(The aim is to tease out where they were in the micro/macro shepherding continuum.)

RQ2. Plurality and Shepherding

What were the benefits to you of being able to share this work with a Ministry Leadership Team?

What were you able to do together in disciple-making that otherwise you think you could not have done?

Are your fellow-leaders also involved in governance? What has been helpful in keeping shepherding to the fore?

RQ3. Collaboration

Please describe what you do as a team and how you are together. What words would best describe the ethos of the MLT? (Prompts: partners, associates assistants, family, fun, work, task.)

What obstacles are there to working as you would want? For example, if some are full-time paid staff, and others are not, does that create an imbalance?

Can you describe occasions when you were not working as you would like?

What practices and values have been most helpful in promoting the sort of collaboration you want?

RQ4. Anglicanism

In what ways do you feel you have adapted (evangelical) typical Anglican ministry for the work of making disciples?

When you are asked to explain what it means to be Anglican, how do you answer?

Participants were shown the following definitions, and invited to comment on which they incline towards:

Normative Principle

God has provided clearly and definitely in some areas of church life, but has left others more open and flexible. The aspects in which revelation firmly operates concern salvation in Christ; the areas in which the church has a freedom to act concern the structures and customs of the church. (Timothy Bradshaw, 1992)

Regulative Principle

We are given a model for church government in the Scriptures to which we are neither to add nor subtract. ... though the written Word of God is sufficient to tell us how to worship God and govern the church, the circumstances and implementation of the biblical order are left to our sanctified common sense.”(Samuel Waldron, 2004)

Additional Question

It became clear from the earliest interviews that the place of women within the leadership teams should be explored. A further pair of questions was therefore asked, ‘How is the pastoral care of women managed within your church?’ and ‘Where is the voice of the women pastoral leaders heard?’

Observations

Observations were limited to field notes jotted down during the interviews and focus group to note the respondents’ posture, body language, and any changes in attitude and emotion during the interview or exercise.

Data Analysis

As soon as possible after each interview the recording was transcribed. The writer reviewed the transcript against the recording to ensure accuracy. Data analysis began even while the interviews were being conducted. Merriam explains that while a problem may have been identified at the outset of the research, the research will likely not know what will be discovered. With simultaneous data analysis, early findings inform

subsequent data gathering, and tentative categories and themes may begin to emerge.³⁶²

In this research, questions about the role of women were added as this emerged early as an additional area to explore. When the interviews and observation notes were fully transcribed into computer files, they were coded and analyzed using an inductive system of coding, with a particular emphasis on information that responded to the research questions.³⁶³ As findings were compared and contrasted, categories and themes emerged that form the basis of the data analysis recorded in Chapter Four below.

In order to maintain the participants' confidentiality, names were changed as soon as the interviews or focus groups were transcribed. Names used in Chapter Four are pseudonyms. In addition, some responses were grouped and others are left with attribution in order to mitigate the risk of identifying respondents from their context or comments.

Researcher Position

Merriam notes the importance of reflection on the writer's position: as an Anglican evangelical in the conservative tradition, the writer would identify with the respondents' theological outlook and share a very similar philosophy of ministry. The writer's Anglican self-identity is rooted in confessional, principled Anglicanism influenced by the experience of ministering in parish churches since 1997 and being an active member of evangelical Anglican churches since my undergraduate days. The

³⁶² Idem, *Design*, 170-171.

³⁶³ Ibid., 175-178.

context in which the writer ministers differs from many of the respondents' in that the writer ministers in a settled church, serving a small town, and with significant parochial contacts. Most if not all respondents work in urban areas, and those in younger churches have a younger age profile than in the church where the writer serves. The writer shares the respondents' theological vision but not their experience of ministry in their context. This study has arisen from the writer's church struggle to reconcile the need for shared effective local pastoral leadership with the Church of England's formal structures, and as we will see below in Chapter Four, most of the respondents have greater freedom to reform their governance and leadership structures than most parish churches do. Finally, and in common with many of the respondents, the writer counts as friends and ministry partners many non-Anglican ministers who hold closely to elder-based models of church government, similar to those described in Chapter Two above under "Other Perspectives on Collaborative Eldership." I believe this experience equips me better to understand the slight differences between the different evangelical traditions, as well as some of the nuances between different Anglican evangelical contexts; with experience of leadership in ministry I am also well placed to empathize with the political contours of leading a church that has neither formal membership nor a tradition of shared pastoral leadership.

Study Limitations

As stated in the previous section, pastors interviewed for this study are limited to those serving in Anglican evangelical church plants located in England. Some of the study's findings may be generalized to the benefits of shared leadership in making disciples in other similar churches in Britain, but readers wishing to do so should factor in

the characteristics of their own particular situation. As with all qualitative studies, readers bear the responsibility to determine what can be appropriately applied to their context.

Summary

This chapter has described the methods by which data will be gathered and analyzed. Criteria used for participant selection have been outlined, and the limitations of the study noted. The following chapter will report the findings of the research.

Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how ministers explain the benefits of a shared pastoral leadership team for the task of making disciples in contemporary Britain. This chapter draws on the nine interviews described in Chapter Three and reports the findings that are relevant to the research questions previously identified, namely:

1. How does the local church's shepherding ministry strengthen the work of making disciples?
2. What are the benefits of a ministry leadership team in the work of making disciples?

(The shared pastoral leadership structure will have been provided by questionnaire).

3. What practices have promoted collaborative working between members of the ministry leadership team, with particular regard to the work of making disciples Church?
4. How is the pastors' Anglican self-identity manifest in the practice of shared local ministry leadership?

Introductions to Participants

The nine pastors who participated in this study are drawn from the mission-oriented conservative evangelical Anglicans working in England who are in a position to establish ministry leadership teams and have done so. The *UK Christian Handbook* estimates that 1,411 of 37,501 English churches are 'mainstream' evangelical, which is

usually taken as conservative evangelical.³⁶⁴ In personal communication the editor further estimates the number of mainstream evangelical Anglican churches in 2015 to be above 2,000.³⁶⁵ However this group includes egalitarian evangelicals and the number of conservative and complementarian evangelical churches is thought to be significantly lower than the figure given. The vast majority of these will be working in settled parish churches with only a small proportion in a position to implement a shared leadership innovation. The number of church planters within the constituency is small, probably less than three dozen. The mission-oriented churches and church plants from which the participant pastors are drawn therefore comprise a very small subset of the already small evangelical population. For these reasons greater than usual care is needed to protect the respondents' identities.

In order to conserve the anonymity of the churches involved, the pastors' names have been replaced by pseudonyms, with a theme of explorers used to reflect the pioneering nature of these pastors' work. They are: Marco Polo (Christ Church Venice); Vasco de Gama (St Gabriel's Church); John Cabot (Newfoundland Community Church); Ferdinand Magellan (Emmanuel Church Mactan); Christopher Columbus (Christ Church Hispaniola); Captain James Cook (Resolution Family Church); Neil Armstrong (Tenth Anglican, Houston); Francis Drake (Emmanuel Church Golden Hind); and Henry Hudson (Christ Church Muscovy).³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴ Peter Brierley, "Churchmanship of Churches 1989-2005," *U K Christian Handbook*, no. 6 (London: Evangelical Alliance, 2006): Table 5.14.

³⁶⁵ Peter Brierley, letter to author, June 4, 2016.

³⁶⁶ The distracted reader may be interested to know more: Marco Polo (c.1254-1324) was an Italian merchant and explorer, famous for introducing Europeans to China and Central Asia. He inspired future

The churches led by these men divide into three groups: two are parish churches, three are proprietary chapels and four are church plants. Two of the plants and one of the parish churches meet in multiple congregations and sites. The four church plants – all Anglican – are divided between those within the Church of England and those receiving oversight from the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE).³⁶⁷ The plants are all less than fifteen years old and are each led by their founding pastor.

All the pastors interviewed in this research are male, are married and have children; all identify as conservative evangelical Anglicans and trained for ordained ministry at one of three evangelical Anglican theological colleges in England, namely Ridley Hall Cambridge, Wycliffe Hall Oxford, or Oak Hill Theological College in London. James Cook and John Cabot are in settled parish churches and have been in post for at least ten years.

travelers, including Christopher Columbus. His home was Venice, at that time an important sea-faring and trading city. Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama (c.1460/1469-1524) was commander of one of the sailing ships that ventured into India from Europe. The ship he commanded on his first voyage was the Sao Gabriel (ie St Gabriel). Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and discovered the Americas under the Spanish emperor's name, although Columbus was himself Italian. Between 1492 and 1503, Columbus sailed between Spain and the Americas four times, including several visits to Hispaniola. Ferdinand Magellan (c.1480-1521) is known as the first sailor to circumnavigate the seas from the Atlantic Ocean and cross the Pacific Ocean. He discovered the Philippines where he was later killed in what is known as the Battle of Mactan. John Cabot (c. 1450 - 1499), another Venetian explorer, was the first European since the Vikings to explore the mainland of North America and the first to search for the Northwest Passage. It is not entirely certain where he landed, but the surviving evidence suggests that it may have been Newfoundland. Francis Drake (c. 1540 - 1596) was an influential English sea captain, trader, explorer, politician, and privateer of the Elizabethan era. He completed the second global circumnavigation from 1577 to 1580. Henry Hudson (c. 1560/70s - 1611) was an English sea explorer and navigator. He sailed three times for the English and once for the Dutch; two voyages were under the auspices of the Muscovy company. James Cook (1728-1779) was a Captain in the Royal Navy whose biggest asset was that he was good at surveying and cartography. His maps were copied and provided to captains for the next 200 years. Cook's last voyage took place on the HMS Resolution. Neil Armstrong (1930 - 2012) was a US astronaut, the first human to walk on the Moon. The lunar mission was controlled from the Space Center in Houston, Texas.

³⁶⁷ See Glossary for more on AMiE and proprietary chapels.

Terminology - A Reminder

A bewildering array of terms is used in churches to denote their ordained, lay, and other pastoral leadership. For the sake of consistency, as well as to preserve the anonymity of the churches, the churches' own titles will be replaced with the terms defined in Chapter One of this research. They key terms to recall are the following:³⁶⁸

In this study, **presbyter** will be used in preference to priest when referring to ordained Christian leaders. **Pastor** and **minister** are used interchangeably to describe the senior minister of a church.

Ministry leadership team (**MLT**, or sometimes leadership team) is the team of leaders who exercise collaborative leadership within the congregation. Members of the MLT are called **lay elders** unless ordained, in which case they are presbyters. Where MLT and other terms defined here have been used to replace terms used in quotations, this is usually indicated with square brackets such as [MLT].

The ordinary translation of the Greek term *presbuteros* will be elder and will be used when referring to the New Testament context.

Responses to Definitions

In order to establish a common frame of reference for a discussion of making disciples, governance and shepherding, participants were shown definitions drawn from the literature search in Chapter Two:

³⁶⁸ These are as found in Chapter One 'Definition of Terms' and listed alphabetically as Appendix A.

Making Disciples

At the heart of discipling is a relationship in which one or more believers assist or invest in each other in order to grow to maturity in Christ. ... it is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip, and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. That includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well.³⁶⁹

All wholeheartedly agreed with the relational dimension to making disciples.

Christopher Columbus spoke for the others in saying that “you can’t have discipleship without relationship.” Ferdinand Magellan, James Cook, John Cabot asked for clarification that in this research, ‘making disciples’ includes both evangelism and growing disciples. Ferdinand Magellan and Neil Armstrong additionally noted the emphasis of the statement that discipleship “includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well” and that it “is about following Jesus and helping others follow Jesus.” Ferdinand Magellan highlighted the definition’s final phrase that includes “equipping the disciple to teach others.” Neil Armstrong wants to put “making disciples is right at the heart of what we are trying to do at Tenth Anglican.”

The definitions of governance and shepherding distinguish between two aspects of pastoral leadership, with governance putting the focus on the care of the whole flock and shepherding on the care of individual sheep:

Governance

The purpose of governance is to ensure that, usually on behalf of others, an organization achieves what it should achieve while avoiding those behaviors and situations that should be avoided.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁹ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 129.

³⁷⁰ Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference*, xxviii.

Shepherding

[Shepherding] refers to the *personal* ministry of the elders among the sheep. It has in view the particular sheep for whom they have been given responsibility ... The micro focus is on developing relationships with the sheep and the exercise of shepherding functions on a personal level.³⁷¹

With hindsight, it might have been just as effective to use Witmer's categories of macro- and micro-shepherding to describe these two aspects, outlined in the excerpt quoted in Chapter Two above:

Macro-shepherding refers to important leadership functions that relate to the entire church. It has in sight the elders' responsibility to provide "oversight" to the flock as a whole. Its concern is to address the corporate concerns of the congregation. ... Micro-shepherding, on the other hand, refers to the *personal* ministry of the elders among the sheep. It has in view the particular sheep for whom they have been given responsibility ... The micro focus is on developing relationships with the sheep and the exercise of shepherding functions on a personal level.³⁷²

Two potential sources of confusion were mentioned, and therefore avoided by this exercise. First is that governance is the vocabulary used to describe the work of trustees and the PCC. As will be seen below, for many of the churches under study, the PCC's role is seen as more diaconal than presbyteral, and therefore governance is seen in this light. Macro-shepherding is a more helpful term to describe the elders' care for the spiritual welfare of the flock as a whole. Marco Polo describes his approach in those terms. "So governance is part of protecting. It's setting the boundaries, the culture; it's discipline, saying this is what it means to be part of this, God's people, this particular family. And as a shepherd, you stop them from going off, but one of the great ways to do

³⁷¹ Witmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 104. Emphasis original.

³⁷² Ibid., 103, 104. Emphasis original. See Chapter Two Other Evangelical Perspectives on Collaborative leadership - Witmer: the Shepherd Leader.

that is teaching. So I tend to think of governance and teaching as things that the shepherds do.”

A second consideration combines a sense of challenge with memories of so-called heavy shepherding. David Moore, author of a scholarly history of the Shepherding Movement of the 1970s, explains that “The movement’s teachings on ‘discipleship’ and ‘shepherding’ emphasized the need for personal, one-on-one pastoral care for every Christian, including pastors. This emphasis became highly controversial and critics alleged that the teachings brought believers under the domination of human leaders.”³⁷³ John Cabot explains, “It has that unfortunate connotation so in the churches where traditionally you had to ask permission to get married and that kind of thing.” Henry Hudson agreed that “while shepherding has a biblical precedent, it also has a sort of awkward background noise going off in my head” and prefers to speak of discipling relationships.

Shepherding and Disciple-Making

The first research question sought to determine how the local church’s shepherding ministry strengthens the work of making disciples. Pastors were asked to relate the stories of individuals who had come to faith or grown in faith through the ministry of the local church. Each account given included key conversations as part of a whole process that included the ministries of small groups and the whole church. At one end of the spectrum was a man who came to faith and maturity through “a significant

³⁷³ David Moore, “The Shepherding Movement: A Case Study in Charismatic Ecclesiology,” *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 22, no. 2 (2000): 251.

amount of time reading the Bible one-to-one, encouraging, loving, teaching, rebuking, correcting, training, and then the person ... who is doing the discipling saying to the person being discipled: why don't you start encouraging so-and-so in this or that?"³⁷⁴ Marco Polo related a story that demonstrates how the personal ministry complements the whole-church ministry. "As a result of putting a mark by his name and saying what are we going to do to help this guy, I took him on. I think I read the Bible with him for about a year. And just saw him. Things started slotting into place. I saw him—lights were going on probably, because there was the preaching; there was a small groups, but he was also bringing some of his questions for me." In a third example, Christopher Columbus cited an evangelistic course as the factor that crystallized the impact of other relationships. "Yes, so I was there, personally involved because of the personal relationship I had with each of those people, but in each context there were other people there." In the more settled churches there was opportunity for fruit to come from a long period of community and church contacts and "there was a genuine sense in which the whole church family had played a part in leading [this person] to that point of commitment."

The role of the ministry leadership team (MLT) was to provide an oversight of the individuals within the flock. As will be seen below, for many this oversight took the form of a staff or MLT meeting in which individuals' needs were discussed. Even in the one church where this oversight is not currently happening, it used to be a regular feature, and the pastor recently arranged a meeting to review the pastoral needs of individuals in the church. The responsibility of MLT was described as ensuring that if a person comes to

³⁷⁴ Attribution for this and other quotations that follow has been intentionally withheld in order to protect the anonymity of the speaker and the situation.

pastoral notice, some help is provided, although that help need not necessarily be provided by one of the MLT members themselves. “We pray for them, make a decision about what is the next thing that needs to happen, who is going to meet with them, what can they talk about, and report back,” said Henry Hudson. All pastors said they would try to work within existing relationships, and small groups play a key role here. If that is not possible, then someone else who can relate to the person and come alongside them is sought. In other cases, the church members had naturally sought counsel from other church members, although such counsel introduced an interesting dilemma because the leadership was not always convinced that the advice given was healthy, as Francis Drake explained. “I think one of the things we’ve struggled with is knowing how much to be directive and how much to be sort of letting things happen as, well, just in the life of the body.”

MLT members have both direct and indirect involvement in the care of the sheep. Their direct care is as mentioned above, the involvement with individuals, and the concern to ensure that there is someone to meet with them. A surprise perhaps was that when asked about the pastoral care of the congregation, about half the pastors also gave responses about their macro-shepherding, that is care for the flock as a whole. For example, Ferdinand Magellan said, “I think my big responsibility is to try to teach and train others in the church to do this. And encouraging leaders to see the possibilities and set up the environment where we might do that.” Vasco de Gama explained further that through “the running of Christianity Explored, it is finding opportunities to share the gospel. So formally, I think we've done it in Sunday meetings, because I think I've always wanted to presume, [as does] the Prayer Book, that there are always going to be non-

Christians present as well as Christians. So we'll have evangelistic meetings or evangelistic talks at our Sunday meetings. But the most helpful way is actually getting into the Christianity Explored, a course that shows that." Marco Polo said, "The decision that affects the whole flock more than anything else in one sense is—well, what are we preaching Sunday by Sunday."

The small groups play a key role in two ways. First as one key link in the chain between contact with individuals and contact with the whole congregation's ministry. Second, the leaders of the small groups are key partners with the MLT in determining how best to meet a given pastoral need. "So if someone is in a particular need, we want to make sure that the small group team is kind of like caring and providing for that." And again, "that's a place where on the ground ministry, discipling the people, pastoring and some responsibility for evangelism as well as done in a way that's shared."

The pastors' understanding of who comes to pastoral notice is broader than "crisis management" and "oh, we haven't seen Joe Bloggs, what are we going to do?" Their concern is to be aware of "who needs converting, who needs discipling, who needs training, who is a self starter and can be set free in ministry and who can be taken on into more significant, responsible role in leadership, who might become an apprentice, a senior apprentice, who might we send away ...for review for future ministry, should we be sending on to further training at theological college." Or as Marco Polo explained, "We are looking at the names of individuals, saying what do they need? You know, are they in trouble? Do they need people to look after them, like physical, mental, emotional trouble? Are they in spiritual danger? Or are they people who actually, they've got gifts that need to be nurtured and deployed?" and again in the words of Henry Hudson, "are

they in relationship with other Christians? What does it look like for them to be part of a small group? Are we keeping track of their attendance at small groups and other events that are going on? Has anybody heard what might be going on in their marriage that we might be able to encourage them in their marriage? Those sorts of things. Are they about to have a baby?" Those who come to pastoral notice are those who would benefit from help in their discipleship. Henry Hudson's summary of the MLT's pastoral concern is apt. "It would be how can we encourage this person to take the next step in their discipleship, and their growing as a Christian." It is notable that while all pastors share this level of pastoral concern, it is the church planters who most cogently articulated the scope of what brings a person to pastoral notice.

In the foregoing it has been assumed that the oversight of individual pastoral care is provided by the MLT. (In one church this practice is currently in abeyance, but a restart is desired.) When asked which team considers pastoral needs and how they should be addressed, most pastors replied with Neil Armstrong, "I think it's mixture of the [MLT] and the staff team. There is definitely overlap on those two teams." In the case of staff teams, it is typically the senior staff, often with an administrator, who would meet on a weekly basis to pray over the needs of the congregation. In the case of a MLT, an early agenda item would be the care of individuals. In the case of larger churches, the staff would carry a greater burden for the care of individuals leaving the MLT to focus their attention on discipleship more on "big picture rather than drilling down into particular individuals." In one case the make-up of the present staff team meant that the pastor felt it inappropriate to discuss sensitive pastoral issues in the staff meeting, so they were dealt within the MLT meeting.

The two exceptions are the multi-congregation churches in this study. In one of the church plants, the staff are “just a group of people who in different ways execute some of the things that the elders have been working on.” It is the MLT who meet together to look through the needs of individuals. But in Newfoundland Community Church, it is the staff team who meet to coordinate pastoral care, with the aim of providing a prime point of contact. Non-staff lay elders then work within that framework. Only in this case did the staff team appear to be more significant than the MLT. In all other cases, the prime responsibility for pastoral care lay with the MLT, even if in practice the staff played a significant role. Henry Hudson puts it starkly. “The staff team are not the elders.”³⁷⁵ Similarly Ferdinand Magellan is aware that because the administrator is present at the pastoral review meeting, “This is not the [MLT].” Discipline is needed to ensure that the MLT’s role is not undermined. For Henry Hudson, even though the authority to lead spiritually belongs to the pastor and lay elders, the staff can meet and act quickly until the MLT next have an opportunity to meet. He acts as a crucial link person. “The fact that I cross over both groups means that I think information is not being dropped.”

When the MLT is distinguished from the staff team, the next question concerns the identity of those who meet as the ministry leadership team. Membership of the team does not follow automatically from some other pastoral appointment, eg small group leader, authorized lay reader, member of the preaching or worship leading team, although lay elders invariably serve in one or more of those capacities. Local lay elders are chosen

³⁷⁵ The word ‘elders’ here is retained deliberately because Hudson is speaking about elders in the abstract and in terms of their biblical responsibilities.

because they meet the qualifications for eldership, namely character and ability to teach, and are available to fulfill the role. In three cases, the ministry leadership team included other non-elder members: either an administrator, or the church wardens, if they are considered to be more akin to deacons than elders, or a member of the female pastoral leadership, if not included in the previous two categories. As one pastor put it, “I am shy of calling it the eldership because I’m still trying to figure out what complementarianism looks like in our culture, in our world, and apply proper biblical practice to it.”³⁷⁶ In two of the multi-congregation churches, lay elders are appointed per congregation, and included in the larger structure of leadership for the whole church. The role of those congregational lay elders is to provide focused oversight for that group of people. “Everybody wants a captain at the helm of the ship in some sense and so it was driven essentially by that sense of giving the congregation confidence that there is someone there for them, watching out for them, leading them within that congregation as part of a bigger whole.”

Plurality and Shepherding

The second research question sought to investigate the benefits of a ministry leadership team in the work of making disciples. Henry Hudson explains why there are advantages both for the pastor and for the congregation. “I think if I tried to feel that the responsibility for the spiritual welfare and growth and maturity of each member of this congregation was on my shoulders alone, I would either break under the pressure, or

³⁷⁶ Once again the term ‘eldership’ is deliberately retained because this pastor was speaking of eldership in the abstract rather than to denote a specific group of leaders within an existing church.

people wouldn't be looked after very well." The fact is that the standard structure of the Church of England tends to place the pastoral burden on just one set of shoulders, as another explained. "The weakness of the Church of England system is [that] legally the buck stops with the vicar, the rector, whatever. And that is legally the situation."

All the pastors interviewed were positive about the benefits of sharing pastoral leadership and their comments included: "just loads better," "I'm loving it. I'm enjoying it much more," "It has been one of the best things, in fact, I'm choking up about it," "Made a massive difference," "Huge benefits really." They cited the following areas of benefit.

Resilience. Having a ministry leadership team in place supported the pastor himself in sharing the personal stress of exercising pastoral responsibility. "I've found it good for my own heart and for my own mental health." Two respondents spoke openly about the health problems associated with having to lead alone, now mitigated by having a team in place. In another situation, a pastor spoke about a situation where through circumstance he had to conduct a difficult pastoral conversation alone. "Tragically, I think that's left a scar which might not have been the same had I genuinely been able to be there with someone else, because then it made it very personal, or they perceived it that way, even though it wasn't." Yet he drew strength from the fact that he had discussed the course of action with his MLT and was able to explain that the action taken had been decided by the team acting together. "They endorsed that, and so I felt that I was going as a representative, if you like, of the church family, bringing God's Word to bear on them from the church family, rather than some sort of dictator." Another pastor who was able to make a joint visit was comforted that his fellow leader had witnessed the conversation and could reassure him afterwards that "You did nothing wrong in that situation," which

he said was a great blessing. One explained that he had come from a church with a staff team, but now that he found himself working as sole pastor in a church plant, “I was looking around saying where have they all gone.” He had become used to the plurality of a staff team, and set about providing it through appointing lay elders to form a ministry leadership team.³⁷⁷

Coverage. A plural structure enables greater coverage in the shepherding ministry. Because the lay elders are engaged in the congregation, “they have ears on the ground” and their contributions are “immensely helpful.” In a multi-congregation church, the pastor cannot be present at all sites on a given Sunday, but with a plural MLT, there is always somebody that a worshiper can go and talk to on a Sunday. A related advantage articulated by one pastor was accountability of the pastoral review team. For instance, having been tasked to follow up a person, “A week later we will say, have you followed them up?” Where one ministry leadership team was able to share the wider governance or macro-shepherding concerns of the church, this ministry support enabled the senior pastor to regain capacity for personal ministry. As Marco Polo explained, “There's a danger I would have become several steps removed from the people, because I would have been busy doing all the big picture stuff. But sharing out the big picture stuff has meant I've been able to I think stay more connected with people than I might have done. That I think has been one of the chief advantages.”

One challenge of shared pastoral care is communication in that “in practice you don't always know who is where or what is what. So you can sometimes end up with a

³⁷⁷ Once again, names and pseudonyms have intentionally been omitted to preserve the respondents' anonymity.

situation where you can suddenly leap in to support somebody only to discover that somebody else has been visiting them twice a week for the last three months.”

Diversity/Wisdom The team’s diversity brings additional gifts and wisdom to bear on pastoral care. John Cabot explains that it means “There is more likely to be someone they can relate to” and also different expertise within the team. Christopher Columbus said much the same. “Oh, it’s just loads better because you’ve got different personalities and different skill sets, different ages of people who will actually meet the different needs. One size doesn’t fit all.” Marco Polo agreed that “They add wisdom that is so significant, even if it sometimes slows us down, it’s worth hearing it.” Even when the pastor is identified as the best-gifted person to deal with a situation, the others on the ministry leadership team can be helpful and ask how they can support the pastor in developing their shepherding and pastoring ministry. There are also different relationships in place, so that when an issue came to Francis Drake’s notice, one of the other lay elders was in the same small group as the person concerned. “He actually was on the scene before I was. Again that was immensely helpful.” The team members can also act as check and balance on a sole leader. “The other guys can tell me when I’m being too harsh or … too soft” and “It means the pastor is not the one unilaterally actually calling the shots on a discipline issue.”

Diffusing Criticism A ministry leadership team can deflect criticism that would otherwise be borne by the pastor alone; Marco Polo explains that “they break down that sense of us and them.” Neil Armstrong agreed, saying, “Yes, enormously [beneficial], particularly on the big decisions in church life. I’ve tried to work hard at the language of ‘we have decided’ rather than ‘I have decided’ and that really helps.” In the case of

pastoral discipline, another, said he was able to meet congregational criticism with, “the [MLT] have considered this carefully,” and give an appropriate explanation of the reasons. That helped the congregation understand the seriousness of sin. “I think it just sends out a different message,” he added.

Accountability of leaders/empowering the congregation: A leadership team may also make the pastor, and by implication the other leaders, more accountable. “I think the congregation having a sense that if they did have an issue with me or something I taught, there would be a vent or a way to speak to the [MLT] without having to—I don't know, challenge me to my face. Or that they'd have a mediator to ask an appropriate question, or they'd have a first port of call to say have I got this right or wrong? And that's been healthy.” Thus a ministry leadership team empowers the church members to take questions and even challenges to the church leadership for clarification or action.

Biblical Practice Although none of the pastors directly gave a benefit of shared leadership that ‘it is biblical,’ this aspect needs to be understood more carefully in context. It was seen in Chapter Two that while some writers consider the New Testament to provide a clear pattern of church government, others understand that teaching to provide principles that must be applied in different ways according to the context. Behind these two approaches lie the Regulative and Normative Principles respectively. It will be seen below that the hermeneutic employed by pastors in this study is closer to the Normative Principle than to Regulative Principle. With this in mind, the pastors in this study would not be expected to cite as a benefit the idea that shared leadership is ‘biblical’ because it adheres to a single, fixed model. On the other hand the pastors are evangelicals and desire their church life to be shaped by Scripture, and in that sense

shared leadership adheres to a pattern that may be said to be biblical, as Marco Polo explains:

It's biblical in the sense that we—at its heart is the conviction that Christ rules the church and he rules by his word and he appoints elders to guard that word in the life of the church, to keep the church healthy, to set the boundaries to ... I think that's really what leadership is. It's basically taking care of the family, and you take care of the family by holding them to the Word of God—the Word of Christ. I think that's best done, or it seems to be done in the New Testament in a sort of plural way. It's not just a lone person, and I think therefore there are sort of biblical principles and there's common sense wisdom that one lone person is liable to not be able to do it very well but also has blind spots.

Similarly, Ferdinand Magellan states, “I'm enjoying the environment of the [MLT], the church family understanding that there is a leadership team, I think it's much more healthy for the church.” There is thus an implied benefit that plural leadership is healthier for the church because it conforms to a biblical pattern.

Securing the Benefits. In order to secure the benefits of shared pastoral leadership, two practices were widespread. The first is the adoption and conscious use of plural language denoting the ministry leadership team rather than the pastor: “I will sign things, ‘Ferdinand and the [MLT]’. Interestingly now I get emails back saying Dear [MLT].” And Neil Armstrong, cited above as saying that he had “tried to work hard at the language of ‘we have decided’ rather than ‘I have decided’” went on to comment that “When I was announcing [a change in practice], it was like ‘we have decided this’ and when the criticism came, it wasn’t a huge amount but the flak came [several] ways rather than one way and that was just immensely helpful.”

The second practice was a whole meeting or a portion of a meeting dedicated to the care of individuals. About half of the churches have one meeting in the week at which prayer for individuals is the sole focus, and this meeting becomes the setting within

which the needs of individuals are discussed. The remainder would discuss people in their main leadership or staff meeting as a specific and early agenda item. Typically they might begin with Scripture, then move to consider individuals before any business because, as Marco Polo explains, “the business is the servant of those people.” One pastor shared that while the majority of the people-work is led by the staff, when the ministry leadership team meet, “we try and put discipleship as number 1 on the agenda each time. And that might be thinking more big picture rather than drilling down into particular individuals.” Even if the MLT are not sharing the shepherding ministry themselves, they can ensure that the pastor and others are supported in this role, as Vasco de Gama explains. “We'll have a time every meeting of saying, ‘are there specific individuals? And are there difficulties that I'm encountering?’ Either time or ability, and so on. So I have the opportunity with that group [not only] to share, but for them to drill down and know whether I'm coping or not.”

The senior pastors retains an important role on a shared leadership team, and that role is to lead. One explains, “I've begun to take the initiative and say ‘what are we going to do? We need to do something.’” He followed this up by initiating a discussion that continues through the different leadership groups and congregations of that church. Another explains that his role on a MLT is to ensure that the spiritual priorities are maintained so that he “primarily is to be to some extent a guardian of sound teaching and doctrine.”

Pastors described how they desire and expect their fellow MLT members to be able to challenge them. They do not choose a shared structure “because you think it will make your life easier or that there won't be moments where you are surprised by sort of

the development.” They seek lay elders who are “just like me theologically but different from me temperamentally.” Vasco de Gama explains that it would be self-defeating to lead his team in the same way as he might a PCC meeting. “If I went to a MLT meeting saying I want to do this, and basically spending my whole two hours convincing, trying to convince them, I don’t think they would bother, actually. I think those guys would just say, ‘look, Vasco, you just want to do this. But if people are looking at this role as us being leaders here, we need to be part of that.’” Another described a period in his leadership when he clashed with one of the others on the MLT, which he felt owed more to personality than to theological difference. He admits it was uncomfortable. “When he resigned from the [MLT], it felt like a bit of a breath of fresh air. However, I have missed the robustness of the challenge to some of the things I wanted to say and do, which I think was healthy.”

The development of a ministry leadership team affects the role of the PCC or its equivalent in proprietary chapels.³⁷⁸ The most typical development is that the PCC now act more clearly as deacons, those “who execute the concerns of the [elders].” This emphasis was clear among the church plants, and also among the proprietary chapels, as summed up by Ferdinand. “We are making clear that the PCC is diaconal, practical governance, money, buildings, nitty-gritty stuff.” The PCC may have a standing item to hear what is being discussed at ministry leadership team, and invited to pray, but the discussion and the decision remain the MLT’s if it affects pastoral practice and priorities. PCC members may be asked for an opinion, say on a recent church event, because they

³⁷⁸ While none of the church plants in the study had chosen to establish a PCC, many had some forum for those with practical responsibilities and whose work assisted the elders as described.

are “godly and wise and mature and hold deeply to the great truths of the faith” rather than because they act as members of the PCC. Judgment is required by Neil Armstrong to ensure that issues are discussed by the right body. “I’m thinking where does this need to go, is this a [MLT] thing? Is this a staff team thing? Is this a something else thing?” The complication is that PCC members may also be trustees of the church’s governing charity and need to combine that role with the work of deacons. “So [as trustees] they are responsible for finance, for governance, and so on. But they’re also responsible for making sure things happen and [are] kind of worked out.” Where churches have separate trustees, such as church plants and proprietary chapels, the crossover in roles is explicitly acknowledged, as by Marco Polo. “We think it’s valuable to have [in] the trustees a cross-section, they are members of the congregation, elders and external trustees. And when they meet as trustees, they’re all wearing a slightly different hat from their normal hats.”

In the churches studied in this research, however, it was clear that whatever the responsibilities of the PCC were, they did not include the shepherding ministry of the church. “It’s real nuts and bolts … because they’re freed from having to make decisions such as: are we going to have a mission, or what are we going to do spiritually?” It should be noted that one pastor described another church he had known where the minister had sought to share some of the burden of spiritual leadership with his PCC. Although that church was not within the scope of this research, it is mentioned as a hint that others trying to invest Church of England structures with biblical meaning can come to different conclusions. The consensus within this sample is that as the eldership character of a leadership team strengthens, so the diaconal character of the PCC becomes more evident.

The status of churchwardens is ambiguous. Two pastors described wardens as “as senior deacons but may, depending on the person, also be an elder-ish presbyter person.”

Another acknowledged the ambiguity and chose to resolve it. “If you want to treat your wardens like deacons, fine, feel free in which case have women wardens because if they are deacons that’s fine. But we are choosing to treat our wardens like elders so we won’t have women wardens. So yes, that’s where I’d be on that, that kind of flexibility.”

Another also thought of wardens as elders with the consequence that the MLT “is just a bigger group of wardens.” The church plants did not appoint wardens at all. And Newfoundland Community Church deliberately kept the wardens out of the pastoral oversight structures altogether in order that they might form a support to the incumbent, independent of the staff and ministry leadership team relationships.

One theme common to all the pastors interviewed is that their conception of leadership structures grew over time. As Vasco de Gama explains, they “evolved, I have to say. I’d love to think it was clinically worked out. [laughs]” James Cook expressed the fear that “by comparison with the others you’ve talked to, this is all incredibly small and muddled. I know how it works.” Ambiguity tolerance is a strategy for engaging an issue that all seem to be struggling with. For instance, discussing women in leadership, Christopher Columbus is frank. “I’m on a journey there, nothing is sorted. I’m on a journey, and I keep looking for help from elsewhere. I’m not looking for a quick fix; I’m looking for a proper engagement.”

When asked what prompted them to transition to a shared leadership structure, the pastors interviewed offered three themes: the need to support the senior pastor; a need to define structures in the face of scrutiny, and the opportunity to make a fresh start through

a church plant. Support for the pastor was an obvious need in the two cases mentioned above in which pastors risked ill health because of the burden of pastoral care; another made changes because he saw that his predecessor's leadership style "is not how I operate, partly temperamentally, partly theologically so I'm just trying to feel my own way really." One pastor explained that a shared structure was needed because "me being me in itself isn't automatically the best fit for the best, efficient running of the church family. So I had to take it on the chin that there was some frustration."

The need to define structures came to churches from two directions, and sometimes from both at the same time. On one side was the opportunity that arose because a change in charity law required the church to re-draft its constitution and trust deed. That process forced pastors and their churches to consider afresh what leadership structures should be written into the way the church operates. Unlike proprietary chapels and church plants, parish churches are not affected because their governance structure is governed by a separate law.³⁷⁹ Henry Hudson started with shared leadership from the outset because he was free to do so, in contrast to his experience in a settled parish where he felt the minister "was heading in this direction, i.e. shared pastoral leadership, but he was constrained by structures that the Church of England traditionally gave him and was therefore overlaying on top of traditional structures precisely what I'm talking about." The second aspect prompting clearer definition of leadership structures was common to all kinds of churches, namely the impact of nonconformists in the congregation. These members had been attracted to the church by the clear and evangelical ministry on offer,

³⁷⁹ Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956. See Chapter Two 'Lay Officers in the Church of England'.

and having found their way there, were beginning to challenge the church's government. "What caused me to change," said Vasco de Gama, "was a whole load of Free Church people coming into the congregation and saying, 'What is a churchwarden? What does the PCC actually do?' That's what got me thinking."

The pastors did not directly admit that a shared leadership structure was a response to the changed missionary context, or an adaptation of a Christendom model to a post-Christendom world. However their reflection of how to conduct ministry sustainably, effectively, and in a way that is informed by biblical categories may lead toward the same outcome. But they did not exhibit the sense of historical development anticipated in Chapter One.

Collaboration

The third research question inquired what practices have promoted collaborative working between members of the ministry leadership team, with particular regard to the work of making disciples. When asked to describe the ethos they wanted for their MLT, Christopher Columbus replied, "I'm looking for accountability, and I'm looking for them to really own, shape and deliver change." Francis Drake agreed. "I want them to feel like the responsibility is shared and that they've got genuine responsibility." One pastor shared how he desired "more theologically trained [lay elders] with whom I could have a conversation in more depth." He was grateful for the godly character of the men alongside whom he serves, citing an instance when one MLT member's attitude toward the pastor was challenged and corrected by the others. John Cabot wanted his ministry leadership team to see their ethos as one of cooperation in which they can be creative but

realistic, and working prayerfully and biblically. Two pastors answered along these lines. “Our ethos is to keep watch over ourselves and watch over the flock” which translates into the practice in which “our meetings start with watching over you as an individual and we pray for you, and then we look at people, and then we do business.” Finally, one other is more pragmatic. “We enjoy huge unity. I think there is purpose, though we waffle.”³⁸⁰

One potential obstacle to collaborative working is the mismatch in capacity between staff and non-staff members of the MLT. Paid staff are able to devote more time, effort, and usually expertise to a ministry issue which potentially can put non-staff lay elders at a disadvantage and weaken the collaborative ethos described above. One issue is deciding what to aim for, “and one of the things I’m trying to work out, what is the right expectation of a guy on the [MLT] who is a lawyer or a banker or a teacher or something? He is not paid, he is not full time, he hasn’t got the mental or physical space, what is the right expectation of him?” If not addressed, frustration might result, as one pastor explained. “So there was a while when we picked up some of the nonstaff [MLT members] were feeling a little bit excluded and wondering if things were happening behind their backs. And we had to sort of look each other in the eye and say, ‘that is inevitable, because we cannot go at the pace of people who have only got one evening a week to give to this, or who might be ill or away or with work or on holiday. We have to press on. We just—as time goes on, we will know more. We just will.’”

³⁸⁰ Names and pseudonyms omitted to preserve confidentiality.

A corresponding challenge is to the staff members' patience when collaboration seems to slow down the implementation of the vision. "The tension and frustration is you can be ahead of the game and then you are frustrated when someone is asking awkward questions and you can see the reason that they are asking is ... they don't see what you see." Another shared his grievance that "They hadn't done all the reading and thinking that some of us had done, and therefore they were kind of a little bit behind, and had fears and concerns. There was a bit of me that was thinking, well, if you done more of the reading, and read the books I said you should read, I don't think you'd be stuck on this so much. But we've got to go at their pace." The only situation in which the staff member was at a disadvantage was the multi-site church where the lay elders had responsibility only for one congregation while the staff members' remit ran across the whole church so that "if anything, the guys who have day jobs are thinking much more about the individual congregation than the staff member because the staff member has another responsibility."

On the other hand, the non-staff lay elders can bring wisdom to the discussion. "There is a need for those of us who aren't doing the children's ministry, the youth ministry to be a little bit humble, and acknowledge that this person [the staff member with responsibility for ministry to children and youth] will have had more time to think, but then [they] also need to be thinking, 'actually sat around the room are some parents, and they've got children and they've got youth, so in actual fact they bring something else to the party.'" Another admitted, "occasionally I'll present something and there'll be 'I never thought of that—I'm not sure about that at all. Let's hold off on that for the next few months while we think about it.' And I will find myself twiddling my thumbs while

they get their heads round something that I think has been quite clear. And sometimes, not even pressing ahead." Marco Polo summarizes. "It would be quite easy to say, oh, these part-timers haven't got the capacity or they're not quite up to speed; let's just press on. But actually, they give us really valuable insight in understanding what it feels like to be not in full-time church leadership, what it is to deal with a regular job, what it is to come home of an evening. They help us understand the pressures people are feeling, the capacities people have got. They just have an ear to the ground. And I think they add wisdom that is so significant, even if it sometimes slows us down, it's worth hearing it."

A further area of collaboration that pastors admit to negotiating is the split in responsibilities between themselves and the ministry leadership team as a whole. For some it was about what topics are to be agreed jointly. "There was some argy-bargy earlier on when someone said ... we should be having a say in the preaching programme [sic] and so on, and I'm thinking, 'Hang on a minute, I've always done this.' But we've worked that through." Two other pastors spoke of their desire to discuss the preaching program with their MLT, and their frustration at the others' apparently passive willingness to go with what the pastor suggested. The issue is not how the split in responsibilities was resolved, but that the pastor and elders negotiated the division, which required a change of working that Vasco de Gama found to be radical. "I've had to understand that I'm working with others, rather than just having to convince a PCC or others that this is what we're going to do. I've had to change shape completely."

Another aspect is in the level of detail that lay elders expect to see. "It's not like everything has to go past them. There are times when we need to make a decision quickly and they respect that. I think what I try and make sure is there is no big surprises for the

[MLT].” Elsewhere the same pastor admits “I find that is one of the challenges though, is the challenge between listening and leading. You can’t just say on everything, ‘What do you think?’ Sometimes I’ll just say, this is the situation; my feeling is that I should do this, do you think that is a good idea?” Marco Polo explained, “And there’s a danger that we will sort of cook things up and present them to the non-staff elements, and they will feel like, ‘Hold on, this has been cooked up in our absence, because you guys have got more time and you are giving yourself to this in ways that we are not. And you’re seeing each other outside of these meetings, which we aren’t.’ And we really had to address that.” A series of discussions followed to establish “what they do want to know, what they don’t need to know, and what they want to—what sort of level they want to agree things on and what they want to get us to drill down and work out.” For Henry Hudson the negotiation is less formal but is “on-going, and it’s very personality dependent.”

Although the mismatch in capacity and training between staff and non-staff MLT members is a given, certain practices can mitigate the impact of the difference. All the pastors circulate documents for discussion in advance of the meetings. “I think it’s crucial that a paper that is presenting something is received in good time so that other people can read it; that’s really crucial.” Other strategies include taking time over decisions, as Christopher Columbus explains. “I think I also found it helpful for myself to say, so we are not going to make a decision tonight; tonight we are just going to talk about it, and that takes the pressure of everybody, and it does level the playing field because then everyone does get a chance to at least have a month to reflect on what’s said.” Another put his ministry leadership team through a Strength-finder analysis, which helped him and a fellow-member understand the nature of the tension that had arisen between them

“and since then, you know it’s been brilliant.”³⁸¹ Francis Drake sees every discussion as an opportunity for training by sharing his thinking. “It means that I am sharing my own reflections and thoughts on things with these guys in a way that I probably wouldn’t have been if they were just doing something else in church life.”

Anglicanism

The final research question sought to explore how the idea of ministry leadership teams coheres with Anglican polity and practice. This question provided the pastors an opportunity to reflect on their Anglican self-identity and on the relationship between their practice and scriptural precept.

Because it was noted in Chapter Two that decisions on church government depend on the hermeneutic, employed³⁸² pastors were invited to comment on the following statements of the Normative and Regulative Principles:

Normative Principle

God has provided clearly and definitely in some areas of church life, but has left others more open and flexible. The aspects in which revelation firmly operates concern salvation in Christ; the areas in which the church has a freedom to act concern the structures and customs of the church.³⁸³

Regulative Principle

We are given a model for church government in the Scriptures to which we are neither to add nor subtract. ... though the written word of God is sufficient to tell us how to worship God and govern the church, the

³⁸¹ The speaker is referring to the Strengthsfinder analysis in Tom Rath, *Strengths Finder 2.0* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007).

³⁸² See Chapter Two, “New Testament Passages”.

³⁸³ Bradshaw, *The Olive Branch*, 143.

circumstances and implementation of the biblical order are left to our sanctified common sense.³⁸⁴

When asked which of the two statements more nearly expressed their own position, all but one of the pastors identified with the first. “I think I’m quite happy with that Normative Principle.” It was notable that the pastors of church plants and proprietary chapels showed greater affinity for the Normative Principle than those working in settled parish. The only pastor who felt more comfortable with the Regulative Principle explained that his objection to the Normative Principle was that it could mean that revelation concerns only salvation in Christ when he wanted to assert that it “also concerns conduct and life in Christ as a body.”

His concern exposes a weakness in the two definitions that became apparent as the interviews progressed. The statement of the Regulative Principle as given here is self-contradictory because it begins with a strong statement that “We are given a model for church government in the Scriptures to which we are neither to add nor subtract” that seems to be undermined by the concession after the ellipsis that “the circumstances and implementation of the biblical order are left to our sanctified common sense.” The benefit of this apparently weaker statement is that it avoids a possible problem identified by one pastor. “The trouble with the Regulative Principle is that it can descend into looking for commands, and then you either end up finding commands in weird places or something.” A more nuanced understanding would allow the broader themes of typology and biblical theology to impact how to understand the Bible’s instructions to the church.

³⁸⁴ Waldron, “Plural-Elder Congregationalism,” 203.

On the other hand, the statement of the Normative Principle is potentially weak because “the Bible doesn’t say everything about how churches should be structured and governed but nor does it say nothing.” James Cook shied away from the Normative Principle as given here “because it suggests that everything else is up for grabs, and I don’t believe that’s true.” Instead he believes that the revelation is “sufficient to tell us how to govern the church, but it’s not sufficient to tell us what that government is in structure. So it’s sufficient to tell us how to govern the church in that we do not lord it over them as the Gentiles do, though we have to shepherd the flock as under shepherds, that we are to be collaborative and plural, that we are not to be isolationist and independent from the universal church in any form.” Not everyone sees this as a necessary implication. “I think there are very few people,” says Francis Drake, “who as far as the Normative Principle [goes], relegate the Bible to irrelevance when it comes to those matters they would define here as open and flexible. There are very few who would say, ‘Well at that point the Bible is of no help and no relevance, and we’re just left being pragmatic.’” Instead there is reliance on principles being applied, says Marco Polo. “I think [what you are] always doing is some kind of extrapolation of principles” and the determination is to ensure that those principles are firmly biblical so that the commitment is to be “a bit more intentional about how do we let the Bible shape our life together, not just our pulpit if you like.” One pastor summed up his position as “Normative plus” which may be fair if the reservations noted above are taken into account.

The foregoing is important in giving the context for these Anglican pastors’ appreciation that “There’s some flexibility on how these things can be worked out.” While the statement that “We must be completely inflexible on the gospel and flexible as

possible on how we go about doing our mission” provides a pithy statement that frames the discussion on church order, it does not tell the whole story for these pastors because Scripture informs even how that flexibility is exercised. The best summary remains an informed ‘Normative Plus.’

When asked to describe what it means to be Anglican, most pastors answered in terms of conviction and connection.

Belief came first because “Anglicanism is first and foremost about what you believe.” Five pastors explicitly pointed to the Anglican Formularies to which were added either Canon A5,³⁸⁵ or a common evangelical Doctrinal Basis,³⁸⁶ or the Jerusalem Declaration.³⁸⁷ Yet even in giving a confessional response to the question about Anglican identity, these pastors affirmed a right place for flexibility in applying the doctrinal principles. Marco Polo, for example, said that at its best, Anglicanism is “really clear on the foundational fundamental things.... it is not like a kind of Westminster Confession where everything is nailed down. There is room for discussion and difference on some of the secondaries [i.e. issues of secondary importance].” Vasco de Gama expounded the relationship in this way: “So that must mean therefore that there are certain things that we just don't change, which is Scripture and what Scripture teaches, but there are things that

³⁸⁵ Canon A5 of the Church of England ‘Of the doctrine of the Church of England’ states that “the doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal.” The last three documents are known as the Formularies: See Chapter One ‘Definition of Terms’ and Appendix A.

³⁸⁶ Such as the doctrinal basis of UCCF: the Christian Unions.

³⁸⁷ The Jerusalem Declaration was issued by the Global Anglican Futures Conference (GAFCON) held in Jerusalem 22-29 June 2008. In the Declaration signatories join in “solemnly declaring the following tenets of orthodoxy which underpin our Anglican identity....” (<http://fca.net/resources/the-complete-jerusalem-statement> accessed 30 May 2016).

we can constantly move in a sense with the culture, and we must acknowledge we'll get wrong, because we are human. And so I suppose in a sense I would want to say if that is a helpful way of seeing my Anglicanism, I would think that we're more Anglican than we were before, actually. But I don't think I've ever described it as such to others." It is this clear sense of Anglicanism's biblical and confessional heritage that allows one church leader to claim that "by not being within the structures of the Church of England, I see us being faithful to the Church of England."

A second important aspect of Anglican identity to be articulated is a visible relationship with other churches. Christopher Columbus put it thus, "I think being Anglican is about being connected effectively with others." It is that need for connection that persuaded one of the churches outside the Church of England to seek episcopal oversight from another Anglican jurisdiction. It is a more complicated relationship but one they pursue as best they can. "We're one of the reasons for which [groups such as AMiE] does exist." Within the Church of England, one pastor also recognizes that principle. "I actually think it's important that we are not isolationist" because of the strong sense he gets from the early church of interconnectedness. An implication for him is that "leadership should be under authority. So I believe in—I want to be overseen, as in I'm not kind of reluctant." He sees his external accountability as making a visible point about leadership. "I'm certainly not head of the church. Naturally, my leadership is a leadership is under authority. Sometimes it's harder and sometimes it's easier to be under the authority of the Bishop." This strong sense of external oversight was not widely shared by the other pastors, although all had some kind of relationship with an episcopal visitor whether they were in the Church of England or outside of it.

Seven pastors defined their Anglican identity in confessional rather than institutional terms, but for the remaining two it remained in the background. John Cabot and James Cook serve the two parish churches in the sample and yet describe themselves as “not very Anglican” (with laughter), or needing to “sit loose to some aspects of Anglican structure which have become less than fully biblical. Like bishops, which, you know, people would say that's quintessentially Anglican, and you can't argue with that in one way.” It is not that their Anglican identity lacked doctrinal foundation. On further probing, the Anglican identity is confessionally rooted. The point is that for them, Anglican identity is experienced in terms of structures and with respect to that definition their use of leadership teams was ‘not Anglican.’ By contrast the other churches in the study, being either proprietary chapels or church plants, felt a stronger sense of their Anglican identity, and that their practice of ministry leadership teams was a legitimate development of Anglican principles.

It was noted above that when asked why they had moved to their present structure, a couple of pastors replied that pressure from nonconformist congregants had been a factor. “What caused me to change was a whole load of Free Church people coming into the congregation and saying, ‘What is a churchwarden? What does the PCC actually do?’ That's what got me thinking.” Another minister leading a church plant explains that the range of people they reach was a positive force towards articulating their confessional stance. “And because we have such a range [of church backgrounds or none], it would be easy for us to kind of just pretend we are a nondenominational outfit, and we often go, well, we are actually Anglican, we're trying to be as Reformed according to the Bible as we can be. But if you want to know where I stand

confessionally, I don't know what other denomination I feel at home in." Although all the churches in this research would expect to draw a congregation from many different church backgrounds, denominational affiliation is in a sense not up for discussion in a settled parish church. For that reason there is a stronger need in proprietary chapels and church plants to articulate their identity in the face of these pressures.

The final question under this heading explored to what extend the leaders saw their shared pastoral leadership structure as fitting within Anglicanism. Christopher Columbus is among those who most clearly identify as Anglican. "I think sharing the leadership of the church and the pastoral ministries more widely, I think that is Anglican. I think Anglicanism got into a bit of a pickle with the one person being the vicar and the priest and the like. ... we have developed the ideas and thinking and philosophy and have tried to put that in place in our own set up being outside the Church of England." Two others were more specific in seeing their ministry leadership team as an extension of the vicar and wardens group. "I suppose in a sort of knockabout way, I'd say I just have lots of wardens as in two wardens isn't really enough, we just have loads of them." And from another minister, "So pretty much from day one I started treating my wardens like elders, and, not quite from day one, but moving towards trying to treat my council as deacons. So that would be an example I think of where we are trying to retain Anglican structures but invest them with biblical meaning." Another pastor describes his development for the appointment of lay elders as adding an additional set of criteria to the selection of Church officers. "So we just inserted that filter, which we don't think is going against the Church of England or Anglican principle, but it is just bringing hopefully not an overbearing

rigour, but just a healthy, biblical practice.”³⁸⁸ An example of developing the role of wardens when they are seen as senior deacons is given in one church plant. “In our context we don’t have wardens but we have two trustees who are members of the church. They act as wardens and they have not the same powers that a church warden has in the Church of England, but they do have powers and authority over me.”

The Role of Women

An unexpected area of discussion was the role of women in pastoral leadership. The position on gender roles in church held by these pastors is described as complementarian: that men and women are of equal worth and dignity, with different roles. Within church life that means male-only eldership. This is in contrast to the surge of interest in ministry teams in the 1970s which was a deliberate exploration of a way around the institutional bar on women presbyters.³⁸⁹ Yet they are reluctant to exclude women. “We are trying our hardest to figure out what it means to be complementarian in ministry, and if we’ve not got a woman involved, I think we are not hearing things stereo. and we’re just hearing it mono, and we are not getting the insights we need,” explains one pastor, and he might speak for the others when he says, “I don’t really know that we’ve figured it out yet and that’s....I’m on a journey there, nothing is sorted.”

Because the focus of this research is on the shepherding ministry of the church, the follow-up questions to this topic aimed to discover how and where women’s voices

³⁸⁸ See Chapter Two, “Lay Officers in the Church of England” for a brief description of the common criteria.

³⁸⁹ See the final section of Chapter Two ‘Cranmer’s Ordinal: A Ministry of the Word’.

were heard in the process of sharing pastoral responsibility. The findings divided into three groups. In the first, where the staff team bear the first responsibility for pastoral care, women were already represented. In a second option, the ministry leadership team might deliberately include non-elders such as churchwardens, or a female pastoral worker, or an administrator in order to give that broader voice. (It also allows overlap with PCC to facilitate a good relationship with it.) Finally the MLT might meet as male-only elders and from time to time seek advice from female pastoral leaders, either by calling them into the meeting, or by informal discussion outside of the elders' meeting. It should be noted also that because the small groups are the front-line of pastoral care, women are both heard and cared for at that level most of the time. The answers barely changed from the early interviews. "As far as I'm concerned, I haven't met a church that has worked that out well." The challenge these pastors are negotiating is finding the right balance between their conviction that the leadership of the local church rests ultimately with the (male) elders, and the vital need for women to be partners in ministry.

Summary of Findings

This chapter examined the benefits of shared pastoral leadership for the task of making disciples. These may be summarized as providing better care for the church and better support for the leaders.

According to the accounts given, individuals received ministry at congregational, small group and personal level, and from both leaders and members. It was in fact a notable and encouraging observation what a wide range of relationships were implicated in a person's growth to faith and maturity in Christ within these churches. The role of the

ministry leadership team was to provide oversight to ensure that care was being given where it was needed. Because of their commitment to disciple-making, the MLT members' understanding of where care was needed ranged beyond crisis-management to include anyone facing an opportunity to grow in their discipleship.

The benefits to pastors of being able to share the burden of care with others included improved resilience in ministry in the face of criticism, better coverage and quality of pastoral care on offer for the church members, and healthier relationships between members and leadership in accountability. The team giving pastoral oversight varied: in some cases it was primarily the staff team; in others a team composed of pastor(s) and lay elders; and in some cases a mixture of the two. Because there is an imbalance between staff and non-staff members in a ministry leadership team, pastors employed various leveling techniques to enable and empower the non-staff members to participate fully. The collaboration space between leader and led also needed to be negotiated.

The development of a MLT often led to a fresh evaluation of the existing Anglican offices. In Anglican polity, wardens may be considered as either diaconal or elder-like, and different pastors made different decisions about how they would operate. Some resolved it that wardens were elders, and their MLTs were in effect an enlarged vicar and wardens group; others chose to treat wardens as senior deacons, who might be invited to the ministry leadership team to enable cooperation between MLT and PCC. The role of the PCC itself was clarified in a more diaconal direction. In churches where some or all PCC members also served as trustees, this level of governance provided a

complication, but was not permitted to lift the spiritual responsibility from the ministry leadership team's shoulders.

An unexpected topic was the role of women in pastoral leadership. As complementarian evangelicals, the pastors were committed to male-only eldership, but are still wrestling with how and where female pastoral counsel is heard. Pastors openly admit to this area being a work in progress.

Finally, pastors were asked about their Anglican identity, which they expressed in confessional and connectional terms. The further the churches were from a settled parish model, the more clearly the pastors identified themselves as Anglican. Included within this identity was a commitment to allowing the Bible to inform and shape ministry practice, all within the scope of a hermeneutic that was dubbed 'Normative Plus.' It is this which empowers churches to adapt models of pastoral leadership to their own context.

The pastors operated from a very similar theological framework yet came to different decisions in the practical implementation of biblical principles. Good men differed on the status of wardens and PCC, on the locus of shared shepherding, on the nature of accountability, and on different aspects of the role of wardens. There is, as Chapter Two hinted might be the case, no single or simple solution to implementing shared local pastoral leadership in Anglican churches. But however it is done, it provides for better disciple-making. The pastors interviewed have exercised diligent care for their churches and foster the love with which they seek to pastor the flock entrusted to them. This integrity came across in every section of the interviews.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations

Summary of the Study and Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how ministers explain the benefits of a shared pastoral leadership team for the task of making disciples in contemporary Britain. In Chapter Two, the literature search highlighted that Anglicans tend to read the New Testament patterns of church leadership through the so-called Normative Principle, a hermeneutic that was derived from the writings of Richard Hooker and which allows the principles and patterns found in Scripture to be adapted according to the context being served. Further it was noted that within the Church of England, the inherited structures of incumbent, churchwardens, and PCC did not easily lend themselves to establishing a system of locally shared pastoral leadership, especially with regard to the shepherding ministry. Chapter Four summarized the findings of the research interviews with evangelical Anglican pastors who are working with a ministry leadership team. This chapter will draw together the insights of the literature and the evidence of the research interviews to identify recommendations for practice and suggestions for further research.

Discussion of Findings

The most striking finding of the research interviews is that while the pastors who took part all hold to a very similar theological vision for ministry, no single pattern for shared pastoral leadership predominated. No simple relationship exists between the type

of church, be it parish church, proprietary chapel or church plant, and the form of leadership structure in place. There is therefore no ‘right’ answer to the question of how to share local pastoral leadership in Anglican churches in order best to serve the mission or making disciples in a post-Christendom culture. Instead I can offer the following observations. First, some key principles underpin a biblically informed ministry leadership structure. Second, the pastors articulated clear benefits, echoed in the literature, for sharing the pastoral oversight locally. Third, practices are already in place that promote healthy collaboration between the members of the ministry leadership team (MLT). Finally, I will suggest possible structures, with some of their advantages and disadvantages noted. They will be very similar to those mentioned in Chapter Two.³⁹⁰

The focus of this research has been on the shepherding ministry, that is the personal ministry of leaders with members of the congregation. Within Witmer’s definitions, this type of shepherding corresponds to micro-shepherding, as opposed to macro-shepherding, the care of the flock as a whole.³⁹¹ While some of the benefits for the macro-shepherding ministry of a ministry leadership team emerged during the research, they have not been the focus of the investigation.

With these comments in mind, let us turn to the discussion of the three themes noted above, namely key principles, clear benefits, and collaborative working.

³⁹⁰ See Chapter Two, “Possible Solutions”.

³⁹¹ Witmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 103, 104. See Chapter Two, “Witmer: The Shepherd Leader”.

Key Principles

The findings from the interviews, reflected in the literature that addressed evangelical Anglican views of ministry, espouse the following key principles about ministry in a local Anglican church.

Let the Teachers Lead

The first key principle is the priority of the ministry of the Word. We noted in Chapter Two how the New Testament data confirm that local leaders of the early churches were plural within a locality, and could be interchangeably described by the terms bishop, elder, and shepherd.³⁹² Further, Christ is the head of the church, and he rules by his Word. Elders who direct the church guard that Word and guard the life of the church according to it.

The Anglican evangelical understanding of ordination to ministry as a presbyter is that it is ordination to a ministry of the Word and of the sacrament, and further, that the sacraments are an extension of the ministry of the Word. In the words of Calvin, the sacrament is a “visible word.”³⁹³ The priority in the leadership of the local church is in the leadership through the ministry of the word, because of what Marco Polo explained as “the conviction that Christ rules the church and he rules by his word and he appoints elders to guard that word in the life of the church, to keep the church healthy … you take

³⁹² See Chapter Two, “New Testament Passages about local Church leaders”.

³⁹³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. XXI (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), IV.xiv.6. He is following Augustine *Against Faustus* xix.6.

care of the family by holding them to the word of God—the word of Christ.” Where, therefore, leadership is shared, it should primarily be shared among those who are engaged in the ministry of the Word. Therefore the first principle is to let the teachers lead the church.

This principle is not clearly signaled as a priority within Church of England structures. While the ordained presbyter is clearly a leader and a minister of the Word, neither churchwardens nor PCC members are required to have either qualifications for, nor involvement in, Word ministry within the local church. And those others who may be authorized to minister the Word, such as readers, are not required to be concerned with sharing the church’s leadership. Therefore in order for plural local leadership to be exercised by teachers, i.e. Word-ministers, some kind of innovation will be required.

The principle of letting the teachers lead the church also cuts across business models of leadership. We saw above in Chapter Two that Carver’s work on governance recommends a clear separation between the board and the staff. “Boards are groups of people that oversee one person, whereas managers are single persons who oversee groups.”³⁹⁴ Such a separation is not possible in a church if those who are qualified to give leadership are also those who are delivering Word ministry. Malphurs, for example, accepts that the pastor must be at once accountable to the board, and a member of the board, and providing leadership to the board.³⁹⁵ But if pastoral leadership is to be shared among the teachers of the Word, then they too must share all three roles.

³⁹⁴ Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference*, 27. See Chapter Two “Carver: Boards that Make a Difference”.

³⁹⁵ Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 213f. See Chapter Two, “Malphurs: Being Leaders and Strategic Leadership”.

Business models fail churches because they seek to separate what God has joined, namely the active shepherding ministry of the elders and the oversight ministry of governance. Either the elders must pull double-duty and act as both board and shepherds, or a double set of elders are required to populate the staff (shepherding) team and church board. Quite apart from the practical difficulty of finding enough elders to double-staff a leadership structure, this arrangement separates the direction of the church from the pastoral care of the flock. In churches that are required by charity law to have a board of trustees, the connection between governance and shepherding requires a conscious overlap in the trustees' roles so that, as Marco Polo explained, "when they meet as trustees, they're all wearing a slightly different hat from their normal hats." In other words the trustee meeting creates an artificial separation of the kind Carver advocates, and does so for governance reasons rather than for shepherding ones.³⁹⁶

Leaders Lead

The incumbent is the senior pastor of the church, and also the leader of the elders, lay or ordained. Even where there is a clear commitment to the equal status of the fellow-MLT members, the pastor is expected to serve the church by leading the leaders too. Such leadership may mean taking the initiative when direction is needed. "I've begun to take the initiative and say 'What are we going to do? We need to do something.'" Or ensuring that spiritual priorities are maintained in the decision-making process, and "to be to some extent a guardian of sound teaching and doctrine." The MLT may challenge

³⁹⁶ See Chapter Four, "Plurality and Shepherding".

the overall leader as well as support him; they are to collaborate rather than merely cooperate. There is sufficient equality that any member of the MLT can and indeed should speak up. We saw how one pastor reflected on the resignation of an elder. “I have missed the robustness of the challenge to some of the things I wanted to say and do, which I think was healthy.” And sometimes it is a challenge to find the balance between listening and leading. “You can’t just say on everything, ‘What do you think?’ Sometimes I’ll just say, ‘This is the situation; my feeling is that I should do this, do you think that is a good idea?’” Among the positions surveyed in Chapter Two, this is closest to Getz, who summarized his practice as, “‘I led the elders’ and together ‘we led the church.’”³⁹⁷

Disciple-making Requires a Shepherding Ministry

Each of the pastors interviewed leads a church in which personal ministry, or shepherding as defined in this study, plays a key role. To be sure, participants were at pains to emphasize that the ministry to the whole church, including the quality of preaching, is essential. But it is not sufficient. All were committed to a personal ministry which is the subject of this study. The connection explored in this study, and espoused by the pastors, is between the leadership of the teachers and their involvement in one to one ministry. A MLT enables the senior pastor to remain engaged in personal ministry. “There’s a danger I would have become several steps removed from the people, because I would have been busy doing all the big picture stuff. But sharing out the big picture stuff

³⁹⁷ Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 255. See discussions in Chapter Two, “New Testament Passages about local Church leaders” and “Getz: Plural Elders with a Point Leader”.

has meant I've been able to I think stay more connected with people than I might have done. That I think has been one of the chief advantages."

Thus pastoral leadership is rightly shared with Word-ministers, and is concerned with individuals as well as with the big picture. It was notable that the range of concerns that called for pastoral attention was broader than reacting to the sick or the sinning. Marco Polo's concern is to be "looking at the names of individuals, saying, 'What do they need? You know, are they in trouble? Do they need people to look after them, like physical, mental, emotional trouble? Are they in spiritual danger? Or are they people who actually, they've got gifts that need to be nurtured and deployed?'" In Henry Hudson's words the MLT's concern is "how can we encourage this person to take the next step in their discipleship and their growing as a Christian?"

We are Normative Plus

Evangelicals differ from other evangelicals in their understanding of how to apply the Bible's teaching on church government because of the hermeneutic they employ. Historically Anglicans have been committed to the Normative Principle derived from the work of Richard Hooker.³⁹⁸ A strength of this approach is that it affirms that Scripture speaks clearly and plainly on some matters, and that on other matters the teaching of the Bible may inform practice rather than prescribe a single pattern. A potential danger of the weaker forms of the Normative Principle is the fear that, as one pastor put it, "It suggests that everything else is up for grabs, and I don't believe that's true." Equally the stronger

³⁹⁸ See the discussion in Chapter Two, "The evangelical Anglican understanding of Presbyteral Ministry".

forms of the Regulative Principle can lead to problems. “The trouble with the Regulative Principle is that it can descend into looking for commands and then you either end up finding commands in weird places or something.” The Anglican evangelical pastors in this study are therefore best described by an informed Normative Plus, that is they are committed to a form of the Normative Principle in which the teaching of Scripture as a whole heavily informs those areas of life including church government on which Scripture does not give an unequivocal pattern. This allows a pattern in which Anglican structures are biblically informed.³⁹⁹

We are Confessionally Anglican

All the pastors in the study identify as Anglican: that is no surprise since that was one of the selection criteria. It was notable, however, that the further the church and minister were from being in a settled parish church within the Church of England, the more clearly they articulated their identity as Anglican, being both confessional and connectional -- confessional in being rooted in the Formularies of the Church of England, sometimes with additional commitments such as the Jerusalem Declaration, and connectional in expressing a desire to find some effective way to be in relationship with other churches and receiving oversight from outside the congregation.⁴⁰⁰ The combination of the Anglican self-identity and the Normative Plus hermeneutic led these

³⁹⁹ See Chapter Four, “Anglicanism” for a more extended discussion.

⁴⁰⁰ See Chapter Four, “Anglicanism”.

churches to be conservative in changing the structures and creative about how to use those structures to bring about effective, biblically informed local ministry leadership.

Biblically Informed Anglican Structures

Churchwardens occupy an historical office, but in biblical categories their role is ambiguous. For some, wardens are elders, and any additional members of the MLT form “just a bigger group of wardens.” For others the wardens are senior deacons and may act as a link between the MLT and the other councils of the church. The difference in role is significant in churches that are committed to male-only eldership because of their complementarian theology.⁴⁰¹

When a MLT emerges to share in the shepherding care of the church, the role of the PCC becomes more clearly defined as fulfilling diaconal roles. They are the ‘doers’ or in larger churches, the lead deacons. They are not tasked with the spiritual leadership of the church, whether it is agreeing preaching programs, or discussing the care of individuals let alone church discipline, or in initiating discussions of ministry strategy. Church plants did not choose to establish a PCC but shared the practical tasks with teams. The council that unites the leaders of these teams would function in a similar way to the PCC.

A further thought on the PCC is that it may be considered as a representative of the church membership. The Church of England has only a fluid definition of membership because it is based on the Christendom model in which every resident of the

⁴⁰¹ See Chapter One “Definition of Terms”, Appendix A and also Chapter Four, “The Role of Women”.

parish has a claim on the church. The Electoral Roll consists of those who are willing to be associated with the church and entitles those found on the Roll to choose wardens and elect PCC members. All other decisions are taken by the PCC. Thus in comparison to a congregational system of church government, the PCC performs some of the functions of the members' meeting. That is also consistent with the qualifications for membership of the PCC gently reflecting the characteristics of a church member rather than those of a deacon or even elder.

The role of the staff is also ambiguous. Senior staff, that is those whose role is public ministry and leadership and who are often ordained, function as elders; that much is straightforward. Staff teams often have the time and expertise to follow up individuals, and mixed-sex staff teams allow for even coverage for men and women in the church. In the absence of a MLT, the normal place for shepherding discussions would be the staff team. A MLT is therefore needed if either (a) there is an ethical commitment to shared leadership with non-staff elders, or (b) there are insufficient staff. In all but one of the cases studied in this research, reason (a) dominated.

The Role of Women

The pastors in this study all identify as conservative evangelicals, and espouse a complementarian view of the Bible's teaching on the role of women in leadership within the local church. The following four statements may be made to summarize the pastors' understanding: (a) women are equal to men but have different roles; (b) elders should be male; (c) deacons may be men or women; and (d) nobody has worked out where the

senior women fit in. “I don’t really know that we’ve figured it out yet and that’s … I’m on a journey there, nothing is sorted.”

Clear Benefits

The purpose of the study was to explore how ministers explain the benefits of a shared pastoral leadership team for the task of making disciples in contemporary Britain. And the benefits are clear. We may summarize them using the headings found in Chapter Four.⁴⁰²

Resilience. The pastor himself is better supported in sharing the personal stress of exercising pastoral responsibility when a MLT is in place to share the burden with him.

Coverage. A plural structure enables greater coverage in the shepherding ministry because the lay elders are also engaged in the congregation. This benefit is entirely absent from the models of ‘College of Presbyters’ under a Bishop or in a Deanery.⁴⁰³

Diversity/Wisdom The team’s diversity brings additional gifts and wisdom to bear on pastoral care because “one size doesn’t fit all.” To be sure there are frustrations in working collaboratively because it may sometimes slow the leaders down and different personalities can also give rise to tensions.

Diffusing Criticism A ministry leadership team can deflect criticism that would otherwise be borne by the pastor alone.

⁴⁰² See Chapter Four, “Plurality and Shepherding”.

⁴⁰³ See below, “Who knows Eric?”

Accountability of leaders A leadership team may also make the pastor, and by implication the other leaders, more accountable to the congregation because their decisions are more visible. And conversely, having a ministry leadership team in place empowers the church members to ask their leaders for clarification or action.

The same benefits were cited in the other evangelical perspectives on shared leadership reviewed in Chapter Two.⁴⁰⁴ Dever cites an additional benefit, which is that plurality indigenizes leadership by rooting leadership in non-staff members and protects the church should the pastor be removed for whatever reason.⁴⁰⁵ Getz adds that the weakness of staff-led churches and staff-dominated elder boards is that they may cut out valuable experience, such as business acumen, that non-staff elders bring to the leadership.⁴⁰⁶ Strauch notes that plurality is a protection against the abuse of power. “Only when there is genuine accountability between equals in leadership is there any hope of breaking down the horrible abuse of pastoral authority that plagues many churches.”⁴⁰⁷ While abuse of power did not feature directly in the findings of Chapter Four, one pastor at least cited the role of the other MLT members in acting as a possible check on him. “The other guys can tell me when I’m being too harsh or … too soft” and “It means the pastor is not the one unilaterally actually calling the shots on a discipline issue.”

⁴⁰⁴ See Chapter Two, “Other Evangelical Perspectives on Collaborative Eldership”.

⁴⁰⁵ See Chapter Two, “Dever: Elder-Led Congregational Baptist Church” and references cited there.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 309-310. See Chapter Two, “Getz: Plural Elders with a Point Leader”.

⁴⁰⁷ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 43. See Chapter Two, “Strauch: Biblical Eldership”

Healthy Biblical Practice Given the discussion above about being ‘Normative Plus,’ we do not expect Anglican pastors to cite as a benefit that plural eldership is ‘biblical’ because it is simply obedient to the biblical pattern *tout court*. However, a MLT reflects a biblically informed Anglican structure which allows for healthier patterns of church life. “I’m enjoying the environment of the [MLT], the church family understanding that there is a leadership team, I think it’s much more healthy for the church.” Hellerman makes a similar case from Philippians that the example of Christ in Philippians 2:6 provides a model of leadership that draws away from status and privilege. According to Hellerman then, plural leadership is biblical not because the New Testament gives a prescription for church polity, but because the plurality approach offers much hope for raising up healthy, effective pastoral leaders and for significantly curbing authority abuse in churches.⁴⁰⁸

Collaborative Working

Biblically informed plural leadership informs the manner of working as collaborative rather than merely cooperative. Several practices enable and protect collaboration, and these are discussed below.

I’ve Had to Change Shape Completely

We saw in Chapter Two that in the Church of England, the duties of the PCC are “cooperation with the incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the

⁴⁰⁸ Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry*, 266. See the discussion in Chapter Two, “New Testament Passages about local Church leaders”.

church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.” The wardens too are to “be foremost in … co-operating with the incumbent”.⁴⁰⁹ But cooperation falls short of collaboration, as may be seen even in secular settings. Amy Edmondson, for example, defines collaboration as “a way of working with colleagues that is characterized by cooperation, mutual respect, and shared goals,”⁴¹⁰ Carole Orchard’s study of collaborative working in healthcare identified a scale for measuring different degrees of collaboration.⁴¹¹ She identified power imbalances as one of the obstacles to collaboration, which fits one pastor’s explanation of the difference between cooperating with a PCC and collaborating with a MLT. “I’ve had to understand that I’m working with others, rather than just having to convince a PCC or others that this is what we’re going to do. I’ve had to change shape completely.”

Ethical Commitment

The commitment to collaboration is an ethical commitment. The phrase is borrowed from Wilson and Cervero’s study of education planning. When the different parties meet to plan educational provision, they each deploy their own power to further their own interests; that is simply pragmatism. But if they make an ethical commitment to democratic planning which serves the interests of *others*, then they will strive to conduct the planning discussion in a way that enables those others’ interests to be fairly

⁴⁰⁹ See Chapter Two, “Lay Officers in the Church of England” and references cited there.

⁴¹⁰ Edmondson, *Teaming*, 52. See Chapter Two, “Teaming”.

⁴¹¹ Orchard and others, “Assessment of Interprofessional Team Collaboration”. See Chapter Two, “Lank: Collaborative Advantage”.

represented.⁴¹² In a similar way, pastors and MLTs' commitment to plurality and to collaboration in church is not mere pragmatism, although there are benefits that accrue to them. It is also an ethical commitment to work collaboratively for the health of the whole church and the health of their ministry in providing leadership. We saw in Chapter Four that one pastor explained he did not choose a shared structure "because you think it will make your life easier or that there won't be moments where you are surprised by sort of the development." A consequence of the ethical commitment is that having decided to collaborate, the MLT members then need to agree *how* they will collaborate. In other words, they need to negotiate the collaboration space.

Negotiating the Collaboration Space

In a church, the introduction of a MLT changes both the composition of the team and the way it will operate. A PCC that cooperates with the incumbent will be replaced by a MLT that collaborates with him. Discussions about how a group of people will conduct their business is termed a meta-negotiation, while the business itself is the substantive negotiation. Wilson and Cervero's studies of working the planning table examine the meta-negotiation about who will be represented in the discussions. Siemens and others describe interdisciplinary research in which the nature of the collaboration itself "may range from relatively little task interdependence to a fully integrative process where researchers work closely together on all aspects of the project."⁴¹³ We saw that

⁴¹² Wilson and Cervero, "Democracy and Program Planning". See Chapter Two, "Cervero and Williams: Working the Planning Table".

⁴¹³ Siemens, Liu Yin, and Smith, "Mapping," 50. See Chapter Two, "Siemens: the Collaboration Space".

instead of searching for a ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to collaborate, Siemens *et al.* suggest a conceptual framework in which research teams can negotiate which point in the so-called collaboration space that they wish to occupy.⁴¹⁴

In a similar way the formation and conduct of MLTs works towards collaboration by considering both the composition and the conduct of the MLT.

The composition of the MLT ensures that those who should lead are present. Another outcome of a meta-negotiation might be deliberately to include non-lay elders so that their interests are represented. This conclusion might lead to the inclusion of female pastoral leaders, or non-elder wardens, or staff such as an administrator. Liaison with other bodies in the church as PCC or trustees will also need to be borne in mind, even if they are not formally represented.

The conduct of the MLT is also to be negotiated, as well as which responsibilities would be shared by the MLT and which would not. “There was some argy-bargy earlier on when someone said … we should be having a say in the preaching programme [sic] and so on, and I’m thinking, ‘Hang on a minute, I’ve always done this.’ But we’ve worked that through.” Staff elders also needed to agree with the non-staff lay elders how much detail was wanted. “What they do want to know, what they don’t need to know, and what they want to—what sort of level they want to agree things on and what they want to get us to drill down and work out.” Part of ‘changing shape completely’ is negotiating the

⁴¹⁴ See Chapter Two, “Siemens: the Collaboration Space” and especially Figure 1 Dimensions of the Collaboration Space.

collaboration space, which is about getting the right people together, to work in the right way.

Who knows Eric?

Because of the importance of personal ministry, the ‘right people’ must include those who are engaged in discipleship, that is (micro-)shepherding. Even in those MLTs that are not able to spend much time on individuals, perhaps because of the size of the church, disciple-making is still a criterion for potential lay elders. In Strauch’s terms, they are to be shepherd elders rather than what he calls “board elders.”

“A true biblical eldership is not a business-like committee. It’s a biblically qualified council of men who jointly pastor the local church.”⁴¹⁵ When the MLT consists of those engaged in shepherding ministry, there can be collaborative pastoral leadership. If ‘Eric’ comes to pastoral notice and the benefits of plural pastoral leadership include coverage and diversity, then the discussion can begin with the question, “Who knows Eric?” to reveal which of the persons present are already engaged with that person. Indeed one of the challenges of shared pastoring is communication. As one respondent put it, “You can sometimes end up with a situation where you can suddenly leap in to support somebody only to discover that somebody else has been visiting them twice a week for the last three months.” When the right people are gathered into a MLT, then the question “Who knows Eric” will find an answer.

⁴¹⁵ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 31. See Chapter Two “Strauch: Biblical Eldership”.

The ‘Who knows Eric’ test also explains why the focus of this research was, and must remain, locally shared pastoral leadership. One way to read the historical development of the ordained clergy within Anglicanism is that in the early church a bishop emerged as president of the presbyters serving the churches in a town. But, as Beckwith notes, with the conversion of the Roman Empire and the expansion of the churches, the presbyters were first scattered and then isolated, resulting in the sole presbyterate that in turn survived the Reformation unscathed.⁴¹⁶ What began as a college of presbyters serving churches in a town expanded to become the college of presbyters serving the churches in a diocese. Unless the presbyters are serving an area so small that they can ‘know Eric’, they cannot meaningfully collaborate and achieve the plural local leadership patterned on the New Testament churches. No college of presbyters in Britain can achieve this because English dioceses are very large. For instance in my own diocese of Bath & Wells, two bishops oversee more than two hundred clergy who between them have charge of five hundred or more churches. The diocese is further divided into deaneries, groups of parishes in an area. Sedgemoor Deanery contains twenty-four parishes, only five of which serve the town in which my own church is located. While I might ask other clergy for advice, it would be fantastical to assume that any of them know the pastoral situation I am describing. None of them ‘knows Eric,’ and we cannot collaborate in caring for people whom we do not know together. The second dimension of distance is theological spread. The Church of England is, alas, known for its theological breadth, as Bray admits. “Few branches of the Christian church have as much

⁴¹⁶ Beckwith, *Elders in Every City*, 77. See the final paragraph of “Richard Hooker (1554-1600)” in Chapter Two.

difficulty defining themselves as the Anglican one has.⁴¹⁷ Unless my fellow-clergy and I share a common theological basis, pastoral care will be difficult to discuss fruitfully.

Finally, for evangelicals to share leadership within the church in obedience to the pattern of scripture, the unit of the church must be the local church, that is the congregation or parish.⁴¹⁸ It is not the deanery or diocese which are too large and usually too broad to provide a basis for shared pastoral leadership. The emphasis in this research is therefore on locally shared pastoral leadership, meaning that it is plural within the local church because no college of presbyters in a diocese or deanery is likely to ‘know Eric’ and cannot provide a functional model of collaborative pastoral care.

Methodological Leveling

The right people need to be gathered, and they also need to work in the right way. One of the clearest imbalances is between staff and non-staff MLT members, because the staff usually have more time, training and capacity to bring to bear on ministry issues than their non-staff counterparts. This sort of situation is not unique to ministry. In education, for example, students and faculty can collaborate as learning communities to facilitate learning. Students are understandably anxious about taking part in public discussions with faculty whose knowledge and power far exceed their own. DeLathouwer and others studied the role of workshops designed to mitigate the perceived imbalance. This deliberate strategy to overcome structural barriers to collaboration was named

⁴¹⁷ Bray, “Why I Am an Evangelical and an Anglican,” 65. See Chapter Two “The evangelical Anglican understanding of Presbyteral Ministry”.

⁴¹⁸ See the discussion of Article XIX in Chapter Two, “Cranmer’s Ordinal: A Ministry of the Word”.

methodological leveling.⁴¹⁹ In a similar way, pastors and MLTs can employ deliberate strategies to mitigate the imbalance in capacity between staff and non-staff MLT members and the following were noted in the findings in Chapter Four:⁴²⁰ All the pastors circulate documents for discussion in advance of the meetings, a practice also noted in Chapter Two from Dever.⁴²¹ Other strategies include taking time over decisions, putting MLT members through a Strengths Finder analysis, and also seeing in every discussion an opportunity for training through the pastor sharing his thinking. Imbalances in capacity and training do exist between members, and these may well impede good collaboration. These imbalances can be addressed by negotiating the collaboration space -- that is, agreeing how the MLT wants to work -- and by methodological leveling or using deliberate strategies to change the dynamic.

Leadership is an Us

The final practice that enables collaborative working is the deliberate presentation of the MLT as a team. In other words the incumbent learns to move from ‘I have decided’ through ‘The MLT and I have decided’ to ‘The MLT have decided.’ One pastor explained how when a change was introduced in church in this way, “When the criticism came, it wasn’t a huge amount, but the flak came [several] ways rather than one way, and

⁴¹⁹ DeLathouwer and others, “Multidisciplinary Collaboration,” 28. See Chapter Two “Cervero and Williams: Working the Planning Table”.

⁴²⁰ See Chapter Four, “Collaboration”.

⁴²¹ Dever and Alexander, *Deliberate Church*, 180. See Chapter Two, “Cervero and Williams: Working the Planning Table”.

that was just immensely helpful.”⁴²² In another situation, when the approach to a difficult pastoral situation requiring church discipline had been agreed by the MLT rather than by himself acting alone, the pastor could know that he “was going as a representative, if you like, of the church family, bringing God's word to bear on [the person concerned] from the church family, rather than some sort of dictator.”

Recommendations for Practice

Effective shared pastoral leadership involves gathering the right people and enabling them to work in the right way. In light of the findings described above, no single structure for locally shared pastoral leadership emerges as the best solution. Instead the adoption of key principles and the determination to put into effect the practices of collaborative working can guide a church and its leadership into the development of a contextualized approach to sharing effectively the shepherding ministry within a local Anglican evangelical church. In this section, we will return to the structures suggested in Chapter Two as possible solution, in order to comment on their suitability in the light of the findings of this research.⁴²³

⁴²² Where [several] is the number of leaders on that church's MLT.

⁴²³ See Chapter Two, “Possible Solutions”.

The Cure of Souls and the Care of Stuff

We saw in Chapter Four that a weakness of Anglican polity is that “legally the buck stops with the vicar, the rector, whatever. And that is legally the situation.”⁴²⁴ For the purposes of this research, the ‘buck’ is the spiritual care of the church, both as a whole flock and as a series of individual sheep. Within the Church of England, this responsibility is conveyed in the phrase “the cure of souls,” and legally it rests with the incumbent and is shared only with the bishop. When a new incumbent is instituted to a post, the bishop presents the deed of institution with the words “Receive this cure of souls, which is both yours and mine.”

The care of property and assets, on the other hand, is in the hands of the church wardens and PCC. There is therefore a distinction between the ministry of shepherding the sheep (the cure of souls) and the management of assets (the care of stuff). As a consequence of this research, it is clearer to me at least that pastoral oversight locally rests with the incumbent alone, and that any arrangement for plural local oversight involves the sharing of the incumbent’s ministry without taking away any of the PCC’s responsibilities. It is also clear that because there is no existing format for locally shared pastoral oversight, some kind of innovation will be needed. Let us therefore return to the solutions proposed in Chapter Two.

⁴²⁴ See Chapter Four, “Plurality and Shepherding”.

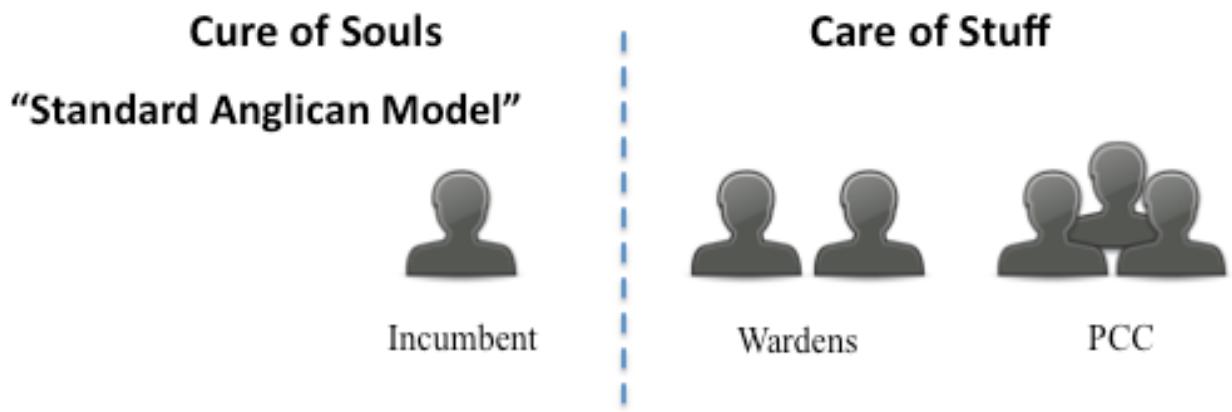


Figure 2 Standard Anglican Model

Possible Structures for Sharing the Cure of Souls

Incumbent and Wardens as a Plural Eldership

Under this model, the wardens are elders and are recognized before the church as working in a leadership team. The wardens are naturally seen as senior lay people, but usually each church has only two wardens, and they have other legal duties to fulfill. We saw that in one church plant, the MLT “is just a bigger group of wardens.” However in parish churches and to some extent in proprietary chapels, the wardens also have legal duties with regard to the church property (the care of stuff). If they are to give attention to the shepherding role of a MLT, the church must lift the administrative burden of practical duties from churchwardens.

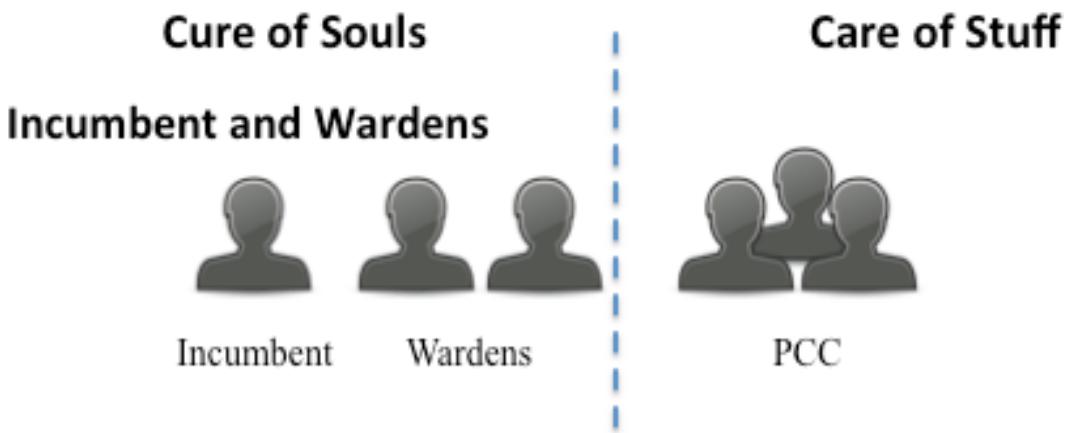


Figure 3 Incumbent and Wardens as Plural Eldership

Standing Committee as a Plural Eldership

This solution has not been encountered in the interviews conducted for this research. It is possible that it emerged as a response to concerns over use of elders inspired by charismatic renewal of the 1970s and 1980s. The concern may be that decisions are made by an unelected body, thus taking away from the PCC's legal role. However we have seen above that the role of the MLT in sharing the incumbent's shepherding ministry does not take away from the elected PCC's role. It shared the duties of an appointed but unelected person, namely the incumbent. The use of the standing committee as a plural eldership stems from confusion about the role of the PCC. Once that confusion is removed, there is no obvious advantage in establishing a smaller but elected body to do share pastoral care, because those so elected must be both qualified to act as lay elders and willing and able to conduct PCC business, which is the standing committee's purpose. The disadvantages of an elected standing committee outweigh the advantages, and a better solution is either incumbent and wardens or MLT.

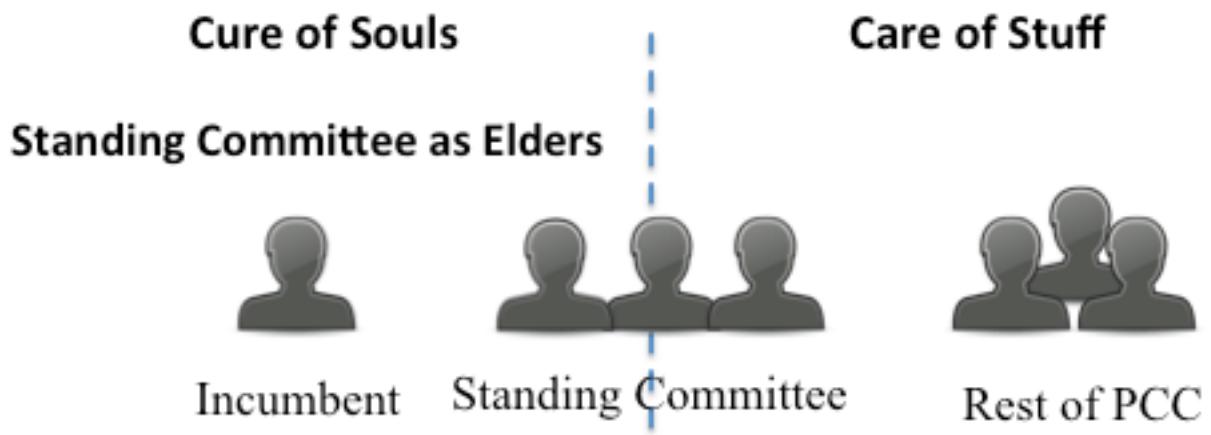


Figure 4 Standing Committee as Plural Eldership

PCC as a Plural Eldership

In accordance with the key principle of letting the teachers lead, the PCC can only act as a plural eldership if every member meets the qualifications of a lay elder. At a practical level, the church must agree to significant additional criteria being added for eligibility for election to PCC. In addition it should be noted that either the members of the PCC must fulfill both the duties of the MLT and those other legal duties required of the PCC, or some other ‘shadow PCC’ is required to carry out the PCC’s original legal duties in its place.

The first key principle of letting the teachers lead suggests that PCC should not be confused with the church’s spiritual leadership. While the PCC is the church’s decision-making body, it cannot be the church’s leadership if that function is ultimately to be exercised by those having responsibility for the ministry of the Word within the congregation. It is a right instinct for the incumbent to want to share his ministry, but the

PCC is the wrong body with whom to seek to share it. The incumbent and the PCC have different responsibilities. If the whole PCC is co-opted onto some kind of eldership, then either another PCC must arise in its place, or confusion on roles will reign.

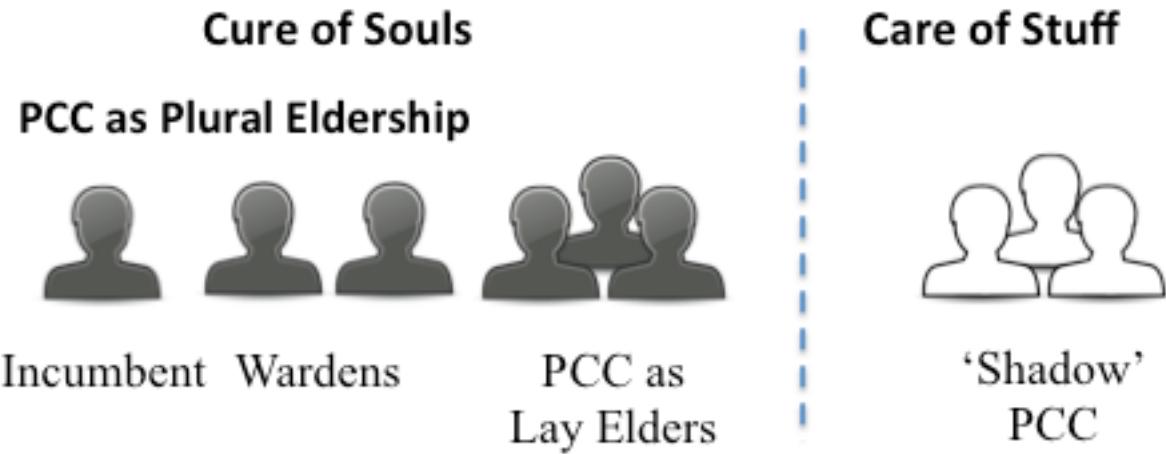


Figure 5 PCC as Plural Eldership

Staff Team as a Plural Eldership

This pattern is attractive for practical reasons. Paid staff have the time, capacity, and usually training for providing pastoral care. If they report to the incumbent, their work can be efficiently coordinated. And further, where they are engaged in the public ministry of the Word through teaching and leading worship, they become the natural points of contact for those seeking pastoral counsel. However the pastors in this study are looking for more than a merely practical solution. They seek biblically informed practice, and their reading of the Bible’s teaching prompts them to seek a plural eldership that deliberately includes non-staff lay elders -- even if it makes life more difficult. It is an ethical commitment on their part. Indeed we saw that in one church, the staff explicitly have no formal role in the church’s leadership structure, while in another they play a large part in overseeing pastoral care but in a framework that also includes non-staff lay

elders. For principled reasons, therefore, the staff are not the elders. We saw that staff teams can provide effective pastoral care, and in particular can provide a good way for female pastoral leaders to be involved without undermining the principle of male-only eldership.

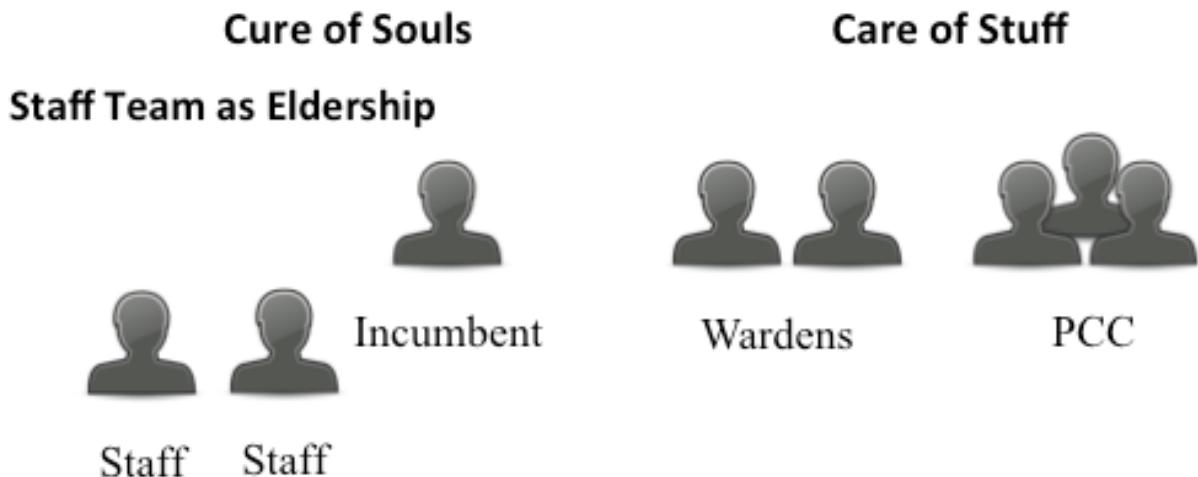


Figure 6 Staff Team as Plural Eldership

Home Group Leaders and Service Leaders as a Plural Eldership

The small groups form the front line of pastoral care within a local church. Where a person came to pastoral notice, we saw that the MLT would try to work within existing relationships, and the small groups played a key role.⁴²⁵ Small group leaders are therefore very much involved in pastoral care within the church. The issue here is about how that pastoral care is overseen and directed. The churches in our study had both small group

⁴²⁵ See Chapter Four “Shepherding and Disciple-Making”.

leaders and a MLT, and in several cases the MLT members were also small group leaders.

Service leaders provide visible leadership. We saw that in a multi-congregation church, the pastor cannot be present at all sites on a given Sunday, but with a plural MLT, there is always somebody available for worshippers on any given Sunday.⁴²⁶ Service leaders might therefore be a natural choice as MLT members because of their visible and public ministry. In one multi-site church, each congregation had its own MLT whose duties included public leadership so that congregation members have a visible leader.

⁴²⁶ See Chapter Four, “Plurality and Shepherding”.

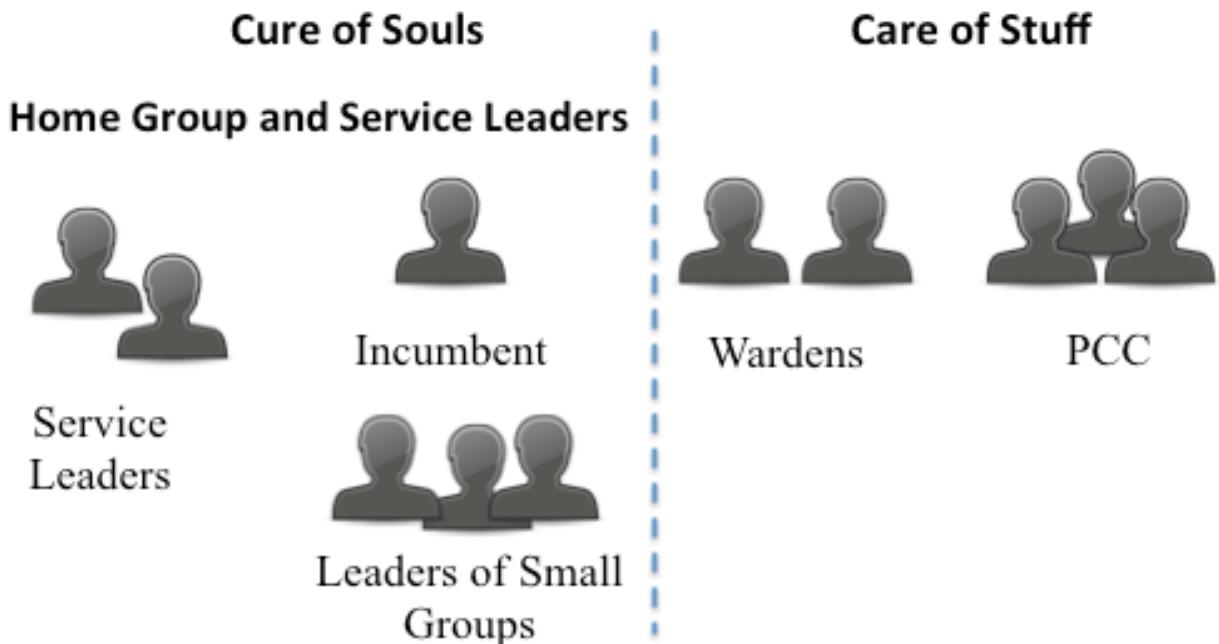


Figure 7 Home Group Leaders and Service Leaders

Small group leaders and service leaders are the kind of people who should be part of a MLT; nevertheless, a MLT is an additional, explicit group that exists for more than the coordination of small groups or of service leading. The leaders of small groups and the service leaders do not form a MLT by virtue of their roles; rather their roles identify them as people who would be suitable for MLT if they have the additional capacity to serve in this way.

“College of Presbyters” as a Plural Eldership Under the Bishop

Although not encountered in Chapter Two, this option is attractive to some Anglicans for historical reasons because it seems to reflect the situation in place before

the conversion of the Roman Empire where presbyters collaborated in serving the churches in a town. But we also saw how the expansion of the churches led to the isolation of the presbyters. “Thus congregations with a sole presbyterate, instead of the plural presbyterate usual from New Testament times in the towns, became normal. The sole presbyterate afterwards spread to towns as well.”⁴²⁷ The notion that a College of Presbyters can be a plural eldership appears to offer a return to an early church model.

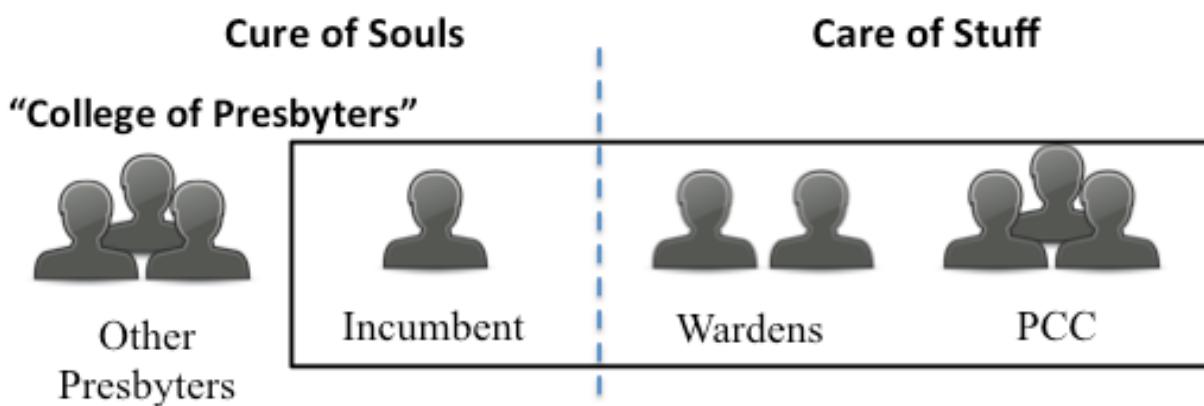


Figure 8 College of Presbyters as Plural Eldership

This is unattractive to evangelical Anglicans both as a matter of principle and as a matter of practicality. On principle, the local unit of the church is the local church not the deanery or diocese; and as a matter of practicality, the college of presbyters or deanery chapter does not “know Eric” and cannot collaborate.⁴²⁸ Claiming a shared oversight with

⁴²⁷ Beckwith, *Elders in Every City*, 77. See Chapter Two “Richard Hooker (1554-1600)” and Chapter Five above “Who knows Eric?”

⁴²⁸ See the discussion of Article XIX in Chapter Two, “Cranmer’s Ordinal: A Ministry of the Word” and Chapter Four “Discussion of Findings” and “Who knows Eric?”

presbyters in other churches is not a recommended solution. It is, simply put, dead in the water.

Ministry Leadership Team as a Plural Eldership

A ministry leadership team is a group of suitably qualified persons who are recognized by the church as those who share shepherding leadership with the incumbent. Their role is to share both its macro- and micro- dimensions (to use Witmer's terminology). The MLT does not take functions from the PCC, which is not charged with either dimension of shepherding, but shares those that are committed to the incumbent.

The MLT therefore consists of those qualified to give spiritual oversight. As we saw in the key principle of letting teachers lead, the MLT consists of those qualified as elders in some way. Their role is to act collaboratively, under the leadership of the pastor, to care spiritually for the flock. Rather than inhabit one of the existing structures, such as standing committee or PCC, the MLT is identified as a new body that works with the pastor. The closest overlap is with the incumbent and wardens group.

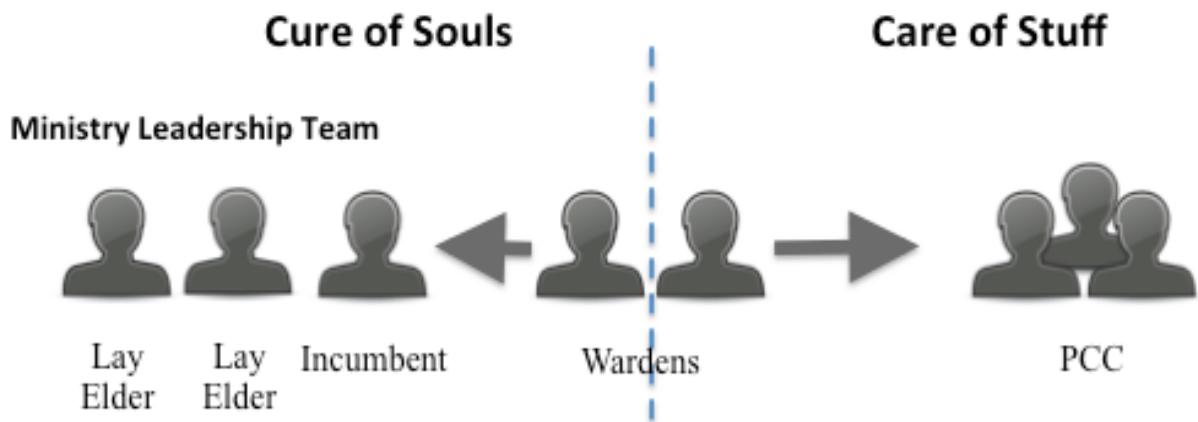


Figure 9 Ministry Leadership Team as Plural Eldership

A MLT becomes more important when the key principles are central to the church's ministry. These principles state that teachers of the Word should lead, rather than administrators and deacons of the PCC; that shepherding must be an essential component of both ministry and leadership; that it should be shared and not rest on the incumbent's shoulders alone; and that existing structures can be biblically informed and adapted accordingly.

A consequence of the adoption of a MLT is clarity on the role of the PCC. It is not an eldership, and becomes more of a diaconate tasked with providing practical support to the church's spiritual leadership.

Two further elements are helpful in the smooth functioning of MLT and PCC. The first is to ensure good communication between the two bodies. Usually the incumbent and one or two others will be members of both groups. That overlap provides liaison and communication, without confusing the remits of the two groups. We saw in one church, for instance, that the PCC may have a standing item to hear what is being

discussed at ministry leadership team, and invited to pray, but the discussion and the decision remain the MLT's if it affects pastoral practice and priorities.⁴²⁹

The second is clarity as to which matters are discussed by which group. This is discussed further below under Recommendations for Further Research.

Another area of deliberate overlap between MLT and other bodies is ensuring the participation of women in churches that hold to male-only eldership. The meetings of the MLT, especially those concerned for the care of individuals, may include additional members such as a female pastoral worker or an administrator who is also female and who facilitates the meeting. As has been admitted above, such additions are an accommodation to the desire to include women, even though the most theologically coherent way to do so remains unclear because “nothing is sorted.”⁴³⁰

The option that is most attractive will depend on the context, with the key factor being the church wardens. If they are to function as elders, then the MLT is essentially a incumbent & wardens group, to which other suitable individuals may be added. But there may be good reasons why the wardens do not function as elders, such as, the difficulty of delegating the diaconal duties that come with the role or the desire to retain someone who is excellently suited to the role of senior deacon. In that case the appointment of a MLT allows suitably qualified elder-types to share the incumbent's shepherding ministry, with support from the wardens in their ministry. In a church with larger staff, the MLT may

⁴²⁹ See Chapter Four, “Plurality and Shepherding”.

⁴³⁰ See above Chapter Five, “The Role of Women”.

more closely resemble a senior staff meeting with lay elders in addition. Again it is a matter of context whether the lay elders are wardens or not.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on the benefits to the church's shepherding ministry of a shared leadership team. The following areas emerged as being patient of further investigation.

The Place of Women

The clearest and most urgent need is for further research on the place of women within leadership structures in churches that hold to complementarian evangelical theology. In general this position holds that men and women have different and complementary roles to play in the life of the local church; specifically it means male-only eldership. The pastors interviewed in this study are wrestling with this question and continue to do so. A question that might be investigated is the relationship between senior female pastoral staff and the MLT. If the pastor is responsible for obeying Paul's instruction to Titus to "teach what accords with sound doctrine." (Titus 2:1) and this includes equipping older women to "be reverent in behavior, ...to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, [etc.]" (Titus 2:3–5), what does it look like in practice? A third question might be to what extent is it permissible or wise to include as a matter of course non-lay elders in the MLT meeting?

The Relationships between MLT and PCC

One pastor described his role as deciding which body should discuss a certain question. “I’m thinking where does this need to go, is this a [MLT] thing? Is this a staff team thing? Is this a something else thing?”⁴³¹ At face value that model assumes that the discussion needs to take place either in one setting or in another, be it MLT, staff, or PCC. In practice a ministry issue may have implications for several areas of church life. For example the decision to plant a new congregation is taken first for missional and spiritual reasons; yet it has potentially massive practical implications. Is it a MLT thing or a PCC thing? RACI analysis allows that different bodies have different levels of involvement according to whether they are responsible for carrying out the task, accountable for its execution, required to be consulted, or have a right to be informed.⁴³² In a similar way, it may be that that a key decision in church life is who has the authority to initiate a discussion and how it progresses from there. For instance the MLT can propose planting a new congregation and once the idea has reached a certain stage, it might be handed on to the PCC to elaborate some of the practical details. Similarly the MLT may decide on a change of format to the Sunday services, and the PCC then be consulted and asked to agree. But the PCC would not be expected to take the first lead in either of those cases. The division of labor between MLT and PCC is therefore not only a question of who discusses a particular issue but may be a matter of who discusses it first

⁴³¹ See Chapter Four, “Plurality and Shepherding”.

⁴³² See for example Thomas Frauman, “Improving the effectiveness of strategy implementation through use of RACI charts,” *Asia Pacific Coatings Journal* 25, no. 5 (2012): 39-40; Idem, “Using RACI charts to drive more powerful execution of business strategy,” *Asia Pacific Coatings Journal* 25, no. 6 (2012): 25-27.

and who signs off on it last. Author and surgeon Atul Gawande describes a problem-solving process in the construction industry which may be pertinent. If a situation arises on-site with respect to, say, the steel frame of a building, then the checklist details which other contractors must be consulted and must each sign off on the proposed solution before it can be implemented.⁴³³ These and other works might provide a creative grid to guide the interaction between MLT, PCC and any other bodies such as Trustees.

Different Patterns for Different Churches

A third area for potential research is to explore the statement in the opening paragraph of the Discussion of Findings :“There is no simple relationship between the type of church, be it parish church, proprietary chapel or church plant, and the form of leadership structure in place.” While that may be true within the limited sample contained in this research, it may be that some general patterns emerge if a larger sample of churches were surveyed, controlled for church setting, size, and filtered for similar theological vision. The findings may provide hope and models for those in settled churches who dismiss the benefits of locally shared pastoral leadership as being only for those who are in proprietary chapels or church plants.

Conclusions and Summary

The research sought to investigate the benefits of shared pastoral leadership in Anglican churches in England. Interviews with Anglican evangelicals who for biblical

⁴³³ Atul Gawande, *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010).

reasons seek to share their spiritual oversight with local lay elders are informed by a ‘Normative Plus’ hermeneutic that reads the Bible as giving principles rather than patterns for leadership and that seeks for the church’s structures and practices to be deeply informed by biblical teaching and themes. As a consequence of their hermeneutic and different ministry contexts, and despite very close theological agreement, the exact arrangement in place differed from church to church. Instead of a common pattern, common principles were found, such as: leadership should primarily come from those charged with the ministry of the Word; it should be plural and collaborative; nonetheless, the senior pastor should lead the leaders; and shepherding or disciple-making is vital at every level of leadership. The composition of the ministry leadership teams overlapped with the wardens and with the staff team, and did not take on any of the PCC’s responsibilities.

Clear benefits were identified for the health of both the pastor and the congregation, where a ministry leadership team is in place. These include increased resilience, coverage, and wisdom and the ability for criticism to be diffused and leadership to be more accountable to the congregation. The capacity imbalances between staff and non-staff leaders can be addressed by methodological leveling practices to empower lay elders to participate and regular negotiation of the collaboration space to agree where the boundaries should lie between what kinds of decisions require the lay elders’ involvement, and which do not.

The place of women within the structures of these churches remains unresolved. Unlike the evangelical Anglican experiments with leadership teams in the 1970s at a time when women could not be ordained to the presbyterate, the churches in this study are not

looking to sidestep an institutional bar on women in leadership. On the contrary their complementarian convictions lead to a tension between a theological conviction that eldership is only for men and a pastoral conviction that women have a vital part of play in the care of the church. While no ‘best’ pattern for ministry leadership teams emerges from the study, there are clearly ‘better’ structures which benefit the church in its work of making disciples in twenty-first century Britain.

Appendix A Alphabetical Glossary of Terms

Alphabetical Glossary of Terms thematically introduced in Chapter One

Anglican Communion – the chief institutional expression of Anglicanism, thirty-seven provinces or national churches that trace their roots to the Church of England and are in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury (England).

Anglican Evangelical – term preferred by conservative evangelicals within British Anglicanism to show that they identify first with other evangelicals and then with Anglicans. In this study, Anglican Evangelical and Evangelical Anglican will be used interchangeably.

Anglicanism – a theological ethos that is loyal to the so-called formularies: the Book of Common Prayer (1662), the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, and the Ordinal.

Association, a network or a denomination – various groups of churches.

Bishops – the third order of ministry, which oversees presbyters and congregations within a diocese. The bishop is considered the “chief pastor” of the diocese, and the cure of souls is shared between the bishop and the incumbent. In this study we will use bishop to refer to an official in a denomination, and use overseer as translation for the Greek term *ἐπίσκοπος*.

Church – one or more congregations under local leadership.

Churchwardens and members of the parochial church council (PCC) – lay leaders from the congregation.

Collaborative ministry (CM) and collaborative leadership (CL) – sometimes used interchangeably in sources. In this study, collaborative ministry (CM) means that every member of the body is to exercise ministry for the common good. Collaborative leadership (CL) refers only to church leadership that is carried out in a collaborative or plural way.

Complementarian – conservative evangelical theological position holding that men and women have different and complementary roles in ministry and that headship or leadership within the church should rightly be exercised by suitably qualified men only (cf. egalitarian).

Congregational Elder – an office holder in churches constituted with an eldership. Except in quotations, the single term ‘elder’ will be reserved for the translation of the Greek πρεσβύτερος.

Conservative evangelical – an evangelical who espouses complementarian views on gender and ministry and hold to a traditional definition of marriage.

Curate – an assistant minister in their first ordained post.

Deacon – one of three orders of ministry in the Church of England. They are ordained to a ministry of mercy, and most will be ordained as a presbyter after one year. Because there is no permanent diaconate in the Church of England, deacons are in effect probationary presbyters.

Egalitarian – theological position holding that the equality of men and women entails no difference in role (cf. complementarian).

Electoral roll – members who may choose churchwardens and elect PCC members. The Church of England has no formal membership.

England – distinguished from the rest of the UK because of its different legal and ecclesial framework. From the point of view of culture and society, the countries of Great Britain, namely England, Wales and Scotland, form a single entity, and it is appropriate to speak of British Society or the challenges of ministering in Britain.⁴³⁴

Evangelical – a Christian who holds to the sufficiency of scripture, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the centrality of the cross, and the need for personal faith.

Evangelical Anglican – see Anglican Evangelical.

Governance – one of the tasks of boards. John Carver's definition is an apt summary. "The purpose of governance is to ensure that, usually on behalf of others, that an organization achieves what it should achieve while avoiding those behaviors and situations that should be avoided."⁴³⁵

Incumbent – the appointed leader of a congregation and may be named rector, vicar, priest in charge, or minister-in-charge without any difference in role.

Lay elder – a member of an identified ministry leadership team in an Anglican church (see ministry leadership team).

⁴³⁴ Ireland and the other Islands making up the British Isles are excluded as not pertinent to this research.

⁴³⁵ Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference*, xxviii.

Making disciples – bringing men, women, and children to mature faith in Christ, and in a local church this is done through relationships. Pastor Greg Ogden describes the discipling relationship, in which one or more believers assist or invest in each other in order to grow to maturity in Christ, when he calls it “an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip, and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ.”⁴³⁶ Making disciples, then, is the work of enabling people to come to faith and maturity in Christ.

Ministry leadership team (MLT) – a team of leaders who exercise collaborative leadership within the congregation. In this study, MLT will be used for Anglican Churches and eldership for others, except in quotations.

Non-stipendiary minister (NSM) – also called a self-supporting minister, an ordained bi-vocational minister.

Ordinal – Form of service for ordaining Bishops, Presbyter (priests) and Deacons.

Parishioner – any person living in the ecclesiastical parish, the geographical area served by the parish church. Most Church of England churches are parish churches.

Pastor and minister – used interchangeably to describe the senior minister of a church.

Presbyters – second of the three orders of ministry, also known as priests. Although the English word “priest” was known to be derived from, and to be a contraction of, “presbyter,” it is avoided by evangelicals because of its association with a

⁴³⁶ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 129.

sacerdotal ministry. In this study, presbyter will be used in preference to priest when referring to ordained Christian leaders, unless the word is found in a direct quotation. The ordinary translation of the Greek term $\pi\tau\varepsilon\sigma\beta\acute{u}te\rho\varsigma$ will be elder.

Proprietary Chapel – in the Church of England, this is an independently owned chapel that operates as a Church of England church. Unlike a parish church, a proprietary chapel is not required to be governed by churchwardens and PCC, although some form of governance is required if it is to operate as a charity.

Readers – laypeople licensed by the bishop with the incumbent's consent; they may preach, lead services, and if appropriately trained, take funerals. They may assist in the administration of the sacraments but may not preside.

Shepherding – in contrast to governance, the pastoral care of the flock with an emphasis on individuals. The terms governance and shepherding correspond to Timothy Witmer's categories of macro-shepherding and micro-shepherding respectively, and unless used in quotation, governance and shepherding will be the preferred terms.⁴³⁷ Models of church pastoral leadership may lean more to governance, or to shepherding, or attempt to embrace both equally.

The Church of England – the established national church in England. When it comes to discussing churches and denominations, the Anglican churches in Great Britain (the Church of England, the Church in Wales, and the Scottish Episcopal Church) are national in character, and because the churches and pastors in this study minister in England, their relationships are to the Church of England, or AMiE.

⁴³⁷ Witmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 104.

The Free Church of England and more recently the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE) – other Anglican groups. All the pastors interviewed within this study identify as Anglicans, whether or not the congregations they serve are currently within the Church of England.

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