

PASTORAL TRAINING APPROACHES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

A Multi-Case Study

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the types of pastoral training approaches being employed by evangelical churches today?

How are exemplary churches from each category of pastoral training approaches equipping their pastors for the work of the ministry?



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is a research-based curriculum framework for designing church-based pastoral finishing residencies?



RESEARCH PURPOSE

To categorize pastoral training approaches used by evangelical churches today, investigate exemplar churches in each category, and utilize the research results to construct a curriculum framework for designing finishing residencies.

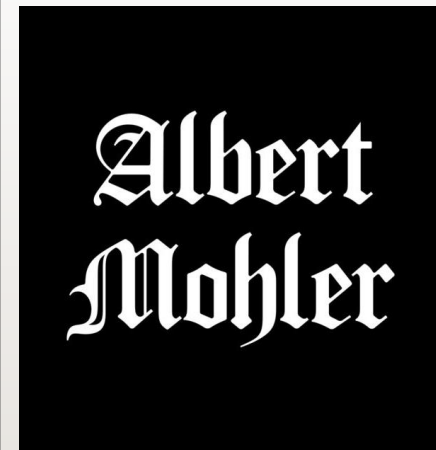
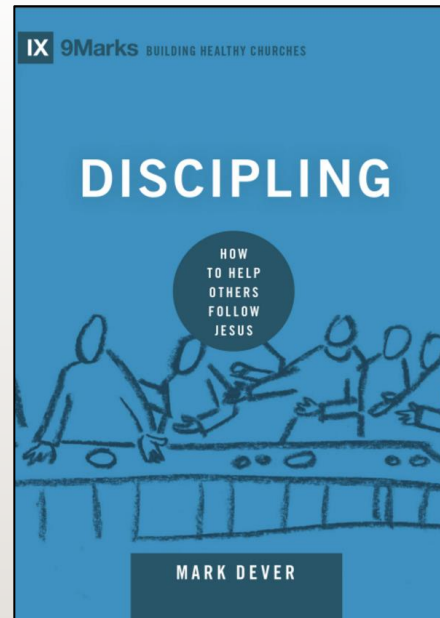
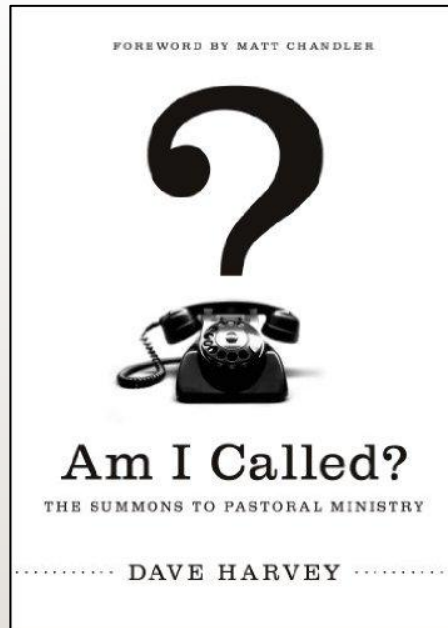
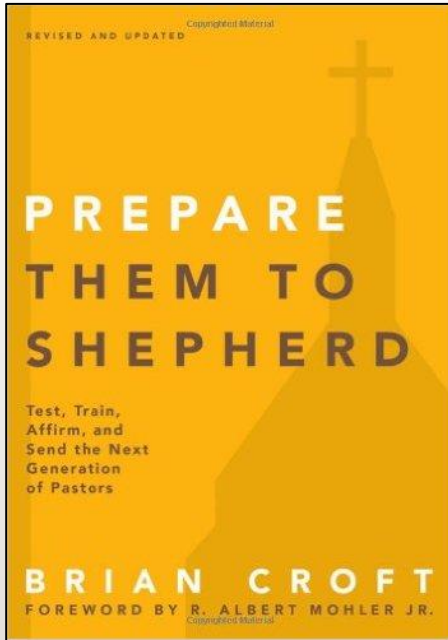
PASTORAL TRAINING APPROACH

A method, model, or program that a local church employs for preparing pastors to lead their churches effectively and fulfill the responsibilities of their calling.



THE LITERATURE – the good

- Strong voices calling for churches to take responsibility to train & some good models.



EXAMPLE - Quote

Brothers, seminaries don't make pastors in three years, under God local churches make pastors. We are what God uses to do that. Seminaries can be helpful, but its local churches that make pastors. And we must lead in that work. Like Luther training pastors in Wittenberg and Calvin in Geneva, each of those pastors represents an investment. . . . You want to see revival come in your area? Pray, and give your life to the training of the next generation of preachers. (Dever)

THE LITERATURE – concerning trends

- Low pastoral retention rates.
- Pastoral burnout stories and statistics.

Example: Barna Group

- More than one-third of pastors are at high or medium risk of burnout.
- Three-quarters know at least one fellow pastor whose ministry ended due to stress.
- One in nine U.S. pastors is at high risk for burnout based on their own self-assessment.

The State of Pastors (Ventura, CA: Barna, 2017)



HOW LOCAL CHURCH TRAINING CAN HELP WITH THESE ISSUES

- Links knowledge with necessary ministry experience and coaching/mentoring
- Provides the support of a community connected to a local church
- Connection to local church develops the heart/character and helps discern calling
- Provides necessary relationships for assessment of gifts/character/skills

LITERATURE GAP

- Little published or academic literature that discusses the types of approaches employed by churches today.
- Little scholarly research exists regarding training programs at model churches.
- *Concern:* Poor training at the local church level is a factor that contributes to the low pastoral retention rates and high burnout numbers seen today.

RESEARCH PROCESS

Phase 1 - Categorize pastoral training approaches (RQ 1)

- Literature review and expert panel

Phase 2 - Investigate exemplar churches of each category (RQ 2)

- Case studies of churches

Applications – Cross-case analysis, recommendations for practice, list shared practice categories.

RESEARCH PROCESS

Phase 3 - Construct the curriculum framework for designing a pastoral residency (informed by the research results) - (RQ 3).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



CATEGORIES AND APPROACHES

(1) **Send off to Seminary**

“hands off” posture

(2) **Church and Seminary Partnerships**

“hand shake” posture

(3) **Train on Own** – “hands cupped” posture

- accredited college and seminary

(i.e. Bethlehem, Masters)

- use in-house curriculum and/or utilize

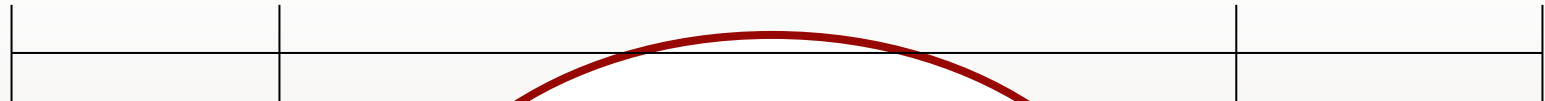
training groups (i.e. Porterbrook Network)

CATEGORIES AND APPROACHES

Send off to
Seminary

Church and Seminary
Partnerships

Train on
Own



Approaches

1. Apprenticeship Model
2. Cohort Program
3. Institute Approach
4. Finishing Residency

Hands Off

Hand Shake

Hands Cupped



APPROACHES

(1) **Apprenticeship Model**

- Small to Mid-sized church
- Pastor with a strong heart to train
- Relational, mentoring focus
- Generally 1-2 at a time for 1-4 years
- Often congregation is highly involved
- Partnership – field or internship site

APPROACHES

(2) Cohort Program

- Group of pastoral trainees working through a program together.
- Leaders organize topics & classes.
- Mentoring designed for character and spiritual formation.
- Supervised ministry experiences to develop skills.
- Generally 1-2 yrs; 4-22 participants
- Partnership – credit for a class

APPROACHES

(3) Institute Approach

- Large church with devoted resources.
- Pastoral trainee group part of larger church effort to train leaders - multiple cohorts with courses, seminars, church-wide classes.
- Generally 1-3 years, 5-10 trainees
- Partnership – often can receive seminary credit for a number of classes.

APPROACHES

(4) **Finishing Residency**

- Post-seminary residency experience.
- Developing pastoral skills & character through mentored positions/programs.
- Sharpen doctrine, leadership topics.
- Generally 1-3 years, 1-4 residents.
- Usually trainees have full-time staff positions with supervision and direction.

CASE STUDY CHURCHES

- (1) **South Woods Baptist** - Apprenticeship
“A Mentoring Church”
- (2) **Capitol Hill Baptist** - Cohort program
“Ecclesiological Boot Camp”
- (3) **Cornerstone Church** - Institute approach
“Equipping the Next Generation”
- (4) **Austin Stone Church** - Institute approach
“A Culture of Building and Sending”
- (5) **Christ Community** - Finishing residency
“Holistic Development”

Category	South Woods Baptist Pastoral Internship - Value or Practice
Program Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasis on life-on-life, consistent formal and informal mentoring of each trainee by the senior pastor. ● Working with individual trainee's needs and his seminary program requirements for pastoral ministry experience. ● Full involvement in the life of the church body as a means of pastoral training. ● Overall emphasis on learning elements of practical pastoral ministry and developing preaching skills.
Convictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developing strong theological, biblical, and ecclesiological convictions. ● Emphasis on studying hermeneutics, homiletics, and historical preachers. ● Each trainee develops a ministry philosophy about ecclesiology, worship, discipleship, evangelism and missions, church leadership, and preaching.
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spiritual formation through mentoring, observation of pastors, and being active members of the church community. ● Personal development through mentoring and by developing strong relationships with other pastoral interns.
Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Skill learning through observation of the senior pastor, receiving an up-close perspective on all aspects of church leadership. ● Strong emphasis on the study and practice of preaching. ● Practicing pastoral skills through supervised ministry experiences such as teaching, leading, administrative tasks, and pastoral visits.

Category	Capitol Hill Baptist Pastoral Internship
Program Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating a culture of discipling and leadership development. ● Emphasis on gospel and Word-centeredness. ● Emphasis on togetherness as interns are with everyone during Wednesday study, Sunday nights, Sunday morning service, and staff meetings. ● Overall program emphasis is on convictions, developing “robust ecclesiology,” and discussing its practical outworking in a local church.
Convictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developing convictions in ecclesiology—reading, writing, discussing, explaining, observing, “ecclesiological boot camp” ● Observe how ecclesiological and theological beliefs are implemented in the church and pastoral ministry.
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasis on relationships—meet with pastors, members, and a staff partner. Develop strong relationships among the interns. ● Observe the pastors/elders and learn about their character qualities as they shepherd. ● Develop spiritual disciplines and character by being a fully-invested member of the church.
Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Observation and learning about all facets of the church led to growth in competency. ● Administration duties and Sunday morning serving.

Category	Cornerstone Church School of Theology and Residency Program
Program Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing in both academic rigor and practical ministry experience. • An emphasis on personal life and doctrinal convictions: “Watch your life and your doctrine” (1 Tim 4:12). • “Developing next generation leaders” for network pastoral positions, network church plants, and broader kingdom work. • The CST Resident program focuses on growing in knowledge (convictions), developing ministry skills (competency), and maturing in character (character).
Convictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on developing robust theology and Bible knowledge with others in the church community. Often classes discuss practical church ministry applications. • Take 15 master’s level classes through MBTS. Strong partnership allows for the church to offer these classes on site with professors within congregation. Trainees receive an accredited MATS.
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort group learning and growth environment provides sharpening, encouragement, and accountability. Many said the relationships built were the highlight of the program. • Consistent meetings and modeling by staff mentors provide character sharpening and consistency in walk with Christ. • Specific character growth projects and spiritual disciplines learning/practice in the practicum classes.
Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three practicum classes provide skills learning, coaching, and opportunities to practice competencies. • Significant supervised ministry assignments give hands on practice, skill development, and testing of gifts and calling. • Trainees become part of the staff team at a growing church.

Category	<p style="text-align: center;">Austin Stone Church: Austin Stone Institute and the Pastoral and Church Planting Residency</p>
Program Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing strong leaders in doctrine, character, and skill (head, heart, hands). • Emphasizing the importance of the community in growth—MWDP cohort, pastoral residency group, LTG’s, and community groups. • Gospel-centered, missional community and lifestyle.
Convictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in the church-wide leadership development program develops strong doctrinal convictions. • The cohort reads, studies, and discusses targeted books and topics related to pastoral leadership.
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing and maintaining healthy habits of Bible intake and spiritual disciplines through cohort and mentor encouragement and accountability. • Participating in formal character assessments and action plans.
Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainees are given significant supervised ministry opportunities. • Trainees participate in teaching/preaching labs and engage in opportunities to teach/preach within specific ministry assignments. • Specialized, bi-monthly training sessions with the pastoral residents focusing on such competencies as ministry philosophy, events, team leadership, and training leaders.

Category	Christ Community Church: Pastoral Residency
Program Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong emphasis on competency and character “integrity of heart and skillful hands” (Ps 78:72). • Multiple layers of mentoring from senior pastors, staff supervisor, members of the congregation, and the program director. • Coaching in a variety of areas for “holistic development” as “being comes before doing” • Seminary partnership with TEDS is very important and strong. • Emphasis on developing leaders out of love for the local church.
Convictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus is on sharpening existing convictions—filling in gaps in training by studying practical ministry topics and church values. • Developing new convictions about faith and vocation, engaging culture, and personal stewardship.
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic pastoral development: stewardship in areas such as spiritual disciplines, rest, finances, health, and family. • Congregational-facilitated growth opportunities such as assignment to a “safe friend,” join a community group, and personal development coaching. • Healthy and confidential environments for accountability and mentoring.
Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on ministry leadership as significant responsibilities are given to each trainee. • Developing a positive team mindset. • Immersive employee experiences (doing and learning) allow trainees to see the inner workings of pastoral ministry. • Pastoral modeling, mentoring, supervision, and coaching. • Observation of many church and staff meetings. Some debriefing. • Preaching and hermeneutics learning and practice.

APPLICATIONS - recommendations

1. Develop robust biblical and theological convictions.
2. Provide opportunities to strengthen shepherding/pastoral ministry skills.
3. Include leadership topics in the training curriculum.

4. Cultivate relationships among trainees.
5. Delegate important ministry responsibilities in conjunction with pastoral coaching.
6. Provide a context for mentoring toward whole-person growth.



CONSTRUCTING A CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGNING A PASTORAL RESIDENCY

Phase 3

EdD to PhD Bridge

ALARMING TRENDS - THE NEED

Pastors are Aging

- In 30 years, the median age has risen from 44 to 52.

Pastors are Retiring

- 1 in 4 pastors today plan to retire by 2030, so 25 percent of today's pastors will not be serving in 5 years.
- We're seeing these trends in my denomination.
EFCA article, "Empty pulpits coming to a church near you."

ALARMING TRENDS - THE NEED

Churches Struggle with Retaining

- Roughly 50 percent of seminary graduates will leave the ministry within 5 years.

Churches Struggle with Training

- Recent Barna Group data reveals a great need for churches to put more effort in training the next generation of pastors (*State of Pastors, Vol 2, 66-69*).
- 83 percent of respondents agreed that churches are not rising to their responsibilities to train up the next generation of leaders.

WHAT CAN BE DONE? The Heart

- Apply the research findings to the task of training pastors in a local church.
- Choose one pastoral training approach to focus the application.
 - Pastoral finishing residencies.
- Design a curriculum framework from the research categories to help churches design a pastoral residency.

WHY PASTORAL RESIDENCIES?

Definitions:

A church-based pastoral training approach focusing on developing well-rounded pastors through a post-seminary church ministry experience.

“A period of transition during which seminary graduates begin the work of the ministry under the supervision of an experienced pastoral team, with the support of key lay leaders and the collegiality of peers.”

(George Mason, *Preparing the Pastors We Need*)

WHY PASTORAL RESIDENCIES?

Finishing residencies typically range from one to four residents each year and contain training elements such as:

- Supervised ministry experiences.
- Clarifying biblical and theological convictions.
 - Training classes.
- Mentoring by seasoned pastors.
- Pastoral skills observation and practice.
- Personal development.
- Character building.

WHY PASTORAL RESIDENCIES?

It is a training approach on the rise.

- Made to Flourish (KC), NETS training center, SEND Network Residency Builder (SBC).
- EFCA seeing the benefits, building programs

Like teaching hospitals, pastoral residencies provide a unique training context for aspiring pastors.



CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

PHASE 1 – Curriculum Framework Design

- Step 1:** Literature Review
- Step 2:** Residency Designing Instruction
- Step 3:** Expert Consultations
- Step 4:** Framework Construction

PHASE 2 – Curriculum Framework Implementation

- Step 1:** Expert Reviews
- Step 2:** Field Site Feedback

PHASE 3 – Curriculum Framework Revisions

Feedback collection, revisions, finalization



Design with the end in mind. What is a pastor?

Three biblical characteristics – a leader who is (1) sound in doctrine, (2) godly in character, and (3) skilled in shepherding.

Sound in Doctrine (Convictions)

- Strong biblical knowledge: knowing and holding fast to sound doctrine and biblical truth (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 5:17).
- Able to preach or teach the Bible and sound doctrine (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2, 4:6-16; Acts 6:4).
- Able to guard the flock by refuting false teaching (Titus 1:9; Acts 20:26-31; 2 Tim 3:16).



Godly in Character (Character)

1. Exemplary in spiritual disciplines and love for God (1 Tim 4:7-8; Matt 6:33; 22:37-38).
2. Above reproach in character: one who is humble, whole, and honorable (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
(Mathis, *Workers for Your Joy*)

Humble in his devotional life; the man before God.

Aspires, humble, sober-minded, and mature in faith (not a recent convert).

- Upright, holy, and loves good (Titus 1:8).

Whole in his private life; the man before those who know him best.

- Self-controlled, a one-woman man, temperate with alcohol, and not a lover of money.
- One who is a good manager of the home.

Honorable in his public life; the man before the church and world.

- Respectable, hospitable, gentle, peaceable, and reputable.
- One who is not violent or quarrelsome.



Skilled in Shepherding (Competency)

Competent in caring for the church

(Acts 6:1-6, 20:28; Heb 13:17; 1 Thess 5:12).

1. Prays for and visits the sick (Jas 5:14-15; Matt 25:37-40).
2. Comforts the grieving (2 Cor 1:3-7).
3. Cares for the weak and needy (1 Tim 5:3-10; Jas 1:27).
4. Counsels members (Heb 13:7; 2 Cor 5:18-21).
5. Prays for individuals and families (Acts 6:4).
6. Admonishes members (1 Thess 5:12).



Skilled in Shepherding (Competency)

Competent in managing the church

(1 Pet 5:2-3; 1 Tim 3:4-6, 5:17).

1. Directs mission & vision of the church (Matt 28:18-20).
2. Trains leaders & equips members (2 Tim 2:2; Eph 4:11-12).
3. Serves as a healthy team member (Acts 13:1-3, 14:23).
4. Makes wise decisions (1 Tim 5:22; Acts 6:1-6).
5. Oversees the ministries and finances of the church
(Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2-3; Heb 13:17).
6. Practices church discipline (Matt 18:15-17; 1 Tim 5:19-20).



PRACTICES FOR TRAINING PASTORS

Now that we have defined our goal, what training practices can we utilize to build pastors who are sound in doctrine, godly in character, and skilled in shepherding?

Found that the shared practices of the case study churches map directly onto the goals of who a pastor is and what a pastor does according to Scripture.



SHARED PRACTICES AMONG THE CASE STUDY CHURCHES

Convictions

- Learning the Bible and theology
- Developing topical knowledge

Character

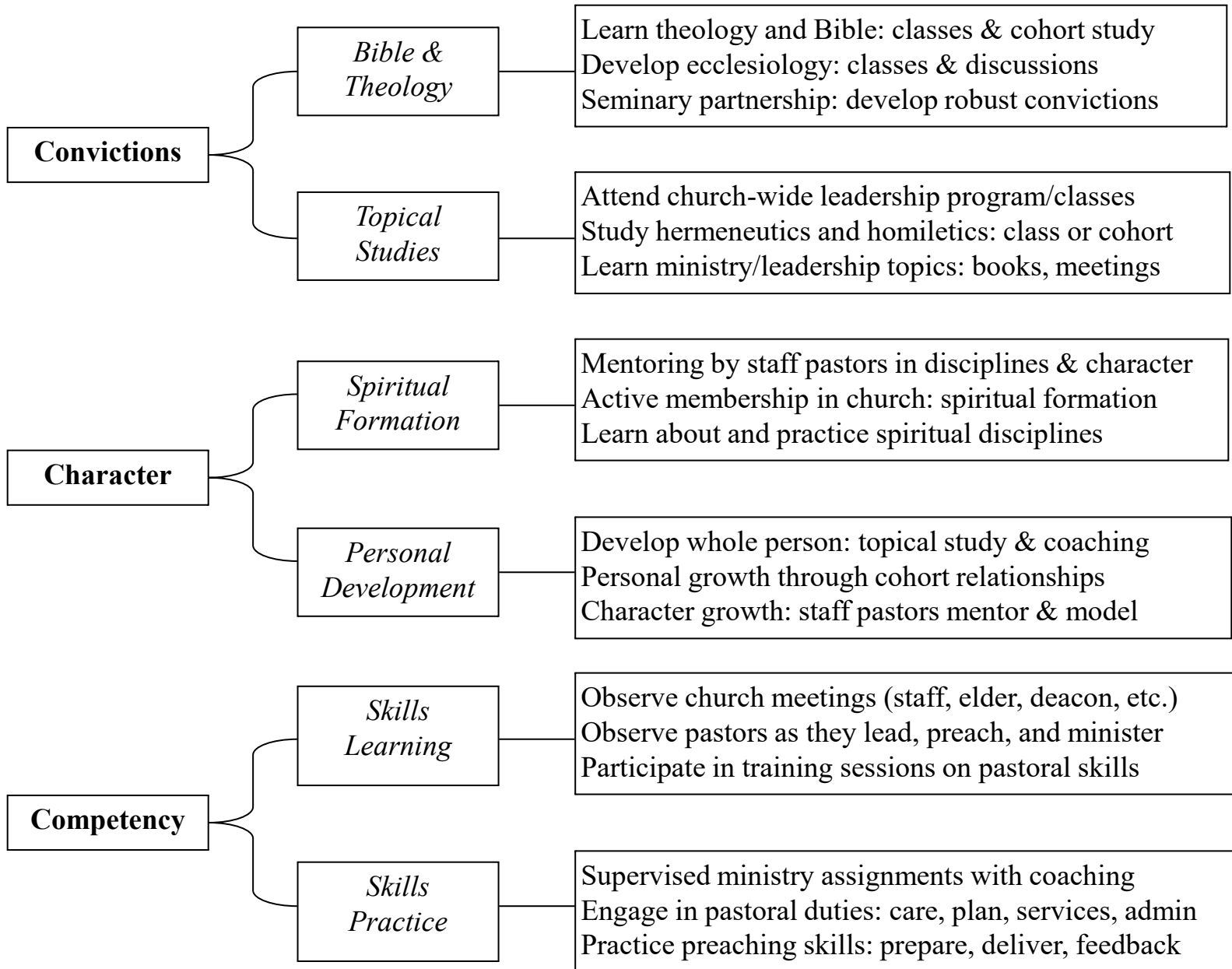
- Practices for spiritual formation
- Practices for personal development

Competency

- Pastoral skills learning
- Pastoral skills practice

Categories

Practices



CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

- Built around the three main categories, six subcategories - centering around the 18 shared practice categories.
- Set of categories and questions for curriculum designers to consider as they build their residency. Lists of tips, examples, ideas.

Three Sections

1. Description
2. Design
3. Details



FRAMEWORK - DESCRIPTION

- Description
- Rationale
- Integration into the Church
- Desired Outcomes
- Curriculum Overview
- Assessment Evidence
- Learning Activities

FRAMEWORK - DESIGN

Each section is designed around one of the 18 shared practice categories with a description, directions, questions, and tips or ideas in footnotes.

- Convictions
- Character
- Competency

FRAMEWORK - DETAILS

Building a sustainable residency program:

- Personnel Needed
- Selection of Participants
- Financial Matters
- Gathering Curriculum
- Residency Schedule
- Starting Strong
- Placement for Future Ministry
- Curriculum Specific Evaluation and Adjustments
- Program Evaluation and Adjustments

RESEARCH APPLICATIONS

- Adds to the literature base, provides categories for other researchers
- Provides helpful models - five case studies of exemplary church programs
- Shows wide variety of options available
- Encourages churches to start programs & partner
- Provides ideas on resources, strategies
- Helps strengthen existing programs
- Assists church leaders in designing a residency
- Provides an example residency program built by using the framework (Stonebridge Church)

RESEARCH EVALUATION

- Results only generalized to case studies.
- Limited geographical scope.
- Limited denominational scope.
- Research design could be repeated in another area or expert panel broadened.
- Church planting, church revitalization
- From seminary lens, those seeking to partner.
- Church-based accredited seminaries.
- Small & Mid-sized church partner groups.

RESEARCH EVALUATION

- Expert panel, very helpful and strong.
- Case study protocols & analysis process yielded abundant data on the three C's.
- Interview instruments greatly aided the rich descriptions, refinement process.
- Cross-case analysis yielded robust shared practices list & recommendations.
- Churches visited were very impressive.
- Personally – such a joy, honor. I was very pleased, for time I had, it went very well.

EVALUATION – Improvements

- (1) Provide additional practical examples for each section.
- (2) Simplify redundancies within the directions and questions sections.
- (3) Define the backward design steps in plain terms for pastors with clear examples.
- (4) Providing more direction for residency designers to equip those called to church planting, revitalization, or missions.

EVALUATION – Further Research

- (1) The framework could be used by leaders of other denominations in a campaign to equip church leaders to start residencies.
- (2) The framework could be modified and utilized by church leaders to specifically train church planters or revitalizers.
- (3) The framework could be used when hosting workshops for pastors interested in training on residency design.

