Adversity in pastoral leadership: Are pastors leaving the ministry in record numbers, and if so, why?

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As churches in the West grapple with the rising tide of secularism, post-modernism and individualised spirituality, the leaders of those churches become casualties of these macro-environmental factors. Statistics show that three pastors in North America leave the vocational ministry every day to move into a different career path. This ongoing loss of leadership must prove detrimental for churches, which in turn are confronting declining attendance figures, declining income and low volunteerism from the membership. It would seem that pastoral leadership is vital to the health and sustenance of the church, and yet churches all over North America are losing pastoral leadership on a daily basis. This article attempts, through the use of Osmer's heuristic, to review why it is that pastors are leaving the ministry and what might be done to stem that tide. A missional ontology in contrast to a Christendom ontology together with a review of workplace adversity and the Scriptural data on suffering in the ministry are developed for the reader as potential solutions to stem the tide.

Introduction

The 21st century is proving to be a time of intense crisis and adversity. Whether it is the economic downturn and the global debt crisis or the tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes and disasters that result from these cataclysmic events, such as the nuclear tragedy in Fukushima, Japan, adversity seems to confront the modern leader at every turn. However, adversity may be a surprising factor in developing leadership strength and leadership capacity. Adversity emerges in the literature as a potential element, given the right conditions and factors (Pellegrini 2009), of personal growth (Durkin & Joseph 2009) and thus also of leadership character (Berry 2007) and the development of leadership capacity (Stoner & Gilligan 2002). Kouzes and Posner (2003:xvii) suggest that leadership 'creates the climate in which people turn challenging opportunities into remarkable successes'. Brownstein (2009:159) concludes that many leaders in North America 'have no idea how to make good use of our adverse circumstances'. He (Brownstein 2009:163) also incisively points out that '[a] leader doesn't herd; a leader doesn't blindly follow others in their foolishness. A leader must have a theory through which he or she sees the world clearly'.

What type of world-view thrives in a context of adversity? What type of leadership emerges from contexts of adversity and then thrives in situations of adversity? Wilson and Rice (2004) point out the following:

> Times of adversity often give rise to unpredictability, fear, anxiety, and loss of confidence. Such circumstances call for inspirational leadership, which gives employees the motivation, commitment, and productivity to take advantage of the opportunities lying on the other side of what seems to be a dark curtain of misfortune. (p. 3)

This general research article seeks to understand how adversity shapes leadership in general leadership and pastoral leadership, in particular, utilising a literature review for leadership in general and Osmer's (2010) heuristic for the effect of adversity upon pastoral leadership. The first part of this article, the literature review, seeks to understand how adversity shapes leadership. In order to achieve this goal, I searched Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health (CINAHL), Elton B. Stevens Co. (EBSCO) and Journal Storage (JSTOR) within the date range 2000 to 2012, using the following keywords: 'adversity', 'leadership' and 'resilience'. Articles in English were included. The second part of this article focuses on pastoral leadership and the impact of adversity by using Osmer's (2010) heuristic to uncover the potential causes of decimation amongst church leadership. The articles also tries to determine what – if anything – can be done to stem the tide? Osmer's heuristic follows a fourfold line of inquiry, namely:

- What is going on: 'Are pastors leaving the ministry because they face serious opposition, difficulty and adversity during their ministry career? What factors contribute to the current exodus of pastors from vocational ministry?'
- Why is this happening: 'What systemic pathologies lead to the endemic adversity and consequent stress that seem to be causing so many pastors to leave the ministry in the 21st century?'

- What should be happening: 'What is the Biblical view of the pastoral role, and is intense and widespread adversity a natural component of leadership and by extension the pastorate?'
- What can be done: 'How do we mitigate the current exodus from the pastoral ministry? Are there strategies and mechanisms that can be developed to help churches and pastors see longevity and health within the realm of pastoral leadership?'

The following question also arises: Why does adversity seem to shape business and 'secular' leaders with seemingly positive outcomes whilst within the ranks pastors it seems to cause career termination and loss? What is the difference between the way in which business and secular leaders handle adversity and the way in which pastoral leaders handle adversity? What causes such seemingly different outcomes in the current global milieu of adversity, crisis and uncertainty? This article attempts to uncover these factors as well as trying to provide some suggestions on how the current tide of the daily loss of pastoral leaders might be stemmed.

Defining adversity and its role in shaping leadership capacity

Adversity can be defined (Jackson, Firtko & Edenborough 2007) as 'the state of hardship or suffering associated with misfortune, trauma, distress, difficulty or a tragic event'. Stoner and Gilligan (2002) distinguish adversity from crisis based on the risk of survival. For Stoner and Gilligan, adversity comprises the following three elements:

- Adversities are unexpected.
- Adversities are disruptive, twisting and thwarting the expected patterns of planned action.
- Adversity has a level of uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding it. The path through it is often not immediately clear.

Jackson and Daly (2011) define adversity as it relates to the domain of leadership within the nursing profession in Australia as follows:

> Workplace adversity has been conceptualized in nursing as the cluster of negative, stressful, traumatic or difficult situations or hardships stemming from working conditions, the work environment and the daily challenges encountered in an occupational setting. It is often associated with excessive workloads, lack of autonomy, bullying and violence, and organizational issues such as restructuring. (p. 21)

They (Jackson & Daly 2011:22) then expand on this definition with a plethora of challenges that nurse leaders face in their daily regimen and conclude that ' … personal resilience is an essential characteristic, necessary for nurse leaders to effectively manage the many, often unremitting, and highly complex demands placed on them.'

In his Asa Yancey lecture, Pellegrini (2009) gives us an example that illustrates this definition of adversity and how it shapes leadership capacity when he states: 'I believe that we build strength when we face the barriers that are put in

our path.' He then goes on to recount his youth in Argentina and the severe moral crisis that corrupt leadership brought about as well as his attempts to change the environment and the difficulties that caused him to leave Argentina to seek a new life in the USA (Pellegrini 2009:143). Pellegrini then outlines his desire to become a surgeon and the difficulty he faced because even though he applied to every conceivable program, no one even offered him the possibility for an interview. Pellegrini (2009) shares that he felt:

> shameful and down every time I received another thin letter with just a few lines of apology for not offering me an interview, but I went on and eventually I was offered a preliminary position at the University of Chicago in their internship program. (p. 143)

Pellegrini also describes how, in the early years in Chicago, he felt like he had lost his anchor (his modes of being, language, food, music, way of living), and so he was adrift, and this drift was the root of his adversity. Pellegrini's experience of adversity fits all three of the criteria listed in Stoner and Gilligan's definition. What is key for Pellegrini is that he had a keen self-awareness as reflected in his personal engagement and the way in which he perceived the reality of his circumstance. He understood his circumstances as a situation of adversity in which he needed to develop a paradigm to address that adversity. Pellegrini's (2009) paradigm is a stroke of genius, and it is reflected in his eight rules represented in summary form in Table 1.

It is clear that Pellegrini faced adversity and that this adversity refined his leadership capacity. Pellegrini reframed his experience of adversity into a learning event that enabled him to acquire, through reflection on a specific period of adversity in his life, a world-view or mental framework that serves as a paradigm for each new situation of adversity he faces in his leadership role as a surgeon. This paradigm, forged by adversity, is so clear and useful to Pellegrini that he felt compelled to share it with a larger audience of professional colleagues in his Asa Yancey lecture.

However, it is not just people in adulthood who develop leadership capacity through adversity. Teenagers facing adversity can also develop leadership traits as (Shepherd, Reynolds & Moran 2010:273–290) point out in their study. They (Shepherd et al. 2010) aimed at exploring:

> … the psychological journey from adversity to resilience, starting with participants' memories of an adverse event (or set of events) in adolescence, and then the processes that constituted their recovery. Resilient adolescents who have coped with adversities such as foster care or early motherhood

TABLE 1: Pellegrini's eight rules.

Strategy	Description
1. Get an anchor	Decide what gives meaning to your life
2. Set your goal	Aim high, follow the direction (of lofty goals)
3. Get a mentor	Do not wait for someone to come to you
4. Knock at the door	Seek opportunity
5. Take some risks	Do something with passion, defy the odds
6. Believe in yourself	Every person is unique, make a difference
7. Enjoy the process	Success is not a destination
8. Keep a balance	Put important things first

typically present personal strengths including problem-focused coping skills, internal locus of control, self efficacy, and positive ambitions ... (p. 274)

Lee *et al*. (2009) present an extensive study on resilience in children in the face of adversity with special reference to the ecological or environmental and cultural factors that influence how people, and by extension their children, approach adversities in life. They go on to state (Lee *et al*. 2009):

It was found that positive cultural beliefs about adversity was associated with a higher level of positive mental health, better school adjustment, and less problem behaviors, even more so for adolescents facing adversity (such as economic disadvantage). (p. 440)

The conclusion that Lee *et al*. (2009:451) draw from their extensive research with three waves of data collected from a sample of 843 Grade–4 pupils is that children exhibit a higher level of resilience in the face of adversity when they experience a better quality of family life. This conclusion is reached after the researchers (Lee *et al*. 2009) point out that:

… even large scale programmatic effort will not be sufficient to raise a generation of young people who are optimistic about their future … Indeed, family is considered the most important source of social capital. (p. 450)

For the purposes of this literature review, what is key in this study is that, in the course of their research, Lee *et al*. (2009:450) highlight the notion that adversity can be a useful element in developing the kind of character in children that would be useful in leadership settings. They state (Lee *et al*. 2009):

… what constitutes the outcome of resilience has evolved from a focus on a reduction of negative outcome to a focus on positive development, such as psychological well-being and a positive outlook–and this overlaps with the concept of quality of life (QOL). (p. 450)

Defining 'adversity' leadership

The concept of leadership is a contested one, but four broad categories (Bolden & Kirk 2009:70–71) of theory can be identified, namely:

- essentialist, which sees leadership as something done by leaders to followers
- relational, which sees leadership not as innate but as residing in the leader's relationship with others
- critical, which sees leadership in a negative light as something used to maintain status relationships and legitimise the unequal distribution of power and resources
- constructionist, which sees leadership as a process of constructing shared meanings that enable people to make sense of their predicament.

Reflecting on Bolden and Kirk's research (2009:69–86), it seems useful to define leadership as an art and a skill in which a person or persons collaborate to construct shared meaning with a view to securing helpful outcomes. Adversity often poses a threat to the accomplishment of those outcomes and thus calls for certain types or styles (Kerfoot 2003:232)

of leadership in response to the threat. Kerfoot (2003) states: 'Leaders help us transcend life's adversity by bringing us together in new self-organised ways that create a sense of belonging and caring among us.' Leadership in the face of adversity must thus take on an inspirational tone (Kerfoot 2003):

… because we create the cultures in which people's spirits can grow, or die, in adversity as well as in good times. Those who can keep the spirit of the organization alive in times of great adversity are the truly great leaders of our time. (p. 233)

Building on this idea that great leaders are those who keep the spirit of an organisation alive in times of great adversity, Wilson and Rice (2004) state:

But steering an organization skillfully through adverse conditions doesn't just happen. Handling the intangibles—instituting more efficient processes, developing a strategic plan, tightening spending, diversifying the customer base, and so on—is in many ways the easy part. The trickier part is mastering the intangibles involved in practicing a model of leadership that is often qualitatively different from and runs counter to the theories of leadership prevalent in modern organizations and in society as a whole. This model is *inspirational leadership*-displaying the skills that enable leaders to motivate, grow, and build confidence in the people they lead so the organization can regularly achieve high standards of performance, even in tough times. (p. 4)

The idea that leadership in the face of adversity must be inspirational is attested to on many fronts. For example, Nancy Adler, in her 2009 Duke University lecture 'Inspiring leaders of the future', speaks extensively about the role of inspirational leadership in shaping history, especially in the face of adversity. For Adler (2009), leadership is courage, and she defines this as the:

… courage to see reality the way it actually is. It is the courage to see possibility even when others cannot see this possibility and label you as completely naïve and stupid for suggesting that there is possibility when others see none. It is the courage to inspire people to move from reality back to the type of opportunity and possibility we would really like to live in. (n.p.)

Adler attributes the roots of her courage to her mother and her mother's stories of intense adversity during her childhood in Vienna as a Jew during World War II and the inspirational way in which her mother, as a 14-year-old teenager, had survived and thrived in this context of adversity.

Wilson and Rice (2004:4) see adversity in an organisation as a great opportunity from which the organisation can emerge stronger, revitalised and more resilient, mature, focused and disciplined. Ferrer (2009:21) asserts the same optimistic perspective on the opportunity that adversity holds within the context of academic heads of colleges and universities within the Philippines. Wilson and Rice (2004) point out that, to achieve positive outcomes in the face of adversity, requires inspirational leadership:

… displaying the skills that enable leaders to motivate, grow, and build confidence in the people they lead so the organization can regularly achieve high standards of performance, even in tough times. As people in organizations experience higher than usual levels of stress, new demands are made on their leaders. (p. 4)

Wilson and Rice (2004:4–5) point out that inspirational leadership surfaces naturally during times of uncertainty and complexity (adversity) and state: 'Inspirational leadership can breathe the capacity for responding to adversity into the heart and soul of an organization, and this capacity becomes part of the organization's culture.' They list the following characteristics and capabilities as endemic to inspirational leadership in the face of adversity (Wilson & Rice 2004):

- Strategic orientation and vision. In adversity, leaders require impressive mental, social, physical and spiritual intelligence. These are leaders who can see beyond the horizon and who are willing to take calculated risks. They are also the kinds of leaders who are naturally compelling.
- Strong awareness of perspectives and behaviour. As people in organisations look for cues on how to deal with misfortune and distress, they turn to their leaders' words and actions for inspiration and for an example they can follow.
- Sense-making communications. People operating in adverse conditions want to believe that they can negotiate their way forward and past the unfortunate events or circumstances in a sensible way. They want to know the goals the organisation will pursue and why those goals have been chosen.
- Competence-building communication. Leaders can support their followers by taking an interest in developing them, helping them reach their full potential and making them feel important and valued. (p. 4)

Workplace adversity and personal resiliency in professional leadership

Personal resilience refers (Shepherd *et al.* 2010:273) 'to a process of dynamic adaptation to adversity – the active process of coping, reframing experience, and even thriving after trauma and loss'. Personal resilience does not describe a finalised state or trait since no one can be classified as resilient in a static and permanent way. Kerfoot (2003) writes in the context after September 11, 2001: 'Extreme states of adversity often create a blur as we try to lead through the confusion of the event.' It seems that leadership within contexts of workplace adversity is extremely complex because there is often so much uncertainty in a world of such rapid and massive global change (Levenson 2002:165–176). Kerfoot (2003:233) goes on to point out that leading through times of great adversity is a new challenge in which the leadership styles of yesterday will not fit in this new chapter because the world is changing so rapidly. Kerfoot suggests that the true test of leadership is what happens when uncontrollable fate turns the world upside down and the leader must, somehow, move forward. Kerfoot suggests that adversity refines and reveals true leadership character and that a leader's capacity is developed if that leader can reframe situations of adversity as a learning experience. Jackson *et al.* (2007) review the effects of adversity in the nursing profession in Australia whilst Brownstein (2009) looks at the impact of the economic downturn on business leaders in America. Pellegrini (2009) reviews circumstances of personal adversity in both Argentina and the USA and how personal adversity better prepared him for life as a surgeon and as a leader within his profession in the USA. Farmer and Officer (2010) discuss the impact of adversity upon educational leaders and possible

mechanisms to address such adversity. In this section, we review the dynamic interplay between workplace adversity and personal resiliency with a view to understanding the innate capacity to respond to adversity and learned capacity to respond to adversity.

Stoner and Gilligan (2002:17–24) focus on the interplay of workplace adversity and personal adversity when they point out that 'adversity has a unique impact on leaders'. Stoner and Gilligan unpack the personal narrative of leaders passing through adversity by detailing the three stages of growth that leaders experience when facing workplace adversity that cause personal distress. Stoner and Gilligan (2002) surface the notion that:

> … successful leaders followed a surprisingly consistent path when confronted with the disruption of adversity. Three stages of response or rebound emerged: disillusionment, reflection and transformation. Each stage appeared to be an essential step in the overall process of constructive adjustment. (p. 17)

Stoner and Gilligan (2002:23) conclude their article by stating: 'All of us face adversity and crisis. None of us are exempt. Rebound leaders make a series of conscious decisions that facilitate their movement through adversity.'

Jackson *et al.* (2007) review a vast body of literature related to workplace adversity within the nursing profession. Their goal in the literature review is to identify strategies that enhance personal resilience in nurses. Jackson *et al.* (2007:1) identify workplace adversity associated in nursing with 'excessive workloads, lack of autonomy, bullying and violence and organisational issues such as restructuring …' Jackson *et al.* (2007:1) go on to state: 'However, despite these difficulties many nurses choose to remain in nursing, and survive and even thrive despite a climate of workplace adversity.' Jackson *et al.* (2007:4) propose that nurse educators better prepare nurses for the ongoing and sustained adversity related to their work by utilising the model developed by the Human Becoming School of Thought (HBST) in which the nurses are able to develop strategies of reflective learning and reflexive practice. Added to this notion of learned resilience through the understanding of the HBST is the fact that they (Jackson *et al.* 2007:5) also point out that 'the personality trait of hardiness helps to buffer or neutralise stressful events or extreme adversity'. They then cite, from the literature, that resilience can be learned and present the following three dimensions of resilience:

- being committed to finding meaningful purpose in life
- the belief that one can influence one's surroundings and the outcome of events
- the belief that one can learn and grow from both positive and negative life experiences.

Another aspect (Jackson *et al.* 2007:5) of hardiness that is more an innate personality trait than a learned behaviour is that of optimism or positive emotions. These positive emotions or the sense of optimism serves to broaden a person's initial thought-action inventory, which increases thoughts and possible actions that come to mind, which in turn builds long-term personal resilience. As a result of these findings,

Jackson *et al*. (2007:6) propose the following self-development strategies for nurses that can help build personal resilience to workplace adversity:

- build positive nurturing professional relationships and networks
- maintain positivity
- develop emotional insight
- achieve life balance and spirituality
- become more reflective.

Jackson *et al*. (2007:6–7) expand the discussion of each of these elements in the rest of their article and conclude by stating:

> We believe that it is not only possible but favourable to build resilience as a strategy for assisting nurses to survive and thrive. Nurses' occupational setting will always contain elements of stressful, traumatic or difficult situations, and episodes of hardship. Therefore, combatting these adverse effects through minimizing vulnerability and promoting resilience has the potential to impact positively on nurses' daily experiences. (p. 7)

Jackson and Daly (2011:21–22) update this study with an incisive article in which they point out the following:

> Today's nurse leaders are facing challenges and levels of accountability perhaps not contemplated by previous generations of nurses. Nurse leaders are sometimes seen as being all things to all people, and Hewison highlights this in posing the question, 'Do we expect too much of our leaders?' (p. 21)

Jackson and Daly (2011:21) also highlight the fact that, although the pressures and difficulties on nursing leaders are real and legion, there is a relatively scant body of literature, and the literature that does exist focuses more on the positive aspects of leadership than on dealing with the difficulties and complexities that can take their toll on even the most committed leaders.

Farmer (2010:1), in a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Georgia Educational Research Association called 'Resilience development strategies for educational leaders'. In his article, Farmer (2010:1) lists the circumstances of adversity that educational leaders in the USA currently face:

- increasing costs
- flat or decreasing revenue streams
- decreasing fund balances
- unfunded mandates
- increasing accountability
- decreasing autonomy
- continued demise of the nuclear family
- increased poverty
- changing demographics
- high school board turnover
- teacher morale issues
- recruitment and retention issues
- aging facilities
- tax payer revolt.

He then goes on to say (Farmer 2010:1): 'It is easy to see how school leaders could allow themselves to become consumed by adversity.' Whilst adversity can be helpful in developing leadership capacity, especially if one applies the matrix developed by Pellegrini (2009) or Jackson *et al*. (2007:5),

Farmer (2010:2) suggests healthy coping mechanisms such as a balanced exercise program and a healthy diet as opposed to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as overeating, alcohol or drug abuse or negative attitudes that can lead to negative outcomes. Just like Pellegrini (2009) and Jackson *et al*. (2007:5), Farmer presents a positive mental outlook as a powerful coping mechanism when facing adversity. Farmer (2010:2) also points out that '[*a*] positive attitude during difficult times can also simultaneously promote personal health and serve as a professional example to both colleagues and educational stakeholders alike'.

Farmer (2010:4), much like Pellegrini (2009) and Jackson *et al*. (2007:5), present a list of healthy coping mechanisms that can increase educational leaders' chances of both overcoming adversity and promoting personal health as follows:

- a routine of exercise and healthy diet
- a positive life view
- a sustained focus on building bridges between stakeholders
- spiritual renewal
- a focus on one's personal mission
- a determination to model resilience
- utilisation of supportive professional networks.

Farmer (2010) concludes by stating the following:

> The incorporation of healthy coping mechanisms into a balanced lifestyle can lead to both positive health benefits and more effective leadership. By utilizing these healthy coping mechanisms as part of their daily life, school leaders are more likely to overcome adversity and accomplish organizational objectives. School leaders employing these healthy coping mechanisms have an increased likelihood of mental, physical and social vigor. Through the effective use of healthy coping mechanisms, school leaders develop resilience skills and increase their capacity to overcome adversity. (p. 4)

Adversity as a useful element in developing leadership capacity

Most people see adversity as an unwelcome intrusion into the rhythms of life. Adversity is certainly unwelcome because it is often disruptive, and yet it seems that the literature, which covers a wide range of professional and personal experience, highlights that adversity has a refining (Stoner & Gilligan 2002:17) and strengthening (Galli & Vealey 2008:318) capacity within the lives of those who become leaders or those who serve as leaders. Building upon Brownstein's (2009:163) notion that 'A leader doesn't herd; a leader doesn't blindly follow others in their foolishness. A leader must have a theory through which he or she sees the world clearly', it seems absolutely essential that part of a leaders worldview (Wilson & Rice 2004:4) must include an acknowledgement that adversity is unavoidable and that strategies (Farmer & Officer 2010; Jackson *et al*. 2007:5; Jackson & Daly 2011:21–22; Pellegrini 2009) to deal with adversity on both a personal and professional level are thus vital.

Strategies for dealing with adversity are listed throughout this article and occur as both intrinsic and extrinsic strategies to deal with the adversity. Intrinsic strategies encompass

worldview, attitude and spirituality whilst extrinsic strategies refer to external supports to be garnered in the face of adversity. These intrinsic and extrinsic strategies are grouped in Table 2.

This table highlights the importance of internal (mental) strategies for developing resilience and leadership capacity in the face of adversity. The extrinsic strategies are also extremely useful, and they possibly buttress and strengthen the intrinsic mental foci essential to strengthening leadership in the face of adversity. It seems that, whether from an early age Lee *et al.* (2009), in adolescence (Shepherd *et al.* 2010:273–290) or in adulthood (Farmer & Officer 2010; Jackson *et al.* 2007:5; Jackson & Daly 2011:21–22; Pellegrini 2009), adversity can be a factor in shaping leadership character and capacity. This is true because, if effective leadership is the ability to construct shared meaning (Kerfoot 2003:233) and to inspire action in difficult and adverse situations, the leader will first have learned this process of refining and applying effective intrinsic and extrinsic strategies in situations of *personal* adversity before applying those same strategies to

situations of *workplace* adversity that require effective and inspirational leadership (Wilson & Rice 2004:3). Adversity presents a threat that leads either to surrender and despair or to an opportunity to grow through resilient endurance and optimism as evidenced (Table 1) in the various paradigms developed for thriving in the face of adversity.

It seems that there is a strong connection (Stoner & Gilligan 2002:18) between success and adversity since there is no realisation of success if there is nothing to overcome. Stoner and Gilligan (2002:18) refer to this as the 'paradox of success: the meaning and value of success are heightened as adverse events build, intensify and are handled'.

Galli and Vealey (2008:324) provide a diagram of the process of sport resilience in which an athlete moves from adversity to positive outcomes. This diagram mirrors the material gleaned in this literature review that suggests that effective leadership first masters personal adversity, whether in childhood through the support of a strong family system, in adolescence through effective coping mechanisms or in adulthood. The diagram is inserted as Figure 1.

As outlined in the literature (Stoner & Gilligan 2002), leaders who succeed in the face of adversity undergo the same process of movement from adversity through agitation to strength, learning, perspective and improvement coupled with a desire to help others. Often such a movement to success is possible because of the predisposing factors, as represented in Figure 1, in the life of the leader such as 'influences' (Lee *et al.* 2009:450) and 'personal resources' (Pellegrini 2009:144). The question of whether or not leaders can develop these 'influences' and 'resources' if they have not been cultivated through childhood and adolescent experiences is something Jackson *et al.* (2007) wrestle with for nursing leaders who face increasing adversity in the workplace. As Farmer and Officer (2010) highlight, wrong responses to adversity are also possible and manifest themselves in 'unhealthy coping mechanisms that are counterproductive both personally and professionally'.
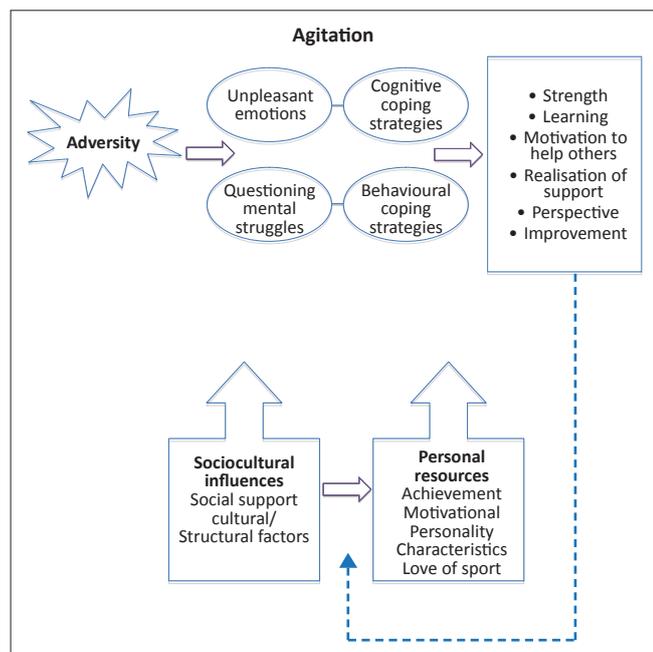
Source: Galli, N. & Vealey, R.S., 2008, '"Bouncing back" from adversity: Athletes' experiences of resilience', *The Sport Psychologist* 22, 324

FIGURE 1: The movement from adversity to positive outcomes.

Adversity and its impact upon pastoral leadership in the 21st century

Statistics inform us (Sherman 2012) that three pastors leave the church ministry in North America every day. This figure

TABLE 2: Strategies to deal with adversity.

Intrinsic strategies	Extrinsic strategies
Get an anchor or define and refine your value system to give clarity to your understanding of life's meaning. Keep your focus on your personal mission (Farmer 2010; Pellegrini 2009).	Get a mentor (Pellegrini 2009).
Set goals and have a 'forward looking' mentality driven by a desire to achieve those goals (Pellegrini 2009; Galli & Vealey 2008).	Knock at the door – seek opportunities (Pellegrini 2009).
Take some risks (Pellegrini 2009).	Build bridges between stakeholders (Farmer 2010).
Believe in yourself and work to sustain a positive life view (Farmer 2010; Pellegrini 2009; Galli & Vealli 2008; Jackson *et al.* 2007).	Utilize supportive professional networks (Farmer 2010; Jackson *et al.* 2007).
Enjoy the process (Pellegrini 2009) by regulating negative emotions and building positive emotions (Jackson *et al.* 2007).	Keep a balance and have a routine of exercise and a healthy diet (Farmer 2010; Pellegrini 2009).
Determine to model resilience in the face of adversity (Farmer 2010).	-
Develop a routine of spiritual renewal (Farmer 2010; Jackson *et al.* 2007).	-
Find ways to enjoy good humour and laughter. (Jackson *et al.* 2007).	-

Note: Please see the full reference list of the article, Elkington, R., 2013, 'Adversity in pastoral leadership: Are pastors leaving the ministry in record numbers, and if so, why?', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34(1), Art. #821, 13 pages. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v34i1.821, for more information.

is startling and represents a major shift in just two decades since Richard Brown (1993) wrote his book *Restoring the vow of stability: The keys to pastoral longevity*. In Brown's book, the concern was with pastors who moved around between churches after a short tenure. Now, in the 21st century, pastors are not moving from church to church. It seems that they are just moving right out of the church altogether. The eminent management researcher, Peter Drucker, stated (Malphurs 2003:63) that the pastoral leadership of a large church is one of the most difficult vocations in the world. This article attempts, through the use of Osmer's (2010) heuristic, to uncover the potential causes of decimation amongst church leadership and what – if anything – can be done to stem the tide. In utilising Osmer's (2010:3) heuristic, we follow a fourfold line of inquiry, namely:

- What is going on: 'Are pastors leaving the ministry because they face serious opposition, difficulty and adversity during their ministry career? What factors contribute to the current exodus of pastors from vocational ministry?'
- Why is this happening: 'What systemic pathologies lead to the endemic adversity and consequent stress that seem to be causing so many pastors to leave the ministry in the 21st century?'
- What should be happening: 'What is the Biblical view of the pastoral role, and is intense and widespread adversity a natural component of leadership and by extension the pastorate?'
- What can be done: 'How do we mitigate the current exodus from the pastoral ministry? Are there strategies and mechanisms that can be developed to help churches and pastors see longevity and health within the realm of pastoral leadership?'

It seems as though something disturbing might be happening within the leadership of North American churches. It is believed that most people who enter the vocational ministry do so because they believe that it is a call from God, and they want to be obedient to that call. Often though, after years of ministry training in a Bible College, University or Seminary, at great personal and financial cost, they enter some form of vocational ministry with an eagerness to change the world and to build God's church, only to find that things may not be as they first anticipated or envisaged. What is happening in North American church life to give birth to the alarming loss of three pastors from the vocational ministry every single day? What factors lead to such an exodus and is there any way to stem what seems to be an emerging tide?

What is going on: Are pastors leaving the ministry?

Statistics (Krejcir 2011) indicate that three pastors leave the ministry in North America every day, and significant numbers experience ministry burnout (Chandler 2009:273–287) due to inordinate ministry demands. The literature suggests that this attrition in pastoral leadership is a global phenomenon, occurring in countries such as Australia (Miner, Downer & Sterland 2010:167–188), Korea (Shinwan 2006:241–255), and the United Kingdom (Lewis, Turton & Francis 2007:1–8), to

name but a few. It is clear that the modern church ministry is exacting a heavy toll upon pastoral leadership. This author conducted a brief on-line survey amongst 51 pastors who have served, or are currently serving, in pastoral ministry in countries such as Canada, Netherlands, France, Germany, Norway, South Africa, United Kingdom and the USA. The feedback from this survey was as follows:

- 98% had served in pastoral ministry for four years or longer
- 75% stated that they had faced serious difficulty in the ministry
- 75% stated that they had also faced intense opposition in the ministry
- 67% stated that they had faced exhaustion and sadness in their ministry tenure
- 52% stated that they had faced hardship in the ministry
- 48% had faced loneliness in the course of their ministry career
- 44% faced serious doubt at some time in their ministry career
- 35% had dealt with feelings of fear whilst in their ministry career.

Whilst each aspect of adversity listed above could be developed further, the key impression that arises from this broad survey of ministry practitioners is that difficulty and opposition together with exhaustion and sadness are major factors within the ministry profile of more than 65% of these pastors. These figures indicate that serious opposition, hardship and difficulty, coupled with loneliness, exhaustion and sadness, form a major part of the pastoral career profile.

Both the literature and the statistics cited above indicate that pastors are under duress, and it seems that many of them are vacating the pastoral ministry as a way to alleviate that stress. Some of the pastors surveyed stated that adversity in the ministry is to be expected, a notion that is discussed further in the: 'What should be happening', section of this article.

Within the narrative section of the on-line survey, pastors were asked: 'Please share any further comments you have about adversity and difficulty in pastoral ministry.' Their responses were thoughtful and enlightening. One pastor stated:

> 'There are two main sources of adversity: the world and the visible church. Acts 20:28. The ruling paradigm for ministry simply does not work in a chaotic and post Christian world, where very possibly most of your enemies are sitting in the pew.' (Participant 34, male, pastor, 50–59 years of age)

Another pastor had this to say:

> 'Our culture's accepted metrics of success in church ministry, and the cult of personality and of the pastor, over against the biblical understanding of the church, not the pastor, as the locus for the dwelling of the Spirit, sets up pastors and prepares us to fall. We need a far more collegial model of church ministry, both pastorally and within our local churches.' (Participant 32, male, lead pastor, 40–49 years of age)

Is there some systemic way in which the modern church is structured that may undermine the health and vitality of pastoral leadership within the local church? Both pastors quoted above are keenly aware of the post-Christendom (Frost 2006) nature of the church in the context of the 21st century in Western countries. Many Evangelical churches across North America need to adapt (Stetzer & Putman 2006:7–28) to a missional ontology. That is to say, the church needs to see herself (Stetzer & Putman 2006:21–58) as a missionary community, sent by God, to reach the surrounding community with the Gospel message. Such a shift to a missional mindset, in a post-Christendom milieu, is essential for the effective proclamation of the Gospel (Frost 2006:28–49; Guder 1998:6; White 2006:vii–17). The reality and pressure of a post-Christendom context for the North American church has been a welcome catalyst in moving practitioners and thinkers to reflect on their current praxis with a view to re-shaping both their ecclesiology and their praxis (Braaten 2008:143–151; Guder 1998:6–17; Suderman 2005:1–51). The eminent Lutheran theologian, Braaten (2008), has developed an excellent treatise on the confluent forces that have led to the post-Christendom reality and the need for the North American church to shift from a Christendom to a missional focus. This leads us to the second aspect of Osmer's (2010:3) heuristic, namely, 'Why is this happening?' What systemic pathologies exist that cause such endemic stress within the pastoral ministry in the 21st century?

Why is this happening: 'Are there systemic pathologies within church life in the West in the 21st century that cause stress within pastoral ministry?'

This brief review of some of the literature around workplace adversity highlights the notion that pastors in Western society are not unique in facing adversity related to their leadership role. What may be different is the rate at which pastors leave the ministry when confronted by sustained and intense adversity. This may have something to do with the expectations (Miner 2007:14) that pastors have upon entering the ministry, expectations that the parishioners will love them, work harmoniously with them and that the church is a safe and peaceful place to fulfil one's calling? Most pastors entering the ministry may be vastly unaware of the leadership challenges before them and the adversity they will face. Indeed, when approaching the question of systemic pathologies within modern church life that may be impeding effective and sustainable pastoral ministry, it may be helpful to think of the local church as a complex adaptive system (Ebright 2010). Complex adaptive systems are 'diverse living elements made up of multiple interconnected agents that have the capacity to change and learn from experience' (VanderKaay 2010). From this definition, it is evident that complexity refers to the concept of many diverse yet interconnected living elements. It is evident when one reviews the biblical description of the church as a 'body' in

1 Corinthians 12, namely that the church is made up of many different and distinctive (1 Cor 12:12–31) yet interconnected living elements or 'members', and so by its very nature, the church might readily be termed 'complex'. Thomas Oden (2006b) refers to the nature of the church's complexity when he states:

> Christianity has never been merely a matter of isolated individuals being converted and voluntarily joining together to constitute autonomous, voluntary organizations of believers. Rather the body of Christ is called out by Divine address, from the world from the outset as a corporate, social reality. There can be no absolute individualism in the body of Christ. The church is from the outset defined as a single living organism, an interdependent body with every member depending on the community of faith made alive by the Son through the Spirit (1 John 1:1–7). (p. 280)

Grudem (2000:951–961) points out that the organising principle of the complex body of Christ is that it is comprised of a community of believers who have come together around a common commitment to the lordship of Christ and their willingness to follow him in discipleship. To fulfil this commitment to Christ and live out their discipleship call, each local church (Erickson 2007:1042) gathers for the purposes of fellowship, prayer, worship, encouragement, evangelism, discipline, service, baptism, Holy Communion or the Lord's Table and teaching (Erickson 2007:1060–1078; Oden 2006:287–365). By its very nature, every person who is a part of a local church has a role (Eph 4:11–13; 1 Pt 2:9) or function (Grenz 2000:486–510) within that local church, as people exercise the Spiritual gift, or gifts, that have been given to them by the Holy Spirit. It is because of this organismic (Oden 2006:281) nature of the church and the corresponding multifarious diversity within the unity of the Spirit, subsumed in the Lordship of Christ, that the church can be said to be a 'complex system'.

Having established that the church is a 'complex' system, we need to consider the notion of the church as an 'adaptive' system. By 'adaptive' system, we refer to the idea that, both within the church and then also outside of the church, there are many different agents acting (Nikolic 2010) and reacting (Senge 2006:73–91). This notion of agency as an aspect of the adaptive nature of systems is extremely helpful when thinking through adversity and the pastorate because it alerts the reader to the fact that the churches in the West, and indeed anywhere in the world, are not static, inanimate entities. Churches all over the world are complex living organisms that are affected by the actions of agents both within (pastors, deacons, elders, members, visitors, etc.) and outside (regional laws, culture, economic realities, family breakdown, etc.) of the church. The linear (Kaiser 2006:46–47; Kaufman 2008), mechanistic (Borden 2003; Malphurs 2004) success model (Rima 2002) of the church-growth methodology may not always acknowledge the powerful impact of internal and external agents that act as stressors upon the leadership of churches and that also impede any sense of success as defined by the Church growth model. The added debilitation of these models is that they create unrealistic expectations in

the mind of the pastor(s) who review this more simplistic and linear model as the authoritative definition of church life and church growth. Understanding the church as an adaptive system alerts us to the need for a keen awareness of and research into the multiplicity of internal (Brunson & Caner 2005; Richardson 1996) and external (Carson 2008; Wells 2005) realities that impact the systemic health and vitality of local churches and the way in which endemic pathologies impact pastoral staff in ways that can create intense adversity. The church is adaptive and this means that it is continually changing as it is acted upon both internally and externally. The church is constantly undergoing movement towards either health or increasing strength, or it is moving towards disease and stagnation (Philips 2001:31–77).

We have identified that the church is both a 'complex' system, and it is an 'adaptive' system. We must now answer the question: 'Is it accurate to identify the church as a system?' Capra (1996) defines living systems in a way that is reminiscent of the church as a living body or organism when he states:

> Living systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller parts. Their essential or 'systemic', properties are properties of the whole, which none of the parts have. They arise from the organizing relations of the parts, i.e. from a configuration of ordered relationships that is characteristic of that particular class of organisms, or systems. Systemic properties are destroyed when a system is dissected into isolated elements. (p. 36)

The church is a system because it is comprised of many interdependent parts or 'members' (1 Cor 10–12) as the Bible refers to them. These 'members' exert influence upon each other that results either in health (Eph 4:29–32; Phlp 4:1–3; Col 3–4) or conversely and unfortunately in un-health (Tt 1:10–11; Ja 4; 2 Pt 2; 3 Jn 9–11; Jude 3–16), dependent upon the nature and purpose of their mutual interactions. As Lars Skyttner (2005) points out:

> A system is a set of interacting units or elements that form an integrated whole intended to perform some function. Reduced to everyday language we can express it as any structure that exhibits *order, pattern* and *purpose.* This in turn implies some constancy over time. A system's purpose is the reason for its existence and the starting point for measuring its success. 'The purpose of a system is what it does. (p. 57)

Pastors who lead the church will find it helpful to gain a stronger awareness of the nature of the church as a complex adaptive system. Such awareness will equip the pastor to look beyond the microcosmic forces that are creating adversity to the much larger macrocosmic realities that intersect, interact and, indeed, shape the various people and families who make up the church. The pastor will also realise that simply maintaining the church to keep the peace is not an option since a system functions best when it is accomplishing the purpose it was designed to accomplish. All that the church does should accomplish the missional purpose of 'bringing many sons [*and daughters*] to glory' (Heb 2:5–10). If the goal of the church is to serve as God's light in the world, sent into the

world by the risen Saviour, perhaps it is essential to change the measurement of success and hence redefine the purpose of the church. If the measurement of success becomes the degree to which the church is serving as a missional community that seeks to make disciples and to shine as light in the darkness, and not the degree to which it attracts large crowds, the expectations upon the leadership of the church and especially the pastors will also change dramatically. This may then lead to a greater sense of satisfaction and health on the part of all of the members who form the church body. If life transformation and spiritual formation through a process of effective biblical discipleship becomes the goal, the size of the church and even the 'happiness' of the members is no longer the measurement of effectiveness. If the goal of the church is not so much to be 'big' as it is to be 'missional' and by implication 'disciple-making', the role of the leadership and the expectations upon the leadership change dramatically as does the leadership's own assessment of their personal and ministry effectiveness.

In North America, and indeed in most Western countries, the church has functioned within a Christendom framework and continues to do so, even though we live in a post-Christendom era. In the Christendom model of church life and ministry, success has been measured based upon consumer values such as the following: How many people attend, how much do they give to support the programs of the church, how much do these people personally support the ministries of the church? Perhaps, in a post-Christendom milieu, the measure of success should no longer be ecclesio-centric or church centred, but perhaps now, it should be discipleship centred or missio-centric according to the call of Matthew 28:19–20. If the leaders of Evangelical churches in the West can shift the focus of their membership away from the old measures of church size as an indicator of success to a missional focus as the indicator of successful discipleship, there may yet be hope for the survival of pastors – and by extension the Evangelical churches that they are called to serve. This is true simply because the expectation upon those pastors and the role definition for those pastors will change dramatically from chief executive officer (in the Christendom model) to equipper and fellow pilgrim (in the missional model). Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006:12) highlight the distinction between the Christendom pastoral leadership paradigm and the missional pastoral leadership paradigm, in Table 3.

If pastors and churches shift their focus in pastoral leadership from the left side of the table to the right side of the table, the churches might be healthier. Not only will churches be healthier with a missional focus, pastors will function more effectively as *facilitators* of church ministry as opposed to the *key functionaries* in church ministry. The leadership dimensions on the right side of the table are far more sustainable because they involve a multiplication process through equipping (missional discipleship) rather than a control process through managing (Christendom).

TABLE 3: Operating models of leadership.

Pastoral or Christendom	Pastoral or missional
Expectation that an ordained pastor must be present at every meeting and event or else it is not validated or important.	Ministry staff operate as coaches and mentors within a system that is not dependent on them to validate the importance and function of every group by being present.
Ordained ministry staff functions to give attention to and take care of people in the church by being present for people as they are needed (if care and attention are given by people other than ordained clergy, it may be more appropriate and effective but is deemed 'second class').	Ordained clergy equip and release the multiple ministries of the people of God throughout the church.
Time, energy, and focus shaped by people's 'need' and 'pain' agendas.	-
Pastor provides solutions.	Pastor asks questions that cultivate an environment that engages the imagination, creativity, and gifts of God's people in order to discern solutions.
Preaching and teaching offer answers and tell people what is right and wrong. Telling, Didactic, Reinforcing assumptions, Principles for Living	Preaching and teaching invite the people of God to engage the Scriptures as a living word that confronts them with questions and draws them into a distinctive world.
'Professional' Christians	'Pastoring' must be part of the mix, but not the sum total.
Celebrity (must be a 'home run hitter')	-
'Peacemaker'	Make tension OK.
Conflict suppressor or 'fixer'	Conflict facilitator.
Keep playing the whole game as though we are still *the* major league team and *the* major league players. Continue the mythology: 'This staff is the New York Yankees of the Church World.'	Indwell the local and contextual; cultivate the capacity for the congregation to ask imaginative questions about its present and its next stages.
'Recovery' expert ('make it like it used to be')	Cultivator of imagination and creativity
Function as the manager, maintainer, or resource agent of a series of centralised ministries focused in and around the building that everyone must support. Always be seen as the champion and primary support agent for every-one's specific ministry.	Create an environment that releases and nourishes the missional imagination of all people through diverse ministries and missional teams that affect their various communities, the city, the nation, and the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What should be happening: 'Are there biblical paradigms for adversity in pastoral ministry?'

What does the Bible say concerning hardship, opposition and difficulty in the ministry, and how does the Bible suggest that pastors respond to adversity? The following question may arise in the mind of the pastor: 'Why am I facing such hardship, difficulty, loneliness and opposition when I am doing my best to serve God?' Does the New Testament specifically, as the road map of the structure and function of the church, say anything about suffering in the ministry? At this point, we attempt to uncover and discuss key aspects in the New Testament concerning adversity related to pastoral ministry.

Paul and suffering in ministry. Whilst it is true that Paul served as an apostle and as a missionary, his service for the Lord Jesus was marked by suffering, and his commitment to suffering serves as a model for those in pastoral ministry in the 21st century. As King (1999:31–100) points out:

> God not only chose Paul to bear His name, but also to suffer for the name of Christ. This prophecy was fulfilled in the life of Paul as can be seen from his own testimony (2 Corinthians 4:7–11; 6:4–10; 11:23–28). The call to suffering was as real as the call to preach and teach. Paul emphasized the importance and inevitability of this in his letters to the churches (Philippians 1:29; 3:10; 2 Timothy 3:12). The call to suffering was of special importance in Paul's admonition to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:8; 1:11–12; 2:2–3; 2:9). In each of the references Paul associated the life of intense suffering and persecution with the ministry of preaching and teaching the Word of God. The concept of suffering is of special importance when discussing an appointment to the ministry because it has a direct relationship to a commitment. The universal requisite for a minister of the gospel is that he will be faithful when the times become difficult. Paul knew of the difficulties from the very beginning and was still desirous of serving. (pp. 31–32)

Many who commit to serve in the pastoral ministry may not be aware of the difficulty, opposition, hardship and loneliness that are part of the commitment to ministry. However, that being said, it seems prudent to seek to ameliorate those aspects of suffering that are overwhelming for a pastor and thus destructive, as well as finding ways to equip pastors to endure adversity when it becomes an aspect of their ministry profile.

Peter and suffering in ministry. Peter served as both an apostle (Mt 4:18) and a pastor (1 Pt 5:1–4), and he was well acquainted with adversity and with suffering. It was Peter (Lk 22:31–32) whom Satan desired to sift, and Luke recounts that Jesus did not deny permission for the sifting, only that Peter's faith would not fail through the sifting and that Peter would be restored after the sifting to enable him to restore his brethren. This instance of trial and sifting seems to inform Peter's urging (1 Pt 1:3–7) to the believers who seem to be undergoing suffering at the time of his writing to them. Peter understood suffering (Osborne 2002:405) as the path to glory. As Elwell (2001) states:

> According to Peter, suffering promotes sanctification (1 Pet. 4:1–2). It does so in various ways such as refining the believer's faith (1 Pet. 1:6–7), educating the believer in such Christian virtues as endurance and perseverance (Rom. 5:3–4; James 1:3–4), teaching the believer something more of the sovereignty of God so that he understands his Lord better (Job 42:2–4), and giving the believer an opportunity to imitate Christ (1 Pet. 3:17–18). If any of these occurs in the life of the believer, it will be evidence of sanctification, and such sanctification is worked through affliction. (p. 883)

For people in pastoral ministry, suffering seems inevitable and part of the sovereign process of refining and deepening the faith of the pastoral leader. It seems, though, that pastors today may not be as fully equipped for the suffering that comes their way, often at the hands of those within the church, and so they are tempted to vacate vocational ministry for some other 'less stressful' position. A systems approach (Richardson 1996) with a capacity for wisdom and differentiation (Richardson 1996:85–89) in leadership and ministry could help a great deal as a component of securing

longevity in the ministry. It may help leaders to understand that suffering is a tool that God uses to strengthen and deepen their faith (and by implication leadership capacity) and that suffering because of bad behaviour by those they lead can be assuaged and diffused through wisdom and differentiation.

There are many other New Testament examples of suffering as a natural part of the leadership of the local church, but Paul and Peter render sufficient exemplars of the verity that ministry entails suffering.

What can be done: 'How do we respond to mitigate the current exodus of pastors away from pastoral ministry?'

What can be done to assist pastors who face adversity in the ministry, especially those who face adversity to such a degree that it causes those pastors to leave pastoral ministry as a calling and as a career? The following suggestions need to be developed and expanded, but they serve as an initial attempt at some potential suggestions that might help to slow the mass exodus of pastors in the West in general, and in North America in particular, who are currently leaving the ministry at such an alarming rate. A number of these suggestions arise from the material cited in the 'business' or 'secular' leadership and adversity section of this article in which these coping mechanisms have been developed and tested amongst secular leadership seeking to cope with increasing complexity, crisis, adversity and uncertainty:

1. *Shift from a Christendom model to a missional mode of church life. Changing the pastoral worldview*: This is a worldview issue as developed in the 'Introduction' portion of this article. How do pastors view their role, the nature of the church and its place within the world of the 21st century? As long as pastors have a worldview that is shaped by a Christendom mentality, they will struggle to deal with complexity and adversity that is so much a part of the new world order in the 21st century. As stated above, it is imperative that the metrics of success and the focus and purpose of ministry move away from a Christendom model in which the size of the church determines the success of the leader to a missional model in which leaders and people see themselves as a community on mission with God to reach their community for God. This major paradigm shift to missional ontology is essential for the health and strength of the churches and pastors in North America.

2. *Shift from high intensity to a balanced life or harmonious lifestyle*: When the 51 pastors surveyed were asked the question: 'What suggestions do you have for helping pastors facing adversity in ministry?', their responses were varied. One pastor stated: 'Keeping balance in your life is essential, that is, ministry is not life it is how we serve God. Life is far fuller and meaningful when we see the rest of what God has given to us to enjoy. Taking time away is important too, though in some situations

the church doesn't give this option. Having a good friend to talk with who will give perspective is of great value. Expect adversity, Satan doesn't move opposition against those who are doing nothing of consequence for God. Don't give up and don't give in to anger and resentment. Try to remember that you are part of God's plan to build his church and it is him whom we are to please.' (Participant 50, male, lead pastor, 50–58 years of age). These are helpful suggestions, especially the notion of balance and the idea of wise counsel from a friend. Interestingly, in this regard in the on-line survey, the following data concerning counsel in the face of adversity emerged:

- 90% of the respondents stated that when faced with situations of adversity they confide in their spouse
- 74% stated that they confide in another pastor as mentor
- 35% stated that they confide in a friend not in ministry
- 7% stated that they confide in a denominational representative.

It may be that one of the ways in which pastors can be assisted in coping with situations of adversity in the ministry is to ensure that they take time to cultivate meaningful relationships with other pastors and with other people outside of the ministry. If these relationships are cultivated at the outset, they will serve as great bulwarks in the face of adversity in the ministry. It would be prudent to train churches on the necessity and importance of allowing and supporting their pastor(s) in meaningful time with other pastors and perhaps even building such collegial interactions into the job description of the pastor(s).

3. *Shift to include resiliency training in ministry preparation*: Bible colleges, seminaries and universities need to prepare pastors (and their spouses?) for the personal cost that a ministry career will exact upon their lives. Leadership training with especial focus in resilience needs to be built into the curriculum of ministry training institutions. This training occurs for nurses (Jackson *et al.* 2007), police officers (Paton 2006) and many other careers that work in high-stress, people-related careers.

4. *Shift to a better system of care developed by denominational resources*: This is clear from the very low percentage (7%) of pastors in the survey who report that they confide in a denominational representative when facing adversity in ministry. Denominational leaders and administration would be well advised to research why this percentage is so low and to find ways to become a resource to the pastoral leadership that serves on their front-lines every day!

5. *Shift to a renewed perspective on the value of adversity in shaping pastors for deeper, richer ministry outcomes*: In this regard, the new book, *Sifted* (Cordeiro 2012) and the web-site, 'Stories of Sifted' (Exponential 2012) are a great first step in reframing pastoral perspectives on adversity in ministry.

6. *Shift to congregational education concerning the high cost of pastoral attrition*: Churches would be well advised to understand the high cost of pastoral attrition to their

effectiveness, health and vitality. When a pastor is demoralised, attacked and filled with sadness, as the survey of the 51 pastors uncovered, their capacity to remain energised, focused and empathic can be greatly hindered. Churches (Christian Century 2011:14) expect that every church should have a full-time pastor. When a pastor resigns from the leadership of a church, it can take up to 2 years to replace that pastor. This is a long time for a church to be leaderless as they work with interim pastors and guest speakers whilst undergoing the process of reviewing candidate profiles, interviewing candidates and then bringing that candidate before the church family for a vote. Church leadership could take a very pro-active stance on care for the pastor(s) by ensuring healthy governance models that deflect and share some of the leadership and conflict issues within the church.

Conclusions and areas for further research

The literature survey in the first part of this article highlights the fact that leaders who succeed in situations of adversity move through a process, sometimes difficult and painful, to a place of resolution and resilience that opens space for new vistas and opportunities to address the problems that the adverse reality has interpolated into the leader's world. Most often these leaders do not enter this movement from adversity to resolution in a vacuum. It seems that this is a learned skill, garnered over a lifetime of dealing with adversity and understanding through familial support and training and other learned thought processes and behaviour, which the leader brings to the realm of adversity. Adversity varies in level of threat and intensity, but the process within the life of the leader to meet adversity and to succeed in the face of adversity remains the same. This article also raises many important and intersecting questions that warrant further research such as:

- Pastoral education and training: What areas of education and training are needed to equip pastoral leaders for effective and sustained ministry in the face of adversity?
- Leadership styles: Which leadership styles (Northouse 2010) are prevalent in situations of conflict and adversity within churches, and which leadership styles sustain greater longevity and harmony within church ministry contexts?
- The church as complex adaptive system: Much more work needs to be done in understanding the church as a living organism and the various ways in which complexity theory and network theory intersect and impact the assigned and emergent leadership within church contexts.
- Effective long-term pastors: What is the nature of the pastors who have sustained their ministry over an extended period of time (10 years or more) in a specific context? What factors have enabled these pastors to sustain an effective (missional) and healthy ministry over an extended period of time within a Western, secular context?

- Missional versus Christendom ontology: Does a missional ecclesial ontology impact leadership health and longevity as opposed to a Christendom ecclesial ontology? We argued in this article that it should and seems to, but further intensive research in this area may prove useful for the Western church in the 21st century.

It is this author's hope that further research into this complex and important topic is quickly developed since the church in the West cannot long survive the loss of her leadership at such alarming rates, nor can she thrive or even survive with a Christendom mindset in a post-modern and post-Christendom milieu. If this article helps pastors to think through these issues and make some changes, and if this article spurs academics and practitioners into a framework of meaningful dialogue and research, it will have accomplished, in small measure, something of significance.

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