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**Contours of Leadership**  
From the Life and Ministry of John R. W. Stott

By  
Anthony Thomas Bailey Jr.

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

Saint Louis, Missouri

2024

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Graduation Date      May 10, 2024

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to explore how ministry leaders at All Souls Church, Langham Place, and other adjacent organizations, experienced the leadership of John R. W. Stott. This study sought insight, wisdom, and best practices from Stott's faithful life and ministry.

The research used the basic qualitative case study method. Seven individuals who served with Stott at various points throughout his over sixty years of ministry leadership were interviewed.

The study reviewed three distinct areas of relevant literature: (1) a biblical framework for ministry leadership through the lens of the Apostle Paul in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, (2) succession planning from long-term pastorates, and (3) core ministry practices of leader development in churches.

The study revealed that Stott's leadership was characterized by a robust commitment to biblical truth, a remarkable focus on long-term leadership development, and an intuitive approach to succession planning. Participants highlighted Stott's personal humility, incisive mind, and discipline. His leadership disposition of "gentle seriousness" cultivated healthy institutions, mission-oriented teams, and the development of resilient leaders.

The study found three key themes from the tenure of Stott: (1) a posture of "gentle seriousness," (2) a life of discipline and delight, and (3) a long view of leadership development. The findings underscore the significance of Stott's approach, particularly in addressing the challenges of resiliency and leader development in today's ministry context.

To my wife and closest friend, Emily.

Your joy is infectious and shows the world what you treasure.  
Thank you for daily pointing me back to Jesus.

The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor. That sums up the progress of an artful leader.

Max Depree, *Leadership Is an Art*

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## **Acknowledgements**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

What qualities of character and skill contribute to a healthy, resilient, and vital leader for a church or ministry organization? What are the discernable contours of leadership that result in flourishing and fruitful ministries over the long haul? The subject of leadership generates a seemingly inexhaustible river of new books, conferences, seminars, programs, coaches, videos, and articles.<sup>1</sup> Barbara Kellerman uses the catch-all term “leadership industry” to describe the abundance of fresh resources aimed at the subject.<sup>2</sup> A basic online search for church leadership conferences in the United States highlights dozens of options to choose from within a single calendar year.<sup>3</sup> One prominent Christian book retailer offers nearly 1700 titles on the subject of church leadership.<sup>4</sup> Although the marketplace is flush with new information about leadership, does the wealth of new material expose a gap in the current state of leaders today?

There is a deficit of trust in organizational leadership across a wide spectrum of public life in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Some suggest that many churches are facing a

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Kellerman, *The End of Leadership* (Harper Collins, 2012), 50, Kindle.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Kellerman, *The End of Leadership*, 50, Kindle.

<sup>3</sup> Kagi.com, accessed April 27, 2024. Search term used: “church leadership conferences 2024.”

<sup>4</sup> Christianbook.com, accessed April 27, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Lee Rainie, Scott Keeter and Andrew Perrin, “Trust and Distrust in America,” *Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy*, July 22, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/07/22/trust-and-distrust-in-america/>.

“leadership crisis.”<sup>6</sup> Most pastors are self-reportedly unprepared for several components of multi-directional pastoral leadership, including handling conflict, crisis management, delegation, administration, and developing new leaders.<sup>7</sup> Pastors and ministry leaders are not immune to the lure of more data and analysis into this seemingly inscrutable topic. Enchantment with the mechanics of leadership is not without merit since new models and methods can be invaluable tools. However, new models and methods alone are insufficient to equip leaders for the multi-directional realities of organizational stewardship.<sup>8</sup> Deeper roots are needed. Perhaps giving our attention to sage leaders from the past could help develop the deeper roots needed for the rigors of pastoral leadership today?

The *Flourishing in Ministry* research project studied more than 10,000 pastors from various denominations. According to the study, “Almost 40 percent of all clergy report low satisfaction with their overall life...And slightly more than 40 percent—41 percent of women and 42 percent of men—report high levels of daily stress.”<sup>9</sup> So, the focus on wise leadership is not simply about the mechanics of day-to-day execution but also about the health of the whole person entrusted with leadership responsibility.

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<sup>6</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* (Crossway, 2020), 18, Kindle.

<sup>7</sup> Barna Group, *The State of Pastors: How Today's Faith Leaders Are Navigating Life and Leadership in an Age of Complexity*, Vol. 2, 1st ed. (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2024), section 5.

<sup>8</sup> Trevin Wax, *The Multi-Directional Leader: Responding Wisely to Challenges from Every Side* (Gospel Coalition, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Matt Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry: How to Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 6, Kindle.

The Bible offers a wealth of evidence that good leadership is a gift from God meant for the flourishing of his people and the rest of creation.<sup>10</sup> In the seminal story of humanity, God breathes life into Adam and Eve and entrusts them with stewardship of all that he has made. The forerunners of humanity were created in the very image of God, given the task of exercising dominion over God's creation as his vice-regents. In other words, their vocation and calling were, in part, a type of leadership responsible for attending to all that God had entrusted to them in the Garden so that it might grow and flourish.<sup>11</sup> Their rebellion was a ceding of their responsibility, and the whole of creation continues to suffer for it.<sup>12</sup> The Bible frequently showcases, with honesty, the consequences of poor leadership.<sup>13</sup>

Is the pursuit of more knowledge about leadership, particularly in the context of ministry, too narrowly focused on discovering new and novel insights? To what degree could wisdom be gleaned from the recent past to hone and shape leaders for today and the future? The ministry of John R. W. Stott provides a potential model for healthy, resilient, and vital church leadership.

## **The Life and Ministry of John Stott**

John Robert Walmsley Stott was born in London in 1921 to Sir Arnold and Lady Lily Stott. According to biographer Alister Chapman, the Stott family was a classic

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<sup>10</sup> Genesis 1:28, Exodus 14, Judges 4-5, 1 Samuel 7, 1 Peter 5.

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 2.

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 3:16-19.

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 32, 1 Samuel 13:8-15, 1 Kings 12, Matthew 26:14-16.

“upper-middle class family,” with his father, Arnold, an “accomplished young doctor.”<sup>14</sup> Stott’s mother, Lily, would raise him and his two older sisters in the Christian faith and regularly took them to the nearby Anglican congregation, All Souls Church, Langham Place.<sup>15</sup> According to Chapman’s research, Stott began contemplating the pursuit of ordination in the Church of England in 1939.<sup>16</sup> Soon after, Stott was invited to become a curate (pastor-in-training) at All Souls and later ordained into the Anglican Communion in 1945.<sup>17</sup> In 1950, only five years later, he was appointed rector.<sup>18</sup> He remained rector until 1975 when he became rector-emeritus and his successor, Michael Baughen, was appointed rector.<sup>19</sup> His teaching and writing ministry outside the local congregation was flourishing at the time of this leadership transition. Stott recognized the need to step down as rector for the good of his ministry leaders and congregation. According to Chapman’s biography, the minutes of the All Soul’s Church Council meeting on September 20, 1969, report that Stott said, “The need for better pastoral oversight of both congregation and staff has become increasingly apparent in recent years...The present inadequacies are due largely to my growing extra-parochial commitments.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 11.

<sup>15</sup> Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> “John Stott’s Life,” *John Stott*, accessed March 19, 2024, <https://johnstott.org/life/>.

<sup>18</sup> “John Stott’s Life,” *John Stott*, accessed March 19, 2024, <https://johnstott.org/life/>.

<sup>19</sup> Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement*, 75. Baughen became vicar and Stott functionally ceased his duties as rector in 1970. It was not until 1975 that Baughen was officially appointed rector and Stott became rector-emeritus.

<sup>20</sup> Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement*, 75.

Stott's ministry inside and outside the local church was prolific and globally influential. Billy Graham said of Stott, "I can't think of anyone who has been more effective in introducing so many people to a biblical world view..."<sup>21</sup> He authored more than fifty books and formed several evangelical organizations, including *Langham Partnership*, which "walks with the global church to biblically equip leaders and pastors to multiply disciples."<sup>22</sup> In 2005 *Time* magazine named Stott one of the world's 100 most influential people.<sup>23</sup> Although the impact of Stott's preaching and teaching ministry cannot be overstated, his work developing other leaders, shepherding a congregation, and establishing vital Christian organizations is just as worthy of attention in a time when many young evangelical pastors feel ill-equipped for the rigors of pastoral leadership.<sup>24</sup>

### *Pastoral Challenges*

A recent Gallup survey revealed a diminishing trust in clergy of all types, with only 41 percent of middle-aged participants and 24 percent of the youngest participants indicating high trust.<sup>25</sup> Those within the church and the wider public recognize a gap between the ideal leader and the present slate of leadership. With a broad decline in trust

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<sup>21</sup> Time Magazine, "The TIME 100," *Time*, April 10, 2005, accessed March 19, 2024, [https://content.time.com/time/press\\_releases/article/0,8599,1047355,00.html](https://content.time.com/time/press_releases/article/0,8599,1047355,00.html).

<sup>22</sup> Langham Partnership, "What We Do," *Langham Partnership United States*, accessed March 19, 2024, <https://us.langham.org/what-we-do/>.

<sup>23</sup> Time Magazine, "The TIME 100," *Time*, April 10, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Barna Group, *The State of Pastors*, section 8. For example 78% of pastors surveyed "at least somewhat agree with the statement 'I am concerned about the quality of future Christian leaders.'"

<sup>25</sup> Gallup Inc., "U.S. Ethics Ratings Rise for Medical Workers and Teachers," *Gallup.Com*, last modified December 22, 2020, accessed March 19, 2024, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/328136/ethics-ratings-rise-medical-workers-teachers.aspx>.

from the public and a large percentage of pastors who feel inadequate in vocational ministry, the present gaps in training, development, and resilience become evident. In his book, *The Flourishing Pastor*, Tom Nelson offers this encouragement:

Pastors who flourish navigate well both the external and internal challenges that inevitably come with leading a faith community. Flourishing pastors are marked by a long resilience in the same direction.<sup>26</sup>

Stott, by many accounts, exemplified this “long resilience in the same direction.”

He became rector at All Souls Church, Langham Place, at the age of 28. At 53 he became rector-emeritus until he passed away at the age of 90. During those years he started several Christian organizations, was honorary chaplain to Queen Elizabeth II, and mentored numerous people who would go on to serve in long-term pastoral ministries. In many corners of the wider public, Stott is held in high esteem as well. For example, columnist David Brooks wrote a *New York Times* op-ed extolling his trustworthiness, his “backbone of steel,” humility, and tone.<sup>27</sup> These are just a few examples of the quality of leadership this research intends to mine to discover insights that could help equip church leaders today.

### *Developing, Empowering, and Supporting New Leaders*

A recent study suggests that evangelical pastors are reporting less personal and spiritual support than in years past, while the perceived level of development and support

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<sup>26</sup> Tom Nelson, *The Flourishing Pastor: Recovering the Lost Art of Shepherd Leadership* (InterVarsity Press, 2021), 47, Kindle.

<sup>27</sup> David Brooks, “Who Is John Stott?,” *The New York Times*, November 30, 2004, sec. Opinion, accessed March 19, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/30/opinion/who-is-john-stott.html>.



of a new generation of leaders has also languished.<sup>28</sup> This study hopes to discover insight into how Stott developed and empowered other leaders toward faithful long-term leadership tenures. To highlight the characteristic marks of Stott's leadership development and support, Michael Baughen, Stott's successor as rector at All Souls, gave this example of Stott's skilled handling of the near-term challenges of his own succession:

On one occasion, after a year, an anonymous letter was delivered, claiming to be from a large part of the congregation, demanding my resignation. But John stood shoulder to shoulder with us and the letter actually produced the reverse of its intent, with most of the congregation swinging in a new attitude of wonderful support.<sup>29</sup>

The wisdom demonstrated here is indicative of the intuitive leadership that could be gleaned from Stott's tenure. This simple story reveals a multi-faceted understanding of the complexities of shepherding a congregation through change and supporting an incoming leader. It was neither a harsh chastisement of a group of naysayers nor a simplistic pick-me-up for Baughen. Stott had the steady hand of a leader with experience and wisdom accumulated from years in the throes of pastoral work. He demonstrated by example how to identify and develop new leaders and, subsequently, how to support and empower them.

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<sup>28</sup> Barna Group, *The State of Pastors*. For example, "In 2015, 37 percent received personal support from a network of peers or a mentor at least several times a month; in 2022, just 22 percent report getting this type of spiritual support so regularly." Also, in section 2.8 the study says, "83 percent of pastors agree that 'churches aren't rising to their responsibilities to train up the next generation of Christian leaders.'" This concerned majority has also grown over the years that Barna has asked this question. In short, one reason the next generation of Christians seems unprepared for the challenges of leading a church may be that so few churches are intentionally preparing them—and pastors know it."

<sup>29</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Portraits of a Radical Disciple: Recollections of John Stott's Life and Ministry* (InterVarsity Press, 2012), 69, Kindle.

The tenure of Stott's ministry work continues to impact many corners of evangelicalism today. As noted above, his entrepreneurial leadership was instrumental in the formation of Langham Partnership, a global ministry expressly devoted to training pastors for ministry. Dr. Christopher Wright serves on the leadership team of Langham as Global Ambassador and recently commented on the international impact of Stott's leadership vision and work:

So there is, in my view, a rather delightful irony about how John Stott's vision has turned out. His initiatives...were initially born of his desire that the well-resourced Western church should come alongside the under-resourced churches of the Global South with generous assistance...We in the West are already finding ourselves the recipients and beneficiaries of the spiritual, missional, and theological leadership in the non-Western church that is in part the fruit of such investment over decades.<sup>30</sup>

Wright himself was led and mentored by Stott. It was Stott who invited Wright to lead Langham after him.<sup>31</sup> While reflecting on his time with Stott, Wright said, "It was a most beautiful, liberating and affirming relationship, and a delightful privilege for which I am immensely grateful to God."<sup>32</sup> Influential evangelical pastor and church planter, Dr. Timothy Keller, was also shaped by Stott's work. At his U.S. memorial service, Keller praised Stott's lifetime of ministry, saying, "He truly was, in some ways, the first person who spoke the word of God to me..."<sup>33</sup> Keller continues, remarking on the gap in present

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<sup>30</sup> Laura S. Meitzner Yoder, *Living Radical Discipleship: Inspired by John Stott* (Langham Global Library, 2021), 26-27, Kindle.

<sup>31</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Portraits of a Radical Disciple: Recollections of John Stott's Life and Ministry* (InterVarsity Press, 2012), 148, Kindle. At the time Stott invited Wright to lead Langham it was two organizations, Langham Trust and the Evangelical Literature Trust.

<sup>32</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Portraits of a Radical Disciple: Recollections of John Stott's Life and Ministry*, 151, Kindle.

<sup>33</sup> Collin Hansen, *Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation* (Zondervan, 2023), 39, Kindle.

day understanding of Stott's work, "It worries me that an awful lot of younger evangelical leaders barely know what John Stott stood for."<sup>34</sup> This observation supports one of the core assumptions of this research, that there is much more to learn from the work of Stott that could be helpful and instructive to those on the front lines of ministry today.

The median tenure of a pastor at a single church is now only four years, and the percentage of pastors experiencing burnout is high.<sup>35</sup> Matt Bloom offers insight into pastoral health in his book, *Flourishing in Ministry*, writing, "Perhaps most alarming, we find that over one-third of pastors are experiencing high to severe levels of burnout. These data are clear indicators that some pastors—too many in our view—are overburdened."<sup>36</sup> A deficit of resilience in pastoral ministry will inhibit the long-term effectiveness of the local church and the pastor. This study will survey the ministry of Stott to look for best practices from his nearly fifty-years of leadership service. What are some of the attributes of resilient leadership that Stott exhibited over his lifetime of ministry? How did he identify, develop, and empower other leaders? In what ways did he care for his own health throughout his ministry tenure? How did he prepare his church and other organizations for leadership succession and transition?

One of the primary aspirations of this research is to discover principles that helped catalyze any best practices that are discovered. To accomplish this, the research will explore literature from a wide spectrum of fields related to the pastoral work of Stott.

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<sup>34</sup> Collin Hansen, *Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation*, 39, Kindle.

<sup>35</sup> Thom S. Rainer, "Ten Traits of Pastors Who Have Healthy Long-Term Tenure," *Church Answers*, September 29, 2014, <https://churchanswers.com/blog/ten-traits-pastors-healthy-long-term-tenure/>.

<sup>36</sup> Matt Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry: How to Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 45, Kindle.

Those fields include a survey of the Apostle Paul's correspondence with Timothy and Titus in the Pastoral Epistles, where he offers guidance and instruction on matters of church leadership, character, and doctrine. Second, the literature will explore succession planning from long-term pastorates. Finally, the literature will explore the core ministry practices of new leader development in churches.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to explore how ministry leaders experienced the leadership of John Stott at All Souls Church, Langham Place, and other ministry organizations where Stott served. Alongside his pastoral work in a local congregation, Stott founded and influenced many other institutions and organizations that the study will refer to as "adjacent" to his work at All Souls. This research will look at his leadership work in these adjacent institutions alongside his formal pastoral tenure.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the qualitative research:

1. How did ministry leaders experience the leadership of Stott?
  - 1.a Church leaders?
  - 1.b Leaders at ministry organizations?
2. How were ministry leaders developed as leaders by Stott?
  - 2.a Church leaders?
  - 2.b Leaders at ministry organizations?
3. How did ministry leaders observe Stott's stewardship of his own health?
  - 3.a Physical?

3.b Emotional and intellectual?

3.c Spiritual?

4. How did Stott prepare ministry leaders for his succession?

4.a Church leaders?

4.b Leaders at ministry organizations?

## **Significance of the Study**

This research aims to gain insight from those who experienced a leadership tenure carried out roughly two generations ago. This aim presupposes that giving attention to exemplars who have navigated leadership dynamics in the recent past can supply a new generation of leaders with wisdom to navigate their own leadership challenges. Churches, denominations, and ministry leaders may receive fresh wisdom into key responsibilities, such as caring for staff, developing new leaders, preventing burnout, and preparing for leadership succession.

The legacy of Stott can be measured in some ways by the observable and fruitful impact of his ministry. All Souls Church, Langham Place, continues to flourish in central London. Many of the initiatives Stott founded continue to have sustained growth and influence, such as Langham Partnership.<sup>37</sup> These serve as indicators that there may be something for present-day ministry leaders to learn from the work of Stott.

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<sup>37</sup> Langham Partnership, “Financials” *Langham Partnership United States*, accessed March 19, 2024, <https://us.langham.org/financials/>. The latest annual report demonstrates the vitality of the ministry.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Leadership:** The act of exercising power, authority, and influence for the flourishing of a person or group of people and their mission.<sup>38</sup>

**Rector:** Stott was ordained in the Church of England. The Clergy of the Church of England Database defines a rector as a “clergyman who has the charge or cure of a parish church.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, the term "rector" will be synonymous with the term "pastor." Roger Steer marks Stott’s tenure as rector at All Souls Church Langham Place beginning September 26, 1950, at the age of 28.<sup>40</sup>

**Rector-emeritus:** An honorary title given to clergy who previously held the position of rector but who are no longer actively serving in day-to-day operations. Although honorary, it can include responsibilities that benefit the local church. For example, Stott continued to write and teach with the support of All Soul's Langham Place as rector-emeritus. Steer records that Stott preached his last sermon at the Keswick Convention July 17, 2007.<sup>41</sup> This date is effectively when Stott’s work as rector-emeritus ended, although his title stood until his death in 2011.

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<sup>38</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, (Harvard Business Review Press, 2009). This definition is a summary from the work of Heifetz, Linsky and Grashow.

<sup>39</sup> Ginestra Ferraro, “Rector,” The Clergy Database, August 15, 2013, <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/glossary/rector/>.

<sup>40</sup> Roger Steer, John Stott, and David Neff, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010), 78, Kindle.

<sup>41</sup> Roger Steer, John Stott, and David Neff, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010). 270, Kindle

**Long-term pastorate:** Over seven years, using pastoral tenure analysis by church consultant Thom Rainer.<sup>42</sup>

**Succession:** “The intentional transfer of power, leadership, and authority from one primary leader to another.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Thom S. Rainer, “Ten Traits of Pastors Who Have Healthy Long-Term Tenure,” *Church Answers*, last modified September 29, 2014, accessed March 17, 2024, <https://churchanswers.com/blog/ten-traits-pastors-healthy-long-term-tenure/>.

<sup>43</sup> Dave Travis, “Succession and the XP,” XPastor, Slide Presentation, <https://www.xpastor.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Succession-Planning-by-Dave-Travis.pdf>. The researcher is indebted to Vanderbloemen for highlighting this succinct definition by Dave Travis.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this study is to explore how ministry leaders at All Souls Church, Langham Place, and other adjacent organizations, experienced the leadership of John Stott. The aim of the research is to analyze the leadership work of Stott to find transferrable best practices to benefit pastors and ministry leaders who are serving in local congregations today. As a foundation for this qualitative research, the literature review will survey three related fields.

The literature review begins with a biblical framework for ministry leadership, primarily interacting with Pauline epistles. Attention will be given to the Apostle Paul's correspondence with Timothy and Titus in the pastoral epistles, where he offers guidance on matters of church leadership, character, and doctrine. Second, the literature will explore succession planning from long-term pastorates. Finally, the literature will explore core ministry practices of leader development in churches.

#### **Contours of Christian Leadership in the Pastoral Epistles**

When approaching the subject of leadership, the word itself must be defined. By some measures there are at least 1500 definitions of leadership when considering precise legal distinctions.<sup>44</sup> Broadly speaking, leadership is not a singular theme but a composite of many constituent parts. Matters of authority, power, and influence are bundled

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<sup>44</sup> Deborah L. Rhode and Amanda K. Packel, *Leadership: Law, Policy, and Management* (New York: Wolters Kluwer, 2011), 6.



together when leadership is exercised in any given situation or context.<sup>45</sup> Broadly defined, leadership is the act of exercising power, authority, and influence for the flourishing of a person or group of people and their mission.

There are, of course, many different varieties of leadership. Organizational leadership can be qualitatively different from self-leadership, situational, or entrepreneurial leadership. For example, leading an organization for several years necessitates skills different from those required to start an organization from scratch.<sup>46</sup> This literature review will explore the Apostle Paul's understanding of leadership within the context of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. It will examine how Paul's perspective on leadership can be applied through his instruction to Timothy and Titus.

### *Timothy and Titus*

Paul has great affection for Timothy and Titus, and great respect for their work as ministers of the gospel.<sup>47</sup> Both men had been given the responsibility of formal leadership in particular local Christian congregations – Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete.<sup>48</sup> Yet

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<sup>45</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2009). Heifetz helpfully explores the distinctions between authority, power and influence and how they relate to leadership.

<sup>46</sup> Robert A. Baron, Rebecca J. Franklin, and Keith M. Hmieleski, “Why Entrepreneurs Often Experience Low, Not High, Levels of Stress: The Joint Effects of Selection and Psychological Capital,” *Journal of Management* 42, no. 3 (2016): 742–768, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0149206313495411>. The research from Baron, Franklin and Hmieleski helped inform this understanding of the necessary skills for entrepreneurs contrasted with the necessary skills for long term institutional leadership. Their research into the emotional skills and capacity of most entrepreneurs was insightful.

<sup>47</sup> There are many examples of this affection and respect throughout the NT, here are a few references: 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:4, Titus 1:4, 2 Corinthians 7:13.

<sup>48</sup> 1 Timothy 1:3 (Ephesus), Titus 1:5 (Crete).

Paul's primary aim was not simply to provide formal organizational leadership training for these young pastors, at least not from a present-day understanding of the term. His letters include training for organizational leadership in local congregation, but his primary aim was far higher.<sup>49</sup> Paul summarizes, "O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you."<sup>50</sup> Applying this summary to all three letters, Paul instructs Timothy and Titus on how to guard the gospel of Jesus Christ from competing teachings that had infiltrated their churches and to guide them towards cultivating churches healthy in doctrine and behavior.<sup>51</sup> Paul also instructs them in faithfully teaching the Bible, with practical counsel on the wise use of authority, power, and influence.<sup>52</sup> Put another way, their charge from Paul was to keep each congregation unwavering in fidelity to the word of God, demonstrated in both faithful teaching and growth in holy living. He writes to Titus: "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned..."<sup>53</sup>

In vocational leadership there are a multitude of ways to "model good works," including exercising the attributes Paul requires for church leaders, such as gentleness and self-control.<sup>54</sup> Along with formal leadership training, Paul is decidedly practical in

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<sup>49</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries v. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009). Guthrie is particularly helpful in teasing out some of main objections some scholars have to Pauline authorship. The author of this study agrees with the traditional view that the Apostle Paul was the primary author of the letters to Timothy and Titus.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Timothy 6:20.

<sup>51</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16-17 offers a good example of Paul's instruction to both faithful doctrine and behavior.

<sup>52</sup> 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

<sup>53</sup> Titus 2:7-8, emphasis added.

<sup>54</sup> 1 Timothy 3:3 (gentleness), Titus 2:12 (self-control).

his guidance. He often gives precise direction on stewarding their charge towards the development of other leaders, watchfulness over their own character, and humble service. Although some of the prescriptive guidance must be interpreted in light of Timothy and Titus' historical contexts, this brief review will identify contours of Christian leadership applicable to most church and ministry organizations today. These letters are not exhaustive regarding excellent leadership, but the scope is remarkably comprehensive to address the leadership challenges of today.

The controlling theme of Paul's own ministry is the resurrected Jesus Christ.<sup>55</sup> At one point he breaks out into breathless praise as he opens his first letter to Timothy: "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."<sup>56</sup> From Paul's perspective, all leadership is subordinate to the leadership of the "King of all the ages." For him, all of life, including the vocational task of leadership, is a "gift of God" and should be lived before him and oriented towards his "honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."<sup>57</sup>

### *A Noble Task and a High Bar*

Leading a healthy organization over time requires trust between those empowered to lead and those who are led.<sup>58</sup> A recent Gallup poll of employees in the U.S. found that

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<sup>55</sup> 1 Timothy 1:16.

<sup>56</sup> 1 Timothy 1:17.

<sup>57</sup> 2 Timothy 1:6, 1 Timothy 1:17.

<sup>58</sup> Barbara Kellerman, *The End of Leadership* (Harper Collins, 2012), 31, Kindle. Kellerman implicitly describes the trust that is needed for organizations to develop "engagement...cooperation, collaboration, participation..."

only 23 percent of respondents said they trusted the leadership of the organization in which they serve.<sup>59</sup> This, along with similar studies across several professions, indicates a remarkable deficit of trust in organizational leadership.<sup>60</sup> This level of mistrust may also be leading to questions about the value of authority itself. Dr. Jonathan Leeman notes:

When we stop believing authority can be good, we grow in cynicism. We grow incapable of trust. We insist the world operates on our terms, which is another way of describing “individualism.” When this becomes widespread, community breaks down, because authoritative relationships teach us how to defer to other people, even in relationships where no hierarchy exists.<sup>61</sup>

The Apostle Paul wrote in one of the most decadent periods in Roman history.<sup>62</sup> National, political, and religious leaders did not demonstrate the hallmarks of a Christian leadership ethic.<sup>63</sup> Yet, he encourages Timothy, “If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.”<sup>64</sup> Here Paul frames leadership as a worthy calling. Aspiration toward leadership, however, is tethered to honorable qualifications:

Therefore an overseer must be (1) above reproach, (2) the husband of one wife, (3) sober-minded, (4) self-controlled, (5) respectable, (6) hospitable, (7) able to teach, (8) not a drunkard, (9) not violent but gentle, (10) not

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<sup>59</sup> Gallup Inc., “Indicator: Leadership & Management,” *Gallup.Com*, accessed January 26, 2024, <https://www.gallup.com/404252/indicator-leadership-management.aspx>.

<sup>60</sup> Gallup Inc., “Ethics Ratings of Nearly All Professions Down in U.S.,” *Gallup.Com*, January 22, 2024, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/608903/ethics-ratings-nearly-professions-down.aspx>. For example, according to this January 2024 study, only 32% of respondents rated the honesty and ethical standards of clergy as “very high/high,” this is 8 points down from 2019.

<sup>61</sup> Jonathan Leeman, *Authority: How Godly Rule Protects the Vulnerable, Strengthens Communities, and Promotes Human Flourishing*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), 34-35.

<sup>62</sup> Tom Holland, “The Shadow of Pax Romana,” July 7, 2023, in *Unherd* podcast, <https://unherd.com/2023/07/the-depravity-of-the-roman-peace/>. Historian Tom Holland comments on the decadence of Roman life and culture in this helpful podcast episode, summarizing his work in *Pax*.

<sup>63</sup> For example, Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa in Acts 23-26 demonstrate a willingness to accept bribery, use flattery, and manipulate the situation towards their own ends. In Philippians 1:15-18, Paul describes religious leaders who preach out of “selfish ambition” and “envy and rivalry.”

<sup>64</sup> 1 Timothy 3:1.

quarrelsome, (11) not a lover of money. (12) He must manage his own household well, (13) with all dignity keeping his children submissive... (14) must not be a recent convert... (15) must be well thought of by outsiders....<sup>65</sup>

The list establishes a high bar, carefully linking leadership to personal fidelity.

### *Stewarding Leadership Towards Flourishing*

Throughout the pastoral epistles, Paul connects the mission and practices of the local church to the needs of the wider culture. In 1 Timothy 2, Paul describes the role of public worship in the life of a local congregation. He starts with the attributes of prayer in a congregational gathering: "...that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people."<sup>66</sup> He goes on to enumerate who is included in "all people." Perhaps surprisingly, the first group is the political leaders of their day: "...for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way."<sup>67</sup> Without going further than the text allows, this command indicates that stewarding good leadership fosters the flourishing of nations, families, and churches. Stott observes:

This was a remarkable instruction, since at that time no Christian ruler existed anywhere in the world...when Paul told Timothy to pray for kings, the reigning emperor was Nero, whose vanity, cruelty and hostility to the Christian faith were widely known.<sup>68</sup>

Paul links his view of leadership as a public good to the doctrine of sin. To bring a concern before God in prayer implies a need for divine help. Leadership has been

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<sup>65</sup> 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Timothy 2:1.

<sup>67</sup> 1 Timothy 2:2.

<sup>68</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 62.

corrupted by the pervasiveness of sin and thus must be exercised with humility and reliance upon the grace of God.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, good leadership is linked to God's redemptive purposes: "This is good [praying for leaders], and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."<sup>70</sup> Thus, by prioritizing prayer for political leaders, Paul asserts that leadership is a noble calling worthy of attention for the good of those being served and for God's eternal purpose of calling people to himself.

### *Leadership Is Good but Distorted by Sin*

Although Paul offers a positive vision of leadership, he qualifies it because of the enduring effects of sin. This review will thus briefly consider a Pauline view of sin and its relationship to stewarding leadership.

### **Paul's Understanding of Sin and Its Relationship to Leadership**

In many of his other letters, Paul defines a person who has faith in Christ Jesus as Lord as a "new creation."<sup>71</sup> Although the implications of this new creation nature vary, Paul's letter to the church at Colossae specifies, separating the "old self" from the "new self."<sup>72</sup> When someone's nature has been changed through faith in Jesus, Paul teaches

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<sup>69</sup> 1 Timothy 2:1-2, From a plain reading of this text, Paul's instruction to pray for political leaders is for an end goal – "...that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." Thus, it can be said that the instruction to pray for these leaders is an act of faith that God would guide or restrain any sinful behaviors or patterns in their public leaders that would inhibit flourishing. It also could be an act of faith that God would develop and grow the common grace gifts given to all leaders.

<sup>70</sup> 1 Timothy 2:3-4.

<sup>71</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15.

<sup>72</sup> Colossians 3:9-10.

that this change is no less than from death to life. “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him...”<sup>73</sup> Thus, Paul instructs the Colossians to “put off the old self” and to “put on the new self.”<sup>74</sup> In other words, (1) Paul affirms that a redeemed person has a new nature but (2) must continually respond in faith by putting to death those things that belonged to the old self, the beliefs and behaviors of a person before Christ.<sup>75</sup> The old self no longer has power over one who is in Christ, but the presence of sin remains until the consummation of the “new heavens and the new earth.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, those in Christ “put off” their previous nature in every part of the human person, including leadership. Paul summarizes:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, the old self must be “put to death,”<sup>78</sup> which means, according to 1 Timothy: “Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.”<sup>79</sup> These attributes counter those of false teachers who had demonstrated the opposite of these character attributes.<sup>80</sup> Instead, Paul encourages Timothy to strive for leadership that

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<sup>73</sup> Colossians 2:12–13.

<sup>74</sup> Colossians 3:9–10.

<sup>75</sup> Ephesians 4:22 expands on this theme.

<sup>76</sup> Revelation 21:1–4 and Romans 6:11.

<sup>77</sup> Colossians 3:1–3, emphasis added to language that indicates action from the believer.

<sup>78</sup> Colossians 3:5, Paul expands on this theme of “putting off” with the more active language, “put to death.” Believers are concurrently at work with the Spirit of God in actively removing the old self.

<sup>79</sup> 1 Timothy 6:11.

<sup>80</sup> 1 Timothy 6:1–10.

evidences the new self.<sup>81</sup> Because of Paul's understanding of sin's pervasive effects on all aspects of life, including vocation, he sets careful guidelines, boundaries, and limits for character to protect the leader and the people in their charge.

### *A Double Submission*

Throughout Paul's writings, he insists that all who are in Christ, leaders included, live in submission to the resurrected Christ as Lord of all.<sup>82</sup> This is the soil in which Paul roots his understanding of the life of a believer. Paul most clearly states this submissive posture in his introduction to Romans: "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle...".<sup>83</sup> Before Paul lists his vocational calling, "apostle," he situates his entire life as one who is a "servant of Christ Jesus." Paul also applies this principle to Timothy: "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness."<sup>84</sup> Here Paul provides another list of qualities for Christian leadership, but he situates these qualities within the leader's *a priori* role as "the Lord's servant." I. Howard Marshall's critical work adds, "δοῦλος (doulos) is Paul's self-designation...but can be used of any Christian leader... It

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<sup>81</sup> Paul uses the phrase, "O man of God," to address Timothy before he lists character attributes. Although these marks of Christian character could be applied to any believer, the grain of the text seems to indicate that Paul is particularly encouraging Timothy to "put on" these character attributes in the sphere of his church leadership role, thus applying the "new self" to his vocational role.

<sup>82</sup> 1 Timothy 4:1-2.

<sup>83</sup> Romans 1:1, emphasis added.

<sup>84</sup> 2 Timothy 2:24-25.



also indicates the leader's position both as a servant and also as one endowed with authority by the Lord."<sup>85</sup>

In this Pauline framework, biblical leadership is a double submission: first to Christ Jesus as a servant, and second as a servant of those who are led. Paul's second letter to Timothy contains the most explicit working out of this framework, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season...exhort with complete patience and teaching..."<sup>86</sup>

Put another way, Paul's sees the work of an overseer as done before "God and Christ Jesus" first and then links that posture with vocational church leadership. He calls Timothy to work with "complete patience," or forbearance – a costly act of service towards another, for their good. Good leadership within a Christian framework is always bounded by a posture of submission to God and to others, in stark contrast to the leadership in Rome.<sup>87</sup> Leeman explains:

The take-away lesson here: Good human authority is never absolute. Good authority is always accountable. Good authority drives inside the lines that God has painted on the road. In fact, good authority is always submissive!<sup>88</sup>

Paul begins each of the Pastoral letters with a reference to Christ Jesus as Lord or Savior. Submission to Christ is the prerequisite to leadership and service towards others

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<sup>85</sup> I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 765.

<sup>86</sup> 1 Timothy 4:1-2.

<sup>87</sup> See note above on Felix and Festus.

<sup>88</sup> Jonathan Leeman, *Authority: How Godly Rule Protects* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2023), 31.

in Paul's framework. This counter-cultural leadership can be traced to the earthly ministry of Jesus, who taught his disciples, "Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves."<sup>89</sup> Paul's approach did not arise from a vacuum but rather from the God to whom Paul himself bowed in submission.<sup>90</sup>

### *Personal Steadfastness*

Thus far this study has surveyed a broad framework of the Apostle Paul's view of leadership from the pastoral epistles. This survey summarizes his approach from the practical guidance he offers his protégés Timothy and Titus. This study has so far reviewed two contours of Paul's approach, (1) that Christian leadership is a good gift that requires stewardship, and (2) Christian leadership necessitates a double submission, to God and to those whom the leader serves. However, the contours of Christian leadership revealed in the pastoral epistles would be incomplete without giving attention to Paul's emphasis on the personal godliness of Christian leaders.

In the final sections of 1 Timothy, Paul says, "But as for you, O man of God...Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness."<sup>91</sup> The word steadfast (ὑπομένω) summarizes Paul's clarion call for Christian leaders to continually pursue personal holiness. One major Greek-English lexicon defines ὑπομένω this way: "the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty, patience, endurance,

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<sup>89</sup> Luke 22:26.

<sup>90</sup> Ephesians 3:14.

<sup>91</sup> 1 Timothy 6:11.

fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance.”<sup>92</sup> For Paul, personal fidelity to God and his Word over a lifetime of ministry was an indispensable mark of faithful Christian leadership.<sup>93</sup>

Paul also uses two negative leadership examples: “This charge I entrust to you...[that] you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander....”<sup>94</sup> Remarkably, Paul calls out these two men as a warning to Timothy to remain faithfully committed to the ministry given to him – faithful in his stewardship of his calling (the “good warfare”) and faithful in his steadfast pursuit of godliness (“holding faith and good conscience”). Paul is calling Timothy to put off the old self in every aspect of his life, throughout his life. Paul’s instruction for Timothy implies steadfastness in belief and behavior.<sup>95</sup>

### *Three Contours of Christian Leadership*

Figure 1 below illustrates the integrated framework surveyed in Paul’s instruction to Timothy and Titus. These three contours work together throughout the pastoral epistles as Paul’s approach to Christian leadership.

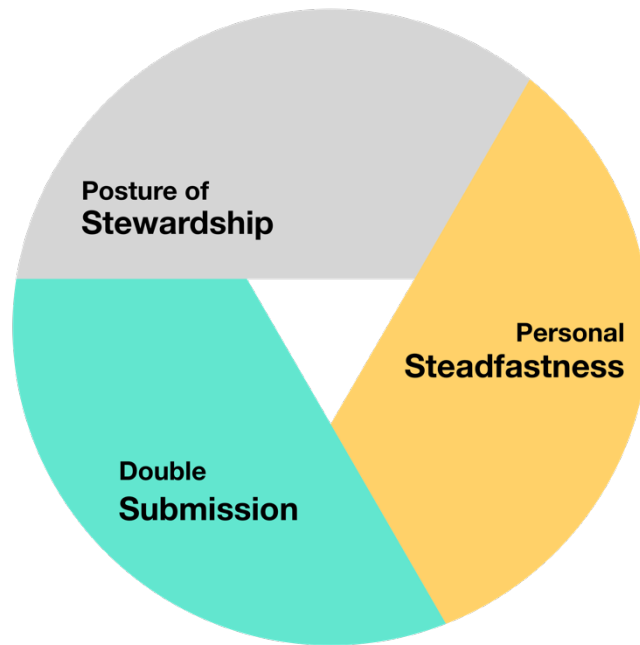
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<sup>92</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1039.

<sup>93</sup> 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul helpfully uses his own lifetime of ministry faithfulness as an example for Timothy.

<sup>94</sup> 1 Timothy 1:18–20.

<sup>95</sup> 1 Timothy 1:19, emphasis added.



**Figure 1. Contours of Christian Leadership**

### **Literature Related to Succession from Long-term Pastorates**

Every leadership role is temporary, and so stewardship is a fitting description for the role of an organizational leader. This stewardship of authority benefits the organization in its present moment and also its future. It has been said that “every pastor is an interim pastor.”<sup>96</sup> By some estimations, nearly 30,000 American Protestant pastors transition in any given year.<sup>97</sup> Succession is an inevitable responsibility for any organization that intends to last more than a single generation. For the purposes of this

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<sup>96</sup> William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, Exp. and Upd. ed. edition. (Baker Books, 2020). 19, Kindle.

<sup>97</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 19, Kindle.

research, succession will be defined as “the intentional transfer of power, leadership, and authority from one primary leader to another.”<sup>98</sup>

The literature on succession has been weighted towards business and public service sectors. However, literature focused on succession within churches in the Protestant evangelical tradition in the United States has been growing.<sup>99</sup> This review will survey the literature related to succession from healthy long-term pastorates, examining the challenges of three key stakeholders: (1) the outgoing pastor, (2) the incoming pastor, (3) the board or governing body.

### *A Leadership Gap*

Succession can be a delicate matter. Weese and Crabtree list several reasons why succession planning is not openly discussed by church leaders as regularly as they recommend, including fear of change, fear of unintended consequences, lack of support, and limited resources.<sup>100</sup> John Maxwell also recognizes the deficiency in churches attending to succession planning:

Transitions in any kind of organization are important. Many business leaders seem to understand this intuitively. The best corporations have succession plans in place, and their leaders spend a great deal of time grooming successors and planning the handoff. Fewer church leaders seem

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<sup>98</sup> Dave Travis, “Succession and the XP,” Xpastor, Slide Presentation, <https://www.xpastor.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Succession-Planning-by-Dave-Travis.pdf>.

<sup>99</sup> David L. McKenna, *The Succession Principle: How Leaders Make Leaders* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014). McKenna makes the point that most of the literature on succession is not focused on Christian organizations.

<sup>100</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions - How to Handle Pastoral Transition with Sensitivity, Creativity, and Excellence* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2020), 277, Kindle.

willing to tackle succession planning. Some are afraid to tackle the difficult subject.<sup>101</sup>

Maxwell highlights a lack of preparation by church leaders but also highlights the demanding work of succession planning. John Ortberg characterizes this work as the “subtle art of torch-passing.”<sup>102</sup> Given the complexity involved, stakeholders must think “more art than science.” There is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to succession.<sup>103</sup> Within a church context, succession requires navigating spiritual, emotional, financial, and other considerations from the outgoing pastor, incoming pastor, governing body, congregation, denominational leadership, and other connected institutions. Navigating the passing of the torch has challenges at any age or stage, but they are amplified when the outgoing leader has had a long tenure. For the purposes of this literature review, a long tenure will be defined as over seven years, using pastoral tenure analysis by church consultant Thom Rainer.<sup>104</sup>

### *Outgoing Pastor*

In many evangelical church models, the outgoing pastor can bear much of the weight of the “subtle art of torch-passing.”<sup>105</sup> Transitions are a part of the natural rhythms

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<sup>101</sup> John Maxwell, “Foreword,” in *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry* (Thomas Nelson, 2015). 1, Kindle.

<sup>102</sup> John Ortberg, “Foreword,” in *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, (Baker Books, 2020). 13, Kindle.

<sup>103</sup> William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*. Vanderbloemen and Bird make the point in chapter 7, “...there is no cardinal rule for pastoral succession.”

<sup>104</sup> Thom S. Rainer, “Ten Traits of Pastors Who Have Healthy Long-Term Tenure,” *Church Answers*, September 29, 2014, <https://churchanswers.com/blog/ten-traits-pastors-healthy-long-term-tenure/>.

<sup>105</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 150, Kindle. Vanderbloemen and Bird state, “After studying...hundreds [of cases]...much of the work of succession is counterintuitive...Nearly everything rides on the back of the outgoing senior pastor...”

of any organization, and seasons are clearly marked by the beginning and ending of the senior leader's tenure. Vanderbloemen and Bird explain, "The typical pastor will experience several ministry successions over a lifetime. Whether it's the pastor's own decision, the board's, or the bishop's (or equivalent), sooner or later all leaders move on."<sup>106</sup>

There are certainly exceptions. Pastors sometimes leave a church because of a breach of trust with the congregation, a moral failure, or out of medical necessity.<sup>107</sup> Pastors are also called to other churches, which may lessen the weight of responsibility to shepherd the transition to a new pastor.<sup>108</sup> Formally, the primary responsibility for succession is often within the purview of a church's governing body.<sup>109</sup> But, for a long-term pastor, the layers of relational depth within the congregation and the identity the pastor may have personally formed in his tenured role all contribute to the hurdles that outgoing pastors face, regardless of why they are transitioning. Stott experienced succession first-hand at All Souls Church, Langham Place, as well as other organizations. The research will investigate the ways Stott navigated these challenges and consider his

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<sup>106</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, Exp. and Upd. ed. (Baker Books, 2020), 20, Kindle.

<sup>107</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 150, Kindle. Vanderbloemen and Bird helpfully describe these exceptions.

<sup>108</sup> Christopher A. Polski, *Transition from Founding Pastor to First Successor Pastor: Every Pastor Is an Interim Pastor* (Covenant Theological Seminary, 2021), 153. Polski makes the case that one of the "slightly less painful" transitions from a founding pastor is when they are called to another church.

<sup>109</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions - How to Handle Pastoral Transition with Sensitivity, Creativity, and Excellence* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2020), 232, Kindle. Weese and Crabtree describe several models of church culture and polity. In order to summarize a wide spectrum of church leaders (session, vestry, council, coordinating committee...) they chose to use the generic term *board*. In this research, the research may use the terms *governing body* or *board* to describe a "group of leaders who are generally the elected or appointed decision makers..."

experience in light of the review of the literature. For this literature review, the focus will be given to healthy and stable pastorates.

### **Outgoing Pastors: Personal Challenges**

For a long-term pastor, the complexities of torch-passing include a host of emotional, spiritual, and practical tensions alongside the organizational challenges already mentioned. There is a personal cost to any vocational change. One such cost is the loss or reshaping of relationships within the congregation and staff team.

In the realm of organizational health, responding to each leader as a human being with complex relational and emotional layers should be a part of the work of any leadership transition.<sup>110</sup> William Bridges writes:

The starting point for dealing with transition is not the outcome but the ending that you'll have to make to leave the old situation behind...but psychological transition depends on letting go of the old reality and the old identity you had before the change took place. Organizations overlook that letting-go process completely, however, and do nothing about the feelings of loss that it generates. And in overlooking those effects, they nearly guarantee that the transition will be mismanaged and that, as a result, the change will go badly. Unmanaged transition makes change unmanageable.<sup>111</sup>

These dynamics reveal themselves in the work of the governing body as they oversee the reshaping of a leadership team, support the incoming pastor in his new role, and support the outgoing pastor as he manages his own "letting-go process." Eugene

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<sup>110</sup> William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011). chap. 3, Kindle. Bridges describes some very specific practices that help contribute to healthy successions, including the relational work of remembering and honoring the past work of other leaders.

<sup>111</sup> William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011). 22, Kindle.



Peterson and Marva Dawn appropriately titled one of their books, *The Unnecessary Pastor*.<sup>112</sup> They place the work of pastoral leadership in a specific context:

What I'm getting at is this: spirituality and ministry are always local and specific, always taking place in conditions. We aren't working with a set of truths, abstractions, and generalities, but rather with a cultivated habit of the heart and a determination to immerse ourselves in our place, our town, our congregation after the manner of Jesus...<sup>113</sup>

The transition from a long-term pastor to a successor will necessarily include the personal dynamics of the “letting-go process” within the context of a “local and specific” relational community. In a transition from a long-term pastorate, the relational work is multiplied because of the broader and deeper relationships formed over an extended tenure. Dale Weldon comments:

Another aspect of the broader ministry derived from a long-term pastorate is knowing and being known in the community. Not only are there opportunities for deeper relationships within the church, but there are also opportunities for more relationships in the community.<sup>114</sup>

An outgoing long-term pastor carries a unique weight in a succession because of the relational roots that have grown deep. Disrupting the rooted relationships is a loss that, for many, will require a grieving process.<sup>115</sup> These relational challenges for an outgoing long-term pastor should be considered in any succession process.

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<sup>112</sup> Marva Dawn and Eugene Peterson, *The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999).

<sup>113</sup> Dawn and Peterson, *The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call*, 14, Kindle.

<sup>114</sup> Dale B Welden, *The Impact of the Long-Term Pastorate*, (Theological Research Exchange Network (TREN), 2001), 118.

<sup>115</sup> William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011). 51, Kindle. Bridges goes into great depth about the grieving process “when endings take place.” He lists the traditional stages of anger that often accompany changes: anger, bargaining, anxiety, sadness, disorientation, and depression.

## Outgoing Pastors: Organizational Challenges

Jim Collins, a secular business thought leader, began a conversation with church pastors by stating frankly, “Your church cannot be great if it cannot be great without you.”<sup>116</sup> This truism could be applied to any kind of leader transition, whether an incoming leader being developed from within or brought in from without. The outgoing pastor, even if his departure is in the far distance, has a crucial role to play in the future leadership in the church.<sup>117</sup> The work of cultivating a congregation (including a staff and board) to prepare for succession is ideally done well before the season of transition arrives.<sup>118</sup> Most outgoing pastors and their churches neglect this preparatory work for many reasons, including the size of church and resources available. While no pattern works for all churches, Vanderbloemen’s research found that 84 percent of churches lacked a written emergency succession plan for their senior leader. Robert Vester reached a similar conclusion in his research, finding most pastors and organizations do not begin preparation ahead of time.<sup>119</sup> He writes:

I assumed a few pastors would not have actively investigated transition theory or utilized a written plan. I also believed a few would counter the need for such planning and documentation by an abiding trust in God’s providence. What I discovered was lack of preparation and a plan were the norm. Most of the pastors were motivated more by personal assumptions

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<sup>116</sup> Eric J. Swanson, “A Day with Jim Collins,” November 16, 2013, <https://www.ericjswanson.com/2013/11/a-day-with-jim-collins/>.

<sup>117</sup> Noel M. Tichy, *Succession: Mastering the Make Or Break Process of Leadership Transition* (Penguin, 2014), 276, Kindle. Tichy helpfully examines the role of the primary leader at non-profits as playing a critical role in planning for future leadership changes.

<sup>118</sup> Robert Vester, “First Succession : From Founding Long-Term Pastor to Second Pastor,” ATS Dissertations, May 1, 2016, <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/ecommonsatsdissertations/821>. Vester’s work goes into detail about the virtues of developing a succession plan well ahead of time. In particular, his research focuses on founding long-term pastorates, which is helpful in connecting with this research. Emphasis added by the researcher.

<sup>119</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 30, Kindle.

and observations than by established principles, congregational need, or even theological concern.<sup>120</sup>

Vanderbloemen and Bird give urgency to the task, writing, “Every pastor—young and old, new or long tenured—will end up better by starting today with succession preparations.”<sup>121</sup> A long-term outgoing pastor has many roles to play. At the top of the list is cultivating resiliency that will allow the church to flourish when the time comes to transition to a new leader. Again, Vanderbloemen and Bird urge, “Planning for that day of succession may be the biggest leadership task a leader and church will ever face. It may also be the most important.”<sup>122</sup> One way to cultivate this resiliency is by having conversations to initiate the planning process for passing the torch early on.<sup>123</sup>

### *Incoming Pastor*

For an incoming pastor following a long-term outgoing pastor, the literature focuses on the process of (1) onboarding the new pastor and (2) the skill of “managing the tension” of honoring the past while moving the church forward.<sup>124</sup> For this study, onboarding will be broadly defined as the process of a new pastor becoming oriented to

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<sup>120</sup> Robert Vester, “First Succession : From Founding Long-Term Pastor to Second Pastor,” ATS Dissertations.

<sup>121</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 30, Kindle. Emphasis original to the authors.

<sup>122</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 19, Kindle.

<sup>123</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 277, Kindle. Weese and Crabtree describe the “triple whammy” that can take place all at once in a congregation that does not begin the preparations for succession early, “The end result is that the congregation is left with no alternative but to experience the triple whammy of emotional, ‘organic,’ and organizational change all at the same time.”

<sup>124</sup> Gavin Adams, *Big Shoes to Fill: Stepping into a Leadership Role...Without Stepping in It* (Zondervan, 2024), chap. 4, Kindle. Adams gives the helpful leadership concept of “managing tensions” to describe the work of leadership in an organization.

the practical and cultural nuances of the church and the new leadership role.<sup>125</sup> It is connected to the task of honoring the past and moving the church forward because a new leader must do the hard work of investigating where the church has come from to move it forward. Tod Bolsinger stresses, "...leadership vision is often more about seeing clearly what *is* even more than what *will be*."<sup>126</sup> Regardless of the health of the church and whether the handoff from the outgoing pastor was positive, hiring a new leader means losing the status quo, which requires delicate care and careful attention to the church's current state. Bridges counsels:

When endings take place, people get angry, sad, frightened, depressed, and confused. These emotional states can be mistaken for bad morale, but they aren't. They are the signs of grieving, the natural sequence of emotions people go through when they lose something that matters to them. You find these emotions in families that have lost a member, and you find them in an organization where an ending has taken place.<sup>127</sup>

Managing the tensions of anger, sadness, fear, and the like would be a daunting hurdle for any leader. But, for an incoming pastor who has not yet had the time to build a reservoir of trust with the congregation, the challenge is even more pronounced.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Michael Adam Beck, *The Five Congregational Personality Types: An Ancient Pathway for Congregational Renewal in the 21st Century* (Invite Press, 2023), 24, Kindle. Beck helpfully defines church culture as "a unique meaning and information system shared by a group and transmitted across generations." He also uses the term "personality" to describe other intangible aspects of a congregation, such as "behavioral and cognitive characteristics, traits, or predispositions."

<sup>126</sup> Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (InterVarsity Press, 2018), 154, Kindle.

<sup>127</sup> William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011). 51, Kindle.

<sup>128</sup> There are certainly situations when an incoming pastor is already a known figure, such as an internal succession. However, for any new incoming pastor the congregation (including the staff and board) are in uncharted territory with the *known* person in this *new* role.

## Incoming Pastor: Onboarding Challenges

The handoff to an incoming pastor grows more complex when the handoff is from a long-term pastorate. Dan Ciampa and David L. Dotlich shine light on the importance of preparing for the complexity of the initial handoff, stating, “Transitions at the top fail because major players are unprepared for critical crossroads...often, because they underestimate or ignore the complexity of the transition process.”<sup>129</sup> The phrase “critical crossroads” summarizes the kinds of transitions highlighted in the literature. Ciampa and Dotlich enumerate several organizational factors passed on to the incoming leader, “...mix of strategic, operational, political, personal, and cultural factors...”<sup>130</sup> The last factor on their list, “cultural,” is highlighted throughout the literature as one of the more challenging ones. Vanderbloemen and Bird put it plainly, “...culture—not vision or strategy—is the most powerful factor in any organization.”<sup>131</sup> They go on to elaborate, “A church’s culture of where power is located and how leadership decisions are made commonly trumps an imported model that doesn’t fit the existing culture.”<sup>132</sup>

Communicating the intangible systems of an established church culture increases chances for a successful onboarding process. A clear understanding of a church’s culture is often anthropomorphized.<sup>133</sup> Adams explains:

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<sup>129</sup> Dan Ciampa and David L. Dotlich, *Transitions at the Top: What Organizations Must Do to Make Sure New Leaders Succeed* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 23, Kindle.

<sup>130</sup> Dan Ciampa and David L. Dotlich, *Transitions at the Top*, 65, Kindle.

<sup>131</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 117, Kindle.

<sup>132</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 118, Kindle.

<sup>133</sup> Philip D. Douglass, *What Is Your Church’s Personality?: Discovering and Developing the Ministry Style of Your Church*. Philip Douglass also goes into further detail in his insightful work about church “personality.”

Think of it like personality types. There are people you like and people you don't. Why does this happen? Primarily because of your personality and their personality. There is chemistry between you, or there is not...Culture is similar...The best scenario for everyone is finding both a job description and organizational cultural fit.<sup>134</sup>

Michael Adam Beck looks at a congregation's cultural personality through the lens of its long-term leaders or founders:

To summarize, congregations are more than an aggregate of individuals. They each have a distinct cultural personality. This personality can be profoundly shaped by its founders. Consider, for example, Ignatius of Loyola and the Jesuit order, John Wesley and the people called Methodists, Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity, and Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement. Those expressions bear the traits of their founder's core ideas and personalities—again—for better or for worse.<sup>135</sup>

Transmitting the cultural realities of a church to the incoming pastor is not a mechanical process but is rather more akin to the development of a relationship – a learning process that takes time. Onboarding must include the practical realities of staff personnel, organizational finances, institutional history, the expectations of the governing body, and more.<sup>136</sup> However, each of those functional factors are inevitably connected to the cultural dynamics or personality of the church. Weese and Crabtree state:

If the strategic plan runs counter to the organizational culture, the culture will win every time regardless of what the plan says. This is the reason this book has gone to such great lengths to define churches in terms of cultures and the kind of transition they require.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Gavin Adams, *Big Shoes to Fill* (Zondervan, 2024), 58, Kindle.

<sup>135</sup> Michael Adam Beck, *The Five Congregational Personality Types* (Invite Press, 2023), 28, Kindle.

<sup>136</sup> The Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, *Administrative Checklist of Materials for the New Pastor*, <https://www.flumc.org/files/fileslibrary/clergy+excellence/admin+checklist+new+pastor.pdf>.

<sup>137</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions - How to Handle Pastoral Transition with Sensitivity, Creativity, and Excellence*, 1993, Kindle.

From this brief survey of the literature, a successful onboarding plan for an incoming pastor from a long-term pastorate is far more than a communication of information or transfer of authority and much more akin to the development of a relationship.

### **Incoming Pastor: Managing the Tension of Honoring the Past and Moving the Church Forward**

During a transition from a long-term pastorate, the incoming pastor will face the double challenge of honoring the past while also charting a course to move forward. Just as all personalities respond to change in unique ways, so every church culture will have its own idiosyncrasies to navigate. Adams advises incoming pastors:

Before you even step foot into the building for your first day as the leader, ask yourself this question: Who is losing what? This illuminating question will help guide you to support those in the organization experiencing grief during the process, even if they appear enthusiastic about you and the future. Every loss, even the losses we appreciate, should be grieved. The grieving process for a simple loss we are grateful for doesn't need to drag on. On the other hand, the loss of a beloved former leader demands a much more intentional grief process. As the new leader, it's your responsibility to ensure these losses are processed and grieved.<sup>138</sup>

This responsibility of honoring the past includes, according to Adams, leading the congregation through grief for whatever might have been lost. The outgoing pastor may or may not remain a part of the community, but loss is still a part of any succession because routines, team members, processes, and expectations can all shift when a new leader arrives. The loss of status quo is a part of any transition process for a congregation. Honoring the past will look different in each individual church transition, but the

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<sup>138</sup> Gavin Adams, *Big Shoes to Fill: Stepping into a Leadership Role...Without Stepping in It* (Zondervan, 2024), 173, Kindle.

literature consistently highlights the value of recognizing the contributions of the outgoing leader, in most cases. Bridges counsels:

Never denigrate the past. Many managers, in their enthusiasm for a future that is going to be better than the past, ridicule or demean the old way of doing things. In doing so they consolidate the resistance against the transition because people identify with the way things used to be and thus feel that their self-worth is at stake whenever the past is attacked.<sup>139</sup>

Honoring the outgoing leader then, according to Bridges, shows respect for the work of the leader(s) who have gone before and affirms the defining marks of the previous pastor. Honoring the past demonstrates respect for the former leader and those he led, which in turn can also mitigate resistance to change.

Honoring the past is bundled tightly with the rigors of moving a church forward after a leadership transition. This tension is more tightly bound in a transition from a long-term pastor. Vanderbloemen and Bird make the case that some long-term pastors “function like a founding pastor.”<sup>140</sup> The long-term pastor can suffuse a church with unique passion, drive, creativity, and energy,<sup>141</sup> so much so, that it may be daunting for the outgoing pastor to know when it is time for a leadership transition. Vanderbloemen and Bird call this blind spot, “Founder’s Syndrome.”<sup>142</sup> This syndrome can also frustrate the ability of an incoming pastor to move a church forward because of loyalty to the previous leader’s impact. However, Lawrence Gilpin offers a positive outlook:

Conventional wisdom may affirm that the successor to a long-term pastor is inevitably a "sacrificial lamb." But this does not have to be the case...

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<sup>139</sup> William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011). 59, Kindle.

<sup>140</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 121, Kindle.

<sup>141</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 127, Kindle.

<sup>142</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 120, Kindle.



The successor can lead the church in fresh directions for ministry. In addition, he can work toward developing his relationships with the long-time members of the church and can solidify his position as *their* pastor.<sup>143</sup>

Gilpin reassures that the disruptive nature of a transition does not inevitably lead to a fraught or failed succession. Bridges lists “three phases of transition.”<sup>144</sup> (1) Helping the community to “let go” of old ways and identities associated with the time before the transition. (2) Leading the community through the in-between time when the old is gone, but the new isn’t fully operational,” or what he calls the “neutral zone.” (3) Leading people into a new beginning by helping them to discover new energy and purpose. Bridges summarizes, “Because transition is a process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world, we can say that transition begins with an ending and finishes with a beginning.”<sup>145</sup>

An incoming pastor plays a critical role in managing the tension of unplugging from what has come before with a delicate touch that gives due honor to the contributions that have brought the church to where it is. Managing this tension is a crucial step in mitigating resistance to change and building trust to move forward to a new season.

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<sup>143</sup> Lawrence A. Gilpin, *When the Long-Term Pastor Leaves: The Local Church Process of Pastoral Transition in the Presbyterian Church in America* (Covenant Theological Seminary, 2006), emphasis is the author’s.

<sup>144</sup> William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011). 19, Kindle.

<sup>145</sup> William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011). 19, Kindle.

## *Governing Body*

The governing body of the church plays an essential role in leading a congregation through the transition from a long-term pastorate. Weese and Crabtree enumerate five key players in a successful leadership transition: (1) the outgoing pastor, (2) the transition consultant, (3) the personnel committee, (4) the arriving pastor, and (5) the board.<sup>146</sup> Church polities can vary widely, but for the purposes of this literature review, the research will use the term “board” or “governing body” interchangeably.

Weese and Crabtree state:

Throughout the text, we speak about the board of the church. This refers to the group of leaders who are generally the elected or appointed decision makers setting policy, direction, vision, and so on. It is often referred to as the session, vestry, council, coordinating committee, church board. We are ever mindful of the fact that women and men fill the pastoral and lay leadership roles in the church today; therefore, we have tried to be inclusive throughout the text.<sup>147</sup>

The governing body of a church has responsibility for the incoming and outgoing pastors and must also attend to the congregation’s long-term vitality. Again, Weese and Crabtree define a healthy transition, in contrast to an “illness-based” transition, as:

A healthy pastoral transition is one that enables a church to move forward into the next phase of its external and internal development with a new leader...with a minimum of spiritual, programmatic, material, and people losses during the transition...Note that this definition is holistic. It does not set spiritual issues in opposition to material ones.<sup>148</sup>

A healthy transition navigates disruptions from a long-term leader to a new leader so that the next phase begins to develop. Gilpin highlights the critical nature of the

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<sup>146</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 765, Kindle.

<sup>147</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 232, Kindle.

<sup>148</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 677, Kindle.

governing body: “One of the greatest keys to an effective transition after a long-term pastor relates to the leadership of the Session. There is a tremendous need for mature leadership to exist on the part of a church's elder leadership.”<sup>149</sup>

Gilpin’s phrase, “mature leadership,” offers insight into the depth of skill and character required for a governing body to make wise decisions. Tod Bolsinger describes the marks of wise leadership, focusing on the highest priority:

The answer was for me—and my leaders—to develop the adaptive capacity that comes from living out a core, clarifying conviction: The mission trumps. Always. Every time. In every conflict. Not the pastor. Not the members of the church who pay the bills. Not those who scream the loudest or who are most in pain. No. In a healthy Christian ministry, the mission wins every argument.<sup>150</sup>

A well-functioning board sets up the church for health in the long-term, which includes planning healthy transitions well in advance. According to Vanderbloemen and Bird, most boards do not plan far enough ahead because of processes and systems that create barriers for proactive planning. In describing the role of the board in succession planning, Polski indicates the need for boards to keep succession planning at the top of their agenda. “But the job of succession planning shouldn’t just fall to the CEO [pastor]; it must be a top concern of boards as well.”<sup>151</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird say something similar while also affirming the unique challenges that each board and church face:

In many denominations, the current processes, policies, and politics discourage and even preclude any proactive planning or preparation...Even so, we believe there is much a church in those situations can still do to plan for its future. Succession is a process, not an event. It’s a leadership value and practice. It is a big deal. We are

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<sup>149</sup> Lawrence A. Gilpin, *When the Long-Term Pastor Leaves* (Covenant Theological Seminary, 2006).

<sup>150</sup> Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains* (InterVarsity Press, 2018), 124, Kindle.

<sup>151</sup> Christopher A. Polski, *Transition from Founding Pastor to First Successor Pastor* (Covenant Theological Seminary, 2021), 63.

frequently asked, “What’s the right way to do succession?” The right way depends entirely on your situation. There are very few cardinal rules in succession. It’s much more art than science.<sup>152</sup>

This “subtle art of torch-passing” requires that governing bodies lay the groundwork for a strategic transition well in advance of its implementation. Weese and Crabtree offer a three-tiered framework for boards to consider. In summary, (1) Develop a “strategic plan” that includes not only the pastoral selection process but the entire transition. (2) The board must “commit itself” to the time needed to develop and execute the plan. They list several components that require increased time and attention:

...updating job descriptions, choosing a transition consultant, identifying unique mission components in the life of the congregation, assessing the maturity and capability of the organization at critical points...conducting a final interview, negotiating the final compensation package for the pastor, managing the information transfer from the departing pastor to the arriving pastor, and negotiating any ongoing role for the departing pastor.<sup>153</sup>

The third tier of Weese and Crabtree’s framework for the role of the board during a pastoral transition is “selecting a transition consultant.”<sup>154</sup> According to their research, this key player could be a denominational representative or a hired consultant with expertise in leadership transitions. Vanderbloemen and Bird also advocate for a third-party in healthy church leadership transitions, “The process will almost always be healthier and more effective if an objective third party speaks into it. This could include a denomination, judiciary, or district; a search firm; or an objective, trained consultant.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 42, Kindle.

<sup>153</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 818-839, Kindle.

<sup>154</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 839, Kindle.

<sup>155</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, 43, Kindle. It is worth noting that Vanderbloemen operates a pastor search firm that specializes in working with churches during pastoral successions.

Vester is not as rigid as the others regarding the necessity of a third-party. From his research he says:

Search teams, transition teams, and prayer teams all may be useful for their intended purposes. In some cases, existing boards or committees filled these roles. In others, the teams were set up independently of the existing leadership groups. Deployment and use of teams was largely guided by church culture and leader preference.<sup>156</sup>

The literature surveyed highlights the critical role that a church's governing body plays in a healthy pastoral leadership transition and the necessity of starting the process of strategic planning early.

### *Summary*

Due to the limits of the research, only three roles were highlighted during this literature review. Several other roles could have been surveyed, such as the congregation itself, the incoming or outgoing pastor's immediate family, key church staff members, or volunteers. The three roles of outgoing pastor, incoming pastor, and the church's governing body were selected because of repeated emphasis on their contributions to a healthy transition. When these three key roles work together with a shared mission, trust, and clear communication, a healthy outcome is more likely.<sup>157</sup> Because this study is primarily concerned with Christian ministry, the data-driven nature of a literature review should not in any way negate the crucial role of prayer and a humble posture before God for every key player during a pastoral transition.

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<sup>156</sup> Robert Vester, "First Succession : From Founding Long-Term Pastor to Second Pastor," ATS Dissertations (May 1, 2016), <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/ecommonsatsdissertations/821>.

<sup>157</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, 818-882, Kindle.

## Literature Related to New Leader Development in Churches

This section will review the literature as it relates to development of new leaders within churches and Christian ministry organizations. A recent Barna study found that 69 percent of current pastors say, “...it is becoming harder to find mature young Christians who want to be pastors.”<sup>158</sup> In that same study 83 percent said, “...churches aren’t rising to their responsibilities to train up the next generation of Christian leaders.”<sup>159</sup> This research suggests a growing gap in the quality and quantity of the leadership pipeline of evangelical churches in the United States. The health and sustainability of any organization or institution relies upon the growth and development of new leaders to move the mission forward.<sup>160</sup> How are existing ministry leaders responding to this gap? What does the literature have to say about the formal and informal processes and systems that develop mature leaders? This brief review will examine the literature pertaining to three areas of leadership development: (1) finding and identifying potential leaders, (2) equipping and nurturing rising leaders, and (3) empowering new leaders.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Barna Group, *The State of Pastors*, section 8.

<sup>159</sup> Barna Group, *The State of Pastors*, section 8.

<sup>160</sup> Scott Edinger, James M. Kouzes, and Laurie Sain, *The Hidden Leader: Discover and Develop Greatness Within Your Company* (Amacom, 2015), 3, Kindle. Kouzes, Edinger, and Sain helpfully describe the ways that an organization thrives (or not) with good leadership. For example, “Hidden leaders provide the underlying energy that drives organizations forward, in our estimation.”

Note: For Christian churches, the quality of its leaders is critical. However, Jesus Christ is the “Great Shepherd” (1 Peter 5) and the health and sustainability of his Church is not ultimately at the mercy of the quality of human leadership, but is sustained by Christ alone.

<sup>161</sup> John C. Maxwell, *The Leader’s Greatest Return: Attracting, Developing, and Multiplying Leaders* (HarperCollins Leadership, 2020). The researcher was helped by some of the categories Maxwell identified in his work on the leadership development process.

## *Finding and Identifying Potential Leaders*

The development of new leaders requires a posture of attentiveness. Within a local church or ministry, existing leaders must assess current staff, volunteers, or congregation for individuals with potential leadership skills or gifts. Alternatively, churches or pastors can seek out potential leaders from the outside, such as seminaries, search firms, or church leadership networks. This study, however, will focus on developing leaders from within an organization. Mark Miller, a vice-president at Chick-fil-A, emphasizes the need for creating a culture of leadership development:

How do you ensure you'll have the needed leaders to fuel your future success? The answer, in short: Build a leadership culture. Let's be clear on terms from the beginning. A leadership culture exists when leaders are routinely and systematically developed, and you have a surplus of leaders ready for the next opportunity or challenge.<sup>162</sup>

Miller explains that an organization must regularly invest in potential new leaders. In their research on leader development within the church, Elkington, Meekins, Breen, and Martin ask a similar question from a different angle:

The preeminent question of whether leaders are born or made affects the notion of leadership within the local church too. If leaders are not in fact born, but made, then the question is what processes, context, and practices facilitate this type of leadership development in the 21st century church in such a way to empower leaders to view themselves as a piece of the whole and yet also dependent upon the whole.<sup>163</sup>

Miller, and Elkington et al., recognize the need for “processes,” “context,” and “practices” that facilitate development of new leaders in an organization’s regular

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<sup>162</sup> Mark Miller, *Leaders Made Here: Building a Leadership Culture* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2017), 1, Kindle.

<sup>163</sup> Rob Elkington et al., “Leadership as an Enabling Function: Towards a New Paradigm for Local Church Leadership in the 21st Century,” in *In Die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi*, vol. 49, 2015, accessed December 27, 2023, <http://indieskriflig.org.za/index.php/skriflig/article/view/1911>.

rhythm. When an organization grows in its capacity to discover emerging leaders, what key attributes should they be on the lookout for? More precisely, what are the distinguishing characteristics of a potential leader? Maxwell recognizes this challenge:

Recently, at a conference...someone asked how I develop good leaders. “First,” I responded, “you need to know what a good leader looks like.” I know that may sound simplistic, but it’s true. And I’ve found that most people have a difficult time describing what a good leader—or good potential leader—looks like.

Defining the characteristics of a good leader does seem simplistic on the surface, but naming these attributes is the first step in recognizing potential. Kouzes, Edinger, and Sain explain:

Conventional wisdom portrays leadership as if it were found mostly at the top. Myth and legend have treated leadership as if it were the private reserve of a very few charismatic men and women. Nothing is further from the truth...Our images of who’s a leader and who’s not are all mixed up in our preconceived notions about what leadership is and isn’t.<sup>164</sup>

They go on to describe what they call “hidden leaders,” or individuals within an organization not immediately obvious, but they are functioning as a leader in some measure. To find “hidden leaders,” they list four facets to watch for:

They (1) demonstrate integrity, (2) lead through relationships, (3) focus on results, (4) remain customer-purposed whether or not they work directly with paying customers.<sup>165</sup>

For a church or ministry organization, the fourth facet, “remain customer purposed,” is easily reoriented toward the mission of the church. More specific to the local church, Thabiti Anyabwile lists four facets to identify potential church leaders:

(1) Take note of those who...regularly attend the church’s services and the church’s business meetings, (2) ...note the men who already appear to be

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<sup>164</sup> Scott Edinger, James M. Kouzes, and Laurie Sain, *The Hidden Leader*, 136, Kindle.

<sup>165</sup> Scott Edinger, James M. Kouzes, and Laurie Sain, *The Hidden Leader*, 10, Kindle.



shepherding members of the church even though they don't have the title "elder" or "pastor." (3) ...note those men who show respect and trust in the existing leadership... (4) ...Be patient and note those men who evidence the desire [to lead] over time...Encourage him. Observe the desire in fruitful seasons, in dry times, when he is full of joy, and when he is sorrowful. Does the desire persist, grow, and strengthen, or does it fade, wither, and weaken?<sup>166</sup>

The literature suggests that the challenge of finding new leaders within a church or ministry organization needs a context (i.e leadership development "culture") and an attentiveness to characteristics that mark quality leaders. According to Kouzes et al., organizations must clearly define the characteristics they seek as they learn leader development. Maxwell stresses, "So, how do you do it? How do you identify good potential leaders, people you want to develop? As I said, you need to have a picture of that person..."<sup>167</sup>

### *Equipping and Nurturing Rising Leaders*

Finding quality leaders leads to the work of equipping and training them. Noel Tichy writes, "The development of leaders to succeed other leaders is every leader's most critical task."<sup>168</sup> Formal leadership training from universities, seminaries, and other learning institutions provide invaluable resources that should not be understated. However, wisdom cultivated in the trenches of ministry alongside seasoned leaders is also essential to developing healthy and resilient leaders. McKenna et al., states:

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<sup>166</sup> Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons* (Crossway, 2012), 52, Kindle.

<sup>167</sup> John C. Maxwell, *The Leader's Greatest Return: Attracting, Developing, and Multiplying Leaders* (HarperCollins Leadership, 2020), 2, Kindle.

<sup>168</sup> Noel M. Tichy, *Succession: Mastering the Make Or Break Process of Leadership Transition* (Penguin, 2014), 79, Kindle.

Like with business leaders, education and training represents an important element in the pastoral leader's development, but the importance of ongoing development in on-the-job experiences, during transitions, and in relationships tends to be underestimated.<sup>169</sup>

The crucible of “on-the job experience” and “transitions” equip ministry leaders with the wisdom necessary to navigate the complexities of vocational ministry. Some of the literature identified an undervaluing of practical experience by organizational leaders already in place as well as incoming new leaders. They may assume that traditional education and training methods alone can prepare leaders for vocational ministry or that leadership principles learned from other fields are sufficient. However, Elkington et al., critiques current formal ministry training as insufficient in some critical areas:

It seems that there is a growing awareness that whilst Ministry Training Institutes (MTIs) are training people for orthodox ministry, they are not equipping people for orthopraxy leadership in a highly complex environment. Is it possible that MTIs believe that if they train for orthodoxy, somehow orthopraxy naturally follows? Or is it simply that the MTIs have not had the capacity to develop a lively and robust leadership development track as a viable part of the training regimen?<sup>170</sup>

Their insight distinguishes between equipping rising leaders with knowledge (orthodoxy) and practice (orthopraxy). Both are necessary for the development of resilient leaders, especially given the “highly complex environment” of church work. Huizing offers a broader critique, suggesting church leadership development relies too heavily on secular leadership models and should integrate a discipleship approach to

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<sup>169</sup> Robert B. McKenna, Paul R. Yost, and Tanya N. Boyd, “Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons That Shape Pastoral Leaders,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 35, no. 3 (2007): 179–189, accessed March 21, 2024, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/009164710703500301>. The phrase “Ministry Training Institutes” is a summary term for a broad array of formal places of learning.

<sup>170</sup> Rob Elkington et al., “Leadership as an Enabling Function”

training new leaders for ministry.<sup>171</sup> He does not negate the value of secular leadership wisdom but instead emphasizes:

The holy grail of leadership research is successfully identifying and developing leaders. Meta-theories specifying...specific traits, environmental contingencies, behavioral adjustments, management systems, and relational influences have all been proposed as answers to this search. Much of ecclesial leadership has followed these patterns by attempting to adapt non-ecclesial leadership models to an ecclesial context... This does not suggest that we should abandon the truths that are established through non-ecclesial leadership research. However, it does suggest that ecclesial leadership has not only a distinct contribution to make to organizational leadership studies but also an obligation to develop a unique ecclesial leadership theory drawn from its sacred texts.<sup>172</sup>

Training models that use discipleship practices found in the Bible are critical to equipping and nurturing rising leaders with the skills needed for Christ-like leadership.

Huizing goes on to describe training leaders while in the trenches of ministry:

Teaching is primarily a cognitive exercise whereby disciples come to an understanding of why they should act in a particular manner. Training, on the other hand, is praxis-oriented, assisting the disciple [leader] to act upon the knowledge gained through teaching... The combination of both the cognitive and praxis is critical to the concept of discipleship, as is clear from Jesus' original commissioning statement – "teaching them to obey everything" (Mt. 28:20, NRSV).<sup>173 174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Russell Huizing, "Leaders from Disciples: The Church's Contribution to Leadership Development," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35, no. 4 (October 2011).

<sup>172</sup> Russell Huizing, "Leaders from Disciples: The Church's Contribution to Leadership Development."

<sup>173</sup> Russell Huizing, "Leaders from Disciples: The Church's Contribution to Leadership Development."

<sup>174</sup> Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2017). For a different perspective than the strict bifurcation of theory and practice by Huizing and others, the researcher was helped by a fresh look at Paul's anthropology from Eastman. In summary, Eastman integrates theory and practice by describing each individual as they relate to others. Individuals are embedded creatures, and a person cannot understand themselves (or what they are learning) without reference to where and with whom they are embedded.

Author and Senior Pastor Tom Nelson agrees with Huizing on the critical role of “praxis,” or “apprenticeship,” as Nelson labels it, for the wholistic equipping of new leaders. Fusing insight from the medical industry with vocational ministry, Nelson writes:

The surgeon...said to me that the scrub sink is the key to leadership development. His insightful words reinforced in my mind and heart the vital importance of the apprenticeship model of life-on-life leadership development not only in the health care profession, but also within the church. By its very nature, leaders with integrity of heart and skillful hands emerge out of a rich tacit knowledge environment that best takes place not in the classroom but in the dynamic incarnational laboratory of organizational life.<sup>175</sup>

According to the literature, within a Christian ministry context, leadership development should integrate discipleship practices found in scripture alongside common grace leadership insights. Furthermore, on-the-job training, or “praxis,” can play a crucial role for mature new leaders, ideally set alongside rigorous study with careful reflection in a formative community context.

### *Empowering New Leaders*

For a church or ministry organization to endure beyond its present leadership, existing leaders must learn to pass authority to new leaders. Referencing the work of Huizing, “praxis” is an integral part of the development of a new leader.<sup>176</sup> Nelson calls it training in the “laboratory of organizational life.”<sup>177</sup> Hands-on training means some

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<sup>175</sup> Tom Nelson, *The Flourishing Pastor: Recovering the Lost Art of Shepherd Leadership* (InterVarsity Press, 2021), 193, Kindle.

<sup>176</sup> Russell Huizing, “Leaders from Disciples: The Church’s Contribution to Leadership Development,” *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 35.

<sup>177</sup> Tom Nelson, *The Flourishing Pastor*, 193, Kindle.

measure of authority must be given to the new leader to exercise the gift. In his research on the subject, Brian Keith Moss makes this plain:

Great leaders empower people rather than build power through people. To empower others requires a leader to be in tune with their own identity and secure enough to release authority.<sup>178</sup>

Moss touches on why some leaders struggle with empowering a new leader. In the related context of leadership succession, John Ortberg calls empowerment the “subtle art of torch-passing.”<sup>179</sup> In other words, this skill is an “art,” rather than a science.

Maxwell identifies several reasons why passing authority to new leaders is resisted, including “lack of time,” “lack of confidence in others,” “reluctance caused by past failures,” and “ignorance or inability to empower others.”<sup>180</sup> Developing wisdom to discern appropriate timing, assessing the breadth of authority to be given, and establishing clear feedback loops are therefore essential.<sup>181</sup>

Although there is clear biblical precedent for empowering young leaders to develop and practice their leadership skills, such as Paul’s work with Timothy and Titus, the secular business world also understands the value of “praxis.” From their research on this subject in the *Harvard Business Review*, Moldoveanu and Narayandas add:

... the farther removed the locus of learning is from the locus of application, the larger this gap [leadership skills] becomes. To develop

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<sup>178</sup> Brian Keith Moss, “Leadership Development in the Local Church: An Intentional Strategy for Developing Leaders at Every Level” (Liberty University, 2014).

<sup>179</sup> John Ortberg, “Foreword,” in *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, (Baker Books, 2020). 13, Kindle.

<sup>180</sup> John C. Maxwell, *The Leader’s Greatest Return: Attracting, Developing, and Multiplying Leaders* (HarperCollins Leadership, 2020), 104-105, Kindle.

<sup>181</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Truth about Leadership: The No-Fads, Heart-of-the-Matter Facts You Need to Know* (John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 116, Kindle. Kouzes and Posner offer practical observations from their own research regarding the value of feedback in the workplace.

essential leadership and managerial talent, organizations must bridge these three gaps.<sup>182</sup>

Moldoveanu and Narayandas provide another way of articulating the hands-on experience necessary for new leaders in churches and ministry organizations. Shortening the distance between the “locus of learning” and “locus of application” within a church or ministry organization parallels with what Elkington et al., more plainly call a “mentorship” method of church leadership development. They further explain:

At the core, mentoring is a communal relationship and would be a fitting method to train church leaders to lead within the context of a community of faith. With mentorship added, theological education becomes more than passing on a body of knowledge (experiential or otherwise)...<sup>183</sup>

Giving opportunities for young leaders to exercise leadership skills within the context of a hands-on ministry alongside more experienced leaders could address the deficit in mature young leaders.<sup>184</sup>

### **Summary Conclusion of Literature Review**

This brief review surveyed leadership through the lens of the Apostle Paul in his letters to Timothy and Titus, the challenges of pastoral succession from long-term pastorates, and three attributes of new leader development. Although the literature suggests a leadership gap in the evangelical church, rigorous work is being done to develop systems, practices, and biblical methods for addressing this gap.

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<sup>182</sup> Mihnea Moldoveanu and Das Narayandas, “The Future of Leadership Development,” *Harvard Business Review*, March 1, 2019, <https://hbr.org/2019/03/the-future-of-leadership-development>.

<sup>183</sup> Rob Elkington et al., “Leadership as an Enabling Function...”

<sup>184</sup> Barna Group, *The State of Pastors*, section 8.

The research into the leadership work of John Stott will benefit from this literature review as it directly addresses many of his life and ministry experiences. For example, Stott was a long-term pastor at All Souls Church, Langham Place, and presided over the transition to his successor. The literature review on “Succession from Long-Term Pastorates” offered several best practices and practical insights. However, the most striking was the consistency with which the literature showcased the value and unique contribution of key roles in the succession process. Outgoing pastors, for example, can carry a heavy load as they process “emotional, spiritual, and practical tensions” within themselves and within a congregation. On the other hand, incoming pastors have the double challenge of honoring the past and moving the church forward in its mission. Distinguishing between these roles identify potential best practices from the life and ministry of Stott.

As the research surveys the leadership work of Stott, his experiences in developing new leaders will be of interest. The literature review on “New Leader Development” will offer insight into the ways Stott approached developing new leaders within his church or other ministry organizations. The literature was overwhelmingly consistent in calling current leaders to initiate the development of new leaders. Systems and practices within an organization that identify, equip, and empower new leaders are invaluable to institutions that seek to grow beyond the present generation. This kind of organizational insight will be useful as the research seeks even further insight from Stott's leadership development practices.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore how ministry leaders experienced the leadership of John Stott at All Souls Church, Langham Place, and other ministry organizations where Stott served. This study assumed that many of those who served under and alongside Stott's leadership have unique insight into the principles and practices that undergirded Stott's fruitful work. The research aimed to gain understanding by analyzing and reflecting on the qualities of Stott's leadership that could be applied to ministry leadership gaps present today. For example, with the decline of the average tenure of the pastorate to a mere four years, are there principles and patterns that could be learned from the twenty-five years Stott served at All Souls Church?<sup>185</sup> This research sought to discover insight into how Stott's development of other leaders contributed to the health of his church and other institutions where he served. Although the shape of Stott's work was unique to him and his context, this research sought to discover transferable principles that could benefit ministry leaders today and in the future.

To address this purpose, the research identified four primary areas of focus, namely, Stott's approach to leading ministry teams, his work in developing leaders, stewardship of his own health, and his method of preparing leaders for his eventual succession. To examine these areas more closely, the following research questions guided the qualitative research:

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<sup>185</sup> Thom S. Rainer, "Ten Traits of Pastors Who Have Healthy Long-Term Tenure."



1. How did ministry leaders experience the leadership of Stott?
  - 1.a Church leaders?
  - 1.b Leaders at ministry organizations?
2. How were ministry leaders developed as leaders by Stott?
  - 2a. Church leaders?
  - 2.b Leaders at ministry organizations?
3. How did ministry leaders observe Stott's stewardship of his own health?
  - 3.a Physical?
  - 3.b Emotional and intellectual?
  - 3.c Spiritual?
4. How did Stott prepare ministry leaders for his succession?
  - 4.a Church leaders?
  - 4.b Leaders at ministry organizations?

## **Design of the Study**

The basic qualitative case study method was used for this research. Sharan B. Merriam, in her book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, describes the goal of basic qualitative research as "understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world."<sup>186</sup> Offering a helpful contrast between quantitative and qualitative research, Merriam writes:

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<sup>186</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 15, Kindle.

Rather than determining cause and effect, predicting, or describing the distribution of some attribute among a population [quantitative], we might be interested in uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved. [qualitative]<sup>187</sup>

Put another way, the qualitative research method allowed for a fresh observation of Stott's work to uncover key insights into the meaning and significance of his leadership practices.

### **Case Study Setting**

Although this study will employ the basic qualitative method, the foundation relied on the experiences of those who served under or alongside the leadership of an individual, John Stott. Thus, the setting of this research was a case study. Merriam defines a case study thus: "A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system."<sup>188</sup> In this study, the bounded system was decidedly limited to Stott's work with the ministry leaders at All Souls Church, Langham Place, and other adjacent institutions he served during his tenure as rector and rector-emeritus. Although a considerable amount of material could be surveyed regarding any number of initiatives and creative work from Stott's life, this research was strengthened with a narrow focus on his leadership work with ministry leaders.

The case study method utilized minimized variables for this in-depth research because each of the participants shared the same leader, theological commitments, and missional direction. Because the variables involved in the data analysis were more

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<sup>187</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 5-6, Kindle.

<sup>188</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 36, Kindle.

focused, the case study provided avenues for enhanced exploration of leadership challenges that many face today: leadership succession, health of leaders, and leadership development. In addition to the advantages of limited variables, the case study inquiry provided a fuller understanding of the narrow context in which Stott did his leadership work. Thus, the case study method supported the research in developing a more complete emic perspective of those who experienced the leadership of Stott. The case study method was essential in helping to achieve the outcomes that Merriam helpfully outlines for all qualitative research. "The focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive."<sup>189</sup>

### **Participant Sample Selection**

This research required participants able to describe with breadth and depth their experiences of Stott's leadership. To obtain data towards best practices, the participants self-reported that they had significant experience working near Stott at All Souls Church, Langham Place, or adjacent institutions. Therefore, the purposeful study sample consisted of ministry leaders who served while Stott was rector or rector-emeritus at All Souls.<sup>190</sup>

Participants were chosen according to who could provide a common framework of experience in the data collected. Merriam notes, "A typical sample would be one that

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<sup>189</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 15, Kindle.

<sup>190</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 95-96, Kindle. Merriam offers helpful guidance for purposeful study.

is selected because it reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest."<sup>191</sup>

Participants represented various roles and contexts under the leadership of Stott. The participants also varied in age and gender, which provided helpful perspectives for greater depth and insight.

The final study was conducted through personal interviews with seven ministry leaders. They were formally invited to participate with an introductory letter, followed by an in-person interview or a personal phone or video conferencing call. Each ministry leader expressed interest and provided written informed consent to participate. Each participant also signed a "Research Participant Consent Form" to demonstrate the intention to respect and protect the human rights of the participants. The Human Rights Risk Level Assessment is "minimal" to "no risk" according to the Seminary IRB Guidelines. The following is a sample of this consent form.

#### **RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

I agree to participate in the research which is being conducted by Anthony Thomas Bailey Jr. to investigate the experiences of those who served under the leadership of John R.W. Stott for the Doctor of Ministry degree program at Covenant Theological Seminary. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary. I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that they can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, and/or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

- The purpose of the research is to investigate the leadership of John Stott to discover insights and best practices that could serve Christian ministry leaders today.
- Potential benefits of the research may include fresh approaches to long-standing leadership challenges, such as leadership succession, health of ministry leaders, and insight into best practices for developing new leaders. Although there are no direct

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<sup>191</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 97, Kindle.

- benefits to the participants of this research, I hope they will be encouraged by sharing their experiences with a listener eager to learn and apply any insight gained from this study.
- The research process will include seven participants who will sit for an interview. The research process will involve an audio and/or video recording of each interview and a subsequent transcription for the purposes of categorizing the material. The recordings and transcriptions will be used for the research alone, and each participant will be anonymized in the study.
  - Participants in this research will engage with the researcher for ninety minutes to discuss a wide range of their experiences of Stott's leadership from the perspective of their own role and context.
  - In some cases, the interview may touch on difficult seasons of the participant's life, particularly when that season intersects with the experience of Stott's pastoral care and leadership.
  - Potential risks: Minimal
    - Participants will be asked to reveal personal information regarding individual viewpoints, background, and experiences.
    - Topics or questions raised may be emotionally, culturally, or spiritually sensitive.
    - Participants may have regrets, concerns, afterthoughts, or reactions to the interview.
    - The research may inconvenience participants by causing a delay or intrusion.
  - Any information that I provide will be held in strict confidence. At no time will my name be reported along with my responses. The data gathered for this research is confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Audio or video recordings of interviews will be erased following the completion of the dissertation. By my signature, I am giving informed consent for the use of my responses in this research project.
  - Limits of Privacy: I understand that, by law, the researcher cannot keep information confidential if it involves abuse of a child or vulnerable adult or plans for a person to harm themselves or to hurt someone else.
  - The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the study.

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Anthony Thomas Bailey Jr

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Date

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Printed Name and Signature of Participant

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Date

*Please sign both copies. Keep one. Return the other to the researcher. Thank you.*

Research at Covenant Theological Seminary which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to: Director, Doctor of Ministry; Covenant Theological Seminary; 12330 Conway Road; St. Louis, MO 63141; Phone (314) 434-4044.

## Data Collection

After the participants for the study had been carefully selected, they were scheduled to interview with the researcher. This study employed semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. The open-ended nature of interview questions facilitated the ability to build upon participant responses to complex issues and explore them more thoroughly. Within a qualitative case study, Merriam catalogs three kinds of qualitative study interviews: 1) Highly Structured/Standardized, 2) Semi-Structured, or 3) Unstructured/Informal.<sup>192</sup> For the purposes this study, the semi-structured method fit best. Merriam describes the semi-structured method as requiring that "neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions [be] determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic."<sup>193</sup>

Because this study focused on the experiences and perspectives of those who interacted with an individual in a particular time and context, the interview method enabled this study to identify common themes, patterns, threads, and contrasting views from all the participants.<sup>194</sup>

The researcher interviewed seven participants for approximately sixty to ninety minutes each. Prior to the interview, the participants worked with the researcher to identify a time and place that coordinated with their schedule. In some cases, the

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<sup>192</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 108, Kindle.

<sup>193</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 110-111, Kindle.

<sup>194</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 108, Kindle.

researcher was able to conduct the interview in or around the greater London area, where Stott and many of the participants lived and worked. In other cases, video conferencing accommodated the schedules of the participant and researcher. The researcher used a mobile phone app to record in-person interviews. When an interview was done by video, the call was recorded by the video conferencing service, Zoom. By conducting 1-2 interviews a week, the researcher completed the data gathering over the course of six weeks. During and directly after each interview, the researcher wrote field notes with descriptive and reflective observations about the content of the interview.

The interview protocol contained the following questions:

1. Describe one of your most memorable personal interactions with John Stott.
  - a. Did that interaction influence your life, vocation or faith in a significant way?
2. Tell me about your experience of John Stott's leadership.
  - a. What were some aspects of his leadership ethos that were unique to him?
  - b. What is something the average person wouldn't know about Stott's leadership methods?
  - c. How did his leadership influence your own work?
3. Describe a typical team meeting led by Stott.
  - a. Describe the tone.
  - b. How was it different from other meetings you have participated in?
  - c. How was it similar?
  - d. Describe Stott's sense of self-awareness.

- e. How intuitive was he in recognizing the emotional needs of his team?
- 4. How did you perceive Stott's development of other leaders?
  - a. If applicable, describe how he developed you and your own leadership?
- 5. Can you provide some examples Stott's leadership development methods?
  - a. Were his methods formal, informal, or a mix?
- 6. From your perspective, how did Stott steward his own health?
  - a. How did he steward his physical health?
  - b. Intellectual?
    - i. From your experience, can you describe his habits of reading and study?
  - c. Emotional?
    - i. From your experience, how did he manage his own emotions?
  - d. Social?
    - i. From your experience, what were the dynamics of his close friendships?
    - ii. How did he make time to be present with his friends given the demands of his preaching, writing, and travel schedule?
- 7. How did you perceive Stott's preparatory work for his own succession (All Souls or other institutions)?
  - a. Would you describe his preparation as instinctual and spontaneous, or more methodical and formal?
  - b. How far in advance did he plan for succession?



- c. How closely did he work within the systems and structures of the institutions he served?

## **Data Analysis**

Within one week of each interview, the researcher transcribed each interview by using computer software and human transcription. Transcription allowed the researcher to do the important work of initial analysis and categorization of the data while it was still top of mind. Alongside this, the study utilized the constant comparison method of routinely analyzing the data throughout the interview process. This method provided for ongoing revision, clarification, and reflection on the resultant data categories. Again, Merriam is helpful in describing the value of conducting data analysis throughout the entire process, rather than exclusively after the process is completed:

Data analysis is one of the few aspects of doing qualitative research—perhaps the only one—in which there is a preferred way. As illustrated in the scenario just described the much-preferred way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection.<sup>195</sup>

When the interviews and observation notes were fully transcribed into computer files, they were coded and analyzed using an inductive method of analysis. In other words, the researcher worked within the bounds of the data gathered to identify useful categories to construct an accurate description of the experiences of the participants. The inductive method guarded against reading into the interview data conclusions or preconceived ideas that might have unintentionally skewed the interpretation of the data. The analysis focused on discovering and identifying (1) common themes, patterns, and

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<sup>195</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 197, Kindle.

experiences across the variation of participants; and (2) continuity or discontinuity between the variety of participants or contexts from which the participants came.

## **Researcher Position**

The primary instrument of research in this qualitative study is the researcher. The researcher selects the area of focus, the case study, study participants, research questions, and analyses the data. As such, the commitments and background of the researcher should be disclosed, even as every effort has been made to minimize the influence of those biases.

First, the researcher is an evangelical Christian who holds to the historic creeds of the faith, such as the Apostle's Creed.<sup>196</sup> He believes the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and infallible in the original manuscripts. He agrees with the Westminster Confession of Faith, which says this about the Holy Scriptures, "...The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture..."<sup>197</sup>

Second, the researcher is a pastor who serves in a non-denominational church that also holds to the historic creeds of the Christian faith. In preaching and teaching he often cites John Stott and models ministry practices on Stott's work.

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<sup>196</sup> Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* (Crossway, 2022). The researcher was helped by the explanation and translation of the Apostle's Creed in this volume by Van Dixhoorn.

<sup>197</sup> Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms*, 185, Kindle.

Third, the researcher has personally benefited from the preaching and writing ministry of John Stott. Both his father and grandfather were pastors, and both introduced him to Stott at a young age. The founding pastor of the church where the researcher currently serves has also been greatly influenced by Stott's ministry, and this influence in turn has impacted the researcher's own pastoral work.

Fourth, a few of the interview participants were personal friends or acquaintances of the researcher. The participants have been carefully chosen for this research strictly because of their contribution towards the purpose of this study.

The researcher was aware of these biases throughout the process of this study and has made every effort to ensure they do not unduly color the process or outcome of the research. Ultimately the researcher's background and familiarity with some of the life and work of Stott strengthened the focus of this research and provided motivation to mine the data with vigor, accuracy, and depth of understanding.

### **Study Limitations**

As previously mentioned, this study included only participants who served under or alongside John Stott's leadership. Therefore, each participant was selected because of direct knowledge and unique perspective to enrich the data of this inquiry. Some of the study's findings may be generalized and transferable to other leadership contexts, but not all. Although ministry leaders are the most likely to benefit from the findings of this research, other contexts such as helping vocations (e.g., counselors, medical doctors, attorneys), business, and non-profit leaders may also benefit. Readers who wish to generalize some of Stott's leadership philosophy, methods, and practices should test those aspects in their own setting. Leadership is context dependent and must be dynamic as fits

the occasion.<sup>198</sup> As such, not all the conclusions from this research will be appropriate for every setting of leadership, whether ministerial in nature or not. As with all qualitative studies, readers bear the responsibility to determine what can be appropriately applied and transferred to their sphere of leadership influence.

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<sup>198</sup> Jim Herrington, Trisha Taylor, and R. Robert Creech, *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation* (Baker Academic, 2020), 39, Kindle. In part two of this work, Herrington, Taylor, and Creech describe the necessity of dynamic leadership because of the complexities of serving in what they term a "living system."

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to explore how ministry leaders experienced the leadership of John Stott at All Souls Church, Langham Place, and other ministry organizations where he served. This chapter provides the findings of seven interviews with participants who worked alongside Stott at various points of his ministry. This research aimed to gain insight for the present moment by analyzing and reflecting on the extensive leadership work of Stott. How did he shepherd, administrate, steward his own health, and plan for succession where he served? To address the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided the qualitative research.

4. How did ministry leaders experience the leadership of Stott?
  - 1.a Church leaders?
  - 1.b Leaders at ministry organizations?
5. How were ministry leaders developed as leaders by Stott?
  - 2.a Church leaders?
  - 2.b Leaders at ministry organizations?
6. How did ministry leaders observe Stott's stewardship of his own health?
  - 3.a Physical
  - 3.b Emotional and intellectual
  - 3.c Spiritual
4. How did Stott prepare ministry leaders for his succession?
  - 4.a Church leaders?
  - 4.b Leaders at ministry organizations?

## **Introductions to Participants and Context**

The researcher selected seven participants for this study, each serving in unique roles at different points during Stott's ministry. The participants varied in age and gender, which provided a range of perspectives for greater depth and insight.

All names and identifiable participant information have been changed to protect identity. Below are brief descriptions of each of the interview participants.

### **Participant #1 - David**

Beginning as an intern, David joined the All Souls Church team in 1973. After his first year, Stott invited him to look after students, becoming the chaplain of students. His role included preaching, speaking at local Christian events in the London area, and other ministerial duties. David also served on the board of John Stott Ministries for nine years. The name of the ministry in the US was later changed to Langham Partnership USA.

### **Participant #2 - Cindy**

Cindy met Stott while a university student in Wales. She served with Stott in various roles, eventually becoming the director of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, an organization Stott founded in 1982.

### **Participant #3 - Paul**

Paul became the director of music and organist at All Souls Church in 1972, serving under the pastoral leadership of Stott and the newly appointed vicar, Michael Baughen. Paul experienced the succession process from Stott to Baughen first-hand.

### **Participant #4 - Stephen**

Stephen met Stott after Stott heard him give a lecture at a conference in 1974. Stephen served in several roles, most notably as Stott's successor as the International Director of what would become Langham Partnership International.

#### Participant #5 - Franklin

Franklin was the successor to Stott as the principal pastoral leader at All Souls Church. Effectively the succession began in 1970, but Franklin officially became rector in 1975, when Stott was given the role of rector-emeritus.

#### Participant #6 - Matthew

Matthew worked alongside Stott as a study assistant from 1999 to 2002. His work included significant travel with Stott, research, and editing on several projects.

#### Participant #7 - Jeremy

Jeremy's connection with Stott began at an early age when Stott spent three months in the United States doing a series of university missions throughout the country. Jeremy's father was invited to host Stott throughout his time in the US. Stott eventually invited Jeremy to work with the All Souls Church staff in 1973. Jeremy would also play a role in the formation of John Stott Ministries in the USA and later Langham Partnership International.

### **How did ministry leaders experience the leadership of Stott?**

The first research question was intended to gain insight into the overall experience of John Stott's leadership on the life and work of the participants. All participants remarked on his humility, personal and professional discipline, generosity, and kindness. Each of these attributes, and many others, contributed to an overwhelmingly positive experience of Stott, both in organizational leadership and one-on-one leadership

development relationships. David said, “The better I got to know him, the more impressed I was. [I] always speak of the onion principle...you peel it and it's just onion all the way down to the core...He was godly and humble.” Jeremy articulated the quality of Stott’s leadership with the word “integrity.” One of the notable findings was the similarity of experiences among the participants, over a period of thirty years. They agreed that Stott remained substantially the same in his demeanor, rhythms, and approach to leadership throughout his lifetime of ministry.

### *Church Leaders*

Stott’s tenure as rector and later rector-emeritus of All Souls Church, Langham Place, was the locus of his early years of writing, preaching, and organizational leadership. Even after his day-to-day duties at All Souls were handed off to successors, he remained tethered to the church until his death in July 2011. Many of the participants pointed out that his notable humility was unwavering throughout his day-to-day interactions with ministry leaders and staff. Paul commented on a typical interaction with Stott during routine staff lunches:

He was one of the boys. He'd come into the room, put his coat over a chair, and then we would go, it was a buffet... And there's an egalitarian atmosphere or so, in that, even the cleaner who cleans the lavatories, the toilets, is elevated. So, you can be a cleaner and you can be the rector and all the pastors and study assistants...musicians, all that in between...there's a great sense of just being a community together...So, nobody had this feeling of awe, this is “the great John Stott.” [But] we all knew, “Oh, this is the great John Stott.” He was one of the boys, very red faced, always glowing with a smile.

Stott’s humility also extended to the way he communicated with the team at All Souls. Many participants commented on his ability to listen deeply. David recalled:



He would always be the last one to comment on anything, and it would often sort of have to be pulled out of him. And then, of course, [when] it was, [we would think], “Why didn't I see that, or why didn't I think of that?” He would just be very thoughtful about his engagement with the Word and with all of us.

Yet, Stott's humility should not be misunderstood as weakness or timidity in his leadership. His discipline, personal and professional, gave him a remarkable confidence in his vision for ministry. Nearly every participant was quick to point out his ability to wed a humble posture alongside a clear vision and determined persistence to execute on that vision. Jeremy commented, “He was not a negative confrontational person, although he had a backbone of steel. And I think that everybody would recognize that.” Franklin commented on a time when a change needed to be made in a church governance matter. Great pressure from broader church leadership had been placed on Stott and Franklin to change positions, but they held fast while remaining committed to the authority of the leaders who gave them oversight:

...the only way that we could make any progress in the church was to be involved in its system, so we ought not stand back and keep throwing bricks at the windows, we should go inside...So, that was a tremendous result...thanks to John holding the line, that we managed to get that changed.

Franklin also went on to describe the shadow side of Stott's strong convictions, sometimes blinding him to challenges or other issues that he hadn't considered fully, “He was the man of vision, of great vision, but he didn't always see when the vision was wrong or inadequately put forward or prepared for.” Put another way, “...if John had something he wanted, he was determined to get it. And that was a good determination in many things. But sometimes it was not...” This shadow side of Stott's persistence was not mentioned by many of the other participants, but Franklin's vantage point gave him insight into some of the challenges of working under Stott's leadership.

Jeremy described Stott's clarity of vision on ministry priorities and connected it to his ability to delegate and empower other leaders to execute the vision:

And so, that sense of his own personal character and commitment and how he followed through when he became convinced about things was such a strong (skill). His character and his actions and how he worked through things gave him so much authority...it's not that he was playing for that, "this is my way to get authority." It was that he was seeking to do what he (thought) God had called him to do. And I think people recognized that and they gave him the space to do it, and he was quite willing to have others undertake things.

From many personal stories, the research showed that one of Stott's defining characteristics was humility. From that posture of humility, his clear-eyed vision and discipline were woven through with kindness and generosity that shaped the ministry experiences at All Souls.

### *Leaders At Ministry Organizations*

Ministry leaders who worked alongside Stott at organizations outside of All Souls Church, Langham Place, described their experiences in similar ways. Humility, discipline, generosity, and kindness were emblematic through all spheres of his work. Cindy describes her years working with him:

I think I could say he was the humblest Christian brother I have ever had...He had no ego. He really wasn't proud. And those occasions where he felt somehow or another his pride had surfaced, he would confess them immediately and apologize and ask God's forgiveness.

Connecting this notable humility to his practical leadership, Cindy recalled how he worked with a team in organizational meetings. His default posture was a listening ear, allowing others to lead the conversation and speaking up only when he thought his opinion might contribute to the conversation. She noted:

...he didn't lead a team meeting; he joined a team meeting. In my experience, he was never a team leader...by the time he was working with me, he'd actually given over that kind of leadership to other people. That sounds odd, because when you had a group of people around the table and John was there, he was always the "leader," but he didn't act as a leader. So, somebody else would be chairing the meeting...every now and again, John [would] be asked for his opinion. In fact, nothing ever happened until John did give his opinion, and then that opinion changed the whole nature of the discussion...his opinion was always thoughtful. It was always reflecting on what he'd heard...it was always perceptive, and it was usually right, not always, but usually, right.

Cindy designated this kind of leadership as "backseat leadership." His leadership was marked by a settled confidence in the leaders he had chosen to move an initiative forward and in his role that restrained him from overplaying his influence. Several participants remarked that Stott was self-aware enough to realize how his influence could sway a decision, and he was careful in applying it, often choosing to defer and support the primary leader's final decision. The participants highlighted the skill with which Stott carefully deployed his influence. David said:

He knew that people held him in very high regard. And so he used that to create or curate institutions...Many of those happened because of his reputation, and he was the president or a convener of [them]...But it was really, really remarkable how he did not trade on his celebrity because he very clearly realized the appeal to celebrity fallacy: "just because someone who's well known believes it, [it] doesn't mean it's true." He was just wonderful about that.

### **Frances Whitehead**

Any investigation of Stott's leadership would be deficient without considering the immense contributions of his long-time personal secretary, Frances Whitehead. According to all participants, the work of Whitehead cannot be overstated. Cindy described Whitehead's relentless protection of his time and energy:

First of all, he had a first-class secretary...Frances. She was there twenty-four hours a day if she needed to be. She did have another life as well with

her own family. She was an unmarried woman, but she just made sure that John was protected. So, she made sure his health was protected...that nobody soaked up his time, that he didn't get sent on errands that were pointless or anything. So, she managed his diary, and she was ruthless, completely ruthless. Nobody could get past Frances. And if people were persistent, they would just be sent away. And occasionally she would phone me and say, "What do you know about this chap?"

Stephen also described Whitehead as "an incredible woman" and elaborated on the critical administrative tasks that she took off Stott's plate, allowing him to focus his energy on writing, teaching, and leadership. For example, Stott was notoriously meticulous in keeping notes on people he met domestically and internationally. These notes allowed him to remember names and keep tabs on people he met and potential leaders he might want to follow up with in the future. Although he would write the names down initially, Whitehead organized the notes so they were accessible. Jeremy elaborated:

And he kept cards whenever he traveled, and I don't know when it started. I've seen the cards, and he would write down the name of every family that he met and the names of the children and the pets, and he kept these by geographic areas. And we would go back to a geographic area, he'd take that pack with him and would refresh his mind...And this is the scary thing about All Souls as a church. It really is the crossroads of evangelical Christianity. You never were sure on a given Sunday who might come through the door, and he would be preaching, and then some African would come up to him and he would look at him. He'd go, 'Oh brother so-and-so, how's your wife?' And [he would] come up with the wife's name, but [he hadn't] seen [him] in ten years...because he would pray through these cards as well.

Stephen explained how Whitehead enabled this practical leadership discipline: "Yes, it was all organized. I think alphabetically for names, his secretary would keep it for him. Frances, she was an incredible woman, but she did all of that."

## **Summary of Participant's Experience of Stott's Leadership**

Integrating the attributes of Stott's leadership across all participants, Matthew synthesized with a simple phrase, "gentle seriousness." Stott led his teams with a clear vision of their mission but with a shepherd-like tone. This kind of leadership framework came from a deep reservoir of learning from the example of Jesus in the text of scripture. Reflecting on how this "gentle seriousness" worked itself out in his day-to-day work, Matthew explained:

[Stott] had this gentle seriousness, this playful seriousness about him...[When] we were in a workshop or at a pastor's gathering, or even if we just had a gathering of friends in his office discussing a topic, he just had this...amazing ability to really listen deeply to people and understand the grain of the conversation. And he would be thoughtful and playful and reflective and humorous. He had a great sense of humor, but then at some point, he would just say, 'So, what we're saying is this.' And then he would just summarize everything up so perfectly that everyone felt that they had been heard and that there was great clarity. I think that was one of his great gifts...he was able to listen deeply, and this is whether it was in his biblical exposition in his sermons or his commentaries, but also with human beings. This ability to listen well, listen deeply...and then only after he had listened well and deeply, to synthesize and communicate with tremendous clarity. I just think that was one of his greatest gifts.

Stott's humility, discipline, generosity with his time and influence, and his notable kindness reflected a pastoral sensitivity in all his endeavors, alongside a principled pursuit of excellence in the leadership roles he stewarded.

## **How were ministry leaders developed as leaders by Stott?**

Leadership development was a vital part of the life and ministry of Stott. From his days at All Souls Church, Langham Place, through the myriad organizations he founded or served, the participants indicated an uncommon skill in identifying, equipping, and empowering developing leaders. His emphasis on leadership development worked itself

out through one-on-one mentoring relationships but also through the founding of organizations that gave primary attention to leader development. Notably, Langham Partnership, an organization Stott founded, was explicitly focused on church leadership development across the globe. Stott helped fund the organization by donating royalties from sales of his books. Matthew recounted Stott's commitment to leadership development:

...his great passion was investing in leaders. So, he became this great leader of leaders...he would just give so much of his time and energy to leaders in these places...What most impressed me was the extreme intentionality of the way that he used his time and relationships to deeply invest in people that he knew would then have impact on the church and their local areas.

The phrase "leader of leaders" synthesizes how the participants described his enduring work serving young leaders. Cindy articulated his intentionality:

...[Stott] would spot people and he would [read] a little resume, [he] may find out their profile, [to] make sure that they were sound, that there were no areas where they might give us concern. Then [he] would plunge into enabling them to gain a bigger platform. So that was a great mission of his.

Another aspect of Stott's leadership development was his remarkable focus. Matthew said that Stott had "laser focus." Paul added, "He wouldn't really waste any time at all. There would be a purpose, a focus." Stott was generous with his attention to leaders at All Souls as well as those at other organizations and in other fields.

### *Church Leaders*

Multiple participants noted the intentionality Stott gave to following up with young leaders throughout their education, training, or ongoing careers. Stott would spot potential leaders and follow their trajectory over long periods of time and offer support

and sometimes jobs. Jeremy mentioned a notebook that Stott used for notes on potential leaders. The notebook was called “BWW,” or, “Blokes Worth Watching.” In the notebook, Stott recorded the names of people he kept his eye on as they progressed in their ministry, education, or other vocational pursuits. Although he may have initially slanted towards men, Cindy recalled that later in his ministry Stott paid attention to the gifts of men and women. Describing this notebook, Jeremy said:

[Stott] just kept track of people...He just kept [his] eye on these people that [he thought] might be going somewhere, and [he would] keep encouraging and feeding and looking for the right opportunity and praying. And I think that John—that's one of the things that strikes [me]...was the depth of his prayer life. But also, as he met more and more people, he was very organized and disciplined in the way that he prayed for them. And so, he felt as though he had this depth of relationship [with them].

None of the interviewees proposed that Stott had a rigid process for identifying and training young leaders. However, some similar themes emerged. Stott equipped young leaders with practical tools, such as books, regular teaching, and preaching. However, he also provided opportunities for them to integrate their deep study with the ordinary work of the local church. For example, when David was early in his ministry at All Souls, Stott sent him speaking invitations originally given to Stott himself. David remembered:

Did I see him intentionally developing others to lead? He would hand off opportunities. He would be invited to speak at a Christian Union, and he would write to them...and say... “I'm not available then, but I suggest you invite David who is on our staff team.” And I don't know what he said to them because I didn't see those letters, but it was enough that I got a lot of those kinds of invitations.

David described the personal feedback that Stott gave to nurture the budding gifts of this new leader. This integrated method of development – theory and practice woven together – was intuitive for Stott. For example, Jeremy recalled Stott's counsel to a small group of young believers:

He was not a quick fix, or “here's three steps to that,” or whatever. But, the students said, so what would you recommend for a good quiet time? He says, “Well, quiet time begins the night before...[You] have to go to bed.”

David also emphasized Stott's skill in providing affirmation and critique at appropriate times and in appropriate proportion. David recounted one moment in his early years at All Souls when Stott critiqued his preaching. This feedback shaped David's life for the better, influencing his later career in higher education. He said:

[Stott] didn't hesitate to tell me when he felt there was a growth area that I needed to address. His affirmation was always incredibly sincere, so it really meant something. It was...sparse...[not] in the negative sense, but it was carefully meted out...In my first year there as an intern, [he did] critique my sermons. And again, that was very graciously done, but they needed it, and he gave it. And that of course, influenced me because my second career was really doing that [sermon evaluation] ...[Stott] was very good at a combination of affirmation and, when needed, rebuke.

Even Stott's consistent preparation was indirectly influential on the young church leaders. For example, Stott prepared ahead of time for a church staff meeting, developing internal notes for himself that prompted him to speak with people to move an initiative forward.

In this way, Stott's personal discipline served as a teaching tool. David recounted:

He knew how to use his time extraordinarily well. So, for instance, when we'd come to a meeting, he'd have one little card or piece of paper a list, and people he needed to talk to and decisions he needed them to make or things he needed to tell them...I think that is a wonderful discipline, and I always appreciated people...who prepared or helped me to prepare for a meeting.

Stott was generous and gave great intentionality to the people the Lord put into his path at All Souls. All participants who served with Stott remarked on the influence of that personal time and attention afforded to them.



## *Leaders At Ministry Organizations*

At organizations outside of All Souls Church, Langham Place, Stott developed new leaders with same rigor as within the local church. Cindy elaborated:

Platform for others was one of his main planks. I mean, whoever he spotted, who he felt had some gifts given by the Holy Spirit to reach out in apologetics or evangelism or mission of any kind, he would then work very hard on their behalf to make sure that their voice was heard.

Like his work with leaders at All Souls, Stott was also generous in providing constructive feedback to people in other organizations. Cindy described his feedback as honest but humble. Stott would occasionally ask for feedback on his own work after critiquing the work of the young leader. This mutual feedback was mentioned by several other participants. Cindy recalled a typical interaction:

[Stott] would kindly give me feedback to the talks I'd given. They're always very encouraging and [then he would] invite my feedback, the talks he'd given and so on. So, it was a collegial relationship...

The participants uniformly recognized Stott as masterful in identifying leaders and in giving appropriate attention that contributed to their own growth. Although his tone could be perceived as gentle, he was not hesitant to give clear instruction and incisive feedback when needed.

Many of the participants also pointed out not only Stott's attentiveness in a particular moment but also his attentiveness to leaders over long periods of time and over long distances. For example, Stephen met Stott in 1978 at a theological conference. Stephen was invited to give a devotional at one of the morning sessions, and Stott was sitting in the back row. After the morning session, Stott sought out Stephen and invited him to lunch. Stephen recalled:

Whenever [Stott] was mixing and mingling afterwards, [he] came up to me and said he'd appreciated what I'd said and so on...And then [asked if

I] would care to have lunch with him...as I know he had done for many others all through his years, he just wanted to get to know somebody who he seemed to think had a bit of potential. So, [he] asked me who I was, what I was doing, what my background was, what my research had been, what I was doing... and so on. And it was just...the beginning, really, of a personal friendship.

Stephen would become the international director of Langham Partnership International, a combination of several ministries Stott had founded years before. It was twenty-three years after their initial meeting that Stephen would take on this new role. Although Stephen and Stott remained in touch and worked together in some limited capacity throughout those twenty-three years, it was Stott's watchful eye over the long stretch that led to his eventual invitation to Stephen to take the reins.

This long-term development work was instinctual to Stott. Similar accounts were given by Jeremy and Greg, both of whom worked with Stott early in their vocations and would go on to serve with him later in life. Jeremy described a conversation in which Stott invited him to serve at one of Stott's organizations. This invitation came after a conversation they had had years prior:

“[Stott] said, “Jeremy, I was wondering if you would...,” and I turned and I looked at him and I said, “You remembered?” And he had this twinkle his eye, “Yes, I did.” And at that point, he asked if I would become involved with the literature effort. [Evangelical Literature Trust]

This encounter highlights the long-term approach Stott took when developing other leaders as well as the “gentle seriousness” ethos highlighted by Matthew. Stott's tone and tactics went hand-in-hand in life and ministry.

Although Stott was widely regarded by the participants as exceptional at his personal leadership development work, his formation of what would become the Langham Partnership scaled his investment in young leaders far past what he could have done on his own. Matthew described the current impact of Langham:

I would meet so many people in the developing world who named their children Stott or Walmsley or John, I mean, because of the way that he had just invested and cared for people and invested his time and energy in leaders in the global South... You would be amazed... if you started to visit some of these places in Africa and Asia and South America to see kind of the impact that he had over the years. It's really just incalculable.

Franklin also commented on Langham's great contribution to the global church. He shared Stott's strategic vision and leadership at Langham:

I think one of the greatest things about his leadership is the way in which he embraced the world. He didn't just go to India and Africa and so on and come back. His heart wanted to help them... Langham Foundation... I think that was immensely strategic, and that's the point. He could see where there was a need, and if he could, he would find a way [of] meeting it... I mean, his vision for the world really was something terrific. Really. Very few people have that, I think, in the way that he did...

### **Summary of Stott's Leadership Development**

According to the participants, Stott was a "leader of leaders." His methods grew from an innate sense of how and with whom he should spend time and give attention, as opposed to a set leadership program. Sometimes that time and attention was stretched long periods of time. Stephen summarized:

People sometimes said, John Stott had a great nose for opportunities... it wasn't strategic in this sort of technical sense of what we mean by a 'strategic plan' where you fill lots of boxes with points on this spreadsheet... but he was strategic in the sense that he saw what needed to be done. And even from small beginnings began to make things happen.

Stephen and others used descriptors like "intuitive" and "instinctive" when characterizing his lifetime of leadership. His love for Christ and the local and global church all contributed to a deliberate focus on the development of leaders through personal relationships as well as institutional efforts, such as Langham Partnership.

## **How did ministry leaders observe Stott's stewardship of his own health?**

All the participants used the word “disciplined” to characterize the way Stott conducted much of his personal life and leadership. As in other areas of his work, he instinctively gave appropriate attention to his day-to-day consumption of food, entertainment, and other cultural goods. He was meticulous in using his time wisely and rigorously pursued spiritual growth. Other hobbies outside of ministry leadership were also given priority in his life, such as his famous penchant for bird watching and enjoyment of natural beauty. Although Stott did not use the same language of self-care used today, his disciplined approach left a mark on the participants.

### *Physical*

Stott carefully managed his time, a sentiment expressed by all participants and most noticeably in his regular rising early in the morning. Paired with his early mornings was his diligence in going to bed on time for the sleep he needed. Most participants noted a regular 10 pm bedtime. Greg remarked:

He was an early to bed, early to rise guy. You've probably heard stories about that. He'd be at a gathering or a conference and say just he would go to bed at 10 pm and that it was an inviolable rule. I can remember once in a parish weekend, we'd be up talking and joking and things. He'd just go off and go to bed 10 and then got up early...

His early mornings were not simply to allow more time for work-related productivity. Many commented on the depth of his spiritual life cultivated in his time of scripture reading and prayer early in the morning. Beyond early morning and evening sleep habits, he also took a break in the afternoon. Jeremy said Stott called it his “HHH”, or “horizontal half hour.” On a typical day, after lunch, Stott took a thirty-minute nap to

refresh before fully engaging back into his work. This regular rhythm of sleep was one of the primary ways that Stott cared for his physical body.

Stott was also conscientious about what and how much food he consumed. Many remarked on his commitment to simple eating and meager portion sizes due to his concern for the poor. This spiritual reason also had physical implications in that he remained at a healthy weight throughout his life, according to the interviewees. Matthew noted:

...Even though I don't think he talked...about...psychosocial, spiritual, physical health the way that we would today. Nevertheless, I think that he did have, if you look at his life, he had really healthy practices...First of all, [he] ate really healthily. He was very concerned about not eating too much because he saw not just the importance of stewarding his own body, but he also saw it as a way to be in solidarity with the global poor. And so, he specifically chose not to eat too much. In fact, I lost 20 pounds working for him because I would eat what he ate, and it wasn't much.

Stott was not rigid in his approach. For example, sometimes he got lost in his work to such a degree that his sleep routine was interrupted. According to the participants, he occasionally, although with restraint, indulged in some of his favorite treats, such as ice cream or chocolate candies. However, Stott remained in good physical health until later in life, when he suffered from TIAs, commonly referred to as mini-strokes, which took a toll on his body. The participants were consistent in their remarks that he was disciplined in most categories of health, including his physical health.

### *Emotional and Intellectual*

Many of the participants took great care to comment on Stott's joviality. Matthew termed it "playful seriousness." He said, "[Stott] would be thoughtful and playful and reflective and humorous. He had a great sense of humor..." Jeremy elaborated on Stott's

disposition, "...He was an exceptionally joyful person. Always had a spark in his design. He was fun to be around." Stephen added:

"...so he had a sense of humor, quite a dry sense of humor, sometimes quite an erudite sense of humor... and he also enjoyed being teased, which is one of the things that my wife is very good at. And so, she would say things to him that nobody else would've [gotten] away with, and he would laugh..."

This consistent lightheartedness was described by each of the participants. Paul remarked that Stott was "always glowing with a smile." With a growing writing, teaching, and preaching ministry, along with his growing leadership responsibilities, how did he cultivate a healthy interior life?

Matthew considered one of the ways Stott cultivated his resilient interior life: birdwatching. Stott understood the value of hobbies and interests outside his primary vocation. Matthew elaborated:

I think one of the things that made him healthy was his commitment to rest and recreate. He loved creation...He's famous for his birdwatching, his birding. But, I actually think that made him a really unique leader because, if you look at a lot of leaders, they're so driven...[Their work] is fully who they are in their identity. A lot of leaders don't even have hobbies because they're just so absorbed in what they're doing...[For example,] we went to India for a pastor's conference, and we were there for a week, and then we also went into the bush, the jungle for a week to watch birds...And that wasn't just a thing in his retirement, that was just something he did his whole life...he wouldn't have articulated it as, 'This is helping my mental health and helping me to be a whole person.' But, in hindsight, it really did.

Nearly all participants mentioned Stott's love for creation, his regular hikes, birding, and his frequent visits to his writing retreat in Wales, the Hookses. Paul commented, "He really relaxed when he went down to Wales to the Hookses."

Stott was also acutely aware of his need for the support of other people. As a single man, he was conscious of the value of social interaction for his own health. He was

also a naturally private man, according to the participants. But, as Cindy recalled, Stott understood his own need for personal support, “So I think the first thing [is that he had] a support group. Doesn't matter how big it is or how small it [was], John's main support group was Frances, but then his study assistants were also part of that support group.” Matthew also commented on the value of friendships in Stott’s life, “I...think his friendships were [key to his health] too... he had many, many very good friends that enabled him to be healthy...” Paul recalled:

Occasionally my wife and I went to the theater with him. He'd sometimes get little groups because there's a good play coming on or a new musical...And whether it was books or movies or theater, he quite liked to turn them into discussions. So, a group of people would see a play [together].

He enjoyed culture, art, and storytelling, and as Matthew pointed out, “He loved James Bond...Every time there was a new James Bond movie, we would go see James Bond...” In other words, Stott enjoyed a break from intense intellectual pursuits.

However, Stott was also a “voracious reader,” according to Stephen and many of the other participants. His reading habits included the time spent ingesting reading material and then also organizing careful notes for later recall. Stephen detailed Stott’s careful organization:

Every time he would read a book...he would underline a passage that he wanted...and then he would pass it to Frances and she would type that up on...these card indexes...and then, that would have the book and the title and the quote, and then some cross reference...whether it's some ethical issue or justification or something, which could then be filed in his filing system according to some topical system. It was a database, a manual database...so that when he was preaching, if he wanted to quote, he could pull that card out, put it in with his sermon, read it in his sermon, and quote it, and then put it back in the card index, so he didn't lose it for the next time. So again, incredible personal organization assisted of course, by having a brilliantly competent secretary.

This characterization of his reading habits paired with his organizational instincts and support from Whitehead illustrated how Stott integrated practices of intake, reflection, and support that cultivated a deep and resilient interior life.

### *Spiritual*

For Stott, his lifetime of work remained rooted in his love for God, God's mission in the world, and God's people who served that mission. He also had a great trust in God and his providential care, leading to a poise and resilience that many of the participants recognized. That love and trust grew deeper even as his ministry became more demanding and its impact and influence around the world spread. Cindy recounted:

He would begin and end everything with prayer. And it wasn't kind of titular. It wasn't just a format. It was because he really could not do anything, couldn't make any decisions, couldn't be at a meeting where we were making important decisions without first committing the whole process to God. And it would be thoughtful prayer...reflective prayer...And there was no...curtailing of the prayer time. [There might] be other things [that] could be curtailed, but...we had to listen to God. And it's part, again, of his double listening. If you're talking about listening to the world and listening to the Holy Spirit and the scriptures, then you have to listen...So the discipline of prayer was very, very important.

This depth in his prayer and devotional life influenced his public leadership in his day-to-day personal rhythms. Stephen recalled, "He followed the Bible reading plan of Murray M'Cheyne, where you read the whole Bible every year." Jeremy mentioned again Stott's characteristic humility, noting, ironically, that Stott did not view himself as disciplined:

[Stott] was just so disciplined. And yet, he would say to me, 'Oh, Jeremy,' he says, "my biggest sin is a lack of discipline." And I'd look at him... "John, if that's true for you, I have no hope." And I never sensed that he belittled me for the fact that I couldn't match or surpass [him], nor anyone else.



Yet, Stott desired to grow in the depth of his love for and trust in God. Jeremy recounted a story in which Stott, when he was serving at All Souls, was taught a devotional practice that would shape his spiritual life for years to come:

This older person suggested to him that he should take one day a month and become unavailable to the church and get off by himself and have a time of spiritual retreat in a time of planning. And so, [Stott] said, “I wouldn't have survived without that.” And that became the key thing where he could, first of all, spend four or five hours in scripture and prayer and refresh himself spiritually...he [then] spent the balance of the day praying through his diary and planning for the coming month...and that gave him then a sense that he was tuned in to how the Lord might be leading and that he had a plan and had thought through...everything in the future wasn't overwhelming to him because he prayed this through and thought it through. Well, the once-a-month became once-a-week...

This key insight from Stott, “I wouldn't have survived without that,” indicates the weight he gave to prayer, scripture, and reflection in cultivating a robust interior life that demonstrated a growing love for Christ. Stephen reflected on the growth he witnessed:

And I think that's what goes to the heart of John Stott's humility and Christlikeness, is that he really was a man transformed by the grace of God. And you've probably heard his daily prayer...Here's a man who was praying every day that the Holy Spirit would...bear fruit in his life. And God answered the prayer. [Stott] was Christlike.

The intense discipline Stott brought to every initiative was just as present when it came to his health, even if done instinctually rather than programmatically. Many participants commented on the holistic integration of his practices that shaped his overall health.

### **How did Stott prepare ministry leaders for his succession?**

A common refrain from all participants was that Stott excelled at the skill of empowering other leaders. Cindy explained, from her experience later in his life, that his leadership style was marked by “allowing other people to lead.” This empowerment became more pronounced when he began to regularly hand off authority in leadership

roles that he had filled. The succession process at All Souls Church, Langham Place, and later at other organizations, proved to be challenging according to some of the participants but also provided practical insight.

### *Church Leaders*

Franklin was the direct successor to Stott at All Souls Church, Langham Place. After twenty-five years as rector (1950-1975), Stott recognized that he could not give All Souls the time and attention it needed as his global ministry took more and more of his time. In an unusual move within the Church of England's system of appointments, Stott handpicked Franklin as his successor. Stott persisted for several years to bring Franklin fully onboard. Initially Franklin could not be given the title of rector, so a new role was created. He said, "The arch deacon came up with the suggestion that I could be made a vicar, which didn't have to affect the crown patronage. I could run the church with John's permission, and John would just do the legal things of signing any papers."

The daunting task of following the leadership of Stott weighed heavily on Franklin, and it took time for him to accept the initial invitation. He recalled:

So, I suppose eventually, we came to the conclusion we better say yes, but it was difficult because I've always preached that the guidance [of the Spirit] involves personal conviction as well as the Word of God and the advice of other people...and circumstances. But I had no conviction, no inward conviction. It was rather everybody was sort of saying that 'this is the direction you need to take...' Well, I mean, supposing looking back, but I think it was the right call...It was the right answer, I think under God, yes. But [it was] about a year later that I would say that.

Franklin also credited Stott with courage during this season. "I think John was...incredibly brave. He took a terrific risk [choosing me], I think." Stott's conviction,

discipline, and focus gave him the needed internal resources to choose a successor whom he trusted and navigate a complex system to the end of the process.

From the perspective of someone outside the process, David recalled the difficulties Franklin faced, leading in the shadow of Stott's distinguished tenure. In addition, it would take several years for Franklin to inherit the more official role of rector, when Stott was given the title of rector emeritus. David described the burden Franklin carried:

...everybody held John in such high regard that it was not easy for Franklin... [For example,] Americans would come across and say, "Is John Stott preaching?" And that was a kind of filter. And that was rough on Franklin. He was pretty candid about that.

However, in Franklin's retelling, he remarked on Stott's relentless efforts to mitigate these challenges with regular public support and affirmation. When anyone would complain to him personally about Franklin's leadership decisions, Stott would answer forthrightly. Franklin remembered, "Oh, he just told him to get lost...but he would've done it politely. He was determined not to undermine me." Jeremy recalled a conversation with Franklin in which Franklin praised the regular public support of Stott, "I never could have survived if John hadn't done the things that John had done." David described a conversation he had with Stott regarding the initial years of the succession:

And I remember once John saying to me, "I don't let these things rancor, but I know it's hard for Franklin. And I read between the lines." Franklin probably said some things to John [such as] "Is there anything you can do to minimize this?" So it was not easy, but I attribute great godliness to both men, and they made it work. And John especially, he must have got his back strained bending over backwards to give Franklin prominence.

Both men played crucial roles in successfully navigating an unusual succession. Franklin honored the legacy and contributions of Stott while simultaneously moving the church forward with fresh vision and attentiveness. Stott, as the outgoing pastor, perhaps bore

the greater responsibility of supporting the incoming pastor and tempering resistance to change within the congregation. Jeremy recalled a story from an All Souls staff retreat after the succession had taken place. Stott spoke to the team, offering unambiguous support to Franklin, “John would say, ‘Maybe just a word before we begin. I want to say that I’m so appreciative for Franklin and I’m behind everything he’s doing.’”

### *Leaders At Ministry Organizations*

The succession at All Souls laid a foundation for other successions Stott would manage throughout his lifetime. Commenting on his growth as a leader after his time at All Souls, Cindy recalled, “...the later [Stott] was much more appreciative of other people leading and ready to sit under their leadership or alongside their leadership as an advisor and a helper and an empowerer.” Even so, Stott remained intimately involved in key leadership decisions at organizations where he served. But he was unusually gifted at balancing direct involvement while passing authority and power to other capable leaders. Noting how he presided over succession at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, Cindy said:

...Preparing for succession wasn't that hard because all he had to do was find somebody to take over the reins with the structures that he'd already set up. The business structures, the different departmental structures that were all there and already functioning. So, I took over...and everything was already mapped in place. We already had courses, we already had everything...And I think that he'd thought about [and] set up an awful lot of stuff.

Stott’s characteristic preparation contributed to the effective succession at LICC, an organization still thriving today.

Although his preparatory work was apparent when setting up structures and processes for organizations, precision was not always a strength, especially when it came

to defining the role of his successor. For example, Stephen recounted Stott's initial invitation to take the reins of what would become Langham Partnership, "He was...asking me to take on the leadership, but there was no job description. I mean, John Stott didn't have, 'a position or a role or a job.' I mean, he was just himself." There were two organizations – Evangelical Literature Trust and Langham Trust – and they were led by Stott, along with Whitehead. They had support from a board and donors, but Stott and Whitehead were leading the organizations. For Stott, writing a formal job description for his roles was a unique challenge.

His strengths were identifying needs and finding ways to meet those needs either directly or through the development of organizations that could meet those needs. Adjacent to that strength was his ability to identify and empower leaders. Jeremy connected these two strengths when describing the founding of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. "[Stott would say], 'Here's how we can start to do this.' But then, as soon as he could, he found someone that he could offload it on. He had other places to go and things to do." Matthew elaborated:

[It] never felt like he was heavy handed about it, or he was trying to control the outcome, but he was very keenly interested in who would be selected, and he really wanted to be involved in the process and hoped that it would be someone that could continue the legacy that would've been built there.

Although Stott may not have had the strength of engaging in the fine details of formal hiring practices, such as crafting job descriptions, he showed great aptitude in selecting the right leader for the right position. Recalling the selection of Stephen to take the helm at Langham, Matthew offered:

Stott really became interested in Stephen, and he was just very, very deliberate about it. I mean, spent lots of time with Stephen, invited Stephen to the Hookses, invited [him] to his apartment, spent lots of time

together. I spent lots of time with them, and I remember just him being so joyful and so happy when Stephen was chosen, and Stephen accepted...[Stott] really felt like he was sort of handing off the legacy of Langham to somebody who was so competent, experienced, and gifted as Stephen is.

Stott was again careful to publicly support and empower his successor, this time Stephen, as the new directional leader of the organization. This challenge must have been particularly difficult because Stott was the founder of the organization. Stephen remembered fondly how Stott supported him after the succession process:

On more than one occasion, he would sort of give [his] view [on a decision] ...but then he [would say], “Stephen is our leader now.” He would defer to me. He'd say, “But, Stephen has to make the decision,” or “This is up to Stephen, whatever he thinks.” One of the hardest things for leaders ever to learn is how to give up leadership.

Cindy synthesized their sentiments by recounting Stott's steadiness and poise:

Part of his preparation for succession was just to carry on doing what he was doing, which was withdrawing. Withdrawing from...effective power and direction and leaving it to people he now trusted to get on with the job, whatever those jobs were...I mean, they just get on with it. And John [was] always there...[He] made it clear that if you wanted a conversation, if you were concerned about something, [he'd say] “I'm always here.” And I think we had priority... the people who took over from him in all these various areas...Frances gave us high priority in his diary, and that was great...Nothing that John did was big in the sense of making a fuss about it. It all kind of happened quietly and peacefully and with minimum big noise and celebration, and it was all very ordinary.

## **Summary of Findings**

Whether or not all the participants would characterize each succession Stott managed as “ordinary,” they all agreed that Stott brought great intentionality to each transition. His remarkable poise and composure were rooted in his abiding trust in God, according to many of the participants. The skill of appropriately giving away authority to other leaders reflected a rare confidence. Perhaps some measure came from the skills God

had given him, but more so, his confidence was rooted in the sovereign hand of God. As Matthew recalled Stott telling him in a private moment of instruction, “Grace means that everything is a gift. Everything is a gift.” Mathew continued, “I think what made him a great leader...is the way that he related to people. And that's kindness, patience, gentleness, his sense of humor, his humility...” These attributes were woven together in comments from all participants, which painted Stott as a leader who demonstrated a love for his Lord and a love for people in every initiative he undertook.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to explore how ministry leaders experienced the leadership of John Stott at All Souls Church, Langham Place, and other ministry organizations where he served. This study reviewed three distinct areas of relevant literature and conducted interviews with seven individuals who worked with Stott at various points throughout his over sixty years of ministry. These research questions guided the qualitative research:

1. How did ministry leaders experience the leadership of Stott?
  - 1.a Church leaders?
  - 1.b Leaders at ministry organizations?
2. How were ministry leaders developed as leaders by Stott?
  - 2a. Church leaders?
  - 2.b Leaders at ministry organizations?
3. How did ministry leaders observe Stott's stewardship of his own health?
  - 3.a Physical?
  - 3.b Emotional and intellectual?
  - 3.c Spiritual?
4. How did Stott prepare ministry leaders for his succession?
  - 4.a Church leaders?
  - 4.b Leaders at ministry organizations?



## A Summary of the Study

This study sought to discover insight from the life and ministry of John R. W. Stott that could provide sage wisdom for a new generation of ministry leaders. Many young leaders today do not immediately recognize Stott's name or fully grasp the scale of his impact across many streams of evangelical Christianity, especially his contributions from the late twentieth century.<sup>199</sup> His incisive mind, theological insight, winsome tone, and clear leadership vision all contributed to a towering influence that continues today.

### *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

We have, perhaps, never had access to more material about leadership. Even a cursory search on the theme reveals an endless stream of new books, podcasts, articles, and conferences. Yet, there has been a precipitous decline of trust in organizational leaders in nearly every category of public life, including clergy.<sup>200</sup> It has become increasingly routine for leaders across the spectrum to generate headlines due to moral failure, domineering leadership practices, or financial impropriety. Information about leadership can be a good thing, but we need godly wisdom to apply it.

A close examination of the life and ministry of Stott revealed a leader who remained faithful and resilient over a long period of pastoral ministry and service to the global church. David, one participant who worked closely with Stott, described his depth

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<sup>199</sup> Collin Hansen, *Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation*, 39, Kindle. Keller remarks on the gap in present day knowledge of Stott's work, "It worries me that an awful lot of younger evangelical leaders barely know what John Stott stood for."

<sup>200</sup> Gallup Inc, "Ethics Ratings of Nearly All Professions Down in U.S." For example, according to this January 2024 study, only 32% of respondents rated the honesty and ethical standards of clergy as "very high/high," this is 8 points down from 2019.

of character: “The better I got to know him, the more impressed I was. [I] always speak of the onion principle...you peel it and it's just onion all the way down to the core...”

Stott was still human and would be the first to point out his own flaws. Yet, he embodied a way of living and leading that resulted in a tenure unstained by scandal. More than that, his “long obedience in the same direction” offers renewed hope that a lifetime of faithful ministry is not only possible, by the grace of God, but can leave an impact with reverberations that continue well beyond an individual lifetime.<sup>201</sup> As Matthew, one of the participants, said, “...[Stott] became this great leader of leaders...he used his time and relationships to deeply invest in people that he knew would then have impact on the church and their local areas.” Stott’s intentional use of time was a theme that continually surfaced throughout the research. How he stewarded his time in the service of other people offers today’s leaders a fresh point of view, far removed from the accelerating “attention economy” that so easily normalizes distraction and inattention.<sup>202</sup> Stott’s leadership legacy can still be witnessed today in the institutions he once served. However, his legacy is perhaps most visible in the numerous individuals he invested in, with time and attention, over his lifetime of ministry.

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<sup>201</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil - Classic Illustrated Edition*, ed. L. Carr, trans. Helen Zimmern (Heritage Illustrated Publishing, 2014), 51, Kindle. Eugene Peterson would use this phrase from Nietzsche as the title of one of his books and as a description of a lifetime of Christian discipleship.

<sup>202</sup> Agnès Festré and Pierre Garrouste, “The ‘Economics of Attention’: A History of Economic Thought Perspective,” *Œconomia. History, Methodology, Philosophy*, no. 5–1 (March 1, 2015): 3–36, <https://journals.openedition.org/oeconomia/1139>.

## *Fresh Observation of Applied Wisdom*

There is a sense in which the findings from this research yielded little new or novel insight. Stott's life and leadership were shaped by ancient wisdom from the scriptures he loved, taught, and applied in the context of Christian community. Yet, I believe a fresh observation of applied wisdom can offer timely insight into the leadership challenges of our current moment.

Three "contours" of Stott's leadership offer ageless wisdom and also address many of today's leadership challenges: (1) a posture of "gentle seriousness," (2) a life of discipline and delight, and (3) a long view of leadership development.

Any observation of the life of Stott must begin with his unshakeable commitment to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. His love for and trust in the God of the Bible suffused everything this study explored. His own words distilled the Christ-centered approach that marked his life and leadership:

Authentic Christianity is not a safe, smug, cozy, selfish, escapist little religion...It is an explosive, centrifugal force, which pulls us out from our narrow self-centeredness and flings us into God's world to witness and to serve.<sup>203</sup>

The leadership of Stott was animated by the "centrifugal force" of his vibrant faith in Christ. Much has been written about Stott's preaching and teaching ministry and rightly so. However, his faith was not exclusively, or even primarily, cerebral but was applied in the quotidian work of life and ministry. My hope is that this brief survey of Stott's leadership exposes a new generation to a posture of ministry leadership that cultivates more faithfulness, resilience, and joy in ministry.

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<sup>203</sup> "Our God Is a Missionary God," *John Stott*, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://johnstott.org/work/our-god-is-a-missionary-god/>.

## **A Posture of “Gentle Seriousness”**

While interviewing those who served alongside Stott over several decades of his work, I noticed remarkable continuity in the ways participants characterized Stott’s leadership. Perhaps the phrase that most captured his ethos came from Matthew, who noted that Stott exemplified a “gentle seriousness.” It bundled together the disposition (gentle) and intentionality (seriousness) that formed the raw material for his approach to life and ministry. Many participants highlighted both sides of this apt summary description.

Gentleness is one of the biblical fruits of the Spirit and is related to other virtues, such as humility, meekness, patience, kindness, and wisdom. Seriousness indicates intentionality, clarity of purpose, and weighty regard for the stewardship of responsibility. This two-fold phrase, then, is emblematic of a life that pursued godly character and exhibited a dogged commitment to his calling and leadership responsibilities.

### *Double Submission*

The quality of Stott’s posture of gentle seriousness was the fruit of a life immersed in the scriptures that ignited a growing love for and trust in Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul’s instruction to Timothy highlights this posture:

But as for you, O man of God...Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> 1 Timothy 6:11-12.

Paul instructs Timothy to pursue Christlike qualities that mark a faithful Christian, such as “godliness,” “faith,” “love,” “steadfastness,” and “gentleness.” But he simultaneously urges his protégé to remain committed to working out his faith in every category of life, using vigorous language like “fight,” “take hold,” and “pursue.”

Paul gives Timothy these instructions in a letter aimed at training this young pastor to serve his local church with fidelity to God and his word. Put differently, a life of godly leadership begins with submission to God, which should lead to submission to others in servant-leadership. That kind of double submission should result in servant-leaders growing in depth of character and faithfulness to the responsibilities God has given, wherever he or she might be planted.

### *A Backbone of Steel*

Stott exemplified servant-leadership with an unusual depth of humility, kindness, and yes, gentleness. But his leadership was also marked by clear-eyed vision and forward momentum. Jeremy captured this sense of Stott’s approach: “He was not a negative confrontational person, although he had a backbone of steel. And I think that everybody would recognize that.” Stott took seriously his responsibilities as rector at All Souls and at the many other organizations he founded or served throughout his lifetime.

Many of those I spoke with remarked on Stott’s ability to listen deeply, whether in a one-on-one conversation, or team meetings. More than that, he was well known for his ability to articulate what had been said and either summarize or synthesize to move the ball forward. This quality of deep listening may be instinctual for some, but it is a skill that can be developed and foster more trust in organizational leadership. Cindy described a typical team meeting with Stott, “...he didn’t lead a team meeting...he’d

actually given over that kind of leadership...[but,] he was always reflecting on what he'd heard...it was always perceptive, and it was usually right, not always, but usually, right.”

Cindy articulated a key insight into Stott’s capacity for listening deeply and responding with thoughtfulness – he “was always reflecting on what he’d heard.” The capacity for reflection can be developed and distinguishes sagacious leadership in an era marked by splintered attention. With the skill of deep listening and reflection, Stott showcased a remarkable focus, which gave honor and respect to other team members contributing to an initiative. That reflective skill also allowed him to think deeply so that he could synthesize a team discussion and catalyze the team to action. Put another way, his reflective insight often “changed the whole nature of the discussion.”

### *Reflection and Attention*

Commenting on our decreasing capacity to pay attention, Jay Kim writes, “Everything is grabbing our attention, nothing is holding our attention.”<sup>205</sup> This pervasive inattentiveness influences our approaches to making decisions and results in leaders deficient in wisdom to navigate organizational complexities. There is something to learn from the reflective capacity of Stott. Reflection requires attention, and Stott gave us an example of a leader who, despite the growing demands of his ministry, took great care to give attention to the right things at the right time.

This reflective skill is indicative of Stott’s “gentle seriousness.” He did not use his leadership authority to demand that his voice be first or loudest, but rather, he was often

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<sup>205</sup> The Gospel Coalition, “How Should Christian Leaders Think About AI?” March 21, 2024, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/video/christian-leaders-think-ai/>.

quick to listen and slow to speak.<sup>206</sup> But, he did speak. His gentle approach was linked to a seriousness in his words and actions that could only come through slow, careful reflection. Many noted how Stott's typical interaction during a meeting or discussion was unhurried and thoughtful. David recounted, "He would always be the last one to comment on anything, and it would often sort of have to be pulled out of him."

This kind of unhurried poise may seem unusual or even out-of-touch in many of today's leadership contexts eager for instant results and unbridled productivity. A slower, more reflective approach may appear to be less productive in the moment, but even a cursory glance at Stott's body of work over his lifetime would suggest otherwise. Stott was a pastor, teacher, author of over fifty books, founder of several institutions, chaplain to the Queen of England, and chief architect of The Lausanne Covenant, just to name a few. Applying the leadership approach of "gentle seriousness" today will look different from leader to leader. Personality styles, family dynamics, and ministry contexts will require nuance and distinctives appropriate to each individual and organization. However, in a cultural landscape increasingly marked by noise, hurry, and crowds – something churches and ministries are not immune to – Stott offers an alternative way.<sup>207</sup> "Gentle seriousness" integrates a disposition of heart and an intentionality for mission that provides a compass for leaders today.

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<sup>206</sup> James 1:19, "...Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak..." (NIV).

<sup>207</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (Zondervan, 1988). 15, Kindle.

## **A Life of Discipline and Delight**

Stott was remarkably disciplined in the way he ordered his life and work. His disciplined life may seem rigid and legalistic to some, and perhaps it was on occasion, but the fruit of his discipline was not drudgery but delight. He was delightful to be around, and he perpetually delighted himself in God, creation, and people. Paul commented that Stott was “always glowing with a smile.” His general disposition was jovial, with a good sense of humor and lightheartedness. Jeremy noted, “...he had a sense of humor, quite a dry sense of humor, quite an erudite sense of humor...” He exhibited a unique combination of orderly discipline alongside a way of being that gave his friends and team the sense that he did not take himself too seriously. Timothy Keller would describe this kind of person as “self-forgetful.”<sup>208</sup>

Stott’s life had a poise that revealed a deep confidence in the sovereignty of God and in his union with Christ. That poise, however, did not come from a vacuum but was developed in patterns of disciplined living that shaped his characteristic delightfulness. These patterns are not groundbreaking for today’s leaders, but they were applied with striking regularity and pursued with the same seriousness of purpose that he gave to everything he did.

### *Spiritual Disciplines*

Stott loved the Bible. He is well known for his extraordinary skill in preaching and teaching the Bible, but he understood his own need to feast on the treasure of

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<sup>208</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness: The Path to True Christian Joy* (10Publishing, 2012).



scripture before he ever fed it to others. Some noted that he followed Robert Murray M'Cheyne's reading plan, reading through the entire Bible each year.<sup>209</sup> This rhythm was supported by his practice of rising early in the morning and paying careful attention to when he would go to bed in the evening. Greg remarked that his bedtime was almost an "inviolable rule." His mornings were set apart for scripture reading, prayer, and reflecting on the responsibilities of the day. Given the intense demands of his writing and travel, his stringent adherence to a regular pattern of rest is even more remarkable. One participant chuckled as he recalled a trip when Stott, weary from the day's work, simply retreated from an ongoing informal evening gathering with no fanfare. Stott recognized his limits. This pattern is not novel on its own, but his consistency reveals a radical priority for personal communion with God that is instructive for leaders today.

This exacting rhythm extended beyond early mornings; he also regularly took a nap after lunch so that he would be refreshed for his afternoon responsibilities. He humorously termed these naps his "HHH," or "horizontal half hour." He knew his limitations and took measures to restore his body and mind so that he could serve the God he loved.

For leaders today, to mimic Stott's precise routine may not be helpful or appropriate. Yet, how Stott structured his life made his priorities unmistakable. His commitment to cultivating a deepening love for God, even in the mundane category of time management, shaped how he lived and led. Stephen summarized, "...I think that's

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<sup>209</sup> Robert Murray M'Cheyne, "M'Cheyne Reading Plan," n.d., accessed April 22, 2024, <https://www.mccheyne.info/mccheyne-reading-plan/>. The M'Cheyne reading plan is an annual plan that goes through the New Testament and Psalms twice, and the rest of the Bible once.

what goes to the heart of John Stott's humility...here's a man who was praying every day that the Holy Spirit would...bear fruit in his life...God answered the prayer.”

*“I Wouldn’t Have Survived Without That”*

During his ministry at All Souls, he was taught a devotional practice that shaped his spiritual life and ministry leadership for years to come. Stott had entered a spiritually dry season and needed wisdom for how to pace his life for the long-haul of healthy ministry. Jeremy recalled that an older man suggested to Stott he take “one day a month and become unavailable to the church...a time of spiritual retreat in a time of planning.” The regular practice of time away for prayer and reflection would become a rhythm of Stott’s ministry for most of his life. A key aspect of these retreats was time given to review and consider his upcoming commitments. This combination of prayer, reflection, and attention to his responsibilities would become invaluable to him. Referring to these regular spiritual retreats, Stott would say, “I wouldn’t have survived without that...”

Stott was not afraid to ask for input. This trait helped him see things that he would not have seen otherwise. This self-awareness was accentuated by his young start to the ministry, becoming rector of All Souls at the age of 28, young even for the time. His early self-awareness prepared him to invest in young leaders with the same kind of on-the-job nurturing that he had received from others.

For ministry leaders today, Stott’s longevity in ministry offers an approach that accounts for human limitations and missional urgency. According to Matt Bloom, “over one-third of pastors are experiencing high to severe levels of burnout.” With such an epidemic of burnout among pastors, leaders today can look to examples like Stott, who

took great care to order his life in such a way that honored God-given human finitude with trust in the God who governs all things.

A survey of Stott's life and ministry would be wildly deficient if it did not mention the incalculable support and work of Frances Whitehead, his personal secretary of nearly sixty years. Her contributions to ordering his life, developing systems for his extensive notes, typing his numerous manuscripts, not to mention her relentless efforts at protecting his time, cannot be overstated. He would affectionally call her, "Frances the Omnicompetent."<sup>210</sup> Stott's health and longevity were directly tied to the faithful service of Whitehead. Stott understood his own human limitations and wisely leaned on others.

### *God's Creation*

Although Stott would not have used language like "self-care" or "emotional health," his recreational habits reflected an instinct that interests outside his vocation were good for his wellbeing. He was an avid bird watcher, or "birder." He delighted in God's creation in other ways, including spending time at his writing retreat on the coast of Wales, The Hookses. Matthew elaborated, "I think one of the things that made him healthy was his commitment to rest and recreate. He loved creation...he wouldn't have articulated it as, 'This is helping my mental health...' But, in hindsight, it really did."

Stott had a well-developed understanding of his own need for margin and time set apart for rest. For the many pastors and leaders today who are perpetually fraying at the edges of physical, emotional, or spiritual health, there is wisdom to be gained from the

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<sup>210</sup> J. E. M. Cameron, *John Stott's Right Hand: The Untold Story of Frances Whitehead* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 28, Kindle.

long and resilient ministry of Stott.<sup>211</sup> Ironically, Stott did not always see himself as particularly disciplined. Jeremy recalled, “...he would say to me, ‘Oh, Jeremy,’ he says, ‘my biggest sin is a lack of discipline.’ And I’d look at him... ‘John, if that’s true for you, I have no hope.’”

Stott’s posture of “gentle seriousness” was accentuated in that conversation. Although he likely had outsized expectations for himself, his own self-awareness provides insight into his humility and desire to mature as a follower of Christ. For ministry leaders today, an audit of our pace, margin, and attention could be the first step in diagnosing where our priorities are and how they might need to be realigned. Developing an eagerness to regularly examine how our days are ordered could be a key contributor to resiliency and longevity in ministry.

Stott’s prayer life was clearly central to the rhythm of his own days. Cindy described: “He would begin and end everything with prayer. And it wasn’t kind of titular...It was because he really could not do anything, couldn’t make any decisions...without first committing the whole process to God.” Whether it was consistent time away from the regular demands of work or the daily priority he gave to communion with God, Stott’s notable discipline offers not a model to mimic but a perspective from which to consider how our own days may reflect the order of our priorities.

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<sup>211</sup> Matt Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry*, 45, Kindle.

## **A Long View of Leadership Development**

One of the fruits of Stott's disciplined way of living and leading was his ability to focus on things that mattered for the long term. A great theme of Stott's life was the generous way in which he gave his attention and time to develop burgeoning leaders. He had an uncanny ability to identify leaders early in their careers, follow their progress, and nurture their gifts all along the way. Often, he did this development work over the span of several years and across continents. His view towards the future was undeniable and persistent, and it reflected an eternal perspective that looked beyond his own lifetime.

### *Blokes Worth Watching*

Many of those I spoke with noted that it was not unusual for Stott to identify potential leaders and follow the trajectory of their marriages, children, education, and careers – sometimes over decades. Jeremy observed that Stott had a notebook for ongoing observations. The notebook had a name: “BWW,” or, “Blokes Worth Watching.” Although early on he may have initially slanted his development work towards men, Cindy recalled that later in his ministry Stott paid attention to the gifts of men and women as potential leaders. Recalling Stott's joy in developing leaders, Jeremy said: “[Stott] just kept track of people...and [he would] keep encouraging and feeding and looking for the right opportunity and praying.”

Stott's attention was not given for the sake of mere formal training but also for preparing mature disciples to serve the mission of God. For him, it was matter of Christian mission to invest in other people who would then make an impact for the gospel wherever they were planted in the world. I believe that is the essence of what he termed the “centrifugal force” of the Christian faith – “to witness and serve.”

Stephen met Stott in 1978 at a theological conference and was invited to give a devotional at one of the morning sessions. Stott happened to be sitting in the back row for the devotional. After the morning session, Stott sought out Stephen and invited him to lunch. Following that lunch, twenty-three years later, Stephen received an invitation from Stott to take the reins of Langham Partnership International, a ministry Stott had founded for “equipping global pastors as they make disciples.” Stott had followed the trajectory of Stephen over those twenty-three years, built a friendship, and offered support and encouragement along the way. He had a long view.

Stott’s long view of equipping could be instructive for leaders today who may be discouraged by the deficiencies in our current leadership pipeline.<sup>212</sup> This long view is costly. It requires effort to remain attentive, wisely invest time, and remain steadfast in prayer. The fruits of Stott’s costly work did not ripen until well outside his own lifetime, as in the case of Matthew, who has served faithfully for many years as a church planter and now senior pastor. The legacy can also be witnessed in the countless pastors who have benefited from the work of Langham Partnership around the world.

### *Succession*

Equipping, supporting, and nurturing young leaders was a part of the regular pattern and practice of Stott’s life and ministry—including in his own successors. Many I spoke with were full of gratitude for Stott’s support, including Franklin, whom Stott chose as his successor at All Souls Church, Langham Place. In the Church of England’s

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<sup>212</sup> Barna Group, *The State of Pastors*, section 8. For example 78% of pastors surveyed “at least somewhat agree with the statement ‘I am concerned about the quality of future Christian leaders.’”

system of appointments, it is very unusual (if not unheard of) for a rector to choose his own successor. Yet, Stott gently navigated a multi-year church governance process with his typical seriousness to support the man he believed God would use in the next season of ministry. He had been following Franklin's trajectory and eventually asked him if he would consider taking the helm at All Souls. Franklin recalled their seminal conversation, "His first words were breathtaking: 'I want you to take over from me at All Souls.'"<sup>213</sup>

Stott's growing prominence as a writer and Bible teacher inside and outside of All Souls was in full force at the time of the succession, so anyone who had been given the task of taking on his pastoral role would have felt tremendous pressure. Franklin was not convinced at first, yet Stott continued his pursuit out of deep conviction. Eventually Franklin accepted the role, and the process of officially installing him as the rector of All Souls took roughly five years. Franklin's ministry flourished, and Stott supported him all along the way, even during periods of resistance from some in the congregation. Franklin's appreciation for Stott continued to grow over time. He commented, "I think John was...incredibly brave. He took a terrific risk [choosing me], I think."

During the initial period of Franklin's tenure as the primary leader at All Souls, Stott intuited the need to offer regular public support. Many participants noted when those resistant to change would speak to Stott privately, Stott unequivocally voiced his support for Franklin. One recalled, "[Stott] must have got back strain bending over backwards to give Franklin prominence." Franklin was thankful for Stott during the

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<sup>213</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Portraits of a Radical Disciple: Recollections of John Stott's Life and Ministry* (InterVarsity Press, 2012). 66, Kindle.

tumultuous process, saying, “I never could have survived if John hadn't done the things that John had done.”

Cindy was another young leader who Stott identified early and supported over several years. She eventually became the executive director of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, an organization Stott founded. Cindy explained, “Part of his preparation for succession was just to carry on doing what he was doing...Nothing that John did was big in the sense of making a fuss about it...it was all very ordinary.”

Stott’s long view of leadership development applied to his succession at All Souls and other organizations he founded or served. His leadership instincts were tactically sharp and remarkably humble. Put another way, he was self-forgetful.<sup>214</sup> The leadership successions he oversaw were never about him or the incoming new leader, but about the health and longevity of the mission of the church or organization he served.

### *Leaders for the Long Term*

A recent Barna study found that 83 percent of current pastors say, “...churches aren’t rising to their responsibilities to train up the next generation of Christian leaders.”<sup>215</sup> Perhaps one solution can be found in Stott’s example. He generously gave away his attention, focus, and time to young leaders. His example showcased a dogged determination to support individuals and later, institutions, which expanded Christian leadership development far beyond the limits of one person. Cindy described her experience of Stott’s generosity, “Platform for others was one of his main planks. I mean,

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<sup>214</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*.

<sup>215</sup> Barna Group, *The State of Pastors*, section 8.



whoever he spotted, who he felt had some gifts given by the Holy Spirit...he would then work very hard on their behalf to make sure that their voice was heard.”

### *Hands-on Training*

Stott’s legacy of leadership development was not disconnected from the day-to-day challenges that these nascent leaders faced. Several commented on Stott’s aptitude for offering candor and incisive feedback when necessary. Moreover, his gentle approach bundled direct feedback with a request for feedback on his own work. Stott understood the value of on-the-job ministry training. For example, when David was early in his ministry at All Souls, Stott would send him speaking invitations that had originally been given to Stott himself. A hallmark of Stott’s ministry was generously lending his credibility and reputation to support the young leaders he was developing.

David’s example was emblematic of how Stott instinctually sought to shape the burgeoning gifts of leaders. Commenting on Stott’s growth as a leader after his time at All Souls, Cindy recalled that Stott was, “...appreciative of other people leading and ready to sit under their leadership or alongside their leadership as an advisor and a helper and an empowerer.”

With intentionality and vigor, Stott invested his life in other people, for their good and the for the spread of the gospel around the world. Stott’s long view approach was costly but eternally rewarding. His generosity with his attention and time was not a hobby or an optional add-on. I would make the case that, for Stott, developing leaders for the church was one of his primary responsibilities.

## Conclusion

Stott's posture of "gentle seriousness" was cultivated through a lifetime of love and reverence for God and his word. His leadership was marked by integrity and humility – two of the most frequent words used to describe Stott in every conversation throughout this study. His corpus of work, including preaching, teaching, writing, pastoring, institution building, and leadership development, was motivated by the "centrifugal force" of his deep faith and trust in Christ.

It is notable that only one interview participant mentioned a headline honor of Stott's ministry – honorary chaplain to Queen Elizabeth II for over 30 years.<sup>216</sup> It is not surprising though. Stott's life was not bent towards spectacle. His leadership was quiet, slow, and deep. Cindy summarized Stott's self-forgetful humility, "I think I could say he was the humblest Christian brother I have ever had...and those occasions where he felt somehow or another his pride had surfaced, he would confess them immediately..."

Stott's way of life and leadership revealed that his most precious treasure was Christ. His approach of "gentle seriousness" is neither new nor novel. But it is a posture worth recovering, and in it we will find a sturdier way forward for a new generation of faithful leaders to serve God's mission in the world with a "long obedience in the same direction."<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> "John Stott's Life," accessed April 26, 2024, <https://johnstott.org/life/>.

<sup>217</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 51, Kindle. Eugene Peterson would use this phrase from Nietzsche as the title of one of his books, and as a description of a lifetime of Christian discipleship.

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