**Empty Pews vs Empty Pulpits**

***Examining the Pipeline of Calling***

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**Abstract**

This paper (and the presentation that will accompany it) are the beginnings of the fruit my doctoral studies. I have been aiming to address the question, “Why are fewer people going to seminary and majoring in undergraduate ministry-related programs?” And the more significant question I am *really* asking is whether or not there are truly fewer people feeling called to go into ministry. (There are also side questions about why the average age of seminarians seems to have consistently risen, and whether this implies that God is not only calling fewer people into ministry but also is no longer calling younger people.) (And to be clear, I reject both ideas!)

Readers may notice that this paper feels slightly unfinished, and that is because, in many ways, it is. It is meant as an accompaniment for the breakout session I will lead at AYME’s 2024 conference. The session will be divided into two parts, the first being a presentation of why I feel this research is important, how it applies to members of the AYME, insights I have found so far, and what new questions I have been led to explore. The second part will be used for those attending to give feedback about where I should go from here, what elements they think need more attention, and even help to develop options for the research plan going forward. I have also included an appendix with suggestions I have already received, research plans for the coming months, and sections I intend to include in the final project.

The hope is to gather a group from diverse backgrounds that can learn from one another and open up new perspectives on this issue, and even offer what they are seeing in these areas of and how their denominations and faith traditions view the very process of calling.

**The Problem**

On a Sunday in late February 2023, a medium-sized Presbyterian church[[1]](#footnote-1) in the northeast US held its annual meeting. The church is somewhat historic and is very well respected in their Presbytery. At this year’s meeting, there was a contentious item on the docket about whether the church would offer their Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor pay raises. These were more than the usual “CODA” salary increases. It had been more than a few years since the pastoral staff got a raise, and the previous years were certainly not smooth, including political unrest and a global pandemic. Some members had been (loudly) complaining about the leadership. Recent changes in the Sunday services and in the staff were not universally liked. When the meeting came to that agenda item, one of the members, known for being upset with the changes, stood up to speak. Everyone was expecting to hear more complaints, but the church member instead spoke of how they had been talking with people who work for the denomination. They had heard the numbers of how many churches are looking to hire pastors and are unable to find decent candidates. They spoke about how many pastors had chosen to leave the ministry during the pandemic. They also spoke about the low number of people entering seminary lately. In short, the member was making the case that while they did not necessarily love everything about the Senior Pastor and the Associate, it would likely be far worse for the church if the pastors went to *another* church. (And according to her sources, other churches were definitely looking and willing to pay!)

Around that same time, a pastoral search committee for a larger (mainline denomination) church in the southwest was having its monthly meeting. They formed when their long-time pastor retired in 2020. They had created their church profile, aggressively searched and networked all over the country, discussed the qualities they wanted in their next pastor, spread the word, collected resumes, and done initial interviews. After the first round, their top pick turned down the offer in favor of an offer from another church. Their second choice was not approved by their denominational committee. Their third choice removed himself from consideration due to “personal issues.” They had started with energy and optimism, but the committee chair was now having to refocus the group and decide how they wanted to move forward. This church was a good size and in a very healthy place. Candidates should have been knocking on their door! Where were all the candidates?

Also in February 2023, the vestry of a large Episcopal church had a meeting with their Bishop. Months earlier, the church had voted to have their senior pastor step down. The Bishop explained he supported this decision, but there were some difficulties ahead. Staff from the diocesan office presented some surprising numbers: the denomination is losing a little over 400 priests per year (nationally), but only gaining 225.[[2]](#footnote-2) They also presented that the number of Episcopal churches currently engaged in a Rector[[3]](#footnote-3) search far exceeds the number of priests currently looking for a placement. Due to those realities, the diocese changed its rules/guidelines regarding the process of calling a new Rector[[4]](#footnote-4) to help streamline the process.

The Presbyterian church mentioned above voted in favor of giving their pastoral staff the proposed increases *partially because they did not want to have to go into a long and frustrating pastoral search*. The pastor search committee for a church in the southwest finally called a candidate, and their new pastor started on August 1, 2024, almost *three years later than they had originally hoped to fill the position*.[[5]](#footnote-5) The Episcopal church chose to call their Interim Priest-in-Charge as their new Rector because *they felt that he was a “good enough match” and did not feel comfortable “rolling the dice” to see who might apply*. These stories represent a massive shift in attitude and posture for the Church.

The church member who spoke up at the annual meeting seemed to have good sources. Seminaries have been reporting lower enrollment numbers for a few years now while simultaneously seeing the average age of a seminary student creeping upward. Even seminaries that are advertising extremely low tuition are not seeing a major bump in enrollment.[[6]](#footnote-6) Undergraduate programs for ministry seem to have been hit even harder.[[7]](#footnote-7)

When I was growing up in the church, we heard a lot about evangelism and making things “seeker-friendly.” For as long as I can remember, the modern church has been worrying about empty *pews*. But hearing more and more stories like the ones above, I am beginning to wonder if the far bigger concern for the average local church might be empty *pulpits.*

**Where Have All the Pastors Gone?**

Over the last few years I have heard many people ask what is essentially the same question: ***“Where have all the pastors gone?”*** While there has been some reporting of a “great resignation” in the world of ministry, there is some legitimate pushback on whether this is really the case or just pastors from the Boomer generation simply reaching retirement age.[[8]](#footnote-8) But Barna Research and seminary enrollment numbers are at least giving us three definite issues of which those of us in the Church need to take note.

First, those currently serving in vocational ministry are more likely than ever to consider leaving their jobs.[[9]](#footnote-9) In their Pastoral Burnout reports for 2021, 2022, and 2023, Barna asked if pastors had given “real, serious consideration to quitting being in full-time ministry with the last year.” In January 2021, 29% of the respondents said they had indeed given serious thought to leaving the ministry. However, in March 2022, that number jumped up to 42%. September 2023’s results showed some promise, with the number being back down to 33%. Barna also surveyed pastors about their job/ministry satisfaction levels. In 2015, 72% of those surveyed reported being “very satisfied” with their jobs. The number fell to 67% in 2020 and then all the way down to 52% in 2022. Like with almost all of the 2023 numbers, there was an improvement in this area in the latest study, showing 59% being “very satisfied,” but this is still 13 points away from the 2015 numbers and is a real cause for concern.[[10]](#footnote-10) I think it is evident that there is some sort of “post-COVID” bounce back with these numbers, but we cannot chalk the whole thing up to the pandemic. Times of stress show the cracks in our armor, and I look at these survey results and see some serious cracks.

The second issue, which is related to the first, is that those currently serving in vocational ministry are far less certain of their calling. In 2015, 66% of surveyed pastors felt confident in their calling. In 2020 and 2021, that torpedoed down to 35%! 2023 shows some promise with the results showing 51% of the respondents feeling confident in their calling. As mentioned above, there seems to be a “post-COVID bounce back,” but the number is still not at 2015 levels. Pastors are not as confident in their calling as they were in 2015.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The third issue is that of seminary enrollment,[[12]](#footnote-12) and this is the more significant marker of the issue that I am exploring in this paper. There are many interesting trends in the numbers presented by ATS,[[13]](#footnote-13) but I do not want to lose the point that the enrollment numbers – especially those for MDiv programs – have been consistently decreasing. [[14]](#footnote-14) At least two seminaries that I have always considered to be “mainstays” are effectively downsizing. [[15]](#footnote-15)

Ultimately, my question for this paper might be better stated as, “Where have all the *new* pastors gone?” In many seminaries, the areas of growth do not seem to be with younger students but with people over the age of 35. This is far from a new problem. In 2017, David Kinnaman of Barna Research pointed out that there were “more pastors over the age of 65 than under the age of 40.”[[16]](#footnote-16) There has also been some growth in programs that train lay leadership and give current pastors broader skills (such as degrees in pastoral counseling and church planting). However, this is still a cause for concern as the “growth areas” are seminaries essentially finding ways to gain “repeat customers” and are not creating new pastors.[[17]](#footnote-17)

In their book “Calling Out the Called,” Scott Pace and Shane Pruitt acknowledge that “the focus has shifted away from intentionally inviting believers to consider vocational ministry as a calling.”[[18]](#footnote-18) They even make reference to (more of an inference to) the idea of “cultivating a calling culture”[[19]](#footnote-19) but then only make a few suggestions of how churches and church leaders might move more in that direction. The book then goes on to be more of a helpful guide and encouragement to those who *have already* begun to discern a possible call into ministry. But It is interesting to me that the authors acknowledged that there seems to be an issue with the very pipeline of people (especially young people) sensing God calling them into ministry. I believe we need to focus far more attention on this apparent “point of failure.”

If there are fewer people in seminaries preparing to serve in vocational ministry, and if of the people in seminaries, there are fewer young people than what has historically been the norm, we, as the Church, are faced with two possibilities. The first is that God is calling fewer *people* (and especially fewer *young* people) into ministry at a time when the population of the country[[20]](#footnote-20) is larger than ever, and when we are seeing more and more people leave the faith. The other possibility, which seems far more likely to me, is that God *is* calling plenty of people into ministry, but there has been a massive failure in recognizing these people and their calling. (It could also be argued that, as part of this breakdown, we have failed to equip people to hear this calling themselves.)[[21]](#footnote-21)

If God is calling fewer people into ministry, then we need to make a lot of pivots very quickly. Many churches will need to either close or completely redefine what leadership looks like in their walls. Church members and attendees will need to rethink their understanding of what a “pastor” is, and what their job description would entail. Seminaries will need to shift their understanding of who it is they exist to educate. If I am speaking just from what I have witnessed, I see this already happening to a point. I mentioned above how seminaries have begun to shift their educational offerings, and some churches have already begun to rethink leadership models.[[22]](#footnote-22) And to be fair, not all of this change is bad.

But there is also the idea that maybe we (the Church) may be missing something on the idea of calling. Maybe we have muddied the waters a bit on what it even *means* to be called. Maybe we need to rethink the *concept* of being “called?” Or at least what the process looks like? In almost every denomination, the sense of call comes from the person. Is this the best practice? Do we even acknowledge that this is the case?

In most denominational systems, an individual informs their pastor/priest that they feel a sense of calling, *and then* the church community comes in to help discern that call. What if that were flipped? Dr. Tony Campolo made a similar suggestion in his essay “A New and Biblical Way to Extend a Call to Ministry,” saying that we are being far too *reactive* instead of *proactive* when it comes to ministerial calling.[[23]](#footnote-23) Additionally, Carey Nieuwhof argues that the way we tend to currently understand the process of calling relies far too heavily on the subjective experience. [[24]](#footnote-24)

But simply looking at our current landscape, one must ask the question of why things have changed so drastically. Is this just the natural consequence of the end of Christendom? Scott Pace and Shane Pruitt offer three obstacles that have kept some from sensing a call into ministry: (1) A drift away from public invitations, (2) a mischaracterization of vocational ministry, and (3) the neutralization of vocational ministry due to the emphasis on mobilizing every member to “live on mission.”[[25]](#footnote-25) I agree with these (at least to a degree), but I believe that there are at least two additional hurdles that need to be addressed: a lack of vocational imagination, and many pastors secretly[[26]](#footnote-26) disliking their jobs.

***Lack of Vocational Imagination[[27]](#footnote-27)***

We tend to dream in the direction of the examples that are in front of us. When I entered college over 25 years ago, the idea of majoring in business never even occurred to me. I honestly do not know if I was even aware that it was an *option.* My father was a teacher. My mother never went to college, and neither did any of my four grandparents. “Business” was not a “thing” the Hobbs family did (or even thought about). It was not in my “vocational imagination” whatsoever and so it was not even considered.

In the case of church leadership, young people are not thinking about vocational ministry. Teenagers are not looking at their Sr. Pastor and thinking, “Wow! I want to do *that* when I grow up!” (Obviously, we do not want people to equate “calling” with “wanting to do that when I grow up,” but this concept could easily be the *start* of a discernment process.) However, this step seems to rarely happen these days.

Obviously, a large part of this is that fewer people are attending churches on a weekly basis, but even for the people who *do* regularly attend, there is still this lack of vocational imagination. I would submit that at least part of the issue is the rise of age-based ministries in churches. If during the Sunday church service kids go to Children’s Church, and middle schoolers go to their own class/service (and sometimes high schoolers have their own space as well) then the pastor is never seen “in action.” If the pastor does not prioritize spending time with the next generation, then it is easy to understand why the next generation would not consider “growing up to be like them.” The idea would not even cross their minds.

***We Do Not Encourage That Which We Despise***

Even when a young person *does* have access to the Sr. Pastor, we need to remember the sobering statistic mentioned above about job satisfaction. Over 40% of pastors in the latest survey said they were less than “very satisfied” with their jobs. (And 40% was an encouraging *improvement* from the previous study!) When I recently asked a group of local pastors what careers they hoped their own children might go into, working in the church was surprisingly far down the list. (And some respondents did not put it on the list at all). Apparently, when Dietrich Bonhoeffer announced to his family that he wanted to become a Theologian, their reaction was not one of celebration. In fact, his brother and brother-in-law pulled him aside and tried to talk him out of it. They told him that it would be wrong for him to waste his talent and intellect on the Church. They told him the Church was “far too backward.” I wonder if we are basically in the same place today, subtly (and maybe even subconsciously) encouraging our best and brightest away from considering a calling to the ministry.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Another issue at play here is the changing definition of what it even *means* to be a pastor. Andy Root’s book “Pastor in a Secular Age”[[29]](#footnote-29) explains how, through the ages (from Augustine all the way to Rick Warren), the understanding of the role of “pastor” has shifted – at times quite significantly. So there is an understandable confusion of what a pastor’s job is in modern-day. In “Canoeing the Mountains,”[[30]](#footnote-30) Tod Bolsinger emphasizes the end of Christendom has already happen and expresses the need for modern pastors to be skilled in *adaptive leadership*[[31]](#footnote-31)if they want to be effective in ministry in the 21st century. In their book “A Church Called Tov,”[[32]](#footnote-32) McKnight and Barringer argue that the very way we understand leadership in churches has created a system in which the output[[33]](#footnote-33) seems to be leaders with incredibly unhealthy tendencies.

Root tells us that the role of the pastor has continually changed throughout history, especially in times of large cultural shifts. Bolsinger tells us that the large culture shift that we should be on the lookout for is actually *behind* us and Christendom is gone. Both of these combine to say that the role of the pastor as defined when you were young is no longer necessarily relevant. (Bolsinger might even say that if you have been in ministry for more than 25 years, the role of the pastor from *when you started as a pastor* is no longer necessarily relevant!) But then add McKnight and Barringer saying that the model of highly successful pastors that we have been basing our modern imaginations on over the last few decades might be deeply flawed,[[34]](#footnote-34) and you come to a simple but important conclusion: ***We do not have a solid definition of what it means to be a pastor (or at least a successful pastor) in modern Western society***.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Andy Root addresses this rather directly and speaks to how this uncertainty has led to an inner sense of discomfort that he calls *pastoral malaise.*[[36]](#footnote-36)In the end, we are faced with a simple truth about humanity, which is that we do not encourage others to take paths that cause us misery. If those in church leadership are finding themselves to be exhausted, underpaid, underappreciated, and possibly even in a constant state of asking, “What even *is my job?*” then it is no wonder why we are not encouraging young people in our congregation to follow in our footsteps.

# *The Problem of Pain Tolerance*

# In the book *Boundaries*,[[37]](#footnote-37) Dr. Henry Cloud writes, “We change our behavior when the pain of staying the same becomes greater than the pain of changing. Consequences give us the pain that motivates us to change.”[[38]](#footnote-38)

# There is a fantastic book called *Moneyball* by Michael Lewis that was made into a decent movie starring Brad Pitt.[[39]](#footnote-39) It is the story of how the General Manager of the Oakland A’s baseball team with a meager budget was able to assemble an amazing team by challenging the way baseball had traditionally valued players. Personally, I prefer the book. The movie moved a little too slowly for me. But there is a scene where Billy Beane (Brad Pitt) is looking at game film with the Yale graduate economics expert Peter Brand[[40]](#footnote-40) (Jonah Hill) and then they are interrupted by one of the scouts who asks Beane into the hall so he can tell him how much he hates Beane’s new approach to choosing players.[[41]](#footnote-41) The big line from the scene is Beane saying, “Adapt or Die.”[[42]](#footnote-42) The implication is that the scout would rather die. In the scout’s mind, the pain is not big enough to try new things. The idea that he has been missing quality players due to his long-held biases is just too hard of a pill to swallow. He chooses instead to end his friendship and even get fired instead of being open to new ideas and trying something different.

# I worry about what the “pain point” is going to be for the Church. We are already having trouble filling open positions in churches all over the country. Most mainline denominations are seeing record-low numbers of seminarians. How bad does this have to get? How large of a church has to be in danger of closing to get those in authority to really consider (and dream of) ways that we can start fixing this problem? We must try new things. And if we do not get busy now dreaming of new ways to develop church leaders, we will soon need to get busy dreaming of new models of leadership that the local church *can* support.

# *The Beginnings of Solutions*

The title of is final section purposefully includes the word “beginnings.” I think it is appropriate to state some *beginnings* of ideas that may be part of the solution. My goal over the next 24-30 months is to flesh these ideas far more fully when they are included in my final project. But for now, here are some (beginnings of some) ideas…

First, I think ***pastors need to begin to rebuild the vocational imagination***. Pastors need to be spending as much time with the next generation as possible. They also need to start (or restart) casting the vision of vocational ministry as a possibility. The words “You know, you would make a fantastic pastor” should be more common than it is today.

Second, ***churches need to systematically be on the lookout for people within the congregation who God might be calling into the ministry***.[[43]](#footnote-43) They should be in touch with the youth pastor about who in the youth group might be a good candidate. They should be considering people of all age groups. This would also naturally require more sharing of ministerial duties like the preaching of sermons, leading meetings, and possibly even some pastoral care. Having a committee (or something similar) that meets semi-regularly would at least create a *cycle* of thinking about who might be in our congregations that would be good candidates.

Finally, I continually come back to the idea of a “formula” that congregations could use to measure how well they are helping to raise up the next generation of church leaders. It might sound far too pragmatic on the surface, but ***we need to have some sort of metric for the average congregation to be able to check themselves up against***. My very rough draft of this is something like *every ten years, every congregation should call (at least) the same number of people into ministry as there are pastors on their staff*. If a church has three pastors, they should actively seek out three people to call into vocational ministry every ten years. This is not a finished idea, and there are multiple details to be worked out (like what it would mean if a church has a part-time pastor on staff, etc.) but I strongly feel that *some sort of metric* needs to be put in place. We have metrics for denominational giving. We have metrics for how many representatives a church should send to denominational meetings. Some churches even have internal metrics about how many people congregation members have shared their faith with. These are not meant to be unbreakable laws, but helpful guidelines to encourage growth in healthy directions.

“Healthy direction” is the goal. And we (the Church) have not been growing in a healthy direction when it comes to vocational ministry. We need to start to “feel the pain” of this so that we start to act, or else soon we will find that empty pews are far less of a problem than empty pulpits.

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**Appendix**

Suggestions, thoughts, and topics for further study and possible inclusion in the final work:

The most glaring need here is for more Biblical foundations (and references).

How do the “main” denominations (especially in the USA) view, define, and go about calling? It would be good to have actual examples and not paint with so broad of a brush.

A few different sources have told me that the Greek Orthodox Church seems to have a very different take on calling and might be worth including.

More specific numbers about denominations, pastor retirement and registration, recruitment, etc. (Similar to the numbers I was able to present in the Episcopal example at the beginning. Fn 2, pg 4)

Examination of high-profile denominational splits and exploring if that has an influence on this area (especially thinking of Presbyterian, UMC, and Episcopalian).

Work more through the idea of the “metric” (from pg 16-17)

Southern Baptist and non-denominational churches (esp those with SB roots) seem to be doing better in this area. More research and hard numbers would be helpful in this area.

It would be good to include at least some acknowledgment of the situation in Christianity in the global south.

“You use quotation marks quite liberally. You might want to have a few editors take a look at that – or better yet, spend time learning how to better use them.”

Building the bibliography seems like a good place to spend some time. What other books and/or resources would be helpful in this area of study?

Things I would like to know from those attending the presentation:

How does your church/denomination approach calling?

Do you know of books or works that address this issue (because my advisors and I have been having trouble finding much).

Are you seeing the same trends where you are working?

Are there any premises of this work that you disagree with or at least slightly push back against?

1. I have chosen to keep the churches mentioned in this section anonymous. This prevents me from referencing the specific sources, but anonymity proved to be the more important value here. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I am still gathering hard numbers for other denominations, but all mainline denominations seem to tell a similar story. Additionally, the pandemic seemed to exacerbate the issue by accelerating the exits of some people who were already on the fence about leaving (or retiring early). The numbers mentioned here come directly from the Episcopal Diocese of the aforementioned church. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This is basically the Episcopal term for Senior Pastor. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A short explanation of the new process.: The church chooses an “Interim Priest-In-Charge” or “Interim Rector” (the main difference is that a PIC can apply for the full Rector position, where the RIC cannot). After a period of discernment, the church decides if it wants to call the Interim Priest-in-Charge as their new Rector. If they choose not to call the interim PIC, they start a larger search. However, the Interim Priest-in-Charge can no longer be considered for the permanent position. This seems to have been put in place to encourage parishes to avoid the larger and longer Rector searches. Technically speaking, these are “guidelines,” and the church’s vestry (board) officially chooses the process, but there is an understanding that not following these guidelines could create a good bit of problems in the process on the diocesan level. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Two things to note with this example: This is not three years after the old pastor *left* the position… it’s three years after their initial *target date* that they hoped to have filled the position. Second, the pastor started and has been received well. However, the association announced they were leaving within the month, and they are now beginning another search. They are hoping it does not take as long. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. When speaking at Eastern University in the Fall of 2023, Dr. Andy Root mentioned that Luther Seminary made their MDiv program ***free*** a few years ago, and yet they still could not fill their 2023-24 cohort. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. At Eastern University, the 2005 YMIN freshman (intro) class had 76 students. In 2022, it had 6. Many undergraduate Youth Ministry programs report similar drops. (Though, it may be worth noting that there were multiple factors that led to such a dramatic shift, including changes in staff and faculty.) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. David Roach. *1 in 4 Pastors Plan to Retire Before 2030.* Christianity Today, April 28, 2023. <https://www.barna.com/research/hopeful-increases-pastors/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. To be clear, the survey is about whether pastors *considered* leaving the ministry. This is different from what I pushed back against in the previous paragraph, which is the idea that there is/was a “stampede of pastors leaving their positions.” This survey shows there was an increase in pastors *considering* leaving their positions (or even the ministry entirely). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. David Kinnaman. *New Data Shows Hopeful Increase in Pastors’ Confidence & Satisfaction.* Barna Group. March 6, 2024. <https://www.barna.com/research/hopeful-increases-pastors/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. It is my understanding that the 2015 results on this are likely lower than previous years, meaning that this has been a pattern for quite some time. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Part of my scope of work for the final project/dissertation is to have hard numbers but seminary enrollment. I am using the best numbers I have presently for this paper, but the goal is to research this far more for the final project. This site has helped: <https://www.graphsaboutreligion.com/p/seminary-education-in-2022> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. <https://www.ats.edu/files/galleries/2021-2022_Annual_Data_Tables.pdf> -- Some of these include (1) a massive uptick in online options, (2) Southern Baptist Seminaries are doing better than other denominations, and (3) Roman Catholic and Orthodox enrollments have actually gone ***up*** in recent years. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Steve Rabey. *Enrollment Declines and Shifts Continue at Evangelical Seminaries.* Ministry Watch, November 26, 2022. <https://ministrywatch.com/enrollment-declines-and-shifts-continue-at-evangelical-seminaries/> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. This may be an odd choice, but for multiple reasons I have chosen not to name these specific seminaries for this presentation of the paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. David Kinnaman. *The Aging of America’s Pastors.* Barna Group. March 1, 2017, <https://www/barna.com/research/aging-americas-pastors>. (Note: This was also quoted in the book “Calling Out the Called” – pg 2) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. I do not fault the seminaries for these actions. I understand the need to serve the “marketplace” and give people what they seem to want. Seminaries must keep the doors open. But I think it is important to note that much of the “growth” in seminary numbers is not resulting in increasing the number of church leaders and pastors. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Scott Pace and Shane Pruitt. *Calling Out the Called: Discipling Those Called to Ministry Leadership.* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2022), 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Pace and Pruitt, 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. One thing to note: I have focused my attention on the Church in America (with some attention on other Western countries like Great Britain). I felt like focusing on global Christianity would be a bit more than I could handle for my project. I am hoping to at least note somewhere in my final project that there are places where Christianity is growing around the world. In fact, the “global south” is doing quite well in this area. But to focus on that just felt outside of the realistic range of my project. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. I find the story in 1 Samuel 3 to be somewhat encouraging here. Young Samuel did not yet know the Lord, but Eli was able to instruct him with some rather simple advice. “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.” I think God is speaking, but young people are running to other people (and things) assuming it is them that calls. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Just one example: <https://relevantmagazine.com/faith/church/we-need-to-rethink-our-idea-of-pastors/> [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Tony Campolo. *A New and Biblical Way to Extend a Call to Ministry.* Essay and Donation Request Letter. 2014 (republished 2017). Unpublished. Copy can be attained through the Campolo Center for Ministry or found at the following link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XF1IpDWz3CEn_3O2o8so1IlDIO-lULA6/view?usp=share_link> [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Carey Nieuwolf. *Why It’s Time to Rethink What It Means to be Called To Ministry.* <https://careynieuwhof.com/why-its-time-to-rethink-what-it-means-to-be-called-to-ministry/> [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Pace and Pruitt, 7-9 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Or worse, not-so-secretly… [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. It could be argued that this is technically a “branch” of Pace and Pruitt’s point about public invitations, but I felt it was differentiated enough that it deserved to be listed separately. Also, when they go on to explain their point in more detail, this is not the direction they focused on, suggesting to me that this was worth mentioning here. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 80-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Root, Andrew. *The Pastor in a Secular Age: Ministry to People Who No Longer Need a God*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2019)  [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Charted Territory*. (Downers Grove, Il: Intervarsity Press, 2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Bolsinger, 40-44 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer. *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture that Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing.* (Carol Stream, Il: Tyndale Momentum, 2020) [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Or perhaps “product” is the better word here? [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. This is not a direct quote from McKnight and Barringer but is basically the premise of the entire book. It is probably best expressed on pages 209-211, especially when they are quoting Eugene Peter’s memoir “The Pastor.” [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Many reading this might be thinking about how Eugene Peterson’s book “Pastor: a Memoir” would be a good place to look for some of the solutions here and I agree. Both Root *and* McKnight and Barringer used it significantly in their books and it will be a larger part of this final project. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Root 3-10 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend. *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life (Expanded Edition).* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017) [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. This quote (or at least a very similar version of the same quote) is also attributed to American business author Tony Robbins. I felt like Dr. Cloud made more sense to be the cited person for this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Lewis, Michael. *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004.

    and

    *Moneyball*, directed by Bennett Miller (2011; Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 2011), theatrical. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Not important to this paper, but I find it odd that the character of “Peter Brand” appears in both the book *and the* movie, but he’s actually a fictional character based on Paul DePodesta (who was a HARVARD grad.. not a Yale grad… but literally everything else in the movie and book line up with his story). I have no idea why Lewis felt the need to fictionalize his character. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. You can find the clip here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugN5aD5p2NU> [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Interestingly enough, this exact scene is quoted (mostly uncited) by Tod Bolsinger in *Canoeing the Mountains*. (pg 33, but it is basically where he gets the name for Chapter 2 “Adventure of Die.”) [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Again, this idea comes from the Campolo essay mentioned above. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)