

**Teaming With Possibilities:  
What Team Ministry Reveals**

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A Graduate Project Submitted to  
Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Divinity

March, 2017, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Date: March 24, 2017

## Teaming With Possibilities: What Team Ministry Reveals

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**Abstract:** This qualitative research study explores the experience of ordained clergy living out their vocational calling in a team ministry setting. Using a two-point case study methodology, and an ethnographic approach, the data collected through interviews and intentional observation describes the overall experience of the four participants, and further identifies major themes and subthemes which contribute to their overall experience and to their sense of identity. Based upon the results of the research, a review of literature and theological exploration, various issues and potential courses of action for the Church are explored.

March 24, 2017

## Certificate of Ethical Acceptability for Research Involving Humans

This is to certify that the Research Ethics Board has examined the research proposal:

AST REB File number:	0152016
Title of Research Project:	Teaming with possibilities: What team ministry reveals
Faculty Supervisor:	Dr. Jody Clarke
Student Investigator	Shirley Carras

and concludes that in all respects the proposed project meets appropriate standards of ethical acceptability and is in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) and Atlantic School of Theology's relevant policies.

Approval Period: 30 November 2016 to 16 April 2017

Dated this 30th day of November, 2016 at Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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## ***Introduction***

Prior to beginning my studies toward my Master of Divinity degree, I had spent many years in a professional working environment, the latter ten or so years in various middle and senior management positions. Each of these positions involved working closely with others. These working relationships may not have been dubbed with the official title “*teams*,” but teams they were – working groups, projects and committees.

Many of these teams were struck to accomplish a specific task or to solve a specific problem, and were later disbanded. Other teams, such as management or general staff meetings, reflected ongoing working relationships.

While the task at hand may have been successfully completed, or the problem solved, my personal experience of working in a team environment did not necessarily parallel the outcome. As I reflected back on the most positive, and also the most dysfunctional, teaming experiences of my prior career, I became very conscious of the effect both had had on my physiological, mental and emotional states of being.

As I prepare to enter into the service of the Church, feeling called to ordained team ministry as a way to embrace the missional work of the church, I have become increasingly interested in the experience of ordained clergy who are living out their vocational calling in a team setting with at least one other ordained clergy member. As it would parallel my particular circumstances, I am very interested in ordained clergy teams where both/all have a graduate-level theological education, where each is working a minimum of half-time, and where their focus is a single-point pastoral charge (“church”).

A review of existing literature provides only general guidance. Author Lovett Weems suggests that most of the best research and writing on leadership comes from the

business sector, not from the context of the church.<sup>1</sup> While research specific to team ministry can be found, most has been conducted in the United States, in large congregational settings, with large ministry teams comprised of both ordained clergy and laity. Therefore, we are left having to extrapolate from those specific findings, as that research base is not representative of churches in Atlantic Canada.

This has led me to conduct this specific research study, focussing on my more narrow definition of “team” working in church settings in this geographic area. I was interested in answering questions such as: Does their experience in team ministry align with the broader research? Does their experience parallel my own personal experiences in any way? On a continuum from totally dysfunctional to extremely positive, how would they describe their experience? What lessons might their experience provide?

### ***Research Question***

In *A Sacred Voice is Calling*, John Neafsey, who is both a practising clinical psychologist and a college theology teacher, makes the comment that vocation is very much a matter of the heart.<sup>2</sup> He comments that the word vocation has different meanings and associations for different people – it generally is associated with either ordained ministry/religious life or with a job or career. However, he cautions that we ought not to define the “rich, complex phenomenon of vocation” either too narrowly or too exclusively.

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<sup>1</sup> Lovett H. Weems Jr., *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture and Integrity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 16.

<sup>2</sup> John Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), x.

Neafsey broadens the definition to say vocation encompasses every aspect of our lives – personal, family, work, career, social, political – as well as spiritual and religious.<sup>3</sup>

Focussing on Neafsey’s broad definition of vocation, my overall research question became: *How do ordained clergy understand and live out their vocational calling in a team ministry setting?*

It was my desire to explore vocational calling in as broad a context as possible, including vocation in the sense of ordination to the word and sacrament, and vocation in the sense of managing the “work” associated with serving in ordained ministry, including frustrations with the “job”, passions, and life-giving practices.

In taking a reasonably holistic view of how vocation is lived out in team ministry, it was my hope that the insights gained from my research would inform not only me personally, as I prepare to enter into service with the Church, but also other ordained clergy and church structures such as dioceses, conferences, and presbyteries.

My research study was never intended to provide a checklist of what to do and what not to do. It was also not intended to advocate for a particular model of team ministry that could be implemented as an off-the-shelf solution for churches already engaged in teaming or those looking to engage in such. Furthermore, it was not intended to highlight positive experiences of team ministry or negative experiences to the exclusion of the other.

Instead this research was designed to provide a snapshot of two churches which embrace team ministry as a way of serving God and serving God’s people; a snapshot of how four pastors embrace the fullness of their vocation.

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<sup>3</sup> Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice is Calling*, 2-3.

## ***Research Methodology***

The focus of my research was to gain an in-depth appreciation of how my study participants worked together in team ministry, rather than simply looking at trends and generalities. I explored this research topic using a case study approach, while drawing on some of the principles of ethnography. Case study methodology provided me with an opportunity to collect and analyze multiple forms of data for description, themes and lessons learned about a system of people working and bounded together by space and time. Drawing on the principles of ethnography enabled me to be immersed in the language, behaviours and beliefs of the group while collecting information through observations.

Case study research involves detailed and in-depth data collection using such research tools as interviews and observations.<sup>4</sup> Robert Yin suggests the essence of a case study is that it tries to illuminate an issue, using “what” and “how” questions.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, my interview questions focussed on *what* drew them to team ministry, *how* they described their experiences, and *how* teaming meshed with their own vocational identity, particularly with their theology and their liturgical and pastoral practices. Yin also suggests that, if possible, a case study should take place in the natural setting of the “case”, in order to provide opportunities for direct observation, either formal or casual, to supplement the information gained through the interview process.<sup>6</sup>

I wanted to examine team ministry in two sites which might offer different perspectives, turning my research into a multi-point case study. Creswell refers to this

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<sup>4</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007), 73.

<sup>5</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods Fourth Edition* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009), 17.

<sup>6</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 109-110.



“purposeful maximal sampling.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, in consultation with my project advisors, I chose potential sites from two different mainline Christian denominations in order to give a greater breadth to my research.

As my research was designed to include not only in-person interviews, but also observations, the sites, or churches, were chosen based upon their proximity to my place of residence/study. Ideally, I was interested in selecting sites which were within a 150 kilometer radius of my home. All of the ordained clergy serving as part of the team had to be agreeable to participating in the study in order for their church to be chosen.

I relied upon my advisors to identify potential sites based upon their knowledge of the ministry structures in place at that site, and whether or not they met my narrow definition of team. It is important to note that the churches were not pre-screened by my advisors based on their perceptions of whether they were “good” or “bad” teams, or on the gender or experience of the individual team members. Nor were any qualifying questions asked to pre-screen potential participants. Specifically, no attempt was made to intentionally select participants who would offer either similar or differing viewpoints, only a positive viewpoint, or only a negative viewpoint. A church was selected for the study only if all the team members agreed to participate and, once two churches were selected, no further participants were contacted.

The ministry team in each of the two churches selected was comprised of two ordained clergy (“pastors”) who met the criteria that I was interested in observing – each with a graduate-level theological education and working at least half-time.

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<sup>7</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 75.

All four pastors had been ordained for a minimum of 8 years. Furthermore, three of the four had previous experiences in team ministry prior to their current teaming situation. The fourth pastor was able to draw on their extensive experience working in a team environment outside the church structure. The participants will be referred to in this paper as Pastors Red, Blue, Green and Brown.

I conducted one-on-one interviews with each of the pastors in their church offices and, in addition, I attended liturgies at both churches and observed liturgical styles and practices and interactions with their teammates and the congregations.

### ***Overall Experience and Development of Themes***

In response to the question *how would you describe your experience of ordained team ministry*, the lived experience of my participants in team ministry was unanimously and enthusiastically positive.

**Red:** *“Teaming is a wonderful, wonderful experience.”*

**Blue:** *“It’s amazing.” ... “It almost feels like a family.”*

**Green:** *“It’s just been a delight all the way around.”*

**Brown:** *“Oh absolutely, team ministry is better.”*

Each pastor expounded upon their experience in team ministry, and in some cases, shared their perspectives on previous teaming experiences. My observations were that each pastor not only spoke enthusiastically, but also embodied this enthusiasm throughout our interview time. The themes which emerged from their lived experiences were that teaming gave them a sense of *relief*, a sense of *freedom*, and an ability to live out their *vocational*

*identity* in ways which resonate positively with them. I will now present what the participants shared about each of these.

## ***Relief***

In order to appreciate why these pastors experienced this sense of relief while working in team ministry, it is important to reflect upon the pressures and stresses that are inherent in vocational ministry.

Author H. B. London, Jr., a 4<sup>th</sup> generation minister who himself actively pastored for over 30 years, talks about the struggles that beset pastors – working harder in a world that is more corrupt, fatigue, worry, and crammed schedules. “Some” he says “quit in utter hopelessness. Others lapse into passivity. And many of the rest just hold on by their fingernails.”<sup>8</sup> One of the great hazards facing pastors is what London terms the “walk-on-water-syndrome,” one of several delusive images. The pressure to live up to this expectation that a pastor can do no wrong is tremendous. But an even greater hazard is allowing oneself to believe it is true, and triggering “an obnoxious, pseudoholy, prideful opinion” of themselves.<sup>9</sup>

Neither the expectation nor the crafted self-image is in keeping with scripture, which says, “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment.” (Romans 12:3, NRSV) In his essay *The Called Life*, Richard Lischer describes vocation, which he calls pastoral office, as “God's way of helping the church discover its true vocation in the world.

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<sup>8</sup> H.B. London, Jr., *Pastors at Greater Risk* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2003), 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> London, *Pastors at Greater Risk*, 37-38.

It is God's gift to the church” but goes on to say that “the orifice of pastor was never meant to create a hierarchy of privileges in the body of Christ. It is not that sort of gift.”<sup>10</sup>

George Barna, president of the Barna Group, a market research firm specializing in the study of religious beliefs and behaviours, says that “the problem is not our [church/religious] leaders but the unhealthy expectations we have of them.”<sup>11</sup> He suggests we set leaders up for failure by holding them to absurd performance standards<sup>12</sup> - expecting them to be *all* things, to *all* people, *all* of the time. In the eyes of many, we elevate our pastors to superhero status, or “Super-Pastor.”

While unofficially being dubbed “Super-Pastor” may give some an ego-boost, it also creates isolation and loneliness; loneliness possibly leading to anxiety, depression, burnout, and other manifestations of stress. Clinical psychologists suggest “it is not surprising that clergy often find themselves exhausted, depleted and languishing in the throes of burnout.”<sup>13</sup> Lloyd Rediger suggests that the single most energy-draining pressure facing clergy is “the gap between expectations and reality.”<sup>14</sup>

According to papers presented at the Second Psychotheological Symposium, sponsored by the International Therapeutic Center for Clergy and Religious in 1976, loneliness is an emotional issue that plagues the lives of many religious professionals. In his essay presented at the symposium, Joseph Hart writes about the loneliness that comes from trying to be the “people pleaser,” a lifestyle that is often associated with clergy. In

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Lischer, "The called life: an essay on the pastoral vocation," *Interpretation* 59, no. 2 (April 2005): 168.

<sup>11</sup> George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership: Achieving Success Through Shared Responsibility* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Ryan C. Staley et al, "Strategies employed by clergy to prevent and cope with interpersonal isolation," *Pastoral Psychology* 62, no. 6 (December 2013): 846.

<sup>14</sup> G. Lloyd Rediger, *Coping With Clergy Burnout* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1982), 39.

attempting to please everyone, the people pleaser often withdraws rather than put themselves in a close relationship where their failure to please will garner attention.<sup>15</sup> The theme of clergy loneliness also came up in London's writings. London says loneliness troubles many pastors – it's just like a chronic virus. Because so much of a pastor's work is done alone - behind closed doors so to speak - loneliness becomes an occupational hazard. Other things also contribute to this sense of loneliness. Things like - trying to maintain a professional distance from congregants, being removed from classmates and colleagues who previously provided support, and having to maintain strict confidentiality.<sup>16</sup>

Although the pastors I interviewed never explicitly mentioned loneliness, burnout, stress, or unrealistic expectations, what they commented on were the very things that contributed to combatting these things, in effect, antidotes to these symptoms.

I was told that working in team ministry lessened the load – there was someone with whom they could share the day-to-day responsibilities. This is not unlike the image which is evoked by Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, when he tells Moses “what you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out .... For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.” (Exodus 18:17-18, NRSV)

**Green:** *“recognizing that I don't have to do everything. That's a big thing.”*

The pastors told me that working in team meant that there was a mutual support network. Knowing that there was someone who could provide a listening ear and with whom they could debrief difficult pastoral situations was very valuable.

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<sup>15</sup> Joseph L. Hart, “Perils of the Pleaser,” in *Loneliness: Issues of Emotional Living in an Age of Stress For Clergy and Religious*, ed. James P. Madden (Whitinsville: Affirmation Books, 1977), 42-50.

<sup>16</sup> London, *Pastors at Greater Risk*, 52.

**Brown:** *“just the knowledge that you’re not in this up to your eyeballs on your own. That there is someone, even someone you can sit down over a coffee with and share what’s going on. ... To be able to do that in-house, and to be able to do that with, with a degree of comfort and confidentiality, that’s a huge piece.”*

During the course of this research, I was able to observe the interaction between two pastors after one had had a difficult pastoral encounter. The question asked – *“do you want to debrief later”* – was an example of this mutual support.

The very idea that there was someone who could, and who would, step in and assume responsibility for various aspects of ministry when times were particularly busy, or when personal time was arranged, contributed to alleviating stress. Brown had commented on being able to take personal time just before the Advent Season – a busy time liturgically, but a time when there were pressing personal commitments.

**Brown:** *“So to be able to have the trust and, that you can walk away for a week, knowing that everything is in good hands, I mean that’s huge.”*

## ***Freedom***

The stresses which were elaborated upon in the previous section, particularly the feeling of being overwhelmed, can also be addressed in part by allowing pastors to have a degree of professional freedom. Solo ministry is filled with many demands, some unreasonable, some oppressive; some of which pastors may feel incapable of handling, and others of which hold little interest for them. Team ministry can provide some of this professional freedom.

There was a clear sense from the data that team ministry gave my participants a sense of freedom to pursue their own passions and interests and to build upon their strengths. According to authors Ervin Henkelmann and Stephen Carter, one of the success

factors for effective ministry is utilizing the unique gifts and abilities of the team members.<sup>17</sup>

The biblical imagery most often used to describe the dynamics of team ministry is that used by Paul, “the quintessential team player,”<sup>18</sup> in his letters to the Corinthians, Romans and Ephesians – the image of the one body having various body parts, each with its own function. A parallel is drawn with this body image when Paul suggests there are a variety of spiritual gifts, all of which contribute to the one Body, the Church. The imagery goes even further to suggest that not only do all parts of the body, or all spiritual gifts, belong to the body/Body – all are necessary for the proper functioning of the one body/Body.

This imagery was expressed by the pastors as having the freedom to express and follow their own individual interests and passions, all of which contributed to the missional purpose of their churches. One of the pastors I interviewed was passionate about outreach, and they were able to expand this aspect of their church’s mission. It started with a church service in one care facility, and expanded to another facility, and then to another. Another pastor was passionate about pastoral care and was able to pursue that passion by accepting a position in team ministry which had pastoral care as its primary focus. Team ministry for another meant they were able to spend more time in children and youth ministry.

Pastor Brown suggested that in following their interests and strengths:

**Brown:** “[they were] able to do those bits and pieces with a fair bit of enthusiasm and passion because that’s what we were really excited to do.”

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<sup>17</sup> Ervin F. Henkelmann and Stephen J. Carter, *How to Develop a Team Ministry and Make It Work* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), 22.

<sup>18</sup> Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership*, 34.

Moreover, team ministry gave them the freedom to brainstorm, to share and test out ideas, and to let their creativity come to the forefront. This was a freedom that allowed them to be vulnerable with one another and to trust one another, and in so doing, the outcome often reflected the synergy of ideas, which was more robust than any one of them could have imagined on their own.

**Blue:** *“I think getting, sharing ideas. Ah, getting ideas that “oh, I hadn’t thought of that.” Or, “you know, that would be a good way of doing that” or “No, I really think we should do it this way cause this has worked for me.”*

**Red:** *“Colleagues, I haven’t got a clue what to do in this situation. What do we do about this?”*

### ***Vocational Identity***

Another thematic piece that emerged from the data revolves around the question of how team ministry informed or was informed by the pastors’ theology and their liturgical and pastoral identities. What became apparent in the interviews was that my participants were not so much shaped by team ministry as their team ministry was shaped by how they lived out their vocational calling. Team ministry was simply an expression of themselves. Authors Kevin Lawson and Mick Boersma suggest that it is important for each team member to find his or her own personal inner spiritual and emotional strength.<sup>19</sup> Living out their own vocational identity is a manifestation of this.

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<sup>19</sup> Kevin E. Lawson and Mick Boersma, *Associate Staff Ministry: Thriving Personally, Professionally, and Relationally* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 5-6.



The personal theologies of my participants aligned very closely both with the biblical imagery of team ministry - one body, varying spiritual gifts, all for the common good - and also with each other's theologies.

**Green:** *“the oneness, the oneness of all of us, and the gifts of all of us. All coming from the Spirit. And sharing in the life of the Spirit. And giving rise to that Spirit, in each and every person, not only in my colleague, but also in the congregation. The Spirit that is between us, and among us, and in us. Being allowed to give expression, full expression, - that is my theology in a nutshell, really. This oneness, this interconnectedness of all of us, and sharing your gifts for the good of all. That shines here, that shines here at this church.”*

**Red:** *“it's this, this perspective of oneness, this kind of mystical, contemplative theology of the oneness of all people and really recognizing each other as expressions of the Divine. ... We manifest with different abilities and skills and whatnot but we are all expressions of the one life. And that's who I am, that's the way I see the universe. So that's the way I see life and my colleagues.”*

Pastor Blue told me their theology and their Christology were very similar to that of their teammate.

From a liturgical perspective, my participants were unanimous in their conviction that it is very important for each member of the team to have a visible presence during the liturgy. I was able to observe this when I attended liturgies at each of their churches. While the liturgical roles each assumed might vary service by service, week by week, each participated. In one church there was a rotation of liturgical roles; for example, if one presided, the other preached, and vice-versa. In the other church it was less structured, but each participated in the sacramental aspects, preaching and other roles such as children's time.

There was also a practical aspect to having each pastor participate in the liturgy.

**Red:** *“[we] play off each other and banter back and forth, bringing spontaneity, joy and life to the liturgy.”*

**Brown:** *“I think it’s important for the congregation to hear a different voice and a different approach. [And] I wouldn’t want to listen to my preaching every Sunday, year in and year out.”*

Furthermore, the pastors acknowledged that they were each ordained to the ministry of the sacrament and the word.

The pastors were also unanimous in living out a pastoral identity which put the needs of the individual congregants first, even if this meant overriding assigned functional responsibilities. Individual needs of the congregants became the primary focus. Each team acknowledged this. For example, Pastor Green’s primary responsibility was pastoral care, but they commented:

**Green:** *“I have no problem referring somebody to [my teammate], or [my teammate] referring somebody to me, because we just feel the personalities might better fit. ... It’s just, especially for funerals, it’s whatever the need of that person is, right, what their wishes were, what their family needs.”*

Pastor Blue indicated that this same caveat applied to hospital visitations, commenting:

**Blue:** *“So for visiting in hospital, if it’s somebody we normally have a relationship with we’ll do that. ... But if it’s other than that, it’s just who’s available or who would be the best person to fit in.”*

Over and above discussing their overwhelmingly positive lived experiences in team ministry, my participants offered their perspectives on what they considered to be the key success factors in their teaming efforts. They also provided their insights as to when and how teaming might be difficult.

### *Contributing Success Factors*

One of the key ingredients to a healthy team according to author Stephen Macchia is fostering trust through communication. He says “the success of your team and the level of trust your team will acquire are directly proportionate to how well they communicate.”<sup>20</sup> Macchia is not alone in his comments; communication is a consistent theme or principle in leadership texts. It is therefore not surprising that it was raised during my interviews as a contributing success factor. My participants valued open, honest, non-critical, and non-threatening communication – regularly, formally and/or informally. One of the pastors commented that electronic communication such as text messaging and e-mail offered further avenues for keeping in touch. However, they were quick to point out that electronic communication should only be considered as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, face-to-face communication. Communication was essential to the success of their teams.

However, the most significant factor that contributed to their team’s success was attitude. Pastor Red spoke passionately about this saying:

**Red:** *“ultimately what needs to be present for a good team to happen is there needs to be an attitude. There needs to be an awareness, an openness and awareness that ministry isn’t about me, it’s not about me shining, it’s not even about me and my gifts. It really is about releasing the potential, the creativity, the gifts of everyone on the team. And the recognition that when that kind of creativity is released that’s when ministry happens at its very best,”* for “when the team shines, we all shine.”

What I observed during the interviews, in the exchanges between the team members, and during the liturgies was “attitude.” All my participants presented themselves

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team: Five Traits of Vital Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 64-65.

as mature, confident, positive persons, very self-aware of what did and did not work for them, and quite open to making it work. The personalities I observed were neither the ego-centric nor the insecure that they collectively suggested were challenges to team ministry. Theirs was a “good” attitude.

### ***Potential Challenges***

Despite best efforts, literature sources suggest there can be downside to the team concept. The Church of England noted that clergy teams can encourage a “new form of clericalism which results from their close association” resulting in an unintentional distancing from the laity, and it can at times infringe upon what was once considered the “clergy’s professional independence.”<sup>21</sup> This is echoed by Lyle Schaller who suggests a co-pastorate can be perceived as stripping the laity of having a powerful voice.<sup>22</sup>

However, the views expressed by my participants did not support this in practice. All commented on the fact that, for them, “team” encompassed the entire congregation, inclusive of the ordained clergy, staff ministry positions, retired clergy, laity involved in the liturgy and the congregation as a whole. Pastor Red spoke of it this way:

**Red:** *“[I] learned years ago both by experience and by perhaps inclination, that ministry really is ministry of the whole people of God and that ministry really is a team undertaking from the get-go.”*

In observing the laity and other ministry personnel, they were very much involved in the liturgies at both churches and the role that each played was very much intentional.

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<sup>21</sup> General Synod of the Church of England, *Team and Group Ministries: A Report by the Ministry Coordinating Group* (London: General Synod, 1985), 19.

<sup>22</sup> Lyle E. Schaller, *The Senior Minister* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 55.

While author Andrew Dawswell personally accepts the benefits of team ministry, his experience has been that these teams can be a significant source of conflict in their parishes. Notably, he says managing and leading teams can simply add to the long list of things that have to be done, as opposed to providing a release from previous burdens on the clergy. As well, there can be significant tensions between team members and differences of understanding.<sup>23</sup> As previously noted, my participants viewed team ministry very positively, not as a burden. However, they did offer comments which support Dawswell's contention that there can be "significant tensions."

The pastors indicated that personalities and personal dynamics can be a challenge to team ministry – egos, insecurities, jealousies, competition and the like. In their current teams this has not been an issue, but one pastor commented on a previous experience in team ministry. Notes this participant, "*team ministry is very difficult. And unless you have the right dynamics it can be disastrous. I've seen it.*" In that particular instance a former teammate was very insecure and felt threatened by the participant. The tension was noticeable, even to the congregation at the time.

The second challenge which the pastors raised was the potential for triangulation. Author Alan Rudnick also speaks about this in his book. Although his comments are particular to the senior/associate pastor relationship, I believe they can be applied more broadly. He suggests there is a danger that associates will be drawn into triangulation between congregants and the senior pastor.<sup>24</sup> It was apparent in the interviews that the pastors were well aware of the potential. There was recognition that some parishioners

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<sup>23</sup> Andrew Dawswell, *Ministry Leadership Teams: Theory and Practice in Effective Collaborative Ministry* (Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, 2003), 5-10..

<sup>24</sup> Alan R. Rudnick, *The Work of the Associate Pastor* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2012), 51

might be drawn to one team member, and others to another team member, but they did not view this negatively; on the contrary, they felt that being able to appeal to different personalities was a strength of team ministry. But in terms of triangulation, as one pastor put it, “*we just don’t play that game.*”

### ***Evaluation and Implications for Pastoral Theology and Ministry***

George Barna suggests “a major advantage of being led by a team is that the results almost always transcend what any individual from that team could have produced alone.”<sup>25</sup> This central thought, which might alternatively be expressed as “the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts,” combined with the overwhelmingly positive experience of my participants would suggest that this model of ministry ought to be worthy of serious consideration by those entering the service of the Church, and by the churches themselves.

Over and above this, however, is the theological argument that Paul puts forth in his letters - the imagery of many spiritual gifts working together for the common good of the one body; specifically, the imagery which can be found in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 , Ephesians 4:11-12, and Romans 12:6-8.

In each of these letters Paul refers to varying gifts/roles - apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, evangelists, healers, speakers of tongues, exhorters – and makes the point that no one person possesses all of these gifts. As Paul says “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?” (1Cor12:29-30, NRSV) If no one person possesses all the spiritual gifts necessary for ministry in the context of our churches – preaching, teaching,

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<sup>25</sup> Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership*, 11.

pastoral presence, leadership, mentoring, music, outreach, youth work – how is it that solo ministry is even a defensible construct? Perhaps the time has come to reconstruct what we see as the role of “the” pastor.

Clearly one of the constraints within which our churches must operate is the fiscal resources that are available to pay for ministry personnel. Many churches have difficulty in paying for one clergy position, let alone for a clergy team. But if team ministry is not only desirable from the perspective of the health and well-being of the clergy, but is also the model that is suggested in Paul’s letters, we must become out-of-the-box thinkers.

If this out-of-the-box thinking is done in a team environment, the collective brainstorming would undoubtedly produce a more expansive list of potential ways to implement teaming in our congregations. For now, several strategies come to mind which may be worthy of consideration.

One is to utilize the resources of an ordained pastor who is willing to serve the church more than half-time without receiving a regular stipend. In fact, this is modelled in one of the churches in my case study. This may be particularly appealing to individuals who feel called to God’s service as a second career and who otherwise have adequate retirement income.

Another strategy which has potential would be to implement team ministry within a geographic area or region. Perhaps one pastor might have the gift of preaching; another might have the gift of teaching; another a gift with youth. This may not have the effect of reducing overall workload, but it may offer opportunities for pastors to pursue their interests and passions. But beyond that, perhaps as a region there may be sufficient resources to hire another shared pastor(s), to not only complement skills, but to share the burden of the workload.

A third strategy might be to subdivide fulltime positions into multiple part-time positions, such as two pastors working 50% rather than one 100% position. As unreasonable as that might seem on first blush, options such as this could also attract those persons interested in bi-vocational ministry. It might also allow for incremental increases in ministry – perhaps one fulltime could be refunded to provide two 60% positions – a slight increase.

However, over and above implementing team ministry, the research highlighted two other significant points. First, the experiences of my participants revealed just how important the “fit” is – the common, or at least compatible, theologies and liturgical and pastoral identities; the compatible personalities, helping to avoid the potential of insecurities, egotism and competition; building on complementary skills, passions and interests. Furthermore, my observations would suggest that “fit” needs to be complemented by “attitude,” the kind of attitude that my participants exhibited. Red referred to that as being “*mature [and] contented in their own skin.*” If we can take as a given that those applying for clergy vacancies will have the requisite theological education, other attributes must receive greater attention. Both “fit” and “attitude” must find their way into the consciousness of those applying for positions within the church, as well as into the hiring practices of the churches themselves.

Secondly, the research highlighted the importance of a strong support system. Churches – whether it be the local congregations or the corporate structures need to address this proactively if there is a hope of shattering the Super-Pastor image. If not through teaming, other avenues of support need to be made available. It is also incumbent upon clergy to develop their own support networks.



## ***Conclusion***

While the literature I reviewed gave me a theoretical understanding of team ministry - both the positives and the challenges – the case study research provided me a closer-to-home, practical perspective. Although my research findings very much aligned with leadership texts, I did find that they contrasted with my own lived experience of teams. In my experience teams were often competitive; did not allow for fulsome discussion, particularly of differing viewpoints; and were concerned with outcomes, but not necessarily the team members or working relationships. On the other hand, my participants only spoke of the *potential* for dysfunctional teams in theory.

Their lived experience was far from dysfunctional. They experienced *relief*, *freedom* and living out their own *personal vocational identity*, shattering the image of “Super-Pastor.” The distinguishing factor may well be that they all personally embraced Paul’s imagery of varied spiritual gifts, one Church, all for the common good. They embraced this in practice and their embodied it in their attitudes. They had no other agenda other than Christ. That is what provokes personal reflection and offers hope to all who embrace a vocation of ministry.

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## Appendix I

### Literature Review

*The Vocational Dynamics of Ordained Team Ministry*

While the resources available to someone interested in the topic of *leadership* are extensive, there is considerably less available on the topic of “*church*” leadership. Lovett Weems suggests “Most of the best research and writing on leadership has not been done in the context of the church or not-for-profit institutions. Most comes from the business and public sectors.”<sup>1</sup> He also says while in recent years more research is being done in the church or not-for-profit sector, it has yet to be proven over longer periods of time. However, one topic in church leadership that has been explored in some detail is *team ministry*.

Andrew Dawswell defines ministry leadership teams as teams “consist[ing] of those in ordained and licensed ministry and others who, together and in diversity, lead, encourage and build up the work of the whole Body of Christ.”<sup>2</sup> This review will examine literature written about such ministry leadership teams for the purpose of providing a framework for engaging my interviewees and for comparison and contrast against the data I will be collecting.

While research on team ministry comprised of both ordained clergy and lay leadership is readily available, and limited research is also available on the role of the “senior” pastor and that of the “associate” pastor, there is an absence of published literature that deals specifically with the narrow definition of team ministry as envisaged by this graduate research project – the team ministry of two or more ordained clergy, each of whom has graduate-level theological education, serving together in a single-point pastoral charge.

Furthermore, the research examined has been conducted primarily in the United States, often in very large congregational settings. The research conducted by the Barna

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<sup>1</sup> Lovett H. Weems Jr., *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture and Integrity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Dawswell, *Ministry Leadership Teams: Theory and Practice in Effective Collaborative Ministry* (Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, 2003), 3.

Research Group revealed, however, that teams can work in small churches (attendance of roughly 100 or less) just as well.<sup>3</sup> In support of this, Barna suggests the expectations of clergy are diverse, disparate and often unrealistic, regardless of congregational size,<sup>4</sup> and thus “a major advantage of being led by a team is that the results almost always transcend what any individual from that team could have produced alone.”<sup>5</sup>

Accepting on principle that Barna is correct, it is my intent to extrapolate from the existing literature several themes which would seem to have broader applicability, including applicability to the instance of team ministry that this graduate research project envisages. These themes include (1) the characteristics of healthy teams, (2) potential ways to structure the teams, and (3) potential downsides of team ministry.

There is consistent reference in the literature to the characteristics which are typical of successful ministry teams. These include a common vision, taking advantage of individual strengths and interests, clearly articulated expectations, and spiritual practices. If any of these are lacking or deficient, the literature suggests team functionality suffers, as do the individuals.

Stephen Macchia suggests that should vital church leadership not have a focal point towards which the team’s energies can be directed, they simply become “a meandering group of happy cohorts.”<sup>6</sup> This focal point is also known as a common vision – a vision that must be clearly defined and understood. In arriving at this common vision, Anne Marie Nuechterlein suggests that it is very important to discuss one’s theological beliefs. While it

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<sup>3</sup> George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership: Achieving Success Through Shared Responsibility* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 29.

<sup>4</sup> Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership*, 1-7.

<sup>5</sup> Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership*, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team: Five Traits of Vital Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 19.

may not be absolutely necessary to have the same theological beliefs, it is helpful to have some common theological understandings. If the differences are significant, it will be harder to develop and support a common vision; conversely, shared vision and common goals are more easily set when the team members have similar basic theological beliefs.<sup>7</sup> This concern is shared by others as well.<sup>8</sup> Having a common vision, individual expectations and responsibilities can be set, taking into account the personalities and the gifts of each team member.

Henkelmann and Carter suggest that effective ministry is not “maintenance ministry”, nor is it simply preserving the status quo. One of the success factors in moving beyond maintenance or status quo is utilizing the unique gifts and abilities of the team members.<sup>9</sup> Macchia refers to this as assimilation - bringing together respective gifts and abilities which when assimilated “create a new ‘sound’ in much the same way that jazz musicians do when they make music together.”<sup>10</sup> But more than simply using each member’s unique gifts, literature suggests it is advisable to seek out team members who possess complementary, rather than just similar, aptitudes.<sup>11</sup> Hardy Clemons suggests balancing different sides of polarity can be effective; for example, complementing someone’s strength as a thinker, with someone else’s strength in taking action or practical balanced against imaginative.<sup>12</sup> Identification of these aptitudes or gifts can inform how the work of ministry is to be done.

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<sup>7</sup> Anne Marie Nuechterlein, "Building a healthy team ministry," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 17, no. 2 (1990): 105. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 6, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Joseph T. Kelley, "Five Group Dynamics in Team Ministry," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 48, no. 2 (1994): 129. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 6, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Ervin F. Henkelmann and Stephen J. Carter, *How to Develop a Team Ministry and Make It Work* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), 22.

<sup>10</sup> Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team*, 99.

<sup>11</sup> Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership*, 99.

<sup>12</sup> Hardy Clemons, "The pastoral staff as ministry team," *Review & Expositor* 78, no. 1 (1981): 54-55.

Macchia advocates for clearly defined roles and responsibilities.<sup>13</sup> Failure to identify and clarify expectations can result in team members working at cross-purposes which, in turn, might lead to “a frustrating team ministry and an unfulfilled parish mission.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, these roles, responsibilities and expectations should be in writing, covering everything from pastoral and liturgical roles to administrative necessities. Nuechterlein describes these written narratives as a dynamic covenant, requiring regular review and updating when necessary.<sup>15</sup>

Many authors identify the necessity of a solid spiritual foundation and the nurturing of same for the team. This is what distinguishes a *ministry* team from other teams, and it becomes my fourth characteristic. To thrive personally, each team member needs to find his/her own personal inner spiritual and emotional strength through his/her relationship with God.<sup>16</sup> Foundational personal practices are very important – prayer, study of scripture, worship and perhaps spiritual direction, journaling and retreats.<sup>17</sup> But team practices also nurture – practices such as prayer at meetings, regular participation in corporate worship together and prayerful interactions such as praying for one another.<sup>18</sup>

Ministry teams are most often structured in either a hierarchical structure, such as the senior pastor–associate pastor(s), or a flat structure. While both structures are effective, generally one or the other will be favored in any given ministry situation.

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*ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 6, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team*, 82-83.

<sup>14</sup> Henkelmann and Carter, *How to Develop a Team Ministry and Make It Work*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Nuechterlein, "Building a healthy team ministry," 102.

<sup>16</sup> Kevin E. Lawson and Mick Boersma, *Associate Staff Ministry: Thriving Personally, Professionally, and Relationally* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 5-6.

<sup>17</sup> Lawson and Boersma, *Associate Staff Ministry*, 29-43.

<sup>18</sup> Henkelmann and Carter, *How to Develop a Team Ministry and Make It Work*, 18-20.



The original hierarchical approach used by the Next Level Church in the Denver metro area did not work. The Next Level now has a flattened leadership of four young pastors who truly embrace collaborative team ministry. When asked “can a church function efficiently and faithfully without a senior pastor . . . . After eight years filled with successes, failures, and personal crises, the pastoral team of The Next Level answers with a resounding “Yes!”.”<sup>19</sup> These leaders recognize progress is slower, but they are about community moreso than vision. Vision for them is an “organic [exercise] . . . – like composing an album.”<sup>20</sup> These young leaders also suggested their leadership style is more creative than traditional, and comment their generation views authority not as “organizational authority” but rather “more about character and integrity and authenticity.”<sup>21</sup>

Still another version of team organization can be termed “shared ministry”. This can be described as “the division of pastoral responsibilities between two or more persons: cooperative work and systematic evaluation are not essential parts of this ministry.”<sup>22</sup> A study of this model revealed it that the priests involved found it conducive to personal growth and their parish councils found it improved ministerial effectiveness. The downside being that as positions harden, conflict might ensue; there is no cross-pollination of ideas; and it is less theologically grounded than a more cooperative form of team ministry.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Brian Gray et al., "Next & level: after a bad experience with personality-based, top-down leadership, a whole new approach was needed at what is truly the Next Level Church," by *Leadership Magazine* 29, no. 2 (2008): 25-26. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 21, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Gray et al., "Next & level," 29.

<sup>21</sup> Gray et al., "Next & level," 27.

<sup>22</sup> Adrian Visscher and Merle Stern, "Training in team ministry: a model and a report," *Pastoral Sciences/Sciences Pastorales* 1, (1982): 42. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 21, 2016).

<sup>23</sup> Visscher and Stern, "Training in team ministry," 43.

Despite best efforts, the literature suggests there can be downside to the team concept. The Church of England noted that clergy teams can encourage a “new form of clericalism which results from their close association” resulting in an unintentional distancing from the laity, and it can at times infringe upon what was once considered the “clergy’s professional independence.”<sup>24</sup> This is echoed by Schaller who suggests a co-pastorate can be perceived as stripping the laity of having a powerful voice.<sup>25</sup> He goes on to say hierarchical structures, such as senior pastor and associate pastor(s), can set up conflicts with those who believe “professional ministry should be a brotherhood of equals, not a superior-subordinate relationship.” As well, it can set up a conflict in loyalties – to the person versus to the organization.<sup>26</sup> Alan Rudnick comments that there is a danger that associates will be drawn into triangulation between congregants and the senior pastor.<sup>27</sup> This may be the case particularly when the associate is filling what he calls the “generic” associate pastor role, performing many of the same duties as the senior pastor – preaching, counselling, visitation, teaching, etc.<sup>28</sup> While Dawswell personally accepts the benefits of team ministry, his experience has been that these teams can be a significant source of conflict in their parishes. Notably, he says managing and leading teams can simply add to the long list of things that have to be done as opposed to providing a release from previous burdens on the clergy. As well, there can be significant tensions between team members and differences of understanding.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> General Synod of the Church of England, *Team and Group Ministries: A Report by the Ministry Co-ordinating Group* (London: General Synod, 1985), 19.

<sup>25</sup> Lyle E. Schaller, *The Senior Minister* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 55.

<sup>26</sup> Schaller, *The Senior Minister*, 67-68.

<sup>27</sup> Alan R. Rudnick, *The Work of the Associate Pastor* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2012), 51

<sup>28</sup> Rudnick, *The Work of the Associate Pastor*, 17-18.

<sup>29</sup> Dawswell, *Ministry Leadership Teams*, 5-10.

The graduate research that I will conduct will hopefully either confirm or contradict the extrapolations I have been able to draw from this literature review. It will also hopefully be able to provide specific experiential information about the unique team ministry scenario I am exploring, that being team ministry involving two or more ordained clergy who have graduate-level theological education and who are working together in a single-point charge.

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Appendix II

Theological Essay

*The Vocational Dynamics of Ordained Team Ministry*

With the exception of one specific reference to chariot teams in 2 Samuel, the word *team* does not appear in the text of the Bible (NRSV translation). Nonetheless, many leadership principles can be inferred from Biblical writings, especially with regard to working and serving on teams. George Barna suggests solo leadership can be inefficient as the leader is limited by his/her own capacity, whereas teamwork enhances the quality of life for all – the people and the leaders. Biblical examples are found in both testaments: In Exodus 18, Moses is able to devote time and energy to leading the people after he divides up the tasks and shares leadership at his father-in-law’s urging; Nehemiah relied heavily on gifted people with complementary skills to restore the city walls; Jesus himself had a team of disciples sending them out “two by two” (Mark 6:7); and Paul worked with many others such as Barnabus, Silas and Timothy and encouraged shared leadership throughout Acts and his Epistles.<sup>1</sup>

For purposes of this theological reflection on team ministry I am drawn to a metaphor that Paul consistently used in his writings – *The Body of Christ*. Stephen Macchia refers to the image of the *Body of Christ* as “the ultimate team,” which is first and foremost a unified working structure, and which secondly embraces the five key management traits – trust, empowerment, assimilation, management and service – that are crucial to healthy and successful teams.<sup>2</sup> In this paper I will explore the theology of Paul’s *Body of Christ* image and whether or not Paul’s theology can be viewed through the lens of process theology. I will furthermore explore its applicability to team ministry. It is my contention

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<sup>1</sup> George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership: Achieving Success Through Shared Responsibility* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 31-35.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team: Five Traits of Vital Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 31.

that ordained team ministry, at its very best, can be both theologically grounded in Paul's *Body of Christ* imagery and depicted as a relational construct.

Craig Keener has noted that “ancient intellectuals [the Stoics, Agrippa, etc.] commonly used the image of the body for both the cosmos and the state to indicate a sort of organic unity.”<sup>3</sup> Agrippa had drawn an analogy between the state and human body in which the body's members of parts were quarrelling parties or factions – he exhorted revolting plebians to unite with the patricians, submitting to them, for the good of all – ie., the weak are to give it up to the strong.<sup>4</sup> However, no other ancient writer used the analogy as Paul did – to emphasize the diversity and interdependence of the body's members.<sup>5</sup>

The *Body of Christ* is an image that Paul explores in several of his epistles, most notably 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4. “The diversity of socioeconomic levels and religious and ethnic backgrounds among Corinthian Christians was undoubtedly an underlying cause of several of the issues and problems that Paul addresses in 1 and 2 Corinthians.”<sup>6</sup> In Romans 12, Paul is concerned with impressing upon the diverse community that the gifts they receive from the Spirit are for the good of the believing community, not a matter of personal pride that elevates one above the other.<sup>7</sup> In Ephesians 4, Paul was concerned with building an ethnically inclusive church, in which Jew and Gentile were equal partners.<sup>8</sup> This church was envisaged as an “international fellowship of Christians,” which Paul envisioned as “one unified body of believers.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Romans* (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2009), 145.

<sup>4</sup> Keener, *Romans*, 254-255.

<sup>5</sup> Richard A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 171.

<sup>6</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 28.

<sup>7</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Romans* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2002), 286.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2012), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Slater, *Ephesians*, 25.



While Paul uses this metaphor to address the unique circumstances of each community, nonetheless, there is remarkably consistency in his message, that message being *unity*. Frank Thielman underscores Paul's emphasis on unity by pointing out the striking repetition of the word "one" – it occurs seven times in Eph 4:4-6 – *one* body, *one* Spirit, *one* hope, *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God and Father of all.<sup>10</sup> The word "same" is repeated in 1 Cor 12 – the *same* Spirit, the *same* Lord, the *same* God (1Cor 12:4-6), again underscoring the message of unity.

In exploring Paul's imagery I will focus on the 1 Cor 12 passage. The Spirit is given for the "common good" (1 Cor 12:7), and manifests herself in a variety of gifts such as wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, speaking and interpreting tongues, gifts which are given as the Spirit chooses. Possessing these Spirit-given gifts, each one is a member of the one body; stating it another way, the body is comprised of all members, inclusive of each of their gifts. Verse 27 of 1 Cor 12 (NRSV) states "now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." The option to disengage from the body is not present – God is the architect; the option to refuse or exchange the given gifts is also not present. If one suffers, *all* suffer; if one is honored, *all* rejoice. In this one-all exchange it is clear that Paul connects the individual body and the corporate body.<sup>11</sup> He insists that diversity which manifests itself in different spiritual gifts is integral for the common good of the body politic.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (Grand Raids: Baker Academic, 2010), 256.

<sup>11</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 255.

<sup>12</sup> Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 171.

Marion Soards summarizes this passage by saying “Not only has God brought the richness of diversity to the coherence of unity, but also God created unity through the deliberate arrangement of diversity. Unity prevails and makes diversity meaningful.”<sup>13</sup>

Stephen Pickard suggests 1 Cor 12 can be viewed with a variety of theological lenses. First, it can be viewed Christologically based on Christ’s authority over services. The downside of this, however, is that it gives priority to the “ministry” over the “church”,<sup>14</sup> and this wasn’t Paul’s message. Secondly, it can be viewed with a Pneumatological lens, focussed on the Spirit’s gifts, but the downside to this is that it can lead to problems in differentiating ministries and can lead to confusion amongst the ministry team trying to fulfill its calling.<sup>15</sup> Balancing over-valuing the ministry and under-valuing the ministry requires a different lens – a Trinitarian lens.

Paul’s presentation of the *Body of Christ* lends itself very much to a Trinitarian lens. The Spirit gives the gifts; the services (in which the gifts are used) are the Lord’s; and God activates them all (1 Cor 12:4-6). The Greek word for this activation is **ἐνεργῶν** which, when transliterated, is *energēō* – properly, *energize*, working *in* a situation which brings it from one stage (point) to the next, like an electrical current *energizing* a wire, bringing it to a *shining light bulb*.<sup>16</sup> It is not unlike saying through the Holy Spirit we are conformed to Christ and taken up into relationship, through Christ, with God – God being the energizing force behind it all. While this Trinitarian view of 1 Cor 12 lends itself to a more systematic theology, it doesn’t really explain how the interrelationship between the Spirit’s

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<sup>13</sup> Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1999), 264.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Pickard, *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 33-34.

<sup>15</sup> Pickard, *Theological Foundations*, 37-39.

<sup>16</sup> Strong’s Concordance <http://biblehub.com/greek/1754.htm>

gifts, the Lord's activities and God's energizing works. Ulrich Schmidt suggests Paul's [trinitarian] writings can also be interpreted through a process theology lens.

Schmidt attempts to simplify the language of process theology by explaining that everything is a process which "implies the idea of interrelatedness or interdependence. Every entity occurs within a temporal stream, receiving from the preceding and contributing to the actual occasion." Key words in this definition are "interrelatedness," "interdependence," "receiving from," and "contributing to." He suggests the challenge for many with process theology is that they cannot, do not or will not see God as interdependent. As opposed to the traditional systematic understanding that God is unchangeable, all knowing and all powerful, process theology would suggest that God is neither unchangeable nor complete. Process theology suggests God gives and God receives, always aiming for the best future possibility taking into account the past and the present.<sup>17</sup>

Schmidt argues the pattern in Paul's theological thinking does cohere with the process view. Although Paul never consciously tried to illuminate a process, "he realized the matter of interdependence with the diverging possibilities of mutual enrichment or impoverishment."<sup>18</sup> He never generalized; but his specifics, although restricted to a specific sphere, are very much coherent with the modern process view.<sup>19</sup> To illustrate he refers to Paul's use of the Greek word **παράκλησις** which Paul uses in 2 Cor 1. Schmidt contends Paul uses this word group - meaning to console, to comfort or to encourage – as a process. Starting with God, it is not only a result, but a purpose whereby the recipients pass along

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<sup>17</sup> Ulrich Schmidt, "Pauline and Whiteheadian perspectives: basic points of agreement," *Kerygma Und Dogma* 48, no. 1 (January 2002), 54. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 21, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Schmidt, "Pauline and Whiteheadian perspectives," 66.

<sup>19</sup> Schmidt, "Pauline and Whiteheadian perspectives," 66.

to others what they have received. To further connect this Pauline expression to process theology Schmidt suggests the receiving and acting out of this *παράκλησις*, this *consolation*, aren't two separate occasions (or experiences), but are related. God is the source and is constantly initiating *παράκλησις*, but it is a continual activity - returning back to God to start over again. It is a process.<sup>20</sup>

The *Body of Christ* imagery can be used to refer to ecumenical relations within a given community, focussed efforts on the part of a given denomination, and/or, even more broadly, the collective efforts for a world-wide initiative. This same imagery, however, can also be a useful metaphor for the church, and more particularly a specific congregation. Although in many instances within a specific congregation this *Body of Christ* has been used to address the ministry of the whole people of God, both ordained and lay ministry, in my opinion it is just as relevant to a team ministry of ordained clergy, each member of which has graduate-level theological education ("ordained team ministry"). There are several ways in which Paul's body imagery and his relational theology parallel and even inform our understanding of ordained team ministry.

First of all, just as God energizes the spiritual gifts in the services of Christ, the vocational calling of the clergy is from God. God is the activator, the energizer, the one who puts the puzzle pieces together. Secondly the spiritual gifts referenced in the scripture passage, are what we, as individuals, might refer to as our strengths; or what ordained clergy might refer to as the gifts or charisms which God has imparted to them through the workings of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>20</sup> Schmidt, "Pauline and Whiteheadian perspectives," 55-57.

The spiritual gifts outlined in 1 Cor 12:8-10 may in some cases parallel the unique vocational calling of each of the ordained clergy. Perhaps a team member is called to “the utterance of knowledge” through preaching or leading education programs; perhaps a team member is called to “healing” through pastoral ministry, etc. But perhaps the gifts are different, for example administration/organization - the list in 1 Cor 12 was not meant to be exhaustive, simply representative.<sup>21</sup> Each of the clergy may have a gift that the other team member doesn’t, or perhaps each team member has the same gift, although they each might express it differently. But gifts are allotted “just as the Spirit chooses” (1Cor 12:11).

In 1 Cor 12 God arranges the members of the body as he chooses (1 Cor 12:18). In a team ministry situation prayerful discernment may inform how best ordained team ministry is to be structured – a structure that perhaps sees “specialists” based on their gifts, e.g. one preaches, one does pastoral care; or a structure where all share in all “services”, e.g. all preach, all do pastoral care. Listening for God in discerning the structure is very much akin to God doing the arranging as God does in 1 Cor 12:18.

Analogous to *all* being members of the one body, all members of the ordained clergy team must be actively engaged in the ministry of the congregation. The challenge posed by 1 Cor 12 concerns how clergy are to engage with the team, how clergy are to employ their spiritual gifts; the challenge parallels that facing the Corinthians - how to use their unique gifts in ways that are complementary to other gifts, such that overall the common good, rather than personal egos, is recognized as the ultimate goal. As opposed to the Unity in Christ (the “head”) which is called for in Ephesians 4 and Romans 12, the

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<sup>21</sup> Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 257.

unity called for by 1 Corinthians 12 is the unity achieved through building one another up for the greater common good, even giving greater honour to the inferior member (1 Cor 12:24). What is good for one, is good for all, and conversely, what is bad for one is also bad for all.

When Pickard suggested a Trinitarian lens be used in interpreting 1 Cor 12 for team ministry, he was suggesting a relational approach. He suggests a challenge exists in “develop[ing] a relational view of ministries that (a) recognize[s] the importance of properly differentiated representative ministries to enable the Church to fulfill its mission and at the same time (b) protect[s] a natural openness for the continued development and eruption of ministerial charisms.”<sup>22</sup> Process theology is this relational approach. It can be said that the team taken as a whole interacts with society, possibly or probably ecumenically, and that team ministry evolves because of that interaction. It can be argued that within a congregation the ministry of the laity and clergy together inform one another. But it is also applicable to the ministry between/amongst ordained clergy. The interdependence that Paul advocates requires a giving and receiving, to again be given and received, as in Paul’s expression of “*παράκλησις*.”

An example which many congregations might encounter is an ordained clergy team of two persons, where one person was given the charism of preaching the word, and the second person given the charism of pastoral care. The team is structured such that each member pursues the ministry aligned with his/her gift. But to become complementary implies interdependence. The theology expressed in preaching should not, for example, be

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<sup>22</sup> Pickard, *Theological Foundations*, 46.

at odds with the theology expressed in pastoral care. The relational approach requires deliberate recognition of the other's articulation so that overall the positions can inform each other for the greater good. This means communication must be deliberate, not accidental. The resulting dialogue ought to inform the position held by each of them such that there is a newer, more nuanced, articulation. It is a giving and a receiving, only to give and receive again. It is not a static delivery of the services commissioned by the Lord, it is an evolving ministry, informed by the interrelationships and interdependencies of the various spiritual gifts. It is an evolving ministry that parallels the relational workings of the body, strengthening it for service.

The image of the *Body of Christ* complete with the manifestation of Spirit-given gifts working together interdependently for the common good of the body is very much an image of ordained team ministry. Like the Corinthians, each team member has his/her own unique charisms, possibly even sharing some. The success of each member may in part be due to how he/she exercises their Spirit-given gifts, but it is also significantly impacted by the cooperative efforts of the team. The expression "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts" may be an apt descriptor as it speaks to their interdependence. This interdependence informs the ministry of each team member, it is a relational process, and there is growth and even evolution in the exercise of their individual gifts, and taken together, and growth and evolution in the collective ministry of the team. Ministry thus takes on a fluidity as opposed to rigidity and stagnation.

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## Appendix III

### Invitation to Participate

*The Vocational Dynamics of Ordained Team Ministry*

Date:

Name and Address of Potential Participant:

Dear (name of potential Participant):

My name is Shirley Carras – I'm a student at Atlantic School of Theology, and an ordinand in the Anglican Diocese of NS and PEI. As part of the course work for my final year of study, I am conducting a graduate research project, under the direction of Dr. Jody Clarke, about the vocational dynamics between graduate-level theologically educated ordained clergy who work together in team ministry.

I have a personal interest in this study as it is my hope, *DV*, that I will have an opportunity similar to this in which to offer my ministry. As such, I have chosen to conduct a case study to more fully explore these dynamics through the experience of my participants.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study and share your experiences. Your participation would entail one face-to-face interview at a location of your choosing. As well, I would like to have the opportunity to observe your team in both a worship setting and in their interactions with one another in ministry meetings.

If this sounds like something you would be interested in, please let me know via e-mail ([shirleycarras@gmail.com](mailto:shirleycarras@gmail.com)) or by telephone (902-499-2905), and I will follow up with further information.

Sincerely,

Shirley Carras

## Appendix IV

### Informed Consent

*The Vocational Dynamics of Ordained Team Ministry*

Date:

Shirley Carras  
660 Francklyn St.  
Halifax, NS B3H 3B5  
[shirleycarras@gmail.com](mailto:shirleycarras@gmail.com)  
902-499-2905

Name and Address of Participant:

Dear (name of Participant):

I am a student enrolled in the Master of Divinity Degree Program at the Atlantic School of Theology. As a part of my course work under the supervision of Dr. Jody Clarke, I am conducting a research project about the vocational dynamics between graduate-level theologically educated ordained clergy who work together in team ministry.

For my study, I am interviewing ordained clergy from two church sites in order to find out about their experience of working in team ministry. As well, it is my intention to observe the team in a worship setting, and, with consent, observe their participation in meetings together. It is not my intent to draw generalizations from my research; rather, the research will explore in depth two individual cases.

Your participation in this project is very much appreciated.

I will take notes and audio record our conversation. I will also take notes of anything I might observe. The notes, audio recordings and transcripts will be held in a secure environment until the completion of this course of study, at which time they will be destroyed. This project will be completed by the end of March, 2017. If you are willing to participate in this project, please read the following and indicate your willingness to be involved by signing your name at the bottom of this page:

1. I acknowledge that the research objectives, methods and procedures have been outlined to me. Any questions I may have had regarding the procedures have been answered to my satisfaction.

I know that I can contact the researcher at any time, should I have further questions.

I am aware that my participation in this study is purely voluntary and I am assured that personal records relating to this study will be kept confidential. I also understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time.

2. All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly **confidential and anonymous**. Audio recordings, transcripts and field notes will be kept under lock and key until the conclusion of this project at the end of April, at which time they will be destroyed. Names and revealing facts will be changed, thus providing anonymity. To further protect individual identities, this consent form will be sealed in an envelope and stored separately. Furthermore, the results of the study will be presented as a group and no individual participants will be identified.

If you have any questions, please contact the student researcher, Shirley Carras either through email at [shirleycarras@gmail.com](mailto:shirleycarras@gmail.com) or by phone (902-499-2905).

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board of Atlantic School of Theology. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Alyda Faber, Chair, Research Ethics Board or Dr. Jody Clarke, Research Supervisor. ([jclarke@astheology.ns.ca](mailto:jclarke@astheology.ns.ca) (902-425-5315)).

Sincerely,

Shirley Carras

**By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.**

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please keep one copy of this form for your own records.**