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# A PROFILE FOR NEEDED TRAINING

## Capital District Report

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

*“This report offers a partial glimpse of Capital District pastors and their skill-sets. It was undertaken in an effort to determine which sorts of training venues would be most beneficial to the men and women who labor as shepherds. It is neither comprehensive nor conclusive, but it does point us in a very clear direction. This report is being sent to all district pastors, the eastern Region Supervisor, and the General Supervisor.”*

### INTRODUCTION

Because I inherited more than twenty new churches, I wanted to get a heads-up about the pastors who had been placed under my care. To design any sort of meaningful training process, I knew it was essential to discover what was true of pastors at the present time: *“What am I working with?”*

I conducted two surveys. The first survey asked divisional superintendents to evaluate the pastors in their divisions; all the superintendents responded, assessing 100% of our district pastors. The survey looked like this:

**ON A SCALE OF 0 TO 5 (VERY POOR TO EXCELLENT), GAUGE EACH PASTOR’S:**

<b>Cooperation</b>	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Participation</b>	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Accountability</b>	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Teachability</b>	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Servant-Heartedness</b>	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Leadership Skills</b>	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Discipleship Skills</b>	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Larger Ministry Potential</b>	0	1	2	3	4	5

The second survey was done at our district transition gathering. Because we did the survey in one of the main sessions, we got responses from over 90% of the pastors—as well as from many spouses and licensed ministers. Although the sample size of our survey was small—and, thereby inadequate for drawing national conclusions—over 90% of our district participated in the short questionnaires.

Many of the results simply confirmed what we have known for a long time. Other results were somewhat surprising, and they have interesting policy/program implications. As a supervisor, I am even more excited than I was before about collecting additional data because of how useful these limited results are to me as I plan for my district events.

With more time and thought, we could develop specific questionnaires to compile district profiles and compare each district to a regional “norm” as well as to a national “norm” to help each supervisor spot and address district weaknesses.

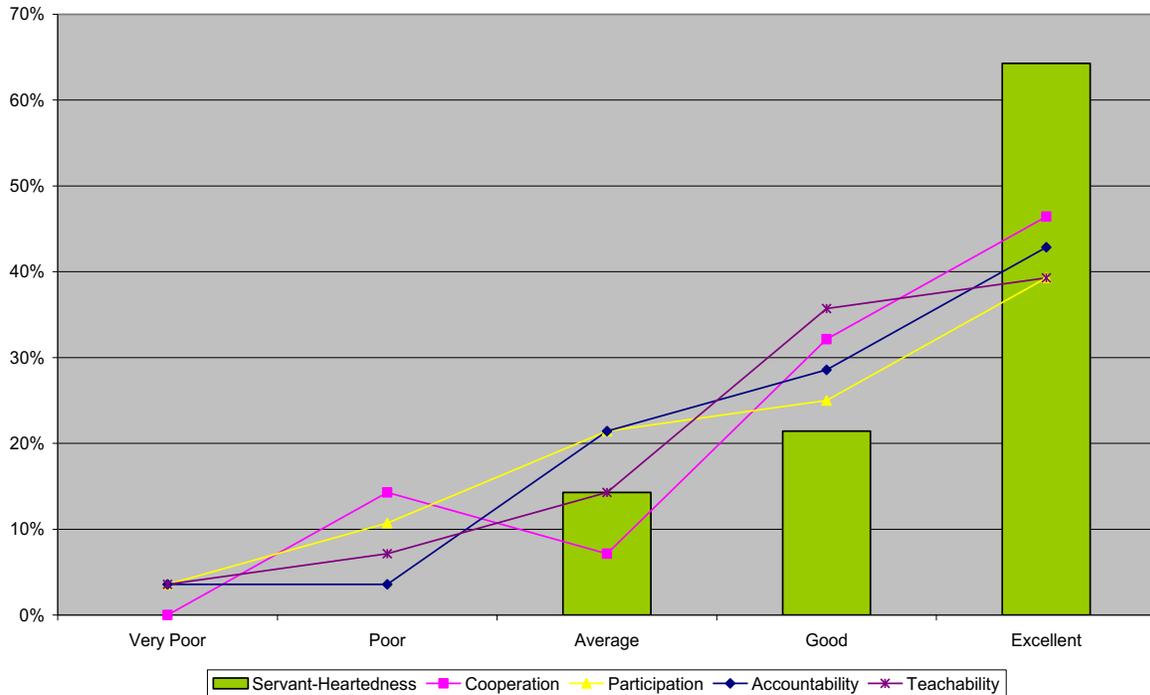
## **ATTITUDES**

Not surprisingly, 84% of the pastors received scores of 4 or 5 on *servant-heartedness*. Scores for the other attitudes were not quite as high. Roughly 15% of the pastors were deemed “very poor” or “poor” in their *cooperation* and *participation*.

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
<i>Cooperation</i>	0%	14%	7%	32%	46%
Participation	4%	11%	21%	25%	39%
Accountability	4%	4%	21%	29%	43%
Teachability	4%	7%	14%	36%	39%
Servant-Heartedness	0%	0%	14%	21%	64%

Because *cooperation*, *participation* and *accountability* are so closely related to one another, it was not surprising to see that they have almost identical profiles (see chart below). I have set them against a backdrop of *servant-heartedness*, the most exceptional attitude among our district pastors.

**Attitudes of Pastors**  
(as reported by Superintendents)



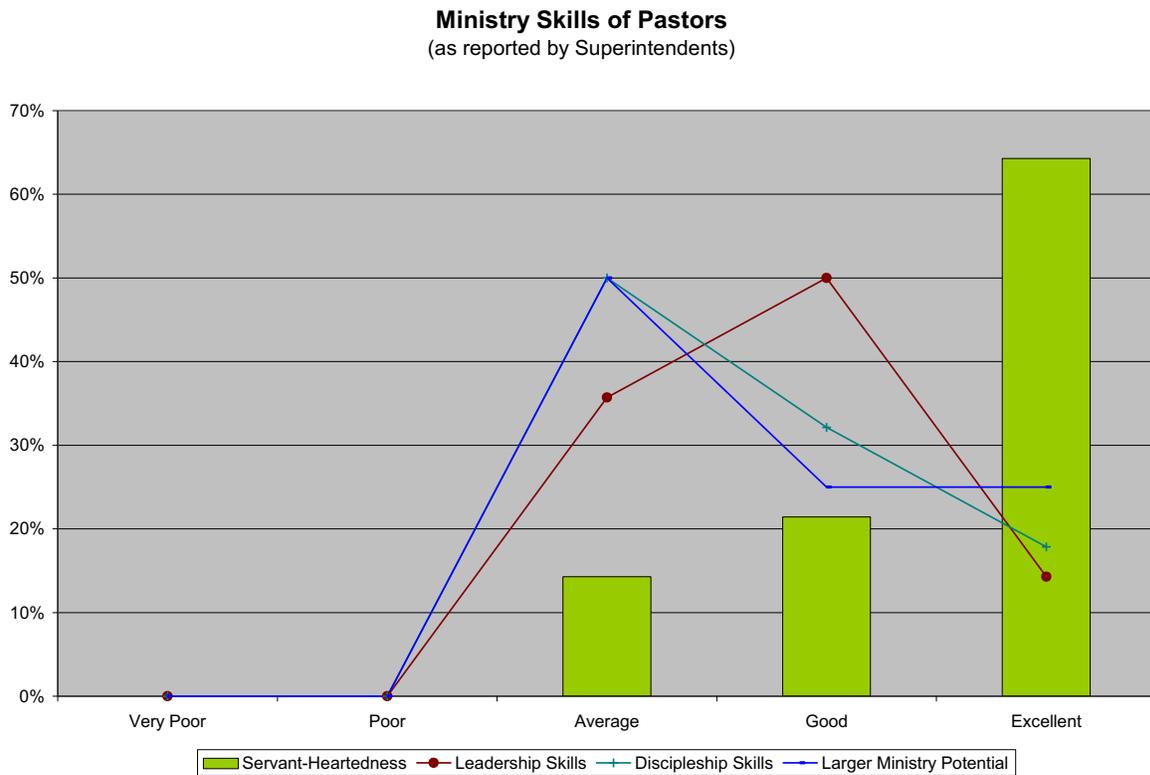
With this profile of attitudes as a district “norm,” I will be able to compare individual divisions to see which ones are particularly strong/weak in various areas. For instance, if one division scores exceptionally high on the *participation* index, I might ask that superintendent to share ideas for how he is getting such engagement with his pastors. On the other hand, if the majority of pastors in another division have “poor” or “very poor” levels of *teachability*, I might begin to ask questions of that superintendent.

## SKILLS-POTENTIAL

Questions about the skills and ministry potential among our district pastors revealed a very different profile from that of attitudes. While none of the pastors were rated below average in their *leadership* or *discipleship* skills, or, in their *potential for larger ministry*, very few were appraised as “excellent” in those categories. For the most part, one must conclude that our pastors are a very average lot.

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
Servant-Heartedness	0%	0%	14%	21%	64%
Leadership Skills	0%	0%	36%	50%	14%
Discipleship Skills	0%	0%	50%	32%	18%
Larger Ministry Potential	0%	0%	50%	25%	25%

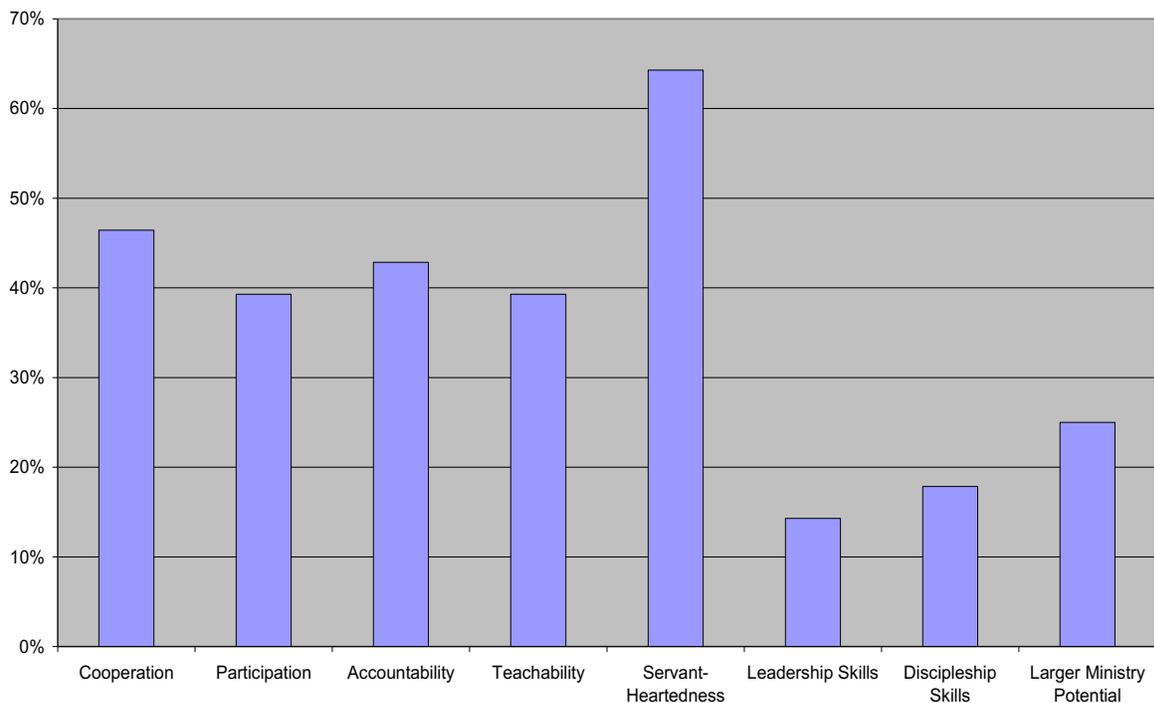
When we contrast the skill-potential profile against the same *servant-heartedness* benchmark (see chart below), the skills deficit is even clearer. Whereas the attitude profile generally increased by percent from “poor” to “excellent,” the skill-potential clusters at slightly above average—then drops off dramatically!



### A More Excellent Ministry?

If we combine both profiles, we can see definite differences between the percent of pastors whose skills/attitudes are deemed “excellent” by their superintendents (see below):

**Percent of Pastors with "Excellent" Attitudes and Skills**  
(as reported by Superintendents)



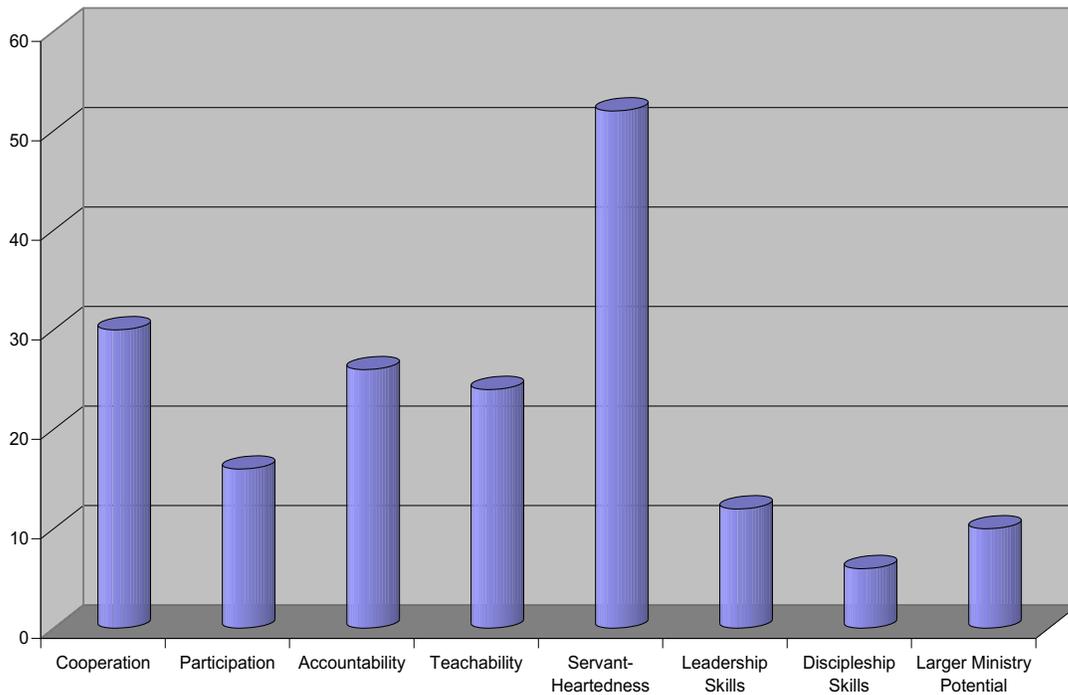
There are huge training implications for my district—and, perhaps, our whole movement. While many of the Capital district pastors have good attitudes and are, hopefully, open to input from me and others, the sad reality is that we have little hope for growth and development among our churches with such low scores on *leadership*, *discipleship* and *ministry potential*. Less than 15% of the district pastors have “excellent” *leadership* skills, and less than one in five have “excellent” *discipleship* skills.

Frankly, this is alarming. Without additional training and tooling in the skills of discipleship and leadership, there seems little likelihood that our existing pastors will raise up many future leaders.

The following chart uses weighted scores for each of the skills and attitudes, multiplying each response by its relative score, then adding the aggregate: the “3” responses were multiplied by 3; the “4” responses were multiplied by 4; etc. This provides a comparative picture of how strong our

district pastors are in each skill and attitude in relation to the others. Once again, servant-heartedness is head and shoulders above all others. Participation drops significantly below its counterparts of cooperation, accountability and teachability. That is likely because of the intense work schedules most of our bi-vocational pastors must work around (see section on bi-vocational pastors).

**Pastors' Attitudes and Skills by Rank Order**  
(as reported by Superintendents)



## DESIRED TRAINING

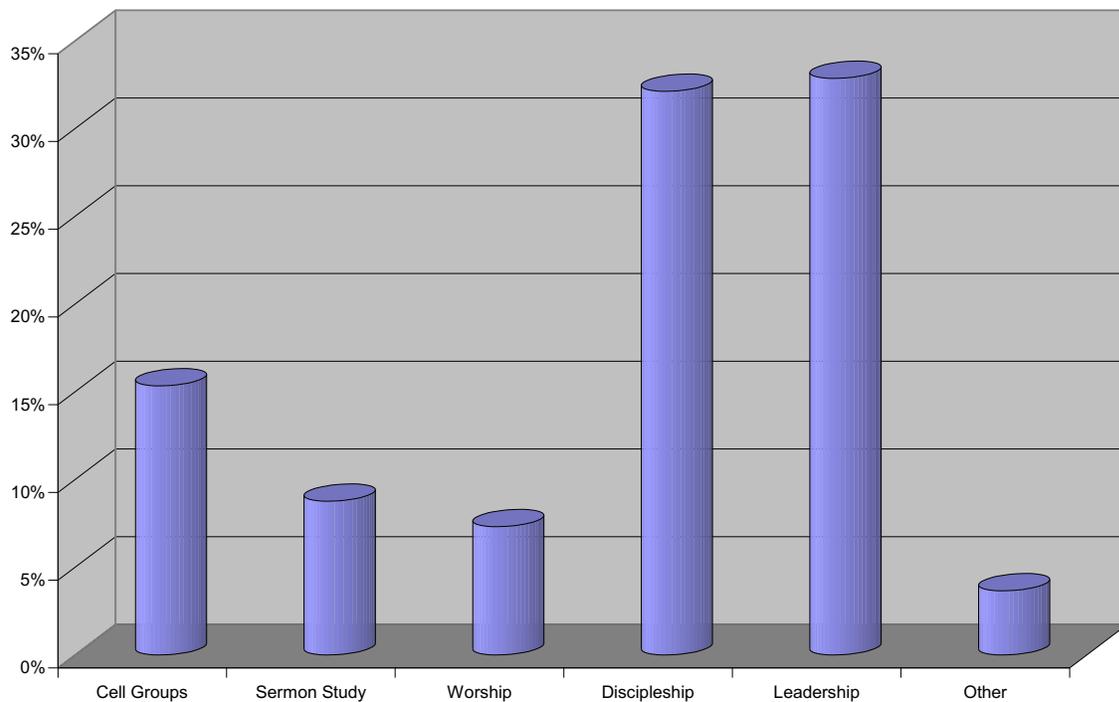
The self-reports of pastors agreed with the profile above. It was not just unkind superintendents being critical of their pastors, who reported the low levels of *leadership* and *discipleship* skills and *larger ministry potential* among our pastors. Pastors seem to be aware of their lack of *discipleship* and *leadership* skills. In fact, they crave more training and assistance.

It behooves me, as a supervisor, to be aware of that lack, too. It was personally illuminating and encouraging to me that the first three pastors I met at the district-merging meeting said to me, “I’m so glad you are here. I really want practical help in knowing what to do. Please give me ideas about how to lead my church better!”

Pastors are not trying to hide their need. As can be seen on the following chart, when the pastors were asked what training topics would be of most value to them, the overwhelming majority responded *leadership* or *discipleship*. An impressive 55% wanted help in one or both of those topics—as opposed to merely 7% who wanted to learn more about *worship*. Perhaps our movement had been reticent to acknowledge what the pastors, themselves, know: we need better training in the mechanics of congregational and one-on-one ministry.

I will be aiming most of my district activities and training venues to address these needs.

**"What Training Topic Would Help You Most Right Now?"**

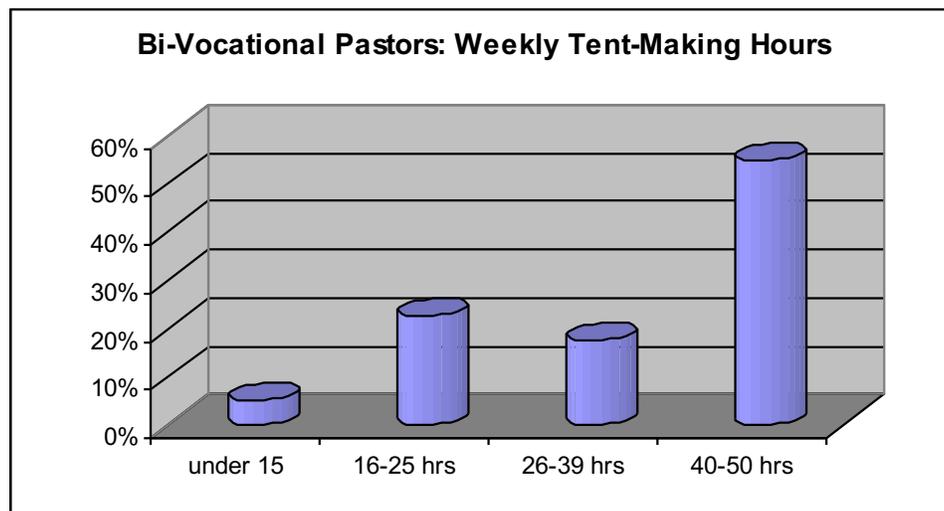


Our assumption has been that pastors want/need to be inspired at our district conferences and larger venues, but perhaps more of that inspiration could come from providing leaders with tools for the work they do throughout the year.

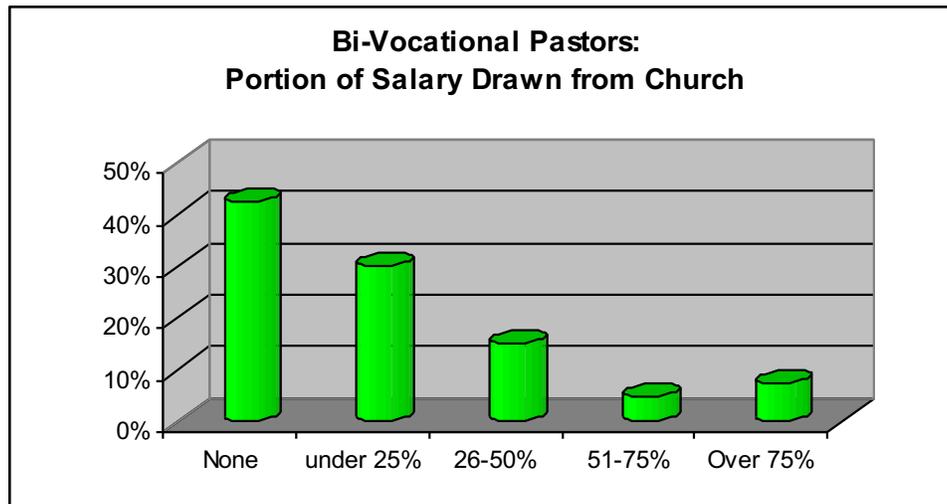
### **BI-VOCATIONAL PASTORS**

Because so many of our pastors are bi-vocational, and because I wanted to cast them as the heroes of our district, I intentionally asked a set of questions for bi-vocational pastors only. The findings

were both sobering and inspiring: just fewer than half our churches are pastored by part-time ministers. I knew that, but what I did not know was the amount of hours these bi-vocational leaders actually worked at tent-making. In terms of the number of hours that can be devoted to church-work, the divide between full-time pastors and their part-time counterparts is huge. As the following chart indicates, more than half the part-time pastors are working more than 40 hours per week on their day job.



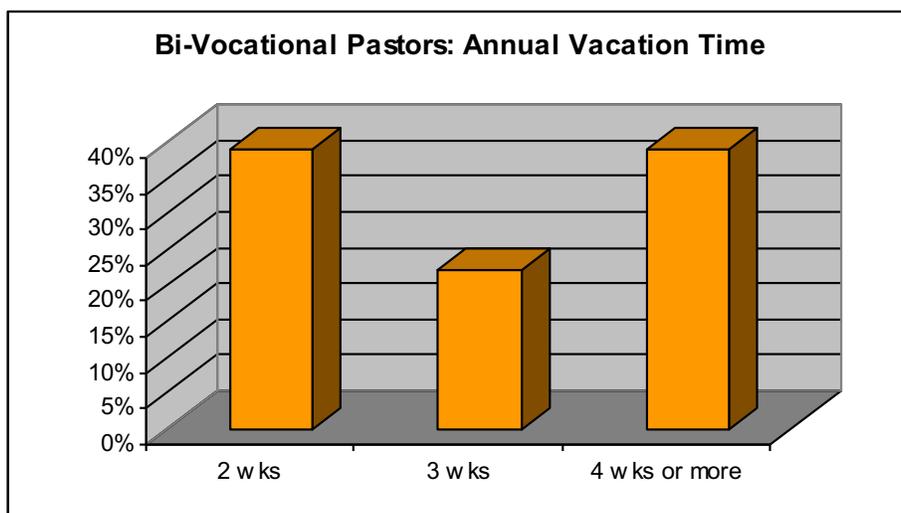
Generally speaking, tent-makers take little salary from the church. Notice that the financial data have an almost direct correlation with the work-hours. Fully 40% of the bi-vocational pastors in my district receive no remuneration for their labors. These men and women truly are the heroes, and I want to do more for them—activities and support programs that fit their needs as well as their schedules.



### BI-VACATION TIME

Bi-vocational leaders generally lack time for all the ministry they would like to do. Even though they are willing to sacrifice, there are only so many days in the year—and some of that must go to normal family pursuits and vacations. Our assumption has been that they cannot get time off from work in order to attend training venues. That may not be an accurate assumption. When asked how many vacation days our part-time pastors receive from their “day job” each year, 61% reported getting 3 or more weeks. While 40% are granted only 2 weeks of vacation, 40% receive 4 weeks. Most likely, pastors who have less vacation time are younger—and newer at their jobs, or in their careers. They likely have young families, so their disposable time during the year is extremely limited. I want to remember that.

So, how much time are these bi-vocational pastors willing to give up from their vacation allotments for additional ministry training? The chart below reveals some of the most significant data from these surveys; unfortunately, I do not have the means to correlate specific groups of bi-vocational leaders with responses to this question. With more sophisticated scoring and analysis, we could determine if the amount of vacation predicted the number of vacation days pastors are willing to trade for training days. But the overall numbers still reveal tremendous willingness to sacrifice vacation time for training.



### IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING VENUES

Nine out of ten tent-making pastors are prepared to surrender 4 or more days of their vacation for additional training! Nearly 70% will give us 7 or more days to better equip them for their ministry assignments. I think these numbers indicate the pastors' dedication and their desperation. We cannot underestimate the ongoing discouragement many pastors feel as their churches fail to grow reproductively and toward more health.

The pastors who lead our churches are, for the most part, earnest and eager for answers and help. Yet, even the most sincere have time constraints. They cannot afford an endless array of training seminars. They need time for their families and their churches.

Consequently, I must be very strategic about how many venues I offer (or require) each year—and I must be especially wise in the topics addressed at those seminars. That takes me back to the subjects the pastors most want to learn about. We could/should conduct more extensive surveys to discover a prioritized list of training topics, but from my simple survey, it's clear: pastors want to learn more about how to disciple their members and how to lead their congregations. For every one pastor who expresses a desire to learn more about worship, there are 4.5 pastors who want more training in leadership, and 4.4 pastors who want more training in discipleship.

In addition to careful subject selection, I want to be thoughtful about the number of events I require my pastors to attend—especially weekdays. Do the math: International Convention takes 5 days; district conference involves 2 weekdays. ***Every other training event—from divisional meetings and regional gatherings to special seminars and workshops—exceeds the number of vacation days that 42% of our bi-vocational pastors are prepared to sacrifice.***

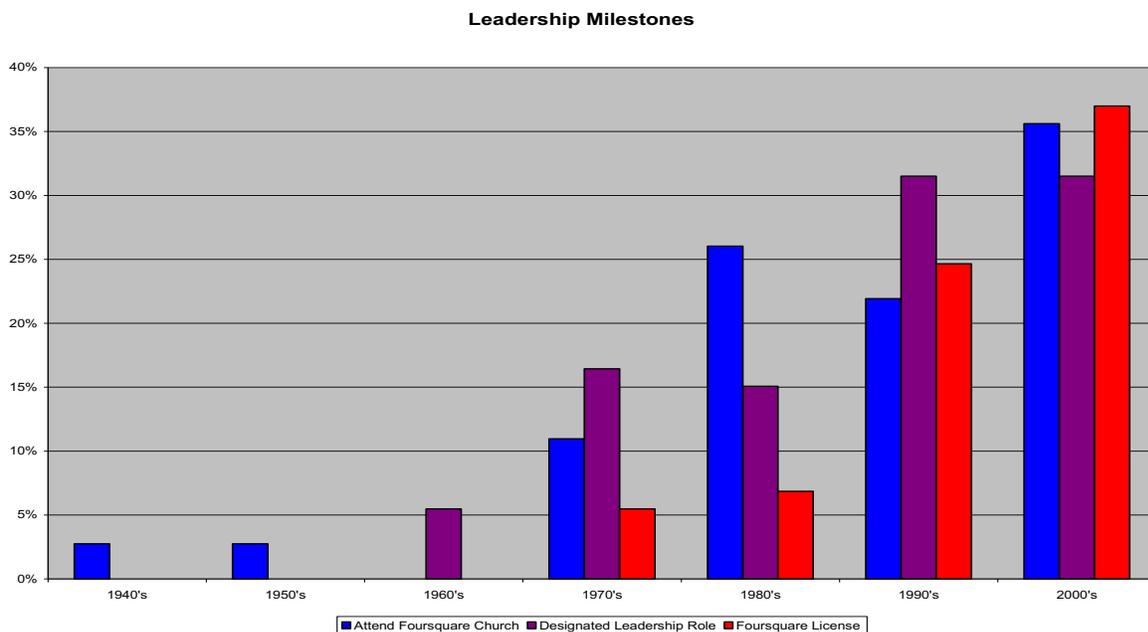
Of course, the full-time ministers and 60% of our bi-vocational leaders will give us more of their time, but the most needy of our pastors—those men and women who work long hours as tent-makers—can unintentionally be left out of the training loop. They simply cannot attend Convention, district conference *and* training seminars.

### **I SEE TWO POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

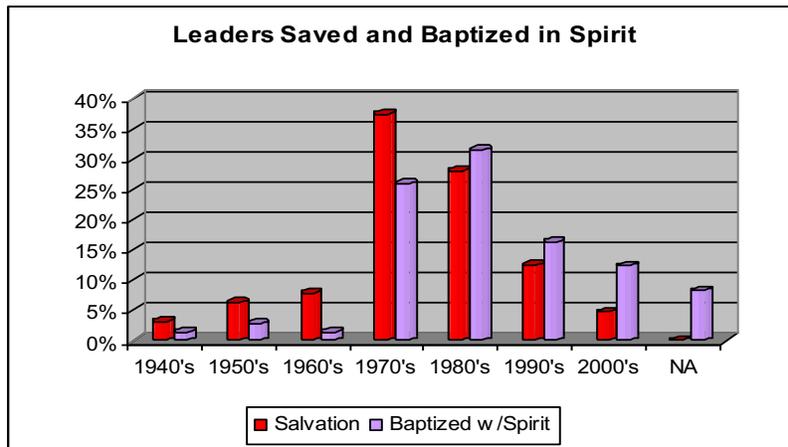
1. **Incorporate more training into and around our district conference.** We hold our conference Thursday night through Saturday afternoon. If I urge pastors to stay through Sunday afternoon to focus specifically on a *leadership* or *discipleship* issue, I can get two birds with one stone. I provide a cost-effective training venue that does not steal away vacation time, and I force those pastors to deputize someone in their church to preach for them that weekend!
2. **Provide more choice in training topics and dates.** In addition to national seminars available through NCO and individual pastors/churches, I want to give four specific training seminars each year. Pastors will be free to attend, or not, depending on which topic is offered on which dates. This year, I am offering training on “*How to Study Your Bible (in order to better disciple people)*”; “*Shaping Your Church (through proactive leadership)*”; and, “*Discovering Ministry Gift-Mixes.*”

## PASTORS

I was interested in discovering any patters for pastors' migration through leadership ranks, so I asked about several milestones—"What year did you first...?" The chart below shows some consistent patterns. The good news is that we're seeing a huge number of licenses granted in the last couple decades, and that correlates with a similar increase in leadership identification. Additionally, 75% of our current ministers came from leadership positions either in the same church or in another Foursquare church. Only 25% of our pastors were adopted from outside the Foursquare family.

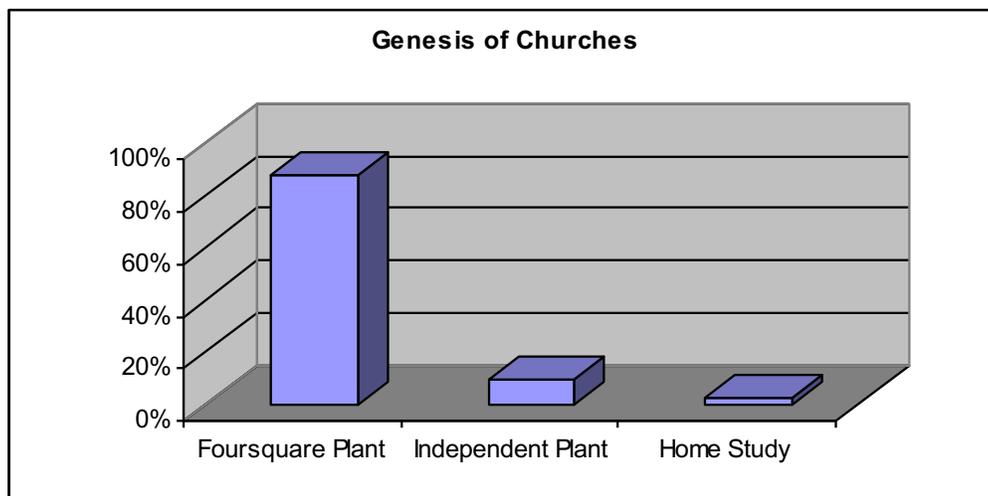


Data about the pastors themselves revealed no real surprises, but it did confirm the general aging of our pastoral ranks. The following chart shows the decade when our current pastors were saved and filled with the Spirit. The almost-perfect bell-curve matches denominational data on the age cohorts within our pastoral ranks. Looking back over four decades, we can still see the impact of the *Jesus Movement* and the *Charismatic Renewal* on our ministers. In the absence of such sweeping moves of God, one has to wonder where our future ministers will come from.

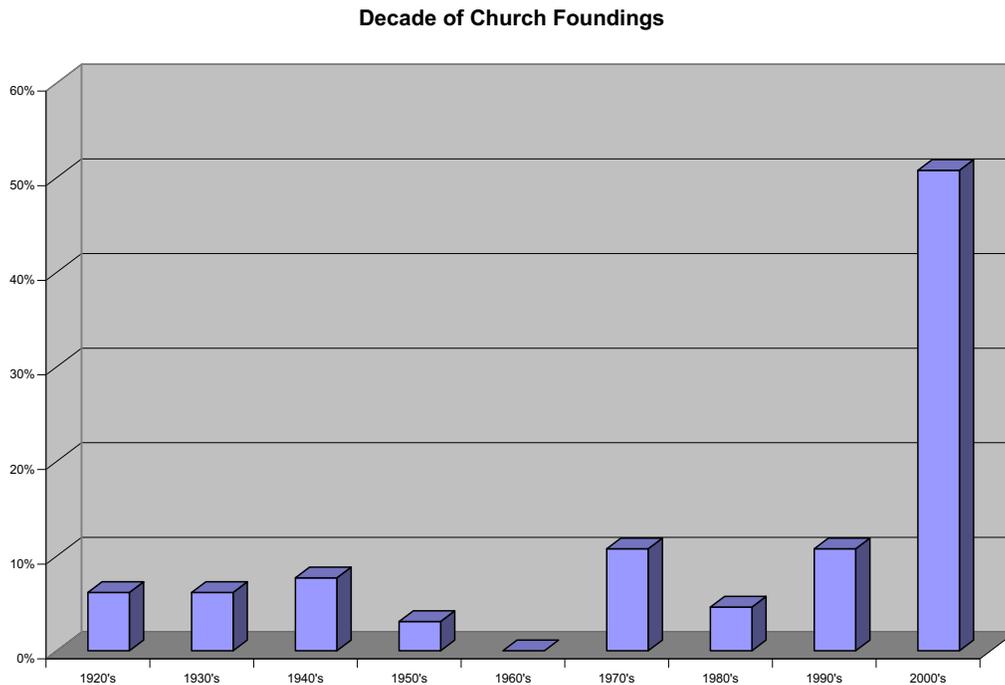


## CHURCHES

I was encouraged concerning the origin of our district churches (see below). The vast majority, were founded out from an existing Foursquare church. Although I do not know the nature of the connection, or, the extent of “mothering” Foursquare churches provided, this is a very positive trend.



The last chart I'll show you is hugely meaningful—I just don't know what it means! As you can see, the vast majority of the churches in our district were founded very recently. Is this a cause for celebration, i.e., we have started lots of churches since 2000? Or is this cause for alarm, i.e., we have not been able to keep many churches alive? I have no readily available data to track the total number of churches started in our district in past decades, so I'm going to opt for a positive interpretation of this graphic data.



## CONCLUSION

Overall, my strongest impression from the data is that we need immediate and significant training in *discipleship* and *leadership*. Pastors recognize their need for more tooling. They want to get better at discipling people and leading congregations. But to get that training, they do not have much more time to give than they are already giving.

Pastors are desperate for practical, “how-to” coaching. Consequently, my job will be to offer more focused training without adding time burdens to the pastors. I have several action-steps for accomplishing that:

- Replace the usual inspirational programs/conferences with more instructional curricula.
- Stimulate a mentoring culture among pastors, highlighting those leaders with well-developed leadership and discipleship skills.
- Provide audio training materials on discipleship and leadership that pastors can listen to while driving.

- Offer an optional array of specifically targeted training workshops with more hands-on guidance.

I am reminded of Nehemiah's words to his friends after he had surveyed their situation and condition:

*"You see the bad situation we're in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach."  
~Nehemiah 2:17*

**I'm ready to start building!**