A BUILDING MINISTRY:
THE ROLE OF A UNITED METHODIST MINISTER
IN THE MAJOR BUILDING PROJECT
OF DUBLIN FIRST UMC,
A LARGE HISTORIC CHURCH

by

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DEDICATION

This Project Thesis is dedicated to the exceptional congregants of Dublin First United Methodist Church, who have graciously taken part in this project and who display their love of Jesus Christ in so many profound ways. You all know truly what it means to be the Body of Christ that seeks to Reach, Teach and Serve others in the name of Jesus Christ.
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ABSTRACT

DAVID TYLER PLAXICO
A BUILDING MINISTRY:
THE ROLE OF A UNITED METHODIST MINISTER IN THE MAJOR BUILDING PROJECT OF DUBLIN FIRST UMC, A LARGE HISTORIC CHURCH
Under the direction of GRAHAM WALKER, Ph.D.

Dublin First United Methodist Church is a large historic United Methodist Church located in downtown Dublin, GA. This church is much like many of its kind; it has a long proud history of effective ministry in the community in which it resides. For over 150 years DFUMC has been a faithful body of believers bent on making disciples of Jesus Christ from its location in the heart of Dublin. As time has progressed, the facilities of the church have begun to decline and the existing structure became much in need of renovation, remodel and new construction. The leadership of DFUMC decided that a Building Project was needed to directly address these acknowledged needs in order for the church to continue to be a place of meaningful worship, study and fellowship.

The purpose of this Project Thesis came as a result of this decision and of the desire to ascertain what the specific role the Senior Pastor of the church would be in this building project. In pursuit of this end, extensive research on pastoral identity, sacred architecture, institutional change theory and Christian leadership was conducted. Following this research, Qualitative Research methodology was employed through the utilization of subject interviews. The interviews were focused on similarly situated Senior Pastors of large historic UMC congregations that have or were currently undergoing a
similar large Building Project. Four such Senior Pastors were chosen according to these criteria and were interviewed using identical targeted interrogatories. The data gleaned from these interviews was then analyzed by coding the resulting information. Specific categories and codes that were identified as pertinent to the study were identified and the data was examined accordingly. The findings were that there is indeed a specific role for the Senior Pastor of a large historic UMC in a Building Project of this type. The identified role was that of a “Managing Agent of Visionary Change.”

The future study of this work is varied and includes the continued examination of Pastoral Identity and perceived ministerial responsibility as it pertains to particular congregations and to the church-specific needs of a Senior Pastor. The information gathered and examined in this Project Thesis may be expanded accordingly and may serve as a foundation for studies on ministerial responsibility within the UMC.
CHAPTER ONE
A BUILDING MINISTRY

Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.¹
Exodus 25:8

Introduction
Description of the Ministerial Context

I am currently the Senior Pastor of Dublin First United Methodist Church (DFUMC), a large historic congregation located in downtown Dublin, GA. DFUMC is a congregation affiliated with the South Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and is specifically connected to the North Central District of this Conference. Our church has a current membership of over nine hundred individuals, numbering between two hundred fifty and three hundred in worship on any given Sunday morning. DFUMC features three separate worship experiences as well as vibrant bible studies, active small groups, and a staff of ten committed leaders. DFUMC has a long and storied history within this community, which dates back to the 1850s and the church building is a point of pride for both our congregation and our community as it is a beautiful architectural feature anchored in the downtown area that has grown to be a beloved mainstay of our community.

¹ All scripture citations are from the New International Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.
Statement of the Problem

Due to the age of our physical structure (portions of our current church facility date back to the 1860s), our church is in need of renovation and remodel in order for it to effectively continue as a place of Christian worship, study, and fellowship. The main hallway that links all of our building together, the youth facility located under the current main building, and the original chapel and parlor all require major renovations, as well as a number of features that need updating for ascetic reasons and for the overall security of our facility. Our church leadership has determined our current facility requires extensive renovations and remodeling and we are faced with a large building project.

Statement of the Project Goals

With this problem in mind, the goals of this project were to:

1. Determine the specific role of a United Methodist minister in a church building project of this type.
2. Interview similarly situated UMC ministers who have led their church through such projects in the hopes that their experience may clarify this role.
3. Present the findings of this work to the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) of DFUMC for review and adoption of my role in this building project going forward.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Project

The primary focus of this project was DFUMC and the very specific building project of this particular congregation. While all ministers and churches within the UMC could be able to glean some assistance from this project, not all of these entities will be able to wholly apply this project to their specific situation. Certainly this is because this
project is based upon a particularized unique situation: a large historic UMC congregation in need of a major renovation.

Some recognized and accepted delimitations for this project were related to the nature of this particular building project and the unique setting for which it is to be conducted. This building project was entirely focused upon a large historic UMC church and does not include much data or discussion beyond this setting. With this in mind, it would be relatively easy to see that a UMC minister seeking to build a modern facility for a brand-new church may not find this project as helpful. Certainly such a pastor would be able to attain some helpful information from this project – such as general information about the early stages of committee formation, what was needed to achieve district building approval and where to locate the overall Discipline stipulations that pertain to building a UMC structure – but the minister seeking to build a brand-new gleaming glass and steel contemporary church facility may not find much useful data beyond this perfunctory information.

A UMC minister within a small or medium sized congregation may not find most of the information produced by this project helpful to their context because the concentration of this project was completely upon the large historic UMC church. A UMC minister in a small or medium sized church or even in a large church that is not within the “historic church” category would likely not be able to fully utilize the resulting data of this project as it does not directly apply to their context. This is certainly also true of non-UMC ministers seeking to build a church or renovate their existing structure. The
focus of this project was entirely upon the role that a UMC minister would play in this unique build. The result of such a narrow focus is that a non-UMC minister may find some useful information within this project, but they would not find the majority of it helpful simply because they are not affiliated with the UMC, which has its own rules, regulations and expectations for building projects.

Terms and Definitions

In order to fully understand this project, certain terms need an explanation. **UMC Minister:** For the purposes of this project, a UMC minister is understood to mean an ordained Elder, who by God’s grace, has completed their formal preparation and has been commissioned and served as a provisional member, has been found by the Church to be of sound learning, of Christian character, possessing the necessary gifts and evidence of God’s grace, and whose call by God to ordination has been confirmed by the Church.²

**UMC Church:** A pastoral charge within the UMC, shall consist of one or more churches that are organized under and subject to the *Discipline* of the United Methodist Church (the governing text of the UMC), with a charge conference and to which an ordained or licensed minister is or may be duly appointed or appointable as pastor in charge.³

**Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC):** The SPRC is a committee within a duly constituted UMC that is directly responsible for the care, support and evaluation of the pastor(s) and

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³ Ibid., 148.
staff as they carry out their leadership responsibilities.\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Large Historic UMC Church}: For the purposes of this project, a “large historic UMC church” is a church that is 150 years old or older and is composed of more than five hundred professing members. \textit{Building Project}: In this project, the term “building project” is to specifically refer to a building remodel, renovation, and/or new construction within an existing church facility.

Assumptions

One of my assumptions was that there is an actual role for the UMC minister in a church building project. I further assumed that this role of a UMC minister was identifiable through the research that I conducted. Also, I assumed the participation of my targeted UMC ministers and that their contributions would lead to some qualitative data that would produce useful information for this project. I also assumed that the data produced in this project would serve to not only pinpoint the specific role of a UMC minister in such a building project, but would also create information that would be useful for the SPRC of DFUMC in determining my specific role in this building project going forward.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the role that I, a UMC Senior Pastor serving a large historic congregation in need of a large building project, would play in this specific building project. Ministers embody a litany of roles and responsibilities that accompany the daily practice of ministry and naturally perform many different functions:

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 197.
administrator, teacher, chaplain, preacher, spiritual guide, etc. All of these roles are a natural function of the multi-faceted position of minister in the congregational setting. These roles are varied and diverse in their presentation and are complicated in their application within the church setting. They are all important in their own way and ministers are able to carry out the obligations of these roles based on factors such as natural giftedness, experience and training.

Though some ministers are better than others at the administration of these roles, all ministers must be at least some-what proficient in the basic functions of ministry. Ministers who have been called to congregational ministry within the church must be able to adequately execute certain basic functions that are the sole responsibility of the minister. The minister must be able to preach and teach, manage the affairs of the church, officiate weddings and funerals and administrate the Sacraments at the very least in order to satisfactorily achieve a minimal amount of competence within the congregation to which they have been called. These basic functions represent but a part of what the congregational minister is asked to carry out in the performance of his or her duties within the church.

There are many other responsibilities that the congregational minister is tasked with performing as a minister in the church setting. One such responsibility springs from a situation that is becoming more prevalent within the church: a building project. Many churches across the United States are currently experiencing a season of decay with regards to their facilities. Such churches are beginning to show their age quite visibly for
all to see for a variety of reasons. Many of these churches are old, they have storied histories dating back to the early 19th Century and many go back even further. This maturity of a congregation is often reflected in the buildings that house the faithful believers of such congregations. These buildings are crumbling because of their age and are often at critical moments in their existence as a result of the effect that their deteriorating facilities are having upon their congregational life. Other churches may not be as “historic” as those who can trace their histories back many decades and yet they are also experiencing drastic facility decline.

These churches are coming to look shabbier and decrepit because of poor administrative decisions that deferred needed facility maintenance, expensive renovations that are beyond the financial capacity of the congregation or, most often, these churches are degenerating into ramshackle facades because they are in the midst of congregational decline and simply cannot keep up with the maintenance of their facilities. Whatever the reasons may be – age, finances, and membership decline – the churches that are physically declining are in need of assistance. The congregations that can afford to renovate declining structures and remodel dated facilities look to the Senior Pastor for guidance in this arena. The Senior Pastor is then asked to perform a duty far outside of the skill set of many ministers as they are often expected to embody a major role within a building project. DFUMC is one such church that is sorely in need of renovation and remodel as its physical structure continues to decline and this DMIN project sought to
determine what my specific role, as the Senior Pastor would be in such a building project within a historic United Methodist congregation.

Research Questions

The research questions of this project were focused upon this particular role. These specific questions were meant to illumine the responsibility that I would embody with respect to this role in the upcoming building project within my congregation. The questions were expressed in this way:

1. Is there a specific role for me, as the Senior Pastor of this congregation, in the forthcoming building project?

2. If so, what is the specific role that I will fulfill as the Senior Pastor in this building project?

3. How will the SPRC of DFUMC respond to my proposed role as the Senior Pastor in this building project?

Methodology

Overview

In order to accomplish my stated goals, I planned on utilizing the processes and procedures of Qualitative Research, specifically, Ethnographic Research. Qualitative Research is best understood according to five characteristics that all such research has in common: “the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as primary
instrument of data collection and analysis, and findings that are richly descriptive.”⁵ This understanding of Qualitative Research is further clarified as research that systematically seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings.⁶ Ethnographic research is aptly defined as “a way of immersing yourself in the life of people in order to learn something about and from them.”⁷ This form of research is largely observational in nature and calls upon the person that is being observed to share their stories and experiences with the researcher. From these stories the researcher is then able to gain insight and understanding of both the research subject and their specific context.

Ethnographic Research was utilized through my efforts to observe my research subjects in their ministry context and in my effort to seek to better understand them and their role within the building project for which they have been involved. Following my observation and analysis of my subject and their context, I employed the practice of Qualitative Research to analyze the data received with the hopes that this data would be codified, clarified and analyzed with the achievement of my goals in mind. These forms of research and analysis, Qualitative Research and Ethnographic Research, became the


⁶ Ibid.

central modes of study that I employed in this project and in my efforts of fulfilling my project goals through the utilization of their specific processes and procedures.

Process and Procedures

The largest component of my research for this project was the one-on-one interviews with the Senior Pastors that I selected as my research participants. As stated earlier, these participants were pre-selected by me based upon the appropriate criteria for this project and the hopeful fulfillment of its stated goals. The criteria included: Senior Pastor (the lead pastor of the congregation), Church Context (large congregation of at least five hundred members that is 150 years old or older) and building project (a large building project with a budget of no less than $1,000,000.00). Once these Senior Pastors were selected and agreed to participate in this research, I obtained their informed consent and began the process of interviewing them about their context, building project and perceived role in the process.

I conducted these interviews within the context of the specific Senior Pastors. This decision was made because I believed it was important to see the setting in which they serve in order to gain insight about their ministry and their building project that I would not have gained otherwise. I also made the decision to conduct the interviews in their setting because I believe that interviewing them in their context would put them more at ease, thus allowing their answers to be more fluid and less constrained by the somewhat awkward nature that such interviews could cause when the interviewee feels out of place or ill-at-ease due to unfamiliar surroundings. It was my belief as well that
interviewing these participants in their setting would likely foster more uninhibited narratives as they would be able to draw from their surroundings in the physical sense as they were able to see the subject matter for which they were speaking. This would naturally lead to more honest and useful responses.

Upon the selection of these ministers and their giving consent to this project, I met with them in their context in order to observe them and interview them with a set of predetermined interview questions (see Appendix A and Appendix B). These questions were highly specific in nature to the minister, the church they serve, the project they were a part of and their personal story/reflection upon the building project to which they have personal knowledge. The interview process began with a brief introductory period, where I reviewed the reason for the interview and explained again the purpose of my research. Of course, I had given the participants a much more detailed explanation earlier in previous discussions with them when I obtained their willingness to participate. During this period the goals of this project were reiterated, the process was explained, the terms were defined, and the participants became more aware of their role in this project. Once this introduction was complete, I began the interview process with questions that sought to illicit more narrative responses that were less concise and less specific than the questions that would follow.

Each of these interview sessions were at least one hour in length, were conducted strictly by me alone and were recorded (with the consent of the interviewee) so that I could take the information gleaned from these interviews and accurately codify the data
from the transcribed text of the recorded interview. The data collected was coded for the purposes of finding common phrases, terms and identifiers that would, hopefully, lead toward the accomplishment of my stated goals. Coding is the most proven and prevalent form of data analysis in Qualitative Research and is therefore the preferred method of researchers engaged in this process. The coding techniques that I utilized were based upon the work of Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* and formed the primary form of research data analysis beyond the preliminary Ethnographic observational and narrative analysis employed in the initial interviews. Once the data was properly codified and examined, I then reported my findings in the next stage of this procedure.

Significance of the Study

I am certainly aware of the reality that there are many United Methodist pastors serving in churches with the same facility issues that we at DFUMC are experiencing. These pastors are ministering in church buildings that are beautiful but antiquated, which means that these pastors and congregations find themselves in the same predicament that we, at DFUMC, find ourselves in and are therefore asking the same questions that we are asking given our shared challenge. While there is a sense of collegial comradery in the commonality of this problem, the truth is that, though we may share in this comparable situation, we similarly situated pastors have no real concrete guide to follow in seeking to

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alleviate this issue with our buildings; especially with regards to the specific role of the Senior Pastor in such building projects.

As United Methodist pastors, we have vague guidelines put forth in our governing legal text, the *Book of Discipline* that serves as the only true resource for pastors to utilize in a building project. As is the case with such denominational texts containing voluminous by-laws and regulations, there is very little specificity in this resource. The *Discipline* (as it is known in the UMC) is composed of broad strokes rather than fine details, which means that churches and pastors of the UMC are bound by the oftentimes agonizingly vague parameters established within this book. As frustrating as this ambiguity can be, this lack of clarity does allow for the pastors and the churches of the UMC to operate fairly freely within the loosely established lanes of the *Discipline*.

Though this freedom is meant to allow the UMC churches the latitude to adapt the guidelines of the *Discipline* to its specific context, it does not make it any less frustratingly obtuse when specificity is sought. This is where I hoped that this project on the building needs within my congregation would hopefully serve as a guide whereby I might glean my specific role in this building project within the walls of DFUMC. This project would become a path to follow with regards to my specific responsibilities and would be an accepted role by the SPRC that concretely detailed my function as the Senior Pastor in this particular building project. I believe that such knowledge and adopted practices would be greatly beneficial for both the church and myself as we move through

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this building project together. The specificity would allow for clarity of position, particularized responsibilities and an intelligible lane of leadership that all involved in this project would understand and accept.
CHAPTER TWO

THE ROLE OF THE MINISTER IN A BUILDING PROJECT

They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”

Nehemiah 1:3

Biblical Role of the Minister in a Building Project

It is nearly impossible to adequately state the importance and value of Jerusalem to the Jewish people. Jerusalem is and has always been more than simply a city, a holy site upon a rock-strewn hill that served and serves as the capital of Judaism and the center of the Jewish faith. This ancient city is more than just brick, mortar and stone; this city is the symbol of Jewish nationalism and is the embodiment of the Jewish faith on earth. Jerusalem is sacred to the Jews because it was crafted by David, made into the earthly home of God on earth in the creation of the holy temple by Solomon and painstakingly stewarded by a vast succession of Kings who sought to protect their people and preserve the Jewish way of life from the throne-room in Jerusalem. The result of which has been a deep veneration, respect and connection with this sacred site for the Jewish people that is as much a part of the core of Judaism as Mount Sinai, the Jordan River or even the Tabernacle.

Jerusalem was both the seat of governmental rule for the Jewish people and the site of the only place of true worship on earth for the faithful ancient Jew and for the ones...
who even now believe as their ancestors have, that Jerusalem is where Judaism begins and ends. As such, the Jews have always revered and cherished their holy city, that has over the centuries become the capital city of both the ancient and contemporary Jews and has gone by many names such as Jerusalem, the City of David and Mount Zion that further speaks to the degree to which the Jews regard Jerusalem as the most holy place in the Jewish faith. The Jewish people draw strength from Holy Zion and find comfort in the knowledge that they, as the Chosen People of Yahweh, have the privileged place amongst all others of calling such a blessed place their home.

Though the Jews could boldly proclaim their status as favored in the eyes of God and could count themselves and their holy Jerusalem as blessed above all other nations of the world, the Jews were as susceptible to the temptations of sin as other peoples and were just as likely to suffer the consequences of that corporate sin. The Jewish people existed in their favored status for generations, but over time, the people began to turn from God and towards sinful ways. Scripture states: that the Lord became angry at the sinful ways of His people, especially its kings, and decided then to thrust his people from His sight and to raise up and enemy to destroy them. The Lord delivered on that promise by allowing the King of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar, to raise an army bent on the destruction of Jerusalem and the subjugation of its people.

The Jewish people refused to heed the warnings of its prophets and godly leaders, which in turn sealed their fate and brought about the bitter fall of Jerusalem; the once

\[10\text{Neh} 24:20.\]
proud site of all that is Judaism and the home of both God’s presence and God’s people.

Scripture records these sad events in this way:

So in the ninth year of Zedekiah’s reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it. The city was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat. Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king’s garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah, but the Babylonian army pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered, and he was captured.

He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him. They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.

On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He set fire to the temple of the Lord, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down.

The whole Babylonian army under the commander of the imperial guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had deserted to the king of Babylon.

This momentous event marked the destruction of the holy city of Jerusalem and the beginning of what came to be known as the “Babylonian Captivity,” a long period of internment whereby many Jews were held captive in Babylon as prisoners of war.

Ibid.
Amongst those held in Babylon, during that mournful period of imprisonment, was a faithful Jew named Nehemiah who never forgot the holy city.

Nehemiah was the Cupbearer (a position of influence and prominence) to the Babylonian King, Artaxerxes and as such was afforded a close proximity to the King. Upon hearing of the dreadful state of Jerusalem from his brother, Nehemiah mourned the pitiful state of his home and ultimately with great boldness used his position to plead with King Artaxerxes to allow him to return home to Jerusalem and rebuild. First Nehemiah asked the King to allow him to go to Jerusalem and confirm the status of the holy city. Nehemiah was allowed to make this short trip to Jerusalem and was able to verify the information that he had received, the walls of the city had indeed been torn down and the gates had been burned. Having seen this devastation for himself, Nehemiah begged King Artaxerxes to allow him to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls that had been torn down by the King’s predecessor. To no doubt the surprise of many, the King agreed to let Nehemiah return to accomplish this task and also gave him letters to the regional governors of the area that would allow him safe passage, and an armed escort to accompany Nehemiah to Jerusalem.

This began a profound journey that changed the future of Jerusalem and the fate of God’s people, the Jews, as Nehemiah became the leader his people needed to restore the dignity and security of their holy city. This task was a difficult one indeed as the physical state of Jerusalem was poor, the resources needed for rebuilding the wall were scarce and the enemies of the Jews were very much against the prospect of Nehemiah
rebuilding any portion of Jerusalem. This dire situation is captured well by Ted and Andrew Kallman in their book, *The Nehemiah Effect*, when they write: “The starting point for Nehemiah’s project was not a pretty picture, the walls were broken down, the gates were burnt, the people were defeated and they had enemies opposing them and successfully frustrating their efforts.”

These circumstances would have dissuaded most people, but Nehemiah felt called to serve in this way and therefore began a great work with diligence and a level of perseverance seen most often only in godly leaders.

Men and women like Nehemiah, who receive direct instruction from God, or feel a strong leading toward a specific mission (like Nehemiah), often struggle mightily in their efforts and yet they remain doggedly determined because of their deep faith in God and their often unusually strong call to fulfill their divine task. Such is the case with Nehemiah, who knew that the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem were of the upmost importance because with the walls being broken down, any enemy could just walk right in and plunder the city anytime they wanted. Securing the city by rebuilding the walls was therefore the top priority for Nehemiah and upon reaching Jerusalem; he went about faithfully executing a very difficult building project against ever-increasing obstacles.

The difficulties that Nehemiah faced were not just the typical tangible issues that accompany large building projects. As a matter of fact, it can be argued that the most

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significant obstacles Nehemiah faced were the intangible ones that came in a variety of forms. Nehemiah knew, however, that in order to help God’s people (his own people) and restore God’s reputation, he must adapt and overcome any and all struggles he faced for the good of all involved. The struggles that Nehemiah faced that became burdens he would have to carry throughout the project were the ones that came from people, most specifically from Sanballat and Tobiah. Sanballat was a Samaritan leader and Tobiah was a leader amongst the Hittites and together both men opposed the rebuilding efforts of Nehemiah, as they feared a resurgent Jerusalem filled with their enemies, the Jews.

These men employed the weapons of ridicule and pessimism as they taunted Nehemiah and his fellow Jews, trying to undermine their efforts at every turn by sowing the bitter seeds of doubt and throwing the sharp darts of contempt. Together these men dismissed the efforts of the Jews as folly and when Nehemiah and his people continued undaunted, Sanballat mocked the Jews as feeble and weak. He then turned to deriding the materials the Jews were using, as the stones that were being placed upon the wall were ones that the Jews had taken from rubbish heaps and were damaged from the previous Babylonian attack. Tobiah added to the bombastic ridicule of Nehemiah and the Jews as they continued to work upon the wall of Jerusalem by mocking the finished product; saying that “a solitary fox could destroy the wall.” Though these efforts were relentless,

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14 Ibid., 11.
15 Ibid., 62.
16 Neh 4:3.
Nehemiah rallied his people by opposing the taunts of Sanballat and Tobiah with prayer to God and encouragement to his fellow Jews. Nehemiah refused to allow such struggles to deter his calling in anyway, as he firmly believed his work was divine and that the opposition he faced from these men would be met with the fervent provision and protection of God.

Nehemiah rallied his people and stayed committed to his work even when the hostilities pitted against him turned from words to threats of physical harm. Nehemiah would not allow the murderous plots and easily discovered machinations of his enemies discourage him or thwart his efforts as he led by example, working upon the wall alongside his fellow Jew. Even when these plots began to thicken and to become even more treacherous, Nehemiah remained determinedly focused on his building project, as evidenced in his most famous quote: “But they (Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, the Arab) were scheming to harm me, so I sent messengers to them with this reply: ‘I am carrying on a great project and cannot come down.’” 17 With this attitude of determination, Nehemiah, with the help of his fellow Jews, completed the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in a miraculous fifty-two day period of time. Upon the completion of this momentous building project, Nehemiah rejoiced and dedicated his work to the name of his God, who had enabled the project to be a success even in the face of such struggle. Nehemiah had reason to rejoice, after all he had completed the great task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem that had been laid before him and he had done so against great

17 Ibid., Neh 6:3.
odds. In so doing, Nehemiah placed himself in the honored company of godly leaders who had gone before him and who would succeed him that had themselves done, or would do, amazing feats for and with the help of God.

Theological Understanding of the Role of a Minister in a Building Project

Nehemiah accomplished a great feat by completing a difficult building project, which was the result of many variables including the fact that he possessed a firm ministerial identity throughout the project for which he felt called by God to complete. This identity was ministerial in nature as Nehemiah led a group of fellow religious observants to complete a building project for a sacred space. The idea of ministerial identity is a crucially important aspect of the life of a minister as it often serves to be the guiding force of a minister’s career. This is true from the earliest days of Christianity as the early church leaders identified themselves according to certain roles and perhaps more importantly, the churches that they represented, viewed them according to these same roles. This is evidenced as the Apostle Peter became a figure of authority within the Jerusalem community as he embraces his role of spokesman and leader of the body of believers.¹⁸ Von Campenhausen embraces the notion that ministers identity themselves according to the varied functions of their service. He even further notes that this practice is carried on throughout the development and expansion of Christianity throughout the world. As the church develops across the span of hundreds of years, so too does the habit of ministerial self-identification within the role of the minister.

The minister often sees himself or herself as fulfilling a specific role in specific ministerial circumstances. As the minister in the congregational setting is asked to embody many different roles, the minister assumes the role that best fits the circumstances of the ministerial requirement. In the hospital, as the minister is called to bring comfort to the dying, the minister assumes the role of chaplain: offering the ministry of comfort and presence. In the church worship service, the minister assumes the role of preacher (or even priest), as he or she proclaims the word of God and administrates the Sacraments. In the Administrative Board meeting, the minister assumes the role of CEO (if this is the role the minister feels led to embody), as the minister operates as a manager of the administrative responsibilities of the church. These are but a few of the roles of the minister in the church, as there are many other responsibilities that the minister must at least attempt to competently achieve.

Nehemiah most embodied the ministerial role of CEO (Chief Executive Officer) during the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. The biblical narrative of Nehemiah illustrates this truth in how he took control of the building project from the beginning. Nehemiah assumed the role of CEO in this building project from the earliest visioning stage all the way through to the management of the build itself and finally to the point of completion and dedication. Not all ministers would have assumed this role in such a project, as all ministers are different, have different gifts and graces and see their specific role as minister in such a project in differing ways. For many ministers, such a role within
such a very specific ministry calling, a major building project is one that has become a reality for many ministers and yet it is also one that has evolved over time.

Ministers, like Nehemiah, developed their ministerial identities in such projects over time, as the people of God they serve have evolved from a landless identity of sacred space to one where their religious identities are deeply tied to the building in which they worship, study, fellowship and serve. We see this in the life of Nehemiah and the Jews, as Jerusalem and the holy Temple there became a both the symbol and center of religious life for this body of believers. This sprang from the time that Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, thereby negating the need for the temporary and itinerant nature of the Tabernacle, the first house of Yahweh on the earth. Once King Solomon built this Temple in the City that his father helped to create, the Jews ceased to be a wandering community that worshipped in a tent wherever they found themselves at the time. Roots of religion and religious practices were thereby firmly implanted into a specific location and from this location the Jews became a people with a specific locale of worship, which was to be a firm foundation for their culture and most importantly for their religious practices.

As time passed from the creation of Jerusalem and the building of the Temple, Christ Jesus came upon the earth, and the birth of Christianity began as disciples of Jesus were brought into this new belief system. Following the death of Jesus, His followers like the Apostle Paul and the original Disciples turned Apostles, began to establish religious communities through evangelistic means within existing locations. These communities
became the first Christian churches, an established body of believers in Christ as Lord and Savior, and these first converts began to construct the first houses of worship of the Christian faith. Mircea Eliade calls this process the separation of the “Sacred and the Profane,” which he explains is the process by which religious people establish for themselves a sacred space that is meant to be wholly separate from the profane world.\(^{19}\) Eliade explains that over time, the Christian basilica and later, the cathedral take over the symbolisms first conceived by Heavenly Jerusalem. In the construction of such sacred places, believers are therefore crafting the sacred from the profane and thereby establishing a seat of religious practice where before, none existed. From this separation of sacred and profane, these religious people carve out their place to worship and practice the tenants of their faith that were before landless and without a firmly established physical structure.

As this process of creating and building sacred places progressed throughout time, the ministers of the Christian communities became landed servants of God, rooted firmly within an established sacred space. These Christian communities came to call these sacred spaces, church: the physical building that houses the spiritual practices of the religious community. With these new spaces of worship and religious practice, the ministers called to serve them developed a deep sense of attachment to these houses of worship. No longer wandering priests in the wilderness of the Middle-East, the ministers became the public faces of these religious institutions and for many such minister, their

identities became (and still can be) inseparable from the facilities in which they serve. For Christian ministers this identity was shaped over many years as the sacred spaces that they ministered within changed drastically over time. In the earliest years of Christianity within the Roman Empire there was no one uniform space in which the people worshipped. These early communities of faith “varied significantly” and were quite diverse throughout the empire and this diversity of sacred space continued to transform over time. As these structures moved from simple house churches in Philippi, Ephesus and Corinth to the gothic cathedrals of Europe and on into the columned stain-glass encrusted churches of the 19th Century in America, the identity of the minister that served within these walls expanded in concert with their facilities.

Sacred space, in the Christian religion, became more than just a facility to house religious practices; these structures came to symbolize growth: the growth of Christianity, the growth of the institution of religion and even the growth of the power held by the clergy. This is evidenced by the massive building expansions and constructions that took simple houses of Christian worship to massive cathedrals and expansive churches that began to personify power and purpose. The ministers within these walls were closely tied to these structures, and as they grew in size, so too did the identity of the clergy-person that served these expanding houses of worship. The Protestant congregations in America fell in lock step with this movement of structural expansion, as these churches grew

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significantly in the 18th, 19th and early 20th century. According to Kilde, as the grand architecture of Protestant churches in America began to expand with ever-growing church facilities, so too did the identity of the congregations and the ministers of these churches, as they began to develop an identity closely tied to their own grand structures. With this expanded identity came a sense that the body of believers and the ministers who serve them are uniquely identified in an ever-increasing manner with the grandiosity of their church structure, which allowed for a melding of the minister’s identity with the identity of the church building that housed their ministry. As the churches grew, so too did the psyche and ego of both the congregants and the ministers; their identities became synonymous with the identity of their facilities and both developed a heightened sense of self as their facilities began to grow.

These massive new churches became increasing symbols of success, power and influence within their communities and the minister became the face of this symbolism within the community. As the churches expanded they began to tell a story and as they grew they began to move beyond simple “houses of worship” and even “eschew traditional ecclesiastical symbols” in favor of grander architectural features that showcased their growth and influence. It seemed that the grander the structure of the church, the grander the image of the minister of the church and as this period of growth


and expansion continued, in many ways so too did the expansion of ministerial identity. Long gone were the days when the minister operated within the home churches of Imperial Rome in the early days of the rise Christianity. Absent were the simple rock structures of the Christian Abbey’s in 14th Century Europe. Gone even were the days of the simple “Meeting House” of the Christians in America, as the simplicity of sacred space gave way to the grandiosity of the modern Christian church.

Historical Foundations of the Role of the Minister in a Building Project

As this movement away from the once simple pragmatic structures of earlier churches to the more expansively grand facilities of congregations began to sweep across the United States, the congregants within these places of worship began to need a person capable of managing the expansion and growth of the church structures that they populated. The ministers serving within these expanding facilities became the one to which these congregants turned to fulfill this responsibility and these ministers began to increasingly be asked to take on yet another ministerial role: building manager. This role is often either thrust upon the minister by a congregation unwilling to devote their own time to such a project or one that is happily embraced by a minister that feels at least adequately skilled to take on such a project. Whatever way the role is established, the minister within a church bent on a building campaign must quickly discern what their particular role will be in the building project, as it is most likely not an option for the minister to fulfill no role at all in such a project. This is a truth born from the fact that the minister, as congregational leader, is expected to perform a great litany of duties. Thomas
Oden, a noted United Methodist minister and author, states that such logic stems from the expectations that the community of faith, in which they serve, either consciously or unconsciously projects upon the minister. Foundationally speaking, Oden maintains a very Wesleyan understanding of the minister as “a member of the body of Christ who is called by God and the church and set apart by ordination representatively to proclaim the Word, to administer the sacraments, and to guide and nurture the Christian community toward full response to God’s self-disclosure.”

Oden expands on this understanding as he writes, “Each of the following titles reveals implicit expectations that the community of faith has toward the ministry:

- **Parson** emphasizes the notion of the minister as embodying the person (“parson”) or soul of the community before God in prayer. The term **elder** points to the dimension of maturity and experience in the guidance of the church often carrying the connotation of “teaching elder” or “ruling elder.”
- **Curate** is one who has a “cure” (“care of souls,” or *cura animarum*, in a parish), a curacy.
- **Preacher** is a characteristically American usage that stresses the publically declared Word and evangelical witness as a central function of the pastoral office.
- **Priest** places sacramental acts at the center of ministry, stressing the mediation of divine grace through appointed means and the representation of the people before God in intercessory prayer.
- **Minister** suggests that service is crucial to all other aspects of the work of the clergy.
- **Evangelist** stresses the itinerant ministry of proclamation of the Word.
- **Clergy** (root word: *clerk*) emphasizes the clerkly skills and learning that were and are still expected of ministers. A cleric, in medieval times, was one educated in church law and prepared to officiate in pastoral services. In medieval usage, to have “benefit of the clerical office” meant to have benefit of education.

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Reverend or the Reverend (from reverendus, “worthy of being revered”) is an epithet of respect applied to clergy since the fifteenth century, preferable used with the definite article – “the Reverend” and often prefixed to the name in correspondence. Chaplain (from chapel) is a minister who conducts services in a chapel of a public institution, and is often used to refer to military, hospital, or various institutional ministries.\(^\text{24}\)

As seemingly comprehensive as this list of ministerial roles seems to be, Oden claims that there are still many more responsibilities of the minister that are not listed above and also that each of the above listed ministerial functions contains additional responsibilities within that specific category. Oden claims that within the ministerial role of Pastor, there are certain gifts bestowed upon the minister by God and one of these is that of Oikonomia: the Gift of Administration.\(^\text{25}\) This gift is one most closely associate with “Stewardship,” and is the management function of the minister as the minister is the steward of the resources of the faith community and the one that is charged with the administration of the work and mission of the church.\(^\text{26}\) The minister, as pastor is therefore historically the figure within the church that is tasked with the oversight of the church property as any steward cares for the property of another.

Bishop William Willimon, a noted United Methodist bishop and prolific author, takes up this idea of the minister as historic steward of the property of the faith community and narrowly defines it by utilizing a 21\(^{st}\) Century UMC distinction.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 49-50.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 80.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 80.
Willimon understands the UMC minister to be a “transformative leader,” called to serve within the congregational context as both a divinely called person of faith and also a position that is bestowed upon the minister as a gift from the congregation. The UMC minister is for Willimon, both agent of the divine and servant of a called community. This image of the core identity of a minister with the UMC, for Willimon, is one that began with John Wesley in the earliest days of the Methodist movement and is one that has evolved into something more in keeping with modern times and yet still retains its original core identity.

Willimon explains this unique formulation when he expresses his own understanding of the roles of the modern UMC minister within the congregational setting. Willimon states that these are the Contemporary Images of the Minister: Media Star: the public image of the minister to the wider community. Political Negotiator: the political function of the minister with regards to his or her role in the political realm. Therapist: the pastoral care function of the minister as spiritual counselor. Manager: the minister as leader of a complex volunteer organization. Resident Activist: the minister as

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28 Ibid., 56.

29 Ibid., 58.

30 Ibid., 59.

31 Ibid., 61.
community prophet moving about town agitating for social justice.  

Preacher: the proclamation of the Word from within the confines of the church body.  

Servant: the minister as servant leader to and for God’s people.  

Rebel: the unorthodox function of the minister as change agent and untraditional emergent leader.  

Willimon further defines the UMC minister as Manager, by embracing the non-glamorous and often lamented function of administration in the life of congregational leadership. In this role, the minister is called to be businessperson to the church, actively pursuing the administrative duties that come with the office of ministry in a proficient and effective way. These functions include such tasks as staff management, financial oversight and facility care along with many other administrative duties. This is, for Willimon, an absolutely essential function of congregational ministry that sees the minister take on the stewarding role of managing the congregational life of the church, which logically includes the facility in which the church body is housed.

The minister within the UMC is therefore the logical caretaker of the church structure, as this function is a natural and logical by-product of the stewarding function of the minister within a congregational setting. This role is embraced differently by different ministers, as all ministers differ in personality, giftedness and calling, and yet it is none-

32 Ibid., 64.  
33 Ibid., 65.  
34 Ibid., 67.  
35 Ibid., 68.
the-less a function that must be undertaken in some way when and if a building project becomes a reality for the minister within that specific congregation. Lovett Weems, a UMC pastor and pastoral leadership expert believes that the minister in the UMC has a duty to their congregation to take on such a role when their church is in need of expansion, remodel and/or renovation. Weems believes that this is a direct tie to the history of Methodism as he states: “The Wesleyan movement began not for itself but for others. Thriving and serving were linked. The growth of the Wesleyan enterprise is directly linked to its identification with the needs of all of God’s children.”

Accordingly, Weems feels that the needs of God’s children, such as the growth and expansion of a church structure, become the natural responsibility of any UMC minister, as he or she is to view such a need as service in the midst of thriving growth. Weems states this most concisely as he explains, “leadership (in the UMC) exists on behalf of and for the sake of community.” The UMC minister is therefore duty-bound by calling and by appointment to service the need of God’s people within the local church with regards to a building project, as that need becomes a clearly manifested requirement for the minister when the facility housing the people under the care of the minister evidences a needful building project of whatever kind. The minister then becomes the one by which the congregation naturally looks for leadership and guidance in such a circumstance.

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37 Ibid., 59.
As the minister in such a circumstance comes to accept that their leadership is required in such a building ministry, the question that most arises in that situation then becomes: What specific role shall the minister embody in the building project? As we have seen, ministers tend to embody many different roles and functions that are largely dependent upon the need of the church or the specific congregant. This is the same for the minister in a building project. In such cases, the minister must perform some function in such an undertaking, as they are the identified leader of the church. It is largely up to the specific minister (or in some circumstances the congregation) to determine what that specific role would be for them personally. Though one reality cannot be denied as the church and the minister find themselves upon the precipice of such a building project, no matter what happens from that moment forward, change will become the order of the day and as Weems rightly sates: “leadership is about change.”  

With this in mind, when the minister begins a building project based upon an identified congregational need, that minister becomes an agent of change, a role that accompanies any specific role that a minister embraces during a building project in the church. And as anyone who has lived upon this earth for any amount of time can attest, change is difficult even when it is sorely needed.

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38 Lovett Weems, Jr., *Take the Next Step: Leading Lasting Change in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 13.
CHAPTER THREE

DUBLIN FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH:
A CHURCH IN NEED OF CHANGE

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.
Deuteronomy 31:6

The Context of Dublin First United Methodist Church

Dublin, GA is a growing community of 16,200 residents located within Laurens County, which currently serves as the County Seat of Laurens County and the largest metropolitan area within this region. Dublin is the product of Irish immigrants who migrated to the area from Ireland, established the community and named the area in which they settled, “Dublin”, after the city of Dublin, Ireland. From its earliest days, Dublin has been a city that is deeply tied to agriculture and textiles drawing from the rich soil of the area that allowed for the growth and prosperity of the city. As the community grew over time, so grew the City of Dublin, which greatly benefited from being located directly in the middle of Savannah and Macon. This prime location, coupled with the development of Interstate-16, has allowed the city of Dublin to thrive over the many years since its foundation.

Dublin First UMC became a fixture in this city from its earliest days and became firmly rooted in the heart of Dublin when it was founded in 1852 by Rev. John McGheehee; a Methodist minister that is credited with gathering the first congregation
and preaching to its citizens until the church building could be created. With the
beginning of the Civil War, DFUMC got off to a slow start, and did not truly begin to
grow until it was officially organized in 1867 at the end of the war. The church itself is
the product of seven dedicated women, who served as the Charter Members, and
organizing force behind the congregation. These pioneering women truly became the
mothers of this great church, as they directly saw to the purchase of the land upon which
the church now sits and the management of the sanctuary construction in 1885. The
completion of the sanctuary became the catalyst for the growth of the congregation as the
membership began to swell from those years all the way through a number of expansion
projects and newly constructed buildings upon the current church campus.

The membership of the church continued to grow as the city of Dublin grew and
eventually the church opened up the sanctuary to accommodate 1,200 people, added the
most recognizable features of the church, the twin towers with accompanying Moorish
archways. Sunday school classes were held in the new rooms of the education building
for the first time in 1911 and the first worship services were held in the newly expanded
sanctuary, complete with fresh stain glass windows and polished oak pews, in that same
year. DFUMC continued to grow from this period of time, which called for another
season of building renovations in the 1950’s and again in the early 1960’s. This period of
renovation marks the last period of major construction and/or building projects of any
type on the campus until an elevator was added in 2000. Aside from this elevator project,
the church structure has remained much the same, as the facility exists currently in the
same manner as it has in the many preceding decades.

The buildings that currently compose the DFUMC campus are now aging and in
many cases rapidly declining as the years have passed. The facility is beginning to show
its age in a variety of ways all over our campus and this decline is becoming more than
just an eyesore, as the facility is now in such a state of degeneration that certain areas are
no longer well suited for our current ministry needs. The entire main floor of the church
from one end of the building to the other is in such a state of complete deterioration that it
has become a source of embarrassment for our membership and even a point of negative
comment for guests in our building. This area includes our church parlor, chapel, main
level restrooms, choir room, administrative offices, church library and main entrance to
the facility. This area is replete with aging and unsightly carpeting, extensive water
damage, peeling wallpaper, antiquated furnishings and even unstable stairways. The
worst of the problems with our aging structures is seen the greatest in our basement
Youth Facility. This area is located under the main church building and has been used for
the Youth Group of our church for over fifty years. In this time, this area has been
inundated with water issues, stricken with mildew and mold, and has incurred pest
infestation resulting from the many holes, cracks and fissures in both the foundation and
the exterior walls. This area is now our greatest area of need, as it has become largely
uninhabitable for ministry, and a location that needs immediate attention for the future
Youth ministries of DFUMC. Photographic images of the exterior of DFUMC, and
interior images of the main hallway, restroom, chapel, parlor, sanctuary, and youth room are located in Appendix E. All of these many needs within our church structure, brings our congregation to our current situation of dire attention, and has become our most significant challenge, as we are now a congregation that is in great need of change.

Most Significant Challenges

This significant challenge facing DFUMC is one that is complicated, as our church needs change in its current facilities and yet we are a historic traditional church, which does not accept such change well. This truth has been evidenced in the fact that the renovation and remodel that our church has needed for many years, has been unsuccessfully attempted by a litany of former pastors and is well seen even in the current attitudes of many of our membership. This has become an opposition to a needed change that has been difficult to bear and frustrating to the leadership of our church and to me, as the Senior Pastor. As noted before, Nehemiah faced opposition to his rebuilding efforts from the enemies of the Jews in the regions around Jerusalem (Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem), as well as from his fellow Jews in the form of nobles from Judah.\textsuperscript{39} One might rationally think that all Jews would be in favor of Nehemiah’s work, but as we see in the scriptural account, this is not the case because change, even when involving the same cultural group, can be viewed in wildly differing ways based on a variety of factors. With this in mind, change often brings out both the best and worst in people, as we see in the differing responses to Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., Neh 6:17.
Certainly this is because change is viewed as positive for some and at the same time seen as negative by others based on such factors as: fear of losing control, opposition to anything that would negatively affect a party's selfish ambitions or even simply a person’s petty opposition to change because of the uncomfortableness that change often brings to people who have operated in the same manner for an extended period of time.

People who are often similarly situated (like the Jews in and around Jerusalem at the time of Nehemiah’s rebuilding efforts) can very often have polar opposite views of change even when they both view the same change process, at the same time and with nearly the same situational conditions like tribe loyalty, corporate identity or even complicated group dynamics like those that exist within the Church. This is due to the vast differences that occur within individuals, even those in a tight-knit grouping, that are often the driving force of both positive and negative responses to change in any form. While one individual can see the benefits of needed change and celebrate what may come from the institution of change action, the other individual may see the same issue and desire to continue to operate as the institution or groups always has, not wanting to upset the status quo or experience the after-effects of change. Bob Whitesel captures this paradox well when he states:

*Change is often ignored by Christians because it creates a tension and discomfort. Change forces us to look at what we are doing and evaluate it as to whether it is God-ordained or human-initiated. Change requires discussion, investigation, reflection, evaluation and a solid understanding. In our busy world today, we often fail to do this. We become stuck in our outdated ways of doing things, because change takes too much energy. As a result, change is often overlooked until a crisis becomes so significant*
that it cannot be ignored. By then the change has polarized each side into competing camps and discussion about biblical change is difficult.\(^{40}\)

As Whitesel explains, Christians often get caught in *Cainophobia* – the fear of the results of change and this fear often becomes disruptively uncomfortable or unfortunately paralyzing for the group.\(^{41}\) This is especially difficult when change is what is most needed, as was the case for Nehemiah, and is very often the case in the Christian church today, where the need for change is evident to most but the fear of change becomes the driving force behind crippling inaction.

Such inaction forces institutions like the Church into stagnation in growth, frustration in vision and a desperation in the loss of mission that results in downward spiraling hope for congregants and community alike. Most of such negativity around change, which results in such destructive and disruptive circumstances, is largely due to people’s resistance to change. People resist change for a variety of reasons such as: misunderstanding, lack of ownership, patterns of habit that are hard to break, threat of loss, negative attitudes towards change as a whole due to past experience, lack of trust in leadership, tradition and fear.\(^{42}\) These reasons drive the behavior and attitudes of individuals and become the barriers to change, especially when such individuals are able to influence a group-dynamic with these negative views on change.


\(^{41}\) Ibid., 110.

Such individuals, when they are situated within a group that is facing needed change, are able to influence the group in detrimental ways that often either prevents change before it happens or frustrate change while it is being instituted. As Galloway suggests, the driving forces behind resistance to change are often rooted in misunderstanding about the change that is sought. Nehemiah experienced such resistance when his efforts were nearly thwarted and certainly slowed due to a misunderstanding of Sanballat and Tobiah, who believed that the Jews were seeking to bolster their military might through the building of the wall. While the building of the wall certainly had a military component in that it provided security for Jerusalem from neighboring peoples (like Sanballat and Tobiah), this was not its chief aim. Nehemiah was more interested in security for his people than he was in raising up a fighting force, as Sanballat and Tobiah feared were his intentions. Such is the nature of misunderstanding when it comes to projects that involve change for groups.

The group typically misunderstands the desired outcome and therefore becomes opposed to the project without having the correct information to begin with, which when such faulty information is spread within the group (as is often the case with group dynamics) the project becomes stalled and/or inhibited by the simple misunderstanding that has crept into the group and permeated to its core until misunderstanding becomes accepted fact. Misunderstandings within groups are often centered on what the overall goal of the project may be, the roles that people are to play in the project, the steps needed to carry out the enterprise or some combination of these factors. If such
misunderstanding is not resolved by the leader/leadership of the group, then the project bent on a perceived change will either be halted before it begins or will be so frustrated during its process of completion that the change action itself will never become what it could have been were it not for the misunderstanding.

Beyond misunderstanding, is the threat to change that is characterized by a lack of ownership, where no one in the group so thoroughly buys-in to the project that it flounders from the insufficiencies that nearly always accompany such a necessary requirement of success. Typically a lack of ownership occurs when the leader or leadership forces an idea or project on a group without the needed input of the group, which nearly always results in an insufficiency of ownership from the group-at-large. Under such circumstances, the group naturally does not embrace the project or get behind the pitched idea because the group was left out of the visioning process, kept away from the planning portion or both. As a result, the group becomes averse to the project that it feels it was not included in from the beginning or at least during the planning and implementation stages. Nehemiah escaped this pitfall by inspiring the Jews to the need for the wall project and including them in the process from the beginning. He also fostered increased commitment to the project from his people by becoming an active part of the project himself through his own labors upon the wall and his willingness to defend the wall if the need arose. By engendering support and committed buy-in from the group at all stages of the wall build; Nehemiah proved that change is possible when the group actively takes ownership of the undertaking.
If people have a tendency to stall projects bent on change within their group or institution through misunderstanding or a lack of ownership, then such people certainly have the capacity to thwart any such perceived project by their own deep-seeded habits that are hard to break. Most people tend to be creatures of habit, in that repetitive action brings comfort in the security and known quantity that result from such repetition. Habits are the result of such behavior and deeply ingrained habits become very difficult to break or alter the longer the habits have existed and the more deeply they have become ingrained in the individual. With that in mind, when a change project is introduced into the lives of people within a group that is bound to habitual behaviors, conflict and opposition to the change project is nearly always the result. Change becomes the enemy of habit in such circumstances and it becomes the threat to traditions that have been adopted and practiced with fervor and pride by such a group for many years in many cases. The group collectively asks themselves: “Why do we need to change when we have done things this way for so long?” In such a situation, the most dreaded statement that strikes fear and loathing into the heart of any agent of change becomes the mantra of a group composed of individuals that are bound by habit; “We have always done things this way.”

This statement is rooted in the love and comfort of tradition and can become the nail in the coffin of any change project. Certainly this is due to the fact that a group can become so entrenched in traditional ways of doing whatever their institution is in the business of doing, that the group can no longer objectively see that its old ways have
become a hindrance to progress and the result of such beliefs are nearly always a passionate objection to any change that might infringe upon such tradition and habit.

Traditions are valuable to most groups in that they help define the group and provide an identity for the group and its very reason for existence. These hard-wired and often hard-fought patterns of behavior and belief are therefore deeply personal to individuals within the group, who themselves are often defined by the traditions that they so faithfully practice and revere. These individuals find comfort and even joy in the keeping of traditions within their group that are often generational and have been taught; practiced and passed down by their relatives and by others who have positively impacted their lives. This is especially true in institutions like churches, where tradition is respected, expected and encouraged as a means of worship and adherence to church dogma.

Problems arise within groups like churches, when such groups become mere repositories of tradition, where the meaning and purpose of such tradition has been lost and is now followed blindly with mindless, heartless robotic action. In such cases, groups that find themselves slaves to tradition are most often the ones that have such difficulty with even the idea of change. Change in this context, for a group that has become shackled by tradition, is viewed as subversive, disruptive and anathema to what is considered the heart of the group’s very existence. This can be so even when the group has become so bound to its tradition, that it no longer even knows why it follows such tradition, as the meaning and intent behind the tradition has become lost to the group over time. The group is no longer benefited by the tradition, in the sense that the tradition
defines the group’s identity setting it apart from the world at large and providing direction for the group’s purpose, the group is at this point, rather a hollow vessel devoid of meaning as it has strictly become a mindless, purposeless and passionless automaton.

The result of such a group condition is often an overwhelming paranoia and outright fear of change as change is viewed as a threat to what the group knows, practices, and adheres to, even if the group no longer knows why it does so. Fear in such a context becomes the motivating force that rallies a group against any proposed change as the group comes to see such possibilities of change as enemies of tradition bent on the destruction of the traditions that bind the group in place. The true culprit behind such fear for groups stagnated by their own traditions is the threat of loss. Alan Deutschman captures the essence of this negative aspect of group dynamics when he states: “The process of change can be threatening for those who have become overly comfortable with the familiar.”

This threat is very real to groups consumed by self-identifying traditions as any deviation from the tradition means a loss for the group that has become consumed by its own traditions. This fear of loss is threatening to the familiar patterns of comfortable behaviors within such a group and when such familiar comforts as long-practiced group traditions are disturbed by change, individuals who have become themselves strict monitors, guardians and practitioners of the tradition actively pursue the end to any threat to that tradition, namely any perceived change.

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When a group comes to this point, bound by tradition merely for the sake of the preservation of that tradition and change is needed for the betterment of that group, leaders within the group must rise to address this issue for the benefit of all within the group. This is seen well in the case of Nehemiah when the Jews in exile had become resolved to their place as captives in a foreign land, accepting their status as prisoners of war without thought to the reality of a change in station and circumstance. As resilient as human beings can be, it is no real surprise just what a human can adapt to and even accept as a new normal. Humans can survive vastly different climates, geographic regions of the world, socio-economic situations and even can persevere in the face of life-threatening conditions such as war, disease or pestilence. With this in mind, humans have an unfortunate ability to accept the lesser of a situation even when such humans are shown that a change in behavior or attitude can immeasurably impact their lives in a positive way.

Such is the case when fear enters the lives of a human being, as we have discussed earlier, and that fear is so pervasive that the person would rather choose to live in circumstances of great difficulty even if that change promises the prospect of a much better life. Or as it has been stated: “Anyone seriously interested in planned change would be well advised to recognize two facts of life. First, despite the claims of many, relatively little is known about how to achieve predictable change. Second, much of what
is known will not work. Generally speaking, because of such fearful uncertainty, people choose what they know, even if what they know is a lesser existence. Or as Galloway says, “Most of us prefer the hell of a predictable situation rather than risk the joy of an unpredictable one.” This is most often true because people fear that even a change that might bring better living is still a change that threatens the known quantity of their current situation.

The Jews in exile during the time of Nehemiah are a solid example of this sad truth. They had accepted captivity and exile as their reality and in their fear of the unknown were unwilling to accept a change that would better their lives. This is seen when the Jews were brought out of Babylon back to Israel. Rather than joyously seeking to move back into the holy city of Jerusalem to live behind the newly constructed wall for protection, the Jews were forced by Nehemiah and the leadership to cast lots for who would be made to live behind that wall. From this example we see how fear of the unknown, even if the unknown promises a much better existence, is a powerful negative motivator that often causes people to choose the bad that they are accustomed to over the great that might occur if a change is sought. Leaders are for this reason a crucial component of any change project, as the majority of people need comforting guidance and resolute leadership in the face of feared uncertainty.

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45 Ibid., 16.

46 Neh 11:1.
Analysis of Role

The role of the leader, or chief change-agent, in any process of change that involves groups of people that are bound by the limitations of their humanity, is a most crucial feature of any successful change project. Nehemiah was that leader for his fellow Jews during the period of Jewish exile, the Jerusalem wall reconstruction and even in the Jewish people’s return to Israel and to Jerusalem. Galloway again captures the essence of this need for leadership in the midst of change (in his case, the Church) when he writes: “You have to have a Senior Pastor (leader) who is willing and gifted to ride as the point person. And for change to happen, the Senior Pastor must be committed to leading the change initiative.” Meaningful change is led by leaders who (in concert with their people) recognize the need for change within their group structure and more importantly, choose to guide the process of change as Nehemiah did so well in his time. The result of such solid guidance was that Nehemiah completed the rebuild of the wall of Jerusalem and in the process he accomplished so much more. Nehemiah was able to not just replace the stone and mortar of the wall that surrounded Jerusalem; he was able to rebuild the national pride of his people the Jews, as they were able to return to their holy city of Jerusalem in safety and blessed security behind the wall that Nehemiah resurrected.

Through the rebuilding project that Nehemiah was called to complete while serving as the Cupbearer to the Babylonian King in exile, the Jews were able to eventually return home in security, given the opportunity to relearn the will of God as

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they were taught (some for the first time) the scriptures and perhaps even greater than all of this, the Jewish people were able to rededicate themselves to the Lord through a written contract that bound the people in holy covenant to God once more.\footnote{Neh 9:38.} In the days that followed all of these momentous events in the lives of the newly freed and repurposed Jews, Nehemiah continued to serve God faithfully as Governor and further led the resurrection of the Jewish identity in the holy place that had always served to identify the Jews, Jerusalem. Behind the newly minted walls of Jerusalem the Jewish people slowly began to rise from the rubble of their former lives as the wall itself had been raised from the mounds of debris to become the symbol of the Jewish resurgence.

The nation of Israel had much to be joyous about in these days and as they rejoiced in their newly reclaimed favored status with God, Nehemiah faded back into the obscurity from which he came. Like so many of God’s leaders, Nehemiah seemed to have come from out of nowhere only to make an incredible impact upon the Jews like Abram, Isaac and Moses before him; and then became content in full humility to give God the full credit as he surrendered to the waves of history. Such is so often the calling and life of biblical leaders and through their selflessness and sacrifice; much can be learned by the leaders in our world today. Men and women who hope to lead their group through uncertain times where change is called for in the midst of uncertainty. It is these men and women who, with God’s guidance, are able to lead the people under their care through projects of change that better their lives and bless the generations that follow. People like...
Nehemiah, who lead by example through the challenges of transformation for the betterment of the people they represent, become the embodiment of the change-agent that guide the people under their care through the tumultuous but quite often very necessary process of change.

Throughout the various stages of this building project, I have sought to carefully illuminate that which Dublin First UMC already knows; that a change is very much needed in the facilities of our church. As the Senior Pastor, I am seeking to express the message to my congregation that this change is not an indictment on them personally or evidence of any failing of the past, or even some desperate attempt to stay relevant in a changing culture, but is rather a natural occurrence of time that all institutions must eventually face. This has not been an easy road to travel, as this church is, like so many main-line historic traditional protestant congregations, is uneasy and in some cases quite averse to change, even when the need for change is so evident and even publicly acknowledged. Much of the pain associated with this stems from the fact that so many of the members of my congregation have been a part of this church for many decades and their families have been a part of the church long before even they came to be active participants in the life of the church. So many of these people have a long and devout history with this church that allows them to remember having been married in the original chapel decades before, having their United Methodist Women’s Circle Meetings in the historic Church Parlor and having their children come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior in the basement Youth Facility.
These memories are strong and for many people in my church, they have become powerful barriers to change, as many of these same congregants have allowed their ties to the history of our church to create in them an obstinate and even subversive attitude towards any changes to our church facility. Such attitudes have made my role, as the Senior Pastor, hoping to bring about needed changes in this congregation, quite difficult and increasingly frustrating at times. I realize that such attitudes are merely products of positive memories of a beloved former age and not simply sour thoughts on the building project that even these same people admit is needed in our church. With the acknowledgement of this impediment, as well intentioned as many of these people are, it is still quite difficult to help facilitate change in the midst of such negativity, even though it is admittedly coming from a small but vocal minority within the church. It is in the navigation of all of this change, that I sought to discover what my specific role would be as the Senior Pastor of this church during this building project. I certainly acknowledge that as the called leader of this congregation, I have a large position in the midst of all of this change, and it was my hope that I would come to understand my role in this by speaking to similarly situated Senior Pastors that have been or currently are going through this same situation in their context. These interviews, with similarly situated UMC Senior Pastors of large historic United Methodist congregations, were the foundation of my research methodology and were the research design that I have adopted, with the hopes that the data that I gathered and analyzed would shed light on my given role in this building project within Dublin First UMC.
Research Methodology

In order to accomplish my stated goals, I planned on utilizing the processes and procedures of Qualitative Research, specifically, Ethnographic Research. Qualitative Research is best understood according to five characteristics that all such research has in common: “the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as primary instrument of data collection and analysis, and findings that are richly descriptive.”\(^{49}\) This understanding of Qualitative Research is further clarified as research that systematically seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings.\(^{50}\) Ethnographic research is aptly defined as “a way of immersing yourself in the life of people in order to learn something about and from them.”\(^{51}\) This form of research is largely observational in nature and calls upon the person that is being observed to share their stories and experiences with the researcher. From these stories the researcher is then able to gain insight and understanding of both the research subject and their specific context.

Ethnographic Research was utilized through my efforts of observing my research subjects in their ministry context and in my efforts to seek to better understand them and their role within the building project for which they have been involved. Following my


\(^{50}\) Ibid.

observation and analysis of my subject and their context, I employed the practice of Qualitative Research to analyze the data received. This data was then be codified, clarified, and analyzed with the achievement of my goals in mind. These forms of research and analysis, Qualitative Research and Ethnographic Research, became the central modes of study that I employed in this project and in my efforts of fulfilling my project goals through the utilization of their specific processes and procedures.

Process and Procedures

The largest component of my research for this project was the one-on-one interviews with the Senior Pastors that I had selected as my research participants. As stated earlier, these participants were pre-selected by me based upon the appropriate criteria for this project and the hopeful fulfillment of its stated goals. The criteria included: Senior Pastor (the lead pastor of the congregation), Church Context (large congregation of at least five hundred members that is 150 years old or older) and building project (a large building project with a budget of no less than $1,000,000.00). Once these Senior Pastors were selected and had agreed to participate in this research, I obtained their informed consent and began the process of interviewing them about their context, building project, and perceived role in the process.

I conducted these interviews within the context of these specific Senior Pastors. This decision was made because I believed it was important to see the setting in which they serve in order to gain insight about their ministry and their building project that I would not have gained otherwise. I also made the decision to conduct the interviews in
their setting because I believed that interviewing them in their context would put them more at ease, thus allowing their answers to be more fluid and less constrained by the somewhat awkward nature that such interviews could cause when the interviewee feels out of place or ill-at-ease due to unfamiliar surroundings. I believed that interviewing these participants in their setting would likely foster more uninhibited narratives as they were able to draw from their surroundings in the physical sense as they were able to see the subject matter of which they were speaking and would naturally lead to more honest and useful responses.

Upon the selection of these ministers and their giving consent to this project, I met with them in their context in order to observe them and interview them with a set of predetermined interview questions (see Appendix A and Appendix B). These questions are highly specific in nature to the minister, the church they serve, the project they are/were a part of and their personal story/reflection upon the building project to which they have personal knowledge. The interview process began with a brief introductory period, where I reviewed the reason for the interview and explained again the purpose of my research. I had given the participants a much more detailed explanation earlier in previous discussions with them when I obtained their willingness to participate. During this period the goals of this project were reiterated, the process was explained, the terms were defined, and the participants became more aware of their role in this project. Once this introduction was complete, I began the interview process with questions that sought
to illicit more narrative responses that were less concise and less specific than the questions that would follow.

Each of these interview sessions was at least one hour in length, was conducted strictly by me alone and was recorded (with the consent of the interviewee) so that I might take the information gleaned from these interviews and accurately codify the data. The data collected was coded for the purposes of finding common phrases, terms and identifiers that would lead toward the accomplishment of my stated goals. Coding is the most proven and prevalent form of data analysis in Qualitative Research and is therefore the preferred method of researchers engaged in this process. The coding techniques that I utilized were based upon the work of Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*[^52] and coding was the primary form of research data analysis beyond the preliminary Ethnographic observational and narrative analysis employed in the initial interviews. Once the data was properly codified and examined, I reported my findings in the next stage of this procedure.

Report the Findings

Upon the completion of the coding stage of this process, my next step in the procedure was to report upon the analyzed data that has been examined and identified as a legitimate outcome of this project. The reporting of this data was the culmination of all the work that has been brought to bear upon this project. It is for this reason that this information has become the central focus of this DMin project as it is this information

that would or would not be the very data that accomplished the stated goals of this overall project. The reporting of this data and the commentary upon it are discussed at length in Chapter Four.

Beyond this reporting, I plan on presenting my findings to the SPRC of DFUMC for their review and adoption as a part of the stated goals of this project. As the SPRC is the committee of the UMC that is directly related to the supervision, evaluation and oversight of the pastor(s) within the church, this committee is therefore the appropriate committee in which to report my findings. I will inform the SPRC of my work and then report upon the findings I have made in the following manner: These reports will come in the form of three called SPRC meetings whereby the members of the SPRC will be presented with the data that I have collected as models of “Pastoral Leadership in Building Projects” to consider and the group will be asked to adopt or modify the model that the committee feels is most appropriate to our project and to my leadership. These meetings will include a time for the discussion and evaluation of the models of Pastoral Leadership in Building Projects that I have gleaned from my survey. From this data, the SPRC will be specifically encouraged to 1.) Examine the strengths and limitations of the various models of leadership I have presented, 2.) Adopt a model for my specific leadership of this building project from the models I have provided, 3.) Or creatively suggest a more context specific model to be derived from the findings I have provided, and 4.) Give a recognized endorsement of these findings by formally adopting a model for my leadership in this building project by committee vote. This process will hopefully
clarify my specific role within this project to both the SPRC and the church at large and will further serve as the acknowledged parameters of my leadership in this building project at DFUMC.
CHAPTER FOUR  

LEADERSHIP UNDER EXAMINATION:  

ALL LEADERS HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY

*We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.  
*If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 
*If it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 
*If it is encouragement, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; 
*If it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.* 
*Romans 12:6-8*

Examination of Research

The purpose of this research was to determine whether there is a specific role for me as the Senior Pastor of DFUMC in the forthcoming building project, to ascertain what that specific role is that I will fulfill in this building project, and how will the SPRC of DFUMC respond to my proposed role as the Senior Pastor in this building project. The research utilized to ascertain the answers to this research questions was primarily the interviews that I conducted with the similarly situated Senior Pastors who were themselves either going through, or had gone through, a very similar building project in a similarly situated UMC congregation. The interviews with my pre-selected ministers served as the heart of the research for this project and as such, these interviews are the main method by which I hoped to attain the answers to my research questions.

The ministers selected for this study were chosen according to the before-mentioned specific criteria: Senior Pastor (the lead pastor of the congregation), Church
Context (large congregation of at least five hundred members that is 150 years old or older) and building project (a large building project with a budget of no less than $1,000,000.00). All of the Senior Pastors chosen for this research participated willingly and according to the guidelines assigned by IRB. The ministers that were chosen for an interview were gracious in all ways throughout this process. They each gave all the time that was needed for the research to be conducted and were very supportive of the process in all stages, especially in the context of the interview itself; where they happily donated an afternoon to participate in this study and were genuinely interested in the research for which they were participating.

All of the ministers that were interviewed answered every one of the research questions completely and were very candid in the narratives that they gave regarding the specific role that they played in the particular building project in which they were involved. Each interview was conducted in the context of that particular minister, in the church setting they currently serve within (only two of them are still serving within the church that they were serving when the building project took place), and I conducted every interview personally, with the longest interview taking a little more than an hour and a half. Each interviewee was asked identical questions that I specifically crafted and that can be found in Appendix B. Every interview was recorded with the consent of the interviewee, and the recordings were then transcribed into written text documents that have been kept securely in my office. These transcribed recordings were then examined
and analyzed according to Qualitative Research methodology; as will be discussed later in the project.

Changes to Planned Research Process

There were no substantive changes to the planned research process at any stage of this process before, during, or after the research was conducted. Each of the interviewed Senior Pastors was pre-selected according to the parameters set before the interview process and each participant met the criteria outlined. These Senior Pastors were notified of this project, asked by myself to participate and all four of them graciously agreed to participate in the interview portion of this research project. Once the meeting time and place was established, each Senior Pastor was notified about the intent of the interviews and they were then given an Informed Consent document that outlined their rights in this process and that can be found in Appendix A. Upon the signing of this Informed Consent document, each of the Senior Pastor participants willingly submitted to the interview process whereby they were all asked identical questions that were crafted by me ahead of time. The interviews themselves went forward without incident and every Senior Pastor that was examined was candid and direct in their answers, which provided a significant amount of data for me to examine. This data came in the form of the interview participant’s specific answers (usually in narrative form) and once this data was transcribed from the audio recording via software, the data was then analyzed at length by myself alone. All of this process went exactly according to the research process and therefore there were no changes to this process that would require reporting.
Report and Analysis of Data

Once the data was transcribed into written form, the process of analysis began in earnest as the data was categorized and codified according to the processes of Qualitative Research. According to Saldana, a code in qualitative inquiry is “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.”

With this in mind, as I began to examine the interviews, I began to look for patterns in language and word usage as I assigned certain codes into the appropriate categories. The categories were composed of groupings of like-minded codes that encapsulated certain amounts of specifically related data. For instance, upon examining all four of the interview transcripts, I grouped my codes in the following categories: “Church Setting, Building Project and Senior Pastor Role.” I chose these specific categories as they were the most pertinent groupings according to my intended outcome. These categories were the most important divisions of data that had the greatest bearing on my attempts to answer the proffered research questions of this project.

I first chose the category of “Church Setting” because this grouping was one that was pertinent to all four projects (also my own building project) and was the division by which I was able to establish the base-line commonality of the specific church building projects that I chose to examine. In this category, I was able to discern a strong base of

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common factors that proved the likeness of these building projects as they relate to my own. This is seen in the codes and coding found within this first category. For example, I hoped to establish a foundation and linkage of common information that could be seen in the analyzed data. This was achieved by examining the code work in this category, such as, each of the interviewed Senior Pastors acknowledged that the church setting for which they were involved in the building project was: “Old, Large and Traditional.” Each of these pastors mentioned each of these coded phrases multiple times as can be seen clearly in the attached Appendix D. Every pastor mentioned that their church setting was old at least three times (Rev. S mentioned this code nine times), all of these pastors acknowledged that there church was both “large” and “traditional” multiple times, which linked their setting to my own and satisfied the research parameters mentioned above: the participant Senior Pastors must be serving “large, historic and traditional” UMC churches. After establishing these base codes in this first category, I then moved on to the next category of “Building Project.”

As this thesis is centered on the work of Senior Pastors in building projects, this particular category and the codes that compose it, is critical for the research of this project thesis. In the Building Project category, I identified and isolated three specific codes that were “significant phrases that make meaning”\(^{54}\) and these phrases were again project-specific terminology that was common to each interview and were ones that have a direct bearing upon my own building project. These codes were: “Church Meeting,

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 9.
Fund Raising and Future” and were chosen as codes to be examined because they were emergent codes that I identified from the data analysis of the transcribed interviews. These codes emerged somewhat unexpectedly as they were not ones that I anticipated as I began the data analysis, and yet they were codes that clearly could not be ignored given the frequency in which they were used by all of the interview participants. Each of these participants, when asked specifically about their building projects, quickly identified three major tasks that were theirs alone. These tasks were identified as leadership in church meetings that directly involved the building project; a significant fund raising component that all four believed was their responsibility and finally, a “futuring” task that emerged as a claimed responsibility of the Senior Pastors for the good of the congregation.

Each of these pastors agreed, as the codes show, that a large portion of their responsibilities in the building project for which they were involved was to guide the church through the multitude of church meetings required to secure a fully vetted final project. Beyond this claimed leadership in church meetings was a definite sense that each pastor felt responsible for the fundraising aspects of these projects. None of these Senior Pastors mentioned fundraising less than five distinct times and Rev. S mentioned fundraising as a significant responsibility of the Senior Pastor as many as ten times. Finally, there was an emergent code that I certainly did not anticipate at all and this was the code that centered on the “future” casting work of the Senior Pastor. What is meant by this is that each pastor felt that the building project for which they were involved in
their church setting required of them a specific role by which they would cast a vision of the future of their church through the work of the building project. Each participant acknowledged that this was a task that was their alone and none of them mentioned this idea of “future casting” less than three times, with Rev. B mentioning this specific responsibility of the Senior Pastor seven times. All of these codes within the Building Project category helped to identify responsibilities that all the participant pastors believed were important to the Senior Pastor during a building project. Though this data was most easily seen on the third and final category, it was composed of codes directly related to the highly specific role of the Senior Pastor in a building project.

In this category, that I named the “Senior Pastor Role,” the interview participants gave away important data that dealt most specifically with pastoral identity in a building project, which goes beyond mere pastoral responsibility. This category became the most informative grouping and contained within it the most pertinent information for my project. The codes in this category, “Administrator, CEO and Vision Casting” all have a task-related connotation but, in truth, these codes go deeper into not just what the pastor sees as their responsibilities in such an undertaking, but further beyond into how they actually view themselves as pastors in such a project. This category was therefore highly enlightening as the codes were glaring in each interview and interestingly were some that I did not foresee going into these interviews. The code of “Administrator” was, for instance, one that was an obvious data piece (each participant mentioned this role) and yet this role was identified far less by the participants than I believed it would have been.
I initially believed that this code/role of Administrator would have been an identity piece that each Senior Pastor would have accepted, acknowledged and portrayed throughout the project far more than was the actual case.

There is a definite aspect of administration in a building project for the Senior Pastor and yet, each participant pastor mentioned this specific role no more than five times and Rev. B only mentioned this role once. This was intriguing and led into the next unexpected result from the coding of this category. The role of CEO was one that I believed going into these interviews was to be the leading identifier for these pastors. I truly believed that these Senior Pastors would firmly attest to their acceptance and portrayal of the classic CEO role in their building project. I was proven wrong, in that some of these pastors did believe that there was a CEO component to the building project work of a Senior Pastor, whereby the pastor takes control of the project and directly manages it from their office, and yet the analysis shows that they did not believe that this was their primary role; as I initially believed that they would have.

The primary role that was identified through the data analysis was, however, not the role of CEO, but rather it became clear that each participant saw themselves as the “Vision Caster” before all other roles. I did not anticipate this outcome in the least and yet, to a person each of the Senior Pastors interviewed, when asked the same specific question: “What do you believe was your specific role as the Senior Pastor in this building project?” answered in the same exact way; that they viewed their role as that of Vision Caster. This term is meant to convey the idea that each of these Senior Pastors
believed that their role was to paint a picture of what this building project could do for the future utility of the building, future effectiveness of the ministries of the church and the future growth of the congregation. All of these Senior Pastors accepted this role as theirs alone, and first ahead of all other roles that may have emerged from their work in the building project for which they were involved. The coded data bears this out: each of these Senior Pastors mentioned that they believed their specific role in the building project was that of Vision Caster at least five times, with Rev. S mentioning this nine times and Rev. B mentioning it six times. This is certainly statistically significant given the small data sample of the recorded interviews and is the largest single identifiable role for each of these participant Senior Pastors. This was not something that I foresaw, I believed that CEO or Administrator would be a much more commonly identified role, and yet there is no denying that these Senior Pastors saw themselves in the role of Vision Caster more than any other role in their building project.

Research Questions Answered

Upon the consideration of all of this data, it is clear that the proffered Research Questions of this particular project have identifiable answers that are illumined by this analyzed information. For the sake of clarity, the Research Questions proposed earlier in this thesis are: 1.) Is there a specific role for me, as the Senior Pastor of DFUMC, in the forthcoming building project? 2.) If so, what is the specific role that I will fulfill as the Senior Pastor in this building project? 3.) How will the SPRC of DFUMC respond to my proposed role as the Senior Pastor in this building project? Given the data received, I can
easily make the judgment that there will assuredly be a role for me, as the Senior Pastor of DFUMC, in the forthcoming building project.

Each of the Senior Pastors interviewed in this project confidently proclaimed that the Senior Pastor that is currently serving a church undergoing or in the preliminary stages of a building project has a clear role in that project. Most of these interviewees believed that this role was one that was either accepted as a function of the specific position of Senior Pastor or was a role that was accepted based upon the expectations of the congregation. All of the Senior Pastors interviewed accepted whatever role they embodied and took on that role willingly as a perceived responsibility that was in-keeping with what they believed to be the duties of the Senior Pastor position of the church. This is to say that none of these individuals felt that this role was thrust upon them by the congregation, but was rather a function that they willingly filled as they believed this role was their responsibility alone as the Senior Pastor of the church. This role may have differed between the interviewees, but there is no denying that each of them firmly believed that the Senior Pastor of a church in the midst of a building project has a role to play in that project.

It is, however, interesting to note that though these Senior Pastors fervently believed that there is indeed a specific role for the Senior Pastor in such projects, there was also a clearly articulated belief by each of these persons that this role (whatever it may have been for the particular Senior Pastor) was at least in a small way influenced by the expectations of the congregation. When asked whether they felt that their perceived
role in this project was “thrust upon them by the church,” each of the interviewees clearly expressed a view that it was not thrust upon them by any group per se, but it was influenced by their role as the Senior Pastor and the congregational expectations that accompany this position in the church. In other words, the Senior Pastors interviewed did not feel pressured to take on their identified role, but they did certainly feel that the church was looking to them for a leadership role in the project as the most clearly identified leader of the congregation, the Senior Pastor. This is a logical conclusion as the Senior Pastor embodies the position of greatest influence in the congregation and is therefore the person most likely to be leaned on in a project of such scope within the church they serve. This role of the Senior Pastor in a building project is therefore both willingly fulfilled by the individual as a duty of the Senior Pastor, and is interestingly also one that is accepted by the Senior Pastor, as it becomes a noted expectation of the congregation that accompanies the position of Senior Pastor.

When considering this information, it is indeed clear that I will have a role, as the Senior Pastor in this building project at DFUMC. I believe this to be the case from prior experience in previous churches, from my preliminary work in this project at DFUMC and certainly from the analysis of the data received and examined in this project. Perhaps then, the question is not so much IF I will have a role and much more so: “WHAT will that specific role be for me alone in this project?” As I consider this question, I do so with the experiences that I have had in this project to date, as well as the knowledge that I have of myself and my particular leadership style as a Senior Pastor. This is pertinent
information as each of the Senior Pastors interviewed, believed that the specific role that they fulfilled in their building projects, was at least in some way influenced by their own personality and the type of leader that they acknowledged themselves to be in the church.

This is evidenced from the interview transcripts: Rev. B states that he was “the point person, I had to keep us on task; I was the driver at some level” (Interview with Rev. B). Rev. C mentions, “I am a Firstborn. I mean Firstborn’s like to run things” (Interview with Rev. C). Rev. J confesses that he is a “hands on kind of guy. And so for this project I did a lot.” Also that he is a “Jack of all Trades.” And that he has a “high expectation of excellence… A high expectation that I want to lead” (Interview with Rev. J). Finally, Rev. S accepts that with regards to his project, he was “running the whole thing” (Interview with Rev. S). Upon reading these words, I see a bit of myself in each of these Senior Pastors. I see myself and certainly my leadership style in all of these individuals as I recognize my propensity to take charge of a project in the way a CEO might lead by managing all aspects of the endeavor and running the day-to-day operations from my office in the strict executive model of leadership.

Based upon my own self-reflective work, I accept that I am a Type A personality that likes to be in charge of projects and feels the need to be intimately involved in the details of such projects. This can be a benefit and a hindrance. It may be beneficial in the sense that it is helpful to keep the project on task, that few details will be missed with direct personal oversight and that I will know that the project will be completed in a timely fashion, with excellence and according to my standards. Though this also leads to
micro-managing that is often not appreciated by others involved in the project, meddling in areas of the project that are outside my skillset and even an inability to foster community buy-in as I may isolate the church from the project in an effort to keep it running smoothly. I also see myself painting the picture of what could be with this building project, in a futuring sense in the role of Vision Caster within my church.

From the earliest conversations with my congregation about this building project, I have cast the vision of what this project can be and should be as we began to have these more serious discussions on the likelihood of a major building project at DFUMC. This role has been mine alone from the beginning, as I believe that it is my function as the Senior Pastor to set the tone for such major projects and to bring the congregation together in an effort to create a community plan for what our church can be through such a project. I do not believe that any other staff-person or laity within the church could fill this role as well as the Senior Pastor, as the Senior Pastor is the one that the people naturally look to for such leadership. This is not to say that the staff and membership should be excluded from the visioning process. The vision should be one that is introduced as a grand possibility by the Senior Pastor to the congregation at large, made concrete by the communal work of all relevant parties within the church and then boldly proclaimed by the Senior Pastor to all the membership as the blessed future hope of the congregation from the pulpit, in church meetings and in every time the congregation gathers to fellowship. As the Senior Pastor of DFUMC, I accept this role of Vision Caster, as the interviewed Senior Pastors clearly did, because this is a function that I
agree must be one that is fully embodied by the lead clergy person within the church, the Senior Pastor.

Beyond the management and administrative functions of the CEO role and the visioning aspects of the Vision Caster, I believe that I have been called to also represent another role that was not mentioned specifically by the interviewed Senior Pastors, and that is the function of Change Agent. As Nehemiah before me, I strongly believe that I have been called to this role as well because, like Nehemiah, the work that I have done to this point has not been “overwhelming positive” as was the experience of the Senior Pastors that I interviewed. Each of these Senior Pastors to a man expressed that their congregation was “very much on board” or was “very supportive” of the work that they were seeking to do in their building project. I must confess that to date, my experience has been much more akin to that of Nehemiah and his attempts to re-build the wall of Jerusalem. Like Nehemiah, I believe that God is calling my community to this building project and that as such, this project is both God’s will for my people and also something that will greatly benefit their lives and faith journey in the future. Yet, also like Nehemiah (and unlike my interviewed Senior Pastors), my efforts have not been without struggles, both internally from my own people and externally from outside influences.

Nehemiah dealt with his own people, the Jews and their negative attitudes toward the building of the wall, as well as their unwillingness to move back to Jerusalem once the wall was rebuilt. This was no doubt a frustration for Nehemiah and yet he persisted because he believed God called him to bring about this needed change in the lives of his
people. This has been my experience with this building project at DFUMC as we continue to live into what this project will be for our church in this earliest of phases. In this early phase, we have begun the conversations about the need for a building project, assembled a Building Committee, hired an architect, completed three different plans for congregational approval and even gained the needed approval of our Conference leadership. Though we have reached this point as a church, it has not come without a great deal of struggle and unforeseen emotional strife. This largely stems from many different factors: as noted, our church is older, traditional and historic. With this truth comes the fact that there is a great deal of emotion tied to the building as it currently exists and as such, many individuals have made the needed change aspects of this project quite difficult.

Congregants with deep ties to our Church Parlor and Chapel have, for instance, by their emotional pleas ensured that the scope of the project has been altered in such a ways as to not include major reconstruction to these most critical areas of our church facility. This had a cascading effect, as when these areas were taken off the table as areas to be redesigned and repurposed for future use, other areas were then not able to be fully redesigned as they were tied to the reconstruction of these areas. This meant that because of the emotional raucous and behind-the-scenes argumentation of a very vocal minority, the Chapel and Church Parlor can now not be reconfigured to become an open space for a coffee shop area, guest meeting point, children’s check-in portal, Small Group meeting area and newly crafted covered entrance to the east end of the church. This group, largely
composed of older members with long ties to the church, fought any idea of allowing their beloved spaces within the church to be repurposed in anyway, which means that the project will not be what the majority of the church hoped it would become; a facility that will be best suited for the relevance of the church in the future.

Nehemiah also had outside forces; agitators like Sanballat that did not want his efforts to succeed for their own personal reasons. I too have had to deal with such negative outside influences. These have come in the form of banks telling our church that we cannot afford the scope of project that we desire, Conference officials that have strongly suggested we scale back our building project so as not to “bite off more than we can chew” and finally in the form of non-member community residents that have been discouraging all along about our project and our ability to complete the vision that was first outlined to the congregation. All of these influences have had unforeseen affects upon our project, and I have been unable to quell the negativity as Nehemiah did in such a way as to keep the project on task and intact. Sadly the opposite has been true, as these negative influences persisted over the two and a half years of this process to date, they have served to whittle this project down from a grand plan that encompassed all of the needs of the church, to a middle-ground plan that incorporated less than fifty percent of the original plan, on to what we are currently facing; a building project plan that is only twenty percent what was originally envisioned and one that in no way fully incorporates all that is needed for our current church facility needs.
This has been most assuredly disappointing, and yet it has solidified in me a function that I believe is not only God-led but also critically important to the overall success of this project, which is my role as Change Agent in this building project. Though I wish that I could have been able to successfully inspire the vocal naysayers of my church to buy-in to what the majority of the church and the totality of the Building Committee desired, I must accept that the change I will be able to facilitate in my time here is much needed and will likely act as a catalyst for the future building projects within DFUMC, that will most likely be led by subsequent Senior Pastors as I will certainly soon become subject to the UMC itinerancy. I will therefore not become the Nehemiah to DFUMC, but I will play a significant part in the change process that is so sorely needed in DFUMC and that is a role that I believe is mine alone.

I therefore believe that I, as the Senior Pastor of DFUMC, have been and will continue to embody the role of Change Agent in this building project we are in the earliest stages of completing and that I will be the sole person responsible for casting the vision of what can be as Vision Caster to this church. As the process proceeds on towards the actual building renovations, remodel and new construction of the Youth Building, I believe that my responsibilities will be increased, as I will take on additional roles. These functions will spring from my position as the Senior Pastor of the church, will be an expectation of this position in the church and will also become a part of the process based on my own leadership style. I believe that these specific roles will be much akin to the ones embodied by my interviewed Senior Pastors, they will be managerial responsibilities
and will most resemble the CEO function noted by the interviewees with the continued responsibilities of both Vision Caster and Change Agent encompassed within my role as Senior Pastor as this project continues to grow and evolve with the coming stages. This combination of responsibilities comes to form the unique role of the Senior Pastor within a building project, that as a result of all of this, I have come to call the “Managing Agent of Visionary Change” and it is this role that I proposed to the SPRC of DFUMC as my specific responsibility in this project. The response of the SPRC to my proposed fulfillment of this specific role will be addressed in the upcoming chapter.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Methodology

Upon reflecting on the totality of the work conducted throughout this project, I must admit that the greatest strength of my chosen methodology would most assuredly be the participation of the Senior Pastors that were interviewed. I was very pleased with how this process went from the moment these pastors were chosen, to the initial conversations with them regarding their willingness to participate and certainly on into the interview phase itself. These pastors immediately understood the desired outcome and were enthusiastic in their willingness to help in any way that they could, which I do credit to the fact that every one of the interview participants, with the exception of one, had themselves completed a similar project in their own DMin work. I believe this prior familiarity with DMin work gave them a basis of understanding of the intended outcome and a prior knowledge of exactly what I was seeking to accomplish in the work for which they were being asked to participate. These interview participants were therefore all that I
could have hoped for and more – they were generous with their time, candid in their answers to the interview questions and were genuinely interested in the success of this project – this was such a blessing as the interview portion of the project is truly crucial to its overall success.

The pastors interviewed also fit the pre-interview criteria perfectly, were certainly willing to participate in the process and gave astute answers to the questions that were posed to them in their various interviews. These answers then provided a rich subject matter for analysis and provided data that lent itself well to coding, which in turn made the reporting of the data both clear and comprehensive. The clarity of the data received from these interviewed Senior Pastors is another strength of this project methodology, as the data that was gleaned from these interviews was not mired in ambiguity nor was the data voluminous to the point of being overly burdensome for examination and analysis. The quality of this data meant that the analysis of the material fit well into the categories chosen and the codes that encompassed those groupings. This would not have been the case had the interview transcripts been filled with lengthy ramblings that were outside the scope of the interview and that would have provided data that was off topic and irrelevant to the project focus.

I certainly credit the interviewees with how this turned out and also credit the questions that were drafted prior to these interviews themselves. These interview questions enabled the interview participants to stay focused on the subject matter and ultimately aided in the quality of the overall interview materials. Along with the well-
crafted interview questions, another notable strength of this methodology is the way in which the churches fit within the targeted criteria of the project parameters. The churches represented by the interviewed Senior Pastors were required to fit within a tight frame of reference in order for the data received from the interviews to be pertinent to the project itself. These churches had to be “historic, traditional and large” while also being a church this is or was involved in a building project within this specific context that is large in scope, which was established to mean a project of one million dollars or more. This is a very particularized set of standards by which these churches were required to fulfill in order for them to qualify as subjects under study in this project. Each of these churches met this criteria perfectly, as did the Senior Pastors that represented them, and as such the building project experiences of these specific churches provided data that served to produce relevant information on this study of my role in a building project involving a church, DFUMC, that is very similar to the churches that were examined.

I also recognize that the strengths of this project methodology can also be seen as weaknesses when viewed from a different light. The Senior Pastors that were interviewed proved to be wonderful subjects and provided relevant data that allowed for a certain ease in examination. As true as this may be, the fact remains that the Senior Pastors that were interviewed were also limited in number, and this small number of interview participants limited the amount of data that was received. The number of participant pastors was established prior to the project with the thinking being that four participants would provide a manageable number of interviews while at the same time producing an
adequate amount of data to be analyzed. To be sure, the strict parameters of the study (church size, church type, scope of building project) also had a part in limiting the number of participants, though the smaller number of interviewees most definitely limited the amount of data that was received.

This meant that the data examined came from a very select group that is also very small in number, which meant that the data produced was not of a size that could have produced more information to be analyzed. While this was an anticipated outcome of working with a small number of participants, it also became more of a limitation to the examination of the data than was expected as the information was analyzed throughout the coding process. During the examination it became quickly apparent that the amount of information that was to be analyzed, while rich in quality, was also quite limited in quantity and this limited amount of information provided less information to be analyzed than was originally expected. Certainly this smaller amount of data to be examined can therefore be viewed as a weakness of the project methodology as this lack of a large body of interviewees limited the outcome. The limited outcome provided a smaller amount of useable data to be examined and thereby became a barrier to a wider scope of research that would likely have produced unforeseen data and relevant information to be studied and reported.

Another limitation that is regrettable, and can undoubtedly be viewed as a weakness of the project methodology, is a lack of diversity in the interview participants. Once again the strict parameters of the subjects to be interviewed caused a noticeable
lack of depth in the pool of project participants. The interview participants were required to be “Senior Pastors of large historic, traditional UMC congregations” and unfortunately this narrowly established criteria discounted all but middle-aged, white, males for interview subjects. Unfortunately, the South Georgia Conference of the UMC is not composed of a diverse grouping of Senior Pastors that fit these strict guidelines and therefore the only acceptable subject participants were the narrowly framed persons that became the interview subjects of this project. With this being the case, the interview data received came only from a very specific demographic of very similarly situated individuals that lacked the diversity of thought that might have been possible from a female, a person of color or even a person that was younger in age. This limitation forces one to ponder whether a more diverse grouping of individuals, had they been available, would have provided different information in the form of their interview answers that might have altered the data received in a significant way. Sadly, as the interview participants of this project were amongst the very few that fit the acceptable project criteria; we will never know whether diversity of age, race or gender may have played a role in the ultimate outcome of the project.

Impact on the Thesis

The intended outcome of this project thesis was to determine what, if any, specific role I, as the Senior Pastor of DFUMC, will fulfill in the forthcoming building project of our church. The goal of the research portion of this project was to provide data that would allow for this determination to be made based on the analyzed data that was gathered.
During the research portion of this project, pre-selected interview participants were identified according to project specific criteria, the interviewees provided pertinent data that was received, transcribed and examined according to Qualitative Research techniques. The ultimate outcome of this process was data that clearly allowed for a determination of the intended outcome of this project thesis.

This data showed, through the reported findings, the following determination: that there is indeed a role for me to fulfill as the Senior Pastor of DFUMC in the coming building project. These findings clearly evidenced that the Senior Pastor of a congregation engaged in a building project has a specific role in this project that stems from the position of Senior Pastor itself, the expectations that the congregation places on the person occupying the position of Senior Pastor, as well as the individual personality type and leadership style of the person who is serving in the Senior Pastor role. Each of the interviewed Senior Pastors provided information that made this conclusion inescapable and in doing so the data that was gathered from these individuals in their interviews bore out the truth that a Senior Pastor certainly has a role to fulfill in a project of this type within the church they are serving.

In furtherance of the ultimate end of this research, that extends naturally beyond the initial determination of the fact that the Senior Pastor does indeed have a role in such building projects, is the more specific determination of what that role will be for the Senior Pastor in such a project. Based on the data gathered and analyzed, clearly the Senior Pastor has a role in a building project and that role is one of Vision Casting,
Administration and CEO. These functions were all noted by the interview participants as roles that only the Senior Pastor can fill in a building project and upon examination of the material, I tend to agree, with one exception. I believe that, based on this data, I will be tasked with casting the overall vision of this building project to the congregation and all other pertinent parties. I also accept that there will be a fair amount of administrative responsibilities that I will fulfill in the process of this project and that I will therefore also embody certain aspects of the CEO role; as I will be the overall manager of this project and most of the work involved will be run largely from my office. The one notable exception to these identified roles is the function of Change Agent that I also believe will be a large responsibility that I alone will fulfill as I believe that as the Senior Pastor in this project, I am called to introduce and carry out needed change in my congregation through this building project.

Ultimately the role that I have determined to be mine alone is a hybrid, based on the research of this project and the work that I have been involved with in this project to date, my prior experienced in such projects and my self-identified leadership style. I have labeled this hybrid role of the Senior Pastor in a building project as “Managing Agent of Visionary Change” and it is one that I believe is fitting for me personally as it encompasses all the identified roles as well as incorporates a leadership function that is unique to this particular building project within DFUMC. This determination was made possible by the research portion of this project and is the product of the analysis of this data, which brought about the desired outcome of this project thesis: that there is indeed a
role for me, as Senior Pastor of DFUMC in this forthcoming building project and this role is that of Managing Agent of Visionary Change.
CHAPTER FIVE

A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

THE STRONG FOUNDATION

*The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; Yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.*

Matthew 7:25

DFUMC is a congregation that is in need of change. The change that is needed has been identified as a significant building project that would renovate old structures, remodel current facilities and construct a new facility for the good of the future of our church; the Youth Group. This change is one that has been acknowledged as a need of the congregation by the membership of the church for many years and is something that is most certainly a long-time in coming. For many years, many different members and leaders alike have accepted that DFUMC is in need of a building project that would change the existing appearance and utility of a once proud institution that has begun to show its age in unsightly ways. Beyond just the poor appearance that DFUMC now presents to all who enter its historic façade, the efficiency and effectiveness of the ministries that are carried out within its walls have also been negatively affected by its current state of disrepair. This truth is something that can no longer be ignored and is therefore the catalyst for the change that is coming in the form of our current building project.
As Senior Pastor of DFUMC, I wholeheartedly agreed with the need for this building project and then immediately began to ponder long and hard about what my specific role might be in this forthcoming building project. My search for understanding in this area became the heart of this project as I became determined to discover what, if any, role I would play as the Senior Pastor of a large, historic, traditional UMC that is preparing itself for an extensive building project. Through the research of this project, I have discovered the answers to my queries, and therefore stand assured of my place in this midst of all the change that is being brought into the life of the church I serve.

Result of Findings

Upon the conclusion of this project, I understand that as the Senior Pastor of DFUMC, I have a role to fill in this building project and I now understand this role to be that of Managing Agent of Visionary Change. This specific role is one that I believe to be mine alone as the research of this project clearly points to this conclusion. I feel confident in this assertion based on the various insights gained from this study and from the totality of this project. There is a clarity of purpose now acquired from the welcomed insights gained from this project, which have prepared me to further pursue this function within this building project with a confidence and purpose that would not have been possible otherwise.

As I began this process, I felt relatively certain that, as the Senior Pastor of DFUMC at the time when the discussions of this building project began to blossom into more than just the possibility of a building project, I would fill some specific role in this
by the nature of my position. Though I believed this to be true, even in the earliest moments of these most preliminary discussions, I truly did not know what that role would be, how it would be understood and what duties would accompany this role. Now that I stand on the other side of this project looking back upon the long months of research, information gathering and data analysis, I believe that I will be well prepared to engage this project with the appropriate mindset and direction gained only through the work of this project thesis.

Based upon the insights of this study I understand that my role, as the Senior Pastor of DFUMC, is to embody and fulfill the functions of the Managing Agent of Visionary Change for this building project. This conclusion is drawn from the research and became evident to me as this project progressed. This role is one that I have come to believe can only be filled by the Senior Pastor. I believe this to be the case because the Senior Pastor, as the chief leader within the congregation, is the only leader in the church that will possess the requisite authority for this position that is an inherent by-product of the position itself. The Senior Pastor is furthermore the specific individual to fulfill this role, in my opinion drawn from this research, as well because he or she is the leader that the congregation will most naturally look upon to fill this leadership function. This is once more based upon the nature of the Senior Pastor’s position as chief leader within the congregation. In accepting this truth that was gleaned from both early research into pastoral leadership models and the data analyzed from the Senior Pastor interview portion
of this project, it became quite evident to me that the lead role in this building project would be mine to fill as the Senior Pastor.

Beyond understanding that I, as the Senior Pastor, will fulfill the main role of this building project, the understanding of what exactly this role will be has been most instructive. This function comes as a hybrid model of Christian Leadership devised from the examination of Nehemiah and his call to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, from the research into historic leadership functions for pastor, as well as the interview portion of this project that engaged participants who have engaged in such building projects as the Senior Pastor of the congregation undergoing such change. All of these various areas of research led me to conclude that in this building project, as the Senior Pastor, I would fulfill distinct functions that involved the management aspects of a CEO, the Vision Casting components of a true pastoral leader and the added function of Change Agent that I identified as a crucial component of my specific building project.

All of these varying functions come to form the hybrid leadership model that I have come to understand as my role, as Senior Pastor, in this building project: Managing Agent of Visionary Change. This role will have features of direct management of the daily operations of the project, clearly evident fund raising aspects in the ultimate Capital Campaign, as well as a clear position of vision casting; whereby I will be the person that paints the picture of what this project can and will be for my congregation in the future. I have come to accept that with this role, I will be the one that is tasked with dealing with the day-to-day happenings of the project. This means that most of the general tasks of
project management will be ones that I handle in conjunction with the various pertinent committees of the church. I will field the majority of the questions, will be the person most likely required to work the closet with contractors and architects and will be the leader that is tasked with guiding the church committee persons through the many required procedures of the United Methodist Church with regards to building projects. This will involve calling timely and appropriate committee meetings, crafting the agenda and delivering the needed information to the group in a way that will be most conducive to attaining the required congregational approvals and dissemination of project specific information.

Beyond the management component of my specific role in this building project, I now know that I will be asked to create and carry out a congregation-wide Capital Campaign. Every one of the interviewed Senior Pastors were very clear on this function that each of them considered to be both crucially important to the overall success of this project and a function that must be conducted by the Senior Pastor. This campaign will need to be one that is tailored to the building project needs and the financial capabilities of the congregation, which according to the research of this project is a significant responsibility within the strict purview of the Senior Pastor. The Capital Campaign portion of the building project is now understood to be one that must be carried out by the Senior Pastor because of how closely related it is to the management aspect of the building project and the visioning function of the Senior Pastor.
This visioning function is derived from the Vision Casting aspect of the Senior Pastor’s role that was so strongly identified in the analysis of the participant interview data. The interviewed Senior Pastors all fervently claimed that the function that is most identifiable for the Senior Pastor of a church undergoing a building project is that of Vision Casting. Nehemiah and his experience not only spoke to the management aspects of such projects but also to the need for the leader to cast a vision that will carry the congregation from dream stage, to planning stage and on through to the completion stage of the project. Each of these interviewed Senior Pastors echoed the experiences of Nehemiah as they corporately spoke to this role as one that is critically important for the Senior Pastor to fulfill and to carry out well. This function is one where I now realize that I will be called upon to effectively illustrate the future functionality of the project that is now just a figment of our collective imaginings. In this role, I will show the church what is needed, why it is needed and how we can attain it through the various stages of the building project. This will involve a great deal of creativity and cross-project interactions with management areas and fund raising aspects that will be directly tied to the painting of this overall portrait of a successful building project. Beyond these clearly important functions, perhaps what is most important for our particular building project at DFUMC is the role that I will fulfill as Change Agent.

Nehemiah was most successful, in my opinion, outside of the obvious divine aid of God because he effectively communicated the need for change within the lives of his fellow Jews. Human beings have a clear capacity to fall into a repressive habit of
continuing along a known harmful path, even when a new path is brought to their attention that will not only better their current stagnated existence but will also improve their future lives. This is because habit and tradition are comfortable for people and they become deeply ingrained over time. This then often leads persons to a depressive place of desiring to stay with a familiar outmoded or no longer valid pattern of living rather than choosing to engage in a new form of living that offers benefits that the old ways do not. Simply put, many times people will choose the less profitable option for their lives because it is one that is known and familiar. This unfortunate reality is what makes change so difficult for people. This is especially true with groups of people because a group-sense of tradition and ingrained institutional habit can be very difficult to overcome as the individuals within such a group feed off of the historical comfort that the habit once provided.

Thus change comes hard for people, especially religious people in communities that are built upon tradition and decades long habitual practices that are deeply tied to the emotions of the affected persons. Nehemiah overcame this obstacle to his building project by not allowing the negativity of the naysayers and the assaults of the obstinate minority to derail what he knew was God’s plan for his people. Ultimately Nehemiah led his people through the turbulent waters of institutional change, by casting a vision of a better life for his people and by leading them to and enmeshing them in this envisioned reality by investing himself in the function of leadership that only he could fulfill. I believe that this function is one that I must embody and employ as well. The Senior
Pastors that I interviewed did not mention this function by name, though they certainly described it in the abstract, and they did not articulate this as a specific function of the Senior Pastor in a building project but I believe that this is a part of my role because of the unique nature of my setting. Change seems to be something that is especially hard for my congregants. This is likely the result of the fact that so many of my members have such a long history in this church and this long history means that they have years’ worth of memories tied to the areas of the church that are most need of change. While this is not unique to historic congregations per se, it is unique to my setting whereby my church members seem more resistant to change than others; especially in comparison to the church members of my interviewed pastors. With this being the case, I know that my function as Change Agent will be especially important to the success of this particular building project. This means that I will have to be increasingly aware of the sensitivities of my congregants to change in their beloved church even when that change is one that they personally accept will be beneficial to the future effectiveness of our church. This also means that I will have to remain even more doggedly steadfast in the vision for change that I cast for this project, just as Nehemiah did so long ago in his project, if this is to be the success that we all hope this building project will be for DFUMC. I therefore acknowledge that the function of Change Agent, that I believe is specific to my place as Senior Pastor in the midst of this building project, is one that will be most especially important in the days and months to come.
Impact of Study on Ministry

All of this research and the concluding results of this study have greatly impacted my ministry in positive ways. The research has provided me with insights that I would not have had otherwise and has given me a clear direction for this building project. This clearly defined direction has provided and continues to provide me with a confidence with regards to this building project that I know I would not have had were it not for this project. Aside from this, the research and all of the work related to this project thesis has also impacted my ministry by ultimately creating for me a very concrete and uniquely specific role to fulfill in this building project that has been examined and approved by the SPRC of my congregation.

The final point of my Statement of the Project Goals was to present the findings of this research to my SPRC for review and adoption going forward. I met with this committee of my church that is tasked with the supervision of all church staff (including myself, as the Senior Pastor) once the research was completed and the data was analyzed. This committee has been privy to the work that I was doing in this area and was purposefully kept up-to-date as I progressed, which enabled us to move through the materials at a more expeditious rate. Once we met, I reviewed the work that I had done and then presented the group with the four selected models of pastoral leadership that had been identified through this research: CEO, Vision Caster, Change Agent and the hybrid model of Christian Leadership that I have identified as Managing Agent of Visionary Change. We then examined the findings together and I answered any of the questions that
were brought to my attention by the group. The meeting then ended when I asked the members of the SPRC to prayerfully consider each of the models of Christian Leadership that had been presented to them. As we concluded I tasked them with deciding which role they felt best suited my leadership in this building project at DFUMC and requested that they identify this role for our next meeting.

Three weeks later the SPRC and I reconvened and discussed their findings. After prayerful examination of these four models of Christian Leadership that had been presented to them, the majority of the SPRC members chose the hybrid model: Managing Agent of Visionary Change. There were two members of the SPRC who felt that the CEO model would likely be the area of leadership most needed, but these members agreed that the other two areas (Vision Caster and Change Agent) were also important, if not, in their opinion, the most important areas of focus. The remaining majority of the SPRC members believed that the hybrid model of leadership was comprehensive, realistic and the model that was most specifically needed for our project. This particular model of Christian Leadership was chosen by the majority of this committee as they believed that it would best suit my style of leadership and at the same time would incorporate what they believed to be the most important areas of the building project: project management, fund raising, raising congregational awareness and driving the project to completion. This information was then briefly discussed further and the meeting came to an end with a formal SPRC vote on this matter. The vote was unanimous in favor of officially adopting
this specific leadership style of Managing Agent of Visionary Change as the one that the SPRC believed would be best for me to seek to fill in our building project at DFUMC.

New Directions of Study

As I now reflect on all that has transpired over the last few years with this project, I feel that this project thesis has inspired me to seek to better understand the role of Senior Pastor, and the many differing styles and modes of leadership that this position embodies. After having been a Senior Pastor for over ten years at this point, I understand that being a Senior Pastor to a congregation is a position that affords the opportunity to be involved in many different areas of ministry. Such areas include administration, preaching and teaching, visitation with the sick and infirm, officiating weddings and funerals, staff oversight and the priestly functions of administering the sacraments just to name a handful of leadership functions. Though I understood that the role of Senior Pastor is one that requires a varying degree of skill in a number of different areas, I did not truly understand the way in which a Senior Pastor may be called upon to lead his or her church through a complicated undertaking like a building project.

I have found through this project that leadership by a Senior Pastor in a building project requires a whole new set of skills that are unlike those found in other areas of ministry. These skills require the Senior Pastor to fill roles that they are not called to fulfill in nearly any other area of ministry. Such skills are fund raising, construction management, fostering congregational buy-in for a project that is needed for the future vibrancy of the congregation and utility of the church facilities. These skills merge to
form a need that only the Senior Pastor can adequately meet as their unique position of lead servant dictates that they strive to fill the roles that these skills necessitate in the ever-changing complex life of a church building project. Having now accepted this truth gleaned from the work of this project, I hope to continue to examine what other areas of pastoral leadership I need to explore in order to become more competent as a congregational leader.

This desire springs from the understanding that I have so much still to learn about how to best lead my church as the Senior Pastor. This project has enabled me to humbly accept that there are many areas of ministry that I need to seek proficiency in and likely others that I need to come to understand are not ultimately within my realm of expertise or even my area of ministry. As I moved through the months of study and research that this project thesis required, it seemed that nearly daily I was reminded of areas of ministry or pastoral skills that I either do not know enough about or do not have a firm enough grasp of to be the most effective Senior Pastor that my congregation deserves. I hope to therefore pursue further study in the area of pastoral leadership with the hope that this further research will help me to better understand my function as Senior Pastor and the roles that this position requires of me. For if this project has done anything for my future ministry, it has shown me quite clearly that I have so much yet to learn about the position that I hold and how coming to better understand this position of Senior Pastor will make me a better overall leader of any church I will serve in the future.
Significance of Research Beyond DFUMC

I believe that I will be able to discover this needed information about being a Senior Pastor by remaining a life-long student and committing myself to intentional daily study. I hope to gain additional insights into the role and function of the Senior Pastor by continuing to read relevant resources like those I have found during the research portion of this project, as well as pursuing every opportunity to study under more experienced Senior Pastors in order to learn from their wisdom and experience. I hope to also continue to grow my knowledge base of the function of Senior Pastor through my further participation in conferences and seminars on leadership in the local church. Such conferences have been a large component of my continuing education in the past whether they were organized by my Annual Conference or through large outside organizations like North Point Ministries.

Aside from the personal ways in which I hope to allow this project thesis experience to impact my life and ministry beyond these experiences, I also believe that I now have much to teach to those who will someday be in a similar situation to the one that I currently inhabit. Most of the congregations in our Annual Conference are traditional in nature and while they may not all be what might be considered “large” or “historic”, they are almost all negatively affected by building decline. This means that no matter how old or big a United Methodist church in my Annual Conference may be, nearly all of them are experiencing the struggles that occur when the facilities that house the ministries of their church begin to degrade. With this being the case, I know now that
I can be a helping hand and guiding influence to any Senior Pastor or church leadership group that seeks to wade into the waters of a building project. I therefore plan to avail myself of such churches, groups and leaders as much as I am able in the hope that the knowledge that I have learned from this project may hopefully aid some congregation in the future.

This factor may be the most impactful aspect of this project beyond the obviously enormous impact that this project has had upon my specific ministry and the work that DFUMC has done and will do on our building project. In this I mean that being able to influence a church or pastor in a similar situation may come to present itself as the most lasting contribution of this project and may be the ultimate legacy of this project thesis. I say this because if even one Senior Pastor or church can be aided by any of the work that I have accomplished in this project, it will be a blessing that allows this project thesis to live on into the future. If such an occurrence may come to be, I would be overjoyed to see that this project thesis could become a resource for any and all people of my Annual Conference or beyond as they seek to pursue their own building project. If this becomes the legacy of this project, then its significance will clearly have a reach far beyond the walls of DFUMC. This project will possibly then have the ability to become a significant tool of research and study for many and I will be a willing guide to lead others along the path that I have traversed to bring my church in and through the large and complicated calling of a building project.
Final Thoughts

DFUMC is a proud historic congregation that can trace its history in and influence upon our community back to before the Civil War. In all of these many years this great church has seen thousands of individuals come through its doors and has played a defined role in the faith development of hundreds of individuals and their personal experience with Jesus Christ. Each room within the walls of this large traditional UMC has a story to tell of how a child, a youth or an adult was touched by God while worshipping, studying or fellowshipping within the confines of this beautiful house of our Lord. This is a history that deserves praise and is legacy that should be preserved and cherished into the future for many more generations of people. For this legacy of faithfulness and commitment to Christ to continue on into this desired future, this grand old church needs to be preserved through renovation, updated through remodel and retooled with new structures.

This is a truth gratefully recognized by the leadership of this wonderful congregation and is therefore thankfully exactly what this church will be experiencing in the months to come through an extensive building project. The goal of this building project is to take DFUMC forward into the future for the glory of God and the benefit of any person who darkens the doors of this church. This is after all the fundamental motivation of those intrepid souls who gathered together to form DFUMC all those many years ago and is the very reason that this beautiful facility has stood in the downtown area of Dublin, GA for longer than anyone alive can remember. It is with this history in mind
and a fervent desire to carry the story of this church and its place in God’s plan for the world forward into the future that DFUMC stands upon the precipice of great change.

As the Senior Pastor of this church at this time in its history, I am mindful of all of this as I stand with the members of this congregation and look with hope upon what will be the greatest dose of institutional change this congregation has experienced in many decades. As daunting as this can be, I feel more prepared for this building project than I ever thought possible because of the work of this project thesis that has shown me exactly what part I will play in this grand experience. I therefore feel much like I believe Nehemiah must have felt long ago with his own building project. Like Nehemiah, I know that God has called my people to this undertaking and I know now what my role will be in this project as the leader of these people. Certainly I know that as Nehemiah struggled with naysayers and obstacles along the way, I too will experience much of the same as we progress through to the end. As difficult and time consuming as I feel this will be, I know that with faith and dedication to the plan, the people of DFUMC like the Jews under the leadership of Nehemiah, will see this building project through to the end; even if it takes us more than 52 days. I hold firm to this belief because this project thesis has revealed to me that I, as the Senior Pastor of DFUMC, have a well-defined role in the midst of this great building project and this is that I will seek to become the Managing Agent of Visionary Change.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM
INFORMED CONSENT

McAfee School of Theology  
Mercer University  
3001 Mercer University Drive  
Atlanta, Georgia 30341

Investigator  
The investigator for this DMin. project is Rev. Tyler Plaxico, the Senior Pastor of Dublin First UMC and Doctor of Ministry Degree student at McAfee School of Theology. Tyler Plaxico can be contacted through the following: (478) 957-1883 or via email at tplaxico@hotmail.com

Purpose of this Research  
All of the research and other work generated for this project is for the strict purpose of fulfilling the stated goals of this project and completing the requirements of this degree program.

Procedures  
This project is meant to determine the specific role of a Senior Pastor in a building project within a large traditional UMC church. This project will therefore be focused on research that will seek to determine this role. This will include reading pertinent books on the topic, conducting one-on-one interviews with selected Senior Pastors that fit the project parameters, coding the data gleaned and reporting on the outcome in the corpus of the project thesis.

Potential Risks  
There may be some discomfort amongst the participants with regards to their sharing information in the interview process. The interview participants may risk their identities being known in the course of this project.

Potential Research Benefits  
The potential benefits of this project include personal insight into the investigator’s own current building project, unrealized revelations realized by the interview participants, instruction for future similarly situated Senior Pastors and materials that may be used at
the Conference level for UMC ministers and leaders who are considering a building project.

Confidentiality and Data Storage
All research participants will be given a pseudonym in order to protect their privacy and insure the confidentiality of these persons. The interviews will be recorded and the recordings will be kept in a secured application for a period of three years and then they will be destroyed. I will personally transcribe the taped interviews and the transcribed materials will be kept in a locked drawer of the researcher’s office for three years, upon which time they will be destroyed.

Participation and Withdrawal
The research participation for this project is entirely voluntary and the participants may withdraw their participation in this project at any time. If you feel the need or desire to withdraw your participation, please contact Rev. Tyler Plaxico.

Questions Regarding the Research
Any and all questions pertaining to the research of this project should be directed to Rev. Tyler Plaxico, who may be contacted in the manner listed above.

Audio Taping
Please be advised that all interview sessions will be recorded via audio recording device. The recordings will be securely kept for three years and will then be destroyed.

Audio Recording Transcripts
I will transcribe the audio recordings and the physical copies of these recorded interviews will be securely kept for three years upon which time they will then be destroyed.

Final Note
This project has been given IRB (Internal Review Board) approval by Mercer University as well as being given approval by the DMin Committee of McAfee School of Theology. If you have any questions about this or any other pertinent inquiries, then please feel free to contact the IRB Chair or Faculty Supervisor for this project.

If you feel that you have been appropriately informed about this project and have no questions regarding the project or the research that you will be a participant of, please give your voluntary consent to participate in this project by signing this form in the space provided.

____________________  ____________________
Research Participant Name (Print)  Name of Person Obtaining Consent (Print)
Research Participant (Signature)  Person Obtaining Consent (Signature)

__________________________  ________________________

Date  Date
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONS
APPENDIX B

Sample Questions (Narrative Inquiry):

Would you please tell me about your experience in the ministry to this point?

- How long have you served in ministry?
- Where have you served?
- How long have you been a Senior Pastor?
- Have you conducted building projects in previous church settings?

Would you please tell me a bit about your current church setting?

- How long have you been serving as the Senior Pastor?
- How old is your church?
- How would you describe this church?
- How large is this church (i.e. How many members are on your church roll?)

You recently completed a large building project here in this church. Would you tell me about this project?

- What facilitated the need for this building project?
- How large was this building project?
- What was done during this building project?
- What was the cost of this building project?
- How has the congregation responded to this building project?
Sample Questions (Targeted Interrogatories):

What did you feel was your specific role in this building project as the Senior Pastor of this church?

- More specifically, as you have been the Senior Pastor during all facets of this building project (visioning, planning, implementation, construction, etc.), what (if any) role did you identify as yours alone? Please explain.

- How did this role manifest itself? Was it something you assumed from the beginning of the project? Or was it something that evolved as the building project progressed? Please explain.

- Why do you think that this was the role you were to fill as the Senior Pastor during this building project? Please explain.

- Was this role something that you took on directly or was it something that was thrust upon you indirectly by some group or circumstance? Please explain.

- Did this perceived role change over time as the building project progressed or was it a steady/constant capacity from the beginning? Please explain.

- If you were to begin this project again, would you assume this same role during this building project? Please explain.
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS
Interview with Rev. B

(Int.) Interview with Rev. B involving building project at Sandersville First United Methodist Church.

(Int.) So would you tell me about your experience in the ministry up to this point? How long have you served in ministry?

(Rev. B) I’m in my 16th year of ministry. I’ve served a rural suburb of Atlanta, a downtown traditional church in Savannah, then a smaller town county seat in Jesup, and then a larger county seat in Sandersville. And now we are in a church start up for the last 1½ years in a movie theatre.

(Int.) Well that answered my next question, where have you served?

(Int.) So how long have you been senior pastor?

(Rev. B) All but three of those years I was the lead, Senior Pastor however you want to look at it; all but the three years I was at Wesley Monumental in Savannah.

(Int.) All right so from my knowledge of you as a pastor, I knew you had conducted a building project in a previous church, have you done more than one in a church you served? And by building project, I mean have you done renovations, remodels, expansions, and new constructions?

(Rev. B) Nope, just the one I lead and worked through. At Wesley Monumental, I was involved in the planning leading up to the mass expansion they did a year after I left. We had a new senior pastor come in, Rev. C and there had been a plan we had been working on for multiple years that did not have the momentum from leadership and from my last year working there with Rev. C I was involved with talking about children’s ministry, and this building, and new office buildings, and those kinds of things, like functionally what we would do with the space and those kind of conversations

(Int.) Okay tell me a bit about your time in Sandersville, church setting, and type of church.

(Rev. B) Sure, It’s a – Sandersville is an interesting town because you think county seat and you think it’s going to be ho hum and people move away and don’t come back but because of the kaolin mining industry there, there are multinational companies there, there is large shipping, large railroad line, runs through that area of middle Georgia; I joke about it being very cosmopolitan for a county seat and um I moved there and knew a couple of people and didn’t really know the town; got to know it really well; very soon
after I got there I started hearing some of the things they had been talking about for years that they had not done that they needed to do for the church. The church is largely blue collar, the people who run the businesses, own the business, teachers, some medical professionals that was a lot of the makeup of that church; very much suit and tie;

(Int.) Would you say upper middle class?

(Rev. B) Yes, absolutely

(Int.) How long did you serve as senior pastor there?

(Rev. B) Five years.

(Int.) All right do you remember how old the church is?

(Rev. B) The church goes back to the 1800’s; the actual building goes back to 1933/1938; the 38’ building was a sanctuary that went back a long way but there was a fire and so they had to rebuild, actually build all over the sanctuary um but they had an education building that they referred to as the 33’ building, 1933, which is where they put their Sunday school classrooms

(Int.) How would you describe the church… How would you describe the congregation? How would you describe the theology of the congregation? What would you describe that as?

(Rev. B) I think that they would probably describe themselves as a High church; they are not theologically a high church; they have a pipe organ; they did not have contemporary worship before I came or while I was there; but they aren’t as high church theologically as they think they are; you still are in middle Georgia and still are a county seat

(Int.) Would you say moderate conservative?

(Rev. B) Yeah that’s, moderate conservative is probably a good term; I mean there is, huh, I’m trying to answer that question; they are very much a pastor driven church when I was there; and they were very much a worship and Sunday school, Wednesday night supper kind of group; typical kind of civic club on Wednesday night, ah some service level Sunday school kind of things

(Rev. B) How large was the church when you were there? How many members were on the church roll?
They were in process of a transition; the rolls had not been worked on in a long time; when I did my moving pastor seminar, it showed six hundred and something members; the first year or two I finished the process of removing a lot of roll, so we were down in the four hundreds by the time I left.

Okay. How about Sunday worship. Average worship attendance?

I want to say it was very common, like the annual average would have been 155-160.

Okay so while you were Senior Pastor of this congregation, you began, the congregation began a large building project for this church; tell me about the project.

Well, very early on you know you always find a church within a church, and people that do a lot of the work; and one of the people came to me and knew the history of the church, grew up there, and knew the campus and had in his mind some things that would help. So I listened to those conversations and learned that ten years before I had gotten there, they had talked about doing some work; and the reason they needed to do some work is because they hadn’t done a major project since the 60’s when they built the chapel, social hall, and what is used as the preschool wing. And so as you can imagine all those years back when energy was cheap not a lot of insulation, things were bleeding money you know for heating and cooling those spaces; so there was an issue with that and needing to have better insulation, better buildings, and efficiencies. The church had thirteen AC units on campus; but the campus kind of sprawled over the life of the church; so from the sanctuary it kept moving down an entire city block as they acquired more land and basically owned the city block. On the campus there was one glaring problem, when we moved there with a seven week old and the nursery was as far away from the sanctuary as you could be on the campus and you had to go outside to get there; and so I knew as a parent, my wife, having to be the one to worry about it during worship, because I was busy that’s not a comforting position to be in to know that your seven week old is across the yard and there is a significant walk to get there in case there is something wrong or just to even drop them off and having to go outside. The second thing I kind of became aware of was when I had my accident, I was hit by a car, I was in a wheelchair and on crutches – you cannot with any type of physical disability get from your car into the sanctuary without being in the elements; and so again I guess in the old way they did church it didn’t really matter, people just had to get wet or they just weren’t as immobile as they are now but we had a lot of people there that had physical disabilities, wheelchair and crutches and canes and whatever… So this really spoke to me because of the sprawling nature of the church property. There was also no cross mingling on Sunday; people went straight to church from their car to the church door and then left, went back out to car; some people went to nursery, then dropped their kid then went to church; some people went to SS and they had a way to get to Sanctuary without
connecting with other people. So it was very much come get what I need and leave without any type of communion happening between people, very little fellowship. So this longtime church member told me that they talked about this idea ten years ago; looked at family life centers, and went around to three different churches in the South Georgia conference. They made a decision not go forward at that time; and so that’s what they put in my lap when I came and said basically this may be the time to try to do what we need to have done; to try to centralize the campus. So in that conversation that’s when it developed into the early stages, people telling us what we needed to do. I was trying to listen to the church and hear what they felt like they needed and then obviously observing having been in a lot of churches recognizing the problems that we had with our daily operations, particularly our Sunday operations.

(Int.) Would it be safe to say that the building was not as functional and effective in its current structure as it needed to be?

(Rev. B) Oh it was definitely an ineffective Sunday experience, yes.

(Int.) So the building project you were a part of from beginning to end, I mean you began the early stages of the building project and saw it to fruition for the most part, to breaking of the ground and all?

(Rev. B) Yeah we got, there was, from the very beginning yes, all that is accurate; and then on the end of it, they were still building, they had done all the demo before I left and they had already built; they did it quickly; as far as I know. I wouldn’t call it stages, but they did the preschool wing and moved throughout the campus doing what they needed to do with the building. Our plan involved a new building in the center of campus, which would connect everything so people would have a covered drop off for folks with disability and they would all come into a centralized space, and all the education would be one building, all throughout that building. You would go into… Go into worship or Sunday school and you would all have same access point to the church. Of course I left before the completion, but a lot of the giving was done before I left. They still had some pledges and they still had construction to finish after we moved, but I have been back obviously since then to see the finished product.

(Int.) How large would you say the building project was? And by that I mean what was the overall cost?

(Rev. B) It was $4,800,000.00.

(Int.) $4,800,000.00 million… Did you do… What was your role in the capital campaign?
(Rev. B) Well the, I will say, the gleaning of information from the church; we started off with focus groups to find out what people wanted and that was an eight something million dollar idea. We told them we are going to have scale some of that back because that was more than we want to do; and even when we got to $4,800,000.00, we listened to some other people, and we hired a man Mr. F, I believe it was Mr. F. No, Mr. T, anyways we hired a guy who has worked with Willow Creek, he’s worked with big churches.

(Int.) Did you organize the capital campaign?

(Rev. B) Yes, absolutely. I was basically the capital campaign leader, fundraiser. Mr. T came in and coached us through how to design our program; and he and I sat in and asked people for a million dollars or whatever in those meetings; he and I sat in together and I would ask them questions and I kind of learned how to do that part and call people and generate funding that we needed because the church did not want to borrow a lot of money. So we raised over $3,000,000.00, more than that; but with pledging and actual giving we had a significant amount. Actually it was almost $4,000,000.00. So they weren’t going to have to borrow very much at all of the total cost and it was where we were front ended to pay, so down the road we might be able to collect more; they didn’t want to borrow any money by the time they got done.

(Int.) How did the congregation respond to the building project?

(Rev. B) It’s funny because the naysayers were very quiet that were there. I still don’t even know; there was not one that even came to me or complained to the building committee that we don’t need this or that… Because the disability aspect was glaring with the aging congregation, part of it aging; the children trying to get them better spaces, it’s hard to argue with that as well because there were components to building up the youth space and building in an elevator, which allowed people that can’t do stairs to be able to get up and down to get to Sunday school classes. So there were certain components that no one could really argue that we don’t need that. So I don’t think there were many naysayers. And again, trying to do the focus groups, trying to hear, get everybody’s’ opinion out their first; we wanted to make sure everybody had a voice; but there were still some people, loyal supporters, inside, a few that thought this is a big endeavor, do we really need it. I have heard back since it was completed and has been lived into and is fully apart of this ministry; and the quote is “ I don’t know how we lived without this before” because it has become the central focus point of the church – they meet their for showers, small groups; again we designed with little smaller areas, there is a coffee bar; for people to have a space to be used for all types of purposes; they say ‘it’s everything now” people come in there, they congregate, they stay after worship, which is what we wanted; but is has turned out to be even more than we had hoped for.
(Int.) What do you feel was your specific role in this building project as the Senior Pastor of this church?

(Rev. B) My #1 job was to cast the vision. I had to explain what the problems were and how we could fix that and how it would be helpful going forward. I used the term a lot for this congregation to “stay relevant” for the next fifty years because it was getting to a point with the church decaying the way it was that it was becoming a deterrent for people to come to church there.

(Int.) So with being a part visioning, planning, implementation, construction, from beginning to a good way through the construction phase itself, if you had to identify your role in any specific way, if you had to quantify it in a word, what would it be?

(Rev. B) Well, I mean, I was the point person; I had to keep us on task; I was the driver at some level; I was the one that had to find the rental space to move our office for the next year and whatever; do the lease negotiations; a lot of it was on me to keep moving our committee forward and do the fundraising. I had to be on that committee; coming up with slogans; I was in all those meetings.

(Int.) How did that role manifest itself? Was it something you assumed from the beginning or did it evolve over time?

(Rev. B) I just took on that role because I felt as God’s called person to lead that congregation that I had to do it. Once I realized their vision for what they needed was accurate; and we did lots of prayer, lots of discernment, and lots of divine intervention to guide us and direct us in what to do; even picking out architects, we prayed before architects meeting; we listened to God. With the building committee, we asked: “what does God want us to do?” And we asked that God would give us the courage to do what God wants us to do with this project. So that was at the heart of everything we did. I was trying to honor the vision that was revealed to us. It got to the point early on that I could actually see this building centralizing; I could see where we would put it, we had to demo multiple spaces to get to the space available to build on; I could see it in conversation, I began to see this building is going to go right here and it’s going to look like this and this before we even started meeting with architects and they started generating 3D images and all that stuff.

(Int.) Tell me more about this role. Was it kind of a claimed roll? Was this role something you assumed from the beginning? Or was it something that evolved over time?

(Rev. B) No. I think it was very clear from the beginning that it was going to be me, it was on me to make this happen. I mean the people that wanted it, that believed wholeheartedly in it, supported me, but I had to be the voice for the building committee.
(Int.) Did you feel like that was something that was necessitated because of your position as Senior Pastor? Was there anyone else in congregation that could have done that?

(Rev. B) No, I really think because of it being the church; we had our first building committee meeting two years after I arrived; I feel like there was a lot of equity I developed to have leadership and authority and that people looked to me to lead.

(Int.) Why do you think that this was the role you were to fill as the Senior Pastor during this particular building project?

(Rev. B) The church had several years of struggling; folks weren’t giving normally, not coming normally and again when I showed up, I was trying to heal it some; trying to do things with excellence – worship, small groups, and those kind of things I felt like God needed to have for this church. I felt like I had to buy in; I felt called to serve God by bridging gaps that had developed over the years; I didn’t try to minister to one family or another family with money or power; I tried to connect everybody with the purpose of serving that church. So when this project came about, I think people had already bought in that we were on this mission together, just living life as a church. So when this came before us, then it was kind of like we stood together. So now we are going to go after this target; and it was a little intimidating; when our campaign leader told us if we could raise the amount of money we needed to raise it would be amazing, and he didn’t’ mean it lightly; he meant if we could raise that amount of money it would be an “amazing” project for a church our size. So I latched on to that word and used it a lot with my conversations with the church.

(Int.) The role you took on, did you feel like it was thrust on you indirectly by a group or circumstance or did you take it on willingly?

(Rev. B) I think I started to, I think God started to reveal that this church needed to do something to stay relevant going forward to draw people in; but I definitely feel early on this was more of a pastor driven church of a blue collar group; and there a bunch of leaders in that church; and part of their upbringing, understanding of church, understanding of God was that a pastor is God’s representative and he’s our spiritual leader. So that buy in; once they accepted or bought into my leadership that we believe in you, we want to support you that when this project came it was an easy transition for them to think we are going to go on and follow his leadership since he is our Senior Pastor and everything.

(Int.) Did this perceived role change over time as the building project progressed? Did it evolve in any way?
(Rev. B) I think it stayed the same. I don’t think… I didn’t pick up on any deepening of that understanding of me; I know people said some nice things about me and getting this done. I believe they still saw me as the pastoral leader and I just did the job that was before me to do.

(Int.) If you were to do this project all over again, beginning to end, would you assume that same role during this project?

(Rev. B) I’m happy with the way we did this project; the building committee – I picked very strong leaders with different backgrounds; who brought a different perspectives for the decision making progress – I empowered a building committee chair that ran the meetings; he drove conversations with architects; he had lots of experience working with buildings; he had a wealth of knowledge and comfort with leading. So he was the building committee chair; he led our meetings; but he was always, when it was the Pastor’s thing, he was quick to say you should do that; he would not say “I need you stand up there and introduce this.” He would do that; he didn’t shy away anytime he had to be up there. But he certainly called me his pastor

(Int.) Based on how it all ended and your overall experience in it, would you take on this role in the building project as the Senior Pastor again?

(Rev. B) Yeah, I think the way we did it, that building committee, that process; we used that consultant who helped us fundraise… You look back and wish we had done it a little faster because I wanted to be done before I left, a lot of people say that; but you can’t control rain, demo takes longer, moving dirt, they find things…

(Int.) If I had to pigeonhole into a functional role what you did in this building project, what word would you use to describe that role?

(Rev. B) Yeah, probably “Visionary Spiritual Leader.” I mean very early on I had that vision of what this could be for that church; it would not have happened if I wasn’t there; because they had had three pastors before me that got nothing done. When they developed the plan, the senior church lay people decided it wasn’t the time; it sat for another four years through a pastor, another two years with a different pastor and then when I came after the first several months it was presented to me. I listened and listened and then when I felt like it was what we needed to do, we did it. They needed it but they were not going to lead it on their own; they were putting a lot of it on their Senior Pastor; and they didn’t feel comfortable before I got there to do it with the pastors before I got there.

(Int.) Well that is all the questions I have. Thank you for the interview. This is the end of interview with Rev. B.
Interview With Rev. C

(Int.) Interview with Reverend C at Mulberry United Methodist Church August 24th, 2018.

(Int.) Would you tell me a little bit about your experience in the ministry to this point? How long did you serve in ministry?

(Rev. C) Thirty-six active years.

(Int.) Where did you serve? What type of settings did you serve in?

(Rev. C) Four years at Waverly Hall, a Three point charge, four years at a suburban church in Macon, four years at a county seat town church in Metter, six years at St. John in Columbus (a suburban church - the church was thirty five years old when I came), twelve years here at Mulberry Street followed by six years Wesley Monumental UMC in Savannah.

(Int.) Of that time, did you ever serve as an associate pastor?

(Rev. C) I served in lay capacity as assistant to the pastor. I was Bill Hinson's full-time lay assistant for a year and a half at Wynton.

(Int.) So you've been a Senior Pastor then for thirty-six years. And of your years in ministry have you conducted building projects in previous church settings?

(Rev. C) Well back to back here and at Wesley Monumental. Other than that just clean up here and there

(Int.) So you said you were here at Mulberry for twelve years.... Do you know the age of this congregation?

(Rev. C) This congregation was established in 1826, three years after Macon became a city. We were in the suburbs then when we were founded.

(Int.) How would you describe this congregation, this church, I mean theologically speaking? What terms would you use?

(Rev. C) Educated, middle of the road, you have some theologically liberal and theologically conservative people here of a whole cross-section of people in terms of what it means to be Methodist. This is also a middle class to upper middle class church.
Although, the church probably used to have some more in what I'd call the lower socio economic class. That's really not as true as it was fifty to sixty years ago.

(Int.) Do you have any idea of the size of the congregation? How many members on roll?

(Rev. C) I'd have trouble telling you that right now.

(Int.) When you were here what was the worship attendance?

(Rev. C) Four hundred twenty-five to four hundred fifty.

(Int.) While you were here you completed a major building project?

(Rev. C) That's correct.

(Int.) Tell me a little bit about the project.

(Rev. C) This congregation had studied trying to figure out how to do things long before I got here. I didn't have to stir it up when I came. But when I came we decided it was time to redo really the course. We ended up working on every square foot, we did every square foot of this building and the church. I laugh about this but I knew it was time for renovation.

(Int.) Absolutely. What in your mind most facilitated the need for the first for the project?

(Rev. C) Mulberry as a downtown church had seen itself losing members to the suburbs particularly at that point to Martha Bowman. And I only mention Martha Bowman because everyone was moving out in that direction. And so there was a sense in which if we don't do something the church would die. When I came, it was on a gradual decline and had been for quite a number of years so there was a sense that we needed to do something.

(Int.) Sure. Other than the decline in membership and attendance, would you also, would it be fair to say that the building facility needed work? Was it showing its age?

(Rev. C) The building was in drastic need of renovation because of the deferred maintenance. The loss was amazing. Yes. No doubt about it. And just to bring it up to standards that would be appealing to somebody who walked in the door.

(Int.) So, scope of the project- what was the size in dollars of the project? You said it touched every square foot?
(Rev. C) It was a $7,300,000.00 project. We had back to back three year capital campaigns. So there you were six years successive in making pledges. Construction certainly would not have taken six years. Can't remember right off hand I could look in the folder. I think one of the things I'm really proudest of is that when I left we were debt free. I did not leave my successor with even a penny to be paid on this project. And that doesn't happen very often.

(Int.) The beginning of the project was in what year?

(Rev. C) 97’ is when we when we appointed the building committee.

(Int.) And then the scope you said - the actual years of nails and hammers were three years you said?

(Rev. C) I think it might have been three years. I borrowed these files from the church office. Let’s see… June 3, 2003 the eighty-seventh meeting of the building committee was. So, yes we began in 97’. Here we are still meeting in two thousand three. Fundraising subcommittee report will be organized for the capital campaign for phase two. So, you know it's been long enough I'm a little fuzzy on the details.

(Int.) You spoke of phases. Obviously it began with you know more than one. So the beginning of the building project was done. With that in mind… With a phased model?

(Rev. C) I think it was phased. I told you I'd have some problem remembering back you know as to what was in each phase and so on.

(Int.) OK. So just kind of briefly walk me through the major areas of construction and renovation.

(Rev. C) The third floor was an unused attic. We realized that we could gain something like six classrooms up there and an entire youth area of which the youth never had an area of their own. Unbelievable. Also beautiful stunning views over the city from up there. So that's where we started because you didn't have to move anybody to do that. And you know then we figured when we get down on the second and first floors we can move some of the classrooms up to the third floor. They'll have been brand new classrooms while we're tearing up the second floor. Sort of a fruit basket turnover. The first and the second floors involved re-constructing and configuring classrooms so that you had departments in the same area as the children and youth Sunday School classrooms and we used some areas to make children's assembly areas. Going back to that old concept where when your children come together they have an assembly before they go out to the atrium somewhere in here. One of the major expenses was the three story elevator - those don't come cheap. And the skylight for the atrium. We wanted a
children's ministry to the community- nursery, daycare, and children’s ministry, which is now down on the first floor. And what was down there originally was the church parlor. So we put the children's center hall down there, built a playground outside. We didn't have a playground except some crummy little playground where the atrium was. We reconsolidated and configured the offices to put them all together down there with a beautiful workroom. This used to be a classroom. We put the parlor right here because it's in the very heart of the church - accessible to the kitchen that way and the sanctuary that way and off the courtyard here. Reconstructed the entire fellowship hall - modernized it, beautified it - ripped out the kitchen. Put in a brand new kitchen and then took all the pews out of the sanctuary and put tile stone flooring to replace nineteen sixty five highly faded orange carpet. And while we were doing that we had a sound engineer from Chicago come down to do acoustic tests on the sanctuary to see what we would need to do to make it acoustically as good as we could.

(Int.) As far as you remember, how did the congregation respond to this building project?

(Rev. C) It was incredibly positive. You know I told B last night as I was thinking about it, I don't think we lost; I don't think we lost a single member. Now there may have been a few who laid low during these pledge campaigns but the only heartburn in all of this was basically moving that parlor. There was a small minority of people, older people, who said I got married in that parlor down there; when my daddy died we had his reception down there. They said you're gonna put babies down there. It's beautiful. A baby won't even know they're there. Well the baby's parents do. And that parlor was well out of the way. It was dark and Victorian. We had spent probably a little more money than we wanted to on this parlor to make sure that the people who lost that parlor - I mean that parlor had a real fireplace. We put up a fake one in here. I mean this is beautiful.

(Int.) It is absolutely gorgeous. It really is. I've never seen anything like this in a church.

(Rev. C) I tell you I think this is one of the most beautiful churches in South Georgia. And here's why. We had a member of our building committee who is very design oriented. An artist kind of a person and he kept saying over and over again nobody cares that you're going to spend a million and a half on air conditioning ducts. He said we need good air conditioning. But the only thing that the average person in this church is going to see is this church beautiful. And he did not let us off the hook on this. So it was incredibly well received.

(Int.) This room alone speaks to the quality of the work. It's great. It really is.

(Rev. C) And you know we had people who went up- that attic is a treasure trove- and they went up there and they inventoried all this artwork. A lot of it was up in the attic and it was in other places around as well. They inventoried every piece of art, every piece of
furniture and everything we had in his church and tried to figure out how can we repurpose it.

(Rev. C) I’m happy to say there was no controversy. There were a group of big church donors who got some cold feet. I think they got cold feet because they knew they were getting ready to get called on and somewhere after perhaps the forty fifth meeting we were just getting ready to pull the trigger on the three year Capital campaign. It was Friday of Holy week. Maybe we were going to start Sunday after Easter. I can't remember exactly, but this group said to me we want to meet with you in your office. So, I got this 11:00... I've got a 12:00 Holy Week service. They came in and they wanted me to pull the plug on the planned capital campaign. They said we want to think this through more carefully. I listened carefully; the building committee chair was in there, chair of the trustees. They were not the group but they sat in with me. I told them it's not gonna happen. This has been vetted. You can come and ask me this but it's the building committee and the administrative board - everybody is on board with this. Everyone has voted and given the green light. I'm sorry. We're not going to stop. They all pledged; they were all part it; none of them left the church. Sometimes people get cold feet.

(Int.) Let me ask you this. I'm beginning to end… Obviously with the benefit of hindsight… What do you feel was your specific role in this building project as the Senior Pastor of the church?

(Rev. C) Vision Caster. Nobody had an idea of having the children center down there. And that was… I pushed that. In fact the Children's Director and some of the other folks said we're not sure we can handle that. That in itself. You're going to do that at the same time that we're going to do this building. I said yeah, we got to do it all together and the third floor. I mean they said: we can't do that. I said well we can. So partially Vision Caster. The key role for a Senior Pastor is to get the right people in the right positions of leadership. If you do that, you've really got the battle won and we had a building committee that was impeccable and so casting a vision, selecting the right leaders. And the third thing I would say would be at least in my experience just look I'm telling you that if you follow the Book of Discipline you cannot fail in our system and we can talk all we want about the Book of Discipline and even in a building project, you know, there are some things that are a little bit fuzzy. I say that because of the pastor’s role, nobody else except the pastor is gonna make sure you don’t cut corners. You know, if I wanted to cut corners I could have cut corners on stuff but I refused to do it. And if they tried to go in the wrong direction, I refused to let them do it.

(Int.) If you had to put a label on that last part, what would you call that?

(Rev. C) I would say Administrative Oversight.
(Int.) That would definitely work. A term that I was thinking… Would it be fair to say CEO?

(Rev. C) Well, I've tried to think about CEO… And yes, that would work as well.

(Rev. C) You know Mulberry was fortunate to have an incredible full time church administrator. A great chair of the trustees and chair of the building committee. You couldn't find better people in the South Georgia conference and those two groups are joined at the hip on the building committee. So I had good people all the way around. And you know I had, Tyler, a lot of people don't do this. I mean I had an informal group at Mulberry called the Executive Committee. They have no power. They met once a month. The chair then was Chair of Council ministries, Chair of the Ministry Board, Chair of Finance, Chair of SPR, Chair of the Building Committee and the Chair of Trustees… We would meet and sit around a table like this. Everybody knew what everybody else was doing. Finance Committee was joined at the hip on this as well. And so, that executive committee could not make decisions, because it's not a group in our Discipline, but you know I was the one that kept that together kept people going.

(Int.) Would it would it be fair to say that of the points that you label, the specific roles… Would you say that those were your roles as Senior Pastor alone?

(Rev. C) No… No, not at all. I think probably if you wanted to do that the vision of course had to be shared and had to be bought in to by everybody. And there were many people who had a vision for ministry. I think I was somewhat the catalyst. The two other roles I said one of them was… The last one I know was… I think pretty much the burden of in some ways… I don't call it like air traffic controller- that fell on me. Nobody else goes home at night and is trying to think far enough in advance, you know who is it they say LeBron James like Larry Bird could see seven plays on the court ahead; you know and that's what the good pastor of a church this size has to be able to do and nobody else is seeing all of these plays. Yeah.

(Int.) So, of the specific role that you embodied that was yours alone… How would you say that particular role manifested itself? I mean was it something that was assumed from the beginning of the project or was it something that evolved as the project kind of went on?

(Rev. C) I'd say that was manifested largely from the beginning. I followed Rev. F, who in his four years here had gotten this church to a good place. Rev. F followed eight years of fallowness at Mulberry. Rev. F was able to kind of get it going. But anyway the church was ready. I was the first baby boomer pastor that this church had had. I was forty-eight when I came. They were eager and ready for me and I didn't half know what I was doing. Moving from St. John here but I matured of course. But I think that role was pretty much
mine- you know here's the ball, they put in your hand and say got out and pitch. The thing I might say in terms of being an overt overseer or the overall manager. You know you can of course, as the preacher, you can incorporate that into his or her teaching and preaching and you work in it in any different ways, playing the angles. Over and over again. No one else can do that except the pastor because you have the power of the pulpit.

(Int.) Why do you think that this was your particular role? Was it something that's in your specific leadership style? Is it tied to personality? Is it because of the circumstances of the building project? What about that role? Why do you think this was yours alone?

(Rev. C) Well you know I don't mean to say I was the only one pulling the cart. I maxed out the chair of the trustees and the chair of building the committee. They were unbelievably helpful. And they were both older men than I was. They had all kinds of brilliance and skill. Also, my dear friend our church administrator. He and I talked long and repeatedly about all of this. So, I don't mean I was alone in this. I hope you don't get that impression.

(Rev. C) I'm not quite sure I understand the question.

(Int.) I guess basically it sounds to me that this was a role that you took on directly for a variety of reasons because of the position of which you were serving as Senior Pastor, also because of the build itself. And it's not that you're running it on your own but it was this very specific part of the build, this overall manager, this kind of ringmaster, that seemed to be the one that you had assumed from the beginning. And I was just trying to see if it was what was the reasoning behind that if it was something that you would assume before?

(Rev. C) Well, I don't think so. I am a first born. I mean Firstborn’s like to run things. When I got here they told me in 1995. We've had a committee called the Future committee. We are currently thrashing around and we don't know what we need to do. I naively jumped in on that and we had six months later a report to the Administrative Board that although the board passed it the board didn't want to pass it. They didn't want to vote against it. And I realized I had gone too fast. But it's like I was saying, they put the ball in my hand from day one and said you know let's go. So… And as scared as I was about this, I was willing to take this on.

(Int.) That runs into my next question, which is… Was the role something that you took on directly or is it ever something that you felt was thrust on you indirectly by some group or circumstance?
(Rev. C) I have served churches with good leaders. Mulberry had a wealth, had and has a wealth of leaders. So I certainly never felt like it was all on me. I think it was mutual. I've really never been a dictator.

(Int.) So, it was assumed but accepted at the same time? That's what I kind of was getting at. Did it ever change over time? Your role in all of this? I mean did it ever... I mean from the beginning when you were casting vision to the point where you were watching as you know the structure of the church physically was changing and then the capital campaign was coming. Did the role that you perceive for yourself in the midst of this big project ever change?

(Rev. C) The role beyond just the building project?

(Int.) Just for the building project.

(Rev. C) I never felt like it changed.

(Int.) If you were to do a project of this type again, would you assume the same role? Would you assume the same position as Senior Pastor?

(Rev. C) Well, I did do a project like this again. Exactly. I mean I wonder if there were any of... If there's another pastor who did back to back building projects as extensive as I did in two historic downtown churches. I think Wesley Monumental got the benefit of twelve years of learning here. But when I got to Wesley Monumental they had had a capital campaign where they wanted to raise $3,000,000.00. They had raised $1,000,000.00 two years before I came. And they didn't know what to do with it. I mean two years later I came and I had first person who called me said I'm your building committee chair - let's get going. I mean so... Would I have done anything differently? Is that what you're asking me? I don't think so. I felt very, very, good about the way this played out.

(Int.) As this interview comes to a conclusion... I've always asked the interview participants if there was anything that they would like to add to the interview. Anything, you know based on their experience from the builds that they've done, the roles that they assumed, anything at all.

(Rev. C) Well, there is this one thing. What I was trying to get at is that doing a building campaign and a Capital campaign is enormously time consuming. But it doesn't begin to define the role that you have as a Senior Pastor. There is so much more to it. And so the burden of ministry without a building campaign is unbearable sometimes. And then when you add that on to it, it can be crushing. And so thank God I had as many good people here who rolled up their sleeves and got involved and thank goodness there was no
controversy. People were so eager to be able to build on the history of this church, to do this project. Out in the courtyard on the stone facing over the entrance of those doors coming off this atrium it says, "For Our Children" and to be able to talk about that and to talk about that which they set out in 1926 to do it for their children. We are doing now for our children and to be able to say to them that all we are doing in this project is completing in the year 2000 what they intended to complete seventy-five years earlier. We are building on their shoulders and moving forward. The name of our capital campaign was "forward through the ages" which was after the hymn. And you know, so I think I'm rambling here... But in so many ways this congregation was eager to embrace what we did.

(Int.) Well, thank you so much. Those are all the questions that I had for you. End of interview with Rev. C, Mulberry United Methodist Church. August 24th, 2018.

Interview with Rev. J

(Int.) Interview with Rev J, Vineville United Methodist Church. Would you please tell me about your experience in the ministry to this point? How long have you served in the ministry?

(Rev. J) My first appointment was in 1991. I was at Glenwood United Methodist church for five years. Wesley United Methodist Church for seven. First Methodist Warner Robins for ten and I'm in year six here.

(Int.) Of that time, how long have you served as the Senior Pastor?

(Rev. J) All of those were Senior Pastor roles.

(Int.) Have you conducted building projects in previous church settings?

(Rev. J) I have built a sanctuary at Wesley United Methodist Church. That was just shy of a $1,000,000.00 because they already had land and some site work done. And I had to raise all the money and supervised that building project. And then at Warner Robins we built the youth building and renovated. So we did get into one building campaign.

(Rev. J) We did about three hundred and fifty thousand dollars in work and then another sort of phase two of that was another two hundred thousand. But it was the first big push. It was and is now... Right onto a $747,000.00 budget.

(Rev. J) On top of that $300,000, we did a little over $1,000,000.00 that year.

(Int.) Tell me about your current church.
(Rev. J) So Vineville Methodist was founded 1846. We currently have thirteen hundred Members. Our year to day average Sunday attendance is 412. This year our budget is two million dollars.

(Rev. J) And we'll make that.

(Rev. J) Demographically… You know, a little bit… You know upper middle and upper class. A lot of professionals with a heart for missions, who likes to write a check more than like to go, but does a lot of connection to the primary African-American neighborhood behind us. We have thirty-five years of ministry with LH Williams School and those partnerships have gotten stronger in the last few years. It's a little disproportionately older but not alarming. So our demographic breakdown puts us a little heavy on the top, but not as much as Warner Robins where I was before.

(Int.) How would you describe the theology of the congregation?

(Rev. J) Pretty moderate. Sort of in the middle as a centrist. You don't have any… We would never be confused with fundamentalist, but we do have a significant… I would say a significant traditional group. We've got folks that are watching what's going on in our Methodist world and I have a few visits of people of concern but not nobody is leaving. Some churches have has those experiences. I have not had anybody to leave because of the change in language that is under consideration. Sure. I know some others have just the fact that there's even going to be a vote about what to do says I'm in the wrong place. So, it's not… It's not the most progressive church in town – more in the middle.

(Int.) You said your church, Vineville dates back to 1846 correct?

(Rev. J) Yes. It is a historic church. It is one of those Methodist shrines that’s got the marker out front. So, yeah it was, you know with Mulberry being founded in 1826, this was the first sort of outreach. When the neighborhoods grew beyond the sort of downtown area, this was the first little village that the in town church reached out to.

(Rev. J) It's been a significant part of the growth of two more churches in Macon. It has connections to Ingleside and Riverside. And so it's got some pieces that it has contributed to them.

(Int.) You have served here as a Senior Pastor for six years?

(Rev. J) Yes. I came in 2013. So, according to the Conference year, I am in my sixth year here.
(Int.) And you are in the midst of, or have completed a large building project since you have been here, right?

(Rev. J) Yes. As we talked about on the phone, we have done several. We have completed a five hundred and sixty thousand dollar roofing project. We literally had the final inspection this week. So we've touched every roof on the campus and we've done that this spring. It took… It was about a year and a half or maybe two years’ worth of a project. We had some storm damage. So we had a fight with our Insurance Co. about how much was damaged. Then we had to go back and forth and then raise some money. We thought we were going to have to raise about a quarter million dollars. Fortunately I was able to… We prevailed in our conversation.

(Int.) So that was the most recent?

(Rev. J) I think the project that you were familiar with before was the work we did on the campus overhaul and that was about three hundred thousand dollars… Maybe a little over and we did complete that. We painted, we pulled all the shrubbery out, we did all the landscaping, we put in a new covered entryway for our seniors by the sanctuary. We worked on sort of visibility out front along Vineville Avenue. Some new signage, new exterior lights so that at night it looks pretty well lit… LED lights on, stuff shining out from the building. We raised that money we had a special sort of extra campaign for that. And then in between those two sorts of bigger pieces we did two years. That was the second year I was here we did the exterior and then the next two years we did about a hundred thousand dollars’ worth of interior work each year. And then this five hundred sixty thousand dollars on the end. So we've done… We've exceeded the million dollar threshold that we talked about spread out over four years.

(Int.) You probably answered a little bit of this already... But what facilitated the need for the building project?

(Rev. J) The church, it had some financial struggles and the way they had resolved that was to defer maintenance for many years. So part of it was coming in with a new set of eyes and looking at things. That's been one of my things. And everywhere I've been. I've touched a lot of the buildings renovated painted new surfaces. I've been a bricks and mortar guy. Every church I've been in, I've done a project. Some of them more significant but just so that it matches in some ways the importance of what we're doing. It's important what we're doing. It's important to us to see that the way the building looks and is maintained. And so that's been… That was sort of the route I moved in. I looked and sort of made a list and I kept a list that I called my "ugly list" and then I took people and said this is on this is the top of my ugly list. What could we do? So we put together sort of an idea of what it could look like and then started talking about that with people. And the people said you know… Yes, I've wanted to do this. So that sort of was… Wanting
people to be excited and proud of the place. So that you're eager to bring people... Just for it to be clean and nice. Then as it is with so many things, what you do makes it to what to do next and go from there. Show that the church has a need and that has spilled over. We've just been working down that list of sort of ugly areas some of them have been big ugly and the roof was a big ugly one, you know a half million dollars. That was bigger than we anticipated... We have a lot of roof.

(Int.) How would you say the congregation has responded to these projects?

(Rev. J) They've bought-in wholeheartedly. That's just this congregation... None of the people in this place... Well the vast majority of the people in this place would not live in a similar state of decline that some other Sunday school classes were or that some of you know the grounds had gotten. And so the idea that the church ought to be as well cared for as our home was something that they bought in to and have underwritten. I mean they've oversubscribed everything they've been doing. What do mean by oversubscribed? Well, if we ask for $100,000.00 they gave $110,000.00 or $105,000.00 so that we've/they've over funded.

(Int.) With the building project projects that you've been involved with here specifically, what would you say was your specific role in all of that? As a senior pastor?

(Rev. J) I have been leading that campaign. I have made the... Cast a vision, raised the funds and supervised the budget. I'm sort of a hands on kind of guy. For this project I did a lot. I was not involved in the roof project. I did not do the inspections because I hired a consultant that knew more than I could do. But like for instance, at Wesley, I worked with the general contractor every day and the guy came into my office and we talked about what is next. That is the job for me and just partly saved money because we were working on such a budget. It's not to say that if it's not my idea we haven't done it. The scope of some of the things have expanded as people have said oh we can do this. You know we could work on this area connected but... But you know the bids the bids come through here. The fundraising. We've not hired any outside folks. I've done sort of the design campaign. We talked about this in meetings... The chair of the trustees, he sent me a, you know, a doodle that he had scanned into his computer. But for lack of a better image, I've been sitting at the head of the table and been the driving force. And what I mean by that is more specifically as a Senior Pastor of the congregation you've been involved in all facets of the project: visioning, planning, implementation, construction, capital campaign fund raising... All of that.

(Int.) Would you say that that you felt like every facet of this was a role that you identified as yours alone? That this was what you wanted to be involved in specifically?
(Rev. J) I think in some ways no one had stepped up to start or to make those things happen. And so it sort of came with the idea that if it's going to get done - and wanting to have particularly in that first one the first three hundred thousand dollar project - you know, I wanted it to be a home run. So because I knew it could be a big momentum... It was really a big springboard for the congregation to want to do more and to see that you know there are going to be good stewardship decisions made in that process. I was a trust builder. Having only lived back here a couple of years and you know it was in my second year when we when we rolled it out. There was a certain amount of forming a leadership authority and a leadership identity that I knew we could hit a home run and that would be the only leverage I have. That there would come a day when some of that that reputation and that follow through would give me leverage that maybe I would not have otherwise. Reputation Credentials whatever word you want to use.

(Int.) If you had to label your role in this... If you had to label it in a term, in a word or two, what would you think you would call that?

(Rev. J) I mean, I think of it as leader. In some way... CEO. You know when I did that Pastoral identity work at Columbia in my DMIN, I sort of went in and said I identify myself as the jack of all trades. And so I was as comfortable you know working with the electrician as I was you know preparing for the pulpit. My own struggle then... And that was a much smaller church was the realization that there would be some difficulty being the jack of all trades. You run out of time, energy, ability and so there was that. Some of what I was looking at in my own work there was to move to that sort of player/coach model in that sort of you know there are times when picking up a shovel and actually having my hand on it with other people is important for camaraderie and connection. And it shows that he's not better than us and he knows sweat and all of that. But there are also times in which you know there's stuff going on and I've had to come in here because the more there was more important work that that only I could do and that I think during the build and work at Warner Robins I sort of learned a little bit more of that. At Wesley I was always able to juggle that Congregation, we were worshipping almost two hundred on Sunday morning and were building that building... Folks knew I was seeing about it. So I didn't have as much other stuff. You know I had a room at the time where the children were. But as the pastoral load got larger and you know there's not as much time for me to meet.

(Int.) So you have been involved in the overall management and pretty much all areas of the project then?

(Rev. J) Yeah, I mean I've done that in every one I've ever done. It just about you know… I've done and I've had a lay person in each place that was involved. Maybe more than some others and always of course I had a committee, whether it was straight up to the trustees or we formed a building committee for the sanctuary out of Wesley and that
helped by in and active fund raising and some of that. But in either one of those places there was a natural sort of leader to that project who could get it going... We either had somebody who had medical knowledge or had somebody who could do this or that. But I never had anybody who could do that and who could speak the language that people would buy and they could cast the vision of what difference does it make that we put this covered walkway in. So it just seemed that what I've been called to do is to get it done. I think that's some of what it is… That you get the sense that this is the next thing the church needs to move forward in its mission. And so what does it take to do it. And if somebody is there that can read the contract and take care of that, then great, if not then let's not and go meet with some other folks.

(Int.) You kind of answered my next couple of questions in this but throughout the project the role that you kind of assumed had gone into the project with already. How did that role manifest itself? Was it assumed from the beginning of the project or something that evolved as the project progressed? How did that happen?

(Rev. J) The last two places it's been… It's been assumed going in and I think that you know that is the same for the initial project here. I think there were some folks who after the fact when they realized hey wait a minute you know Jimmy took care of that. I don't think anybody's in that office has ever taken care of that level of details for those but you know we had some pretty significant building chairs at times in the past and we just didn't have anybody right at that particular moment that was available.

(Int.) So again for this particular building project, the role that you assumed from the beginning, that you kind of embodied throughout the project… Why do you think this happened other than the fact that you have the natural abilities and that this project was something that you had done like projects in the past? Why this particular role for you?

(Rev. J) I guess part of it is an expectation of… A high expectation of excellence. I have a have high expectation that I want to lead. I've wanted to lead every congregation I've been asked to serve like this. I expect more… To have a higher view of church and faith and sort of if it can be done well that that sets a tone and trying to build a culture of excellence. And so that's been part of it.. It is to try to shape the culture here. And I have also been part of that culture… If we need to get something ready, I've been involved in it. So there's that hands on… That, you know if the work is not being done… Like that line from the Pale Rider where Clint Eastwood is with the preacher and the preacher says “some people are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good.” So that… That is a warning to make that connection with people and with building projects. That has been the way I've done it. Some people have done it with other ministry things but that's been what I have done. Formed some good relationships, some good pastoral care relationships that have come out of connections that I've made particularly with men and in some of these projects that's given me credibility and leverage to minister with them.
(Int.) Did you ever feel like any group in particular in the church was seeking to kind of thrust their opinion or their particular mentality of the project on you to divert you away from the role that you assumed was yours alone?

(Rev. J) No. I never really… I never had any real pushback or anything. The only sort of attempt to sway was really about how many trees were cut down. A member here loves trees and he wanted to talk to me about. You know, to explain sort of why we had to take down this particular oak tree that was right there on the corner. But you know that was one of those very sort of practical conversation about how there's no way to save it. And you know in the end he was fine with that. I just want to make sure and that was the most… Really the most any sort of anybody inquired who pushed back against any of this. Just to ask about the trees. We really have had a lot of positive momentum and enthusiasm, as we talked about. Really not anybody was pushing back or were trying to. No group tried to hijack the project to get control of the colors of the rooms or anything like that.

(Rev. J) Yeah, I mean here… I would say it's growing. You know one of the practical differences, Vineville's church administrator changed the year before I got here. So the man who had been here forever was very much... He was better at the practical things like locks, air conditioner, you know, all the details of the building. You know my current administrator that moved here is a CPA and a woman. So she can slice and dice the financials. You know because she's a CPA but maybe not as much do those building things. And so there wasn't a natural staff person who had to handle those things. I think this is another reason that I picked up some of the things that somebody else could have done. But there just wasn't anybody here. And it's just so much easier to manage in house than a volunteer that's not present or you know to meet with contractors.

(Int.) One more question... If you were to begin this project would you assume the same role in this particular project?

(Rev. J) You know, I probably would have brought along the associates more. When I started this D was leaving to take his own church and JD was getting ready to retire again. So it was sort of at that transition time. So there was a sort of new Associate to take in and start fresh. We ended up hiring those positions and I've thought about it… That I probably would have included somebody else like that in more of those preliminary meetings… Just for experience sake. I learned by some of that on the job stuff when I was in college. I was involved in some building stuff in college because I was a student rep. to the trustees. And so I had a little bit of experience and you know I
had a lot of construction experience with my dad and so some of that information and ability to carry on those conversations I already had… But it's something that not everybody does. If I had to do it differently, one of the things might have been to bring one of them along, work in a training field. That way you're not totally in the dark.

(Int.) Would you have taken on so much or would you have delegated more?

(Rev. J) For the first one I probably would have done it pretty much like the same because I wanted, I wanted to set the bar and I also wanted when we were done, I wanted to do what I call ministerial trust those deposits in that bank account for the confidence level that people had in some of those things and it was in some ways a way to prove ability. And that burden I don't know if that burden was more here. I think my first project in Warner Robins I felt it just as much. But I don't know if coming back having grown up here and wondering about you know is there anybody wondering whether I can do it. So you know there was a sense that I wanted that slam dunk out of the gate. And I wanted the financials to be that way because I wanted them to realize that the only thing holding them back was our ability to let go of what we had. So, yeah probably I might not… I might not have done the first one different. This is the last phase... You know I've got this. I don't really need any more… I got that medal. If they know you can do this, then they say OK… Well we need to do this or that. When we got $60,000 dollars worth of work to do on the organ. They can say, Rev. J can handle it.

(Int.) So this question is off script... Do you think that ministerial roles in such building projects, I mean do you think that they are bound in personality and the type of pastor that you are? Do you think that it's driven by how you see yourself as a leader of a congregation?

(Rev. J) Yeah. I think there's a lot of that because I know I've got some friends who have a great ministry but never… I mean they go to meetings and they don't weigh in. They certainly aren't the clearinghouse for those things. There may be somebody a congregation, a lay person who is the front-runner, who's got all the gifts and graces, and they shape it. Their fingerprints are in it. And I know of people, peers that you know, that don't have any real involvement in things like this… They don't see that as their role. You know, they teach and preach but ask them to build a pulpit… Just preach at it. And I guess you know I like to think I bring something to it. And so I want my fingerprints on it. And so it is a personality thing for me.

(Int.) Specifically speaking… If you just had to put your finger on your label for yourself and your ministry and your role... What would you describe yourself as?

(Rev. J) I think there's a significant, important part of what I do that is a CEO role. But with more than just creating the culture and the vision of the organization. But the
teaching aspect of ministry for me is important. So teaching and preaching in that context makes it more than just to see who executes the power that the board throws down you know. So there is a day to day. It's a tension between teacher/preacher and CEO that gets most of my time. And you know I still do a good bit of pastoral care but when it gets pinched... I have to delegate. So trying to let go of some things. But I think one of the things is that they look to me to do you know to make sure all the pieces are sort of here or where they need to be. So there's a certain amount of that to go on.

(Int.) Well, that's all I have. Thank you. End of interview 8/16/2018.

Interview with Rev. S


(Int.) Would you tell me about your experience in the ministry to this point?

(Int.) How long have you served in ministry?

(Rev. S) I have served in pastoral ministry in some form or fashion for about twenty-five years. In the Methodist church I think it is twenty to twenty-one years, somewhere in that neighborhood; and I've served in the Nazarene Church as an associate minister while I was considering seminary.

(Int.) Where have you served in ministry?

(Rev. S) In the Nazarene church - There's a church here in Columbus, Macon Road Church of the Nazarene I was sort of youth director, junior type minister. They didn't really have titles like we do in the Methodist Church. Then in the Methodist church, I served at St. Paul's United Methodist Church as an associate for a couple years right out of seminary. From there I moved to Vienna First Methodist - was Senior Minister there. I was there for six years. Then I was appointed to Forest Hills as Senior Minister in Macon Georgia for three years and then was asked by Bishop King to be on the Cabinet and served there for three years. Since then I've been at St. Paul UMC as Senior Pastor and this is my seventh year.

(Int.) Of all that time, how long have you served as Senior Pastor?

(Rev. S) Total years or appointments?

(Int.) Total years.

(Rev. S) Sixteen years.
(Int.) Now in your previous ministry experiences have you conducted building projects in previous churches?

(Rev. S) Nothing that would require what we would call a typical building project in the Methodist church. You have to go through all the different processes and the votes and superintendents approval. This is the only one that is of that level of magnitude. The others have been things that we've handled in-house that didn't require any lending. You know… Whatever the twenty percent number of the value that requires approval. So, just fairly minor things. Up until now we did it all in house. We did some renovation work at Vienna that probably handled in house. It was very large for the Vienna Methodist church and it didn't require lending and things of that nature we just raised the money just on our own. Forest Hills had just completed a major building project before I got there. So I was just trying to pay it off. Nothing while I was on the cabinet.

(Int.) Tell me about your current church setting.

(Rev. S) Current Church setting - Saint Paul is a traditional South Georgia Methodist Church. It's been in existence for about a hundred and fifty years, total. At this current site we've been here since 1952. So, for sixty plus years or so at this current site. You know it's a typical, for South Georgia larger church. It offers three different types of services- contemporary, kind of a blended service, and then we have a traditional Methodist service which is where a majority of our folks go. We are still considered a traditional church. We're in Midtown. Largest church in midtown. But we reach the whole city. I've got people from the whole city. Over the last six years I have experienced a fair amount of growth. Larger growth than normal - really tied to young families. Now when I say young families I'm going to say you know twenty-eight to thirty year olds up to say you know forty-five to forty-six. That's been the majority of our growth. Probably about eighty-five percent of the people that have come into our church are in that age group.

(Int.) How large is the Church? How many members do you have?

(Rev. S) Roughly 2,200. An average Sunday attendance is probably five hundred. Now it's a fairly affluent church. So, you know maybe middle class to upper middle class. During the summer obviously our numbers go down as people go to their second homes. And after Labor Day our numbers go back up.

(Int.) So, you are currently in the process of a major building project.

(Rev. S) Yes. We've been studying this for some time. When I got here the church had, now this was six years ago, had a fair amount of deferred maintenance that had been
deferred for the better part of fifty to twenty years. So a lot of rotted wood, systems that were old and faltering. A water intrusion problem. This used to be a lake. So this whole area used to be called lake bottom. And for the right reasons. And so there are natural springs under all of this. So whenever it would rain I mean our downstairs would have been over a weekend we might vacuum out a thousand gallons of water. Oh yes terrible. So the system is old. The building was tired. Things of that nature. When I came here we started growing fairly quickly and so space became an issue -particularly with regards to children and youth. When they built a place for contemporary worship back maybe ten to eleven years ago, they took the youth space and built that there. Now the idea was they were to come back later and build a youth space but they never did so. So, when I got here I inherited a church with old systems that needed some repair and with some growth issues. We ran into space issues. We had two issues going on at the same time. Needed more space and we had to repair an old building. So we took my first year here and we started to assess the issues. We had one particular solution that the trustees did not approve and it was to take a building where are now… We bought an old house. The idea was that we could renovate the house and sort of kill two birds with one stone -create some more steps and space but not have to tear the whole house down. Considering it was a house inside the neighborhood even though we're not part of the historic district. They did not want to do that. It would've been a real cheap option of about $1,3000,000.00. And the desire of the trustees, which I was in favor of... Their desire was if we are going to do something we might as well just do it all. So we then took another six-eight months. Now we will be two years into my appointment to see what it is that we need to do for everything for our church. We had zero parking, being in a midtown here in the neighborhood. So we looked at our parking issues we looked at all of our system issues what it would take to build a new space considering the property that we own. The first take of it was what we needed to do to bring up all of our building, build a new building, and bring up our existing building to about eighty to eighty-five percent. That number was $13,100,000.00. So after I had a heart attack, as did the congregation… We didn't go to the congregation. I met with our committee and said You've got to get that number down to at least $10,000,000.00, which at that time would have been five times our annual budget. So just think about that - normally if you can raise two times your annual budget, that's pretty good. Three times is kind of really out there. I don't know anybody doing five times their annual budget. So then we went and said okay maybe five times is a little bit too much because we haven't done a capital campaign in some time. We didn't know, we didn't have any way that we could fund that. We did all the systems renovations. We put a couple thousand here, a couple hundred thousand into our sanctuary and then to build a new building. That number was then $8,1000,000.00. Then we thought we were going to do it over a multi-year pledge campaign. So we factored in $400,000 dollars worth of first costs. It was just a pretty good rough guess on what we thought it would take to make it happen. So the first project that was actually presented to the congregation went through all the committees, so we went through finance, we went through trustees; we hired a GC, an architect and did all that. This is what we would do.
The final run was $8,100,000.00 with $400,000 in finance costs for an $8,500,000.00 total project. Then the next question was do we want to hire a major fundraiser. We sort of did it the other way around. We didn't do a you know, we didn't do a feasibility study on what we could afford. We started with what are the bare essential needs that we have to do. What helps us for some future growth, that was the $8,500,000.00 number. So then the issue was can we afford that. St. Paul back in 1995 did a building construction project then and they hired a consultant who said you can not afford it and it actually made the church angry. And so the church said we'll show you what we can afford. And they raised about twenty percent more than what they said they could not raise in the first place. So there was a little bit of a residual- you know there's some sentiment around that said we don't want to hire a consultant, which did put all the pressure on yours truly. So we didn't know if you could afford it. I actually thought that maybe the best we could do in-house would be $6,000,000.00. But we prayed about it and had a lot of prayer going on. And then for about six months, I mean I went to every dinner, coffee, went to everybody I could go to. And we in six months time in gifts on hand and pledges we overfunded the $8,500,000.00 dollar campaign. You know you actually… We actually pledged out $8,700,000.00. I called the South Georgia foundation to get some help on this. We didn't use them but I asked them what are… What are some of the metrics I need to pay attention to with lead gifts and things like that? And we overextended that. So it was really good. The way we set up the actual resolution that was passed by the charge conference was that we were going to raise- we weren't going to do anything until we raised in pledges $8,500,000.00. We had to have forty percent of the money in hand before we even broke ground and then we had to have a pledge out over a five-year campaign. We met forty percent in hand.

(Int.) How long ago was that?

(Rev. S) We had the vote last March. And so by September of last year we had already had forty percent in hand and pledged out a hundred percent and actually closed above one hundred percent. You could do the math, a couple hundred thousand extra. So that was what we were living in. The first thing we did was the sanctuary and I'll show you the sanctuary in a few minutes and you can take a look. New carpet new paint. We did not refurbish the pews but we polished them up. We did a lot of little just facelift stuff. Now we have two major cracks. We had to do some system stuff. We had to put a fire suppression system in. But we wanted to face lift the sanctuary so people could see something and feel good about that. It was a Super success. By touching that first it created the wow factor. Before we even did any of the other stuff. But it also created a problem because everybody knew that we were doing $3,300,000.00 worth of renovations and $200,000 of that was the sanctuary, but all the other stuff that was used in the renovation of the current building was fire suppression, roof, water intrusion. $1,300,000.00 replacing an old dilapidated HVAC system. So nobody is going to see any of that. It's going be a safe church and a functioning church when it comes to the system
but it still is going to have the same tired paint, the same flooring that's been around in some cases since 1952. So coming out of seeing the sanctuary and how everybody really liked the way that looked, there were about eight or so different people/families /couples that said what are we going to do about all this cosmetic stuff that is not going to get touched in this current project? When we started with eight point, I mean thirteen point one number, lowered it down to what we thought we could afford, which was the $8,500,000.00. So what are we going to do with this - All of the margin that got cut out of the original project. That is what we're calling now the first impressions. Or maybe you call it Phase Two. We're calling it first impressions and what we're after is when people walk into our church building now what's going to be their first impression? They're not going to see the fire suppression. They're not going to see that. They'll see there is no water intrusion and stuff like that. They'll see that the air is working but they're still going to look at the old church that we had. So we have a number for that. It's about a one point to one point four million. And as of last night we pitched it to a Wednesday night crowd. But I went back to these eight or so families and said here's the number. How much are you going to give to this? They have pledged already –they have given and pledged about $850,000 of that $1,200,000.00 or $1,400,000.00. And so we're just like… We will ask the larger church, would you be willing to give a little more in the five year period of time or would you extend your pledge one more year. However that is, so that we can also do all this cosmetic stuff.

(Int.) So what would be the overall cost, the final cost?

(Rev. S) The final cost is going to be, You know when it's all said and done, is going to about $10,000,000.00. $9,800,000.00 but there will be some overruns. So this will be about $10,000,000.00.

(Int.) Generally speaking how has the congregation responded to this project?

(Rev. S) Overwhelmingly excited, happy for a couple of different reasons. One… Everybody knew that our church was tired building wise. You know, there in the summer when the air was not working it didn't take long to realize we need new air conditioning. When you walk downstairs and you see our janitors shop vacuuming water you know they see that. They can walk in the hallways and see that the paint looks older. Go into our fellowship hall and it looks thirty years old… Right. So, you know, when we had all the deferred maintenance around the church - rotted out windows and you know just over time and when you defer all that. You don't see the dust in your own house until someone points that. But once you start pointing it out, people saw it. We had an electrical system that the company went out of business you know back in the 1930s. Well the reason they went out of business is because they were sued - it was hit or miss on whether it worked. I mean I could show you a picture in our chapel of something that's about the size of this bookcase. The technology of the 1930s it took all that wiring just to be able to dim lights.
Back in the 30s that was pretty cool. You know… State of the art. Now you go to Home Depot and for a hundred bucks you can buy that and just put it in the wall. So now taking all that out and you know finding something new… You know, it was it was about time. So the church… It passed all this. The vote was 99.8 percent in favor of the building project.

(Int.) What was that number again?

(Rev. S) It was it was like 99.8 percent approval. There were two votes against it. I did not see the vote. But the tellers think that the two votes came from some elder people who actually spoke in favor of it at the charge conference - think that they misinterpreted how they were supposed to vote. But the actual vote is… You know, I think four hundred in favor, two against. So overwhelmingly in favor and then to raise all the money either to meet the forty percent in hand and the hundred percent pledged out over to a five year pledge campaign… To do all that in about four or five months shows you the level of the churches excitement. And for the fact that we haven't… we have not had a turn down or to stop any of our existing ministries, which requires all types of flexibility of our people. And they're not… Well, if they're complaining, we haven't heard it. So that's another indication that everybody's excited about what we're doing.

(Int.) Let me ask you some more specific questions… So, as far as the current project is going, what would you say was your specific role in this project as the Senior Pastor?

(Rev. S) In this particular project, it obviously was Vision Caster - To paint the picture for the congregation of what could be and why we did it. St. Paul - I'm going talk about this in a couple different ways. Here's an example. St. Paul has always had a strong youth ministry. One of the things that we noticed is that when we built the contemporary space for contemporary worship we took out the youth space. We started to see our numbers decline and the reason why was that they didn't have the space… And we had good youth directors. We had good families. But the youth would be in this room one Sunday and then that room the next Sunday. It just started to play out and we started to say that the common element is not the people. The problem is… You know, you can mark it from the time that we got rid of that space, you can see a slow decline. So, painting that vision again- what's a hallmark for St. Paul. If you ask St. Paul to talk about the four or five things that we do well and what we're known for, the congregation would say children ministry. We have a disconnect because we no longer had children in space. So it was for me to cast the vision, really to go back and see our history and how God has blessed this church. That hasn't changed. So we need to make room for God to continue to do that inside the life of our congregation. So the idea of sharing the vision and then the idea of talking about sacrificial giving in why it's important for something like this. That it’s not an issue-I mean the amount of money is not tied to the quality of a person's faith. But the idea that sacrificial giving does require some level of trust and faith because you're
trusting God to help us and we're all making pretty major sacrifices. So those two are probably the best examples of painting that. Now I also started this four years into my ministry here and the slope of our church is growth and growing. So I didn't start this year one. And so people, I had already banked a fair amount of trust with the congregation - I mean there were questions like "you know are you going to be here?" "Are you going to be reappointed?" I mean… All those dangers and all that stuff. And so what my family has you know we're committed to St. Paul for that as a lifer. And so you know we're personally sacrificing a great deal financially for the campaign just on our own level. So it was inviting people to walk the path. So we walk it together, envisioning what we're going to become at St. Paul. This is what we talk about all the time. We think St. Paul exists to help people mature in their faith. The way, what we look to see as indications of people, their maturation process, is that people come to see God for who God is and to trust God and what God says He's going to do. So for us it was a strong youth ministry, children's ministry, things like that. The way we think people grow in their faith is through or by experiencing five catalysts one of them is worship, service, one of them is study. And so we work these experiences, these catalysts, all throughout the church here. So when I paint... So we talked about the vision of the church. It was what, who God is, what God is doing in the life of St. Paul. Why we need this so that people can experience these five catalysts so that the net effect is they will grow in their faith. So it was connecting the dots for the people, assuring them of the relationship that senior pastor and staff has with the congregation and that together we're going to be trusting God sacrificially.

(Int.) So would you identify that Vision Casting role as your role specifically?

(Rev. S) Yes. One hundred percent me. I've got other people around me. But when we chose not to hire a financial consultant, I mean I remember sitting in the trustees and the building committee meeting saying alright, who are we going to use, and I mean it was like… We are going to use you.

(Int.) So it's more expansive than just casting the vision?

(Rev. S) You know… I was casting the vision, asking for money. I mean you know it was running the whole thing.

(Int.) Your specific role is vision… Visioning, planning, implementation?

(Rev. S) Absolutely.

(Int.) So management of all... Would you fairly characterize that as a CEO mentality? That you had hands in all of it?
Yeah, exactly right. And so I also know my strengths and weaknesses and vision casting, paint the picture, the relational side of ministry is very strong. Reaching is very strong. Now the negative side is administration and detail. So the tradeoff is when we set up the mechanism by which we seek to raise the money, I had to have people who were incredibly detailed. And so I went and chose two people that are - One was older one was younger - heavily respected in our congregation and in our community and they were to do nothing more than just help me to administrate. It was... It was my face, my voice, my interaction in front of the congregation and the dinners and the lunches and all the things that went on one on one with the personal asking. So, very much a CEO aspect.

How did this role manifest itself? Was it something that was assumed from the beginning or was it something that evolved as the building project progressed?

I would probably say eighty percent from the beginning, or maybe seventy-five percent from the beginning and twenty-five percent evolving over time. The truth is in the beginning I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to have this to rest and fall on my leadership. And I distinctly remember you know even though the campaign in that five or six months where we were raising money and pledges. I remember wanting more people to be the face of it and we had... We had testimonies where you know we had all the things that go with raising money. We had people talking about their own levels of sacrifice and what have you. But I remember eating... I have breakfast with my associate every Monday. We have we have a breakfast meeting and I remember sitting there and saying to him I've now come to the conclusion that in order for this to happen, it's going to have to be me. And so there's that that twenty-five percent you know... Gosh it's people- I mean they're responding well but I mean it was a burden that it was like oh my gosh this is going to be so much on my shoulders. So maybe it wasn't seventy-five/twenty-five maybe sixty/fifty. I'd kind of want to be a little passive on it because it was a gut check that if it didn't work, I didn't want to have to look in the mirror and go... Well it wasn't me that didn't do. There was a level of responsibility and I didn't know if I was ready for that. But about halfway through the fund raising project I kind of came to the conclusion that it was, this is going to, I'm going to have to do it. I will have to be fully involved in everything with this Vision Caster, Administrator... The whole nine yards.

Why do you think that this role, that you feel like this role is yours and yours alone? Why do you think that this came to be?

Well, I think some of it was, some of it was a little passive on behalf of the church. Right? You know, some of it was the history of not wanting an outside person to tell them what they could and could not do. So, it was, you know... Hey we are just going to look to you to kind of lead us. You know, that type deal. You know some of it
could have been my inexperience to not know enough to say, wait a minute you know I need 10 other people doing this with me. So it's a little bit of all of that.

(Int.) So it was chosen not assumed? So is it partly the role is assumed because of the nature of the project?

(Rev. S) That's exactly right. And there was a void in people not stepping up to do it and then obviously someone had to step up and do it… Right? So some of that is my inexperience of not knowing ahead of time- of not seeing the organization saying "wait a minute" - I didn't know what questions to ask on the front end.

(Int.) So you wouldn't necessarily say it was something that was thrust upon you?

(Rev S) No. No. No. I think it was more of a vacancy. And you know, I was… Everybody's kind of hoping for you know who to be the face and voice of it. You know… I don't know if I fully was willing to own the success or the failure of it until midway through the process.

(Int.) And we've kind of talked around but if you had to put in a word or phrase your specific role; I mean if you could say: “This is Rev. S’s specific role in this.” How would you characterize this?

(Rev. S.) I mean it's been on me. This project provided our church the necessary process to really spread our wings and fully identify this is what we are going to be as a church. It’s more of a direct management approach. It’s more like you said… “CEO.”

(Int.) Is it a role that you feel like changed over time as the project has progressed? Has the role changed in its nature over time?

(Rev. S) As in my role here? No, it's been that. It's through and through… That would be because people are still looking for me on it.

(Int.) Last question… If you were to begin this project again, we talked a little bit about that, would you assume or take on the same role during this specific project?

(Rev. S) That's an interesting question. Obviously it's been very successful. And although it's been you know some anxiety that I've borne out of this to get to where we're at now, I wouldn't change any aspect of it. But you know we're at the… We're about to walk across the goal line you know with all of this. So I mean we're midway through the project. It has been incredibly…It’s been very smooth. At least from what the congregation experiences. You know, now from the staff side, it’s that juggling of everything and that has been interesting. Obviously since we've raised the money – we have just got a couple
hundred thousand dollars on this Phase Two part – our first impressions part that wasn't part of the original plan. We haven't really announced it to the church yet. I mean, as soon as I announce it we might even get more than that. There's no way this is not going to be successful. So I mean hindsight. I wouldn't change anything because it's worth it you know. But and some of it I didn't shy away, I mean I was willing to take on a fair amount of responsibility through the CEO type style because I was really interested in the personal growth in my own life. You know I've never really had too big of an issue when it comes to asking people for money. But I've never sat down with someone at a lunch and said ______ I need y'all to give me a million dollars. I mean that's a different ask. And so I had to, on a personal level, I had to come to grips that you know whether or not they respond is not any indication of me. If I have… If I've laid out the needs talked about the vision and placed myself in prayer and self reflection and then you know, it is what it is. But I mean there's a lot of learning for me to be able to say I need y'all to give… That is not easy. I mean as… As a person, as a Christian, as a pastor, this experience has solidified something in me with my own sense of leadership and confidence that I didn't have. And so that you know for future projects I would tell pastors to you know to not be passive in it. There's a lot of learning that can take place in the person and then on in the churches as well. There's a real sense of momentum through all this that the church, the work, my thoughts around the word on the street of what people think of us is really important. And the word on the street is there is a lot going on here. So now, for us, it's been very positive. There hasn't been a lot negative and we didn't lose members over this and it hasn't changed any aspect of our church working. So, you know, I have nothing but the upside of it because it's been, it's been very successful. I mean if it wasn't… I would probably have a different take.

(Int.) Thank you so much for the interview. I appreciate it.

(Int.) End of interview. 8/22/2018.
APPENDIX D

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APPENDIX E
APPENDIX E

PHOTOGRAPHS OF DUBLIN FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Figure 1. Dublin First United Methodist Church Exterior a
Figure 2. Dublin First UMC Church Exterior b
Figure 3. Dublin First United Methodist Church Exterior c
Figure 4. Main Floor Hallway a
Figure 5. Main Floor Hallway b
Figure 6. Main Floor Hallway c
Figure 7. Main Floor Hallway d
Figure 8. Main Floor Hallway e
Figure 9. Chapel a
Figure 10. Chapel b
Figure 11. Chapel e
Figure 12. Chapel d
Figure 13. Chapel e
Figure 14. Main Floor Restroom
Figure 15. Church Parlor a
Figure 16. Church Parlor b
Figure 17. Fellowship Hall
Figure 18. Main Sanctuary a
Figure 19. Main Sanctuary b
Figure 20. Main Sanctuary c
Figure 21. Youth Room a
Figure 22. Youth Room b
Figure 23. Youth Room c
Figure 24. Youth Room d
Figure 25. Youth Room e
Figure 26. Youth Room f
Figure 27. Youth Room g