ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must salute a vast company of faithful friends, family members, mentors, and advisors, for without their intentional love and guidance I could not have seen this project through to completion. Life is certainly filled with uncertainties and adventure, and I stand amazed that a little girl from Borculo, Michigan, would venture out into unfamiliar territory in pursuing a life mission. The apostle Paul acknowledges those extraordinary fellow believers who came alongside him as encouragers and partners in ministry. And so it is with utmost humility that I recognize and render thanks to those who have partnered with me in life and in this DMin thesis-project.

First and foremost, I thank my beloved Savior, the lovely Lord Jesus Christ, realizing that apart from him I can do absolutely nothing (John 15:5). He brought me the love of my life 33 years ago and allowed us to journey through seminary together while competing with one another every step of the way. Dr. Jerome Richard Johnston is my soul mate and rock, who has never wavered in his belief in my abilities. He speaks truth into my life daily, and his passion for memorizing the word of God convicts and compels me to follow suit. We enjoy a beautiful marriage and, while running the race set before us in ministry, as either of us look to our right or left, we find one another. Early on, we committed never to run ahead of the other. I love you "like crazy," Jerry.

I could not have asked for more encouraging and supportive parents than Alois and Leopoldine Huf, and my in-laws, J.W. and Joyce Johnston, are continuously reassuring and resolute about my ability to succeed. My precious children, Danielle Marie, Jeremiah Jay, and Jenilee Nicole continually call, text, and email me with missives like "How's the writing going?" or "Are you finished yet?" Their daily prayers and offerings of great praise in my accomplishments embolden me, and I hope—at 52 years of age and earning a first doctorate—that I have modeled my unreserved commitment to continuing education despite overwhelming obstacles. My son, Jeremiah Jay, epitomizes everything a young scholar should exhibit. He is brilliant, dedicated, tenacious, and inspires his "Mommy" to keep learning.

My daughter-in-law, Audrey, is one of a kind. She shows no bias in her unconditional love for me, and her lengthy emails of encouragement and inspiration during this journey are saved in a file marked "love." The many meals she and our son Jeremiah prepared—and the lodging they graciously provided during our weekend stays traveling back and forth to Kansas City—will always be appreciated and the memories cherished. Jeremiah's daily Skype video communication was both tormenting and delightful as he sat our two-year old granddaughter, Lily Faith, on his lap—the first person she asked to speak to was me. Jeffrey Vance Mullikin, my son-in-law, exudes a spirit of servanthood of which I have never seen the like in all my years as a believer. Jeffrey and Jenilee's countless calls and visits to the cabin were a refreshing reprieve during the grueling hours spent writing this thesis. My son-in-law, Christian Newsome, along with our daughter Danielle and our other children, walked along side us with constant encouragement during some tough days. My darling grandchildren, Christian, Kasey, Lily, and Justin, who visited me via Skype during the three most intense months of research and writing, gave me the

fortitude to keep persevering as—out of the sheer frustration from the long absences from them—I contemplated abandoning this dream. Kasey Marie, thank you for gracing "O" and "Papa" with a plethora of handmade drawings and pictures which still hang in our cabin and serve as a gentle reminder that Jesus said, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?"" (Matt 21:16).

The steadfast professors, who dedicated many hours to training me with their expertise and encouragement throughout my years in seminary, are to be commended. The faculty, staff, and my fellow students at Acadia Divinity College are unrivaled. The staff and students are unpretentious and exhibit the utmost kindness, compassion, and authenticity. The professors are men and women of high caliber in academics, with unassuming natures refreshing to find in the academic world. Sincere thanks to Dr. Andrew MacRae, who first welcomed me into the DMin program and patiently guided this learner. Recognition and respect to the President and Dean of Theology, Dr. Harry Gardner, whose professionalism is superior and whose radiant heart is that of a pastor. Dr. Bruce Fawcett and Dr. Jody Linkletter faithfully guided me through the DMin process. Dr. William Brackney, with a gracious spirit, painstakingly led me through two demanding weeks of Contemporary Theology. Dr. Carol-Anne Janzen, Dr. James Beverley, Dr. Scott Gibson, and Don Simmons contributed ever-memorable insights and wisdom to my education.

My ministry and academic supervisor, Dr. Craig Evans, to whom I owe an enormous debt of gratitude—thank you! Acadia Divinity College's commitment in allowing students to learn from the best, "the ones who write the books," provided me with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to attain knowledge from a scholar who is unparalleled in the evangelical academic world. Dr. Evans's wisdom, leadership, and guidance gave me clarity and confidence to excel in my area of passion. He is a sage among sages, and his teachings perpetually spur my yearning for more. If it were possible to find a Scripture that would express the hours and investment Dr. Evans instilled in my academic career, it would be John 21:25. Books written could not contain the investment Dr. Evans has made in the academic lives of the three aspiring scholars in the Johnston family. May the Lord reward you on our behalf. You are the most unassuming, intelligently gifted professor to whom we have ever been exposed. Thanks for taking us under your wing and allowing us to learn from one of the best! I thank your generous and self-sacrificing wife, Ginny, as well.

Praise goes to my friends, the distinguished Judge Robert Ulrich and his equally inspiring wife, Joann, for incessantly urging us to continue our education. And to Jeff Anderson, who saw a diamond in the rough and convinced others in our ministry to see the potential in me. I shall never forget that moment in January 2009—while at breakfast in L.A., you reminded Jerry, "Cristie Jo stands to lose the most in this ministry if we don't get her focused." We are now released, and brighter days are ahead. I am eternally grateful!

I thank my mentor, Judy Smith, whose persistent prodding in an effort to see me through to the finish line. I commit my unreserved love, loyalty, and genuine appreciation for your faithful guidance and friendship during the most challenging time of my ministry career. Thanks to our beloved church family, and to the leaders who selflessly stewarded their pastors during the writing process because of their genuine love for us. Steve and

Christian Barnes, Rick and Karla Moore, and the deacons—my humble thanks seem lacking. Commendations to Danny Zacharias, Ralph Bates, and Natalie Davis for their hours of dedicated time in reading and suggesting edits that slipped through my grips because of burning the midnight oil one too many times.

The writing of this thesis was not completed without anticipated warfare. I will mention only one instance in conclusion, and with that I applaud the genuinely lovely and dedicated people of Branson, Missouri, who graciously welcomed us into their embrace as we escaped to a quiet cabin during the months of finalizing this project. Together we survived the unexpected tornado that tore through the beautiful rolling Ozark hills with 130-mile-per-hour winds touching down in the tourist area in the early morning hours of February 29, 2012. The tempest ripped roofs from hotels and theaters in the city's famous music tourism site, leaving destruction for miles around in the place we now affectionately call "our second home." With electrical power lost throughout the night we awoke the next morning to find massive damage within feet of our rental cabin, and yet the sovereign and merciful Lord protected us. "Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways" (Rom 11:33).