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BACK WHEN I WAS BISHOP…

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF LEADERSHIP AS PRACTICE AS A BISHOP WITHIN
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

By
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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation in practice is to provide an in-depth self-examination of my service as a bishop (a lay clergy position) within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). Through the use of autoethnography, I provide a narrative into some of the people and events that shaped my service as a leader. Doing this provides a lens to study the impact of leadership within direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC) (Drath et al., 2008) and the impact it can have on leadership-as-practice (L-A-P) (Raelin, 2016). Both DAC and L-A-P rely less on the process of leadership and more on the outcome of leadership, what people can accomplish together, and how leadership unfolds and emerges through shared experiences. The approach acknowledges leadership as a social phenomenon and incorporates relationships as part of the process of leadership emerging. When introducing DAC, Drath et al. (2006) acknowledged traditional methods of leadership focused on the tripod of leadership consisting of leaders, followers, and the common goals they share as an expression of their commitment, but also recognized a gap in leadership research and development. This led to a study of both the process and the outcome of leadership by looking at direction (the overall goals of the group and the mission that guides them), alignment (the coordination of actions of the group with a common goal), and commitment (the willingness of the group members to participate fully in achieving the collective interest of the group). These models are especially effective in studying the leadership of an organization like the LDS church because of the unique way leaders are chosen and leadership is carried out. Leaders are chosen from a congregation of members who are assigned that congregation based on where they live and not necessarily on previous leadership experience and training.
Key words: ward, stake, bishop, stake president, general authority, calling, priesthood, direction, alignment, commitment, leadership as practice
Dedication

To my children; there were times during my enrollement in the EdD program when I felt my time had passed to complete my degree. I wanted to give up and leave the program. I searched for reasons to continue; contributing to a new body of knowledge, providing a framework to study leadership, advancing my career, fulfilling a dream – all of those were noble reasons. Not doing those things would have led to regret. I could have learned to be comfortable with that level of regret though. That is not what kept me going. The true reason I have stuck with this, what has kept me going – is you.

I hope this dissertation can lead to some changes in how leadership is studied and discussed. I hope self-reflection becomes a widely accepted tool of leaders. I hope autoethnography becomes more accepted in the academia world. But, if none of that happens, I hope you will know that there is a liberating power that comes from sticking to something you want. I adapted, I persisted, I changed my course, and I paused but I never quit. While this dream is now realized, it was never about the moment. It was always about the journey and about the beyond.

Whatever your dream is, work hard at it. Put in the effort. Keep going during those moments you don’t feel like going. Doing this produces a greatness that only comes when you put in the effort.

Be a leader of self. Make a difference in your circle of influence. Never give up on your dreams. Enjoy the journey and enjoy the beyond.
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To my Heavenly Father who has heard and answered prayers regarding my role as a bishop, as a husband, as a father, as a business owner, and as a student and who has allowed me to serve His children in a variety of roles including five years as bishop to some of the greatest people I have ever met; I can not say the smallest part which I feel, but thank you.

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To Scott Hammond, my professor from back in my undergraduate days; you have been a source of encouragement and a sounding board for my career in academia and beyond. Thank you.

And to those who supported me in my service as bishop; thank you. You all inspired me. There are too many of you to name (although many of you are named in this dissertation – even if the names have been changed).
I hope this dissertation reflects my feelings and commitment about my faith and does what autoethnographies are supposed to do for the reader; cause you to reflect on what is happening within yourself as you read.

The reader does not need to share my religious beliefs to relate to what I am saying in this narrative. We all have our “back when I was…” moments that we can learn from. May this narrative stir up some of those in you.
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Note: The events depicted in this paper are true. However, some of the names, dates, and places have been changed to protect identities, respect expectations of confidentiality, and further ensure that the research does no harm.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is a worldwide organization with over 10,000,000 members in 30,000 congregations spread out over 150 countries. Each congregation (referred to as a ward) is led by members of the congregation. The men and women who fill leadership roles in the wards are not paid and do not apply or campaign for the position. They are selected by the leaders of their congregation and asked if they would fill the assignment. Experience in the area they serve or leadership experience is not a requirement to fill a position. Some of the service opportunities in the church such as serving as bishop (similar to a pastor) are time intensive and require 20+ hours per week. Other assignments are less demanding and require members to give their time only on Sunday and/or only a few hours per week. This unique structure of leadership within the LDS church provides a platform to study leadership through the lens of leadership as practice (L-A-P) (Raelin, 2016) with the end result being direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC) of those within leadership functions (Drath et al., 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Previous leadership experience or formal training in a particular discipline is not a prerequisite for service within the LDS church and yet members of the ward look to their leaders for guidance on spiritual, emotional, and temporal matters. Despite the lack of experience on the part of the individual leaders, there are typically other experienced leaders within the hierarchy who can assist, direct, and, in some instances, take over a few select responsibilities. Thus, a leader is never truly alone in working through the
challenges of the congregation, but with some exception, even those within the hierarchy do not necessarily have formal training in all areas of church governance. On legal matters or issues dealing with mental health, the church has resources for leaders to use although it has been my observation that not every leader may be aware of these resources.

The reasons members accept such positions are potentially a topic for another study, but one overarching explanation is likely found in the very roots of the church. Joseph Smith, the founder and first leader of the LDS church, declared that a religion which does not require it’s people to make sacrifices will not be able to help increase the level of spirituality and faith in it’s members (Smith, 2000). Further, the church teaches that members are to consecrate their time and talents to further the church’s grand mission (McConkie, 1975). Having been a member of the LDS church since early childhood, I have sat through numerous sermons, classes, and meetings where the topic of the mission of the church has been mentioned. In almost every one of these settings, the answer is the same – the mission of the LDS church is to, “bring about the eternal life and immortality of [God’s children]”(Moses 1:31, Pearl of Great Price, p. 256). Individual members and congregations may have different points of view as to how this is done, but on the surface, there appears to be alignment among the membership as to the stated mission of the church.

Regardless of what they believe the mission to be or how they carry out that mission, members asked to serve in responsibilities within the church will likely be confronted with a situation that requires a knowledge or skill set they may not have acquired prior to being in their leadership assignment. For example, a woman may be
asked to be a leader within the young women’s organization (usually 10-40 young women ages 11-18) and yet not have any daughters of her own or have any formal training in the area. Church members are typically drawn to their leaders and look to them for guidance and counsel in a variety of areas. Some of these may include spiritual counseling, assisting an individual with marriage or family challenges, guiding someone through recovery from an addiction or abuse, administering the welfare and humanitarian budget of the church, teaching the doctrine of the church, and defending the church against attacks on its practices. All of this must be done within a set of guidelines which a leader may not be aware of but to which they must administer their assignment within the unique culture of the LDS church. Even if these challenges were somehow handled by church members with training in the specific areas they are asked to lead, there are still challenges that come with holding a leadership position such as building a team and conflict resolution. Here, again, no formal training in these areas is required.

Despite what we know about the leadership structure and challenges, we do not know the outcome serving in leadership capacities within a ward has on the leadership development of an individual, the leadership team overall, and the organization they lead. When studying leadership constructs and theories to understand the outcome of leadership within the LDS church, the traditional leader-follower model commonly used in leadership studies would not be sufficient on its own to understand what is happening in leadership. Yukl (2002) wrote that leadership is a process that is shared among members of a social system and occurs naturally. Raelin (2016) suggested the best way to understand “what is going on” is to “examine the narratives of organizations… the narratives of leadership” (p. 256). The method, platform, and construct upon which this
study is based fills the void sometimes left when the leader-follower model of leadership is applied to understanding what is happening within leadership.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this autoethnographic study is to explore my experiences in leadership functions within the LDS church. The research will use the Drath et al. (2008) model of direction, alignment, and commitment to examine L-A-P (Raelin, 2016) within my scope of responsibility. The impact of LDS culture and organizational structure play in achieving direction, alignment, and commitment and the emergence of leadership was also explored.

**Research Question**

Based on personal experience serving in various leadership positions within the LDS church and working closely with others who also serve in leadership functions, it is thought that there is commitment among those who lead within the LDS church, but there are gaps in direction and alignment which sometimes cause a disconnect and provide a barrier to the emergence of L-A-P. The research will answer the question: using L-A-P as a guide, where were the gaps in direction, alignment, and commitment in the structure and execution of my leadership experience within a local congregation of the LDS church?

**Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to use leadership as a practice, and, therefore, focuses less on individual and more on structural, interpersonal relationships. Using L-A-P as the framework, the study will explore the direction, alignment, and commitment of those
involved in leadership functions within the LDS church. The study will show where leadership emerged or was hindered and any gaps that contributed to that.

Sparkes (1996) summed up an autoethnographic approach as an attempt to take the reader into an otherwise personal and private world of the researcher with the purpose of enticing the reader to reflect on their own experiences in relation to the researcher and to answer why something is happening.

While the research could be used as a springboard for a more in-depth study into opportunities for the LDS church to improve in training and leadership development, the overarching objective is to show how the principles associated with autoethnography can be used to study L-A-P. This is an area of leadership research that has been mostly unexplored but is gaining interest within the community of scholars.

Definitions of Relevant Terms

The following terms will be used operationally within this study.

Ward: A single congregation within the LDS church. Smaller wards (those with few members) are referred to as a “branch.” (Wards and branches function very similarly, but smaller units generally need to adapt some administrative duties to account for their circumstances). A ward is typically made up of about 200-400 members whereas a branch may have much less than that.

Stake: Several wards and branches within a geographic area. While the actual number of wards within a stake vary, a typical stake will have about 8-10 wards.

Bishop: The spiritual leader of a congregation within the LDS church.

Stake President: The spiritual leader who oversees the operations of the stake.
General Authority: Leader within the LDS Church who oversees multiple stakes and/or church programs. Includes those leaders in the top hierarchy with worldwide responsibility funneling down to those with responsibility within a region of the world.

Calling: The LDS church functions with an unpaid clergy and all jobs and duties within the church at a local level are performed on a volunteer basis. When a person receives a job or duty within the church they are said to have received a “calling” to serve in that capacity.

Priesthood: Males within the LDS church who are at least 12 years old and living a moral life and other standards of the LDS church can be ordained to various priesthood offices (levels). Those who serve as bishops or stake presidents are ordained to the priesthood office of High Priest.

DAC: Also known as direction, alignment, and commitment, this is a leadership model developed by Drath, et al. (2008) to assist leaders in identifying where leadership is working well and where improvements are needed.

Direction: Agreement throughout an organization on the vision, mission, and goals of a group.

Alignment: The coordination of people, structure, and resources to produce collaboration toward the stated direction.

Commitment: Ability and willingness of people to put the aim of an organization above their own self-interests and devote their energy toward the shared direction.

L-A-P: Also known as leadership-as-practice, this is a theory focusing on the leadership abilities of the entire population rather than depending on a single individual’s characteristics and behaviors.
Methodology Overview

Parry et al. (2014) and Ospina (2004) provided several areas for justification of using qualitative research to study leadership. Among those include the ability to fill in the gaps where quantitative research falls short, where there is a need on the part of the researcher to understand what is happening from the perspective of those involved in the leadership functions rather than explaining it from the outside, and to understand a phenomenon that is difficult to approach quantitatively. Autoethnography plays a vital role in filling those gap as Raelin (2016) wrote, “narratives become important to understanding how people interact in a practice sense in organizational settings. There is no one narrative analysis, although some people study the narratives that occur within organizations” (p. 253).

Kempster & Stewart (2010) advocated that learning about leadership comes from observing outward while examining inward and then advocating for qualitative approaches because of the need to understand a phenomenon rather than a population when it comes to leadership research and development. Autoethnography works as a method for doing this. Sparkes (1996) wrote, “I attempt to take you as the reader into the intimacies of my world. I hope to do this in such a way that you are stimulated to reflect upon your own life in relation to mine” (p. 467). Leavy (2009) advocated autoethnography as a means to resonate connection between self and culture using the self as a springboard for creating “me too” moments for the reader.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Personal Biases

The study was conducted from a first perspective. It covers my responsibility as bishop within one congregation of the LDS church from 2011-2016. This study begins at
a time in the world where social media was in its infancy, the social issues we see today (or even in 2016) were not as popular, and technology had not yet evolved to where it is today. This research is not intended to be representative of the entire population of the LDS church or of any other leadership function within the church. My perspective is one of many and is not intended to draw definitive conclusions about changes needed within the church. This was not the intent when the study commenced and it was not the intent when the study wrapped up and gaps within DAC and L-A-P were identified. The purpose is to use autoethnography to understand why, when, and how leadership unfolded. The relevancy of that is not bound by time.

Further, church policies and practices which may be introduced as being relevant to the research may lose their relevancy as policies and procedures change. In fact, some of the policies and procedures identified in the narrative during my time as bishop which may have led to gaps in direction, alignment, or commitment are no longer part of the church policy. Despite the recent and potential future changes, the learnings and findings from what may seem to be outdated policies and practices are still relevant because they serve as examples in illustrating how and where leadership emerges.

**Reflections of the Scholar-Practitioner**

During the course of my studies at Creighton, I had the opportunity to serve as bishop in an LDS church congregation of about 350 members located within a geographic location of about 30,000 people. My stewardship covered 1% of the population of the community, and yet I often felt the weight of a community on my shoulders. I did not apply or campaign for this position nor did I have any formal education in theology, counseling, or management of a not-for-profit organization. I
simply showed up to an appointment with a person who had the responsibility to make decisions about who serves as bishops for the geographic area I lived.

During my time serving as bishop, and in the years that followed, I have reflected numerous times on the experiences I had. I have also reflected on what events prepared me for such service, the impact life experiences played in my service, how my service shaped me as a leader, and the impact it had on hundreds of lives. Indeed I have learned that there is power in self-reflection.

Self-reflection on leadership brought me to learn more about autoethnography. I was intrigued and, while I needed to find a justification for using the method as a way of answering my research question, I was drawn to study autoethnography because it drew itself to me. I believe this will come out in several places throughout this dissertation.

I have spent the bulk of the past 20 years working in market research. Using survey data to inform decisions has been a way of life for me. While I understand that academic research is different than consumer market research, I think the reader can understand when I say I wanted to do something different for my dissertation. I did not want to come home from my daily work of survey research and analysis only to do even more survey research and analysis as part of my dissertation. While I knew I needed to be open to a quantitative or mixed-method methodology, I did seek out qualitative methods hoping to land on something that would align with my research question. I was inspired when Raelin (2016) declared that autoethnography is the best way to study L-A-P. Combine that with the statement from Drath (2008) that direction, alignment, and commitment resolves the challenge of understanding which ontology to use in studying leadership, and I felt I was on to something big.
I also discovered the emotional impact of carrying out this method. Quantitative research, which is based on empirical data, does not have feelings attached to it. Sure, these numbers are attached to people and the results and implications are sometimes painful and emotionally gut-wrenching, but even the most in-depth statistical analysis would not have been as emotionally taxing as was my efforts to reflect on the five years of my life I served as bishop. Autoethnographic researchers should be aware of the emotional impact of carrying out this method as well as the enlightenment that comes from pushing through during the more emotionally taxing times.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The DAC model of leadership (Drath et al., 2008) is embedded throughout the research. This model suggests a discussion around leadership should focus on the shared goals of leaders and followers and the way they interact with each other. It should also focus on L-A-P and what leaders become in the process of accomplishing what they have set out to do (Raelin, 2016). Senge (2006) also advocates for the need to have a leader-follower approach to achieve a shared vision and the need for support throughout an organization.

While an autoethnography by its nature should suggest the need to weave culture into the research, the impact of culture was not fully realized until after the data collection phase. Leadership studied outside the realm of the culture in which it operates can be impactful in understanding the fuller picture of the context of what is going on and how leadership is occurring (Raelin, 2016).

Leadership

Research around leadership presents many diverse theories. Part of the reason for this diversity is that there are multiple definitions of leadership and much of the research takes more of an ontological approach focusing on the idea that it is experience that matters. It suggests leaders lead the way they do because of their past experience and the lens through which they see the world. There is an overlap between the experience of the leader and the experience of those they lead. This is not something that can be reduced to a theory or construct.

Leadership competencies and constructs are ‘ubiquitous’ and thus new constructs and leadership domains will emerge (Bolden & Gosling, 2006). L-A-P is one of those
constructs and derives from social theory and has made its strongest impact in organizational development and strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Samra-Fredericks, 2003). While constructs and models of leadership change, the time is ripe for a leadership-as-practice body of work that Chia (2004) called “a practical logic.” Bolden and Gosling (2006) positioned L-A-P around the, subtle, moral, emotional, and relational aspects of leadership. Ultimately, the impact of exploring L-A-P is directed toward understanding how leaders get on with the work of leadership (Chia & Holt, 2006). This is something which both traditional and mainstream leadership research has shed surprisingly little light on.

Whittingham (2004) proposed a series of questions researchers should ask when examining L-A-P: (a) where and how is the work of leadership actually done, (b) who does this leadership work, (c) what are the common tools and techniques of leadership, (d) how is the work of leadership organized, communicated and consumed? Despite the multiple definitions of leadership, one common theme across most theories is a collaborative tripod where there is a leader (formally assigned), followers (whom the leader is to lead), and a common goal or objective. Hence the tripod of leadership is trending toward becoming leadership as an outcome rather than a formal title or delegation. Three such outcomes include direction, which is a widespread agreement of a collective on some overall goals, aims, and mission; alignment, which is the organization and coordination of given knowledge among a collective entity; commitment, which is the willingness of members of a given organization to focus on the collective interest of their shared goal (Drath et al., 2008).
At the root of these and many theories of leadership is the notion of servant leadership. Greenleaf and Spears (1998) explained servant-leadership as follows:

The Servant-Leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead…

The best test, and difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed? (p. 123).

Research on servant leadership can be summarized by six qualities or actions of the servant leader: Empowering and developing people; showing humility; being authentic; accepting people for who they are; providing direction; being stewards who work for the good of the whole.

Closely related to servant leadership is process leadership. This approach focuses on leadership as a process of guiding people, supporting ideas, and facilitating (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Process leaders create a culture where others can succeed (Randall, 2012).

Many scholars have written about leadership-as-practice although they do not always refer to it as such. Senge (2006) suggested that successful leaders learn from and with their followers and work together in the spirit of a shared vision. When followers feel as though they understand and are a part of the mission of a leader they are more likely to embrace the direction of the leader and take an active role in carrying out the vision (Crant, 2000). Lowney (2003) also wrote about the importance of a leader’s vision
declaring it to be the most important tool a leader can use. A clearly stated vision or purpose of an organization is important in order to have alignment throughout the organization. Vision grows as a by-product of conversations with individuals about how they view the organization (Wheatley, 1994). Along the journey of creating a shared vision, change in perception and thinking is likely to occur gradually through Lewin’s (1890-1947) three-staged approach to changing behavior: unfreeze, change, refreeze (Weick & Quinn, 1999). People become entrenched in their own thinking and need to be motivated to change (unfreeze). Once unfrozen, gradual change can take place before re-freezing the new way of doing things. To make such movement possible, there needs to be commitment on the part of those within an organization. Drath et. al (2008) discussed vision as the essence to having direction among members of an organization.

The DAC framework (Drath et al., 2008) considered each component as an essential part of producing a leadership aspect. An agreement on which directions to take requires a balance of personal goals and the goals of others. The group must agree to, conform to, and maintain an agreed-upon direction. Alignment is achieved through agreements. However, achieving agreements might prove difficult and inflexible as teams work together because each member shifts towards the goals of others (Dinh et al., 2014). A forced compliance may resolve the non-compliance among the group members, but this detracts from the whole notion of leadership-as-practice.
Leadership is becoming dynamic as different views of leadership are developed. Therefore, there is a need to create awareness of leadership possibilities that complement the traditional forms of leadership. The difference between the new approach of leadership and the traditional approach is the changed view of leader focused to leader-follower focused. It is a context that does not necessarily involve leaders but rather the DAC process (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Although the new approach of leadership does not involve a total replacement of traditional leadership, the approach provides a complementary method of leadership by identifying other ways of achieving leadership goals. The fundamental idea is that there are other ways of achieving leadership rather than sticking to the traditional leader-follower model.

There are many ways leadership happens when applying the DAC framework. In some cases, a single individual can play a significant role. In other cases, the concept can emerge in a conversation and in the interactions among people who are working together.

Figure 1. Direction, Alignment, and Commitment. Reprinted from Direction, alignment and commitment: Toward a more integrative ontology of leadership by Drath et al., 2016.
The framework can also apply to leadership when different people are playing various roles. Hence, in leadership, both formal and informal processes can make these concepts happen. Therefore, creating DAC is not the same in all situations; it does not have any clear formula. Leadership gaps can be easily evaluated in the DAC framework (Drath et al., 2008). This is achieved when a leader applies the framework, and other team members don't seem to catch up with it. At this point, a leader can evaluate and understand the gaps that need to be filled for the framework to be accepted.

In conclusion, scholars often describe the leadership theories as diverse since there are many different definitions of leadership, which depend on the individual who defines the concept. However, all theories of leadership are developed around the concept of leader, followers and some common goals. In the current society, the contexts for calling leadership are becoming more peer-like and collaborative. Hence, three outcomes that include direction, which is a widespread agreement of a collective on some overall goals, aims, and mission; alignment, which is the organization and coordination of given knowledge and work as a collective entity; and commitment, which is the willingness of members of a given collective to let go of their own interests and focus on the collective interest of their shared goal, are used as discussed above.

**Role of Culture in Leadership**

Culture is a set of patterns, beliefs, and behaviors that are acquired and carried out through language, ideas, customs, traditions, and worship (Lang & Brown, 2013). Givens (2007) described the three dimensions of a person’s existence in a culture to be their general habits, intellectual development, and body of arts. Schein (1992) described culture as embracing artifacts, values, and assumptions. In this definition, artifacts are
described as anything physical that represents the culture, values are the goals and ideals they hold as important, and assumptions are the way the group describes what they are observing or doing. While it is referred to as assumptions within a culture, assumptions are actually realities (Dethloff, 2005). Schein (1992) described a cultural group as sharing basic assumptions and norms they learned as they evolved in order to adapt and integrate.

Taking culture into the realm of leadership is necessary because the people can shape the leader, the leader can shape the people, and the people and the leader shape the culture. While everyone involved in a community can shape a culture, the leader has a high responsibility in this area. Schein (1992) cautioned leaders to become conscious of the cultures in which they operate and then warned if they don’t consider culture that the cultures will manage them.

Kilmann et al., (1985) stated that culture of a organization is similar to what personality is to an individual with a hidden, yet unifying theme which provides meaning, direction, and mobilization. Givens (2007) referred to LDS culture as the “Mormon habit of mind” (p. xiii) and its development and elaboration over a period of time. A discussion on the culture within the LDS church is necessary when studying DAC and L-A-P because it plays a role in a leader’s interaction with members of the congregation. This culture extends to all parts of the church. Positive experiences with some of the lifestyle and cultural aspects of the church have a positive impact on the religious commitment of the LDS church among members. Life events can also lessen the perceived need and motivation for practicing religion – especially when the alternatives bring new friends, new areas of life to focus on, or when the religion cannot solve
problems such as the death of a family member, addiction, or family challenges (Hui-Tzu, 2010).

Familiarity and uniformity is also part of the LDS culture. Church buildings look mostly the same in all parts of the United States. Meetings are structured very similar with church consisting of a two-hour block of meetings. Sacrament meeting is typically held as the first meeting of the worship service. Sunday School, or separate classes for men and women (including youth), are held in the second hour.

Dress and grooming standards are also part of LDS culture. While some of the dress and grooming standards are mandated from church leadership (for example: how missionaries dress, the importance of modesty in length and fit of clothing, and avoiding tattoos), other dress and grooming standards are simply part of the culture and a sense of conformity. While not required to participate in ordinances or to be considered for church responsibilities, a white shirt and tie have become the expected Sunday dress for men. No facial hair, once introduced as an ideal and not as doctrine or policy as required to serve, is accepted by some as “law.” Those who deviate from these standards - even if they have not broken a commandment – stand out and there is a tendency among some members to question the level of spirituality, commitment, or testimony of the offender.

The LDS church has about 14 million members with about 6 million living in the United States. Fifty-five percent of Utah residents are members of the LDS church and, as a whole, LDS membership in Utah makes up 33% of the total US population of members. The culture of the LDS church in predominately-LDS communities differs from that in other communities where the LDS church is not as dominant. Members of the LDS church attend worship services within an assigned geographic area. Depending
on the population density of church members within an area the geographic radius could consist of a few blocks within a neighborhood or be so spread out that members drive several miles to attend services.

McAlexander et al. (2002) described a community as member entities and the relationships that exist between them. They are identified based on a commonality among them. In a community, members share essential resources: cognitive, emotional, or material. While many religious organizations could be described as being a community, the community feel is perhaps more evident in the LDS culture because of the close geographic proximity of members and their shared values and beliefs. While the doctrine may be the same throughout the church, there are differences in LDS culture based on the geographic area. While there are other heavily-populated LDS communities in places outside of Utah, the culture of the LDS church in Utah is different than in other states. In Utah and other predominately-LDS communities, members of the church live closer to each other. Children go to the same schools and live in the same neighborhoods. The culture of the church is intertwined with the culture of the community. In other areas that are not as predominately LDS culture still creates certain expectations of behavior but it is not as pronounced. The culture of the LDS church is brought up here because of the effect it has on establishing DAC and the role it plays in L-A-P.

The unpaid clergy and leadership with little-to-no formal training fits the culture of the church as well. As part of a content analysis on Mormon culture Decco (2013) found that the term ‘Mormon culture’ had become a way of distinguishing the church and being akin to the term ‘lifestyle’. According to Decco (2013), the lifestyle of the LDS church includes a commitment to the religion displayed through prayer, scripture study,
fasting, church attendance, and temple worship. Additionally, the culture supports the
doctrinal belief of chastity (sexual abstinence in all forms prior to marriage and complete
fidelity in all forms after marriage), a strict code of health, family togetherness, the
importance of marriage and service, and many other things. The negative side of the
Mormon culture is the pressure some have to conform to a certain pattern of how a “good
Mormon” acts. There are also some who believe it is good to socially isolate themselves
from certain political parties or from people whose teaching or practices do not conform
with the church. The culture and the doctrine are such that new converts need to undergo
a process of assimilation upon joining the church. Some have compared this to what takes
place when immigrants come to a new country in which they are unfamiliar (Decco,
2013).

**History of the LDS Church**

Understanding the leadership, history, and culture of the LDS church is essential
for the reader to understand because these elements play a role in the leadership structure
of the church. Leadership and history of the church can be stated as fact and backed up by
church authored handbooks, policies, and procedures manuals as well as writings and
teachings from LDS scriptures, books, and leaders. Conversely, a discussion on culture is
more observational, both from my perspective of someone who has served in positions of
leadership within the church for most my adult years in the church and from religious
commentaries.

**Church Leadership**

There are four levels of leadership within the LDS church: general, area, stake,
and ward. Those who lead at the general level are referred to as General Authorities or
General Auxiliary Leaders. Those who lead at an area level are referred to as Area Authorities and those who lead at a local level are referred to as “president”, “bishop”, or do not have a salutation in front of their name.

The General Authorities consist of the First Presidency, Quorum of Twelve Apostles, and Seventy. The First Presidency consists of the Prophet (who is the head of the church) as well as two men who assist him as counselors. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is twelve men from diverse backgrounds and levels of experience who have ministerial duties to the general membership of the entire church. The Seventy consists of men who typically have responsibility for a certain geographic area and provide spiritual guidance and training to the membership within their geographic area. General Auxiliary presidencies consist of leaders who oversee Primary (the program for children under 11 years old), Young Men and Young Women (church program for boys and girls from the age of 11 until the time they graduate from high school), Relief Society (the women’s organization), and Sunday School. General Authorities, Auxiliary Leaders, and Area Authorities travel occasionally within their assigned area to teach, train, and encourage local leaders and members of the Church.

At a local level, a single congregation is referred to as a ward and about 8-10 wards comprise a stake. A ward is presided over by a bishop. A stake is presided over by a stake president. Smaller wards are sometimes referred to as branches and smaller stakes are sometimes referred to as districts. For the purpose of this paper, a single congregation will be referred to as a ward – regardless of its size – and a group of congregations will be referred to as a stake – regardless of its size.
Because this research focuses primarily on my service as bishop it is necessary to provide some background into the role of a bishop. The bishop provides direction to each of the functional units of the ward. He is responsible for choosing (or approving if an individual was recommended by someone else) who will serve in callings. He ensures the doctrine of the church is taught properly. He is in charge of the finances of the ward and determines how church commodities and funds are used for members of his congregation. He is a judge as to a member’s worthiness to attend the temple, serve in various responsibilities, and, in some instances, maintain their full-fellowship membership within the church. While some of these duties can be delegated, and while he has help from counselors and other leaders, he is ultimately the one responsible for the outcome within these areas.

Previous leadership experience, a degree in theology, and/or training in a seminary is not a prerequisite to holding a leadership position within the LDS church. Many of the men and women who hold positions within the highest ranks of the church have extensive leadership experience from other responsibilities in the church, and some have been leaders in their professions prior to working full-time in the ministry. Occasionally there may be a match in skill set of an individual to the need of the organization, but this is typically a coincidence and not necessarily why the individual was asked to fill that assignment. For example, the LDS church owns and operates a university system. Some of the general authorities are former university presidents and administrators. Because of their experience, they are sometimes asked to serve on the board of trustees or weigh in on matters pertaining to the university, but they were not given the assignment of General Authority merely because of their profession. Additionally, holding a leadership position
in the church is a volunteer position and does not come as a result of campaigning or applying for the position. While there are some instances where a church member will ask to serve in a certain capacity, a person is usually selected for a leadership position by the person who has stewardship over that position and then is asked if they will accept the responsibility.

When a stake president is to be chosen, a general authority will typically conduct very brief interviews with the current counselors to the outgoing stake president, the bishops serving from each of the wards, the twelve members serving on the stake high council, and a few others based on the recommendation of the outgoing stake president. The general authority conducting the interview very likely does not know the individual they are interviewing and has less than 5 minutes to determine if the individual should serve as stake president. Typically a new stake president is chosen from one of the leadership bases I just mentioned, but there are no requirements of previous experience. There have been instances where, after completing interviews with individuals from the standard leadership pool, no one will emerge as the right fit and the general authority will ask that others from the stake be interviewed. Likewise, when a new bishop is chosen he is typically chosen from the leadership ranks from his congregation, but this is not required. While both of these instances are rare, I mention it here to further illustrate the unique way in which leaders are chosen.

Those who serve in the senior leadership of the church on a full-time basis include the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Seventy. These men are paid for their service given the full-time nature of their responsibilities. All others serve unpaid.
Church History

The idea of taking ordinary people with little formal training in theology and leadership goes back to the beginnings of the church. According to church history (Smith, 1998), in 1820, ten years before the LDS church was formally established, Joseph Smith, a 14-year-old boy living in a small town in upstate New York, was doing what many people in his time were doing – farming and searching for religious truth. He was trying to make sense of all the different viewpoints about God and about man’s relationship to Him. He was searching for answers. In his search for truth, he attended worship services of several of the churches in the area. He spoke to ministers and other religious leaders in the community. Each had a unique perspective on his soul-searching questions.

Having been raised in a religious home and having heard his parents read scriptures to the family each night, Joseph Smith determined he would turn to the Bible for answers to the question of his soul. While reading in the Bible it was impressed upon his mind that he must seek the answers he was looking for by turning to God in prayer. His exact words were, “never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man at anytime than to mine. I reflected it on again and again knowing that, if any man needed wisdom from God I did…and unless I could get more wisdom than I previously had I would never know” (Smith, 1998). It was that scripture and the subsequent reflection that led him to pray a prayer in which the entire basis of Mormonism is founded. Millions of members of the LDS church believe Joseph Smith’s claim that, while praying to know which church he should join, God appeared to him and told him to join none of the churches and that he had been chosen as a prophet of God to
re-establish the same church that Christ established when he was on the earth 2,000 years prior.

Members of the LDS church refer to Joseph Smith’s encounter with Deity as the “first vision.” The term lends itself to the belief that the LDS church is led by men and women who receive revelation from God to direct them in their leadership roles. Church members believe that those in the highest leadership position of the church are Apostles and Prophets who receive instruction from God similar to the Old and New Testament accounts of prophets such as Moses, Abraham, and Jeremiah as well as apostles such as Peter, James, and John. This revelation from God to function in a leadership position is not just limited to those in the highest ranks of the church. Those who fill roles within a local congregation are also entitled to direction from God in guiding their leadership responsibilities.

A common phrase I have heard used by some inexperienced leaders upon being asked to serve in a leadership capacity is, “well if God can turn a 14-year-old boy into a prophet then he can help me with my assignment.” The church’s history has been shaped in large part by people with no formal leadership experience who have taken on great leadership responsibilities.

Given this narrative focuses on my service within one ward (Fossil Lake 5th) and stake (Fossil Lake Texas) in the LDS church, it is necessary to briefly discuss the leadership and history of that ward and stake.

When wards and stakes within a certain geographic area become too large to adequately manage or when the growth of an area necessitates a realignment of boundaries, a new ward or stake is created. The Fossil Lake Texas Stake was created in
1984 from the wards and stakes in the surrounding Fort Worth and Dallas areas. At the time of its formation, there were 1,500 members and 6 wards. In 2020, the stake has grown to 3,000 members and 9 wards. An increase from 1,500 members to 3,000 members over a 25 year period may seem like modest growth compared to the growth of other organizations. However, it is standard practice to divide a stake or otherwise have boundaries realigned when a stake or ward gets too large.

The current stake president is Adam Globe. President Globe by profession works for the city of Fossil Lake, Texas, in the parks department. Prior to his appointment as stake president, he was bishop of the Fossil Lake 5th ward for about 18 months. Prior to his assignment as bishop, he taught youth in an early morning religion class and has also served in various leadership support functions within the stake and ward. His experience, however, pales in comparison to his predecessor – Jason Woodward. In the 30 years the Fossil Lake Texas Stake had been organized, Jason Woodward had served for 20 of those years as a bishop two times (for about 5 years each), a member of the stake presidency as a counselor, and as stake president. Both a person like Adam Globe with little experience or a person like Jason Woodward with extensive experience, is expected to fulfill all of their responsibilities the day they are put in that position. There is not, however, an expectation that the individual knows how to do everything or has all the answers to the challenges that arise. Faithful leaders hold on to the declaration in the LDS scripture, “the Lord requires the heart and a willing mind” (The Doctrine and Covenants 64:34, p. 121). Many who hold leadership positions within the LDS church will say they have the desire to serve God in the capacity they have been asked to serve in and believe if they put forth
their best effort God will make up the difference for their inexperience and lack of training.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using an autoethnography qualitative approach. Jones et al. (2016) defined autoethnography as a research method that weaves together relationships and experiences to culture and cultural practices while seeking to explain or add to an existing body of research or theory. It creates a relationship with the audience not found in other forms of research. It allows the reader to have a shared experience with the researcher (Creswell, 2013). In this research, the shared experience is being a spiritual leader - a bishop - of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The focus is on my effectiveness in leadership overall, as well as when and how leadership emerged in myself and those who served with me in leadership capacities. Woven throughout this focus is an evaluation of gaps in the leadership model outlined by Darth et al., (2008) which focuses on the direction, alignment, and commitment of those in leadership responsibilities.

Autoethnography was chosen as the method of data collection to allow the reader to have a, “window through which the external world is understood” (Ngunjiri et al, 2010, p. 2). The “world” which to understand spanned a period of time from 2011-2016 when I was serving in a volunteer leadership position as bishop within the LDS church. Members of the LDS church rely on the leaders of the various wards in which they congregate to help them in their spiritual journey. With the exception of a few who may have training in counseling, finance, or leadership, very few are formally educated in the areas in which they are called upon as leaders.

Taking the study into the realm of a transcendental analysis helped to ensure that the researcher viewed the study from the experience of the subjects and not just the
researcher. This was necessary to truly tell the story with very little insight provided based on the researcher’s own experiences with the phenomenon (Lang & Brown, 2013). With autoethnography, it was impossible to tell the story without my insight as the researcher. The researcher, after all, is the storyteller. Additionally, I, as the researcher, had to develop my own conclusions about direction, alignment, and commitment of those involved in leadership within the LDS church. Paradoxically, autoethnography by its very nature, defies what has traditionally been frowned upon among academia and research practitioners - the personal biases of the researcher impacting the research.

Autoethnography is a study of self (auto), culture (ethno), and a research process (graphy). This provides for a connector between the researcher and the culture (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The researcher draws on personal accounts to provide a level of understanding that could not be given another way (Sparkes, 2000). Vasconcelos (2011) described the method as an autobiographical memoir for conducting and presenting research that is forward, backward, inward, and outward looking.

Autoethnography can be a powerful leadership research and development tool, as it requires the author/researcher to not only study their own life but also to explore why and how they think and act the way they do. It explores deep rooted motivations, desires, fears, successes, and failures which ultimately have brought the researcher to the point in the story they are writing (Jones et al., 2016). Cho and Trent (2006) describe autoethnography, “as an interactive process between the researcher, the researched, and the collected data that is aimed at achieving a relatively higher level of accuracy and consensus by means of revisiting facts, feelings, experiences, and values or beliefs collected and interpreted” (p. 321). Wolcott (1994) described ethnographers as,
“researchers who want to have a look around at what people in some other group are
doing, or what people in their own group are doing, and sometimes even at what
researchers themselves are doing and feeling” (p. vii).

My research efforts revolved around the latter part of Walcott’s statement as I
explored my service within the LDS church. Much of my focus was on a period of time
beginning in 2011 through 2016 when I served as bishop. However, it was necessary to
look back on other responsibilities I had in the LDS church. Patten (2004) described the
authoethnographic experience as a collaborative journey between the author and the
reader. The personalized accounts draw upon the experiences of the author/researcher as
they attempt to broaden their understanding of the culture that is at the center of their
research (Sparkes, 2000).

Autoethnographical narratives are typically written in first person. They include
context, dialogue, emotion, self-consciousness, and stories affected by history, social
structure, and culture (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) suggested
that a quality narrative should engage a reader’s imagination by answering compelling
research questions. Opponents to this method argue the questions are not truthfully
answered because they are answered with the lens of bias (Phillips, 1987).
Overshadowing this lens of bias is the idea that truth has many faces and an
autoethnography provides one often overlooked truth – the perspective of the researcher
(Dehtloff, 2004).

Autoethnography has close ties to phenomenology which also describes the
experience a person encounters (a phenomenon) and insight that brings the experience
into focus (Van Manen, 1990). Examining all aspects of a personalized experience allows
the researcher greater opportunity to arrive at the core meaning of the experience. Because people do not accumulate their experience in a social vacuum, autoethnography is not limited to the study of one individual (Stanley, 1993).

This study took into account the benefits and challenges of the entire congregation, but it was done primarily through my lens. Given the reflective nature of autoethnographies, it can also be a powerful tool for a leader to use. They provide the ability to peel back multiple layers of thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the culture of an organization and can help answer the question, “what is really go on here?” (Raelin, 2016).

Lowney (2003) identified self-reflection as a powerful tool in the development of visionary Jesuit leaders. Vision is, “the hard won product of self-reflection” (p. 18) and the vision of an organization grows as a by-product of ongoing conversations relating to individual visions (Senge, 1990). While serving as bishop, it was not only important that I had a vision, but that I listened and sought to understand others point of view. Ignatius (1546) taught that listening for understanding requires the leader to be open-minded, not take sides, and seek to understand the meaning behind what is said.

Autoethnography does not exclude the experiences of others who are familiar with the researcher/author. In an autoethnographic study, family members, colleagues, and organizational members can help to guide the researcher/author down appropriate paths of thinking, but they should not influence or interpret meaning of the researcher.

Dethloff (2004) stated that in traditional research it is expected that the researcher keep their voice separate from the data and context being studied. This expectation is so much a priority that Creswell (2013) has emphasized the importance of a researcher
bracketing out their views before proceeding with the research. Husserl (1859-1938) introduced bracketing as part of the methodology for the very purpose of removing the researcher from the study so they could view the subject being studied without any preconceptions, biases, or judgments (Beech, 1999). Autoethnographers weave into their accounts the very things bracketing was designed to control and in so doing the autoethnographer seeks to broaden the understanding of the very culture that is at the center of what they are studying (Sparks, 2000). Further, according to Charmaz and Mitchell (1997), researchers are often expected to remain unbiased and keep their point of view out of their writing. In order for an autoethnography to do what it is intended to do, the researcher must be part of the experience in order to give the reader a deeper understanding of the cultural meaning, and, thus, bias will be present (Dehtloff, 2004).

Creswell (2013) emphasized the importance of a researcher bracketing out their views before proceeding with the research. Husserl (1859-1938) is generally accepted as the founder of phenomenology and introduced bracketing as part of the methodology so the researcher could view the subject without any preconceptions, biases, or judgments (Beech, 1999). In autoethnography, the researcher is the subject and thus they will view the subject (self) with preconceptions, biases, and judgments. To a degree, one of the overarching objectives of an autoethnography is to validate, disprove, and/or give meaning to why and how the researcher views the world. While bracketing may not be appropriate for an autoethnography, reflective practices were used to identify triangulation, biases, and blind spots that may appear in the autoethnography. Some literature suggests an unaffiliated observer could also be part of the research to provide gut checks along the way to help ensure the researcher’s own thoughts and feelings do
not cloud the story. Given the sensitive and unique nature of this experience, I did have an unaffiliated observer take part in this process.

**Research Question**

Based on personal experience serving in various leadership positions within the LDS church and working closely with others who also serve in leadership functions, it is thought that there is commitment among those who lead within the LDS church, but there are gaps in direction and alignment which sometimes cause a disconnect and provide a barrier to the emergence of L-A-P. The research answered the question: using L-A-P, where were the gaps in direction, alignment, and commitment within the structure and execution of my leadership experience within a local congregation of the LDS church?

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The person studied in this autoethnography covered a span beginning in 2011 through 2016, but as I suspected when I started this narrative, it was not possible to talk about that period of time without reflecting on the experiences that preceded it. While I looked back reflectively, I was a researcher with a different role than I had from 2011-2016. I told my story through the lens of reflection with the benefit of written accounts from my own personal journal, email and text communication, and other artifacts such as meeting agendas, sermons I delivered, and recollection of conversations with others. Each of these items provided context around interpretation and reinterpretation. This re-interpreting was not to try and make my experience into something other than what it was. Rather, I presented what it was in context to how I saw it at the time of writing. I then brought the two worlds together to demonstrate where leadership emerged, the gaps
that were evident in my leadership, where I am now, how those leadership experiences
impacted me, and what I need to do as a result of who I became.

In autoethnography, the researcher moves between field work and analysis. With
each movement there is reflection which leads to awareness of themes, patterns,
connections with the data, and meaning (Erlandson et al., 1993). Within qualitative
research the researcher lets the data emerge throughout the process. This is especially true
with autoethnography; the reflective process leads to the emergence of the themes,
patterns, and connection. Janesick (2002) noted, “the qualitative researcher uses inductive
analysis, which means that categories, themes, and patterns come from the data. The
categories that emerge from field notes, documents and interviews are not imposed prior
to data collection” (p. 389).

It is necessary for autoethnographers to have a framework to operate in while
moving through the iterative process of fieldwork, to analysis, back to field, and then
back to analysis, etc. However, it is also important to not become too rigid in the
approach that the autoethnographer is not able to go where the story takes them. Raelin
(2008) cautioned against such rigidness when he describes the challenges of researching
L-A-P using questionnaires or interviews. “These methods cannot illuminate what’s
occurring in sufficient depth to get traction on the socio-materiality of stipulated
leadership practices” (p. 251). Raelin was not rejecting such methods, but rather was
advocating for these methods to be used for theorizing what is happening within a
leadership setting.

For this study, the questionnaire developed as a way of studying Social Process of
Leadership (SLP) (Parry & Meindl, 2002), and the characteristics of servant leadership
identified earlier served as the framework upon which I analyzed the data. Neither the actual questions asked in the SLP survey or the exact characteristic of servant leadership were replicated. Rather, in an attempt to maintain the flexibility Raelin suggested is at the heart of autoethnography, the themes of both SLP and servant leadership were used to develop themes to provide order and meaning to the overarching research question. Throughout the analysis process I examined the data through the lens of these themes:

• My preparation for service as bishop of the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward
• What challenges I faced in my service as bishop and my response to those challenges
• My efforts to change the culture and perception of the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward
• My role in the development of leaders within the congregation

Autoethnography, as with all research methods, has its drawbacks. Specifically, an autoethnographer cannot tell their story without delving into the story of those to whom the topic they are writing about is connected. Not only are there ethical issues that need to be considered, but for stories that involve pain, betrayal, loss, or other sensitive issues that need to be told, the researcher must ensure telling the story does not cause harm and/or vulnerability to self and others (Ngunjiri, et. al, 2010). Causing harm to self in the form of emotional vulnerability is something Pearce (2010) cautioned autoethnographers about. Because of the confidential nature of my ministry, many of the notes or correspondence that took place around sensitive matters were erased or turned over to the bishop who took my place. Thus, any mention of such matters was from memory with names and some basic elements of the situation changed to protect confidentiality. Once the notes were compiled, a thorough reading and reflection through
meditation practices brought meaning and order to begin the writing process. Ellis and Bochner (2006) warned the process of writing an autoethnography can be hindered if analysis occurs too early on. This reality is unlike quantitative or other qualitative methods where the researcher can get an early read on the data and start to understand the story – and even make adjustments to the research instrument as necessary. I found this to be true early on in the process. I went into these exercises with specific ideas of where I saw I gaps in direction, alignment, and commitment. I had an idea of when and how leadership emerged. I tried to force my reflection and writing into those areas and found that I was stuck. This was very much like what has occurred numerous times during my twenty-year career as a market researcher. I would go down a path looking for that “ah-ha” moment only to find it was not there and would need to backtrack and go down another path. In autoethnographic research, the analysis is ongoing and occurs once information is received and interpreted. With each reflective moment or review of my narrative, I found clarity emerged, themes became evident, and patterns and connections were woven together.

Ellis and Bochner (2000) stated that an autoethnography analysis of data involves a process in which the researcher recalls an event and allows himself to be caught up in the moment including the thoughts and emotions experienced at the time. I found this to be self-evident, and as I went further into writing, clarity came with it. Janesick (2002) stated, “the qualitative researcher uses inductive analysis, which means that categories, themes, and patterns come from the data. The categories that emerge from field notes, documents and interviews are not imposed prior to data collection” (p. 389).
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This narrative is divided into 14 sections. Each covers a different lesson about leadership and reveals opportunities where DAC and L-A-P may have emerged. The first section, “An assignment 20 years in the making” gives the reader a brief history of my leadership responsibilities within the LDS church. It demonstrates that leadership positions and responsibilities do not necessarily make someone a leader. This is the first evidence of when L-A-P emerges. The second section, “An empty building” is the first section where my call to serve as bishop is mentioned. It outlines the interview process I had with the stake president and my thoughts during that process. This interview process sets the stage for discussions that follow around DAC and just how much L-A-P fits within the LDS church leadership structure. The third section, “the barrier that I was inheriting” takes the reader on a bit of a historical journey about the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward and establishes the basis for a discussion on culture and the emphasis I placed on the leadership team to change the culture of the ward. The fourth section, “A few good men and who would I choose” is the beginning of the establishment of the leadership team I served with. While there were many other leaders who served with me during my five years as bishop, this first leadership team established the basis for my service. Section five, “Viewing the work through a different lens” is about a change in perspective during the transition from being a counselor in the bishopric to being a bishop. While the people and circumstances of the ward would remain relatively unchanged in the first few months of the transition, this section provides a lesson in how an individual’s perspective may change when they are placed in a leadership position. It can be likened to when an assistant coach becomes a head coach or a vice principal
becomes a principal. They are operating in the same environment, but suddenly see the organization a little differently. Section six, “Ready or not the time is here” is all about the day I began my service and the experience of walking out of the room with a new leadership title but not yet becoming a leader. The title or position does not make the leader. Section seven, “The leaders I served and the challenges we faced” is an in-depth discussion of the leadership team. It explores how we worked together and the impact each leadership change had on the leadership team and the culture of the ward. DAC was impacted here in part because of the lack of continuity. Section eight, “Integrating into a new ward” explores the challenges of bringing new people into a ward and the impact of that change on culture. Adding to this discussion is the idea that the new people who came into the ward did not choose to move into the ward. They were assigned the ward according to where they live. Assimilating new people into our way of doing things while being open to new ways, created an interesting dynamic of leadership and showed some areas of misalignment and varying levels of commitment. Section nine, “That 5%” describes some of the lessons of my time as bishop that were especially painful and difficult. These were areas that were caused in large part due to a lack of direction and alignment with church policies and procedures and where leadership seemed to be hindered at times. Section ten, “Somewhat undoing what maybe should not have been done” is about making a course correction in the leadership team and essentially undoing a mistake from earlier in my service as bishop. It involves bringing an individual back into the leadership team and the “before-and-after” impact it had on me as a leader as well as the leadership team as a whole. Section eleven, “The management and mismanagement of finances” is an analysis of my responsibility over the finances of the
ward. It explores some of the ways I made financial decisions based on what I thought I knew and the lens through which I viewed the world. The impact of culture development on the management (and mismanagement) of finances is especially pertinent here.

Section twelve, “Uphold the policies, even when I do not agree or understand” puts emphasis on occasional internal struggles I faced in being aligned with church policies that I did not always agree with. Despite not agreeing on some of the policies of the church, it was direction, alignment, and commitment that brought everything back together. Section thirteen, “Back at the empty parking lot” is about the day I learned I would be ending my service as bishop the next day. Service in the LDS church often comes without much notice and ends abruptly. This was a day of deep reflection and soul searching. Section fourteen, “My last day as bishop” transitions from the previous section. It goes from anticipation into reality and the culmination of years of service having come to an end.

**An Assignment 20 Years in the Making**

A brief reflection on my previous leadership experience within the LDS church is necessary in order to establish the degree to which I had formal or informal training related to my responsibilities. Within the LDS church leadership, assignments are given to members as early as 11 years old. Outside of a traditional Sunday school class, there is a separate class for young men and young women age 11-18. For the young men, these classes are referred to as priesthood quorums and are typically divided according to priesthood rank: Deacons 11-13, Teachers 14-15, and Priests 16-17 (or upon graduation from high school). The young women are also divided according to the same age brackets, although recent change in policy provided greater flexibility in grouping young women together in classes regardless of age. Each class or quorum has a president and, if
size permits, that president has counselors and a secretary. The youth have adult advisors who guide them in their leadership efforts but it has been found that the best success comes when the youth presidencies can lead and have the advisors mentor and train. The responsibilities these youth are given typically focus on planning activities and discussing how to help some of their peers who may be struggling. I served in youth class presidencies including being the bishop’s assistant with the priest quorum when I was 17 years old. As a missionary, I held leadership responsibilities that involved the training and supervising of other missionaries. In those assignments, I learned leadership principles from the bishop (as a youth) and from the mission president (as a missionary). Upon completing my mission, I served in presidencies within the Sunday school, young men, and elders quorum. Included in this service, was time spent as the president of the young mens and elders quorum as well as a counselor to my predecessor as bishop.

While all of these assignments prepared me in some way to serve as bishop, the pinnacle of my preparation came while I served as a counselor to Bishop Roy from December 2009-May 2011. At that time, he had been serving as bishop for a little over three years and I had the opportunity to serve with him in other leadership capacities under his stewardship. I was excited for this next responsibility. Not only would I be serving alongside a bishop I knew and respected but the other counselor, Camden, was one of my closest friends and confidants. If leadership assignments within the LDS church were posted as job openings where someone applies when they think there may be a good match, I would likely have jumped at the opportunity to apply for the job that would have allowed me to serve alongside those two men. That is not how things work within the LDS church, but I was fortunate to have that opportunity and believe God’s
hand was involved in bringing me into that responsibility at that time with those men. As I served with them over the next 16 months, we would visit members of the congregation at least weekly. We would sit in council meetings together and discuss concerns, successes, and ideas for improving the quality of the ward. We shared deeply spiritual experiences. At times we agreed heartedly on the direction we should go with the congregation and at other times we disagreed spiritedly on the direction we should go. Through it all, we grew in love, respect, and friendship for each other.

The first half of 2011 was especially challenging for Bishop Roy. His employment was demanding more of his time and this limited his availability to fulfill bishop responsibilities at times. There was a three month period where he was out for most Sundays and had limited availability during the week. Camden and I would shoulder the bulk of the responsibility while still counseling with him as needed. He was still the bishop and major decisions were made and carried out only with his approval. Meetings, administrative tasks, and other activities were carried out mostly by Camden and myself. This time proved to be valuable to me in understanding a little more about what a bishop does. With Bishop Roy out, members of the ward were looking to Camden and I for direction. We set the tone of the ward during this time. It was not conflicting with what Bishop Roy had done, but it was a different voice. Without realizing it at the time, I was establishing myself as a leader. It had not yet occurred to me that I would be the next bishop.

Those weeks where Camden and I shouldered the bulk of the responsibility were a season of change for me. It is where I began to see my leadership emerge. I believe the other leaders in the ward also took a step forward in the emergence of their leadership as
they too were taking on additional responsibilities. In March of 2011, Bishop Roy
mentioned to Camden and I that he had been told by President Woodward he would soon
be released as bishop. Bishop Roy casually mentioned to Camden and I that we may want
to, “make sure that our lives are in order” because one of us could very well be called to
replace him. While it does happen on occasion that one of the bishop’s counselors is
called as bishop, most succession plans within the LDS church are not based on previous
experience or current position held. I have known of instances where a man with no
leadership experience or who was fairly new to the ward was called as bishop. Thus,
when Bishop Roy made that declaration to Camden and I, my first thought was to think
who might replace him. While it did cross my mind that it could be me, there were also
other men who I thought of as potential replacements. Despite trying to be dismissive that
it could be me, I felt deep down in my heart that some of my experiences over the past
four years were preparing me to serve in that capacity. Over the next few weeks,
impressions and thoughts would come to me that led me to think perhaps the Holy Spirit
was nudging me to become aware that my time to serve as bishop was fast approaching.
The difficult task I faced was reconciling those thoughts with the reality that there were
many others in the ward who would be incredible bishops. Thus, I did not feel I was
deserving or somehow the most qualified. I admit I did feel I was among those who could
serve and I believed I was conducting my life in a way that any ecclesiastical leader was
expected to live. My qualifications paled in comparison to other priests, ministers, or
pastors who have academic credentials and who are hired to lead their own
congregations. Nevertheless, I understood how the LDS church operated. I understood
that from the very early beginnings of the church individuals with little to no experience
were given extraordinary tasks to perform. Church history proved that they performed
those tasks admirably, though certainly with a few slip-ups along the way.

With that brief history as context, I’ll flash ahead to April 25, 2011. On this day I
received a call from the stake president’s secretary asking my wife and I to meet with the
stake president the next day. Knowing, thinking, and feeling how I did, justified some of
the concern, anxiousness, frightened, excited, grateful, and humbling feelings I
experienced over the next 24 hours leading up to the meeting. Not wanting to share in
these emotions on my own, I confided in my wife what I had been thinking and feeling. I
shared with her what Bishop Roy had shared with Camden and I. She too began to feel
similar feelings but I tried to reassure her (and perhaps myself as well) that very likely I
would be one of several men that would be interviewed by the stake president and that we
should not be surprised if, when we show up at the church, we saw other couples from
our ward also being interviewed.

An Empty Building

As we pulled up to the parking lot that evening, there were no other cars in sight.
Within a few minutes one of the stake president’s counselors arrived. He informed us that
the stake president was running a few minutes late but that he would be along shortly. As
the three of us waited, the counselor in the stake presidency engaged in small talk with us
and even threw in a few statements that provided some doubt to my wife and I that the
purpose of the meeting was to discuss anything pertaining to a call to serve as bishop.
Looking back, and knowing the sensitive and light-hearted nature of that man, I believe
he sensed our anxiousness and was speaking to us in a way to calm our fears without
divulging what he was not authorized to divulge. During this time I was also wondering
when the other couples whom I expected to see would walk through the door. Surely I
could not be the only person that was being interviewed.

Within a couple minutes of President Woodward arriving, he ushered me into this
office while my wife remained in the foyer. He began the meeting by asking me a little
about my family and my profession. We then said a prayer and he began asking me some
very pointed questions. He explored in depth my commitment to the religion, my
commitment to complete fidelity to my wife, my relationship with my children, my
ability to avoid and abstain from pornography, and generally if I kept all the
commandments and rules associated with the church. He wanted to know if I met the
qualifications of a bishop found in the book of Timothy in the New Testament:

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of
good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker,
not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth
well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a
man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of
God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation
of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest
he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (The Holy Bible, 1 Timothy 3: 2-
12).

He then asked me to share with him my declaration of belief (testimony)
pertaining to the gospel and the Savior. Apparently satisfied that I was the right man for
the job, he invited my wife to come into the room. He spoke briefly with my wife, asking
her about her family and some of the hobbies and interests she has. This was not a private
conversation nor did he ask her any soul searching questions pertaining to her
commitment to the gospel or even her perception of my commitment. Following that
brief conversation, he paused, opened his binder, and pulled out an envelope sent to him from the First Presidency in Salt Lake City. He stated that the letter was authorizing him to extend a call for me to serve as bishop. He then asked if I would accept the assignment. I replied that I would but only if my wife would support me. I knew she would but felt it important for her to declare her commitment as well. She expressed her support. We then discussed some of the details around when the change would take place and then noted that I would need to select two men to serve as counselors. We then said a prayer together and he expressed his confidence in me as we left the building. The meeting took 30 minutes, at most.

Once in the car it seemed there were several minutes of silence between my wife and I. This was not the kind of silence that sometimes accompanies tense or confrontational moments. Rather, the world seemed to stand still. I finally broke the silence by saying, “that was not what I expected”. She agreed and there was again silence for a few moments as we reflected on what had just occurred and what was about to happen. We discussed when and how we would tell our children and we discussed some of the logistics of how we would need to rearrange our family schedule to adjust for things that may come up as bishop. We were making plans and discussing “what if’s” based solely on speculation. We really did not know what was about to happen.

To recap, in a process that took less than 30 minutes I was given a position of responsibility for the spiritual and temporal affairs of a congregation of 350 people as well the financial and other administrative responsibilities of the congregation. At no point during the interview did the stake president ask about my leadership experience or philosophy. He did not ask about my experience counseling with people who are
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experiencing family or financial struggles. He did not ask about my experience budgeting, judging rightness and wrongness of actions, or my experience working with youth. After the assignment was made there were not any training courses or books that I needed to read. All I was told was to select counselors and to keep the assignment confidential except to my parents and my wife’s parents. I had been given a leadership assignment, but, as we will see as we go through this narrative, I did not become a leader that night or even in the weeks that led to my ordination. I had about three weeks before the change would take place. It is worth noting that the decision to make the change on May 15, 2011 -- approximately 3 weeks from the date of the call -- had nothing to do with church policy or the need to prepare. It was, logistically, the best time for the change to occur. In fact, had the previous Sunday not been Mother’s Day I likely would have started my service that week, giving me even less time to prepare.

As we were driving home, we decided to make the call to our parents to break the news to them of this new call to serve. My parents live out of state and had always been especially sensitive to any news of potential tornado threats in my area of town. Perhaps this is why when I called them they sensed in my voice that something was wrong and asked if a tornado was on the way. I replied that there was no tornado but that “we had just left the stake president’s office where he extended a call for me to serve as bishop.” This happened nine years ago, but looking back maybe the comment about the tornado was more accurate than I had suspected. Don’t get me wrong, serving as bishop was one of the most gratifying and sanctifying things I have ever done. It was also at times terrifying and unpredictable. The latter is where the tornado analogy seems most relevant. When speaking to my wife’s parents, my father in law, who had served as bishop a few
years prior, assured me that I would love 95% of what I was asked to do as bishop but cautioned me about that other 5%. “That 5%,” he said, “oh you will wish you had never been born.” While I can look back and acknowledge that the 95/5 ratio was about right, I can say that even that 5% brought me fulfillment, but I did not realize it at the time.

Over the next three weeks, I sought out some information that was available in various online resources. I studied scriptures. I prayed. I visited the temple more often than I had in the past. During Sunday worship services I would observe the congregation in a way I had not before. I was preparing to take on a massive assignment that would transform me and influence many people. Yet, amongst the congregation, only my wife and I were aware of what was about to take place. There is a scripture that many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day saints embrace; “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:15, p. 64). I felt this. Yes, I sensed that there would be years of trying to juggle all the demands on my time, but I also felt that I had been prepared for this opportunity through various other leadership roles I filled within the church. I would be foolish to say I was not afraid. At the same time, I felt a certain confidence and peace that what I was about to embark on would allow me to receive heaven’s help and that I did have some of the knowledge and talents needed to fill this assignment.

If we take a step back and remove the spiritual element that I was chosen of God, one could look at my experience in church leadership and say that I just might have the qualifications by an earthly standard to fill this position – at least the unpaid ministry model of the LDS church. As a 19-year old missionary I spent 18 of the 24 months in leadership positions. I held leadership assignments for almost the entirety of the 10
years leading up to my call to serve as bishop and five of those years were in leadership positions in the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward. I was probably among the most seasoned in terms of leadership within the ward and familiarity to the families of the ward. If the process of selecting a bishop would have been like that of what is common in the workplace my resume would have likely received attention and I may have received an interview based on my resume. This is not how things work in the church and I was not selected based on my portfolio of experience. Although, I do admit my portfolio of experience came in handy during my service as bishop.

The Barrier that I Was Inheriting

The previous pages provided a chronological account of events leading up to my call to serve and culminated with the day that the call was extended to me. I felt this chronological order of events was necessary to establish just what was involved in the selection of a bishop and to view this responsibility through the lens of experience. That journey is particularly useful as I discuss the theory of direction, alignment, and commitment in the next chapter. In my initial outline prepared prior to data collection, I believed that the focus of this narrative would be on the leadership outcomes of some of the core responsibilities of a bishop. Particularly, I envisioned there being some discussion around the management of finances, work with the youth, administering the staffing needs of the ward, and counseling and sitting in judgment of others. These are some of the core responsibilities of a bishop. While these are important to address, a bigger theme emerged following data collection. Not to spoil the ending of this narrative, but as I collected the data it became clear to me that one of the outcomes of my time as bishop was a change in the culture of the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward. As leadership emerged,
as we were aligned and committed, a change in culture occurred within the ward. The effectiveness of this could not have been realized without the efforts of the ward council and many other members of the ward working together. In short, it could not have been realized without others becoming leaders along the way. This is the essence of L-A-P.

Before getting into where and how the culture shift occurred, it is necessary to address why a change in culture was necessary. In the real estate world you often hear the mantra, “location, location, location.” People looking for a home will be interested in knowing how far the house would be from grocery stores, restaurants, thoroughfares, and parks. They may want to know about the schools and other amenities unique to their situation. Within the LDS church there is often another factor in determining where to move - the ward in which the home is located also becomes a factor for some. Congregations within the LDS church are assigned based upon geography. Members do not get to choose which congregation they go to. They are left to acclimate into their assigned congregation. Some may shop around at different wards looking for the right congregation and then find a place to live within that area. However, given the fluid nature of the geographic boundaries, what appeals to an LDS family may quickly change. For example, a family may decide between two different homes to purchase based on the size of the youth program (typically for ages 11-18). They may feel a larger youth program is what their teenage children need to experience. They move into that area with the larger youth program and then, a few months later, a change in the boundaries changes the demographics of the ward and the youth program is no longer large and thriving.
While my family did not shop around for wards, when we moved into the Fossil Lake Fifth ward in March of 2004 we did happen to move into a congregation that had a lot of children who were the same age as our children. The ward was also very socially integrated and involved in activities outside of Sunday meetings. There were many in the ward who had strong friendships with each other. I’ll refrain from using the word “clique”. While there were established friendships and most kept to their own group of friends, everyone worked together when it came to matters of worship. The geographic area had a small growth pocket but was otherwise landlocked for growth. Our ward did take in 4 high schools and several other feeder schools for elementary, intermediate, and junior high.

Surrounding us in the ward geography was the city of Ranger. A large portion of the geography of the wards in that area covered only one high school and had less feeder schools. This area was also growing and had miles and miles of open land that had been zoned for residential neighborhoods. These wards were more socially integrated with each other. This social integration was in large part due to members having other social connections with each other outside of the church. One member made the comment to me that they see their friends in the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward on Sundays and their friends in the other wards the rest of the week at school functions and around town. These types of natural social connections were more difficult to replicate in the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward. Thus, imagine what someone would think and feel if they were looking to move to the area. While they could not choose their ward directly, they could choose the neighborhood. The high school in Ranger was the top high school in the district, giving most neighborhoods within that school boundary an advantage for anyone looking to
move. Add to that the strength of the two bordering wards and their large youth program, it made a move into the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward boundaries a tough sell. This was the challenge the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward was facing for much of my time in the ward, even before being called as bishop.

Another dimension was added to the culture of the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward in March of 2008. During that time, the boundaries of the Fossil Lake Stake shifted. All the ward boundaries changed, a new ward was created, and the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward took a big hit as part of this realignment. Many of the members on the North part of the ward were integrated into other wards. The Fossil Lake Fifth ward did gain a small subset of members from two of the other bordering wards, but overall the change resulted in a net loss of members. Many of the members who came into the ward lived in Ranger. I observed that some of the new people who came in from Ranger did not like being associated with Fossil Lake. It was a territorial thing I suppose. There was, however, another factor that hindered the social integration of the ward and fractured the culture of the ward. Immediately following the boundary shift there was a rumor circulating that suggested the wife of the Stake President caught wind of an earlier version of the realignment proposal which would have put her neighborhood in the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward. According to the rumor, she was upset about this and convinced her husband to change the boundaries. This resulted in even more angst among some who came over from the Ranger side. While this is not how the church operates and the rumor was likely not true, it played a role in the discontent some of the Ranger people had with being in the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward. All of this led to a “us-versus-them” mentality by some of the people in our newly aligned ward. It was a mentality that lasted many years for some.
Bishop Roy was certainly capable of bringing together and integrating a group of people. He had the spiritual and emotional maturity to do it, but from my observation there was too much resistance and many were stuck in their way of where they wanted to belong and/or in how they thought a ward should operate. Bishop Roy also had called a new counselor as part of the change and brought in someone who was well respected among the members of the stake. Even this could not break down some of the barriers to resistance. I observed this cultural struggle from my position as elder’s quorum president and I suspect that it was larger than I observed from my limited scope. Over the three years following the boundary change, the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward had developed a reputation of being unfriendly, not very social, and a place people did not want to attend. Meanwhile, to the south of the ward boundaries, a lot of new homes were being built, communities were being established, and the Ranger congregations were adding 2-3 new families per month. This further disenchanted some of the people within the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward boundaries.

To summarize what was happening, there was a perception among some that most of the growth in the ward had come from people moving in by way of boundary realignment, not by choice, and that those who did have a choice were choosing anywhere but the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward, and not just because the demographics were more favorable on the other side of the town. Add to that the comment, “even the stake president’s wife did not want to come” and perhaps the reader can see some of the challenges the leadership of the ward was facing. I do not know whether this disconnect is what Bishop Roy had in mind when he called Camden and I to serve as counselors in December of 2009, but we both had a connection to the ward and we both saw the reality
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of the “us versus them” mentality. We had been trying to break that down in the other leadership capacities where we were serving. Over time, I believe there was a shift starting to occur in the culture of the ward. The ward had started to become more united. I do not believe there was one single incident or individual that brought about this change. It was something that happened gradually as a result of the right mix of strengths and talents among the leadership within the ward. Despite there being a gradual change over a span of 2-3 years, when I was called as bishop the divide was still there.

A Few Good Men and Who Would I Choose

While this is my narrative, it is not only about me. There were others who led within the ward and part of my responsibility was to choose who those others would be and then to provide them with the environment and resources needed for them to be successful. While most of the ward leadership was already in place and would remain in place when I began my service, it was necessary to select two men who would be asked to serve as my counselors. A counselor in the bishopric is typically given responsibilities over the various functions of the ward. For example, when I was a counselor to Bishop Roy I provided oversight and leadership to those leaders of the Sunday school and youth programs. I would take direction and concerns to and from the bishop within those organizations. There are other responsibilities counselors have but generally, as the name suggests, they are to counsel with the bishop on matters pertaining to the needs of the ward as a whole or within their area of stewardship. They also play a vital role in counseling and establishing rapport with members of the ward.

The process I went through to select counselors was similar to what I had gone through to determine counselors and staffing needs in other church assignments I had in
the past. I don't know if my way was the best way or even the right way (or if there was a right way) but it had worked for me in the past so I determined to do it here as well. As I began the process I saw in my mind a plain white puzzle with two missing pieces. I did not know what those pieces looked like or what the finished picture would be, I only knew they would fit the puzzle when I found them. My method was simple. I went through the ward roster and wrote down the names of every adult male who was at least somewhat engaged with the congregation. Unless I felt I shouldn’t include them, they were written on this initial list. The only requirement for not including them would be a feeling that it was not right or taking them from their current position would disrupt other areas of the ward. Once this list was compiled I went through the list more thoughtfully and prayerfully and crossed off names. I did not always know why I should cross off a name. I just knew it did not fit that puzzle and thus I crossed them off the list. I repeated this process a few times until two names remained - Camden and Jim. While this process was undertaken prayerfully, I kept this decision with me for a day or two seeking further confirmation through prayer and fasting. Once that spiritual confirmation came to me I sent the names to President Woodward in an email. President Woodward simply said, “these are good men. We will get them called.” His simple reply was my first hint of how trusting President Woodward was of me and all the other bishops. There was no mention of discussing the qualifications of these men. It was in sharp contrast to the process which may take place in a business setting where a senior manager may want to interview, review, and approve all hires. While there is a checks and balances system in place for such assignments, rarely is the name of a counselor not approved by the stake presidency. If the stake presidency does not approve a request for a bishopric assignment
it is typically because the stake presidency already had something else in mind for them to serve in a stake calling.

To keep the remainder of this dialogue in perspective, it is necessary to share with the reader a little about Camden and Jim and why I felt they were selected. Throughout this narrative, there will be others mentioned who were called to fill various roles, including new counselors. I will not provide as much detail about those individuals as I do about Camden and Jim, but it is necessary to write in-depth about them because of the time and nature of their service.

In 2008, I was serving in the role of president of the elders quorum when the boundary alignment I spoke of earlier took place. I needed to call two new counselors at that time and I was presented with a list of several men I could choose from. I knew some of the men, but not all, especially the ones who had moved in the ward as part of the realignment. As I was going through the process of selecting men for this position, Camden’s name stood out to me. It was as if God had taken a bright yellow highlighter to the computer screen around his name. I knew nothing about him other than he needed to be one of my counselors. He accepted that assignment and we had served together for three years in various capacities when he was selected to serve as one of my counselors. During our three years of serving together, we developed a bond of friendship that I had not had with many other men during my life. He quickly became a wise and trusted advisor – not only for things pertaining to my leadership assignments in the church but for other aspects of my life personally and professionally. Camden knew me well. He knew my tendencies, strengths, and weaknesses as a leader. Not only that but he had a way of viewing service in the church which was refreshing and new to me. While I will
touch on this in more detail throughout the rest of this narrative, it is appropriate to say that he filled many of my leadership gaps, even if I was not aware of them at the time. Additionally, many in the ward recognized that we were friends and that we worked well together. While I was still prayerful in my selection of him as one of my counselors, I knew that he needed to serve with me in some capacity during the entire time I would serve as bishop. I believed that my service would be more complete with him by my side. This proved to be true over the next five years and, regretfully, some of this realization came when he was not with me.

While I was hoping that Camden would somehow fit into the puzzle, I was neutral as to who the other counselor might be. Looking back, Jim was the right man for the role as a counselor because of his easy-going mannerisms, experience in the ward, connection with many members of the ward members, and character traits that compensated for areas where Camden and I lacked. He was not necessarily the popular kid on the block, but he and his wife were well-respected and often among the first to volunteer when help was needed. Jim was also a little older than Camden and I and provided a perspective that only someone with more experience behind them could offer. This was not my intent necessarily. Jim was not the type to take charge, but he led by an example of quiet steadiness. When he felt strongly about a subject, he would speak up. Simply put, he was dependable.

**Viewing the Work through a Different Lens**

Having settled in my mind that I would be serving as bishop and having the men in mind that would serve with me as counselors, I spent the next couple weeks preparing as much as I could while not letting on to anyone that I would soon be the next bishop. In
meetings with Bishop Roy, I was not only looking at issues through the lens of a
counselor, but I was also thinking about what I would do and should do about a particular
issue once I began my service. Bishop Roy had not yet learned that I would be replacing
him. This created a unique dynamic. I spent the next 24 days leading up to my ordination
date in solo preparation. I spent time reading and watching what I could as well as
observing things Bishop Roy said and did which had a different meaning for me. I sought
to get aligned with the policies and practices of the church as it pertains to being bishop.
There was not any formal training or classes, although I did have access to some of the
handbooks of instruction that the current bishop had.

During one Sunday council meeting prior to my call, a member of the stake high
council attended ward council meeting to provide training and direction regarding
missionary work. I was seeking alignment with the current practices of missionary work.
What stood out to me in this training was a reference to the bishop’s role in missionary
work and the importance of that role. I took a lot of notes – filling multiple pages as I
attempted to get aligned with the responsibility I would have in this area.
Other than the missionary training (which everyone on the ward council was a part of),
there was not any other formal training in my preparation to serve as bishop. There were
no other readings or videos. I did read some addresses from general authorities about the
responsibilities of a bishop. One particular address that stood out to me was a talk by
Gordon B. Hinckley, who served as prophet of the church from 1995-2008.

“Your goodness must be as an ensign to your people… Your moral strength must
be such that if ever you are called upon to sit in judgment on the questionable
morals of others, you may do so without personal compromise or
embarrassment… None for whom you are responsible must go hungry or without clothing or shelter though they be reluctant to ask. You must know something of the circumstances of all of the flock over whom you preside… You must be their counselor, their comforter, their anchor and strength in times of sorrow and distress. You must be strong with that strength which comes from the Lord. You must be wise with that wisdom which comes from the Lord. Your door must be open to hear their cries and your back strong to carry their burdens, your heart sensitive to judge their needs, your godly love broad enough and strong enough to encompass even the wrongdoer and the critic. You must be a man of patience, willing to listen though it takes hours to do so. You are the only one to whom some can turn. You must be there when every other source has failed”. (Hinckley, 1988).

That message from one of the prophets of the church, and a man who was instrumental himself in changing the perception of the LDS church during his time in office, served as my guide for service. I kept a copy in my desk and read it often.

**Ready or Not, the Time is Here**

There are times in my life where seemingly routine events stand out to the point that I can remember very vivid details. One such event occurred on Saturday afternoon of May 14, 2011. This was the day before I began my service. I received a call from Bishop Roy. Not a big deal really, I had received several calls from him over the past few years. This one was different. After discussing some administrative items pertaining to the ward, he shared with me that President Woodward had just met with him and told him he would be released that next day. He also shared with him that I would be called to serve
as bishop and suggested he give me a call. We talked a little more about the process and he took me down his own memory lane of where his thoughts were when he was in the same situation just prior to beginning his service.

During this conversation, it suddenly occurred to me that I would no longer have Bishop Roy to mentor and train me. During the previous five years of my service in the ward, I had Bishop Roy’s attention when I had questions or concerns. He was always a phone call away. In less than 24 hours that lifeline would be taken away. Things I had grown accustomed to turning to him about would now fall on me for others to come to me. I wondered what I would do without him as my support and guide and leadership mentor. Following that Saturday afternoon call with Bishop Roy, I continued the normal events of my Saturday – which included taking my young daughters to a nearby park and sharing with them that I would be called and ordained as bishop the next day. The nervousness and excitement I felt that night can only be compared to what I experienced the night before I was married or the night before one of my children would be born. On these occasions I knew something big was about to happen but I also knew that I needed sleep – and lots of sleep - because the next day would be both emotionally gratifying and draining. I did not have a hard time falling asleep the Saturday before I began my service, but I did wake up several times throughout the night just to make sure I did not sleep through the alarm.

I woke up for the final time that night around 6am in preparation for the early morning bishopric meeting. I followed my normal routine for getting ready and driving to the church, I even sat in my usual spot to the right of Bishop Roy. Yet, it was anything but a normal day. Even the people coming into the Sacrament meeting must have known
something was different. All three members of the stake presidency were sitting on the stand in addition to the bishopric. Shortly after the meeting began, President Woodward announced to the congregation that Bishop Roy had been released as bishop and he presented my name to be sustained as bishop. Prior to the announcement of my name I tried not to make eye contact with anyone in the congregation so as to not tip off what was about to happen. I even made a conscious effort to make sure I was smiling rather than the natural tendency I had to show how I really felt – incredibly nervous. President Woodward asked if I could say a few words to the congregation. Two things stand out with what I said. First, I referenced that I believe that God is more interested in how we serve Him rather than the capacity in which we serve. Second, I mentioned that none of us are asked to perform any assignment in the church while maintaining the status quo and that it was our job to leave the ward better than we found it just as Bishop Roy had done, as I hoped to do, and I hoped my successor would do. I also knew I wanted to make a good first impression and not seem nervous or display anything other than confidence.

Following the meeting consisting of comments by the outgoing and incoming bishopric and their spouses, I was ordained as bishop. This brief ceremony was followed by a few brief comments by President Woodward to the newly formed bishopric and our spouses and children who were in attendance. His words were simple and had more to do with ensuring that we maintained confidentiality, including not sharing with others sensitive things they may overhear us discussing. He reminded us that our first responsibility would be to our families, and then expressed his confidence in us. He then left the room. The entire process took about 20 minutes.
Let’s recap what just happened. The outgoing bishop – an experienced and dedicated leader - was now sitting in a Sunday school class as a member of the congregation. He no longer had authority or responsibility over the ward. Meanwhile, a new bishop was emerging from the room. Anything that an experienced and seasoned Bishop Roy may have had to handle was now in my hands; hands that were less seasoned and less experienced. From that moment anything that occurred which would have involved a bishop fell upon me. In retrospect, while a new bishop may have emerged from that room, leadership within the newly formed bishopric and ward council had not yet emerged. We had not proven or accomplished anything.

The Leaders I Served With and the Challenges We Faced

From the moment I was ordained a bishop, the weight of leadership fell upon me. Despite the training of experience, I still felt inadequate on two levels. First, the very nature of this leadership position necessitated that I have some responsibility over the spiritual development and nourishment of the congregation. Despite striving to live my life in accordance to the commandments and rituals in the church, I soon became aware of my own inadequacies in leading other people in their spiritual development. My inadequacy was felt in my ability to minister to others. Second, I felt inadequate in how to administer in the church. I had sat in council meetings and had a hand in many of the administrative activities that a bishop does, but the level and depth I was involved was now expanded. A bishop has the responsibility to listen to confession of sins and then to guide people as they seek to get back into full favor with God and man and, in some instances, full fellowship in the church. There were very few guidelines in the church handbook around this aspect of serving as bishop. Some instruction was given
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regarding sins and misdeeds that required a church disciplinary council. A disciplinary council is for grievous acts that could impact a person's membership in the church. These include things such as adultery, apostasy, and any criminal act. Other than extreme circumstances, much of my role in handling confessions were decided based on an impression from the Holy Spirit combined with my own life experiences. It came from thoughts and feelings I had. Admittedly, the way I viewed the world, my paradigms, impacted the way I handled confessions and other administrative tasks.

Occasionally all the bishops in the stake would get together to counsel together on matters of concern to us. While they too maintained confidences in not sharing details of specific members or events, it became clear to me that two similar incidents by two similar people would be handled differently by each bishop. Still, there were things I needed to learn. One of the very first confessions that I was involved with came from an individual who had been addicted to pornography for many years. His wife was aware of his addiction and they would occasionally work through it together, but he admitted to feeling alone and at times isolated in his addiction. We discussed his challenges, I shared some thoughts from scriptures and church leaders that came to my mind, and then I counseled him to continue on. There was no mention of do's and do not's. To the outside observer, it may have seemed that he walked out a free man with no consequences for his actions. I felt the same at first. So much so that when I arrived home I reviewed the handbook once again to see if I missed anything. Nothing was there. I spoke to the stake president. He assured me that I probably did the right thing under the circumstances. I will speak more about addiction counseling later, but this very early incident gave me assurance that despite not having explicit instruction around confessions that I would be
able to say and do what was needed and that I had access to help on such occasions. I used the first confession I heard as bishop as an introduction to my first year as bishop because it represented much of the way I went about making decisions as bishop; not a lot of formal training, some direction in the handbook, counseling with the stake president on occasion, and a whole lot of thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

I was not on my own for everything. The leadership team, known as the Ward Council, consisted of the leaders of the young men’s, young women’s, primary, men’s, women’s, Sunday School, and missionary programs. The men and women who led those organizations provided perspectives on the ward that were specific to their organization and to the ward as a whole. I would set the agenda for our weekly meetings but would ask for their input on anything they wanted to discuss. This ward council was really the eyes and ears for the ward and an avenue for me to distribute information to other members of the ward pertaining to the vision of the ward. With counselors in the bishopric and other members of the ward council, there was usually someone there to call upon for advice and to bounce ideas off of. I found the effectiveness of my service was tied to how effectively we all worked together.

Throughout my years in leadership within the church, I found great joy personally and saw the positive impact collectively that visiting with members in their homes had in establishing goodwill, trust, unity, and all-around good feelings about the ward. As I tried to model my ministry to the Savior’s way of ministering to people I realized that one-on-one ministering should be a key component of my ministry as bishop. We already had some things in place within the ward to make this happen and as a bishopric and ward council, we established a few new things as well. While I did not dictate how the ward
council members ministered one-on-one, it was a topic of discussion in our council meetings and I encouraged each organization to do the same. Additionally, if we were going to change the tone and culture of the ward it would need to start with the individuals and families in the ward. We as a leadership group in the ward would set the tone for this. For the most part, this happened during the first year and we did see a shift in the way people spoke and felt about our congregation. We felt like that was important because we really wanted to get in front of the members of the ward, and show them that we were leading by being there with them and being in their home. We felt that was important to help to change the culture.

Camden, Jim, and I would go out each Sunday and one other night during the week to visit some families in the ward. Combine that with weekly youth night and it was not uncommon for us to be gone two nights during the week and for a few hours on Sunday. In addition, I was staying late on Sundays to meet with any member who wanted to meet with me. There were long days and weeks at times and we sacrificed time in other things to fill this role. Despite its uniformity of doctrine and practices, each ward within the LDS church is different. A reader of this narrative, whether familiar with the LDS church or not, may feel such time was too much. I was sensitive to other demands on my time as well as the demands on the time of those who served with me. It was a great balancing act, but one that needed to be done due to the nature of the ward and what we needed to build.

Wells (2011) warns against the danger of the sound of one mind thinking. As I reflect on my time as Bishop and some of the leadership attributes, there was a turning point at about the one year mark which came as a result of the sound of one mind
thinking. I hesitated to blame this turning point only on myself. The nature of my assignment as bishop necessitated that I was prayerful and sought spiritual guidance. When I speak of things that I may classify as mistakes or missteps in my service, I am not implying that God directed me wrong. Rather, perhaps I went another direction, did not wait long enough to really understand God’s will, or, in some instances, God wanted me to learn from my mistakes and did not try to stop me. When I reflect on this first turning point which came as a result of the sound of one mind thinking, I believe several of those elements were at play.

Having served about a year as bishop, and getting a better sense of that puzzle that I spoke about earlier, the scene on that puzzle became more clear as to what I really wanted to accomplish as bishop. It seemed to me that the ward needed a different voice in some areas and as result adjustments to other assignments would need to be made. The Relief Society president has a responsibility to attend to the spiritual and emotional and temporal needs of the women in the ward, and by extension, their families. It's a tremendous responsibility. I was noticing that it was time for someone else in that role. The previous Relief Society president had done well and had gotten us to the point that we needed, but now it was time to take this to the next level. I felt like Bethany would be the most appropriate person to do that. Bethany was Camden's wife and I knew that it might require some adjustment to the bishopric assignments if his wife was serving in this capacity. I also wanted to hold true to an approach that I had that we try and protect the families and not put too much pressure on them. Now, if anybody was able to do this, it would be Camden and Bethany. However, I felt as though if Bethany was Relief Society president, that Camden could not be my counselor. This was an internal struggle.
Through spiritual impressions and my own sense of what was needed, Bethany was the right person at the right time to lead the Relief Society, but I did not have a sense of whether Camden should be reassigned. While this internal battle was going on inside my own, “one mind thinking,” we as a bishopric started to see a need within the youth program for someone who understood the program and could connect to the young men, especially to the 14 and 15 year-olds. Through pondering and prayer, I felt as though Jim needed to be in that position. Without wanting to alert him of potential changes, I did speak to Camden about it. His comment was, "if this is working, why break it up?” He shared with me the idea that perhaps Jim could be the one who took on a greater leadership role with the young men’s organization (an assignment which was Camden’s at the time). Despite that seemingly wise counsel, I could not shake the idea that Jim needed to be the one to serve in a new role with the young men. While trying to resolve this, I felt another change was needed with the high priest group. This was one of the men’s groups. In the LDS church, if a man is asked to serve in a leadership function within the bishopric, stake presidency, high council, or the high priest group, he is ordained a high priest and attends a class with other high priests. Ian, who at the time was serving as ward clerk, had stood out to me as someone who understood how to minister and administer very effectively in the church. He was an older man who had experience previously serving as a bishop and many other leadership callings. Ian had been a valuable resource to me as bishop. I had observed that he had taken on a mentoring role to me. Without telling me what to do or questioning in an unsupportive way, he knew how to ask the right questions and guide my thinking as bishop. Despite this role he played, I did not feel I would lose much in the bishopric with him in another
capacity because he would still be in ward council meetings and I could still get his advice on many areas of my responsibility. At one point in this process of potentially shaking things up, I did speak to the stake president for his advice. His response was direct and obscure, yet it was the right thing for him to say. He simply told me I would, “know the right thing to do.” He was reminding me to simply make a prayerful decision. Over the year of my service, I found it very helpful in decision making to counsel with Camden, Jim, and Ian. Yet, all three of the decisions that needed to be made involved them. Ultimately they each told me, after giving their thoughts on the matter, that I would know what to do and they would support any decision. The decision was made to make the change with Jim and Ian. I submitted the request to the stake presidency and they put the process in place to make the change. The day before those changes were to take place, and still being uncertain about what to do with making a change with Camden, I made a last-minute decision to move forward with releasing Camden as a counselor. The stake presidency ensured me that all the changes I had requested would take place on the same day. Thus, the very next Sunday, about a year into my service, my two counselors and ward clerk, three critical pieces of the Bishopric, were released and three new people were called. I remember sitting watching as all this took place that Sunday. It suddenly felt like making the change with Camden wasn't the right thing to do. I questioned my decision at that moment. When the meeting ended, I just hung around Camden. He was with me for the past four years in my leadership capacities and now he was gone. I felt detached already. I knew I'd still see him as a friend, but I felt like something was missing. As we will see later in this narrative, his departure left a
void to me personally, in the ward collectively, and it hindered my leadership
development.

Work in the LDS church is not like other organizations. I was not able to reassign
people and bring Camden back in without going through the same process of approvals
once again, not to mention the embarrassment I faced with having to undo what was done
and admit that maybe I got it wrong. However, even now when writing this narrative
eight years later, I am still not convinced I got it right. I wondered if some of the
discontent I felt was more disconnect with losing someone who had been a trusted
partner, ally, and someone who knew me very well. Camden’s departure left a void that
lasted for another 18 months until he would come back into the bishopric in a different
capacity.

The work needed to continue forward and I needed to do it with a different group
within my core leadership team. The bishopric now consisted of two men as counselors
who I did not know very well and a ward clerk whom I had known for many years and
respected but did not necessarily have any personal connection with. The executive
secretary (responsible for setting appointments, preparing agendas, and otherwise
keeping the bishopric organized) remained the same. The two new counselors who came
in were at different stages of life. Ron was in his late twenties and had never been in a
leadership position. The other, Toby, was in his late 50’s, had just been serving in a
leadership position within the ward and was generally well experienced in church
leadership. While I did not feel a connection to these men as I did with the others, I liked
the diversity of experience and perspective. It did, however, change the dynamic of the
ward council which in turn impacted the culture of the ward. During my time in the
church, I had believed that the bishop set the tone for the ward. This is in large part why I assumed the work could go on smoothly without Camden, Jim, and Ian. I felt as long as I was the keeper of this vision, and we had a strong ward council in place, we could communicate this vision and direction to any new person who would come in.

I quickly found this was not the case. During my time serving with Camden, Jim, and Ian, there was alignment in the shared vision. Visions are best created as a result of shared conversations. Camden, Ian, and I had served together previously and those conversations had been ongoing before my service as bishop began. Jim quickly got aligned with the vision because the way we were determined to serve and minister to the members of our ward was the way he had been serving and ministering for many years in other capacities. With those three men now serving in other places in the ward, it fell on me to communicate this vision to the new bishopric. I found this to be challenging. With the previous bishopric, we would counsel together on the needs of the ward within the realm of our shared vision. Within the new bishopric, there were some who had a different vision. As we sought alignment in various matters pertaining to the ward, there was some resistance. I am not suggesting that I was against disagreement and resistance. I encouraged those I served with to push back and speak their opinion, even if it differed from mine or others in the group. The challenge I faced was in coming to an agreement on some matters when the alternate approach was outside of the vision and/or it did not support efforts to change the culture of the ward.

These challenges would occasionally create dissonance and cause me to reflect on whether I made the right decision in releasing Camden and Jim as counselors. These also provided a sobering lesson that it was not just the bishop who set the tone for the ward.
Additionally, it showed me that misalignment in one area could impact an entire leadership team. This dissonance caused me to reach out to Camden more than what I may have done otherwise. While he was serving in other areas I considered him a third counselor, or at least “my” counselor.

Both Ron and Toby served for less than a year in the bishopric before they moved out of the ward due to changes in employment. When they moved other men were called. Those men would also move out of the ward or otherwise be needed in other places in the ward. All told I served with nine counselors during my time as bishop. With the exception of Camden and Jim ending their service as counselors on the same day, none of the other counselor changes happened as a pair. This meant training and orienting one new counselor and then, a few months later, the other counselor. It also meant changes to the leadership team at least twice per year.

My leadership and that of the ward council was impacted by each bishopric change. While change can sometimes be good in order to bring in fresh perspectives, the constant turnover in counselors slowed the work down and eventually wore me down. I liken these constant changes in the bishopric to driving a car with a dirty air filter. The car may be moving at the same speed whether it has a clean or dirty air filter, but it was taking more effort to go that speed. This is not to suggest that the effectiveness of the ward slowed down consistently with each change or that we were on a gradual downhill the entire time. We did experience bursts of upward movement when it came to alignment within the bishopric. This typically occurred when the new counselors who came into the bishopric were aligned with the overall vision of changing the culture of the ward and what it took to do that.
While the counselors in the bishopric are usually at the battlefront leading the efforts of the ward, there is also a ward clerk and executive secretary. The role of the executive secretary is to keep the bishop organized. He is also the point of contact that somebody goes to when they need to make an appointment with the bishop. The executive secretary does not ask the members for details of why they want to meet, although they may ask if the matter is something one of the counselors can take care of. Despite the purpose of the visit being relatively unknown, during my service I felt it was important, especially with what we were trying to accomplish in the ward, to have the executive secretaries be men that the members of the ward could connect with and that they were approachable. They also needed to help keep me organized and in so doing filled a leadership weakness I possessed.

Perhaps this is why in December of 2013, about 18 months after being released as a counselor in the bishopric, Camden was called to serve as executive secretary in my bishopric. This opportunity opened up after the existing executive secretary moved out of the ward. I went through my usual process of writing down several names and prayerfully crossing them off one by one hoping that Camden’s name would remain. Even my counselors and the outgoing executive secretary mentioned that Camden should be the one called to fill that position. Their reasoning was based on their observation that I needed him to serve with me. There was a noticeable gap in my service as bishop with Camden not being there with me. Simply put, Camden knew how to point me in the right direction and was aligned with what I was trying to accomplish. Perhaps one of the reasons why he made my leadership better is because the vision I was seeking to carry
out was not my vision, but rather our shared vision that we had created through years of service and ongoing conversations.

The ward clerk has the responsibility to oversee the membership and financial records and the assistant clerks who have responsibility in those specific areas. This role is less forward-facing than the executive secretary but the clerks who served with me not only needed to have the leadership and organizational abilities needed for the position, but they also need to be trustworthy due to the sensitive nature of the information they had access to. As part of the data collection phase for this narrative, I read emails I had sent to the executive secretaries who served with me. One stands out and sums up how I relied on the perspective these men brought and for them to help keep me organized and focused on our overall vision. The following is an email sent to Camden when he was called as executive secretary. Similar emails and dialogue was shared with the other executive secretaries:

“Just a heads up - You will be cc'd on a lot of emails from me and I will forward you several of the emails I receive - sometimes with little said about it. Not only is your council on the matter welcomed but also make sure the idea gets included on the agendas as appropriate.” (Gallo, personal communication December 4, 2014).

Whether serving as a counselor in the bishopric or as a clerk or executive secretary, the members of the bishopric shared one common responsibility; to provide their unique perspective on any matter we discussed in bishopric or ward council meetings. With this being a core responsibility, when I was seeking to determine who should serve in those capacities, I would consider not only their ability to carry out
their core duties but also what voids in the bishopric needed to be filled. To this end, over the course of my time as bishop there were men of varying leadership and life experiences. To illustrate this, when it became time to release one of the ward clerks, the ward had seen an increase in younger families, including recently married couples, move into the ward. Bringing in a younger ward clerk to provide the perspective of those families in the ward council seemed like the right thing to do.

During my time serving as bishop, Sunday worship services lasted 3 hours. Sacrament meeting, typically where communion and sermons were delivered, was the first meeting. This was followed by other meetings such as Sunday school and the men's womens, youth, and children's group. Leaders were needed to carry out the functions of those organizations. Given the objective of this narrative, it is necessary to provide some background on the leaders who served in those capacities, why they were selected, and why leadership changes were sometimes needed within those organizations.

Typically within the LDS church, leadership changes in one of the auxiliary organizations take place every two years. This is not official church policy but it seems that in most of the wards I have been in, the changes take place about every two years, unless changes to the leadership of one of the organizations were needed when someone moved or were needed somewhere else. I mostly stuck to this tradition during my time as bishop but given the focus on changing the culture of the ward, sometimes a change was needed before I anticipated. I will now will give the reader an idea of the why and how of the process of making changes to the leadership of the ward and provide some perspective on some elements of L-A-P as well as the role DAC played in those decisions.
When I was ordained as bishop, the leadership within the various organizations remained in place. From what I had observed serving as a counselor to the previous bishop and the larger perspective I gained following the beginning of my service, the people serving in the various leadership functions were committed leaders who were serving to the best of their ability. I did not come into the role as bishop with the thought of replacing anyone immediately, but I felt changes would likely occur within the first 6 months of serving as bishop. I made it a point to note to the newly formed bishopric that we should spend a few months observing how things were going before making any changes. Within the LDS church, there are several reasons why an individual can be released from an assignment. These reasons include being needed elsewhere in the ward where their talents are needed, moving out of the ward, personal reasons including time commitments or other family matters that would limit their effectiveness, spiritual challenges -- whether it be weakening of their commitment to the church or other matters which came up as part of a confessions which may impact where they can be utilized, burnout, and/or a feeling or impression that it was time for a change. The latter of those reasons is sometimes referred to as a prompting from the Holy Spirit. During my time as bishop, leaders were replaced for each of those reasons. I am not going to necessarily call out the reasons why specific leaders were replaced, but I will explain the impact the changes had on the ward - particularly when they were more unexpected than planned.

After about a year into serving as bishop and learning of some of the challenges the families in the ward were having, I felt it was time to make a change to the Relief Society president. I could not place exactly why a change was needed other than the picture on the puzzle had changed and it was time for a new puzzle piece. I had an idea of
the type of person that was needed. Bethany, Camden’s wife, fit the description of what was needed. Bethany had a way of bringing people together and connecting with them. Some of the women in the ward had spouses who struggled with addiction and Bethany was instrumental in bringing those women together and going with them to a newly formed spouse and family Addiction Recovery class. Bethany also had a way of connecting with women who felt isolated or alone and ministering to them in a way that supported the vision and the need for a change in the culture of the ward. Following her call to serve as in this capacity, we worked well together and we counseled together often on many challenges the ward was facing. While I did not have a timeline for her release from this position, I envisioned that she would be serving in that capacity for the entire time I served as bishop. That would have been about four years of service in that capacity for her. Given the emotional load Relief Society presidents carry, it would have been somewhat unprecedented, but I was prepared for it. About two years into her service, we as a bishopric determined that Bethany’s talents would be better used to help in the young women’s organization. This change was necessary, but the challenge came in finding someone to replace her, particularly in a ward where we were short on people. There was also the challenge to find someone who could connect with the women in the ward while being able to carry out the vision of culture change. While there were a few women who fit this description, I was walking down the hallway one Sunday and passed by Kelly, a younger member of the congregation whose youngest child had just started Kindergarten. An impression came upon me that she should be the one to fill the role of Relief Society president. I knew her husband well, as he had served in some other areas of leadership within the ward, but was not familiar with her leadership experience or abilities. Because
previous leadership experience is not a prerequisite to serving within the LDS church, I was not concerned with that. I just wanted some assurance that she could connect with the women in the ward. Through prayer, reflection, and the perspective of the members of the bishopric, I was comfortable that she met my criteria. Kelly was called to the position and remained in that capacity up through the time I was released as bishop. During her service, especially in the beginning, I observed that the women in the ward rallied together for her as they recognized her inexperience and demands on her time with her young children. While she definitely had the ability to connect with people, the leadership transformation I saw in Kelly over the two years that she served is evidence of individuals becoming leaders through the process of doing.

There were four primary presidents during my time as bishop. Jennifer was serving at the time I began my service. She approached me shortly after I started my service as bishop and shared with me that she had spoken recently with Bishop Roy and asked if she could be released as primary president. The demands on her time were such that serving in this capacity was becoming a burden that was a hindrance to the effectiveness of her service. Each president had two counselors who serve with them and to whom they can share the load. Sometimes, rather than releasing someone when they stated they had too many demands on their time, I would ask if there were things they could ask their counselors to do, even if temporarily, in order to remain in that position. In this situation, she felt she had done all she could. Satisfied that she was ready to wrap up her service, Angela, a woman experienced in leadership within the church, was called as the new primary president. Angela was focused very much on training and development of teachers in her position as primary president, but the role she played on
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the ward council was different. Her family did not feel as integrated into the ward as others did. She was able to provide a perspective and voice inside the ward council to represent others in the ward who felt like her. Participation in social activities as a ward improved while Angela was serving as primary president. While the work Angela did in improving the teaching within the primary was exceptional, perhaps her biggest contribution was what she did to help the culture of the ward. When the time came to release Angela as primary president an older, yet less experienced, woman, Eve, was called to fill that role. Eve moved out of the ward not too long after her service began and that necessitated the call for Patty to serve as primary president. While the reason for the call to have Eve serve was less clear, when it was time to replace her we knew that someone who could connect with some of the families struggling to come to church would be the next need within the primary to fill. Patty fit that description. She took her responsibility seriously and ensured that whomever was the bishopric counselor over primary was aware of the needs of the primary. Her commitment level was high as evidenced by how prepared she was for meetings and the way she took control of the organization she had the responsibility to look after.

A bishop’s most pressing responsibility is to the youth in the ward. While I was hands-on with the other organizations and let the presidents act as they deemed necessary, I was more involved and at times micromanaging with the youth program. To me, the most important attribute of anyone who served in the youth program was that they were able to connect with the youth. Leadership ability or style was of lesser importance to me than was that ability to connect. At the time I began serving as bishop, the young women's president had been serving for close to two years. She had a strong connection to the girls.
I had worked closely with her prior to my service as bishop as part of my first counselor in the bishopric responsibility. She had hinted that they might be moving and had also told me that she was getting worn down in her assignment. She did not, however, ask to be released and her commitment seemed strong despite her being worn down. As bishop, sometimes impressions as to changes that needed to be done in the ward came as a result of being with the leaders as part of their assignment. This was the case with the change needing to be made with the young women’s president. All the youth, youth leaders and the bishopric were at a baseball game. In that setting, relaxed and noisy as it was, the decision was made that it was time to make a change with the young women’s president. As was my practice, this was discussed with the bishopric and confirmed through prayer, but there was something about that setting that led me to think there was a gap in commitment on her part and that a change was needed.

Around this time Dwight and Rory Vance moved into the ward with their children. As part of our action plan to change the culture in the ward, we would visit each new family. Upon leaving the house of this new family, I made the statement to Camden and Jim that Rory would be our next Young Women's president. We had initially discussed perhaps bringing her into the 16 to 17-year-old class and being an assistant to the current young women's president for a time so she could get to know the girls. It was important to have that connection to be successful in that role.

However, after discussing the matter as a bishopric, we determined that we should make the change and the outgoing young women's president would fill a need we had in teaching a youth Sunday school class. The transition to a new president was tough for the older girls, as they had a connection to their former young women leader, but in time she
won their hearts through being there one-on-one for the girls and acting in a way that aligned with the culture we were trying to establish. There were at times challenges with her leadership ability and working with her counselors and the other leaders. This was in large part due to her lack of leadership experience within the church and her limited experience with the young women’s program.

If she were reading this narrative, she may very well feel there was a gap in direction and alignment with her presidency. She and I would counsel together often about the needs of the girls and her counselors. She would need reassurance that she was doing what was needed. At times, much of my focus was on training her on leadership, and, as we discussed this as a bishopric, it was determined the right thing to do would be to have Camden step in and provide some of that training. In time, the right mix of people was there. On one occasion, when she was out of town, her counselors asked to speak to me about concerns they had with her leadership style. They felt she was at times, “my way or the highway.” Despite the unity that was being established among the young women and their leaders, there was less unity among the actual presidency. They were all very committed to ensuring the success of the young women, but had less alignment and at times felt lost in the direction they were supposed to go as a presidency. Rory would serve for about two years total and would bring in new counselors over time. As she was wrapping up her service, she made the comment that had she been with her current counselors the entire time that her service would be different. I disagree. Despite the change in leadership within her presidency, the biggest change came from within herself. She had gained a greater ability to lead and was able to bring others in line with her vision and direction as a result.
As the time approached to call a new young women’s president, it was clear to me that Madison, a sister in the ward who had a strong connection with the young women, having taught some of them in early toddlers and early adolescence and teen years, should serve in that capacity. She had the connection to the young women and the experience, having served in stake leadership and other young women callings in the past. There was, however, misalignment among the bishopric on the matter. One of my counselors felt strongly that she should not serve in that position. This was based on personal feelings about the family, but the concern was valid to me because this counselor also had responsibility for the young women's program. In addition, the counselor and young women’s president would need to work closely together. I wrestled with this matter, mostly on my own. Eventually, I settled on another person, Emily, who was a qualified leader and had a connection with the young women. Looking back, however, she was not the right person for that role at that time. In retrospect, working with the counselor to resolve his concern may have been the right thing to do, or simply put it off. While I made some effort to talk to the other counselor and encourage him to put aside his personal feelings, it did not bring the resolution I wanted. Given the dynamic of this decision, I did feel that I was alone in settling the matter. It consumed a lot of my mental energy. As I look back I wonder why I did not seek the advice of President Woodward. He surely would have been able to provide that other perspective that would have reduced the effects of the sound of one mind thinking. I suspect the right thing to do would have been to leave Rory in this position for a little longer until the personal matter between the counselor and Madison were resolved or another solution became more clear. After about 18 months with Emily as young women’s president, the
bishopric counselor with the hard feelings moved out of the ward. I quickly acted to bring Madison on board as young women’s president. The timing of this decision also coincided with the very early stages of a pending boundary realignment which would bring in a new group of youth. Keeping the ward culture while integrating another was going to be a challenge. Based on what we had experienced last time a boundary adjustment occurred, I felt that Madison would be best qualified to lead the integration efforts. With Madison, the young women's program seemed to run smoothly. This does not suggest that it did not run smoothly with the other leaders. Rather, I say it ran smoothly because Madison had been aligned with the vision of the culture of the ward since the beginning of my service as bishop. This was reflected in our ward council meetings and other meetings we had. I did not feel I would be burdened by misalignment in vision, purpose, and execution.

The young men's presidency provided another set of challenges for me. Shortly after beginning to serve as bishop, the man who had been serving in that calling needed to be released. Tim had recently moved into the ward and was serving as an assistant within the young men's organization. The older youth had taken to him and, despite not knowing anything about his qualification or experience, he was asked to serve as young men's president. Under his stewardship, the older young men came together. He also worked well with Rory as the young women's president. However, with some of the things that were happening in his family, some of the challenges he was going through, it was apparent that he soon wouldn't be able to serve as diligently in that capacity. Harris Gideon and his family had moved into the ward with three boys who were all in the young men’s program. He was trained in all aspects of the program and seemed to understand how a young men’s program was supposed to run. Herein laid the challenge.
There was not any set standard for how the program should be run. It was very much under the direction of the bishop, with a few exceptions in the administrative aspects of the program. Much like what I was looking for with the young women’s president, it would be important for the young men's president to connect with the young men. The rest, I figured, could be learned on the job. Harris came into a difficult situation in that he was an outsider with his vision of how the program needed to be. He did not know a lot about our young men and did not see the vision as I did. On his very first Sunday with the young men, he implemented a change which turned off some of the young men. What he asked of them was something that should have come from my direction. The youth were used to more of a style of counseling together where we would talk about the direction we needed to do.

Harris was also a lot more adamant that the Boy Scouts of America program (the activity arm of the young men's program) be run a certain way. He had the support of some of the other men in the ward who felt the same way about scouting. I was aligned in their vision but only to the point where it started to take away from what I was trying to accomplish in the ward. Throughout his time as young men's president, I struggled to get him to be aligned with my vision. In his mind, a bishop should not adjust the way the young men's program is administered because the church had adopted Boy Scouts of America and developed another program for the spiritual development of the young men. In his mind, there was no deviating from this. My understanding was that the church had set up the program, but leaders were free to adapt as needed based on the unique needs of the ward. Our youth were different. We went through many different youth leaders. Each person had a different voice. This was perhaps one of the biggest frustrations I had as bishop because I understood my role as
the president of the young men's group of the Aaronic priesthood. Yet, each trained and skilled leader had their own way of looking at it. Being aligned with how the scouting program was administered was one of my biggest struggles.

While this was happening with Harris, John Roy (the former bishop) was serving as scoutmaster. While it took a load off of me to have a committed trained leader in an important position in the ward, he was growing frustrated with how the rest of the program was going. This was also an interesting dynamic and challenge. He had taught me and trained me previously as a young men’s leader and I think he felt that I would continue what he was doing when I started serving as bishop. At the same time, I was trying to change the culture of the ward, not because he had done it wrong, but because it was time for a change. I don't feel I adequately communicated that to him. I knew it was a source of frustration for him as well as some of the other leaders that were serving with him.

One of the assistants serving in the young men’s program had an approach that meshed better with the youth. Often the youth would go to him rather than going to Harris. There was a disconnect and the program was at times in disarray. Harris eventually decided he had enough of what he deemed a dysfunctional dynamic and requested to be released from that position. This was especially gut-wrenching, but I had also learned that there was always a way and was determined to lead the bishopric in finding the right person to replace him. In time, it settled on us that Ty should serve as the young men's president. An invitation was extended, but he declined. My initial reaction was that we would hold the position vacant until he came around and the bishopric would fill the void collectively until then. We let that idea sit with us for a few
weeks but ultimately we needed somebody else in that position. We settled on Ammon, a man who had been in the ward for a while, served several times as young men's president, and had a child in the program. He may not have had the connection Ty would have had or ministered and shepherded the way Ty would have, but he filled the role and he did it admirably. Of great importance to me was that he was aligned to the vision of the program. He unified the other men who were serving in the youth program. There was a change in tone and a change in focus under his leadership.

In the time since my service has ended, the church has changed policy and the young men’s president position went away. The bishopric now fills that role, similar to what we considered when Harris stopped serving in that capacity and Ty declined the offer to serve. Ammon served in the capacity as young men’s president until the boundary alignment occurred. Once that took place a man named Zach, who had been serving as young men’s president in the previous ward, was called to serve in that position. Zach had a greater connection to the youth who had integrated from the other ward and was able to win over many of the young men who had already been in the ward. Still, there was a disconnect with how I viewed the needs of the young men and how he and the members of his presidency viewed it.

I have discussed the bishopric, primary, relief society, young mens, and young womens organizations. There were other leadership positions within the ward which I am not addressing with this narrative. I'm not discounting them by not writing about them, but, rather, I believe the themes and patterns of alignment and misalignment that occurred in these organizations have already been addressed. Writing about them would be repetitive.
Integrating into a New Ward

As a ward, we had long struggled to find enough people to fill key positions within the ward. It seemed that we sometimes needed to just fill leadership gaps by reshuffling the leaders we had. Some members had multiple callings. It was usually the committed members who would take on multiple responsibilities. Even if they never said anything to me about it, this extra burden slowed them down and caused even the most committed to struggle with being effective at times. Within the LDS church there are four ways to increase the attendance of the congregation (and I suspect this is similar to other religious organizations).

- Gaining new converts
- Inviting those who have stopped worshipping with us to come back
- Members moving into the boundaries
- Boundary adjustment.

As bishop I really only had direct influence on gaining new converts and inviting others to come back. We had leaders who assisted with the missionary efforts to not only gain new converts but also to play a key role in helping to bring back those who no longer worshiped with us. I supervised those missionary efforts (i.e. the missionary leaders reported to me and I would attend coordinating meetings as often as I could). I would also visit some of the lapsed members with the missionaries and/or with other members of the ward council. To me it was really about leading by doing and setting the tone that we should not give up on people.

From a numbers perspective, our ward was in the middle of the pack compared to the rest of the stake in terms of new converts joining the church and overall attendance at
worship services. I would speak often to the congregation as a whole and to the ward council about planning and executing plans to increase our membership. We had slow growth in this area. It seemed that when we would get the ward to a size that reduced the workload of some of our members that we’d have a family move out. We could not maintain growth. Meanwhile, the surrounding wards were continuing to add 2-3 new families per month. The us vs them mentality that occurred shortly after the boundary alignment of 2008 was creeping into the ward, but as time went on I felt the members were more resistant to discouragement and bitterness and were starting to see the closeness and bond that was found within our smaller congregation. Around 2014, the culture shift we had been working for was starting to solidify. Still, we struggled to retain members. Simply put, we needed a larger army in order to do the work we needed to accomplish in fulfilling the mission of the church. At one point I had suggested to the stake president that they disband the ward and distribute the members among other wards. This would provide those wards with more resources to help bring back some of the members who had felt isolated or otherwise stopped coming. When I would bring this up or otherwise express concerns over the size of our ward, he would assure me that a plan was in place to get us more people and to “hang in there.” In September 2015, it was announced that a boundary realignment had been approved and would take place in the coming weeks.

I was given advance notice of the boundary changes and who would be coming into the ward. While it was not as many as I had anticipated, it did represent about a 30% growth in membership with most of those being members who attended regularly. This was exciting and refreshing, but I was also concerned that we would have a repeat to
some of the resistance that took place in 2008. We had two factors working in our favor that we did not have in 2008. First, the culture and reputation of the ward was different now. Second, we would be gaining members from Ranger and this would be the second time Ranger congregation members had come in as a result of a boundary realignment and there was not as strong of feelings about identity of Fossil Lake vs. Ranger. Despite there being potentially less resistance, the ward council determined we should have a social activity on the Monday following the announcement of the boundary changes. At this activity we would have dinner and provide an opportunity for fellowship. As the day of this activity approached, my introverted self was coming out. I remember just not wanting to be there. It wasn't that I was burned out or had other things to do, I just wasn't feeling like being around a lot of new people that day. Yet, over the years I had learned that a leader sometimes needs to step up, even on the days when they are not feeling like they can. Further, while there were things I could do as bishop to delegate some of the workload, I knew it was important for the bishop to be there to help set the tone and to address the newly formed congregation. As I pulled into the parking lot, I took a deep breath and reminded myself what I was there for and what the purpose of that activity was. As I observed the members of the two wards (now one ward) coming together I likened it to a proud parent watching all of the children come together in a new blended family. The boundary change also coincided with one of my counselors moving out of the area. The timing of that move necessitated a new counselor be called and one of the members moving in as part of this boundary realignment would now be serving as a counselor. I had hoped this would further solidify the wards and that his perspective of those members would further help us with the integration.
Despite the ease of acceptance of this boundary change compared to 2008, those who had been brought over were now part of a ward with a different culture and dynamic. Our ward was stronger, but we still needed to integrate them into the culture and help them see the need to do things differently because the ward was different than where they had come from. There was some resistance to the new members embracing some of the processes we had in place pertaining to missionary work and fellowshipping of members who were not coming to church. The Ranger ward where they had come in from was achieving about 65% activity rate (members on the records who were attending) whereas we were hovering around 35%. Even with the boundary change, the attendance as a percent of members did not change much. Over the past few years we had implemented programs for members to assist in the efforts to reach out to those who were not attending worship services often. These types of activities were new to the people who had just come in. I am not suggesting they were rebellious to the idea. Rather, it was new to their thinking and our leaders (some of which had integrated from the Ranger ward) needed to change their way of thinking. This created gaps in alignment to our vision but I can not say it slowed down our growth. We had growth as a result of them being there. This change took place in September of 2015 and I was released as bishop in May 2016. I am proud of what we accomplished as a ward council during those eight months, but I admit to wishing that more could have been done. I do, however, recognize that change of this magnitude takes time and will discuss my observations on where we are today as ward in a later section.
**That 5%**

When my father-in-law told me that I would love 95% of the work I did as bishop but be less enthusiastic about the remaining 5%, I was not aware of what he could be referring to. Upon reflection, I believe I had my own 5%. Before going further with this section, I remind the reader about the editorial control I have over my story. I did not need IRB Living Subjects approval to conduct this research on myself but in the spirit of “cause no harm” I am exercising editorial control over the content of this section and have changed names, dates, and facts to protect identities. Despite those editorial changes, the general principles behind that pesky 5% remain unchanged.

Looking back my 5% were things that distracted from the mission I was trying to accomplish and/or things where I felt I lacked direction or alignment with church policies and procedures. With that being said, ignoring these things, being dismissive, handing it off to others, or otherwise pushing back from it would put up barriers among the members affected. I needed to address these things. In most instances, I did not shoulder this burden alone. There were other members of the ward council and bishopric I could share things with and I had the stake president as a resource as well. In some instances, other leaders would question whether it was my responsibility to get involved or why I was concerning myself and the ward with a particular issue. I usually held my ground in defense of my involvement with the matter.

Some of these issues could be viewed as petty or simple disagreements between members that I should not need to get involved in. As I reflect on this more, I see where I may have been too hands-on in some matters that I could have let play out on their own. Anything that seemed to be going against the culture of unity and acceptance I wanted in
the ward propelled me into getting involved. There were also things that I alone needed to address and could not hand off to others.

The heaviest of that 5% came when there were suspicions of abuse reported to me. The church's legal hotline was established to give bishops and stake presidents a place to call when they were facing issues that had legal implications. One particular case I had to deal with was not a direct accusation or confession, but rather a suspicion of abuse reported to me from someone else. I had heard through other channels that people who learn of abuse are legally bound to report it within a specified time period. I did not know if clergy were exempt from this or where my boundaries were, but I made a call to the legal hotline and reported the incident. A few days later I received a call from President Woodward asking about that incident. This matter was something I had needed to report to the stake president and I neglected to do so.

Another instance of child abuse was more obvious as Child Protective Services had already gotten involved. In this instance, family members had reached out to me with accusations of who they believed was responsible. Their stories were, at times, suspicious and conflicting. I sometimes felt caught in the middle of finger pointing among members of a family and felt that I was each person’s sounding board as to their side of the story. When I would receive a call from one of these individuals or when I would see one of them were on the schedule for appointments, I would start to feel some of what my father-in-law may have been referring to. I had, however, made a commitment to work with any member who sincerely reached out to me and to not turn anyone away. This was part of the process I felt needed to be done to help establish the culture I was looking to achieve.
While I believe this guiding principle had merit it was also an area that may have hurt in some instances with respect to the overall objectives.

Instances of church leaders ignoring or turning away from accusations of abuse have become common not only in the LDS church but within other religions as well. Additionally the definition of sexual assault and abuse as I had understood it was not correct and I may have missed a few potentially reportable instances due to lack of understanding of the parameters defining sexual abuse and assault. Any neglect could have been damaging to not only the victim but also to me and the church.

One of my earliest lessons as to what constitutes assault was applied to an incident in the ward where someone had accused another of acting inappropriately toward them. At the same time, others indicated it was a harmless mistake. While this may be the claim, there was still the notion of intent, and this was something I felt I needed to judge in this incident I mentioned. I gathered the facts and worked with more experienced leaders in the stake. I contacted the church legal team who spoke to all parties involved. The matter was handled as it needed to be and according to church and state policies and laws. It was determined that the incident would not need to be investigated further. There was, however, another issue in play. Rumors as to what happened were escalating and I needed to show sensitivity to both sides. Those accusing were observers or third parties who heard through others what had happened. Nevertheless, there were accusations and rumors. Some felt uncomfortable being around the individual. Pressure was being placed on me to make a change so that this individual would not be around children and youth. It
should be noted that the individual with whom the contact was made, never felt the contact was intentional or sexual in any way.

Following my release as bishop, I received a call from the church legal team asking me about an incident that occurred when I was bishop. Someone had recently accused another of sexual assault, and it happened during the time that I was bishop. As part of this phone call with the legal department, I was asked whether or not I knew of the incident. I related the facts as they were told to me. As I related what I remembered my heart sank as I wondered if I may have missed a clue that an assault had taken place. The accuser never admitted this as part of my conversations with them but I wondered if I could have done something had I picked up on a couple of clues which may have been a little more obvious. I wondered if I could have done more and what I would have done different if I had a better understanding of what constitutes sexual assault.

There was also an incident when a ward member accused me of having improper relations with a female in the ward. As bishop, I would meet with many people, male and female. The policy in the handbook states that with meeting with females, there should be another male outside the door. For meetings held during regular church activities on Sunday or youth nights, this was a relatively easy thing to do. People were always around and walking past the door. When meeting outside of these hours, the secretary or counselor would sit outside of the office. They were to knock on the door occasionally and check in. I also had a policy which I followed to sit behind the desk (rather than pulling up a chair next to the individual) when talking to females. Each of these was in place as safeguards against false accusations and to protect both myself and the female I was speaking to behind closed doors.
Despite these safeguards, there was one member who had become concerned that I was meeting too often with a particular female in the ward. The member shared the concern with another who immediately told me about it. Knowing what such an accusation could mean to the trust I had established with the ward, I reached out to the stake president who reached out to this member, got the facts, and then told him to, "knock it off". He added that they had no idea why a bishop would meet with members of their congregation. At one point in this conversation, Camden stated that he did not see how I could recover from this. It was his suggestion that I go to the stake president. Following the meeting with the stake president, I met with the accusing member to get their perspective. It was an opportunity for them to share some observations about me and the way I was leading. He suggested that he felt I only took advice from a few members and ignored the advice of others. This was not my intent but I was going to stand by the other leaders and respect what they felt their organization needed. This rumor went away before gaining any traction.

I had also made it a point to follow the policy indicated in the church handbook to avoid youth campouts and hiking on Sunday (part of the church emphasis on honoring the Sabbath as a holy day). While this policy had been in the handbook for several years, we had not always followed it. The handbook also contains a statement that some wards may need to adapt based on their unique circumstances. I, as well as other leaders of youth, at times had felt that in order to execute the Boy Scouts of America program that we would need to adapt. I felt at times we did so with disregard to other alternatives which would have allowed us to not only administer the scouting program but also be observant to the Sabbath day. In the past, I had allowed myself to be talked
out of my tightly held belief that we needed to follow the church policy on Sabbath activities. Some of the leaders who had come in from the other ward, as well as some of our original leaders, presented their case as to why we should once again make the exception. I caved in and allowed it to happen. The pressure I felt and the pulling of both parties with opposing points of view was also one of my “5% moments.”

While I strived to show love, patience, and compassion for everyone in the congregation, some of those 5% things came during my last six months of service. Employment and other family pressures were weighing me down. Things I used to have high patience for were now difficult for me and at times did become my 5% where as the prior 4 ½ years they would not have been.

Somewhat Undoing What Maybe Should Not Have Been Done

In December of 2013, about 18 months after being released as a counselor in the bishopric, Camden was called to serve as my executive secretary. This opportunity opened up after the existing executive secretary moved out of the ward. I went through my usual process of writing down several names and prayerfully crossing them off one by one hoping that Camden’s name would remain. Even my counselors and the outgoing executive secretary mentioned that Camden should be the one called to fill that position. Their reasoning was based on their observation that I needed him to serve with me. There was a noticeable gap in my service as bishop with Camden not being there with me. Simply put, Camden knew how to point me in the right direction and was aligned with what I was trying to accomplish. Perhaps one of the reasons why he made my leadership better is because the vision I was seeking to carry out was not my vision but rather our
shared vision that we had created through years of service and ongoing conversations. He would remain with me until my service as bishop ended.

The Management and Mismanagement of Finances

I loved working with the people as bishop. Whether it was other ward and stake leaders or the membership base as a whole. Being with the people was the highlight of my service. Because it takes money to run a church and because money is sometimes needed to help people in need, I had full responsibility for the finances of the ward. The budgets within the LDS church are very unique. It is not up to each individual unit to raise their own funds or support themselves. Rather, members of the church pay tithing as well as donate to a humanitarian fund referred to as fast offerings. All of this money is sent to church headquarters in Salt Lake to be distributed and used by individual wards all around the world. There is, however, a set dollar amount that is sent to the wards for the operating budget based on attendance at sacrament and other meetings. When I was bishop the allocations were about $12 for the average attendance at sacrament, young men’s, young women’s, and Sunday school and about $6 for each child attending primary. Those total funds were sent on a quarterly basis, but they were not necessarily distributed back the same way they were allocated. For example, there could be 50 kids attending primary across each of the four quarters, but the primary budget the bishop allocated was not necessarily equal to the allocation. Distribution of the funds to the areas in the ward was at my discretion. When I began my service as bishop we had a deficit in the budget. I do not know how long this deficit had existed or if the prior bishop had inherited it. I was, however, taught by Bishop Roy that we needed to be careful but also needed to do what we needed to help the ward run. If we went over, the church would
make up the difference. About 2 years into my service as bishop, I received a call from the stake president informing me that the church finance department in Salt Lake was asking for our plan to pull the ward out of debt. This was the first time I had known about the need to balance the budget. The church teaches its members to be frugal and wise steward over finances so this should not have come as a surprise to me. At the same time, I knew that we needed to have activities and supplies and figured if we were being careful that we would be allocated additional funds. I put together a plan which consisted of giving back a portion of the funds.

Overall the budget for each organization within the ward was a topic that sometimes created tense moments. Each organization had its needs and wanted a claim on what they felt was their portion of the allocated budget based on attendance in their organization. While the budget was allocated according to attendance in a few of the organizations, it needed to cover the entire ward. One of my biggest regrets as bishop is the way in which I mismanaged the finances.

The church has what is referred to commonly as the Fast Offerings. Each member are encouraged to fast for 2 meals and then give a generous “fast offering” to the church. There is no mandate on the amount of this fast offering, although it is suggested that it be the cost of at least the two meals that were skipped. As bishop I was able to have knowledge of the amount that members donated. Much like the widow’s mite in the scriptures (Luke 21:1-4), it was not the actual dollar amount that stood out to me but rather the amount as a proportion of what I knew about the family's financial situation. While these were generated at a ward level, there was no policy that I was aware of which dictated that a ward could only spend what they bought in. The Fossil Lake Fifth
Ward was mostly middle class, although there were some families which would be considered on the lower end of the upper-class scale. Most of the families were financially self-sufficient, but there were times when members fell on hard times and it was my responsibility to determine how much financial assistance they should receive and for how long. Unlike operating budgets, I was not bound to spend only what we brought in. Some of the wards in the stake rarely used their fast offering budget while others use it often. My approach was to understand the family’s situation, determine if they had a plan to become self-sufficient, and then help accordingly. Generally, I would authorize the funds one time and then agree to reassess the next month. I had learned through counseling with other members that financial hardships also impact a person’s spiritual commitment and ability. Thus, I felt it important to reduce that burden by helping to sustain life regardless of the expense. As a general rule, I would authorize assistance for the basic needs of food, shelter, automobile, and utilities. The rule of thumb was “support life not lifestyle.”

**Uphold the Policies, Even When I Do Not Agree or Understand**

One of the responsibilities I had as bishop was to ensure the doctrine was taught correctly and the church policies were followed properly. I did not observe many instances where incorrect doctrine was taught, at least not intentionally. Adherence to church policy was, however, an area which created some resistance. Before continuing the narrative on this topic I will provide a brief explanation of the differences between policy and doctrine (Sweat, 2019). Doctrine are those beliefs that will not change such as the LDS church belief in a Godhead rather a Holy Trinity or the necessity of baptism. There are also doctrines that are more obscure in their interpretation but, due to church
cultural influences, have been passed down as doctrine. The Word of Wisdom is one such point of doctrine. This doctrine is referred to as the church’s code of health and states that members should avoid alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, and harmful drugs. Some have associated abstinence from coffee and tea to also include caffeine (a key ingredient in coffee and tea). Church handbooks and scripture does not mention caffeine specifically and yet some embrace it as doctrine. If someone were to bring a caffeinated beverage to a church activity there would usually be someone who would speak out against it.

Policies are authoritative in nature in that they are generally handed down from the first presidency of the church. Some policies are absolute such as the church’s stance to be politically neutral or the policies regarding same sex marriage. There are also policies that are general rules or guidelines but certainly not anything that would call into question someone’s commitment to the gospel. These would be things such as Monday nights being reserved for family time in which no church activities are to be held. There are also practices within the LDS church that are sometimes confused as policy but are not in any official church handbook and are more culture norms or expectations that have been passed down or based on tradition. An example of this would be the need for those administering the sacrament (similar to communion) to wear a white shirt. There were also others who associated events that occurred at Brigham Young University, a church-owned university, as being part of the church. I have known of instances where members would reach for connections that did not exist by saying something like, “the church may not mention caffeine specifically in the Word of Wisdom but they don’t serve it on the campus of BYU” or “you have never seen the prophet wear anything but a white shirt and
tie when conducting church business, so therefore bishops and stake presidents should do the same”.

Some policies became points of contention among some members of the ward. For example, when someone would administer the Sacrament in something other than a white shirt or when a member of the church leadership would contact someone on Monday nights. Discontent with adherence to these policies would typically get back to me, either from the offended member directly or through my hearing about it through other sources. These provided teaching moments as to what was real policy and what was not but they also created annoyances and dealing with them would sometimes take me away from my focus on what we were trying to achieve as a ward.

I did not always agree with some of the official church policies. During my time as bishop, I had gained a perspective on same-gender attraction and same-sex marriage that I may not have otherwise gained. I found that my views on these topics leaning more towards wanting to be supportive rather than resist. There was an individual who had come to me to address an inner struggle with same-gender attraction. Despite being in a heterosexual marriage relationship, this individual found that they were more attracted to those of the same gender than to their own spouse. Such an issue had never crossed my mind and yet I found myself sitting across from someone having to reconcile how they felt with how the church felt about the topic. Likewise, when the church introduced a policy stating the children of same-sex couples would not be able to be baptized into the church, I had a member of the ward come to me with some deep concerns about how that would impact them and their family. I did not fully embrace this policy and yet I was expected as bishop to support it. While I never fully reconciled my
conflicting feelings on this topic, I did come to realize that it was possible to support 
something even if one does not fully embrace it.

**Back at the Empty Parking Lot**

Over time I had grown weary and a little embarrassed at all the bishopric changes 
that I had made and was determined to not make any more. However, around April of 
2016 one of my counselors informed me that he was going to be moving out of the area. 
It would be time, once again, to call a new counselor. I had an individual in mind, but he 
was currently serving in a position at the stake level and would need to do a little more 
convincing to the stake president to have him come into the bishopric. I had lined up my 
case and was ready to make my argument. I would make the case that this man connects 
well with youth, had come in from the Ranger ward, and that he may be a good candidate 
to replace me as bishop. There are not succession plans within the leadership of the LDS 
church but in my effort to leave the ward better than I found it I wanted to have a pool of 
trained and qualified candidates for the stake president to consider. Up until this point, I 
was never denied a request for personnel from the stake, but the response I received at 
this time from President Woodward was different. He did not say yes or no. He simply 
said, “Bishop, why don’t you sit tight and let’s visit. I will be in touch.” Saying I knew at 
that point that I knew a release was imminent would be misrepresenting the very thing I 
had relied on several times during my service as a bishop - a thought, impression, or 
feeling that a change was needed. This time the thought, impression, and feeling was 
directed at me. As much as I did not want to admit it, I knew my time to be released was 
soon. While not official church policy, it was a general practice that bishops serve about 
five years. However, many of the bishops who had started their service before me were
still serving and I found myself trying to convince myself that this stake president was different and wanted his bishops to serve longer than five years. It also crossed my mind that perhaps I was doing something wrong and I was being fired (or the equivalent to it when it comes to volunteer service in the church). A couple days after the reply from president Woodward, I received a phone call from his executive secretary inviting my wife and I to meet with President Woodward the next day, a Saturday. We both felt strongly that we knew what it was about. As bishop, I was always kept in the loop when a member of my ward was going to receive a calling to serve in the stake. If the meeting was for my wife to be asked to serve in a stake capacity, I would surely have known about it.

I awoke that Saturday morning a little earlier than I would normally wake up on a Saturday morning. My traditional scripture study took a different meaning. I read a verse in the Book of Mormon. “...We see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; Now this is my joy, and my great thanksgiving; yea, and I will give thanks unto my God forever.” (The Book of Mormon, Alma 26:37). This was the fitting scripture to end my service with. After reading, and with tears in my eyes, I got dressed in my Sunday best, as is tradition when meeting with a member of the stake presidency. We drove into the same empty parking lot, parked in the same spot, went in the same door, and were escorted into the same office as we had done five years prior. This conversation was much different than the one that took place back then. President Woodward noticed the tears in our eyes and asked, “Why the tears?” I replied, “I am pretty sure we are meeting with you so you can extend a release to me as bishop. This is a hard thing for us.” He quickly acknowledged that was the purpose of the meeting,
thanked us for our service, and recognized the diligent work I had done in serving in what he referred to as, “one of the most difficult wards to serve as bishop.” The latter part of his statement brought me great satisfaction. It was a tough ward to serve in, but I felt we had done great things. I did not know if others truly understood the challenges we faced.

We talked a little longer about what the experience had been like and he informed me the change would take place that next day. He indicated who the new bishop would be and suggested that I reach out to him before the meeting the next day to arrange a time to fill him in on, “whatever I felt a new bishop needed to know.”

**My Last Day as Bishop**

Prior to coming to church on my last day as bishop, I informed the bishopric that we would cancel the bishopric and ward council meetings, but asked if they could meet about 30 minutes before the start of our Sacrament meeting. Camden and Jim were the first to arrive and I made a point to have them come into the office alone with me. I told them I would be released, thanked them for their service, and expressed my love to them. Shortly after that brief moment with them, the other members of the bishopric arrived. I informed them of the imminent change and we joked briefly about how we had about 15 minutes to completely turn the ward upside down and make wholesale changes just to shake things up for the new bishop. We were not serious but in an effort to keep things light that is what we talked about. Soon our time together came to an end. We took our usual seats inside the chapel and I began the meeting. After a few brief announcements I turned the meeting over to President Woodward who then announced the change to the congregation, just as he had done five years prior.
I spoke to the congregation one final time as their bishop. In my remarks I circled back to what I said when I began my service; it does not matter how we serve only where we serve and that we need to leave the ward in a better place than we found it. I expressed my confidence in the newly called bishop to also leave the ward in a better place than when he found it. Coming into this calling my goal was to bring about a positive change in the lives of the members of the congregation and in the community where we lived. God will be the final judge of how well I did.

As the church services ended that day, my wife and daughters left to go out of town. My parents took my sons home. I could have driven them home, but I wanted one more drive from the church to my house, alone, as I had done many times over the past five years. During that drive home I reflected on my time as bishop. I thanked God for the opportunity and wondered if I had done enough... back when I was bishop.

This concludes my narrative about a five-year period of growth, development, and change. It is my hope that these experiences will be of benefit to others both in and out of the LDS church when it comes to understanding leadership development and self-leadership.

**Summary**

This narrative was an in-depth, highly personal account of my service as bishop spanning a period of five years. Not a lot of research has been done studying the leadership within the LDS church at the local congregation level. Autoethnography was chosen due to the inward-looking nature of the method. Looking inward within the context of one assignment, regardless of how large it is, provides a unique perspective into the heart and mind of a leader. Further, because autoethnography takes the reader on
a journey with the researcher, it allows the reader to view similar events in their world. One does not need to have served as a bishop or even be a member of the LDS church to benefit from reading the self-reflection of another leader.

This section revisits DAC and L-A-P. The importance of culture was an “ah-ha” that emerged from the research. Such unexpected moments have been commonplace throughout my career conducting consumer research, but when they happen to me, with my own data on my own narrative, it is all the more gratifying.

The idea of leaders working together to create a culture change within the ward did not occur to me as a potential theme prior to beginning this journey. In my mind the narrative would talk about some of the areas that are core responsibilities of the bishop such as finances, working with the youth, and counseling efforts. While these were all touched on in the narrative, I found they also impacted other leaders and played a role in one of our overarching purposes of changing the culture of the ward. The more I asked myself, “what happened here” the more I understood the why behind it and the impact it had on other decisions. Some of the deeper challenges and trials as bishop emerged. I came to a richer understanding of the importance of self-leadership and realized I could probably write a second narrative focusing only on this topic.

When I Did See (Or Not See) DAC Within My Service As Bishop?

Drath et al. (2008) introduced DAC after studying several widely accepted ontologies of leadership. They argued for a more integrative approach that went beyond how leaders and followers worked together to achieve their goals. To truly see leadership emerge, they argued, it would be necessary to study three outcomes of leadership: (1) direction which is agreement in the collective goals and mission of the organization, (2)
alignment which is the dissemination of knowledge throughout the leadership structure, (3) commitment which is the willingness of the leadership structure to work together for the collective interest of the organization and not necessarily their own self-interest. It is a willingness of individual members to subsume their own efforts and benefits within the collective effort. The outcome of this produces commitment and is displayed as members allow others to make demands on their time and energy.

The collective goal and mission of the LDS church is to bring people to a closer relationship with Jesus Christ and to fulfill God’s purpose to have all His children live with him in heaven after this life. This grand mission cannot be ignored when studying the leadership within the LDS church (or within any religious setting). However, such a grand and time expansive mission is too broad to focus on in this research. Instead, I chose to focus the research on the collective goal and mission to bring greater unity within the Fossil Lake Fifth ward and to change the perception and culture of the ward.

While I saw pockets of this during my time as bishop, to truly understand the outcome it is necessary to look at how well I did in 2016 when I was released as bishop. The greatest evidence I have of this occurring was when the Fossil Lake Fifth ward gained new members in September of 2015 and we held a ward social the next day. The attendance of the current ward membership at that social event and their willingness to fellowship with the new families who had come in was evidence that commitment had emerged. In addition, the willingness of the new members to attend and break out of their own social circle and mingle with their new ward members was also evidence that they were responding to our effort to reach out. Following the integration of the wards, however, DAC was less evident. Despite being well on their way to being socially
integrated, some of the new adult members were not quite ready to embrace change and a new way of working to achieve a goal. The youth seemed more willing, but there was still some lack of commitment – although they were more socially integrated than the adults. I credit two factors for the youth’s increased social integration. First, they were joining with other youth who had been starving for a larger peer group. Second, the young men’s president had been with the other group in the same capacity and the young women’s president was gifted at bringing people together (recall that is why I wanted her in that position).

For much of the time leading up to the boundary change, I was focused on growth for the purpose of gaining more people to help us find and bring back some of the members of the congregation who had stopped fellowshipping with us. I also wanted to remove some of the burden of the work from the core group of members who shouldered the bulk of the work load. When new people came in, we had a sufficient number of people that we could accomplish this aim. To some it may have seemed like we had accomplished our mission. In reality, the next step was to change the newly integrated members to a new way of thinking. This was an area where I struggled as a leader. My responsibility was to work with the leadership team using Lewin’s (1890-1947) three-staged approach to changing behavior as discussed by Weick and Quinn (1999). Members had become entrenched in their own way of thinking and needed to be motivated to change and then asked to go through gradual changes before solidifying them to a new way. Further, working with those new members to understand other approaches to church leadership would have increased the likelihood of a solid direction in the trilogy leg of DAC.
While the culmination of my service as bishop may be the most concrete point to examine direction, there were other instances throughout my service as bishop where DAC was realized more fully. I saw evidence of it to the collective goals with the first bishopric members I served with; Camden, Jim, and Ian. This set the tone for other leaders to follow and I saw this particularly in the early years with the ward council. New members of the ward council quickly assimilated into the leadership team and were aligned in our vision and purpose. I have pondered what was different in the direction once Ron and Toby came in. Some of the misalignment came from the fallacy in my thinking that if I set the tone for the ward others would follow. It was as if I thought as long as I was consistent in my leadership vision by word and by example, people would just “plug and play” and the work would go on. Wood (2005) describes the fallacy of leadership as being the idea that anyone who is a great person or who as great personality traits can be a great leader. He goes on to say that the some people have the false notion that people can just change their style to suit the situation with no real detriment to the organization. The false notion that the organization would still function at a high level because whoever is brought in would adapt is a damning myth of leadership. I fell for this myth.

I have played back in mind the thought and prayer that led to each change in the bishopric, especially the first one with Camden and Jim. I like to think I acted according to the direction the Holy Spirit moved me to go in. Maybe God wanted me to learn from my mistake, maybe it wasn’t a mistake, or maybe I misinterpreted the impression. Regardless of the explanation, I saw first hand that changes in leadership necessitate another opportunity to get agreement on the collective goals and mission of the
organization, another opportunity to disseminate knowledge throughout the newly formed leadership structure, and challenges that come from varying levels of willingness to work together for the good of the ward. In a ward that was, by nature, relatively transient and fluid in changes to other callings – both in and out of leadership – some stability when stability was present may have made a difference.

Earlier in the narrative I alluded to the “sound of one mind thinking” as discussed by Wells (2011). This sound also created a barrier to DAC and my own emergence as a leader. Wells describes this sound as follows: “The skill of thinking together is crucial for the strategic success of any organization… Strategic thinking must invariably lead us to a decision we have the commitment to follow. As we celebrate the power of the individual human mind, we must also remember how hard it is to keep ourselves honest. Sometimes the sound of one mind thinking is the self-fulfilling prophecy we experience when we bow before the alter of our own prejudices, paradigms, and preconceived notions. We need someone else to jostle us awake. We need others to keep us on track and so we invented meetings” (p. 23).

Wells’ comments hit home to me. I think of the decisions I made in isolation of others. It was this way from the beginning in choosing counselors. I got that right, but what about when Camden and Jim were replaced, did I get that right? I wonder at times what the outcome would have been had I discussed it more openly in our bishopric meeting. I wonder if the solution to the challenge we were facing with the young men’s organization at the time Jim was put in that role would have been resolved differently had we discussed in the ward council meeting. These meetings are designed to reduce the impact around the sound of one mind thinking. Occasionally the “jostling awake” I
experienced with some of the decisions I made as bishop came after a decision had been made and the change took place. For example, when I arrived home on the Sunday that Camden and Jim were released my wife very respectfully shared with me her thoughts on why the change should not have taken place. Camden was not fully aligned with the idea of replacing Jim either and his comment of sticking with something that works still gives me reason to pause and think about that decision.

Recall that I hesitantly made changes to the young women’s and young men’s president. In both of these instances the person I felt needed to be there, the one who best fit the puzzle, was unable or unwilling to serve in that capacity. Holding off on the change or working in a more collaborative effort may have been more effective than the misdirection we experienced. That change also came as a result of one mind thinking and led to misdirection, misalignment, and lack of commitment.

*What Evidence Was There Of L-A-P Within My Service As Bishop?*

As a precursor to L-A-P, Raelin (2005) discussed the idea of a leaderful organization. This is the idea that leaders need to co-exist within an organization and make their own unique contribution to the growth of the organization. The outcome of a leaderful organization is fervent collaboration. In this leadership model, everyone shares in the experience of serving as a leader at the same time, even if they are “merely” leaders of self. Each individual is responsible for setting the mission, actualizing goals, sustaining commitment, and responding to change. Allen & Meyer (1990) stated that it is necessary for leaders to see that people are engaged and supportive of one another. Part of being supportive, they suggested, is for conflict to be brought out into the open and dealt with for the greater good. Pearce (1982) and Campbell (1992) suggest that a
mission is a stabilizing force within an organization and that, even though there may be changes in how things are done, the mission is the constant boundary in which organizations can operate.

This discussion about a leaderful organization and mission is a necessary segue into a reflection on how and when L-A-P emerged during my role as bishop. Contributing in their own unique way, collaborating with one another, and being responsible for setting their own mission aligns with the leadership model the LDS church follows with a leader over various organizations and reporting to, or being accountable to, the bishop. The one stabilizing factor through this was the mission or purpose we had to bring about a change in the culture of the ward, and when I saw leadership emerge among the individuals, the culture shift went to another level.

When discussing L-A-P, Raelin (2016) defines practice as, “a coordinated effort among participants who choose their own rules” (p. 2). There are seven activities that are revealed in L-A-P. (1) Scanning for resources that can help to make sense of what is going on, (2) Signaling or getting the attention of others through building on existing elements within the organization, (3) Weaving networks across individuals to create shared meanings, (4) Stabilizing by offering feedback on activities that lead to changes in behavior, (5) Inviting others who may have held back to come forward with their own ideas, (6) Unleashing a culture of openness where everyone can feel to express their own thoughts on what is happening within the organization, (7) Reflecting on experiences to learn how to meet the needs of the organization.

The council model the LDS church espouses lends itself to these activities, which, according to Raelin and others, should create the emergence of leadership. Leadership
emerged with the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward when these council meetings were operating in a spirit of openness and collaboration and when the vision of the organization was clear. There were a few challenges I mentioned in the narrative that disrupted this development; the young women’s president whose counselors felt she did not listen, the young men’s president who did not want to do the work anymore, and the bishopric counselors who did not quite align to the vision. On the other side of that, I saw leadership emerge when the presidencies and this bishopric worked together and when the culture of the ward fostered openness.

Re-visiting the specific themes associated with this framework will provide a basis for understanding how the data was analyzed and how the narrative is structured.

1. My preparation for service as bishop of the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward.

When I reflected on my preparation for service as bishop of the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward I recounted many years of leadership positions dating back to my youth. An assignment to serve as a leader did not necessarily give me leadership experience. Rather, it gave me experience serving in a leadership function. Simply having the position did not mean I expanded my leadership ability and since prior leadership experience is not a prerequisite for service as bishop I cannot even trace that experience back to the reason I was given that assignment. Nevertheless, if I go back to my first leadership assignment in the LDS church at the age of 13 years old and leadership assignments for close to 25 years prior to my call to serve at the age of 38, I have had the opportunity to observe first-hand leadership experiences of dozens of other leaders. As I reflected on what I learned from other leadership assignments it is as if I was reviewing the narratives of dozens of leaders within the LDS church. In this regard, my service as bishop was impacted by
what I saw and heard others do. I acted in accordance with what Wells (2011) refers to as perceiving. I had viewed the work through the paradigm of a shared experience. When I saw gaps in leadership development, either in myself or in others, I followed the behavioral patterns that I saw others in the church do on a regular basis. I am not referring to the standardized handbook mandated behaviors. The gaps came when I mimicked the behavioral patterns of others which either did not align with the needs and culture of the Fossil Lake Fifth ward or with the vision we had.

2. What challenges I faced in my service as bishop and my response to those challenges

Some of the challenges I faced stemmed from my lack of experience or from a lack of direction on how to handle a situation. Some of them came from personal challenges in my life that stretched my self-leadership ability. There were demands on my time and my emotional energy.

Bullough and Baughman (1997) pointed out that when discussing the acceptance of change in a new social setting “we also engage in accommodation and create new beliefs, new ways of being in the world in response to new experience. Sometimes these changes are more or less forced upon us; at other times they are openly sought” (p. 75). The nature of the LDS church is such that change in leadership is inevitable. In addition, there was the challenge of needing to change the culture and perception of the ward.

3. My efforts to change the culture and perception of the Fossil Lake Fifth Ward

While I was aware there was a need to change the perception of the ward, the extent to which this would need to occur became more evident as my time as bishop went on and as leaders became more aligned with the vision of the ward. According to Wells (2011) the culture of each organization is the foundation of its core values which create
predictability in the way people act and are a critical component of the organization’s strategic ability to move into the future.

Many of the challenges I faced as bishop can be traced back to the culture I inherited or the cultural shift that was taking place. Because vision is a by-product of individual conversations (Wheatley, 1994), I can conclude that the changes to leadership personnel, particularly the loss of Camden and the frequent turnover hindered our ability to have ongoing conversations which in turn created gaps in direction and alignment.

4. My role in the development leaders within the congregation

Leadership development should focus on who leaders need to be and emphasize the need for values, qualities, and styles that make-up what some people would consider “good leaders” (Fitzsimmons, et al, 2016). Within the LDS church there is no formal leader development training such as seminars, classes, etc. Individuals have the opportunity to become leaders as they go along in their assignments. During my time as bishop of the Fossil Lake Fifth ward, I witnessed individuals improving their leadership abilities and becoming leaders. Shortly after Ron, one of my counselors who served in the bishopric with me, moved from the ward, his new bishop called me to get my opinion of a potential leadership calling for Ron. I shared my perspective and recommendation that he would be a good candidate for that position. As we ended the call, he expressed that he was happy to have a trained leader in his ward, as that was an area they had been lacking. Fitzsimmons, et al (2016) advocated for leadership emerging in an organization and not necessarily within an individual. This is the essence of L-A-P: how leadership is produced, goals are accomplished, and practices undertaken. Changing the culture of the Fossil Lake Fifth ward required those in the ward to have a leader mindset. As they were
aligned to the vision of the ward, I saw this mindset emerge.
CHAPTER FIVE: PROPOSED SOLUTION AND IMPLICATIONS

As I recorded my story while writing it and then recorded it a second time through reading it, I exclaimed, “it worked!” Why did it work? It worked because the method (autoethnography) that is used to understand what is happening should be able to explain a leadership principle (L-A-P) which, by its nature, is happening in the moment.

Initially autoethnography was chosen as the method because it was of interest to me as a researcher. Further, as someone who works with survey data all day as a market researcher, it helped that this method would provide a change to my daily routine. Admittedly, had a quantitative approach been the best way to study my leadership as bishop, I would have done it. Knowing what I now know and going through what I now went through, I am convinced that no other method could have uncovered the insights and ah-ha moments like autoethnography did. This journey has gone beyond just writing a narrative. It involved reading journal entries, emails, and other correspondence. This naturally led to self-reflection and provided a deeper understanding of my own leadership.

May of 2020 marked four years since I ended my service as bishop and nine years since I began. There have been many changes in the LDS church since that time. Some of the areas where I identified misalignment in direction from the top hierarchy of the church have been cleared up or are no longer relevant. A few examples of changes since my release as bishop:

• The church came out with extensive training on managing the finances of the ward. This was an area where I felt there was a gap in direction and alignment of church policy.
• Disciplinary councils have moved from being the responsibility of the bishop and are now the responsibility of the stake president. This puts a consistent voice throughout the stake and relieves some of the burdens from the bishop while freeing them to be more committed to the areas where they have the biggest responsibility.

• The leadership within the young men’s organization has been turned over to the bishopric. Some of my struggles with the young men’s program stemmed from conflicting visions and strategies for the program between myself and the youth leaders. At times during my service as bishop, I considered eliminating the young men’s presidency and putting that responsibility on the bishopric. The biggest barrier I saw to doing this was the uncertainty of whether it aligned with church policy.

• The church has given clearer direction around what constitutes assault and abuse and when a bishop should reach out to the legal department. They have also provided more training to bishops in this area.

Those are just a few of the areas I identified throughout the narrative as potential areas where there was some disconnect within the DAC framework. As I collected the data and wrote the narrative, I would at times get discouraged at the changes the church was making to provide greater alignment and direction to areas where I thought could be potential recommendations and action items coming out of this dissertation in practice. Recommendations based on autoethnography with a sample of one are not going to make for a compelling argument to the leadership of a worldwide church of 10,000,000 members anyway. However, the purpose of this study was to provide a framework by which to study where and how leadership emerges. Recommendations for change within
the church based on gaps or where leadership as practice emerged were never the intended outcome. This was about applying a framework to study leadership and to that end, the pieces fit together.

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 introduced the idea of social distancing, forced organizations to work remotely, and reduced face-to-face contact. This reality has led to new methods for research and development of leadership. Autoethnography, by its nature, epitomizes social distancing. This is an ideal for time for researchers and practitioners in the area of leadership development to consider ways to embrace this method.

**Aim Statement**

The aim of this study was to use leadership as a practice, which focuses less on individual and more on structural interpersonal relationships. Using L-A-P as the framework, the study explored the direction, alignment, and commitment of those involved in leadership functions within the LDS church. The study showed where leadership emerged or was hindered and any gaps that contributed to that. Autoethnography was a powerful method to study this because of the focus on self-reflection and narratives which naturally led to answers behind why something was happening.

**Proposed Solution(s)**

It is worth mentioning once again that there was never an expectation that this study would validate the need for specific changes around the training provided to new leaders (specifically bishops) within the LDS church. Therefore, the solutions proposed here revolve around the potential for autoethnography as a solution for understanding
leadership within individuals, leadership teams, cultures, and organizations. The DAC model (Drath et al., 2008) was developed as an alternative to the traditional leader, follower, shared goal model that is woven throughout much of the research around leadership. DAC is not the process, but, rather, the outcome. Direction is general agreement on the goals, aims, and mission of the organization; alignment is the coordination of the efforts to carry out the work; and commitment is a willingness of members to put off their own interests for the collective best interest of the group. It is really about shared leadership that comes as a result of group interaction (Cox et al., 2003).

To truly have leadership emerge there must be DAC. This model worked for studying leadership with the LDS church because the outcomes of leadership were not necessarily quantifiable in the way other organizations may measure growth (i.e. membership or revenue). Rather, successful leadership engagements display evidence of DAC.

The concepts of DAC within the framework of this narrative provide a lens for understanding what successful church leaders do to meet the shared goals of the congregation. It showed how the responsibility of shared leadership is to monitor the pockets of leadership and the outcomes. Mumford et al. (2000) viewed leadership in this capacity as an ongoing task of daily problem solving among the collective group. Regardless of the Aim or research question that was at the heart of this study, the underlying purpose was to put into practice the autoethnography methodology as a means of studying leadership. Raelin (2016) acknowledged the wide spread acceptance of ethnography as a way of conducting research to understand sociological and
anthropological phenomena within organizations. This is largely because of the importance of understanding culture within a leadership setting to more fully understand L-A-P. Autoethnography has been advocated by Raelin as “the” ethnographic approach to studying leadership because of the hyper-reflexive nature of the method. Boyle and Perry (2007) identified two elements within autoethnographic research, which lend itself to a deeper understanding of organizational life. First, the method has the ability to view the everyday, mundane parts of the organizational moments with a broader strategic lens. Second, with autoethnography the researcher can engage the reader to the point where emotions associated with deadlocks, roadblocks, and relationships are brought to life. Further, because autoethnography can get to the core of the emotional impact of leadership practice on what has been traditionally referred to as leaders and followers (Raelin, 2016).

Boyle and Parry (2007) argued that whether a study has a robust representative sample size (such as with a survey) or is a self-reflective autoethnography with a sample size of one, the way in which the findings are presented influences the impact of the research. They state, “While one paper may impact due to its cognitive nature, so too would another paper due to its emotional and evocative nature. We would suggest that the critical ‘n’ factor in much organizational research is the number of people who read the research, rather than the number of people who are the subjects of the research” (p. 188).

There are barriers to advancing autoethnography as a method for studying leadership (Boyle & Perry, 2007). Lee (1995), Rose (1990), as well as Kleinman and Copp (1993) have referred to autoethnography as a dangerous form of fieldwork due to
the personal and professional risk associated with such vulnerability. I found this to be true during my research as well. While there is not professional risk directly associated with a reflection on a previous role as a volunteer and unpaid clergy position, there were still times during my reading when I wondered if exposing my weaknesses as a leader may haunt me, not only professionally in the future but also personally in near term. These fears did cause me to pause and contemplate striking that weakness from the record or downplaying it in some way.

To overcome some of the inherent challenges of autoethnographic research, Kempster and Stewart (2013) have proposed a co-constructed form of autoethnography. With this approach the researcher (who is also the subject and the author of the narrative) allows a co-author, someone who has been close to the setting of the researcher, to also write his or her narrative. The two narratives are then sandwiched together to provide for richer insights and learning. In my narrative, there were many people who took part in the leadership function of the ward. Having them go through reflective techniques and the write their own narrative about their scope of service may have added another dimension to this research. Throughout the narrative I referenced my fellow leader, Camden, who was with me for most of time serving as bishop and whose impact was felt when he was out of the leadership circle. While he was consulted throughout this process as a gut-check, further research could include a co-created autoethnography which includes his perspective and potentially others who served with me.
Implications

In addition to conducting co-created autoethnographies as mentioned in the previous section, Raelin (2016) proposed the use of the Organizational Description Questionnaire (ODQ) as a way to test the transformational and transactional elements of organizational culture. Employing this mixed method approach would provide data around the cultural aspects of the narrative being written.

Boyle and Parry (2007) suggested that authethnographic research may be an ideal approach for younger researchers who are linked into the world of social inquiry and reflection via social media sites. Social media posts and comments provide a rich avenue for autoethnographic research and provide a myriad of data.

Tying this study to the LDS church specifically and to religious and other not-for-profit organizations in general suggests an opportunity for people whose roles are similar to mine as bishop to study their self-leadership as well as that of their organization. Some not-for-profit organizations, both religious and non-religious, may provide more comprehensive training to its new leaders than the LDS church does. Despite formal training, there are areas where these leaders will experience gaps in DAC, and where L-A-P is hindered. Autoethnography can uncover these areas and present opportunities for improvement.

In addition, in a church whose beginnings are rooted in self-reflection and whose leadership model is ripe for DAC and the development of leaders as they go, I would advocate for the church to provide more opportunities for reflective practices and the sharing of those findings among its bishops and other leaders. While I have already addressed the need for training to close some of the leadership gaps, it is worth noting
again the implication of Boyle and Parry (2007) that the power of autoethnography comes, not from the number of autoethnographies written, but by the number of people who read the one. As my narrative, and others like it, is circulated among church leaders it would create healthy dialogue to build from and to find similarities in the experiences.

In my world of market research, I can spend a few days cleaning, analyzing, and interpreting data and then write what it all means while tying it back to strategic implications. I do not want to minimize the research phase of the dissertation process. I know it would not have been as routine and ordinary as is the work I do on a daily basis. Still, I believe it would have been easier on my soul had I chosen another method to understand how and where leadership emerged within my service as bishop and if and when there were disconnects in DAC.

Gottfredson, et al. (2020) advocated for a shift in leadership development and research. While they are not calling for abandonment of the traditional leader-follower model, they are advocating for a change to the construct in which the model is studied. Quantitative methods will continue to have their place in leadership research and development, but qualitative methods such as autoethnography will be able to fill the contextual gap.

**Summary of the Dissertation in Practice**

The method, purpose, aim, and research questions associated with this study were tied back to the leadership structure of the LDS church with emphasis on my leadership as bishop from 2011-2016. An autoethnographic approach was selected because of the reflexive nature of the method and it was applicable due to the leadership structure of the church. Given that no previous leadership experience or formal training in a particular
discipline or subject area is required for service in the church and given that leaders and others who serve do not apply or otherwise campaign for a position, the LDS church provides a unique structure to study L-A-P and to identify DAC. It was believed that the research would find there is commitment among those who lead within the LDS church, but that gaps in direction and alignment sometimes caused a disconnect and provided a barrier to the emergence of L-A-P. This presumption was shown to be correct but also showed where leadership emerged or was hindered and the factors that contributed to that.

No amount of survey data and statistical data would have revealed L-A-P, DAC, and my own self-leadership than what came from this in-depth, self-reflection data collection process. Lowney’s words have proven true -- that a leader’s greatest tool is self-reflection (2003).

Raelin (2016) has advocated that autoethnography is a powerful method for studying L-A-P due to the focus on self-reflection and the narratives that naturally lead to answers behind why something is happening. To this end, another purpose of the research was to provide a springboard for a more in-depth study into opportunities for the LDS church to improve in training and leadership development and for the advancement of autoethnography to be used to study leadership.
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