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INTERDISCIPLINARY PHD PROGRAM

TITLE OF THESIS: SEEKING THE WILL OF GOD: THE INFORMATION-SEEKING EXPERIENCES OF THE LEADERS OF NOVA SCOTIA CHURCHES IN TRANSITION

TIME/DATE: 10:00 am, Monday, August 18, 2014

PLACE: Room 430, The Goldberg Computer Science Building, 6050 University Avenue

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Dr. Gregory P. Grieve, Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina – Greensboro (External Examiner)

Dr. Heidi Julien, Department of Library and Information Studies, University of Buffalo (Reader)

Dr. Louise Spiteri, School of Information Management, Dalhousie University (Reader)

Dr. Lindsay Dubois, Department of Sociology & Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University (Reader)

Dr. Christopher Helland, Department of Sociology & Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University (Supervisor)

DEPARTMENTAL REPRESENTATIVE: Dr. Gordon McOuat, Interdisciplinary PhD Program, Dalhousie University

CHAIR: Dr. Gail Eskes, PhD Defence Panel, Faculty of Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

Christian churches in Nova Scotia are facing economic, social, and theological stresses. In response, many are engaged in processes of restructuring and renewal. Leaders are initiating and managing these change processes, and are seeking information to make their decisions, and “God’s will” for their churches. Very little is known about how church leaders seek, gather, evaluate, and use information in their decision-making. In this study, I asked the question: “Of the Nova Scotia churches in transition, what are the information-seeking experiences of their leaders?” Using ethnographic methods at three church sites, I explored this particular everyday life information-seeking context. I gathered data on church information sources and leaders’ source selections, identifying critical themes such as: the impact of new technologies, prayer as a source of information, and the theology of information-seeking. I developed a model of church information-seeking behaviour that can be used as a foundation for further research on information-seeking in church contexts.