

***IMPROVING LOCAL CHURCH GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP
CAPACITY THROUGH NON-DIRECTIVE COACHING***

by
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A final project report submitted in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the project was to assess the impact of coaching upon church leadership groups' discernment of how to make their congregations' governance practices more effective. Three United Church of Christ congregations in Connecticut were involved over a four-month period. To make the kind of coaching used more understandable, a new term was used – “non-directive” coaching. In addition, the project aimed to assess the impact of the coaching upon the leadership development of the participants. The project leader is both an ordained UCC pastor and a Professional Certified Coach with the International Coach Federation who had successfully coached church leaders and teams for many years. He wanted to create a project that would result in data indicating just how effective the coaching was for helping the participants achieve their goals. The project demonstrated that the coaching had a very positive impact on both governance discernment and leadership development. It also identified factors which hinder or enhance the effectiveness of the coaching process.

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This project is dedicated to the wonderful people of the North Madison Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Madison, CT, who loved me through five fabulous years of life-giving ministry together.

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INTRODUCTION

As an experienced Professional Certified Coach with the International Coach Federation, I have had much success applying coaching to a variety of challenges in my ministry settings and with congregations I have served as an external coach. As coach, I have played a key role in pastors having epiphanies that completely reoriented their ministry, and I have helped leadership teams achieve a powerful new focus that allowed them to overcome long-standing problems. I have coached faithful local church deacons to find ways of effectively engaging congregants who had previously been passive.

Coaching gives people permission to change. When quality *non-directive* coaching is afoot, folks quickly realize whether or not they *want* to change. If they do, then the coaching process will help them strategically to focus on specific problems they care about. They will create plans of action that are realistic, complete with appropriate resources, accountability, and a workable means for measuring progress. It's an *internally* driven process, so ownership is high, in contrast to an *externally* driven process where an outside expert proposes specific solutions and programs that often don't quite match with what folks really want. As a result, there is often lower ownership for the outcomes and implementation flags.

Throughout my previous experiences, I had never collected and analyzed data in an academic way to demonstrate the effectiveness of the coaching model and process I use. Accordingly, the object of my Final Project was to assess the effectiveness of non-

directive coaching as an intervention with three churches to assist them to make or just to discern governance changes in their churches, and its impact on leadership development. Due to the limited time frame of this project, I wanted to focus upon an issue that many mainline congregations would recognize as a current challenge they face, governance.

Many church leaders can see what they don't want or like about their current governance processes and structures, yet it's much harder for them to see what they *do* want. Consequently, many congregations continue with governance systems that hinder their ability to achieve their ministry goals, effectively serving as biases against change. And churches that don't change die. "If the world were stable and the religious needs of people stayed the same from one generation to the next that might be okay.

Congregations that persist at practices that worked in generations past find themselves in decline."¹

Common complaints symptomatic of ineffective governance include the following:

- Why is it so hard to find people to serve on committees and boards anymore?
- The same group of people is doing all the work and we're feeling burned out.
- Why aren't the younger people stepping up into leadership positions?
- Why do we have so many meetings?
- Why do we keep talking about the same problems without making any decisions?
- It seems there are lots of folks whose talents and passions aren't being offered or used in the church.
- Why do so many things end up on my plate? (the pastor)
- We seem to be slowly dying....

Antiquated governance practices create unintentional barriers to people using their gifts in ministry, especially younger people. As one United Church of Christ pastor put it, "The problem with the structures we have is that people don't act or think that way

¹ Dan Hotchkiss, *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership* (Herdon: The Alban Institute Press, 2009), 80.

anymore.”² He says he and other leaders in his church want to restructure because they can’t find folks who want to serve on committees anymore. Younger people *do* want to serve, just not in that old way with the committee politics and having to get the group together every time someone wants to make a decision. He wants a system that enables people to get ideas into action more quickly.

Accordingly, I hoped to assess the impact of the coaching upon their discernment of their current governance practices and ways to improve them. This analysis included elements that affect the effectiveness of the discernment process itself. Discernment is also an important aspect of governance, when governance is defined broadly as the various “how’s” by which they accomplish their “what’s.” Hence, I looked for the impact of the coaching upon morale, team effectiveness, leadership effectiveness, the ability to focus and to identify specific behaviors that lead to improved governance, and the like.

I also looked for which aspects of the non-directive coaching process were more or less helpful in moving them forward in their discernment, including items like these: What helped them identify and focus on their real issues and challenges? Where in the process did they gain new helpful perspectives? How did they create the kind of accountability they needed to move toward their goals? What aspects of the coaching process were unhelpful and most helpful? What insights were gained for other aspects of ministry, church life, or personal life? What changes, if any, did the process help to produce? In addition, I was alert to aspects of my model that might be easily applied to helping congregations meet other types of challenges they face.

² Personal communication with Rev. Todd Weir, Senior Minister, First Churches of Northampton, April 14, 2017.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MINISTRY CONTEXT

In the pages that follow, I will describe some of the general sociological issues facing mainline congregations, such as the United Church of Christ in Connecticut. I define what I mean by governance and lay out the coaching process I used with the several churches I engaged, along with why I chose them.

To understand why congregations may be struggling with their current governance processes and structures, let's look at the larger social context for mainline congregations and how it has dramatically changed in the past 50 years, and continues to do so. In the boom days after World War II, life was good for most mainline congregations. Returning veterans with burgeoning families swelled local churches. The building out of new suburbs created areas for new church starts. After the profound disruptions of the war, families were eager for the stability that community organizations like churches offered.

But America was also changing.

If you were born around 1960 or afterward, you have spent your adult life in the vertigo of that unwinding. You watched structures that had been in place before your birth collapse like pillars of salt across the vast visible landscape – the farms of the Caroline Piedmont, the factories of the Mahoning Valley, Florida subdivisions, California schools. And other things, harder to see but no less vital in supporting the order of everyday life, changed beyond recognition – ways and means in Washington caucus rooms, taboos on New York desks, manners and morals everywhere...³

³ George Packer, *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 4.

American mainline religion was changing too – maybe more than it had in a century.⁴ A third or more of the membership in over half of Oldline Protestant congregations now consists of seniors (65 years old or older). Seventy-five percent of these congregations said less than 10% of their regular participants were young adults (18-34 years old).⁵

Bolstering the claim that mainline Protestants make up a shrinking number of U.S. adults is the Pew Research Center’s 2014 “Religious Landscape Study” which finds that 14.7% of U.S. adults are affiliated with the mainline Protestant tradition – a sharp decline from 18.1% in 2007. The median age was 52 in 2014 compared to 50 in 2007, older than any other major religious tradition.⁶

Michael Lipka summarizes the data aptly: “Mainline Protestants have one of the lowest retention rates and birth rates of any major religious tradition, with only 45% of those raised in the faith continuing to identify with it as adults.”⁷ In particular, the birthrate of Whites – the traditional pool of members for mainline congregations – has declined. According to research by C. Kirk Hadaway and David A. Roozen,

Denominational growth is heavily influenced by birth rate.... white birthrate was highest in 1950 and bottomed out in 1976. This correlates highly with change in denominational church membership numbers. That is, in eras when having children is important, church membership for both mainline and conservative churches tends to increase. Accordingly, the rise of smaller families and adults

⁴ Diana Butler-Bass, *The Practicing Congregation* (Herdon: Alban Institute, 2004), 11.

⁵ David A. Roozen, “American Congregations 2010: A Decade of Change in American Congregations,” *Faith Communities Today*, Release (Sept. 17, 2011): 11.

⁶ Michael Lipka, “2014 Religious Landscape Study,” *Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life*, (Sept. 30, 2014) <http://www.pewforum.org/dataset/pew-research-center-2014-u-s-religious-landscape-study>. (Accessed March 3, 2018).

⁷ Michael Lipka, “Fact Tank – Our Lives in Numbers,” *Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life*, (May 18, 2015) <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/18/mainline-protestants-make-up-shrinking-number-of-u-s-adults>. (Accessed February 28, 2018).

without children correlates with the overall decline in church membership in the past fifty years.⁸

In addition, there is a squeezing out of time for church on Sunday mornings as the lives of baby boomers and younger generations are becoming busier and busier. This busyness translates into many more choices for how to spend one's Sunday mornings. More hours spent at work compared to 30 years ago and the rise of working couples means less family time during the week. Sunday mornings are often seen as precious downtime for families and getting everyone into another activity such as going to church is too much. As a thirtysomething family mom and committed church member of my own told me, "My husband's job is very demanding, working 80 hours a week with a lot of nights on the road. Sunday mornings are the only time we have to be together at home as a family."⁹ Consequently, "regular" church attendance is now understood as being once or twice a month rather than every week. Furthermore, the rise of single-parent households adds to the pressure as Sunday morning is a precious time to get much needed extra sleep.

There is a national cultural shift as well. The "great unwinding" referred to by George Packer and the reaction to it by younger generations has been heavily influenced by American-style consumer capitalism.

The moral order of mass consumer market capitalism and the advertising industry it deploys with great influence on American youth does little to promote self-control, moderation, the common good, sacrifice, honor for others, and other traditional religious virtues among youth. Rather, contemporary American capitalism and advertising tend to promote among youth a moral order whose "virtues" include self-gratification, self-assertion, competition, insecurity,

⁸ C. Kirk Hadaway and David Roozen, "Denominational Growth and Decline," *Hartford Institute for Religion Research*, 40. <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/Church&Denomgrowth/ch&dngrw-pt.1.pdf>. (Accessed April 14, 2018).

⁹ Personal communication, September 13, 2016.

conformity, perpetual experimentation, contempt for traditional authorities, the commodification of all value, and incessant material acquisition.¹⁰

These forces have unleashed a de-traditionalization of American society whereby received traditions no longer provide meaning and authority in everyday life. Paul Heelas, a British sociologist, defines this phenomenon as follows:

“Detraditionalization involves a shift of authority from ‘without’ to ‘within.’ It entails the decline of the belief in pre-given or natural orders of things. Individual subjects are themselves called upon to exercise authority in the face of the disorder and contingency which is thereby generated. ‘Voice’ is displaced from established sources, coming to rest in the self.”¹¹

This turning to internal authority has influenced a disestablishment of organized religion.

Since the 1960s a third disestablishment of religion has been under way. In this phase, all organized belief – especially traditional Western religion – has been dislodged even as a custodian of national morality and ethics – replaced instead by the authority of the autonomous individual.¹²

So instead of folks looking to ministers or rabbis for communal moral authority (and the organizational structures supporting their authority), individuals are just assuming that their choices around religion and ethics are purely private matters; external institutions are not consulted. Yet many mainline churches still operate under the old assumptions. The disconnect is that the world has become more individualistic, but church governance remains largely corporate and bureaucratic.

This major shift in authority has greatly influenced the rise of the “Nones.”

According to Pew Research findings, the rise of “Nones,” Americans who do not identify with any religion, continues to grow unabated. About 20% the U.S. public – and a third of adults under 30 – are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling. In the last five years alone, the unaffiliated have increased from just over 15% to just under 20% of all U.S. adults. Their ranks now include more than 13 million self-described atheists

¹⁰ Christian Smith, “Theorizing Religious Effects Among American Adolescents,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42:1 (2003): 21.

¹¹ As quoted in Butler-Bass, 28 (internal footnote #10).

¹² Butler-Bass, 24.

and agnostics (nearly 6% of the U.S. public), as well as nearly 33 million people who say they have no particular religious affiliation (14%).¹³

One category of Nones is comprised of those who consider themselves to be “spiritual but not religious,” with “spiritual” meaning a preference for direct inner feeling-oriented experience of God over one of engaging in institutional rituals. Such folks take whatever is at hand to create meaningful spiritual experiences. They don’t look to established religious institutions for help.

The changes described thus far have resulted in many mainline Protestant congregations being filled with older folks trying to attract a group of younger folks whom they don’t understand very well. Most parishioners over age 65 are happy with this status quo, and since they have most of the power, congregational life hasn’t changed much. They convey a “Hey come join us and do religion our way” attitude. The young people are demurring. As Diana Butler-Bass points out,

The years 1870 to 1950 proved so successful for the Protestant mainline that both the theology and the congregation patterns of *that time* were enshrined as the tradition of the Protestant establishment. Because of their very success, the traditions of established Protestantism lost the flexibility and creativity of earlier generations.¹⁴

This pattern had led to a crisis of leadership: neither clergy nor laity are responding effectively to their changing ministry context. In most cases, leadership is not bringing the congregation’s talents, interests, and passions to bear on the legitimate needs of their neighborhood or ministry field. Put another way: those who could be part of them are not because they don’t see the congregation as relevant to their lives.

The so-called “Dones” are a good example. The Dones are a particular demographic group of Christians whose experience with their churches caused them to

¹³ <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise>. (Accessed February 28, 2017).

¹⁴ Butler-Bass, 77.

choose to leave the church – to be done with church. They weren't marginal types – they had been rather heavily involved with their churches – but they felt stymied by the organization and hierarchy of their churches; it was “stifling their ability to engage with each other and their communities.”¹⁵

These Dones haven't abandoned their faith. In some cases it's even stronger after leaving their churches. Clearly, for them, the leadership in their churches wasn't able or willing to create a ministry environment where they could thrive. The Dones prefer leaders who facilitate understanding rather than ones who convey knowledge and wisdom.¹⁶ The church could connect with them; it can be the place that coordinates the community activity the de-churched long for.¹⁷

But for this to happen, churches must intentionally examine the vessels of their ministry – the ways they organize and structure themselves. This includes formal by-laws with stated structures of boards and committees; processes and habits of the core leadership team; the exercise of leadership both explicitly and implicitly in decision-making.

¹⁵ Josh Packard and Ashleigh Hope, *Church Refugees* (Loveland: Group Publishing, 2015), 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 136.

WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

Good governance is more than committees and policies. Church governance expert Dan Hotchkiss says it includes the top-level tasks of articulating the mission, selecting a strategy for getting there, making sure it happens, and ensuring that people and property are protected against harm. Ministry is everything else: the daily, practical work of the congregation, including the rest of the decisions that must be made about what to do and how.¹⁸ Governance asks: What is our process for deciding to make a major change, empowering people to make it happen, and holding them accountable for the results?¹⁹

A good structure helps ensure that both governance and ministry tasks are tended to well. One might say that structure is a form and governance is a process, but for my purposes here, a congregation's structure – how it organizes itself (committees, boards, etc.) – is so central to the tasks and job of governance that they cannot be separated. Structures that are well suited to a congregation's current life provide “a clear understanding about the pathway to be followed when various decisions need to be made – who needs to be involved, who needs to express an opinion, and where each buck will stop.”²⁰

As I'm describing it here, governance is distinct from ministry. Governance means “owning” the congregation, exercising ultimate control of its human and material resources, and ensuring that it serves its mission. Ministry is the “doing” part – serving

¹⁸ Hotchkiss, 59.

¹⁹ Ibid., Preface xii.

²⁰ Ibid., 60.

meals, having worship services, caring for one another, leading mission trips, mowing lawns and the like, as it works to achieve the results and have the kind of impact it hopes to have.

Governance connects the congregation's work with the concerns of various stakeholders: its members, future members, donors and volunteers; its wider community; its family of related congregations; and its ancestors in faith – the honored dead who are its greater “cloud of witnesses.”²¹

If leaders were always wise and thoughtful and confronted only by routine challenges it wouldn't much matter what their governance structure was. Almost any system works if it is led only by wise leaders and confronted only by routine challenges.

In fact, while most of the UCC congregations I have served have very similar governance processes and structures for organizing themselves, my experience with Pentecostal churches in America and Africa shows me that there is really no one right way to organize a congregation. The earliest churches had deacons, but it seems they didn't have Executive Committees or Mission Boards, and yet they flourished. Good governance is more about having effective processes and structures so that members' talents and resources align with a widely understood sense of overall purpose. It means having ways to make sure alignment is ongoing and knowing ways to course correct when it isn't. It clarifies where ultimate authority lies for each kind of decision and who needs to be involved.

Congregations pick up governance ideas from their particular religious style of polity – Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and so on. In addition, they accrue general practices and assumptions from the American cultural context, such as

²¹ Ibid., 65.

democratic rule and heavy use of committees, and also from their members who bring expectations about organizational life from their daily work lives.

American religious life, for all of its diversity, has a strong conformist strain. Congregations from a wide variety of traditions organize according to a few common templates (congregational, episcopal and presbyterian) and these do make a difference, especially for choosing clergy and addressing conflict. But even congregations with strong ethnic roots eventually absorb the organizational forms they see around them: paid clergy, elected boards, congregational meetings, and committees. With the forms come certain implied assumptions – for example, that the congregation’s purpose is to meet its members’ needs; that it should run itself without much meddling from denominational officials; that clergy should defer to laity; and that laity speak their most authoritative word by voting. The defaulting way of organizing, which sociologist Stephen Warner call “de facto congregationalism,” helps make American religion democratic, lively, fractious, adaptable, and accessible. It also drains great tempests of ecclesiastical variety into a few well-worn organizational ruts.²²

Antiquated governance practices create unintentional barriers to people using their gifts in ministry, especially younger people. Rev. Todd Weir, Senior Minister of the United Churches of Northampton, Massachusetts, now guiding his congregation through a governance review process, puts it: “The problem with the structures we have is that people don’t act or think that way anymore.”²³ He says they want to restructure because they can’t find folks who want to serve on committees anymore. They *do* want to serve, just not in that way with the committee politics and having to get the group together every time someone wants to make a decision. He wants a system that’s more accessible to folks with ideas for ministry so they can get them into action more quickly.

The goal is to create a structure that helps people of the congregation self-organize the ministry opportunities for what they want to do in the church. We’re changing so as to better use the energies of the congregation. Bottom line: I want 10-20% more energy coming out of the congregation.²⁴

²² Ibid., 35.

²³ Personal communication with Rev. Todd Weir, April 14, 2017.

²⁴ Ibid.

This is a leadership challenge. Without examining governance practices, church leaders often spend excessive amounts of time on the day-to-day management and administrative details and little time on the larger strategic questions of mission and purpose. Church governance consultant Rev. Doug Bixby adds, “What I generally find with UCC churches is they have too much structure and decision making is complicated. Deep down most clergy and church leaders know they need to change, but they are afraid of it.”²⁵

The most successful new governance alternatives focus strongly on the congregation’s mission – rather than on organizational life for its own sake. They also have clarity about the difference between governance and ministry, clarity about which buck stops where, and how leaders will be held accountable.

Non-directive coaching can be a valuable resource for many mainline congregations struggling to change in the context I’ve described above. And change is an absolute necessity in this context. Consulting, with its emphasis on bringing outside answers, and mentoring (often billed as “coaching”), with its emphasis on doing it the way the mentor did, are often too “one-size fits all.” They may be helpful to some extent, but local implementation of their ideas is often lacking because the answers provided don’t really fit – don’t have the degree of local ownership needed for full implementation. In contrast, non-directive coaching helps to facilitate the needed change but without giving answers that don’t fit. Rather, because the answers are internally created, they are adaptive, contextually relevant, and owned by their creators – the congregation itself.

²⁵ Personal communication with Rev. Doug Bixby, March 26, 2017.

THEOLOGY OF COACHING

The non-directive coaching process resonates with much in the Bible. The powerful questions that evoke discovery, clarity, and accountability that are characteristic of non-directive coaching appear early in the Bible. When Adam and Eve are trying to hide from God in the Garden, God asks, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9)²⁶ God asked Cain two questions in Genesis 4:6 and 4:9, “Why are you angry?” (a self-awareness question) and “Where is your brother Abel?” (an accountability question)

Even a cursory review of the New Testament reveals that Jesus was a master at asking good questions.

He used powerful questions with his disciples and with many of those he interacted with and healed. While there is a prescriptive side to Christianity, Jesus is not primarily prescriptive. Instead, his model was to elicit and draw forth.²⁷

When his disciples were reporting others’ opinions about his identity he asked them, “Who do *you* say that I am?” (Mark 8:29) (a thought-provoking question). To the paralyzed person lying by the pool of Bethesda who complained about others getting into the healing waters of the pool before him, Jesus asked, “Do you want to be well?” (John 5:6) (a vision question) In fact, Jesus asked more than 300 questions and gave only a few clear answers, as recorded in the New Testament. He realized that the best way to get people to take themselves seriously was a non-directive question approach rather than a more directive answer-driven approach.

²⁶ All quotations from the Bible are from the New Revised Standard Version unless noted otherwise.

²⁷ J. Val Hastings, *Change Your Questions Change Your Church: How to Lead with Powerful Questions* (J. Val Hastings: 2012), 21.

A core tenet of coaching is that the client doesn't need fixing, doesn't need an external agenda or program, but rather is filled with untapped riches and potential to realize her dream or vision. In the words of Ben Zander, she already has an "A."²⁸ The story of David and Goliath illustrates this well. David has a vision to slay Goliath, the giant Philistine warrior threatening King Saul's army, and offers to go fight him. Saul accepts his offer, yet sees David as deficient. Saul says to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth" (1 Samuel 17:33). He then clothes David with his own armor, which only hinders David. In response, David claims his innate ability, throws off Saul's armor, picks up five smooth stones for his sling and successfully slays Goliath.

Jesus wasn't into fixing people, but saw, spoke to, and drew out the image of God in which Genesis 1 says that all people are created. Like a good coach, Jesus repeatedly looked for the "A" – the good, the Image of God, the "Divinity in Disguise"²⁹ – in a person. Folks grumbled when Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus's home, as he was a tax collector, a "sinner." Yet this evoked Zacchaeus's most generous self to emerge: "Half my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Jesus powerfully messaged him, "Today salvation has come to this house because he too is a Son of Abraham." (See Luke 19:1-10)

In fact, an artful coach who is tuned into the client reminds her in times of self-doubt or low self-esteem, that she is, in fact, wonderfully made, and that God approves of and loves her from the very time of her conception, a la Psalm 139:

²⁸ Ben Zander, "Give Yourself an A," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1ANV5BQnJA>, (Accessed, September 7, 2018). Zander is a world famous conductor and teacher.

²⁹ Title of a book by Kevin Anderson, Ph.D., (Monclova: CLB Press, 2003).

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made...
 My frame was not hidden from you,
 when I was being made in secret,
 intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. (Psalm 139:14-15)

Speech itself is one of the coach's main tools. In a real sense, words create our reality. The Semitic tradition is full of this notion, beginning with God speaking the creation into being in Genesis 1. Laura Cunningham points out that much of Walter Brueggemann's work on the Psalms highlights the power of the speech itself. The person laments, and by the act of articulating his words of lament he knows that the current experience, in this case of the Pit in Psalms³⁰, is not how things should be.

While coaching does not involve a specific scriptural or liturgical tradition, pastors who are coached out of ruts may discover a dynamic similar to the psalmist's emergence from the Pit. As they articulate frustrations, recognize they are not alone, and discover new possibilities for action, all with the help of an executive coach, pastors may come to the same kind of "mourning into dancing" energy that the psalmist discovered.³¹

Like an artful coach, through powerful direct messaging that reveals limiting assumptions, Jesus helped people see how they are hindering what they say they really want. Witness the rich young ruler of Luke 18: "'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus answered him, 'You know the commandments....' He replied, 'I have kept all these since my youth.' Jesus said, 'There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.' But when he heard this he became very sad."

Jesus made statements that challenged folks to integrity between their professed values and their judgments of others. To the self-righteous religious authorities ready to

³⁰ The Psalms feature many instances of the writer agonizing about being in the Pit, or thanking God for rescuing him from the Pit, such as Psalm 28:31 and Psalm 30:3.

³¹ Laura Auman Cunningham, *From Rut to River: Coaching Pastors in Stuck Situations* (Doctor of Ministry thesis, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2017), 12.

stone a woman caught in adultery Jesus proclaimed, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7).

In addition, the Bible parallels non-directive coaching by asking people to see and to value their unique God-given gifts and to put them to use for the good of the greater body. Paul uses the image of the church as a body – needing all its parts (talents) to function well toward an end goal.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? (1 Corinthians 12:14-19)

In another example, I imagine that Jesus is challenging the scribe to expand on the notion of “strength.” Assuming that “strength” doesn’t mean only muscle, it could logically be expanded to include all the gifts, talents, and personality traits that a human possesses – all the characteristics that contribute to making each individual a unique being created in God’s image.³²

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked them, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’” (Mark 12:28-30)

Because coaching helps people identify their talents and put them to use for a stated purpose, it’s an excellent tool for discipleship – “for preparing God’s people for

³² Jane Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching: 7 Benefits for Ministry Leaders* (St. Louis: Lake Hickory Resources, 2006), 1.

works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up.”³³ “Put another way, coaching is a tangible way to address the coach’s role as equipper.”³⁴

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.... (Ephesians 4:11-12)

In addition, planning and resourcing in light of goals are foundational to coaching. There is biblical warrant for this as well:

If one of you wanted to build a tower, wouldn’t you first sit down and calculate the cost, to determine whether you have enough money to complete it?
...Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down to consider whether his ten thousand soldiers could go up against the twenty thousand coming against him? (Luke 14:28, 14:31)

My own experience and testimony is that God is present everywhere and continually revealing things to us. Since a basic objective of coaching is helping the client discover new things, or simply to see what is habitually overlooked, coaching can be understood as a tool God has given us to help us see what God is revealing,

If people can’t see what God is doing,
they stumble all over themselves;
But when they attend to what he reveals,
they are most blessed. (Proverbs 28:19)³⁵

My own coaching could be called “Christian coaching” – descriptively, rather than prescriptively. That is, I consider myself to be a Christian. I experience a relationship with the living God daily. The Bible is sacred scripture for me. Yet, I don’t look to the Bible for “answers” but rather for how it can inform my understanding of the human condition.

³³ Ephesians 4:12.

³⁴ J. Val Hastings, *The Next Great Awakening: How to Empower God’s People with a Coach Approach to Ministry* (Coaching4clergy, 2010), 13.

³⁵ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002).

When coaching a person of Christian faith, I can use biblical metaphors and ideas to advantage such as inviting the client to claim his identity as a child of God. “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God....” (1 John 12)

Another powerful biblical metaphor that coaching actualizes is that of the fish. Unlike the consultant whose job it is to give a fish (the answer or solution the client seeks), the coach helps the client to learn how to fish. “Come, and I will make you fishers of people.” (Matthew 4:19). In fact, coaching is a form of servant leadership that helps people to accomplish their goals.³⁶

In sum, non-directive coaching has the capacity to speak to that deepest and best place with a person, the Imago Dei. It provides a process and framework for it to express itself through God-given talents and resources so as to create in the world that which he or she most deeply desires.

³⁶ Ken Blanchard, Bill Hybels and Phil Dodge, *Leadership by the Book: Tools to Transform Your Workplace* (New York: Waterbook-Morrow, 1999), 152.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Upon surveying the literature that brings coaching to bear upon ministry effectiveness, my own general area of inquiry, I was surprised to see there was not only more than I expected, but also that it had been going on longer than I realized. For this literature review, I will restrict myself to the following several Doctor of Ministry theses which seemed to be most closely related to my area of inquiry, and so could offer alternative ways of looking at this area and help me to see what may be unique about my own project in both its approach and its findings.

Janet Lynn Mers's D.Min. thesis is titled, *Developing a Support Network of Coaches to Work with Congregational Pastors in the Christian Church (Disciple of Christ) of the Ohio Region for the Purpose of Revitalizing the Local Church*.³⁷ Her stated objective was to "evaluate the probability of utilizing Christian coaching for revitalizing the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Ohio."³⁸

Laura Auman Cunningham's thesis is titled, *From Rut to River: Coaching Pastors in Stuck Situations*.³⁹ Her research objective was to see if other pastors in "stuck" situations had positive outcomes in working with a coach, as she did: "...how coaching helps pastors remain energetic and engaged in their ministry even when their church and congregational systems are at an impasse."⁴⁰

³⁷ Janet Lynn Mers, *Developing a Support Network of Coaches to Work with Congregational Pastors in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of the Ohio Region for the Purpose of Revitalizing the Local Church* (Doctor of Ministry thesis. Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, xii.

³⁹ Laura Auman Cunningham, *From Rut to River: Coaching Pastors in Stuck Situations* (Doctor of Ministry thesis. Columbia Theological Seminary, 2017).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

John G. McGinnis's thesis is titled, *Equipping Selected West Florida Christian Educators in Leadership Coaching*.⁴¹ The stated purpose of McGinnis's project was to develop an equipping model for teaching Christian educators coaching as a method for developing leaders in the church.⁴²

All of these projects, including mine, cite the declining trend of the mainline church and see coaching as a major resource to help. We are concerned about the revitalization of the church and see the critical role that coaching can play, whether it be helping individual pastors stay vital while serving challenging congregations or local contexts, or as a superior tool over traditional classroom learning to foster leadership development in the church. Put differently: we see how coaching can support leadership development and wanted to demonstrate that in some specific way so others can learn to use the resource of coaching in their situations.

Since the emphasis of my project was to assess the impact of *non-directive* coaching on the process of church leadership teams' discerning how to improve their congregations' governance practices, I was keen to see how these other researchers assessed their coaching, what they meant by "coaching," and what they learned. All were up front about wanting readers to understand the difference between coaching and its sister disciplines of mentoring, counseling, therapy, consulting, and spiritual direction. We all agree that what sets coaching apart is its forward-looking approach to helping coachees solve their problems themselves. We share the conviction that they don't need fixing, but rather a skillful conversation partner to help them discover and create what they most deeply want in any given situation.

⁴¹ John G. McGinnis, *Equipping West Florida Christian Educators in Leadership Coaching* (Doctor of Education Ministry thesis. New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 46.

In consulting and mentoring, the expertise lies in the consultant or the mentor and is transferred to the person. In coaching, on the other hand, the expertise lies in you, the person being coached. The coach's role is to help you discover how to use more of your own potential and how to determine a strategy for which expertise is needed that doesn't already exist.⁴³

However, what we mean by "coaching" does differ in other respects and these differences influenced what was assessed. My colleagues used different names for coaching such as "Executive Coaching," "Leadership Coaching," "Ministry Coaching," "Christian Coaching" and, of course, just plain "Coaching." No one else used the term "non-directive coaching."

Their methods for assessing the efficacy of coaching fell into two main categories. One is that of simply interviewing those who had been coached and then interpreting the results, as did Cunningham; and two is that of creating a model or process for how to teach coaching skills to church leaders so as to make them more effective in their church roles, as did McGinnis, or to use these coaching skills to coach their peers, as did Mers.

Cunningham's approach was the most similar to mine. While she called it "Executive Coaching," it was, in fact, the kind of straightforward non-directive coaching associated with the International Coach Federation. Both of us highlighted how coaching can help those who are stuck – whether pastors in challenging church situations, or churches with outdated systems of governance. In fact, her problem analysis included quotations very similar to what some of my participants told me: "What's wrong with us that people don't want to come to our church?" and "We have resources now, but what's

⁴³ Gary R. Collins, *Christian Coaching: Helping Others Turn Potential into Reality* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001) as quoted in Jane Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching: 7 Benefits for Ministry Leaders* (St. Louis: Lake Hickory Resources, 2006), 15.

going to happen to us in a few years when we're all gone?"⁴⁴ In addition, she didn't call it "Christian" coaching, as did Mers and McGinnis, but simply drew out biblical examples of the coaching process at work. "Although coaching may not have a specific religious bent, the coach's work may function in the same way as a salvific oracle."⁴⁵

The major difference between Cunningham's approach and mine was that she didn't directly participate in the coaching process herself, nor is she trained as a coach. Rather, inspired by her own successful experience in working with a coach, she simply interviewed two Presbyterian Church, USA (PCUSA) colleagues who seemed also to be in "stuck" situations and who also had received coaching (though by a different coach). She had them describe their experiences of being coached to help her understand how coaching helped them. Her 12 interview questions were all subjective, such as these: "How has coaching been a resource for you?" "How has coaching helped you lead in the midst of a messy or stuck situation?" and "Describe a situation in which your coach helped you reframe a problem or situation so that you were able to move in a (new) direction."⁴⁶

In short, because she did not coach the pastors herself, as I did, she wasn't able to track the movement of specific characteristics or features, such as morale and one's leadership effectiveness, but could only assess things from the angle of the finished product as a third party. Consequently, the depth and breadth of her data were much less than mine and so she lacked the ability to draw the depth and nuance of conclusions that I

⁴⁴ Mers, 7.

⁴⁵ Cunningham, 12. She draws upon Psalm 30 as describing a process of deliverance, of Yahweh bringing up the psalmist's soul from Sheol and restoring him to life from those gone down to the pit.

⁴⁶ Cunningham, 41.

was able to. For example, I was able to conclude that participation itself in a non-directive coaching process grows leadership capacity in the participants.

For their part, both Mers and McGinnis chose the approach of training a selected group of people in basic coaching skills for the purpose of their using these to help others. They assessed the coach skills acquisition process, and where applicable, how well these new coaches used their skills in coaching others.⁴⁷

In Mers's case, a Support Network of Coaches (SNC) was trained in "advanced Christian Coaching techniques." Then each SNC person, now part of the "Transformation Team," coached a local pastor who covenanted to be a "Transformation Pastor."⁴⁸ Both the SNC and the local pastor evaluated the coaching initiative by rating the effectiveness of the process and by giving written comments. The scale was small: four SNC coaches and six coachees.

Again, however, it seems Mers herself is not a trained coach. There is no evidence that she has received non-directive ICF-type coach training herself, of being trained in ICF certified Core Competences of coaching.⁴⁹ The judicatory materials promoting her project refer to her as "the leading coaching resource for the Transformation Team."⁵⁰

It seems the process that Mers describes in her "coaching of the coaches" is really a mentoring and checking-in process with those who did the actual coaching. She asked them a series of the same questions each time to help them improve their coaching of the coachees:

- "How do you feel your coaching sessions went this week?"

⁴⁷ Such as Sean P. Pierce, *Equipping Ministry Leaders to Coach Other Ministry Leaders in Hudson Baptist Association* (Doctor of Ministry thesis. Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).

⁴⁸ Mers, 90.

⁴⁹ See Appendix 5 for a summary of the ICF Core Competencies.

⁵⁰ Mers, 91.

- “What blessings have come from your sessions?”
- “What difficulties did you have in your coaching sessions?”
- “Where were you able to sustain a coach approach?”
- “How can I help you?”
- “What further training would you like to pursue today?”⁵¹

It seems she was in the role of a sports coach, though a sports coach who has never played the sport she is coaching. And being on the sidelines, unlike myself, she was unable to assess the effectiveness of the coaching as a participant in the process – as an insider – but only as an external observer.

In McGinnis’s case, he focused on creating an effective training method to teach a carefully researched and vetted coaching skill set to church educators and then to assess how well the learners were able to use the new coaching skills in actual coaching interactions. The centerpiece of his project was a two-day training event followed by a field practicum. As an educator, not a pastor, McGinnis was especially keen to embrace coaching as a process learning mode which he sees as superior to the traditional event-driven learning mode, as he described it. And as with Mers and Cunningham, McGinnis himself did not directly participate in the coaching process, nor is he trained as a coach. Rather, his role was the Project Director.

This brings me to another finding in my literature review. Mers and McGinnis, as well as Pierce⁵² and several others I reviewed, refer to their coaching as “Christian” Coaching. (Mers alternately calls it “Ministry” coaching, but it seems to be the same thing.) What they are advocating for and assessing is the impact of “Christian” coaching, as distinct from non-directive coaching, as I did.

⁵¹ Mers, 101.

⁵² Sean P. Pierce, *Equipping Ministry Leaders to Coach Other Ministry Leaders in Hudson Baptist Association* (Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).

They draw heavily on the writing of Jane Creswell, PCC, and others,⁵³ “Coaching focuses on promoting discovery. Christ-centered coaching additionally utilizes the power of the Holy Spirit in that discovery process.”⁵⁴

For McGinnis, “The ultimate goal of Christian coaching is to encourage people to become fully devoted followers of Christ,”⁵⁵ and “Christian coaches want the people being coached to move in directions that are consistent with biblical teaching.”⁵⁶ McGinnis says that Christian coaches should abide by ICF standardized rules and procedures for professional coaches, but claims a significant difference between secular and Christian coaching.⁵⁷

Coaching methodology and skill are similar but motive and means are not. Christian coaches rely on the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to guide the coaching process. Furthermore, the relationship between the coach and client has a qualitatively spiritual difference.⁵⁸

McGinnis refers to Collins: “Collins suggests that Jesus coached by showing the disciples the way to go, observing their process, correcting their misunderstandings, and encouraging them to go out on their own. Jesus gave feedback, re-evaluated their performances, and redirected them when they needed correction.”⁵⁹

This model is much like sports coaching or mentoring. Christian coaching for him means the coach is actively involved in steering and shaping the coachee’s outcome by evaluating the coachee’s performance and redirecting the coachee as the coach sees fit. This doesn’t seem to be non-directive coaching, even though it may bear similarities to it,

⁵³ See Chad W. Hall, Bill Cooper and Kathryn McElveen, *Faith Coaching: A Conversational Approach to Helping Others Move Forward in Faith*, (Hickory: BookSurge Publishing, 2009)

⁵⁴ Creswell, 13.

⁵⁵ McGinnis, 45.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

such as deep listening, powerful questions, and holding the coachee accountable for action steps.

As for Mers, she states that a second distinction driving the focus of her project is Christian coaching versus secular coaching. “The working definition of Christian Coaching for this paper is defined as the presence of the Holy Spirit working through the coach to bring about transformation in the life of the person being coached, which ultimately revitalizes the local church.”⁶⁰ However, I don’t think the Holy Spirit operates only through the coach, but rather also through the process. Non-directive coaching is a process through which Providence can operate, and this process includes all those involved – coach, coachees, Holy Spirit, deep listening, powerful questions and all.

So I puzzle over why some people of faith like Mers and McGinnis seem insistent on calling it Christian Coaching. This move does fit with the theologically conservative Christian concern to boundary God’s movement and domain. Labeled as such it could help justify using a secular tool in the church and help others in ministry to benefit from the power of coaching, rather like “Christian” counseling. And yet, we also know that potlucks are useful for enhancing fellowship in churches, yet I haven’t seen anyone trying to identify “Christian Potlucks” so as to legitimize the social benefits of potluck gatherings in ministry contexts. Similarly, work projects are often used by churches to serve their communities, but they aren’t often called “Christian Work Projects,” taking exception for the popularity of “Mission Trips.”

This Christian coaching model also appears to prescribe how God works. Somewhat contrastingly, my coaching may allow the Holy Spirit a bit more mystery. I wonder: Can my way of non-directive coaching also be called “Christian”? My

⁶⁰ Mers, 3.

experience and testimony is that God is present everywhere and is continually revealing things to us. Since a basic objective of coaching is to help the client discover new things, or simply to see what is habitually overlooked, the kind of coaching I offer can perhaps also be understood as a tool God has given us to help us see what God is revealing.

When coaching a person of Christian faith, I sometimes use biblical metaphors and ideas to advantage such as inviting the client to claim his identity as a child of God. “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God...” (1 John 12)

Certainly, by my way of thinking, the coaching that I and my participants experienced was Christian coaching – but not in a formulaic way. My participants were all professing Christians – including three ordained Christian ministers of the Gospel. We deliberately began each coaching session with mediation and prayer, invoking God’s direction and Spirit to guide us and to create results resonant with God’s will. We concluded each session with a formal Benediction. Regularly throughout the coaching session one of us would sense God’s Spirit at work and name it as such. Furthermore, the coaching was brought to bear directly on the ministry of the several churches that participated in my project.

And I could also quite authentically call it Christian coaching as it followed many of Jesus’ own examples and behavior (and God’s too) as noted in scripture. (See my Theological section). Even though we didn’t label it “Christian” coaching it still resulted in positive outcomes for Christian ministry.

It seems from an, albeit, cursory review of other Doctor of Ministry projects that non-directive coaching is still very new to the church world. In addition to my project’s

contribution of the assessment of non-directive coaching, it had other apparently novel aspects. One is that the relationship with my participants was markedly different from that of the other three with their participants. I am the only one who is a PCC level coach and the only one who did the coaching, experiencing it from the inside as a participant and therefore able to draw deeper level assessment as to the effectiveness of the coaching itself. In addition, my format of combining both group coaching and one-on-one coaching of the pastors seemed unique, as was doing so within the integrity of particular organizations (churches) – coaching the pastors and leadership teams in the context of their own church rather than coaching pastors or church leaders of other churches.

Lastly, I conclude that the Christian coaching used in the Doctor of Ministry theses surveyed above is not non-directive as I understand it, but brings a certain directiveness to the coaching conversation. While my coaching in the project was Christian in the sense that I am a Christian and the non-directive character of it modeled much of Jesus' own behavior, it is distinct from the other coaching types described in this section. Accordingly, my project added to the field in that it demonstrated that God can be at work in a coaching process when both coachee and coach draw on the movement of the Holy Spirit and the presence of Christ regardless of what the process is called. My hope is that this will make it appear more accessible and useful to those who may reflexively equate Christian coaching with more conservative theological views, even though that may not be the case.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS I TOOK AND HOW I DID THEM

In this section I will discuss what actually took place with this project: How I approached it (the preparation and set up), along with how the coaching actually happened and the metrics I used.

WHAT COACHING IS AND HOW IT WORKS

The first challenge I had to overcome in my goal of assessing the effectiveness of non-directive coaching was to communicate what, in fact, it is. My experience is that not only do many people not understand what I mean by “coaching;” they often misunderstand it. That is, they *think* they understand what I’m talking about when often they don’t. This gap is one of the major barriers to people’s taking advantage of coaching’s benefits.

Lots of folks in the church world call themselves coaches; say they offer “coaching.” What they’re actually offering is often consulting or mentoring. While there are similarities between the type of coaching I used with this project, and consulting, mentoring or even spiritual direction, the differences are significant and important to understand.

For the purposes of this project, I used a new term: *non-directive* coaching. It's non-directive in the sense that the coach does not bring the answer or solve the problem for the coachee, or tell the coachee how to proceed or what to do, or the "right way" to do it. These are all consultant, or athletic-type coach roles. In contrast, with non-directive coaching, the *coachee* is recognized as the context and content expert and is responsible for the outcome. Ownership begins and ends with the coachee and is never handed off. The coach sets the container that allows a rich discovery process for the coachee. The coachee does most of the work, which makes for high ownership of the results. High ownership is directly linked to high likelihood of follow through and implementation.

The coaching perspective is that coachees are capable of generating their own solutions. The role of the coach is to provide a discovery-based framework that taps further into the expertise of the person or group being coached.⁶¹

Accordingly, during each coaching session a goal for that session is articulated – something the client has discovered he or she really wants. The remainder of the session is spent on helping the client create specific actions to get what is wanted in a manner that is appropriate, together with the resources and necessary accountability.

COACHING AND GOVERNANCE

The congregations engaged with this project had all identified challenges with their system of governance. They wanted change. Coaching gives permission to change. When quality non-directive coaching is afoot, folks quickly realize whether or not they

⁶¹ J. Val Hastings, *Accelerated Coach Training* (Coaching4Clergy, 2011), 6.

really *want* to change. If they do, the coaching process helps them focus on specific problems they care about. They will create plans of actions that are realistic, complete with appropriate resources, accountability, and means for measuring progress.

The secret to intentional change is to engage the system's own deepest motivations – including its resistance to change. A system changes willingly when it sees change as a necessary way to continue being what it truly is.⁶² System change requires wide participation and *starts by asking questions* rather than by providing answers. What do you value in the current structure? What do you find difficult or frustrating? What do you hope for from a new way of organizing?

Rev. Todd Weir, to whom I referred earlier, points to a societal shift away from bureaucratic structures to team-based flexible ones that are more self-organizing. “Folks in my church behave in a team-based way in their daily work lives and want to be this way in church life too.”⁶³ Existing bureaucratic structures create leadership bottlenecks in two main ways. The first, Weir says, is when “folks wait for leadership to come to them with an idea.” The second is when “someone brings an idea to me, the pastor, and expects me to take the next step with it. So now I’m the bottleneck.”⁶⁴

Weir observes the need for the culture of his congregation to change along with the wider culture, which is using technology more and more, so that individuals can get their ideas for ministry into action more quickly and efficiently – a more self-organizing structure. For this to happen, he suggests the church must recognize that folks these days want to use it like they use Facebook – as a platform to which they bring their individual ideas and put them into the world.

⁶² Hotchkiss, 160.

⁶³ Personal communication, April 10, 2017.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

The church is a platform, like Facebook is a platform. The church is Facebook with a vision statement. The pastor's role is that of coach, not CEO. The goal is to create a structure that helps people of the congregation to self-organize the ministry opportunities for what they want to do in the church.⁶⁵

Coaching models this way of organizing by bringing the clients a platform that allows them to discern new ideas and get them into the world in a concrete way. Like Facebook, the client retains full ownership for what happens or doesn't happen. Coaching is essentially a self-organizing process. My hope for the congregations I coached for my project was that the ethos of the coaching process itself would rub off on them and influence their new governance structure.

I used the coaching format that I have been successfully using with several leadership teams I've engaged in my professional coaching practice. While I will cover the step-by-step details in a later section, here's the process in brief. Two local judicatory regional ministers put me in contact with Connecticut UCC solo pastor congregations in their respective areas, those they knew to be struggling with governance and also seemed eager to do something about it by participating in my project. With that referral, I had an introductory phone call with each pastor and followed it with a four-page description of the project⁶⁶ designed to help prospective participants understand what would be required of them and how they could expect to benefit. In turn, each pastor shared this with his or her leadership teams, with whom I then had a two hour in-person meeting at their location to go through the details. We discussed how we would have a total of nine coaching sessions – four one-on-one with me and the pastor, and five group sessions. It would start with a two-hour group session on site, and the rest of the sessions, about 60 to

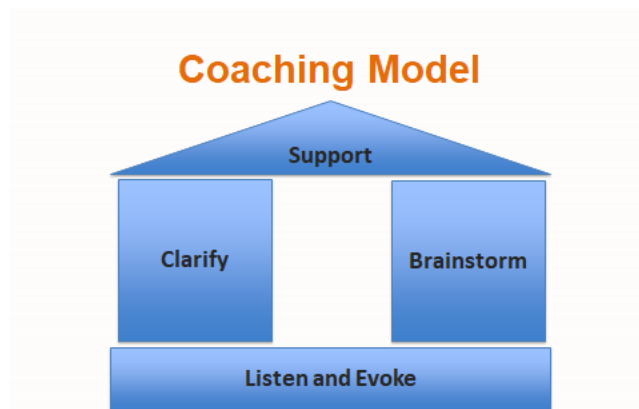
⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ See Appendix 8 for the document: "Doctor of Ministry Final Project – Description for Potential Participants."

90 minutes each, would be via the Zoom Internet platform. We also went through the assessment procedure. I showed them a copy of the Initial Assessment, saying that I would ask each person to fill it out at the beginning of our first group session. They could see that it asked them about their current governance practices and procedures – what’s going well, and not so well, and also asked about their hopes for the coaching and their prior experience with non-directive coaching. I described how there would be a similar Middle Assessment and Final Assessment, all of which would require their thoughtful participation. Two of the three decided on the spot to participate and the third opted in the following day – all enthusiastically.

THE COACHING MODEL USED

There is a variety of non-directive coaching models. As an experienced coach, I tend to blend them. However, for clarity, a five-step coaching model is the basic foundation for my work and is the one I used here. It’s the one that my first coach, J. Val Hastings, Master Certified Coach, conceived of and taught me and is used by his organization Coaching4Clergy, of which I am a faculty member.



Within these five steps are embedded the Coaching Core Competencies as described by the International Coach Federation (See Appendix 5). You’ll notice that none of these has anything in particular to do with church governance. They are non-directive context-free competencies that can be used in many different settings. This is an important point, because my role with this project is that of a non-directive coach, not a consultant. Granted, I do know a good bit about church governance, and therefore I will likely tailor my coaching approach as I engage with each church, but this is what any good coach would do. In all cases, I will avoid content-driven formulaic approaches that could in any way be experienced by the coachee as my solving their problem for them. I adhere to a non-directive approach that could be used with *any* kind of problem they may present – governance or otherwise.

Deep listening is the foundation for non-directive coaching. This cannot be overstated. What the coach learns about the coachee – the one being coached – through deep listening lays the foundation for everything else. The coach listens for what is said and what is unsaid. This kind of listening draws out the best and deepest from the coachee. British psychologist Nancy Kline got it right: “The quality of the listening

drives the quality of the thinking.”⁶⁷ This quality of listening evokes deeper level thinking by the coachee. Having first set a safe place for exploration for the coachee, the coach’s curiosity and total dedication to the coachee’s agenda evokes further exploration by the coachee about what they really want and most deeply desire. The coach listens without judgment, listens for the greatness in the coachee, listens for limiting beliefs and false assumptions, and listens for the larger context.

The coach supports the coachee’s forward movement by occasionally reflecting back what he has heard so that the coachee can clarify where she is in her process of discovery. In addition, the coach employs powerful questions that invite new avenues of coachee exploration, such as limiting beliefs or false assumptions. Some examples of powerful questions –

- “What do you really, really want?”
- “What do you want to be able to say at the end of our time today that you can’t say now?”
- “What can we create together in these next weeks (months) that would change everything?”
- “What’s stopping you?”
- “What action have you taken that you are really proud of?”
- “Where are we now?”
- “What’s next?”
- “What is the real challenge for you in this?”
- “What do you need to say ‘no’ to in order to make room for what you want?”
- “How will you know you have moved on this?”
- “What support and accountability do you need here?”

Notice that non-directive coaching questions focus on the *process* not the story. Unlike consultants, non-directive coaches don’t need to understand all the contextual and situational details of what happened – who was involved, who said what, what has been done already, etc. Rather, they only ask questions that move the *coachee* forward. They

⁶⁷ Nancy Kline, *Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind* (Portland: Octopus, 1999), 70.

invite the coachee to dig deeper into what is beyond the problem – the dream of what the client really wants, but often isn't conscious of. A good coaching process gets the client talking about what is important, and then keeps them talking by deep listening and powerful questioning that invite discovery and new awareness. The artful coach brings no agenda other than to serve the client as powerfully as possible.

Accordingly, during each coaching session a goal for that session is articulated – something the client has discovered he or she really wants. The remainder of the session is spent on helping the client create specific actions to get what is wanted in a manner that is appropriate, together with the resources and necessary accountability.

UPFRONT AGREEMENTS WITH PARTICIPATING CONGREGATIONS AND PASTORS

It's important to note that since this project involved collecting a lot of data about the participating congregations and pastors, I laid out clearly up front with prospective participants that the identities and names of the individual participants and congregations would be disguised in my final write-up. I emphasized that in no way would the data be used to evaluate the effectiveness or job performance of the pastor or any other participant, and that it would not be used to convey any kind of evaluative opinion about the participants to judicatories.

As referenced earlier, using the non-directive coaching terminology above, I created a four-page document for use by potential project participants as well as those

in a position to introduce me to potential project participants.⁶⁸ In this document I detailed the essential components around mutual expectations and agreements, as well as the desired characteristics of participating churches. I was looking for solo pastor congregations in the Connecticut Conference of the UCC, whose pastor has been with them two or more years,⁶⁹ the point being that his or her leadership and relationship with the congregation was well established.⁷⁰ For the coaching itself, I asked each church to gather a five-to eight-person team that included the pastor. I also asked not only that the pastor and team participate fully and enthusiastically in the coaching process, but also that the overall leadership body of the church actively support their participation. In addition, the pastor and team were expected to have recognized that their congregation's governance needed work and that they were willing to work on it.

I asked them to be available and committed for a three-to four-month period to participate in an initial two-hour onsite coaching session and four subsequent 60-90 minutes sessions for the team, and four 60-90 minutes sessions for the pastor. This plan included conscientiously following up with the commitments they made during the coaching sessions as well as filling out and sending me a Focus Report⁷¹ before each subsequent session. In addition, I asked for them to thoughtfully fill out three assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the coaching. To help create a professional quality relationship, the pastor and I reviewed and signed the same kind of Coaching Agreement

⁶⁸ See Appendix 8 for the document: "Doctor of Ministry Final Project – Description for Potential Participants."

⁶⁹ As it turned out, one pastor had been with the congregation only three months. I'll say more about this later.

⁷⁰ So as to have each team enter the process on equal footing, I ruled out congregations and pastors whom I already knew pretty well.

⁷¹ See section titled, "Some Details about Assessments, What the Coachees Did Between Sessions" for the simple Focus Report format.

that I use with my professional clients.⁷² In turn, I committed to serving them as fully and powerfully as I do professionally with my paying clients – to be fully available to them during our journey together.⁷³

In addition to specifying how the information gathered would *not* be used, I explained how it would be used, namely to assess which aspects of the non-directive coaching process were more or less helpful in moving them forward in their discernment. This assessment included these areas of concern: What helped them identify and focus on their real issues and challenges? Where in the process did they gain new helpful perspectives? How did they create the kind of accountability they needed to move toward their goals? What about the coaching process was unhelpful / most helpful? What insights were gained for other aspects of ministry, church life, or personal life? What changes, if any, did the process help to produce?

As for how I connected with participating congregations, in addition to what I described earlier, I also networked with faculty and fellow students at Hartford Seminary. In total, they, together with the judicatory regional ministers previously mentioned, recommended my project to seven pastors. In an effort to minimize the variables to control, I decided not to include non-White congregations. Rather, I sought a modicum of economic and regional diversity. Of the four pastors with whom I initially chose to speak,

⁷² See Appendix 6.

⁷³ So they know I am an experienced coach who knows what he's doing, I also shared the following qualifications: my professional coaching background as an experienced PCC level ICF Certified coach; my experience as a staff coach for seven years with the Center for Progressive Renewal (CPR), coaching numerous pastors and leadership teams around issues of renewal, revitalization, and ministry effectiveness; my ongoing teaching and facilitating of ministry vitality programs and courses, including with CPR: "Church Renewal 1.0 and 2.0," "Coaching Cohorts" (small groups of pastors), as a faculty member with Coaching4Clergy: "Coaching the Lead Pastor," "Coaching Through Major Change," "Basic and Advanced Coaching Training" (for pastors & parishioners), and "Common Coaching Scenarios in Ministry; my 15 years of full-time ordained ministry with the UCC, serving four congregations, including two as an intentional interim transitional minister.

all four were enthusiastic, but in only three cases did their key lay leaders share their enthusiasm. These were the three who ended up participating.

Since the pastor plays such an important role in the success of coaching like this, I vetted them carefully. The first vetting was done by the referring UCC Connecticut Conference Regional Ministers who were able to accurately refer to me congregations struggling with governance issues and which also had pastors who might be interested in my project. During my subsequent phone conversations with the prospective pastors, we discussed their motivations, expectations, and possible reservations about participating. This discussion included their prior experience and impressions of coaching, their thoughts about governance challenges with their congregations, where they are stuck, and the potential impact upon the congregation if they made progress with addressing their governance challenges. I was also interested to hear their degree of confidence in their lay leaders' ability and desire to participate in this project, as well as their own self-assessment. Crucially, I was careful to make it clear that this project was in no way an assessment of the pastor's performance. Quite the opposite: I shared how it was vital that they experience the coaching as supportive of them and their ministry.

For the purposes of this write-up I'll refer to these three congregations as 1CC (Pastor Laura), 2CC (Pastor Kathy), and 3CC (Pastor Roberta).

HOW THE COACHING SESSIONS ACTUALLY WENT

While I will go into more detail in the next section where I evaluate the results, I want to say a few things here in general about how some of the coaching went. With non-directive coaching one never really knows how things will unfold. That is the nature of it. On the one hand, this unpredictable aspect is a strength. There is more potential for growth and discovery. On the other hand, it's a reason people avoid it: they want the certainty of a promised outcome. However, a non-directive coach with integrity will not guarantee a specific outcome. For example, even though I emphasized up front that I am not a consultant or a mentor bringing answers to their governance problems, most of the folks in two of the three groups admitted to expecting just that, and being somewhat disoriented (several people miffed even) in the first couple of sessions that they weren't getting answers. Consequently, I had to quickly adapt at the very beginning, finding ways to help keep them engaged while also remaining true to a non-directive coaching process.

One way was to repeatedly describe the difference between non-directive coaching and consulting or mentoring and that we had agreed to a process of the former. I had anticipated this reaction, so I was extra careful to make sure the pastors really understood the process and its benefits beforehand and that they were truly on board. All three were. Consequently, the pastors were ready allies in helping the lay members understand just what they were getting themselves into. In addition, since the lay members all held their pastors in high regard, they were also motivated to stick with it early on so as to keep their pastors happy. I also shared with them that their disorientation was a common reaction with many groups I've coached over the years, and that if they would

stick with the process and be patient, I was confident they would be happy in the end. They did, and they were.

Another way I adapted to this dynamic of their being a bit put off by my lack of taking charge of the coaching session was to make sure they quickly experienced other more immediate benefits of non-directive coaching. For example, from my initial 10 to 15 minutes of deep listening to one group during the very first session, I could see just how much the lay folks loved and appreciated their pastor and so I invited them to express that directly to her. This lit her up, judging from her big smile of appreciation, and them too! Both quipped, “We’ve never said these things out loud before.” This helped strengthen their foundation for exploring the unknown waters of discovery that lay ahead.

With another group struggling similarly at the beginning, I drew out two participants who weren’t speaking much, pointing out that they would collectively experience more benefit from the coaching if everyone’s input gets into the output. As it turned out, the rest of the group much appreciated what they had to say. They started smiling more. On the Final Assessment, these two people indicated that as a result of their coaching experience, they had significantly grown in their self-confidence and ability to articulate their opinions in front of others.

In addition, the dynamics of the three groups were quite different. One group had never been together before as a group; consequently, they experienced the phases of figuring out how to communicate and how to appreciate strengths and forgive shortcomings in each other. Another group, which had worked together for years as leaders in their congregation and knew each other well, insisted on spending a goodly

portion of the coaching time enjoying each other socially which included veering off into myriad side conversations. Consequently, I had to work extra hard to help them realize at least one specific take-away or action item from each session. I sensed that being a pastor added to my credibility in their eyes and helped them enter unknown waters that they seemed to be avoiding by their hyper socialness. In addition, they could see that their own pastor respected and trusted me and I trusted their pastor. That seemed to boost their trust in me.

There were also some minor issues with technology. With the exception of the initial in-person extended coaching session, all the rest of the sessions used the Zoom internet-based platform: I was at my computer and they were all together in one room gathered around a single computer or TV screen. Since they were not very experienced at this dynamic, there was frequent adjusting of the cameras and sound on their ends so that I could see and hear them better. It required patience from all of us, and also provided moments of levity and was often a welcome distraction from the hard work required by participating in a non-directive coaching process. In addition, one pastor didn't have video capability on her office computer so we did our one-on-one sessions via telephone, which worked fine.

Lastly, was the dynamic between me and the pastors. I had promised them up front that throughout the coaching I was committed to supporting them in their role as pastor and in their overall ministry. They expressed appreciation for this, and it helped me always to be on the lookout for authentic ways to call out their greatness in front of their parishioners.

SOME DETAILS ABOUT ASSESSMENTS, WHAT THE COACHEES DID BETWEEN SESSIONS, AND HOW EACH SESSION STARTED AND ENDED

While I will say more about metrics and assessments in a later section, I'll speak to it briefly here. In order to assess the impact of the coaching I used several tools. The first were my own notes. I took detailed notes during the coaching session itself and then also wrote down my summary thoughts, observations and insights after the session. I did not share these with the coachees.

In addition, I implemented four assessment tools which the coachees filled out. At the beginning of the first group coaching session (the two-hour one) I had them fill out the *Initial Assessment*. After the third group coaching session I had them fill out the *Middle Assessment*, and at the conclusion of the final group session I had them complete the *Final Assessment*.⁷⁴ In each case, I requested that they fill out the assessment then and there. The pastor then forwarded them to me. The fourth form was the *Focus Report*, described below. As you can see from these assessments, they track movement in the several key areas often affected by non-directive coaching: Focus and clarity about desired outcomes, morale, effectiveness as a team, and effectiveness as pastor/leader.

After the Middle Assessments were completed, I typed up the results of both the Middle and Initial Assessments. I then sent them to the respective pastors with the invitation to review them for their own benefit and guidance, as well as to stimulate my one-on-one coaching with the pastors. I invited them to forward these results to their team members as they saw fit. In addition to individual coaching conversations I had with

⁷⁴ See Appendix 1 for examples of the assessment forms.

each pastor, I had several brief check-in conversations with each of them, usually at my initiative, to flush out any latent questions or concerns.

Since much of the value coachees derive comes between coaching sessions, each session concluded with specific actions they committed to taking along with the resources needed. Before the next session I had them send me a *Focus Report* – a single collective report pertaining to the group (for group sessions), and a single one pertaining to just the pastor (for individual pastor sessions). The Focus Report questions were the same in each case:

- What I/we have accomplished or what action have I/we taken since our last session:
- What I/we have learned since last time that’s been helpful or that I’m most proud of:
- What I/we did not accomplish, but intended to do, and what got in the way:
- At this moment, the biggest challenges or issues I/we am dealing with are:
- I/we would like to bring up the following issue or idea at our next coaching session....

In addition, I sent the following articles or resources to the pastors who then shared them with their groups for learning between sessions:

- “Organize Your Church on Purpose, Around Giftedness,” – a 2-page article by Rick Warren, Pastor of Saddleback Community Church, Pasadena, CA⁷⁵
- “Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership” – an 18-page article by Dan Hotchkiss, Sr. Consultant with the Alban Institute⁷⁶
- “Our Church’s Talents: NMCC Skills & Interests Survey: Where Do You Fit In?” (2016) – a simple survey created by the North Madison Congregational Church, UCC.
- “Know Your Why”⁷⁷ – YouTube video clip by comedian Michael Jr.

⁷⁵ Rick Warren, “Organize Your Church on Purpose, Around Giftedness,” (Pastors.com Community; <http://pastors.com/organize-your-church-on-purpose-and-giftedness>, (Accessed, August 16, 2016).

⁷⁶ Dan Hotchkiss, *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership* (Herndon, The Alban Institute, 2006, <https://uuwestport.org/vole/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Governance&Ministry.pdf> (Accessed, March 3, 2018).

⁷⁷ Michael Jr., *Know Your Why* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZe5y2D60YU&t=3s>) (Accessed, September 16, 2017).

We started each session with simple quiet centering prayer. At the conclusion, I asked the pastor to offer a benediction. I began each session by asking questions like these: “What has gone well since our last coaching session?” or “What do you have to celebrate?” This started our session on a positive and affirming note. Next, I asked questions like these: “What would make our time together today fabulous?” or “What would you like to focus on today?” or “At the end of our time today, what do you want to take away?” And especially at the beginning, I reminded them that my role is that of a non-directive coach, not a consultant offering solutions.

Following that, I coached them to wherever it was they really wanted to go that day – whatever they really wanted to accomplish – using the non-directive coaching tools of Coaching Presence, Active Listening, Powerful Questions, Direct Communication, Creating New Awareness, Designing Actions / Goal Setting, and Managing Progress and Accountability.⁷⁸

I ended each session by having them recount who had committed to do what, by when, and with what necessary resources. I then invited each person to share aloud their primary “take-away” from the session.

⁷⁸ See Appendix 5, “The Coaching Core Competencies,” for detailed descriptions of these.

EVALUATION OF WHAT HAPPENED

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this project was to assess the impact of non-directive coaching upon the discernment of the congregations' current governance practices and ways to improve them. This evaluation includes factors that affect the effectiveness of the discernment process itself, which is also an aspect of governance when governance is defined broadly as the various "how's" by which they accomplish their "what's." Hence, I looked for the impact of the coaching upon morale, team effectiveness, identifying important goals, leadership effectiveness, leadership growth, the ability to focus, the ability to identify specific behaviors that lead to outcomes they want, and the application of talents and skills they enjoy using to the challenges they face.

In a sense, the real issue wasn't governance, but how to coach them to be a better leadership team. Unlike consulting, where the team depends on an outside expert for the solution and so can become dependent on outside guidance, with non-directive coaching, the team grows its capacity to create and implement their own solutions. It's rather like learning to fish rather than being given a fish.

First, did the congregations really have governance problems? All three congregations had a typical committee and board structure with a Church Council overseeing things. They cited significant problems with how the system was working. Common themes included difficulty filling open "slots," burnout of the current leaders who rotate off one committee only to rotate on to another, or even back on to the previous one. The same people were feeling like they were doing all the work and experiencing

burnout, resulting in a drag on morale and some resentment. They reported that things get overlooked and that decisions often take too long to make: “We have repeated conversations around topics that never result in action or new ideas,” a member put it. Another typical frustration was that some committee leaders refused to share power with others, creating fiefdoms.

They universally acknowledged that younger members have little interest in serving on standing committees and boards and therefore aren’t serving in leadership positions where these are the only options. “If you look around this table now (core leadership team) these are the same faces you would’ve seen 15 years ago. And now our average age is over 60,” one participant said. Another major concern was a general overall decline in the vitality of the congregation that two of the three teams were feeling, especially in terms of declining finances and membership. Lastly, two of the three pastors reported being overly involved in detailed administrative work, or attending committee meetings, such that they were pulled away from the pastoral and theological leadership work they are most called to do. Pastor Kathy of 2CC sums it well: “We recognize that our current way of doing things does not seem to be working if we wish to be here in the future.” They were all painfully aware of their challenges, but unclear what to do about it, or where to start.

In sum, all three congregations manifested significant challenges with their current governance structures and practices – ones shared by many mainline congregations. However, they are fortunate in that they recognized this reality and were willing to take positive action to address it.

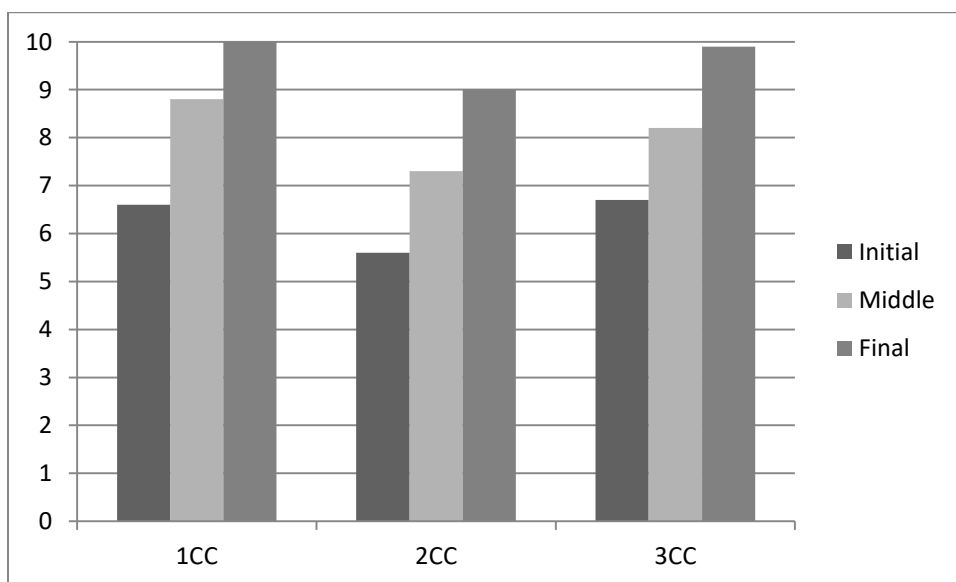
DID THEY MAKE HEADWAY IN DISCERNING THEIR GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES?

The next question is whether or not they made any headway in discerning and addressing their governance challenges. The below chart reveals:

- Where each team started (*Initial* – “We’re clear about the outcomes we want.”),
- Where they were mid-way through the coaching (*Middle* – “We have identified clear goals important to us.”), and
- Where they ended up (*Final* – “I/we have a clear idea of next steps to take to move our governance discernment/improvement process forward.”).

The scale is from lowest (0) to highest (10).

Chart 1: Goal Clarity Progress (Progress in their governance discernment process)



A reasonable conclusion is that all three teams made real progress in moving their governance discernment forward. In fact, on the Final Assessment they gave an average

score of 9.5 (out of 10) in response to the statement: *The coaching process helped us get to a place (achieve results) we could not have done on our own.* Along that line they reported the coaching helped them to get and maintain focus, to prioritize, to move forward, and “To change our view of where we wanted to go with changes. It made us think more about end results.” (3CC member)

Next, let’s look at one of the major outcomes reported by each team to get a more concrete idea of their results. **1CC** reported that one major result was the conception and design of a leadership retreat in September intended to engage the rest of the church leadership with the work they’ve been doing and to get their input and buy-in going forward. It included the implementation of a new Skills & Interests Survey that allows folks to indicate their various talents and passions that can then be linked to serving with greater satisfaction and joy rather than simply filling a committee slot. It also included teaching skills for making meetings more productive.

2CC reported three specific results that came out of the coaching for them, including these: one, a column in the church’s weekly newsletter informing folks about activities in the wider community activities in which they could participate so as to make the church more visible in the community; two, the design and implementation of a Skills & Interest Survey (“If we want folks to participate more we need to know that they like to do.”); and three, a new “elevator speech,” of which pieces can be used on T-shirts, mugs, etc. to raise the congregation’s visibility in the community. “They are all very excited about and feel high ownership for these three things!” said the pastor. She also reported the team experienced a major change in perspective from assuming that people in the wider community know what they do because they are so visible on the town

green, to needing to be proactive. “It’s a shift from being the default church to being an option,” she added.

3CC created a draft of a new church purpose statement: “We extend an extravagant welcome and love to all.” “It makes our hearts skip a beat,” said the pastor. They also created a plan for vetting it with the congregation as well as a process to assess the current reality of each church committee so as to align each committee’s work and make-up with the new purpose statement. In addition, a team member reported, “We have a good working model of governance structure and a good process to get from here to there.” It also included an 18-month timeline for the larger governance assessment and change process.

Next, let’s look at the coaching itself to see if it was really non-directive coaching that I used. Non-directive coaching is a process of discovery and creation. This is part of what distinguishes it from consulting, mentoring, and sports coaching, the processes with which it’s often confused, and which also leads to high ownership implementation of the outcomes. “We discovered a lot of things we wouldn’t have otherwise. We own it because we did the work. With a consultant we wouldn’t own it.” (Pastor Laura, 1CC)

All three teams expressed enthusiasm in our initial “look see” conversation about the non-directive nature of the coaching. “We don’t want to be told what to do,” was a frequent comment. However, my experience coaching other teams has shown that despite this initial reaction, most people, in fact, *do* want to be told what to do. They want to be given an answer, a solution to their problems, or at least a map they can follow that says what to do and when. And I was largely right. The first session was a bit rocky for all

three teams as they grappled with learning to trust themselves: “It took more time to be comfortable with the non-directive process than I previously thought.” (Member, 2CC)

Accordingly, I repeatedly reminded them that non-directive coaching is a process of discovery and creation – by the *coachee*. However, by the end of the second coaching session, they all seemed largely on board with the non-directive nature of the process and were beginning to experience its benefits. Fortunately, all three pastors did correctly understand the “non-directive” part from the start and actively supported it. And relished it!

The beauty of non-directive coaching is that it’s allowed the team to explore within themselves how they can contribute. You’ve given them the gift of exploration of self. This boosted their confidence, which will stay with them with future things, that is, this *experience* will stay with them. (3CC pastor)

Below are the Coaching Core Competencies put forth by the International Coach Federation.⁷⁹ I will take each in turn and offer evidence of its presence in the coaching that occurred. Truth be told, there is ample evidence proving that it was, in fact, non-directive coaching, so I’ll just give a few highlights here in each category.

Creating the Coaching Agreement – Help the client identify, or reconfirm, what she wants to accomplish in the session, and define measures of success; keep the conversation going in the direction of the client’s desired outcome unless she indicates otherwise.

Evidence

After the initial onsite conversation with the teams, if they decided to move forward to participate in the coaching (which they all enthusiastically did), the pastor and I signed a formal “Coaching Agreement” (like I use in my professional practice), that laid out our

⁷⁹ <https://coachfederation.org/core-competencies>, (Accessed February 12, 2018)

mutual commitments. This worked well to convey that both parties are committed to the coaching endeavor.

Ongoing questions I regularly asked during the coaching sessions allowed them to confirm or change course: “Is this line of conversation helpful?” “Where do you want to go?” “How will you know when you get there?” And when they seemed to have changed tracks from what they said they wanted, I asked, “With your permission, may I bring us back to topic X?” In addition, I regularly reflected to them where I thought we were in the coaching conversation. Other times I invited one of them to do it. The latter has the benefit of also revealing where they are from their point of view – invaluable for the coach.

The Focus Report they filled out before each coaching session got them thinking ahead of time as to what they wanted to accomplish or hash out in the next session. It has five simple questions:

1. What we have accomplished or what action we have taken since our last session:
2. What we have learned since our last session, and what we are most proud of:
3. What we did not accomplish, but intended to do, and what got in the way:
4. At this moment, the biggest challenges or issues we are dealing with are:
5. We would like to bring up the following issue or idea at our next coaching session:

Creating Trust and Intimacy – The coach acknowledges and respects the client’s work in the coaching process, expresses support for the client and allows the client to fully express himself. Acknowledging the client’s progress, courage, and excellence is a big part of the coach’s job. This is particularly effective because people often receive the opposite – critiques of how they could have done better, their shortcomings, etc. Many people go through daily life feeling inadequate. This is especially true in the many mainline churches experiencing decline. “Calling out their

greatness” as we coaches say, recognizing and publicly acknowledging the many legitimately positive points, is crucial to morale and to giving them the confidence to overcome their challenges.

Evidence

One example occurred in the first session with 1CC. I asked them what they love about their pastor. There was a brief silence and then a serious outpouring of affirmation and love for her as a person and for her effectiveness as pastor – so much so that the pastor became uneasy with the praise. So I messaged her: “Laura, your job right now is to receive the love. Just take it!” And she did. Her whole being lit up. A team member commented, “Wow! We usually don’t talk like this!” While voicing their “take-aways” from that session the pastor said, “I love my people! This is the perfect group!”

To another pastor in our one-on-one session after she shared her big vision for the church and the challenges she faced, I said, “Roberta, I am totally in your camp!” Her response, “I know. I feel it!” In another case, I acknowledged the 1CC group for the smooth working relationship they’ve developed as a team and linked it to the notable progress they’ve made in a short amount of time.

The 3CC team brought to our final session the wonderful research they did about governance, including the new structures that sister churches have created. They did all this on their own. I acknowledged them, “You are on a very solid path and probably don’t need more information or research about what others are doing. You’ve got it!” They nodded in agreement: “You taught us to feel okay about our decisions.”

Coaching Presence – The coach acts in response to both the whole person of the client and to what the client wants to accomplish – being simultaneously empathic and

highly observant. The coach exhibits curiosity and partners with the client both by playing back the client's expressed possibilities for the session and by encouraging the client to formulate her own learning.

Evidence

“Having third-person input like yours is a wonderful reminder of who we are – who God is calling us to be.” (Pastor Roberta) To Pastor Kathy of 2CC I said: “What I get about you is that you're an inspired preacher. You've told me that preaching is where you're most articulate and bold in putting forth your ideas. What might happen if you brought your ‘Sunday self’ into the other days of the week?”

During our final session the 3CC team started going down the path of individually presenting their respective action items from the previous time and hashing them out. I paused them to message: “Don't spend our time together on things you can do without me. You don't need me to go through all these details with you. Rather, let's work one out together, and then you can apply that process to the others on your own time.” This suggestion really landed judging by the fact that they then changed course and decided to present one of their reports – the Facilities Committee. I coached them around the process for engaging the congregation with their ideas and recommendations around the Facilities Committee. The session came to a natural conclusion soon after.

I then briefly described the STOKeR coaching model.⁸⁰ On a tandem bicycle the “stoker” is the backseat person. His job is to pour energy into moving the tandem forward. The person in the front seat does the steering – decides where to go. That's the coachee. The coach is the stoker.

⁸⁰ Clare Pedrick, Master Certified Coach, Principal at 3dcoaching (<https://www.3dcoaching.com/claire-pedrick-MCC>), (Accessed, April 12, 2018).

Active Listening – The coach listens on multiple levels – not only for content, but also for values, beliefs, frustrations, and what is not being said. She listens for limiting beliefs and false assumptions and is comfortable with silence. The coach allows the client to do most of the talking (80/20 rule).

Evidence

“Jim, you have a great talent for drawing them out,” Pastor Laura said to me. Listening is a key aspect of what draws people out.

Powerful Questioning – Powerful questions are without judgment, usually brief and to the point; they help the client gain perspective and understanding, evoking discovery, while promoting clarity and learning. They can also call for action.

Evidence

Questions I frequently used included:

- “What is the real challenge here for you?”
- “If you’re saying yes to this, what are you saying No to?”
- “Do you want to spend our coaching time on things you can do without me?”

Artful Language – The coach listens for words that help the coachee to learn, to describe their values, and to define their reality. These words can be very useful in facilitating a shift. The coach often uses the coachee’s language in an artful way that makes a constructive distinction for her.

Evidence

Pastor Roberta often speaks with great passion of her vision for her church, yet also expresses impatience for its realization. From my point of view they are making great progress and God’s hand is all over it, so I asked her, “Do you want to live according to your vision or God’s Vision?” ICC team member said, “Jim, you help us to think out of the box – have a way of saying things that allows us to see things differently.”

Direct Communication – The coach shares observations, intuitions, comments, thoughts, and feelings without any attachment to being right; the coach uses language that reflects client’s way of thinking. Part of Direct Communication is called *Messaging*.

“Messaging is a truth that if heard, will help the other person to understand and act more quickly. It is a blend of acknowledging and tapping into the person’s greatness.”⁸¹

Evidence

During our final one-on-one coaching session I messaged Pastor Roberta: “You’re in the top 5% of visionary and prophetic pastors – ones who can clearly articulate their vision and thoughts. And because you’re also deeply humble they feel they can trust you, and so they have given you the keys.” This really landed for her! “I’ve never seen that about myself before,” she said.

Creating New Awareness – The coach invites the client to state / explore her learning about her situation and herself, and invites her to consider how she will use new learning from the coaching.

Evidence

Pastor Kathy said they’ve had several major changes in perspective from the coaching so far that have yielded positive results. “If we want folks to participate we need to know what they like to do.” And, “If we want folks in the wider community to show up (come to us) we need to tell them what we do here. They no longer automatically know us just because we’re the white church on the green in the center of town.”

Designing Actions / planning / goal setting – The coach assists the client to design actions the client will take after the session so he will continue moving toward his

⁸¹ J. Val Hastings, MCC, *Accelerated Coach Training*, (Coaching4Clergy, 2011), 46.

desired outcome. The coach assists client to design best methods of accountability; coach notices and reflects client's progress.

Evidence

When this is going well, the coachees develop a certain ease about it, no longer needing much urging forward by the coach. They often report a new confidence as they recognize and tap into abilities they hadn't recognized previously. At the beginning of ICC Team session #4, I asked them, "What's going really well?" They responded, "We're more focused and concrete now – we've made an attitude shift in how to 'attack' problems. We now have more confidence in how to approach folks in inviting them to serve." Pastor Laura added, "We continue to make goals – surpassing our expectations for this team. We're actually putting out a plan!!" and "It's these conversations with each other in this coaching format led by you, Jim, that is allowing new ideas to come up – to move forward – that would not have happened otherwise."

Managing Progress and Accountability – In every coaching session the client makes new discoveries and takes away specific actions steps that move her toward an identified goal with the necessary accountability.

Evidence

Toward the end of every coaching session I invite the coachees to claim a particular action step to take before the next session. Often these actions were in the context of a larger result they had identified. To assist with accountability, I would also make comments such as, "What would you like me to ask you next time?"

Based on the above evidence, it's reasonable to conclude that the coaching style used was, in fact, non-directive, and that the coachees responded well to it.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH COACHEES ACHIEVING THEIR DESIRED RESULTS

As stated earlier, this project wasn't really about governance. Governance was a means to an end, the end being to see how non-directive coaching can develop these other competencies and skills in the participants, ones that are useful no matter what challenge they are facing – be it stewardship, membership growth, spiritual vitality, or pursuit of social justice in their communities. In marked contrast to consulting, where the benefits (solutions) are typically limited to the specific problem at hand, non-directive coaching benefits are often translatable to challenges other than the one first engaged.

In my professional coaching practice, I've found that regardless of the topic at hand, several factors led to the coachees achieving the results they want. Accordingly, I designed the assessments to measure these. Here are the factors, numbering eight: morale; clarity; focus; effectiveness; identifying clear goals that are important; creating clear and workable plans of action to achieve desired results; using valued gifts or talents in the process of realizing said results; and leadership development. The data clearly show that the participants rated themselves highly as having experienced all of these, or in having improved their ability in each case.

Most of these accomplishments help with other challenges too: morale is a rising tide that lifts all boats. The experience of becoming more focused and cooperating to create clear and implementable action plans builds the muscle (skills and knowledge) to do this elsewhere. But most valuable of all for increasing overall ministry vitality are two factors: Leadership development and knowing your WHY.

Every organization rises and falls accordingly to the quality of its leadership. In my professional coaching practice and in the congregations I've served as pastor, I've seen firsthand how non-directive coaching cultivates leaders and brings them to action. I wanted to demonstrate this in a formal academic study so that more people will see these results and take advantage of the benefits of non-directive coaching. Put another way: *the real issue of this project isn't governance per se, but to see how non-directive coaching could enable them to be more effective leaders, both as a team and as individuals.*

Yet governance is a tool, as it entails the processes and structure for bringing leadership to bear such that the organization accomplishes its purpose. In fact, many of the above-mentioned factors are traits of a good leader: the ability to listen well, to establish a focus and sustain it, to identify clear goals and plans of action about which those in the organization are enthusiastic and that employ congregants' gifts and talents. Effectiveness is a measure of how well leaders and teams do these.

Interestingly, not only are these key traits of good leadership, *they are also the soil in which leadership abilities are developed.* When people are engaged with a team that is good at these, they tend to absorb them by osmosis. The qualities that distinguish leadership are some of the same ones needed for the capacity to develop and grow it in others.

Point: When good non-directive coaching is afoot, leadership capacity is developed and cultivated, which can be applied to the congregation's ministry themes, whatever they may be. Cultivating effective leadership is essential to an organization's vitality – its ability to respond to its changing environment in such a way that the environment perceives it to be relevant, and hence embraces what it offers.

Let me define what I mean by “leadership.” A characteristic of my coaching is to offer *distinctions*. One example is the distinction between a manager mindset and a leader mindset. In my experience, most church (executive) councils are dominated by a management mindset – their agenda is filled with decisions around staffing, facility management, money expenditures, and such. These are mainly about the day-to-day operation of the congregation. This is a major reason they respond slowly to changing external circumstances. Accordingly, in our coaching sessions, I offered this distinction: Managers are preoccupied with the present; leaders are preoccupied with the future. Pastor Kathy picked right up on it: “I get it: managers think about how we are now; leaders think about what we are becoming.”

Other manager / leader distinctions that were helpful to them included these:

- Managers do stuff; leaders inspire others to do stuff.
- Managers tell; leaders influence.
- Leaders have followers vs. leaders cultivate the leadership ability of others.

One could make the case that the process of non-directive coaching itself is an essential governance process for a vital congregation – or for one that wants to become more so. This is why I am dedicated to doing all I can to establish a coaching culture in my own beloved denomination, the UCC: it cultivates leadership capacity which is the number one characteristic of a congregation’s ability to be relevant in a changing environment.

This cultivation of leadership capacity within the congregation by the artful use of non-directive coaching *does not depend on the challenge to which it is applied* – governance improvement, stewardship, facility enhancement, faith formation, or other. Rather, the focus is on participants being actively engaged in artful non-directive

coaching and experiencing its essential qualities, the Coaching Core Competencies mentioned earlier. This grows leadership capacity.⁸²

The data and my notes clearly show that the participants (including the pastors) experienced growth in their leadership effectiveness. Next, I will show how the data reveal this. Following that, I will discuss how knowing your WHY, your purpose, is so essential to healthy leadership, and how it came up in the coaching. For leadership to be effective at attaining a desired result, it needs a clear sense of purpose, of WHY, of direction, otherwise it lurches here and there, aiming at nothing and achieving no particular result. Or worse, it is harnessed by the nefarious intentions of another. We commonly see this when a struggling congregation's well-meaning leaders become infatuated by a charismatic gold-digger pastor from the outside who co-opts their energies and resources, often leading them out of the UCC.

First, let me say a word about **morale**. Just as confidence isn't so much something to be learned as it is the result of taking repeated action, morale isn't something one experiences just because someone tries to pump you up like a cheerleader. Rather, morale often results from experiencing yourself moving ahead toward something you want – overcoming obstacles – especially together with others. Given that accomplishing meaningful goals is fundamental to non-directive coaching, increased morale often results as well. And morale, like good leadership, has a positive impact on everything – like a rising tide that lifts all boats, or the nourishing rain and warming rays of the sun that cause plants to flourish, or the oil that makes a machine's parts run smoothly.

Accordingly, while higher levels of morale may not be absolutely essential to a team's

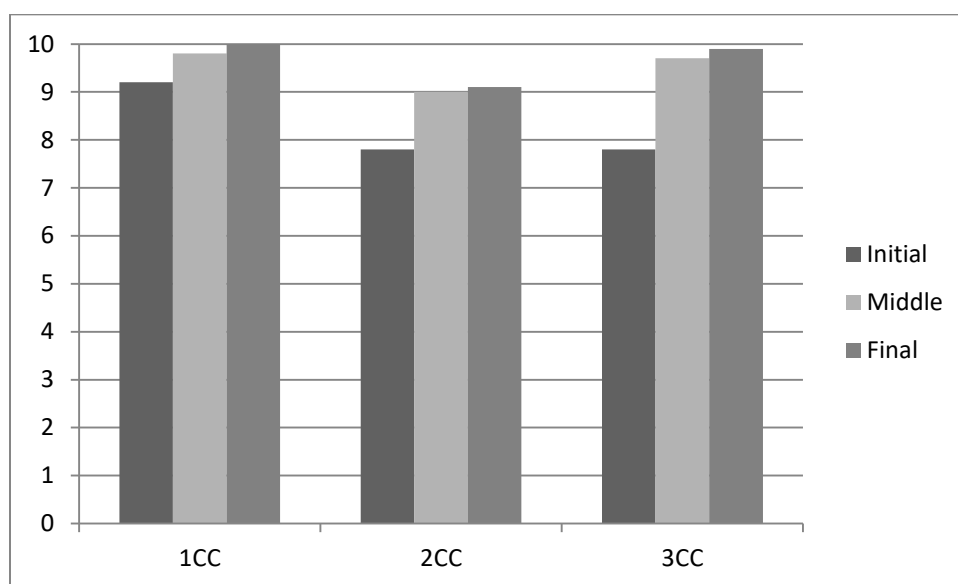
⁸² ICF's Core Competencies: Creating the Coaching Agreement, Creating Trust and Intimacy, Coaching Presence, Active Listening, Powerful Questions, Artful language, Direct Communication, Creating New Awareness, Designing Actions/Planning/Goal Setting, and Managing Progress and Accountability.

realizing its goals, it allows them to realize their goals sooner, and perhaps even better, and certainly with more enjoyment.

At the beginning, all three teams were feeling stuck and frustrated regarding their governance, as the quotations at the start of this section clearly showed. However, as the coaching proceeded, morale increased and continued to do so until the end.

Chart 2: Team Morale (as self-rated at Initial, Middle, and Final Assessments)

The scale is from lowest (0) to highest (10).



Interestingly, the morale of the teams changed more than the morale of the pastors. While all three pastors rated strongly that their morale increased since the coaching began, in fact, their morale was high at the start and may well have increased somewhat during the coaching. 1CC was the only exception: the pastor indicated a significant increase in her morale from initial to final. One could make the case that morale of the lay leaders is more important than morale of the pastor as it's their church. Pastors move around.

Morale is also a key indicator of the progress a team senses it is making. And implicit to making progress are clarity and focus. Again, the data reveal that the coaching

had a strong positive influence on clarity and focus as revealed by the Final Assessment data. What matters is not just the fact that they gained clarity and focus, but also that they realized that they *can*, in fact, change. Recognizing and experiencing such self-agency is a major morale booster. Pastor Roberta of 3CC wrote,

When we started, the team thought ‘Jim will show us the way to improve our church governance,’ i.e., tell us what we need to do. But you’ve given them something better than ‘the way.’ You’ve given them concepts (and tools) that we can use to find what we need ourselves.

Perhaps the biggest one of these discoveries was this change: (they thought) “There’s *one* thing he will give to us, to ‘OMG – there are *several* things for us. And we get to *choose!*’ You sneaked in these concepts instead of a structure; this freed them.” (Roberta) And when this self-agency is grabbed onto and combined with using talents and knowledge that they enjoy using, they will, in fact, create the results they want, as the data show.

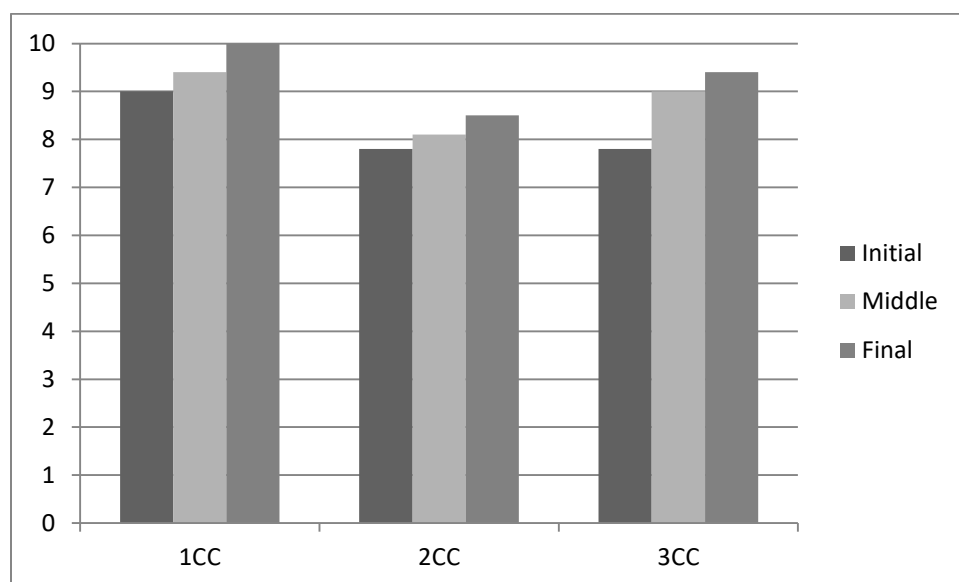
Another major factor affecting morale and positive outcomes is the power of acknowledgment. An axiom of non-directive coaching is: “The coachee gets an ‘A’ at the start.” That is, they don’t need to be “fixed.” Often, however, they don’t feel like an “A,” and do want the coach to fix them. So during the coaching I’m always on the lookout for authentic ways to call out their greatness – what is going well and how they are well. The Creating Trust and Intimacy section earlier gave a good example of acknowledgment. And as Pastor Roberta told me, “Jim, your affirmations, guidance and perceptions has really emboldened them!”

The power of ownership – you get the results that *you* create – is another major factor that builds confidence and the results one most desires.

The coaching perspective is that coachees are capable of generating their own solutions. The role of the coach is to provide a discovery-based framework that taps further into the expertise of the person or group being coached.⁸³

Effectiveness, both personal and group, is another factor that the coaching aimed to increase since it has a direct impact on clients' realizing their goals and is therefore another indicator of leadership growth. Again, the data clearly show that effectiveness increased during the coaching:

Chart 3: Team Effectiveness (as self-rated at Initial, Middle, and Final Assessments)
The scale is from lowest (0) to highest (10).



My experience is that many church committee meetings are run poorly, resulting in lackluster outcomes, disengagement, boredom, and frustration for participants. This negatively affects all aspects of church life and vitality. Accordingly, I messaged all three teams that how meetings are run is also governance. This strongly resonated with them. I modeled this relationship for them in our team coaching sessions. To varying degrees, the teams incorporated the below teaching point.

⁸³ J. Val Hastings, *Accelerated Coach Training* (Coaching4Clergy, 2011), 6.

Key things participants need to be engaged with meetings:

1. Receive an agenda in advance so they know what to expect.
2. A sense of contributing to the output of the meeting in a meaningful and satisfying way – their knowledge and skills are used. Their presence is needed.
3. Receive a pastoral take-away: a loved one is prayed for; they are prayed for, etc.
4. Learn something interesting or useful.
5. A positive social experience.
6. Time is managed well: start on time and end at an agreed time.
7. Negative behavior is dealt with effectively. (1CC had an “a ha” when I suggested that morale killing negative behavior at meetings can be avoided. “All people are welcome, but not all behavior is welcome,” and, “Don’t shun them, but don’t let them take over.”)

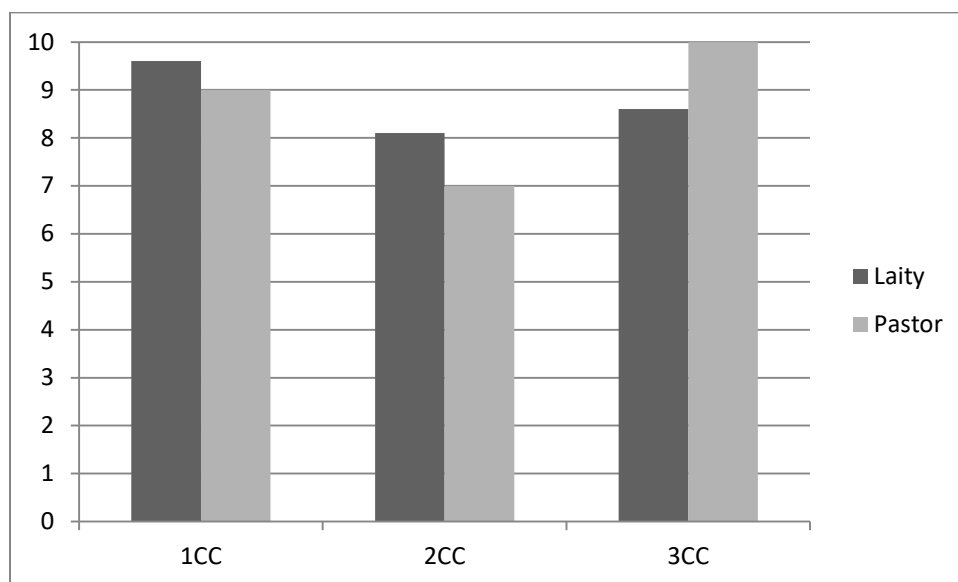
The data also strongly support my hypothesis that non-directive coaching **cultivates participants’ leadership abilities**. Experiencing personal growth is a big confidence booster and motivator. On the Final Assessment the laity participants gave an average rating of 8.8 (out of 10) in answer to the question: *The experience of being coached has increased my effectiveness as a leader*. The pastors gave themselves a composite rating of 8.7 (out of 10) in answer to the question, *My effectiveness as the pastor / leader has increased since the coaching began*. The below chart shows these responses by church.

There are several interesting things to note about this chart. First, with churches 1CC and 2CC, the laity reported a greater increase in their leadership effectiveness over the course of the coaching than did the pastors, while church 3CC is the opposite. This could be explained by the fact that one lay member of church 3CC gave a very low rating of “2” to this question, thereby pulling down 3CC’s laity average relative to their pastor. And the second notable point is how the pastor of church 2CC reported the lowest increase relative to the other two pastors. This could perhaps be explained by the fact this

pastor is both much younger than the other two, is in his/her first Call as a pastor, and has a much shorter tenure with Church 2CC than the other two.

Chart 4: Change in Leadership Effectiveness (Difference between Pastor and laity at Initial and Final Assessments)⁸⁴

The scale is from lowest (0) to highest (10).



In addition to the data, leadership development clues I looked for included these: improvement in listening skills; the ability to articulate one's thoughts; self-awareness and self-accountability (taking responsibility for one's thoughts and actions); big picture thinking; drawing out the thoughts of others; being more intentional about one's own leadership development; increased awareness of process; critical thinking; and risk taking. These are all elements that engaging in a non-directive coaching process of discovery and creation tend to develop. Their written responses to the following four Final Assessment questions reveal many of these:

- *I have developed or discovered new skills / habits / practices that I recognize as valuable, such as (name a few) –*
- *What I gained from the coaching that was especially helpful personally was -*

⁸⁴ Bars indicate respondents' level of agreement with the statement: *The experience of being coached has increased my effectiveness as a leader.*

- *The experience of being coached has increased my effectiveness as a leader. If yes, in what ways?*
- *What differences have you noticed around your own effectiveness during this time of coaching?*⁸⁵

The chart below lists the number of times participants indicated an increase in leadership skills over the course of the coaching. It's notable that the most commonly reported skill development increase is self-awareness. One way to interpret this is that the respondent became more aware of his/her own thinking and presence and how these influence the group. The second most commonly indicated skill improvement is that of critical thinking / creative thinking / big-picture thinking. This is particularly significant, as during the coaching (especially at the beginning) many of the lay participants said that they are "concrete thinkers" and are very good at executing a task given them. "Just tell me what to do and I'll do it!" was commonly heard. This approach created tension in the coaching early on, as many were expecting me to tell them what to do, and I didn't. So this change could indicate their increased comfort with the non-directive aspect of the coaching, which requires coachees to take responsibility for creatively responding to their challenges rather than waiting for outside answers. This taking of responsibility is a critical leadership skill for churches being able to adapt to their rapidly changing environments so as to remain relevant. In addition, this trait is related to self-awareness, as well as to the three other frequently mentioned skills of listening, focusing and prioritizing, and awareness of process.

⁸⁵ See Appendix 4 for their responses.

Chart 5: Increased Leadership Skills Revealed in Final Assessment Responses⁸⁶



To continue with the topic of leadership development, as stated earlier, a characteristic of my coaching is to offer *distinctions*. These distinctions helped participants to think more creatively with a challenge they were facing. For example, with Pastor Kathy, this is her first pastorate. Being very conscientious about accountability, she is sometimes unsure when to step forward to take responsibility for something, wondering, “Will I have the time to do it?” I messaged her that having responsibility for something doesn’t mean that you have to do it yourself. It simply means that you need to see that it gets done. An effective leader delegates much and does little.

In addition, having experienced Kathy’s great insights, uncommon maturity, and somewhat reserved personality, I urged her to trust her intuition and to lead boldly. Her

⁸⁶ See Appendix 4 for their actual responses.

response: “I do think I need to continue to work on asserting myself more, speaking out when I have something to say in contexts outside of the sermon.” And when I challenged her to lead more boldly, she reported to me, “My goal after our last individual coaching session was to bring more of my ‘Sunday self’ into other aspects of my leadership in the church.” By “Sunday self,” she was referring to the fact that on Sunday mornings she is confident and articulate in preaching and leading worship.

For Pastor Laura, an experienced and multi-talented pastor who loves her congregation so much that she sometimes over functions, the “3-Buckets Exercise” helped her with prioritizing, focusing, and clarity. The exercise asked her to identify what things she was doing that she alone was able to do, and what things she was doing that others could do just as well or perhaps better. With this clarity, she began to shift items in the latter to others, and to focus on her unique zone of genius.

Pastor Roberta, a seasoned, deeply wise, and prophetic pastor with a gregarious personality reflected to me, “I want to be more aware of the team’s individuality and their personal ideas and comments so I don’t overpower them. Signal me if I get too passionate during our sessions!”

Reframing is another coaching technique which both cultivated their leadership capacities and also helped the teams to move forward. All three churches were concerned about why a Sunday morning guest may come once and not return. I offered two reframing questions to guide their engagement of guests:

- Guests don’t care whether or not *you* think you are friendly. Rather, their concern is: “Can *I* make friends in this church?”
- Guests are not concerned with where *you* want them to serve or fit in. Rather, their concern is: “Is this a place where *I* can fit it?”

Other reframed questions were helpful to them:

- Rather than: “How do we get people to come to us?” ask: “How can we have a positive impact in our wider community?”
- Rather than: “How can we get people to fund our budget?” ask: “What are we most excited about?” “What is God’s invitation to us today? Right now?”⁸⁷

Pastor Kathy: “We’re now reframing our discussions to focus more on possibilities. This process of considering our WHY is helping us think about what we can and could do rather than what we used to be able to do and can’t do any longer.”

During 2CC Team’s session #4 they began to see the connection between their frequent lament of “The same people are doing everything; how can we get others, especially younger members, to be leaders in our church?” and intentional leadership development. It was triggered by my powerful question: “Whom are you mentoring?” Point: Leadership development must be intentional and ongoing. After an extended silence, most of them realized that they weren’t intentionally mentoring anyone. I left them with the question: “What if mentoring was seen as part of your current leadership responsibilities?”

IMPACT OF KNOWING YOUR WHY

As stated earlier, the clarity and relevance of one’s WHY, or purpose, is essential for leadership to achieve its desired results. The data strongly support this. When a person or group isn’t clear about their WHY, the WHATs often don’t go so well. A 3CC team

⁸⁷ J. Val Hastings, *Change Your Questions Change Your Church: How to Lead with Powerful Questions*, (Coaching4Clergy, 2012), 2.

member stated: “I liked focusing on the WHY piece. We have always done (focused on) the WHATs and gone around in circles in our church on them.”

But the connection between WHY and WHAT in one’s own world is often difficult to see, especially for action-oriented “doers,” as most of the participants identified themselves. I suggested the metaphor of remodeling your house. Logically, you wouldn’t do so until you were clear about why you wanted it to be different – the purpose which the remodeled rooms would serve. It’s the same with governance: without a clearer understanding of the purpose of your organization, remodeling it (re-doing the governance) would make little sense. The WHY is your purpose as a church, the WHAT is your ministries and the HOW is your governance. Governance determines how you make decisions. For leadership to be effective at attaining a desired result it needs a clear sense of purpose and direction, otherwise it lurches here and there, aiming at nothing in particular and having little impact.

As mentioned earlier, attracting and engaging new members was top-of-mind for these three teams – the “music” in the background of their desire to improve their governance. “The same people have been leading for 15 or 20 years. New folks are not coming in the door. We really want this church to be here in the future!” said a 2CC member.

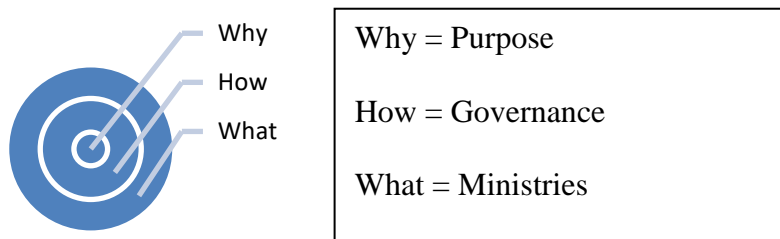
To varying degrees, all three teams sensed a diminished relevance to those in their wider community. Sensing this, I asked them straight out: “What is the purpose of your congregation?” “What’s your WHY?” All the teams struggled initially with this question. Yet all eventually benefitted from their struggle. Exploring the WHY prompted more big-picture thinking than they were accustomed to. Wrestling with your WHY brings depth to

the conversation around governance. As one pastor quipped, “If left to themselves their notion of governance improvement would just be taking a red pen to the bylaws.”

Changing governance without addressing the underlying issue of the end to which they serve is like putting a Band-aid on a broken leg.

The purpose of my above question wasn’t to send them down an all-consuming or anxiety-inducing path of figuring out precisely their reason for existence, or to come up with a polished new Purpose Statement. Rather, it was to prompt them to see its fundamental relationship to governance, to encourage big picture thinking, and to develop at least a rudimentary new purpose statement to guide their governance discernment. Along the way the teams benefited in unforeseen ways too. Pastor Kathy remarked, “I’m glad we got to the WHY! They named their core fear that the church won’t be here in the future.”

Chart 6



For 2CC, the Purpose Statement conversation resulted in what they called their “elevator speech,” a short identity statement to describe themselves to the wider community. During the coaching they became aware that many people in the wider community see them as just “the white box on the village green.”

3CC actually created a new Purpose Statement draft which they then used to guide their reconfiguration efforts: *We extend an extravagant welcome and love to all.* Pastor

Roberta added, “It makes our hearts skip a beat when we see it.” This simple statement meets the characteristics that I offered for an effective purpose statement –

- Is understandable to a 10-year-old
- Makes your heart skip a beat
- Is unique and organic
- Can serve to guide and focus decisions
- Is easily memorized.

Even without perfect clarity about their WHY, the wrestling with this idea yielded other unforeseen benefits. As part of generating their collective WHY, I invited the 2CC team to create their individual personal WHYs as homework for the next session. The results were more powerful than anyone anticipated. They accessed deep places within themselves. “Expressing our inner faith feelings is hard, especially in New England. So I appreciate that we got to the heart of what we do,” Pastor Kathy said. She continued:

I was really touched by what everyone was saying last night (sharing their personal WHYs about how things were going and also about their own faith lives.) I knew they all had deep faith and feelings otherwise they could sleep in and read the paper on Sunday morning. But, this was the first time I ever heard them put those feelings into words rather than actions like making food or repairing plumbing. So, I would say I learned that how I thought things were going is indeed how other people feel things are going so far with my time as pastor.

SOME TEAMS MOVED MORE QUICKLY AND/OR FARTHER THAN OTHERS

While all three groups reported significant progress regarding the initial goal of discerning the effectiveness of their churches’ governance, each group did so in its own way and pace. I got a surprise after the third (of five) team coaching session with 1CC

when Pastor Laura told me, “Our goals of governance discernment progress with this coaching process have already been reached!” She didn’t say this to indicate they wanted to stop, but rather to say that they’d already realized their expectations for what they would receive from participation in this project. And in the ensuing two sessions, they accomplished even more. Notably, this team also scored itself the highest among the three teams by a significant margin on the Final Assessment question, *During the coaching time how much progress have you made in improving your governance?*

As we’ve seen, all three teams were quite satisfied with the results they received from the coaching process, although they realized them differently. 1CC moved along quickly, and by the end realized the most concrete and focused result. The 3CC team took a bit longer to gel (get the hang of the non-directive coaching process) and to focus on specific goals, but once they focused (by the third session) they found a new gear and progressed rapidly, achieving the most comprehensive results of all three teams for governance discernment. For its part, the 2CC team also was well into the third session before most of them got the hang of the non-directive process and made it work for them. Yet, while they too, achieved several concrete outcomes about which they were quite enthusiastic, they could have achieved much more.

So what were the factors that hindered or enhanced the progress of these three teams? At first, I might have pointed to the pastors, since solo pastors have a major influence on everything they are a part of, intentionally or not. It’s true that Pastor Kathy is much younger than the other two. 2CC is her first pastorate and she was just a few months into serving them. And yet despite these factors, the team was quite responsive to her leadership. Additionally, all three pastors well understood the non-directive process

from the beginning, participated in it effectively and enthusiastically, and guided their team members along as appropriate. So I think the pastor element was a relatively minor influence on the different results they achieved.

Then, I might have pointed to attendance. The 1CC team had 100% attendance, with the only exception of Pastor Laura missing one session to attend a family funeral. And interestingly, her absence had no negative effect on their progress during that session, perhaps the opposite, as I'll explain later. In contrast, both the 3CC and 2CC teams had members who missed one or two sessions, and in one case, even three sessions. In addition, one or two people joined the team along the way while one or two others dropped out. However, these shifts didn't seem to have been a significant drag on their progress: the new folks were eager to participate, integrated themselves quickly, and the work being done by the ones who dropped out was taken up by others. In fact, upon returning after missing two sessions (the second and third), one 3CC member told the group: "I see we have a much clearer purpose now of where we're going – that we're on the right track." The team loved hearing this. It helped them to trust the non-directive process and to trust themselves.

Upon closer inspection of the data and my notes, I noticed several factors that most influenced their outcomes, including these: team size and composition; other things happening concurrently with the coaching; activities between coaching sessions; ability to think abstractly; awareness of group process; and learning and incorporation of non-directive coaching skills into their process. I discuss each here.

Team size and composition may have been the single biggest factor. The 1CC team totaled five people, including the pastor. Significantly, they were a team gathered

for this specific purpose. The Moderator, in consultation with the pastor, invited the other three members based upon those members' perceived interest in such an endeavor as well as upon their talents. It even included one person who had never held a leadership role in the congregation, but who was committed to its vitality. The team not only benefited from his skills, it also gave him a concrete and time-limited way to contribute. It was new territory for him. He flourished.

In contrast, the 2CC and 3CC teams were much larger: 2CC had nine members and 3CC had eight, including the pastor in both cases. In addition, both of these teams were the core leadership of their respective churches – the church councils more or less. They were used to working together as a group. The implications of these differences were significant. Being smaller, each 1CC team member experienced herself as a more significant part of their work. Each had more influence and likely felt more responsibility for the team's results than did their 2CC and 3CC counterparts. It was more noticeable when one person was not engaged. It wasn't possible to hide. From my perspective, each of the four lay members equally engaged and contributed to their purpose. They all knew that purpose since it was why they had come together. Another result of this team's being smaller was that my coaching was more focused; there weren't as many moving parts for me to keep track of.

In a smaller group, positive or negative energy from one person spreads faster. Since 1CC hadn't worked together as a team before, they naturally went through the classic team development stages of Forming, Storming, Performing, and Norming. As it turned out, they got to the Performing stage quickly. Not only did this make them more productive sooner, it was also a major morale booster, an evolution which added again to

their productivity and effectiveness. So unlike the other two teams, this one had the additional opportunity and challenge of creating a high performing team since they were creating a team culture from scratch. I sensed this may have been a new experience for many of them. It was clearly a major source of satisfaction for them.

- “I didn’t expect us to bond as we did.” (Pastor Laura)
- “I didn’t expect the cohesiveness and togetherness that we had.” (lay member)
- “The group as a whole talks very openly and suggests things that we can add to this process of moving forward.” (lay member)

Because they formed their team culture from scratch, there was more opportunity to adapt and hone behaviors that typically lead to effective team meetings: listening to and drawing out others’ ideas; time management; focus; and time management. Since meeting management is itself a part of governance, I acknowledged their great progress in team process and suggested that the behaviors they have developed are ones that could be replicated with other teams in the church. I messaged them, “You’re also doing the work of defining the characteristics of effective governance at ICC – the characteristics needed for groups (most any group) to be effective. You now have a template – a model.” I followed up with this powerful question: “What if this energy and way of working and being together that you’ve developed was replicated in other teams and committees of the church?” Big smiles and pride. And rightly so.

Other things happening concurrently with the coaching also affected the teams’ progress. As mentioned above, the ICC team formed specifically for the purpose of participating in this project, whereas the other two were basically their churches’ core leadership teams. As such, the other two were accustomed to discussing many topics whenever they assembled. During the coaching they had other things on their minds which they brought with them when they gathered for our coaching sessions – as they

naturally would *anytime* they gathered. 3CC had two other major initiatives on their minds that required thought and energy: a major capital campaign, and a Five-Year Plan.

For its part, 2CC had other things going on too, which seemed to distract attention from this project. The pastor told me:

Right now a lot of the church's energy is going towards the big annual dinner event this coming weekend and the strawberry festival coming up in June. So, there hasn't been a lot of time these past two weeks to think about much else (i.e., coaching matters).

In contrast, 3CC's concurrent major activities seemed to enhance their governance discernment. One reason is that the capital campaign, which coincidentally ran concurrently with our coaching, turned out to be a smashing success. All were surprised, delighted, and proud. They also rightly interpreted it as a major affirmation by the congregation of the direction that leadership was taking the church. It boosted both their morale and their confidence to move forward boldly with their governance thinking.

In addition, the 3CC people were simply more focused during our sessions than were the 2CC people. Though they clearly enjoyed each other's company, they were less chatty than the 2CC group. Once everyone arrived, we got right down to business. Talk of unrelated issues was infrequent. In contrast, the 2CC team was extremely "chatty" (as one of them put it) and loved talking about whatever came to mind, jumping around from topic to topic and joking with each other.

Food was another influential concurrent activity with 2CC. They prepared a meal for each session, sometimes eating beforehand, and often during our coaching sessions. As a result, the primary meal preparers were often still cleaning up in the kitchen when we started the coaching. (We routinely started the actual coaching 15 or 20 minutes after the designated time.) They then naturally took time to settle in when they joined the

session. Notably, all were well aware of this dynamic. It's clearly a deeply ingrained part of their leadership culture. In a way, it's a beautiful thing: the relationships they've built over the years of sharing leadership sustain them and give great joy.

The 2CC team also self-scored the lowest on the Final Assessment question: *During the coaching time how much progress have you made in improving your governance?* though still a decent 7.8 out of 10. It's important to repeat that this is an emotionally healthy group of capable and committed leaders who enjoy being together. They are well aware of the fact that they struggle with keeping a focus, and that they enjoy to some degree the inefficiency of having the whole group talk about everything. Some nights were more so. The pastor quipped to me after one such meeting: "They were particularly 'loopy' tonight." Naturally, I did more corralling and refocusing that night, but without resentment on my part. I enjoyed them immensely.

However, some of them were frustrated with a process which they experienced as wasting time that could have been spent on discerning governance issues: "I wish we had less digression in our discussions – stayed on topic more," and, "Staying out of minor details was difficult." Notably, as the coaching progressed, they became more aware of the negative impact of this behavior and stayed on topic more.

Another notable factor influencing progress was each team's self-perceived objective with the coaching project as revealed in how it named (referred to) itself. The 1CC team called themselves the "Focus Group," and tellingly, focused themselves the soonest on their coaching work. The 3CC team called themselves the "Reconfiguration Group." Of the three, they were the most focused on the actual reconfiguration of their

governance structure. The 2CC team gave themselves no particular name. They were simply the faithful leaders of the church, and that's how they showed up.

Next, an axiom of coaching is that **what coachees do between coaching sessions** matters a lot. Much of the benefit coachees receive is *between* the coaching sessions. The 1CC pastor said their meetings between sessions really helped to move them forward. “We have learned the importance of communication and delegation,” and “The team is following through unusually well from its last session.”

3CC, which seemed to make the second most overall progress, also discovered the value of meeting between sessions, but not until after their third session: “We realized that to make the most of our coaching sessions we really need to meet as a group in between the sessions.” As for 2CC, Pastor Kathy remarked that the coaching process would have been more effective for them if they had had more time: “probably having meetings between coaching sessions to prep would have been good.”

As I mentioned earlier, in my experience, most church councils are largely tactical (manager mindset) and lack the strategic piece (leader mindset). This phenomenon links to the apparent correlation between a team's progress at governance discernment and its ability to think more abstractly – imagining new possibilities or points of view. While a significant number of the members of all three teams self-identified as preferring concrete thinking and action – “just give us something to do and we'll do it” – those who were able to incorporate more abstract thinking along the way got better results. Those able to adapt more quickly to the open nature of non-directive coaching were more satisfied in the end. Both 1CC and 3CC demonstrated this somewhat more than 2CC.

- “As we opened ourselves up, the ideas really flowed.” (lay member, 1CC)

- “(I now) spend more time thinking through things before speaking or writing – am able to see a ‘different side’ to a problem and make a better decision.” (lay member, 3CC)

In response to the Final Assessment questions about the differences they have noticed regarding their effectiveness and/or forward progress from the coaching, some responses included these:

- “Willingness to think differently.” (lay member, 3CC)
- “The ‘open-endedness’ – not having a structure or boundaries – not receiving a ‘formula’ (helped us).” (Roberta, 3CC pastor)

And within the 2CC team, they began to see and to value the need for more abstract big-picture thinking on an ongoing basis –

- “Our current structure doesn’t allow much time for proper discussion of big picture ideas.” (2CC Pastor)
- “(I am) trying to look at the bigger picture.” (lay member, 2CC)

I also shared brief content from the book about church renewal, *Canoeing the Mountains*⁸⁸ by Tod Bolsinger, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary. Several of Tod’s “vital lessons” for church leaders that resonated with participants were these:

- The world in front of you is nothing like the world behind you.
- In uncharted territory, adaptation is everything.
- Everybody will be changed (especially the leader.)

Bolsinger also notes:

Adaptive challenges are the true tests of leadership. They are challenges that go beyond the technical solutions of residential experts or best practices, or even the organization’s current knowledge. They arise when the world around us has changed but we continue to live on the successes of the past. They are challenges that cannot be solved through compromise or win-win scenarios, or by adding another ministry or staff person. They demand that leaders make hard choices about what to preserve and what to let go. They are challenges that require people

⁸⁸ Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2015).

to learn and to *change*, that require leaders to experience and navigate profound *loss*.⁸⁹

In addition, **teams that learned and incorporated some of the characteristics of non-directive coaching into their discernment process** made more progress. For example, I noted that some of them began to adopt a coaching frame of mind. At the end of our final session, a 3CC team member asked me, “Jim, what have you learned from working with us?” echoing the question I always asked them at the end of our sessions. His question reveals an expanded awareness of process and context.

Additionally, during Session #3, the 1CC team gave lots of affirmation to team member, Susan, for her effective leadership as Moderator: “Susan is unassuming in her announcements to the congregation as to our group’s progress.” Susan was all smiles and her confidence grew. They had heard me frequently acknowledge their greatness during our sessions and experienced its motivational power when used appropriately.

Lastly, as a group coach, I tried to engage everyone, and taught that meetings are more effective when everyone’s input gets into its output. From this, a 2CC member took it a step further when he said, “If you leave a meeting not having contributed anything, maybe you shouldn’t have been there.”

Creating new awareness is a core coaching skill. As the moment was appropriate, I messaged 1CC that many folks in leadership roles assume that others in the organization know what the leaders are doing and what’s happening. But they usually don’t. So a regular drumbeat of communication (employing various modes) to the congregation about what the Focus Team is doing is necessary. They quickly grasped this shift in

⁸⁹ Ibid., 19.

awareness and consequently came away with the most detailed plan (their leadership retreat) for engaging others in the congregation with their new governance ideas.

Next, the several handouts and articles I gave each team seemed to help the progress of those who engaged with them. All three teams loved the skills and interest tri-fold survey example I gave them (“Our Church’s Talents: NMCC Skills & Interests Survey: Where Do You Fit In?”). Each team used it to design a survey of its own. They had taken to heart the content of the Rick Warren article I gave them (“Organize Your Church on Purpose, Around Giftedness”) as well as my own message that even very busy people willingly serve if the opportunity draws on talents they enjoy using and serves a purpose they support. Specifically, it helped 1CC grasp the notion of “a job and a friend” that Rev. Michael Piazza says are essential to new members staying engaged with the congregation. The survey’s simple and visual nature reframed *how* they gather interest and talent information, as well as *from whom* and *when*, such as at new member intake, or a conversation with a second-time guest. It also triggered in them the value of having a database and its crucial function in making “a job and a friend” work. “It’s clearer now how to match folks’ strengths and interests to how they can serve in ministry,” a team member said.

The “Governance & Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership” piece by Dan Hotchkiss also proved helpful. This article lays out big-picture concepts of the different ways congregations can structure their boards and committees depending on their size and purpose. While I sent this piece to all three teams, 3CC made the most use of it. Furthermore, in the end, 3CC produced the largest conceptualization of their governance

work: rather than just examining how to make the existing boards and committees more effective, they looked at reconfiguring the governance process from the top down.

The impact of the one-on-one coaching sessions I had with the pastors also was significant. The pastor plays a critical role in any coaching intervention with a congregation, and especially so when she is a direct participant and is the solo pastor, as all were with this project. Each is a unique leader in the congregation who heavily influences any project they are part of, whether consciously or unconsciously. The pastor's vision, enthusiasm, and commitment to the coaching process are essential to a good outcome, as the rest of the team tends to feed off them. Each of these three pastors had these qualities.

My four one-on-one coaching conversations with the pastors were just as important to the overall results as were my five coaching conversations with the teams of which they were a part. During these one-on-one conversations I intentionally used the pastors as cultural guides to help me interpret the behavior of the group, and for feedback about the effectiveness of my coaching. Each of them spoke frankly, openly, and trustingly. This was extremely helpful.

Accordingly, I tried to serve them as powerfully as possible, knowing that it would have an outsized impact, and also simply because I have a heart for the wellbeing and success of my fellow pastors. It's a challenging job. The topics they wanted coaching around had common themes: leadership and effectiveness (theirs and team members), the group's progress, personal care and growth (maintaining vitality as a person), working to their strengths, dealing with naysayers, and vision. Below are examples of a significant part of some of our coaching conversations which illustrate how the coaching supported

and amplified their already excellent performance as pastors. Note: Since I also coached the teams of which the pastors are a part, I took advantage of the fact that I had more context about them than I do with a typical one-on-one coaching arrangement in my general coaching work.

3CC Pastor Roberta

During our third individual coaching session, Roberta shared about her restlessness – how she’s thinking about the future all the time and pushing the congregation hard toward her vision. “I’m on Volume 5 and they’re still on Volume 1!” I challenged her: “Do you want to *live in the present* more? The present is where the action is. It’s the only place you can actually influence people.”

Roberta: “I want to live in the present, I think...”

Jim: (probing her assumption that her ministry is somehow inadequate) “How do you think God assesses your ministry at 3CC so far?”

Roberta: “God is excited about her people. They’ve broken through barriers and are responding to her in ways they haven’t done in a long time!” (A long pause by her...)

Roberta: “I just had an epiphany. I think I’ve thought God sees the church and me as separate – that it’s a task for me (like Moses) to bring them to a certain place. I guess I don’t trust my Calling enough...”

(She kept dropping deeper and deeper into her thinking.)

Jim: “How would you like to be with this in the next 48 hours?”

Roberta: “I need to talk honestly to God – not just through post-its. I want to think about the Moses thing...Ultimately it comes down to fear of failure as they’ve been let down by their pastors so many times before. Yet look at what God is doing here with this congregation!” she exclaimed.

At the end of the session, as usual, I asked what she's taking away. Her response: "A bucket load! Your affirmations are very important! Apparently, I'm not being honest with God about how I feel."

1CC Pastor Laura

Laura is very effective and happily serving her congregation. Their mutual love is strong. However, she shared with me her propensity to overcommit, to involve herself in too many things which results in stress and perhaps lost growth opportunities for parishioners.

At my invitation, she did the "3-Bucket Exercise" in which she categorized into "buckets" all the things she's doing at church: Bucket A (things that she uniquely can do), Bucket B (things that another person could do just as well), Bucket C (things that someone else could do better than she could). She found it very helpful, confessing: "I'm a bit of a control freak. I don't like to say 'no.' But, I don't want to do things just because I was asked to, or to sit in on meetings that don't really need my contribution. I want to be less oriented to people-pleasing. This helps me take better care of myself...and I realize that my modeling this encourages others to do the same."

Laura: "I have looked at my 'plate' and have decided that what's already on it stays, but a couple of items which were waiting to be 'served' will not be taken on. I am learning to say 'no.'"

Jim: I urged her to consider sharing with her team this shift of saying "no" to meeting invitations that don't really need their input, and the 3-Bucket Exercise.

2CC Pastor Kathy

The topic was her leadership development as pastor. She described how the previous settled pastorate was short and crisis-laden, and that lay leadership stepped into

the crisis and got empowered. This made them even more “doer” and “concrete” oriented. Consequently, she’s struggling with how much responsibility to take on.

Kathy: “I’ve never had this much authority with a group of people before in my life. We’re having staff problems and I’m not sure how much responsibility I want to take with that. They report to me, but so far in my short four-month tenure I haven’t been too involved and have let it run itself. Additionally, I don’t know where I’d find the time to do all the required things if I took on more responsibility explicitly.”

Jim: (reframing the notion of having responsibility) “Just because you’re responsible for something doesn’t mean you have to be the one who does it all. Rather, it’s just your job to see that it gets done...by someone.” (I sensed a shift for her, and perhaps a sigh of relief.)

Kathy: “I’m now re-reading a favorite book, *The Pastor as Poet* by Craig Barnes.

Jim: “Given the ‘doer’ nature of your congregation, and probably the wider community, perhaps what they need is more poetry. Folks are starved for poetry, not for more things to do.” (She nodded in agreement.)

It’s well known that the behavior of excellent leaders sometimes also has the effect of holding back their teams in unintended ways. This was revealed with 1CC in an unexpected way. Toward the start of 1CC team session #3 they had technical problems with their Internet connection and video equipment. They didn’t know what to do, since Pastor Laura was the one who always set up those things and she was away at a family funeral.

The remaining four team members jumped into action, calmly and intentionally solving the problem. I acknowledged them for how they beautifully modeled “non-anxious presence” in solving this unexpected challenge. I followed with a teaching point about the value of non-anxious presence in leadership. Big smiles! I was struck by how they were more proactive than I’d seen them before, and noted how rapidly they had

progressed in their effectiveness as a team since the coaching began. Throughout the coaching session, they were more vocal, openly thoughtful, inspired and interactive than I'd seen before. I wondered how much of this marked change was due to Pastor Laura's absence. I got my answer during the next session when she rejoined: they reverted to their previous more subdued behavior of deferring to Laura's direction and decisions. They seemed to be completely unaware of this snapback. It's obvious they greatly respect Laura. Deferring to her words and direction is natural and comfortable for them. It's their culture. But I wonder about their underdeveloped potential as this was their most productive session yet. It reminded me of how the clergy role has a significant influence on both the coaching process and the growth of the team.

The technology we used also influenced the coaching outcomes. Technology was critical to this project. We couldn't have done all the coaching face-to-face due to time and distance factors. As mentioned earlier, this project replicated a format I've successfully used with a number of my professional clients. This was an opportunity to assess its effect in a more rigorous way. As expected, the use of Zoom for all our sessions, save the initial one, was a necessary compromise, though some participants would have preferred to have all our sessions face to face. However, as anticipated, everyone adapted reasonably well to the video-conferencing medium, with some guidance from me along the way. And two positives resulted that I hadn't anticipated. One, each team grew in its ability and confidence to use Zoom effectively and commented how they could use it for other purposes too. And second, since I was not physically present, they relied on me less than they probably would have otherwise, again, boosting their capabilities to self-manage and to achieve the results they wanted.

The way we started and concluded each session also mattered. I brought a particular format to the way each team coaching session started and ended which I drew from my professional coaching practice. This experience added significantly to the overall value of the session for the participants. We began each session with a 60-second brief meditation led by me. I invited them to sit comfortably with their feet on the floor, to put down anything in their hands, to clear their minds of the many thoughts and concerns they brought into the room with them, and to focus on their breath. Next, I offered a simple prayer asking God's guidance and blessing on our time. Not wanting to impose this on them, after the first session I asked if they wanted to continue this practice, modify it, or drop it. Everyone experienced it as a very centering and calming way to begin our coaching session. We continued this practice.

Next, at the beginning of each session I invited them to share something to celebrate: "Since we've last met, what has happened in your ministry, broadly speaking, that makes you happy, that you want to celebrate?" In the first session, not too much was said as they weren't accustomed to such a practice, but by the second or third session it poured out! Sometimes they celebrated a particular success related to a coaching action they agreed to take or a discovery made. Other times it was a concurrent activity such as 3CC's highly successful capital campaign. Regardless, it started the coaching session on an upbeat "can-do" note that instilled confidence. It also built the momentum which is so central to an effective change process.

Next, I asked them a powerful question such as these: "What would make today's coaching session fabulous?" or, "What do you want to be able to say at the end of our session today that you cannot say now?" or "What shift or change or discovery, if

realized in our coaching today, would put a serious spring in your step or rock your world?” These questions, again being so unusual to them, often put a smile on their faces and helped start our session on the foot of possibility rather than the foot of limitation, an attitude of abundance rather than of scarcity.

At the conclusion of our session, I asked each participant what he or she was taking away from the session: what learning, discovery, shift in awareness, or nugget of truth that made the session worthwhile. Next, we reviewed the actions they committed to for next time. Lastly was a benediction by them, usually the pastor, though in a few instances by others. This was a good stretch experience for them. The ending format reinforced or echoed the opening format, in all cases very effectively.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM THIS PROJECT

My learnings fall into several categories. First are new-to-me things – discoveries; second are things I suspected might be true and got reinforced as being so; and third are things that I suspected might be true but turned out not to be.

This project has allowed me to think more deeply about the power and usefulness of non-directive coaching. For example, although I suspected that non-directive coaching would have some impact upon the leadership development of the participants I was surprised by just how significant this impact was. While I knew from my prior coaching experiences as both a coach and a coachee that participating in a non-directive coaching process tends to develop skills in the coachee – such as greater self-awareness, greater ability to articulate what one wants, and more self-accountability – I hadn't thought of it as *actually cultivating leadership skills and capacity in coachees*. When coachees fully engage with the coaching process, they grow as leaders without even trying consciously to do so.

As it turned out, the participants who were actively engaged with the process (about 90% of them) reported experiencing real development in these leadership abilities of listening; critical thinking; big-picture thinking; self-expression; confidence that their thoughts are worthy of expression; self-awareness and introspection; comfort with silence; and willingness to learn in front of others (related to vulnerability). These leadership abilities also included recognizing the talents of others and being able to match these talents with appropriate opportunities for service; focusing and prioritizing; creating realistic action plans with the necessary accountability; influencing others to support a

vision; and understanding the connection between ownership and implementation. Additional abilities included these: facilitating meetings effectively; recognizing when an outside opinion or viewpoint is needed; patience in pursuing one's goal; celebrating successes; acknowledging the contributions by and the greatness in others; awareness of group process; the need to ground a new idea in an appropriate larger WHY or purpose; the need to mentor others (new leaders rarely just appear); fostering collaborative thinking; and articulating hope.

Other learnings include the fact that the shape and function of a congregation's governance has a big impact on the leadership development of its parishioners – both the degree of it and the type of it. For example, the more permission-giving governance is, the more it develops creative leadership capacities since it often involves risk taking. Another is how the standard board or committee-driven governance model tends to foster a managerial mindset. However, I found that if the leadership council is more policy-oriented – concerned with creating policies which shape what the congregation is becoming – they are better able to consciously shape the congregation's future, as effective leaders do.

I was reminded again that intentional leadership development is critical to the vitality of the church. As congregations and denominational staff lament the overall declining trend in vitality of the mainline church, many are tempted to seek a fix in new contemporary worship styles, new stewardship practices, or championing various social justice issues, all of which are important. *But the key to vitality is effective local leadership.* Every organization rises or falls according to the quality of its leadership. Effective leadership doesn't just happen, it must be intentionally cultivated. This project

offers substantial evidence that participating in non-directive coaching cultivates the characteristics of effective leadership.

Leadership is like a stem cell that can be applied to any challenge. What's more, like a stem cell, leadership is the necessary basic ingredient from which all other assets and contributions of the church flow and grow. To continue the metaphor, non-directive coaching is also a stem cell, one which can be brought to bear fruitfully on many different challenges of the local church. On the Final Assessment the participants suggested applying non-directive coaching to stewardship, outreach, spiritual guidance, strategic planning, time management, recruiting staff, mission efforts, safe church practices, team building, Christian education, and work stress.

I learned and grew as a coach during this project. While I have done a lot of coaching in the past nine years, both internally with congregations I've served as pastor, and externally with faith leaders of other churches, most of the coaching has been one-on-one. Individual coaching is where all coaches begin. Group coaching comes later. Coaching a group is more complex. It has more variables and moving parts. It demands a higher skill level. Although my first experience coaching a group was many years ago, it wasn't until recent years that I've been doing it with relative frequency. In fact, nowadays, my professional coaching practice is mostly group coaching. Still, I am eager to further develop my group coaching skills and this project gave me an opportunity to do that. I'll share a few highlights where I grew as a coach.

This project was my first experience gathering participant data during a coaching engagement. As such, it presented me with a new opportunity to feed some of this data back into the coaching process. At a point in the coaching when the 2CC team was still

looking for its overall desired outcome from the coaching and appeared to lack confidence in the non-directive process well into our third session, I invited them to read out loud to each other their individual responses to the question on the Middle Assessment, *Share a sentence or two about how the process and experience of coaching is going for you.* They wrote far more in response to this question than did 3CC or 1CC. They revealed much more in their writing than in their speaking. It did the trick. Their words inspired, encouraged, and informed each other. The coaching turned a corner with that event and they began producing the kind of focused results they had been pining for.

Another growth experience for me was using the pastors as cultural guides to help me understand how to best serve their teams. It gave me vital feedback about what to keep doing and how to keep being as coach and where to adjust. It also enhanced mutual buy-in: we're in this together. It allowed me to demonstrate with my actions that I'm fully committed to our coaching partnership; help me to be as effective as *you* need me to be rather than just how *I* think I need to be.

During this project, I grew in my trust of the non-directive coaching process. While we coaches tell ourselves to trust the coaching process, it's not easy to do when folks get anxious, including the coach. As reported earlier, team members missed some coaching sessions. Normally, I see this as a negative, something requiring extra work by me to catch them up so as to avoid hindering the team's progress. However, I saw for the first time how this can be beneficial. A 3CC team member who missed sessions #2 and #3, spoke up early on in session #4 saying, "I see we have a much clearer purpose now of where we're going – that we're on the right track." This was a confidence booster to others. His new perspective prompted insights from other team members: "The Holy

Spirit has helped us get to where we are now.” “Our progress – work together – has an ease about it now.” I learned two things here. First, participants missing coaching sessions can be a plus: the changed dynamic offers new possibilities; and second, to look for these possibilities, don’t wait for them to come to me. For example, rather than waiting for a previously absent member to offer her views on where the team is now, which she may not think to do, I could invite her to do so.

I also learned more about trusting the coaching process around technology. Except for the first session, all coaching was done via the Zoom Internet platform, which, similar to Skype, is a type of video-conferencing. While it can seem like you’re all together in the same room, you are not. Participants need continual guidance in how to adapt their behavior and manner of speaking to maximize the effectiveness of Zoom. I learned to grow my patient coaching presence in repeatedly reminding, guiding, and teaching folks to adapt. In all cases they were grateful for the guidance. Outcomes improved. I learned to bite my tongue and to be gentler, recognizing that this too was part of the coaching process. And, of course, sometimes one’s Internet connection dies altogether. When this actually happened during a session, I was able to maintain my non-anxious coaching presence which helped the coachees do the same. Next time, I would have some intentional teaching and learning before the coaching begins about how to use this medium most effectively.

I also grew in my client-intake process. Coaches who have mentored me spend what seems like an excessive amount of time in conversation with a potential client. Some of this time is spent helping the potential coachee access the big dream he has for his life or work that the coach’s deep listening and powerful questioning has helped him

to articulate. I did a goodly amount of this with the pastors beforehand, but could have done even more. It's the same with the teams, though more complex. I could have spent more time partnering with the pastors here. And again, this is done *before* the official coaching begins, even though it is, in fact, coaching. Crucial here is assessing the coachability of the client. Non-directive coaching is not for everybody, and not for every situation. As a result of my experience with this project, I would also discuss team composition more fully. I learned that it's better to have a team dedicated to this particular coaching project than to have the core leaders just because they are the leaders. As the core leaders, they often have lots of other things on their minds that they naturally want to talk about whenever they gather. Point: the gathering of the particular group of people and the environment in which they gather influences and triggers what happens. If working with the core leadership team is unavoidable, I could have suggested that the coaching happen in a different environment than the one in which they usually gather.

As coach my job is to serve the client as powerfully as possible. This is not the same as giving them what they want just to please them. As a recovering "pleaser," I find this a continual challenge. With one exception, none of the participants had any prior experience with non-directive coaching. Even though I explained numerous times before and during the coaching that the non-directive coach doesn't give answers (like a consultant does), they quite naturally expected me to do so and got anxious when I didn't, well into our third session in some cases. One participant put it, "The self-directed nature of it left things to be very open-ended, which was sometimes difficult." And as a recovering "fixer" with lots of experience in the issues they faced, I was continually tempted to offer an answer. Once or twice I did, and it only compounded the problem as

it confused them as to my role. What I could have done differently was rather than to explain the non-directive process more, invite them to see how it has benefitted them so far. Team members were at different places in understanding the non-directive process and there were always some who embraced it early on. I could have invited one of them to speak to the group about how they have adapted to it so far. This would have been much more empowering for them. A message is received differently according to who sends it.

In the end I felt redeemed somewhat when the same participant who'd earlier struggled with the non-directive process asked me at the conclusion of our last session: "Jim, what have you learned from working with us?" Wonderful! This question demonstrated his growth with the process, and how he had actually adopted some of the very coaching moves that I had used with them. He was growing as a leader.

And as mentioned above, while non-directive coaching is a superpower of sorts, it isn't for everyone or for every problem. It isn't for remedial work. For example, the employee whose supervisor recommends coaching to help her with a job performance issue may not benefit from it unless she is highly motivated to do so – the coachability factor. Non-directive coaching is also not for a situation requiring significant content expertise such as constructing a capital campaign. A consultant is better for that, although coaching could support the implementation of the campaign. In addition, non-directive coaching isn't for an emergency situation requiring immediate directed action. These are just a few examples. Coaching works best when participants are willing to enter into new territory – discovery and mystery – and willing to do the hard work of creating what they want rather than insisting it be given to them.

I grew in my ability to offer useful distinctions. For example, in the context of their common struggle to find ways to engage more people in serving and volunteering, I offered the distinction between a “Time Ask” and a “Task Ask.” I had never thought of this before and smiled to myself when I heard the words coming out of my mouth. An example of a “Time Ask” is the invitation to serve on a committee that meets monthly for three years. Conversely, a “Task Ask” is the invitation to participate in accomplishing a particular task. The commitment ends when the task is completed. There are fewer people these days willing to accept a “Time Ask,” yet even busy people often say ‘yes’ to a “Task Ask” which aligns with what they enjoy doing and which matters to them. This distinction strongly resonated with all three teams.

Even though it is non-directive coaching, there is a time for a coach to trust her intuition to be directive. For example, while I had emailed Pastor Roberta of 3CC the Rick Warren article, “Organize Your Church on Purpose, Around Giftedness,” and asked her to distribute it to them if she thought it useful, it was apparent in the subsequent coaching session that its content would help them and also that that few had actually read it or perhaps even seen it. Sensing its value to their conversation now, I asked Pastor Roberta to make copies, and then I asked them to stop and read it – right then – during the coaching conversation. “We’re already doing some of these things!” a member exclaimed. Consequently, confidence grew and more focus was achieved. This degree of directiveness was new to me, but my intuition was spot on. It also allowed me to message them that on balance, they may want to have a structure that is more permission-giving than gate-keeping. I took a similar tack with the short YouTube video clip by Michael Jr., “Know Your Why,” with the ICC team. The impact of their experiencing together

Michael Jr.'s high impact message helped them to connect their WHY (Purpose) with their governance discernment. The lesson for me was that serving clients powerfully may require me to set aside my desire to be liked and to appear nice and to allow myself to act in a way that feels pushy and may irritate them.

However, my shining moment came with 3CC Team session #4. They were settling into working out details of an action plan they'd just agreed upon. I realized that I wasn't needed for this activity. Pointing this out to them, I challenged them by asking how they wanted to use my time and coaching resource during this session. They immediately saw my point and then kicked themselves into high gear by shifting their focus to something that needed my participation, saving the earlier activity for later. I have learned that non-directive coaching is even more powerful and high leverage than I realized. The metaphor is truly apt: non-directive coaching participants truly do learn how to fish.

As mentioned earlier, I am convinced that non-directive coaching is a major resource to help local and judicatory church leaders face the reality of declining vitality in many of their churches. My vision is to establish a coaching culture in the United Church of Christ, my own denomination. Being a culture change it will take time and there will be resistance, yet we urgently need it.

Given the fact that organizations rise and fall according to the quality of their leadership, we must embrace whatever cultivates leadership capacity. This project demonstrated that non-directive coaching is one of these resources: it significantly grows the leadership ability and capacity of those who participate in it. In fact, participants reported that their leadership skills grew *even though some of them didn't self-identify as*

leaders. This is significant because many church-based leadership development programs target the identified leaders, such as moderators, pastors, and high potential younger pastors. While this approach is fine, it overlooks the leadership development potential of average parishioners, which is big. Imagine how a congregation's ministry would come alive if even 10 percent of its parishioners realized significant growth in their skills of listening, powerful questioning, big-picture thinking, drawing out the greatness in others, and in their ability to discern and then to focus on the real issues and create realistic action plans that create the new realities they seek. They would be much more aware of their mission field and how God is calling them to serve it. Governance structures and practices would better align with a commonly understood ministry purpose, meetings would be more productive, they would be more in touch with the spiritual needs of their wider community, and traditions which no longer serve would be artfully set aside, to name a few.

It is possible. A number of Annual Conferences within the United Methodist Church (UMC) have invested significantly to make coach skills training available to local church leaders and judicatory personnel. Many UMC pastors are offered a coach for the first 12 months of a new ministry placement, and even more is offered to new pastors. In addition, the Tarrant Baptist Association in Texas with 121 churches has been driving a coaching culture deep into all aspects of its ministry for the past 10 years; the Christian Church (DOC) has been actively offering coaching to pastors since 2011. They are creating the kind of congregation-centered culture that congregations increasingly say they want.

Accordingly, here is a plan for a judicatory to begin developing a coaching culture, or at least to begin growing a non-directive coaching capacity. I suggest a target of 10-15% of local church leaders acquiring some basic non-directive coaching skills: This includes staff (clergy, Christian educators, Music Ministers, etc.) and laity. It also includes judicatory staff. Caveats: Training is strictly optional; not everyone will want to develop these skills. No pressure or judgment. The judicatory would need to enthusiastically support this effort for it to succeed.

Begin with a simple half-day coach skills training that would orient participants to the basics and benefits of non-directive coaching. It's important to keep the cost of participation low – both in time and money.

What: *Non-Directive Coaching Skills Basics for Busy Pastors*

Non-directive coaching is quite different from traditional notions of coaching which, like consulting and mentoring, cast the coach as the expert who brings the answers. As pastor in this role, parishioners bring their problems to you to solve for them. Imagine the creativity and ministry capacity that could be released if parishioners solved their problems themselves! What if they had a pastor skilled at non-directive coaching who through deep listening and powerful questioning helped them to discover they have the “answer” already within them and don't need fixing or directing?

Cost: minimal

Learning Objectives – Participants in this program will:

- Gain a basic understanding of the power of non-directive coaching
- Develop core coaching skills that can be immediately used in the local church setting
- Observe LIVE coaching by a Professional Certified Coach.
- Learn a simple coaching model

For those interested in more, I suggest offering a two-day basic coach skills training program and a five-day intensive coach skills training. Those interested in these options may want to consider becoming ICF-certified coaches at the ACC (Associate Certified Coach) or the more advanced PCC (Professional Certified Coach) levels. In

addition, regular mentor coaching support is vital to developing coaching skills in beginning coaches, and facilitated peer coaching groups can also help coach skill development.

CONCLUSION

This project demonstrated that non-directive coaching was a major asset in helping three church leadership teams to discern some of the governance challenges hindering their ministries and to identify specific workable actions to move forward. It also proved to be surprisingly effective at developing the leadership skills of the participants even though this wasn't a specific objective. In addition, the project helped me to hone a particular format for coaching teams and revealed aspects that hinder an effective coaching engagement, or support it, such as using the term "non-directive" coaching. The project also suggests a method for equipping ministry leaders with basic coaching skills, which not only helps congregations to solve their problems effectively themselves, but also to grow internal leadership capacity which can foster future vitality.

For nine years I've personally experienced the benefit and power of coaching for improving ministry vitality. My own effectiveness as a pastor has greatly benefited by having a coach. My coaching of individuals and groups, both in the congregations I've served as pastor and in those I've served as an external professional coach, demonstrated time and again its value to improving ministry vitality. Simply put: Coaching gives people permission to change. When quality non-directive coaching is afoot, folks quickly realize whether or not they want to change. If they do, then the coaching process will help them to strategically focus on specific problems they care about. They will create plans of action that are realistic, complete with appropriate resources, accountability, and a workable means for measuring progress. It's an internally driven process so ownership is high, rather than an externally driven process where an outside expert brings specific

solutions and programs that often don't quite match with what folks really want, resulting in lower ownership and commitment.

When I first considered doing my Doctor of Ministry project on coaching I wasn't sure how to approach it in a way that people in church leadership roles would want to read it. This is because coaching still hasn't caught on in many mainline Protestant ministry settings. Specifically, the term "coaching" itself still isn't getting much traction in the mainline Protestant world. There are two main reasons for this. One, people commonly associate it with mentoring, or directing – like sports coaching where the coach tells you what to do and how to do it. Most mainline church leaders resist this, as did the participants in this study. Accordingly, I wanted to see if using the term "non-directive" coaching would help them to better see what it is. It did. It got my desired response: "Non-directive coaching, what is that?" This opened the door for them to understand what it is and what it is not, which led to their ability to choose to engage with it or not, based on an accurate assessment, rather than to dismiss it based on a misunderstanding. The power of this terminology was a major discovery and breakthrough. It's non-directive in the sense that the coach does not bring the answer or solve the problem for the coachee. These are consultant or athletic-type coach roles. In contrast, with non-directive coaching, the coachee is recognized as the context and content expert and is responsible for the outcome. Ownership begins and ends with the coachee. The coach sets the container which stimulates a rich discovery process for the coachee. The coachee does most of the work, which makes for high ownership of the results. High ownership is directly linked to high likelihood of follow-through and implementation.

A second reason that coaching hasn't caught on is the lack of data – studies like this one – that assess its effectiveness in a formal academic way. This study demonstrated that with these three groups, non-directive coaching had a major positive impact upon achieving their desired goals.

I had strongly suspected that if I was able to engage coachable teams struggling with governance issues that the coaching would really help them move forward. It did. I had also suspected that the coaching would positively affect other aspects related to leadership. As it turned out, this proved to be the biggest discovery of this project: Non-directive coaching has a major impact on leadership development. About 90 percent of the participants grew measurably in their capacity as leaders as they engaged positively with the non-directive coaching process. This growth was indicated not only by their own responses to the statement, *The experience of being coached has increased my effectiveness as a leader*, but more concretely and tellingly in that they reported significant improvement in those skills directly related to effective leadership – such as listening, focusing, prioritizing, articulating one's thoughts, self-confidence, self-awareness, critical thinking, and big-picture thinking.

This project demonstrated a powerful way to grow leadership skills and capacity without using a formal leadership development program. The process builds capacity for folks to solve their problems themselves rather than to rely upon external answers. They really do learn to “fish.” This ability is directly transferable to other challenges commonly faced by faith communities, as the participants suggested in their Final Assessments: stewardship, outreach, strategic planning, spiritual guidance, team management, recruiting staff, safe church processes, and Christian education.

Despite the many church vitality programs teaching content and best practices, the continued decline of many mainline congregations indicates this isn't enough. Basic new leadership skills are needed. A basic proficiency with the non-directive coaching skill set can be learned by many people. When a congregation employs the "stem cell" leadership skill of non-directive coaching it is able to see its challenges more clearly and to apply its natural gifts and talents in a way that God is inviting them to do for the sake of changed lives as modeled by Christ.

In conclusion, non-directive coaching is not for every situation, but for people feeling stuck or wanting to raise their game to a new level, it can be a game changer. And because non-directive coaching is not content-driven, it can be fruitfully applied to many aspects of ministry and increase ministry vitality broadly.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ASSESSMENT FORMS

INITIAL ASSESSMENT – Team

Church Name _____ Your Name _____ Date _____

1. I have had experience with a non-directive coach before this – circle one:
 never several times regularly
2. Why did you choose to use coaching to assist you with governance discernment?
3. What has led you to want to work on your congregation’s governance?
4. How would you describe your governance processes now?
5. How would you describe your governance structure now?
6. How effective are your current governance processes now?
7. How effective is your current governance structure now?
8. What problems or challenges do you hope to solve by working on governance?
9. What do you expect to be your biggest challenge in achieving a new governance structure or process?
10. What are your expectations for how helpful coaching will be to achieve your goals? (Circle a number: 1 is low, 10 is high)
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11. We are clear about the outcomes we want. (Circle a number: 1 is low, 10 is high)
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. Rate your level of effectiveness as a team (Circle a number: 1 is low, 10 is high)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

13. Rate your current level of morale as a team (Circle a number: 1 is low, 10 is high)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14. Please share a sentence or two about your concerns and thoughts as you embark on coaching -

INITIAL ASSESSMENT – Pastor

The Initial Assessment for the Pastor was identical to the Team Assessment but added two more questions:

Rate your level of effectiveness as a leader (Circle a number: 1 is low, 10 is high)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate your current level of morale as pastor (Circle a number: 1 is low, 10 is high)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

MIDDLE ASSESSMENT – Team

Church Name _____ Your
Name _____ Date _____

1. We are more clear about our desired outcomes than when we began the coaching process. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. We have identified clear goals that are important to us. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. We are making progress toward these important goals. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. We have clear actions we've committed to take before the next session which will move us toward our stated goals. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Rate your level of effectiveness as a team. (Circle a number: 1 is low, 10 is high)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Rate your current level of morale as a team. (Circle a number: 1 is low, 10 is high)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. I have been able to contribute talents / knowledge toward our goals that I enjoy contributing. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. I have developed or discovered new skills / habits / practices that I recognize as valuable, such as (name one or more) –
9. Please share a sentence or two about how the process and experience of coaching is going for you _____

MIDDLE ASSESSMENT – Pastor

The Middle Assessment for the Pastor was identical to the Team Assessment but added the same two questions:

Rate your level of effectiveness as a leader (Circle a number: 1 is low, 10 is high)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate your current level of morale as pastor (Circle a number: 1 is low, 10 is high)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

FINAL ASSESSMENT – Team

Church Name _____ Your
Name _____ Date _____

1. My overall experience of being coached – (Circle a number: 1 – not worth my time; 10 – extremely beneficial)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Our morale has increased as a team since the coaching began – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. We have identified specific behaviors / things that lead to improved governance – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. The coaching process helped us get to a place (achieve results) we could not have done on our own – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. The most valuable results the coaching helped us to achieve are (Name some...)
6. Our effectiveness as a team has increased since the coaching began – (Circle a number: 1 – disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. Rate your current level of morale as a team. (Circle a number: 1 is low; 10 is high)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. Rate your level of effectiveness as a team. (Circle a number: 1 is low; 10 is high)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
9. I have been able to contribute talents / knowledge toward our goals that I enjoy contributing. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
10. I have developed or discovered new skills / habits / practices that I recognize as valuable, such as (name one or more) –
11. What I gained from the coaching that was especially helpful to me personally was – (Name 2 or 3 things...)
12. The experience of being coached has increased my effectiveness as a leader – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
If yes, in what ways?
13. What differences have you noticed around the team's effectiveness during this time of coaching? (Name some things....)
14. What differences have you noticed around your own effectiveness during this time of coaching? (Name some things....)
15. What happened during the coaching that you didn't expect?
16. What was especially notable about the coaching process that helped move you forward?
17. What about the coaching process was difficult or unhelpful for you? For the team?

18. What would have made this coaching process more effective for you or the group?
19. In what ways did the coaching affect: Clarity? Conflict? Strategic planning? Accountability? Team cohesiveness? Etc.
20. During this coaching time how much progress have you made in improving your governance? (Circle a number: 1 – none; 10 – a whole lot)
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
21. We are more clear about our desired outcomes that when we began the coaching process. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
22. I have a clear idea of some next steps I / we can take to move our governance discernment / improvement process forward. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- If so, please list some of these steps / actions here:
23. Based on your experience would you engage in coaching again in the future? (Circle a number: 1 – no way; 10 – absolutely)
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- If yes, please list some other areas where coaching would be helpful –

FINAL ASSESSMENT – Pastor

The Final Assessment for the Pastor was identical to the Team Assessment but added three more questions:

My morale as pastor has increased since the coaching began – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

My effectiveness as the pastor has increased since the coaching began – (Circle a number: 1 – disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate your current level of morale as pastor. (Circle a number: 1 is low; 10 is high)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

APPENDIX 2: RESULTS OF METRICS

Results of Metrics Sections of the Initial, Middle & Final Assessments

INITIAL ASSESSMENT	1CC/Avg.	2CC/Avg.	3CC/Avg.	Combined
10. Expectations of how helpful coaching will be	9	8	9	8.7
11. Clear about outcomes we want	6.6	5.6	6.7	6.3
12. Level of effectiveness as a team	9	7.8	7.8	8.2
13. Level of morale as a team	9.2	8.7	9.6	9.2
Pastor specific				
Rate your level of effectiveness as a leader	8	7	8	7.7
Rate your current level of morale as pastor	8	10	9.5	9.2
MIDDLE ASSESSMENT	1CC/Avg.	2CC/Avg.	3CC/Avg.	Combined
1. We are more clear about desired outcomes than when began	9.2	8.1	9.6	9
2. We have identified clear goals important to us	8.8	7.3	8.2	8.1
3. We are making progress toward these important goals	9	7.8	8.8	8.3
4. We have clear actions we've committed to take before the next session which will move us toward our goals	9.2	7.6	9.6	8.8
5. Our level of effectiveness as a team	9.4	8.1	9	8.8
6. Our current level of morale as a team	9.8	9	9.7	9.5
7. I have been able to contribute talents/knowledge toward our goals that I enjoy contributing	9.6	9.1	7.7	8.8
FINAL ASSESSMENT	1CC/Avg.	2CC/Avg.	3CC/Avg.	Combined
1. My overall experience of being coached	10	9.1	9.7	9.6
2. Our morale as a team increased since coaching began	10	9	9.9	9.6

3. We have identified specific behaviors/things that lead to improved governance	9.4	9.4	9.7	9.5
4. The coaching process helped us get to a place (achieve results) we could not have done on our own	9.8	9.3	9.4	9.5
6. Our effectiveness as a team increased since coaching began	10	8.3	9.4	9.2
7. Our current level of morale as a team	10	9.1	9.9	9.7
8. Our level of effectiveness as a team	10	8.5	9.4	9.3
9. I have been able to contribute talents/knowledge toward our goals that I enjoy contributing	9.8	8.6	8.7	9
12. The experience of being coached has increased my effectiveness as a leader	9.6	8.1	8.6	8.8
20. During the coaching time how much progress have you made in improving your governance	9.6	7.8	8.6	8.7
21. We are more clear about our desired outcomes than when we began the coaching	10	8.9	10	9.6
22. I have a clear idea of some next steps I/we can take to move our governance discernment/improvement process forward	10	9	9.9	9.6
23. Based on my experience I would engage in coaching again in the future	10	9.4	9.9	9.8
Pastor specific				
My morale as pastor has increased since the coaching began	10	9	10	9.7
My effectiveness as the pastor / leader has increased since the coaching began	9	7	10	8.7
My current level of morale as pastor	10	10	9	9.7

APPENDIX 3: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CLUES

Leadership Development Clues revealed in Final Assessment Responses

In response to the question, I have developed or discovered new skills / habits / practices that I recognize as valuable, such as (name a few) –

- Defining objectives; sticking to an agenda.
- Listening skills.
- Thought process organization at meetings.
- Eliciting ideas/opinions from members in a meeting.
- More vocal and confident.
- Letting go of control.
- Being more intentional about leadership development.
- Thinking outside the box.
- Futuristic thinking about our church.
- Rediscovered critical thinking and effective teamwork.
- Asking people questions to help them come up with the “answer” or “solution” instead of fixing it for them.

What I gained from the coaching that was especially helpful to me personally was –

- Confidence in my thoughts.
- Open minded / being more creative.
- It is more beneficial to coach than to tell people what they must do.
- Ownership of changes is critical.
- Not having to be the expert all the time.
- This experience helped me think more intentionally about my role as pastor and what makes that role particular.
- Focusing on the few and not the many.
- Listening, power of collaborative thinking.
- Looking at difficult tasks in a different way.
- Differentiating between concept and action, and when to focus on one or the other.
- Thinking about possibilities rather than excuses.
- Questioning existing practices.
- It reacquainted me with the value of non-directive coaching.
- Clarity of focus.
- To let other people’s questions guide me in discovering.
- Think more before making a decision.

The experience of being coached has increased my effectiveness as a leader. If yes, in what ways?

- I learned ways to engage participants in groups.
- I learned to keep meetings on task.
- I am more sensitive to respecting the contributions of others.
- Confidence to move forward in reaching out to the congregation.
- Sharpened listening skills, not jumping to conclusions.
- I see the importance of getting everyone in the church involved in some way.
- Deep thinking by focusing and pulling ourselves away from day-to-day tasks.
- Being able to look at difficult situations in a different light.
- Awareness of going off track – gently bringing back to topic.
- Refocusing on building capacity of church members to help us be more engaged effective leaders.
- Awareness that leadership is more about coaching and/or coordinating than doing.
- Looking for solid reasons for change and thinking about how to present “changes” to the congregation.
- Learned to look at things from another’s perspective.

What differences have you noticed around your own effectiveness during this time of coaching?

- I can make better use of my time and be more efficient.
- Difference on how to run council meetings, use of agenda, etc.
- I found a better appreciation of all of us contributing.
- Better balance between speaking and listening.
- Focusing on fewer things instead of examining everything that we could fix.
- Learned to take time out to think deeply.
- Learning how to steer a conversation.
- Looking at bigger picture.
- Intentionally listening and not speaking.
- Affirming more.
- Improved thought process about “change” – much more confident in making changes at our church.
- More willingness to draw on my experience to contribute thoughts & ideas.
- I’m better able to think things out before making a decision or judgment.

APPENDIX 4: FINAL ASSESSMENT TEAM COMPOSITE RESULTS

FINAL ASSESSMENT – Team Composite Results – 1CC

1. **My overall experience of being coached** – (Circle a number: 1 – not worth my time; 10 – extremely beneficial)
 - 10, 10, 10, 10, 10
2. **Our morale has increased as a team since the coaching began** – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
 - 10, 10, 10, 10, 10
3. **We have identified specific behaviors / things that lead to improved governance** – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
 - 9, 9, 10, 10, 9
4. **The coaching process helped us get to a place (achieve results) we could not have done on our own** – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
 - 10, 10, 10, 10, 9
5. **The most valuable results the coaching helped us to achieve are** (Name some...) –
 - Matching people with talents.
 - Making people feel their time is not being wasted.
 - To make / create our thoughts or plans and implement.
 - To stay focused on what our goal is.
 - Honing in on what changes we want to make in governance.
 - Being more introspective about our specific goals.
 - Helped put me on task for future goals!
 - Clarity of purpose, trusting the process, coming up with a plan.
6. **Our effectiveness as a team has increased since the coaching began** – (Circle a number: 1 – disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
 - 10, 10, 10, 10, 10
7. **Rate your current level of morale as a team.** (Circle a number: 1 is low; 10 is high)
 - 10, 10, 10, 10, 10
8. **Rate your level of effectiveness as a team.** (Circle a number: 1 is low; 10 is high)
 - 10, 10, 10, 10, 10
9. **I have been able to contribute talents / knowledge toward our goals that I enjoy contributing.** (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
 - 9, 10, 10, 10, 10

10. I have developed or discovered new skills / habits / practices that I recognize as valuable, such as (name one or more) –

- Defining objectives; sticking to an agenda.
- Listening skills.
- Thought process organization at meetings.
- Eliciting ideas/opinions from members in a meeting.
- I am more vocal and confident.
- Letting go of control.

11. What I gained from the coaching that was especially helpful to me personally was (Name 2 or 3 things...) –

- Confidence in my thoughts.
- Open minded / being more creative.
- It is more beneficial to coach than to tell people what they must do.
- Ownership of changes in critical.
- More assertive with my opinions, thoughts, etc.
- Not having to be the expert all the time. Folks have lots of great gifts and a real love for the church.

12. The experience of being coached has increased my effectiveness as a leader –
(Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

- 9, 10, 10, 10, 9

If yes, in what ways?

- Having others feel engaged and taking ownership of what we are doing.
- I learned ways to engage participants in groups.
- I learned to keep meetings on task.
- I am more sensitive to being aware of respecting the time and contributions others want to make.
- Confidence to move forward in reaching out to the congregation.
- Sharpening listening skills, not jumping to conclusions.

13. What differences have you noticed around the team's effectiveness during this time of coaching? (Name some things....) –

- There is a lot of excitement between us.
- Ease and communication of the group flows well.
- Team members became more focused as time went on.
- As we opened ourselves up, the ideas really flowed.
- I have grown closer to the group. We talk a lot outside our meetings and I feel comfortable voicing my thoughts.
- Grew in comradery, grew in comfort level with the process, opened up to new ideas.

14. What differences have you noticed around your own effectiveness during this time of coaching? (Name some things....) –

- I can make better use of my time and be more efficient.
- Difference on how to run council meetings, use of agenda, etc.
- I found a better appreciation of all of us contributing.
- I don't feel any differences. We all add to the topics.
- See #11 & #12.

15. What happened during the coaching that you didn't expect?

- I didn't expect the cohesiveness and togetherness that we had.
- We learned more about our goal and different ways to reach our goal.
- I did not expect our goal / plan to come together so succinctly.
- Nothing that wasn't expected.
- Bonding of the group to the extent they did.

16. What was especially notable about the coaching process that helped move you forward?

- Jim let us figure things out for ourselves.
- Direction and ideas from leader.
- The coaching kept us moving instead of getting stuck in one area.
- The group as a whole talks very openly and suggests things that we can add to this process of moving forward.
- Learning to trust my folks more.

17. What about the coaching process was difficult or unhelpful for you? For the team?

- Nothing.
- I don't think there was anything that was unhelpful.
- The beginning (understanding the process) was difficult for all of us at first.
- Nothing. Every meeting was an additional guidance to me.
- Wanting someone to first tell us what to do. Of course, this not always a helpful desire!

18. What would have made this coaching process more effective for you or the group?

- Maybe having examples of what other churches have done (in writing).
- Sessions in person.
- Nothing – it worked the way it was.
- Can't think of anything.
- I know logistics are difficult – I would have preferred live face-to-face meetings. Hard to change!

19. In what ways did the coaching affect: Clarity? Conflict? Strategic planning? Accountability? Team cohesiveness? Etc.

- Jim allowed us to say what we wanted and never got in the way of our interaction. This allowed us to be very effective.
- As we continued to meet, and engaged in conversation, asked questions – leader’s interaction – the overall group and understanding of coaching became clearer.
- The coaching encouraged being clear, sifting through our ideas, and coming up with an effective plan.
- Everyone had different pieces of information that we discussed and clarified and added input to clear up any confusion.
- Clarity, accountability, comfort with the process, building trust.

20. During this coaching time how much progress have you made in improving your governance? (Circle a number: 1 – none; 10 – a whole lot)

- 8, 10, 10
- 10 – Huge accomplishment in moving forward.
- 8 – We’re in process!

21. We are more clear about our desired outcomes that when we began the coaching process. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

- 10, 10, 10, 10, 10

22. I have a clear idea of some next steps I / we can take to move our governance discernment / improvement process forward. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

- 10, 10, 10, 10, 10

If so, please list some of these steps / actions here:

- Having an agenda. Delegation of tasks.
- Agenda – leadership training meetings – group involvement, communication with congregation.
- These steps are incorporated in our plan for our leadership meeting. (Sept. Leadership retreat)
- Having an agenda for time commitment at meetings and to keep everyone on task so they want to commit.
- Leadership retreat, more efficient meetings, clear communication with congregation, matching “jobs” with talents & passions.

23. Based on your experience would you engage in coaching again in the future? (Circle a number: 1 – no way; 10 – absolutely)

- 10, 10, 10, 10, 10

If yes, please list some other areas where coaching would be helpful -

- Work stress.
- Team building with co-workers.

- I think coaching is applicable to many situations, both personal and in organizations. Being open to searching yourself for answers as opposed to having someone else tell you what to do is the best option.
- If there is an area that needs to be addressed it's extremely helpful.
- Re-envisioning our Christian Education program.

Questions specific to Pastor

My morale as pastor has increased since the coaching began –

- 10

My effectiveness as the pastor / leader has increased since the coaching began –

- 9

Rate your current level of morale as pastor –

- 10

FINAL ASSESSMENT – Team Composite Results – 2CC

1. **My overall experience of being coached** – (Circle a number: 1 – not worth my time; 10 – extremely beneficial)
 - 9, 10, 10, 9, 9, 9, 8, 9
2. **Our morale has increased as a team since the coaching began** – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
 - 9, 10, 10, 8, 9, 9, 7, 10
3. **We have identified specific behaviors / things that lead to improved governance** – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
 - 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 7, 8
4. **The coaching process helped us get to a place (achieve results) we could not have done on our own** – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
 - 9, 10, 9, 10, 10, 9, 9, 8
5. **The most valuable results the coaching helped us to achieve are** (Name some...) –
 - A shift in attitude/thinking to focus on going to where people are, over waiting for them to come to us.
 - Not lamenting about what was; not trying to do too many things.
 - Created a forum to develop ideas and initiatives.
 - Rethink how we present ourselves to the community.
 - Looking at ourselves and methods of outreach from a different perspective.
 - Identifying ways to engage with the community that we had not previously considered.

- Looking outward; recognizing that we need to go to the people; they're not going to come to us.
 - Increased morale; achievable concrete goals to accomplish in near future.
- 6. Our effectiveness as a team has increased since the coaching began** – (Circle a number: 1 – disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
- 8, 10, 8, 7, 10, 9, 8
 - 6 – Remains to be seen.
- 7. Rate your current level of morale as a team.** (Circle a number: 1 is low; 10 is high)
- 9, 9, 10, 10, 8, 10, 8, 9
- 8. Rate your level of effectiveness as a team.** (Circle a number: 1 is low; 10 is high)
- 8, 9, 9, 10, 7, 10, 7, 8
- 9. I have been able to contribute talents / knowledge toward our goals that I enjoy contributing.** (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
- 10, 10, 10, 8, 8, 10, 7, 6
- 10. I have developed or discovered new skills / habits / practices that I recognize as valuable, such as** (name one or more) –
- Being more intentional about leadership development.
 - Thinking outside the box.
 - Listening with a different focus.
 - I wouldn't say new skills specifically, but perhaps a more open mind.
 - Working with a diverse group of people; deeper listening skills.
- 11. What I gained from the coaching that was especially helpful to me personally was** (Name 2 or 3 things...) –
- This experience helped me think more intentionally about my role as pastor and what makes that role particular; see #12 for details.
 - Focusing on the few and not the many.
 - Listening, power of collaborative thinking.
 - Looking at difficult tasks in a different way.
 - Differentiating between concept and action, and when to focus on one or the other.
 - Thinking about possibilities rather than excuses. Setting aside efforts that were previously not well received.
 - Doing the important stuff first – prioritization.
 - Increased hope for the future. Achievable goals for the coming months.
- 12. The experience of being coached has increased my effectiveness as a leader** – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
- 9, 7, 10, 9, 7, 9, 8, 6

If yes, in what ways?

- I'm the pastor, so I get to bring a theological lens to what we do.
- I see the importance of getting everyone in the church involved – in some way.
- Deep thinking by focusing and pulling ourselves away from day-to-day tasks.
- Being able to look at difficult situations in a different light.
- Awareness of going off track – gently bringing back to topic.
- Refocusing on building capacity of church members to help us be more engaged effective leaders.
- Awareness that leadership is more about coaching and/or coordinating than doing.

13. What differences have you noticed around the team's effectiveness during this time of coaching? (Name some things....) –

- They have realized the value of long-term planning and making clear goals so the ball doesn't get dropped.
- We are more cohesive now that we've identified our goals.
- Increased enthusiasm to perform initiatives to grow the church.
- More focused on task completion.
- Movement toward separating wider discussion from details – still needs work – lots of people who want details set.
- Willingness to engage with team; acceptance of individual & collective ideas.
- See item in #12; same awareness for group.
- More positive attitudes.

14. What differences have you noticed around your own effectiveness during this time of coaching? (Name some things....) –

- This gave me more opportunities to work on finding a good balance between speaking and listening.
- Again, focusing on fewer things instead of examining everything that we could fix.
- Again, learned to take time out to think deeply.
- Learning how to steer a conversation.
- Trying to look at bigger picture.
- Intentionally listening and not speaking.
- Good constructive thoughts and comments.
- Listening, not just leading, but also bringing a different perspective to the group.

15. What happened during the coaching that you didn't expect?

- We came up with 3 things we can work on that were new and we can actually do.
- I honestly didn't think that it would have such a positive effect.
- We came up with great ideas to implement easily.

- I don't know that I knew what to expect, so nothing – I didn't have preconceived notions.
- Team members freely expressed their opinions on all topics.
- Reasonable action items.
- New ideas!

16. What was especially notable about the coaching process that helped move you forward?

- It made us make time for big picture thinking.
- If you try to shoot at everything, you won't hit anything.
- Having an outside person – you – provide perspective and alternative ideas.
- Learning how to identify the “WHY.”
- Being gently pushed into thinking differently or from a different perspective; challenges to be specific in thoughts.
- Listening to what others had to say and allowing priorities to emerge.
- Kept us on task. Always moving forward.
- Working well as a team.

17. What about the coaching process was difficult or unhelpful for you? For the team?

- The self-directed nature of it left things to be very open-ended, which was sometimes difficult.
- It was a big group to do individual recap at the first few meetings, e.g. “What's new going on?” I understand for individual voice, but it was a big group.
- Nothing.
- Nothing.
- For team – staying out of minor details was difficult.
- It took some time to be more comfortable with the non-directive process than I previously thought.
- What came out was solid; but still confused, re: “governance.”
- Getting off topic sometimes “derailed” conversation – we need to stay on topic.

18. What would have made this coaching process more effective for you or the group?

- If we'd all had more time, probably having meetings between coaching sessions to prep would have been good.
- Less digression in our discussions. Staying on topic.
- More concrete structure to the process early on in the meeting.
- Nothing.
- I'm not sure. In retrospect, I think the process has worked well. Ideas have emerged.
- A succinct summary of meeting highlights / take-aways.
- More concrete goals from the beginning; set plans for each meeting.

19. In what ways did the coaching affect: Clarity? Conflict? Strategic planning? Accountability? Team cohesiveness? Etc.

- Coaching made us follow through on certain things because we had a meeting coming up.
- Jim, you made each of us feel worthy, which strengthens us as individuals and as a team. Thank you!
- Strategic planning: The need for church growth is paramount.
- It affects all aspects positively.
- Brought us clarity as to what we want and why we want – to be used as a basis to move forward.
- Each conversation & meeting helped us find clarity for what was important. I don't think that conflict played a significant role in our process. Strategic planning was the result.
- Better understanding of who we are. Verdict still out, re: accountability. Much better cohesiveness.
- In the end we seem to be on track toward working as a team for setting goals over the coming months (strategic planning)

20. During this coaching time how much progress have you made in improving your governance? (Circle a number: 1 – none; 10 – a whole lot)

- 8, 9, 10, 10, 6, 5, 6
- 8 (The best measure will be assessed in the fall when we accomplish our initiatives.)

21. We are more clear about our desired outcomes that when we began the coaching process. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

- 8, 10, 10, 10, 8, 9, 7, 9

22. I have a clear idea of some next steps I / we can take to move our governance discernment / improvement process forward. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

- 10,10, 10, 10, 8, 9, 7, 8

If so, please list some of these steps / actions here:

- Survey of congregation about skills/interests, work on “WHY” statement to put on apparel (T-shirts, etc.), coordinating going to community events.
- Work on the survey; Identify secretary's role in gathering community event information.
- Church member Interest Survey.
- Publicize events for members in our weekly “Cryer.”
- Poling the congregation on their talents.
- Increase awareness of opportunities in the (wider) community
- Survey – talents, etc.
- 3 initiatives previously listed.

- Events in weekly bulletin; Survey; Broadcast elevator speech.
- The 3 action items Erika discussed tonight – survey, outreach on a regular basis, new shirts/mugs etc., to spread the word.

23. Based on your experience would you engage in coaching again in the future?

(Circle a number: 1 – no way; 10 – absolutely)

- 9, 9, 10+, 10, 10, 9, 10, 8

If yes, please list some other areas where coaching would be helpful –

- I think we could honestly do more with governance.
- Stewardship.
- Outreach: how can we be more effective? Are we going in the right direction?
- Stewardship: How can we be more successful in today's society?
- Helping to develop an action plan which is simple and effective.
- Nothing right now – but I hope I would know it when it came up.
- Stewardship; Strategic Planning; Spiritual guidance.
- More on this topic, or getting more specific – specific committees and guidance on their individual goals.

Questions specific to Pastor

My morale as pastor has increased since the coaching began –

- 9

My effectiveness as the pastor / leader has increased since the coaching began –

- 7

Rate your current level of morale as pastor –

- 10

FINAL ASSESSMENT – Team Composite Results – 3CC

1. **My overall experience of being coached** – (Circle a number: 1 – not worth my time; 10 – extremely beneficial)
 - 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 8, 10
2. **Our morale has increased as a team since the coaching began** – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
 - 10, 9, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10
3. **We have identified specific behaviors / things that lead to improved governance** – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
 - 10, 9, 10, 10, 10, 10, 9

- 4. The coaching process helped us get to a place (achieve results) we could not have done on our own** – (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
- 10, 9, 10, 9, 10, 10
 - 8 - I think we'd have gotten there, but it would have taken longer.
- 5. The most valuable results the coaching helped us to achieve are** (Name some...) –
- Confidence.
 - Focus.
 - We established a process that we have confidence in for our reconfiguration. We feel confident in presenting our plan to the congregation.
 - We realize that our congregation can be and will be “nimble” in so many ways in our future.
 - To ask ourselves the important questions and to listen “actively” to each other’s ideas.
 - Clarity – what our actual purpose is.
 - Confidence.
 - Direction forward.
 - Maintaining focus.
 - Setting goals with tasks leading to next coaching session.
 - Change our view of where we wanted to go with changes. Made us think more about end results.
- 6. Our effectiveness as a team has increased since the coaching began** – (Circle a number: 1 – disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
- 10, 8, 10, 10, 10, 9, 9
- 7. Rate your current level of morale as a team.** (Circle a number: 1 is low; 10 is high)
- 9, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10
- 8. Rate your level of effectiveness as a team.** (Circle a number: 1 is low; 10 is high)
- 9, 10, 10, 10, 9, 9
 - 9 - I'd like to say 10, but our goal is still far enough away that I hesitate.
- 9. I have been able to contribute talents / knowledge toward our goals that I enjoy contributing.** (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)
- 10, 9, 10, 10, 10, 3, 9
- 10. I have developed or discovered new skills / habits / practices that I recognize as valuable, such as** (name one or more) –
- Hmm...I don't know. Maybe they will unfold for me.
 - Futuristic thinking about our church.
 - Rediscovered critical thinking and effective teamwork.
 - Speaking up.
 - Asking people questions to help them come up with the “answer” or “solution” instead of fixing for them.

- Personally, none (not coach's fault).
- I think more before speaking. Not afraid to state my thoughts.

11. What I gained from the coaching that was especially helpful to me personally was (Name 2 or 3 things...) –

- Being affirmed, encouraged, challenged – specific insights given.
- Confidence.
- Questioning existing practices.
- It reacquainted me with the value of non-directive coaching. (I've done some myself while working.)
- Team cohesiveness.
- Clarity of focus.
- To let other people's questions guide me in discovering.
- Listening.
- Ask the question when in doubt.
- Think more before make a decision.

12. The experience of being coached has increased my effectiveness as a leader –
(Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

- 9+, 10, 10, 10, 9, 2, 10

If yes, in what ways?

- Being more aware of team's individuality and personal ideas and comments.
- Looking for solid reasons for change and thinking about how to present "changes" to the congregation.
- I realize my opinions are valued.
- Learned to look at things from another's perspective.
- I understand better ways of saying things and explaining ideas.

13. What differences have you noticed around the team's effectiveness during this time of coaching? (Name some things....)

- Confidence grew – less reliance on a "fix."
- Much more confident and relaxed with each other.
- Much more participation by everyone.
- Better able to focus ourselves on issues and a path forward.
- We are more on the same page.
- Willingness to think differently.
- More confidence in decision making.
- A feeling of moving forward rather than spinning our wheels.
- A focus for our outcome.
- Better attendance!
- Able to understand and evaluate everyone's ideas for change.

14. What differences have you noticed around your own effectiveness during this time of coaching? (Name some things....)

- Listening more; affirming more.
- Improved thought process about “change” – much more confident in making changes at our church.
- More willingness to draw on my experience to contribute thoughts & ideas.
- Once there’s a starting point, I can run with it.
- I’m afraid I haven’t found any changes in my own effectiveness.
- I’m better able to think things out before making a decision or judgment.

15. What happened during the coaching that you didn’t expect?

- How quickly we could “move along” in our process.
- My participation was easy with our group.
- Allowing us to flounder for a while on developing our “purpose.”
- We actually slowly made progress and started a plan!
- The confidence that was gained.
- I had thought you were going to tell us what to do.

16. What was especially notable about the coaching process that helped move you forward?

- The “opened-endness” – not having a structure or boundaries – not receiving a “formula.”
- Open questioning – no “suggested” answers for our process.
- The affirmations we received from you as we reached decisions.
- The team cohesion.
- By Jim asking us questions that made us think about certain things, helped to move us forward.
- I keep saying it, but focus. We’d been floundering a bit.
- Your (Jim’s) listening to everyone, then your ideas.

17. What about the coaching process was difficult or unhelpful for you? For the team?

- Really can’t think of anything.
- Nothing.
- Initially – trying to understand your (Jim’s) role.
- I think we needed more guided questions from you (Jim) in the beginning.
- At first we wanted to be told what to do – took us some time to get over that and trust ourselves.
- I personally had a hard time with the purpose statement process. I couldn’t seem to be on the same wavelength and it seemed odious and non-productive.
- Wish you (Jim) could have been here with us. Nothing was unhelpful.

18. What would have made this coaching process more effective for you or the group?

- I think it was pretty effective.

- Nothing.
- Nothing comes to mind.
- A little more guided questioning in the beginning.
- Would like it to go longer.
- Nothing.

19. In what ways did the coaching affect: Clarity? Conflict? Strategic planning? Accountability? Team cohesiveness? Etc.

- I think it brought the “big picture” into focus so we could take steps needed.
- Clarity – much improved for process.
- Strategic planning – helped us set up a plan / structure for reconfiguration.
- Definitely helped us focus and build team cohesiveness.
- Accountability - I think we were more motivated because we knew we would have another meeting with you.
- Gave us direction and the confidence to head in that direction.
- I don't feel we had much conflict, but the coaching did help us find cohesiveness and focus.
- Kept the team together – made us think more.

20. During this coaching time how much progress have you made in improving your governance? (Circle a number: 1 – none; 10 – a whole lot)

- 10, 9, 10, 8, 10, 6, 7
- We have a long way to go, but we're moving forward.

21. We are more clear about our desired outcomes that when we began the coaching process. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

- 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10

22. I have a clear idea of some next steps I / we can take to move our governance discernment / improvement process forward. (Circle a number: 1 – strongly disagree; 10 – strongly agree)

- 9, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10

If so, please list some of these steps / actions here:

- Mapping, goals, staying enthusiastic.
- Structure confidence.
- “Selling” to congregation was improved.
- Refer to our video conversation with you...
- Make a bulletin board of our plan with sticky notes for the congregation to ask questions.
- Revise our timeline; meet more frequently; “homework” between meetings.
- Keep the congregation informed regularly as we move forward.
- Provide channels and deadlines for feedback from congregation.
- Direction. What we really want.

23. Based on your experience would you engage in coaching again in the future?

(Circle a number: 1 – no way; 10 – absolutely)

- 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 9, 10

If yes, please list some other areas where coaching would be helpful -

- Possibly time management – balance.
- Stewardship, recruiting staff, long-term planning.
- We could use this technique with our ongoing discussions with current boards and committees.
- Team management, policy writing, Safe Church Process.
- Stewardship drive.
- Focusing our mission efforts.

Questions specific to Pastor

My morale as pastor has increased since the coaching began –

- 10

My effectiveness as the pastor / leader has increased since the coaching began –

- 10

Rate your current level of morale as pastor –

- 9

APPENDIX 5: COACHING CORE COMPETENCIES

The Coaching Core Competencies (International Coach Federation)

- Creating the Coaching Agreement
 - Help client identify, or reconfirm, what she want to accomplish in the session, define measures of success; keep the conversation going in the direction of the client’s desired outcome unless she indicates otherwise.

- Creating Trust and Intimacy
 - Coach acknowledges and respects the client’s work in the coaching process, expresses support for the client and allows the client to fully express himself.

- Coaching Presence
 - Coach acts in response to both the whole person of the client and what the client wants to accomplish, being empathic and highly observant. Coach exhibits curiosity and partners with client both by playing back the client’s expressed possibilities for the session and encouraging client to formulate her own learning.

- Active Listening
 - Listen on multiple levels - not only for content, but also for values, beliefs, frustrations and what is not being said. Listen for limiting beliefs and false assumptions; being comfortable with silence.
 - “The quality of the listening drives the quality of the thinking.”⁹⁰
 - Coach allows client to do most of the talking – 80/20 rule.

- Powerful Questions
 - Powerful questions are without judgment, usually brief and to the point; they help the client gain perspective and understanding, evoke discovery, promote clarity and learning. They can also call for action.⁹¹
 - I often asked –
 - “Where do we go from here?”
 - “What’s next?”
 - “What shall we focus on first from among the ideas on the table?”
 - “What is the real challenge here for you?”
 - “If you’re saying yes to this, what are you saying No to?”
 - (These questions signal that this is *coaching* – not teaching/mentoring etc. So they have ownership for the results.)

⁹⁰ Nancy Kline, *Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Mind*. (Portland: Octopus, 1999), 70.

⁹¹ J. Val Hastings, *Accelerated Coach Training*, (Coaching4Clergy, 2011), 6.

- Direct Communication
 - Coach shares observations, intuitions, comments, thoughts and feelings without any attachment to them being right; coaches uses language that reflects client's way of thinking.

- Creating New Awareness
 - Coach invites client to state / explore her learning about her situation and herself; invites her to consider how she will use new learning from the coaching.

- Designing Actions / planning / goal setting
 - Coach assists client to design what actions client will take after the session so client will continue moving toward his desired outcome; assist client to design best methods of accountability for himself; notices and reflects client's progress.

- Managing Progress and Accountability
 - In every coaching session the client makes new discoveries and takes away specific actions steps that move her toward an identified goal with the necessary accountability.

APPENDIX 6: COACHING AGREEMENT

Coaching Agreement with Pastor

NAME of Congregation _____

TERM: about 3 months (7 – 9 coaching sessions)

FEE: none

JIM'S COMMITMENT

- Serve you as fully and powerfully as I do professionally with my paying clients.
- Be fully available to you for our journey together.
- Adhere to International Coaching Federation ethics for coaching.

CONGREGATION'S COMMITMENT

- Be fully available and appropriately committed to the coaching process for the designated period – make it a priority, including:
 - Initial onsite coaching session: approx. 2 hours
 - Four subsequent one hour coaching sessions with the pastor and leadership team
 - Four subsequent one hour one-on-one coaching sessions with the pastor
 - Time between coaching sessions among yourselves so as to move forward...
- Complete in a thoughtful manner the several assessments (Initial, Middle, Final) & Focus Reports

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

1. As coaching participants, we understand and agree that we are fully responsible for our physical, mental and emotional well-being during the coaching session, including our choices and decisions.
2. We understand that coaching is a Professional-Client relationship designed to facilitate the creation or development of personal, professional or business goals and to develop and carry out plans for achieving those goals.
3. We understand that coaching is a comprehensive process that may involve many areas of our lives, including work, finances, health, relationships, education and recreation. We acknowledge that deciding how to handle these issues, incorporate coaching into those areas, and implement our choices is our responsibility.
4. How Jim will use the information gathered during this project – We understand that since the objective of this project is to discern the impact of non-directive coaching on the participants' discernment process, the information gathering will be used to assess which aspects of the non-directive coaching process were more or less helpful in moving the coachee forward in their discernment, including things like: What helped them identify and focus on their real issues and challenges? Where in the process did they gain new helpful perspectives? How did they create the kind of accountability they needed to move toward their goals? What about the coaching process was unhelpful / most helpful? What insights were gained for other aspects of ministry, church life or personal life? What change, if any, did it help to produce? Etc.
5. How the information will not be used – we understand that the identities and names of the participants will be disguised in Jim's final write up. We also understand that in no way will the results be used to evaluate the effectiveness or job performance of the pastor or any of the other participants. Furthermore, it will not be used to convey any kind of evaluative opinion to judicatory people.
6. I understand that coaching is not to be used as a substitute for professional advice by legal, medical, financial, business, spiritual or other qualified professionals. I understand that all decisions in these areas are exclusively mine and I acknowledge that my decisions and my actions regarding them are my sole responsibility.

I have read and agree to the above.

Pastor's Signature / Date _____

Jim's Signature / Date _____

APPENDIX 7: GOVERNANCE COACHING QUESTIONS BY HOTCHKISS

Some governance related coaching questions offered by Hotchkiss (and others)

1. To help the client discern the virtues they would like their new structure to have –
 - What would you like life to be like for the governing board?
 - How about for the leaders of your programs? ⁹²
 - What difference would a good structure make for ordinary members of the congregation?

2. To discern clarity about a board's current effectiveness –
 - What is the board's exact role / job?
 - What does it contribute to the organization?
 - How does the board's job relate to the job of clergy, staff, committees, and the congregation?" ⁹³
 - How are decisions made? Big ones? Small ones?
 - When was the last big decision made? How did it go? How long did it take?

3. When needing to confront a board's hidden assumptions about the role of democracy in congregational life: a board member who says, "We represent the members of the congregation. They elected us so we should do what they want us to do,"
 - Should a board do what its constituents want, or what they *would* want if they understood the issues better and had spent more time thinking more deeply about long-term implications?
 - To what degree, if any, should the board represent the interests of those who are not part of the congregation now, but could be in the future?

4. When the congregation seems too self-absorbed –
 - Who is the owner of a congregation? (Members of a non-profit do not "own" it as do the stockholders of a for-profit.)
 - How might things be different if the "owner" that the board must serve is *this congregation's mission* – the small piece of God's will that belongs to it. ⁹⁴
 - What mission do you belong *to*?
 - Where is conflict most prevalent in the congregation? How does it show up?
 - Whose lives do you intend to change and in what way?

⁹² Hotchkiss, 58.

⁹³ Ibid., Preface, xiv.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 85.

5. Since Hotchkiss says that many boards believe they are making policy when they are actually just setting precedents and so over time, lose much of their power to initiate action and become reactive –

- What is the difference between setting policy and setting a precedent?
- Tell me about a recent policy decision.
- How much time do you spend on creating policy? Deciding cases? What would you like the ratio to be?
- Does this decision have such wide or lasting implications that it qualifies as an exception to the rule that boards should govern by making policy, rather than by managing the daily work?”
- Do we need a policy we don't have, or a change to one we do have?

6. Foundational Questions ⁹⁵

- I'm curious who, if anyone, in the congregation is asking these questions –
 - Who are we?
 - What has God called us to do and to be?
 - Who is our neighbor?

7. Dealing with unproductive board Meetings –

- How is the agenda created?
- How do meetings end?
- How do you decide which agenda items just need to have a good conversation, and which need a decision? How do you know the difference?

8. For boards stuck in micro-mode and avoiding the bigger issues –

- What's the benefit to you of filling up the agenda with small issues?
- Who is tending to the larger issues? How do you know?

9. Lay Clergy Partnership issues –

- What does your lay/clergy partnership look like? What are the benefits? Drawbacks?
- What does a fruitful lay / clergy partnership require?
- Describe the boundaries between laity and clergy.
- Who leads the staff? What authority belongs to that role?
- For X type of decision, who is consulted? Who finally decides and who takes charge of getting the work done? ⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Gil Rendle and Alice Mann, *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations*, (Herdon: The Alban Institute, 2003). 3.

⁹⁶ Hotchkiss, 133.

APPENDIX 8: PROJECT DESCRIPTION FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Doctor of Ministry Final Project – Description for potential participants Project Theme: *Improving Local Church Governance Through Non-Directive Coaching*

Rev. Jim Latimer (email address, phone number)
November 2017

PART 1 – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

- Does your congregation struggle to find people to serve on committees?
- Does the same group of people seem to be doing all the work? Feeling burnout?
- Do board and committee meetings frequently feel unproductive?
- Are there a lot of folks whose talents and passions are not getting tapped?
- Does the office of the pastor feel like a bottleneck?
- Does the congregation lack a clear vision and purpose?

Answering “yes” to some of these questions may indicate that your congregation’s governance practices are antiquated and hindering the effectiveness, impact and joy of your ministry.

I seek three UCC congregations to participate in my Final Project as part of the Doctor of Ministry degree I’m pursuing at Hartford Seminary. Over a period of several months I will coach the pastor and leadership team of each congregation so as to *help them discern and improve their governance practices and processes*. I am a seasoned PCC⁹⁷ level ICF⁹⁸ certified coach having coached numerous pastors and leadership teams seeking to meet the challenges of effective ministry today.

Your Commitment

- Be available for a 3 to 4 month period, beginning approximately January 2018
- Initial onsite coaching session: 2 hours
- Four subsequent one hour coaching sessions with the pastor and leadership team
- Four subsequent one hour one-on-one coaching sessions with the pastor
- Time between coaching sessions among yourselves
- Be fully engaging with the coaching process – make it a priority

⁹⁷ Professional Certified Coach

⁹⁸ International Coach Federation

My Commitment

- Serve you as fully and powerfully as I do professionally with my paying clients.
- Be fully available to you for our journey together.

Desired characteristics of participating congregations

- Solo pastor CT conference UCC congregation
- Pastor has 2+ years of experience and has established his/her leadership with the congregation.
- A 5 to 8 person leadership team is available for the work.
- The formal leadership of the congregation actively supports participation in the project.
- Pastor and team are eager to engage the coaching process with a spirit of discovery.

Why this project is important

Many church leaders can see what they don't like about their current governance process and structure, yet find it much harder to see what they *do* want. Consequently, many congregations continue with governance systems that hinder achieving their ministry goals, effectively serving as biases against change. And churches that don't change decline.

*If the world were stable and the religious needs of people stayed the same from one generation to the next that might be okay. Congregations that persist at practices that worked in generations past find themselves in decline.*⁹⁹

Antiquated governance practices create unintentional barriers to people using their gifts in ministry, especially younger people. As one UCC pastor put it: "The problem with the structures we have is that people don't act or think that way anymore." He says they want to restructure because they can't find folks who want to serve on committees anymore. They *do* want to serve, just not in that way with the committee politics and having to get the group together every time someone wants to make a decision. He wants a system that's more accessible for people to get ideas into action more quickly.

What the teams will do between coaching sessions

Since much of the value coachee's derive comes between coaching sessions, each session concludes with specific actions the coachee commits to taking along with the resources needed. Before the next session coachees send a Focus Report responding to five simple questions:

- What I/we have accomplished or what action have I/we taken since our last session:
- What I/we have learned since last time that's been helpful or that I'm most proud of:
- What did I/we not accomplish, but intended to do, and what got in the way:

⁹⁹ Dan Hotchkiss, *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership*, (Herdon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2009), 80.

- At this moment, the biggest challenges or issues I/we am dealing with are:
- I/we would like to bring up the following issue or idea at our next coaching session:

How I will use the information gathered during this project

Since the objective of my project is to discern the impact of non-directive coaching on the participants' discernment process, the information gathering will be used to assess which aspects of the non-directive coaching process were more or less helpful in moving them forward in their discernment, including things like: What helped them identify and focus on their real issues and challenges? Where in the process did they gain new helpful perspectives? How did they create the kind of accountability they needed to move toward their goals? What about the coaching process was unhelpful / most helpful? What insights were gained for other aspects of ministry, church life or personal life? What change, if any, did it help to produce?

How the information will *not* be used

- The identities and names of the participants will be disguised in my final write up.
- In no way will it be used to evaluate the effectiveness or job performance of the pastor or any of the other participants.
- It will not be used to convey any kind of evaluative opinion to judicatory people.

PART 2 – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

What Coaching is and how it works

When people find out I'm a coach, they sometimes ask, "What sport do you coach?" Similarly, when it's a church context, they'll sometimes say, "First Church is really struggling. They need a coach to go in and fix them." Or, "Pastor Bill needs some coaching. Could you please contact him?"

Lots of folks in the church world call themselves coaches – say they offer "coaching," but what they're actually offering consulting or mentoring. While there are similarities between the type of coaching I will use with this project, and consulting, mentoring or even spiritual direction, the differences are significant and important to understand.

I will use what is more descriptively called *non-directive* coaching. It's non-directive in the sense that the coach does not bring the answer or solve the problem for the coachee, or tell the coachee how to proceed or what to do, or the "right way" to do it. These are all consultant (or athletic coach) roles. In contrast with non-directive coaching, the *coachee* is recognized as the context and content expert and is responsible for the outcome. Ownership begins and ends with the coachee and is never handed off. The coach sets the container that allows a rich discovery process for the coachee. The coachee does most of the work, which makes for high ownership of the results. High ownership is directly linked to high likelihood of follow through and implementation.

The coaching perspective is that coachees are capable of generating their own solutions. The role of the coach is to provide a discovery-based framework that taps further into the expertise of the person or group being coached.¹⁰⁰

Accordingly, during each coaching session a goal for that session is articulated - something the client has discovered he or she really wants. The remainder of the session is spent on helping the client create specific actions to get what is wanted in a manner that is appropriate, together with the resources and necessary accountability.

The congregations engaged with this project will all have identified challenges with their system of governance. They want change. Coaching gives permission to change. When quality non-directive coaching is afoot, folks quickly realize whether or not they really *want* to change. If they do, the coaching process helps them focus on specific problems they care about. They will create plans of actions that are realistic, complete with appropriate resources, accountability, and means for measuring progress.

Jim's Background

- Experienced PCC level ICF Certified coach.
- A staff coach for seven years with the Center for Progressive Renewal (CPR), coaching numerous pastors and leadership teams around issues of renewal, revitalization and ministry effectiveness.
- Teaches and facilitates ministry vitality programs and courses, including with CPR: “Church Renewal 1.0 and 2.0,” “Coaching Cohorts” (small groups of pastors), as a faculty member with Coaching4Clergy: “Coaching the Lead Pastor,” “Coaching Through Major Change,” “Basic & Advanced Coaching Training” (for pastors & parishioners), and “Common Coaching Scenarios in Ministry.”
- Fifteen years of full-time ordained ministry with the UCC serving four congregations, including two as an intentional interim transitional minister.
- Testimonial:
 - “As our coach, Jim keeps our church renewal team and me focused, which had been a challenge for us in the past. He gives us the courage to move forward when we feel stuck and invites us to go below the surface and listen to our congregation and community members more deeply. We have implemented several new ministries and community partnerships that are flourishing.” (UCC church pastor)

What is governance?

Governance is much more than Roberts Rules of Order. Church governance expert, Dan Hotchkiss, says it includes the top-level tasks of articulating the mission, selecting a strategy for getting there, making sure it happens, and ensuring that people and property are protected against harm. Ministry is everything else: the daily, practical work of the congregation, including the rest of the decisions that must be made about what to do and

¹⁰⁰ J. Val Hastings, *Accelerated Coach Training*, (Coaching4Clergy, 2011), 6.

how.¹⁰¹ Governance asks: What is our process for deciding to make a major change, empowering people to make it happen, and holding them accountable for the results?¹⁰²

A good structure helps ensure that both governance and ministry tasks are tended to well. One might say that structure is a form and governance is a process, but for my purposes here, a congregation's structure – how it organizes itself (committees, boards, etc.) - is so central to the tasks and job of governance that they cannot be separated. Structures that are well suited to a congregation's current life provide “a clear understanding about the pathway to be followed when various decisions need to be made – who needs to be involved, who needs to express an opinion, and where each buck will stop.”¹⁰³

For more information or to express interest in participating, please contact Jim:

- Email
- Phone

¹⁰¹ Hotchkiss, 59.

¹⁰² Ibid., Preface xii.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 60.

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