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## ABSTRACT

### THE EFFECT OF HISTORY RECITAL ON CONGREGATIONAL SELF-IMAGE

Max Eugene Kingsolver

Current literature on the small church notes both weaknesses and strengths in the small congregation. Its weaknesses are largely derived from external forces. Especially in rural areas, among other problems, declining or non-growth population and lack of employment opportunities force the small church into a defensive position. Eventually, a "downward spiral" is observed where the contextual forces accumulate making the crisis more acute. Due to these conditions, small membership churches often develop a low self-image of their congregation. This study explores the problem of low self-image and seeks to find at least a starting place for renewal.

The small church has many sterling qualities. Its strength is usually derived from within the group, that is, in the areas of personal relationships such as group intimacy, loyalty, and support. Another source of group strength is the treasury of memories from the past, especially in churches with a reasonably long history. It is this tendency of small churches to remember the past that is

exploited in this study. The research project was designed to measure the effect of a history-gathering/storytelling (called history-recital) program in the self-image of one particular small congregation.

Chapter one constructs a theoretical framework including the problem statement, review of literature, definitions, assumptions, and hypothesis.

Chapter two explores the causes of low self-image in the small church. The information gleaned is from the recent literature on the subject.

Chapter three largely examines the power of memory in the life of a community using resources from story theology. The nature of narrative is also explored.

Chapter four is a description of the contextual project which attempted to bring hope and inspiration through the power of memory. The project had two phases. The first was the history-gathering period in which the participants researched secretarial records, denominational histories, newspaper files, and the memories of older persons to gather the needed information. The second phase was the storytelling celebrations of four services culminating in the history project presentation.

Chapter five describes the three questionnaires and the results of these measurements. The remainder of the dissertation contains the scores of the tests, summaries, conclusions, and a bibliography.



THE EFFECT OF HISTORY-RECITAL  
ON CONGREGATIONAL SELF-IMAGE

by

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Max Engelke

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Taking the pulse of the institutional church is more than a pastime for many Protestant churchmen. The concern for the vitality of these mainline churches has been precipitated, in part, by membership decline in most of the mainline Protestant churches during the 60's and 70's. It has been further impelled by a regard for worldwide evangelization, of which one expression is the church growth movement.

Also, a minor revolution is taking place in the area of the small church, which faces both the opportunities and dangers intrinsic in smallness. The current dangers are apathy and extinction, and the existing opportunities are self-understanding and a viable ministry.

Sympathetic voices are speaking up for the small church. Armed with new information gleaned from grass roots sources, these articulate writers are laying a foundation for self-understanding and ministry by harnessing formal training with practical experience. It is believed that this growing body of information is only a precursor to the research that will be done in the field.

This writer has honed a keen interest in the subject because of pastoral involvements as well as research in the

literature of the small church. This writer once stood at the threshold of decision for Christian commitment before a rural altar in a small Wesleyan church in central Indiana. Since that time he has pastored four small Wesleyan churches in the span of twenty-five years. At the present pastorate, the church building houses the altar at which the memorable decision was made. It has been a delightful "homecoming."

Out of this interest, a graduate research project has emerged, focusing on the problem of self-image in the small church, and on the link between history and story.

Interest in the small church has waxed and waned since the turn of the century, depending on the cultural movements and religious moods. Recently another surge of interest focuses on the agonies and ecstasies of small churches in America but with a noticeable difference. The recent literature demonstrates a sociological and a psychological understanding of the dynamics of the small church. The sources for this new surge of interest are the small church workshops and studies sponsored by various seminaries, and the escalation of small church publications from religious life centers.<sup>1</sup> This material is telling the reader that the

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The two largest Protestant denominations tend to speak to the needs of the small church through the general church boards. In the Southern Baptist Church, small church concerns are mostly handled by the Home Mission Board and

small church is not a condensed edition of the larger model; rather it is a different edition altogether.

Common in the fabric of small church literature is the thread of low self-esteem. Crandall and Sells quote a

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the Sunday School Board. The United Methodist Church's General Board of Global Ministries serves as a resource place for different forms of Christian service including the ministries to the small church. However, the conferences throughout the United Methodist Church are largely responsible for promoting the many workshops on the small church. The Hinton Rural Life Center continues to serve small churches in the United Methodist Church's Southeastern Jurisdiction with regularly scheduled workshops at the center near Hayesville, North Carolina. Their quarterly publication, the Hinton Herald, focuses on the small church, particularly the rural one. In the same manner, Robert B. Greene directs the Resource Center for Small Churches in Luling, Texas which serves small Episcopal churches, and publishes the quarterly magazine, Grassroots. Jackson Carroll, Director for Social and Religious Research at Hartford Seminary, in correspondence with this writer, refers to two conferences on the small church held at Hartford in 1976 and 1977. The papers from the first conference are collected in the book, Small Churches are Beautiful, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977). Carroll has conducted workshops on the small church at Claremont, Duke, and the latest in Albany, New York in March 1985 (for the Reformed Church in America). Douglas Alan Walrath edited the book, New Possibilities for Small Churches (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983), which is a collection of papers read to the Detroit Consultation of the National Council of Churches as a report from the Leadership Issues in Small Congregations Project. Recently the Lilly Foundation in Indianapolis gave the Bangor Theological Seminary (where Walrath teaches) a small grant for research in small church life. Carl Dudley held workshops attended by representatives from at least ten different denominations. His book, Making the Small Church Effective (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), was an outgrowth of these workshops and conferences. Under Dudley's guidance, an abundance of material is available at McCormick Seminary. In addition, several special Journal issues have been published focusing on the small church which will be duly noted.

United Methodist bishop as stating that 99% of all the small churches under his leadership have the pervasive problem of low self-esteem.<sup>2</sup> These writers state further, "This self-inflicted wound, a self-imposed inadequacy, is one of the more serious and perplexing problems facing the small membership church."<sup>3</sup> Another researcher cites low morale as one of the four problems listed by lay leaders in the small church.<sup>4</sup> Another source asserts that many people in small and declining churches "feel they are on the margins of life instead of being a part of the center."<sup>5</sup> A pastor of a small church in Warwick, Massachusetts, affirms that small churches frequently have a negative self-image which could be damaging to the initiative of the particular congregation, and thus could become a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>6</sup> Carl Dudley characterizes the small church as "discouraged"

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2

Ronald K. Crandall and L. Ray Sells, There's New Life in the Small Congregation (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1983), p. 90.

3

Ibid.

4

Lyle Schaller, The Small Church Is Different (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), p. 57.

5

Paul O. Madsen, The Small Church--Valid, Vital, Victorious (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1975), p. 32.

6

David R. Ray, Small Churches are the Right Size (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982).

because "to be small in America usually denotes inadequacy,<sup>7</sup> insufficiency, immaturity, and a loser."

The past demographical track of the writer's small rural pastorate in central Indiana shows both an outmigration in the township and a decline in church attendance. Therefore, considering these contextual problems, it is important to have a feeling for the present needs of the congregation that relate to its self-image.

However, everything is not all gloomy on the small church scene. The small congregation has many strengths which will be explored later in this study. Suffice to say here, one of the strengths of small congregations, especially the ones with reasonably long histories, is the inspiration it derives from its corporate memories. Because of its small-group characteristics, the small congregation looks to the past for its "cultural identity."<sup>8</sup>

Further, memory is usually translated into story through one or more of its various forms. It is important to examine the disciplines of story to better understand the phenomenon of memory and the role it plays in the small church setting and the more immediate expressions of story as offered in story-telling and story-preaching.

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7

Carl S. Dudley, Unique Dynamics of the Small Church (Washington, D. C.: The Alban Institute, 1977), p. 2.

8

Ibid. p. 10.

In view of all these strands of inquiry, this study will research both the weaknesses and strengths of the small church. It will examine one of its positive qualities--power through memory. It will then focus on the self-image of one particular congregation located in the context of a socially static environment and having a numerically static attendance in its services. Finally it will utilize a carefully constructed contextual project of history-gathering and story-telling (to be united in the term history-recital) in an attempt to enhance the self-image of this congregation.

#### The Statement of the Problem

The central problem of this study is this: How will a project of history-recital (including drama, visual arts, story-telling, and preaching) culminating in services of celebration, influence the self-image of a small church?

#### Review of Literature

The research into the literature related to this study will cover several areas of inquiry. First, the writings in the field of the small church will be explored to discover the characteristics of small congregational life. Next, story theology will be examined for insights it might offer in the area of memory. Storytelling and story-preaching will be surveyed to uncover some practical applications of story. Finally, a short section on self-image (or self-

esteem) is included to help define the concepts related to self-image and help shape the section on the small church.

### Small Church

The core of the small church literature is a dozen or so books written by specialists in the field. The writer will give special attention to these works and add some other reviews that overlap the area of the small church.

Paul O. Madsen speaks as a denominationalist and an ecumenist in an older but valuable work which describes the small church in its virtues and its limitations. Five reasons are given for the size of the smaller church: inadequate program, inadequate field, inadequate evangelism, inadequate vision, and inadequate personalities. He offers an array of options for the small church including yoked

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Madsen, Vital. pp. 19-26. Madsen's attitudes reflected the moods of the 50's and 60's. One spokesman for the heterogeneous model of church life was Gibson Winter who presented his ideas in his book The Suburban Captivity of the Churches (New York, Macmillan, 1962). Lately that stance has been challenged by research from Fuller Theological Seminary. Peter Wagner's book Our Kind of People, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), is a sample of that viewpoint. Many churches which were "yoked" demonstrated negative effects of the merger. One study in this respect is "The Community Involvement of Yoked Parishes," Rural Sociology 47 (1982): 81-90, by Cantrell, Krile, and Donohue. Also churches resist other types of cooperative ministries. Within ten years of the publication of Madsen's book, the change of mind was evident, so that Douglas Walrath could say in his book New Possibilities for Small Churches, "Few advocate the merging of small churches into larger organizations as a probable outcome for all or even most congregations. Such talk was common as recently as a decade ago." p. ix.



fellowships, cooperative ministries, federated churches, and denominational subsidy. Madsen subscribes to a heterogeneous model of an ideal church. The case studies of vital churches exemplify numerical growth, activism, ecumenical cooperation, and interracial mixture of congregational life.<sup>10</sup> A decade later, the literature began to affirm the small church as it is and where it is. The small church was found to be resistant to heterogeneous experiments, which in turn, reversed some of the formulas for utopian congregations.

Douglas Alan Walrath emphasizes the realities of the contextual clout on small churches. Not understanding social change in both rural and urban areas "steers us away from the real task to which we need to give attention: understanding and learning to cope within the social environment that is really there."<sup>11</sup> Misunderstanding the central problem of small churches led to the failed experiments and strategies typical of a decade ago. A basic knowledge

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Ibid., pp. 86-108.

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Walrath, New Possibilities, p.11. This fact is clearly demonstrated by two recent dissertations at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. "Shepherding the Little Flock: An Adventure in Pastoral Care" (1984), by Oscar J. Mathura, concerns the Immanuel United Methodist Church in Indianapolis which experienced sharp membership decline because of area industrial growth. Paul Sebree writes about the contextual problems of a Wesleyan Church in a changing neighborhood in Indianapolis in "A Study to Determine the Cause or Causes of the Decline of Calvary Wesleyan Church, with Interventions," (1985).

of the impact of social changes will allow energies to be directed into more effective solutions. Walrath is both the editor and contributor for this volume. This affirmation of the small church is typical of the creative attitudes of other authors in this book.

The purpose of Lyle Schaller's study is neither an indictment on the small church nor an apologetic for it; rather, his purpose is to reinforce his thesis that the small church is a different species, and "that it would be unwise and often counterproductive to attempt to force large church ideas, rules, programs, procedures and models on these smaller congregations."<sup>12</sup> That difference is delineated by twenty ways in which the small church is uncharacteristic of the larger church. The small church has as its assets toughness, stability, and closeness. But its liabilities are inclusiveness, narrowness, and a concern with only immediate needs. Schaller's seven reasons behind low self-esteem will not go unnoticed in this study. He states that "if the members of your church do not have a strong, positive self-image, rectifying that should be the first step in developing a church growth strategy."<sup>13</sup>

David Ray affirms the small church as a viable ministry. Certain leaders in the present church scene seem to be

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Schaller, p. 15.

13

Ibid, p. 70.

obsessed with "sizism" and for this reason Ray shares his story of his UCC congregation in Warwick, Massachusetts and the experience of pastor and people focusing on possibilities instead of failures. In the first two chapters, Ray spins the rationale for the small church as being the right size for "five primary and essential tasks: worship, education, mission, caring for one another, and organizational maintenance."<sup>14</sup>

In another study,<sup>15</sup> Walrath focuses on a profile of the small church pastor. In this "Leadership Issues in Small Congregations Project" sponsored by the National Council of Churches, the author gleaned insights from nearly two hundred sources ranging from executives responsible for small church ministries to denominational and independent centers for small church leadership. He wrestles with the definition of the small church and concludes that a non-numerical one is the most adequate one. The author describes the pressures upon small church pastors which stem from stereotypical images of failure. The small church is tenacious, reluctant to change, and suspicious of denominational overseers. Where change has occurred, an individual,

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14

Ray, p. 52.

15

Douglas Alan Walrath, Finding Options for Ministry in Small Churches (New York: Professional Church Leadership NCC, 1981).

usually a layperson, has discovered a new vision for the purpose of the church and has, thus, been the instrument of change.<sup>16</sup>

A collaboration of authors in the field brought about the publishing of Small Churches are Beautiful edited by Jackson Carroll.<sup>17</sup> The authors of these essays originally met at a consultation sponsored by the Hartford Seminary Foundation in 1976. In this volume, a variety of topics are covered ranging from the contextual forces bearing upon the small church to the practice of ministry in the small church. In "The Real and the Unreal: Social and Theological Images of the Small Church," Arthur C. Tennes discusses the power of negative and positive images of the small church. Success is to be measured by the way a church, large or small, fulfills its New Testament purpose. Robert Lynn and James W. Fraser trace the origins of the success syndrome so rampant in American church life today under the title "Images of the Small Church in American History." Douglas W. Johnson in "Social and Cultural Changes Affecting Small Congregations," faces the reality that both external and internal forces can cause decline.

In the same vein, Wayne Jacobson indicts the success syndrome of American Christian subculture. He narrows down

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<sup>16</sup> Walrath, Options, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Carroll, Small Churches are Beautiful.

biblical success to obedience to God's commands. His personal experience in pastoring a small urban church reinforces his conviction that the many small congregations such as he pastors are vital and even powerful forces in the church world.<sup>18</sup>

The thesis of Crandall and Sells is that small churches can grow, with growth being defined in four ways: personal, collective, maturative, and numerical.<sup>19</sup> Case studies of small churches that found solutions for mission and growth are offered. Of special interest is the subject of low self-esteem. The authors verify that the causes for low self-esteem are legitimate but remedies are available. The starting point is a reassessment of the strengths of the congregation and a conviction that its ministry can be vital despite the fact it must function in a culture that prizes bigness.<sup>20</sup>

Carl Dudley has exploited the significance of memory in the life of members of a small congregation. Since the small church is a single caring cell, memories of the past play a significant role in the life of the church. To Dudley,

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Wayne Jacobson, "The Numbers Game: A Threat to Churches Large and Small," Leadership 4 (Winter 1983): 49-53.

19

Crandall and Sells, pp. v.-vi.

20

Ibid., pp. 28-29.

memory has a biblical precedent in Israel's celebration of the saving acts of God and in the events that surround the life of our Lord. But memory can be abusive. The constant recollection of past failures or the avoidance of present responsibilities by an obsession with nostalgia are detrimental elements. But mostly, Dudley is in sympathy with the small church and offers important insights into the inner workings of the caring cell.<sup>21</sup>

The Creative Leadership Series, edited by Lyle Schaller, has produced usable material for the small church. William A. Willimon and Robert L. Wilson give the reader a positive feeling about the future of the small church. The authors give the reader some practical applications of worship and preaching methods that can be utilized in this specialized setting.<sup>22</sup>

James E. Cushman, pastor of the Beverly Presbyterian Church, West Virginia, describes the general characteristics of a small church, but focuses the study on the Appalachian churches with which he identifies himself.<sup>23</sup> The author locates the five stages of revitalization for a small

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21

Dudley, Effective.

22

William H. Willimon and Robert L. Wilson, Preaching and Worship in the Small Church (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980).

23

James E. Cushman, Beyond Survival (Parsons, West Va.: McClain Printing Co., 1981).

church: reaffirmation and rediscovery, initial victories, discovering identity, effective planning, and placing the church back into the mainstream of community life and activities.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to this list, the writer reviewed nearly thirty doctoral studies on the small church which are part of the collection at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. One such study tabulates the results of a survey of 114 lay persons from 54 Presbyterian churches, spelling out the strengths and weaknesses of small congregations from a lay viewpoint.<sup>25</sup>

A special issue of the journal The Christian Ministry features the small church and has such diverse writers as Robert B. Greene of the Episcopal Church and Emanuel L. McCall, pastor of a black Baptist church, making contributions.<sup>26</sup>

A landmark study was done between the years 1975-78 in the area of church growth and decline by Hoge and Roozen. This volume is an intensive effort of leading churchmen to

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Ibid., pp. 81-83.

25

Donald E Neel, "A Design for Planned Change: Collaboration of Presbytery with Small Church: A Model for Strategy Development" (D. Min. diss., McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, 1977).

26

The Christian Ministry 14 (May 1983).

discern the causes of this phenomenon.<sup>27</sup> One other volume, a less technical one, was produced as a direct result of this study, written by Carl Dudley.<sup>28</sup> The spinoffs from Hoge and Roozen have been considerable, and no attempt will be made here to list all the books and articles on the subject.

In this regard, Dean Kelley added an important catalyst<sup>29</sup> to the whole inquiry into church growth and decline. Refutations of some of his findings are still rolling off the press as well as support for his findings. Kelley's main thesis is: "a group with evidences of social strength will proportionately show traits of strictness; a group with traits of leniency will proportionately show traits of social weakness rather than strength."<sup>30</sup>

In picking up from the previously mentioned book by Hoge and Roozen, four factors are discerned that affect church growth or decline: national contextual, national institutional, local contextual, and local institutional.

27

Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen, Understanding Church Growth and Decline: 1950-1978 (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1979).

28

Carl S. Dudley, Where Have All Our People Gone? (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979).

29

Dean M. Kelley, Why Conservative Churches Are Growing (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

30

Ibid. p. 86.



National contextual would be those factors within the life of a nation, and national institutional would be the larger developments within the denomination that affect church growth or decline. Local contextual and local institutional would be those forces closer to the local church scene which affect church growth or decline. It would seem that the two local factors are the most important in this study of the small church. Two streams seem to flow from this study. First, the church growth movement seems to stress local institutional problems as the culprit in church decline. The other stream is authors Kelley, Hoge and Roozen, and Walrath who stress local contextual problems.

One other development should be mentioned here. Some writers are busy taking the pulse of the church and writing about vitality and health. C. Peter Wagner listens to the heartbeat of the local parish as he proposes seven vital signs of a healthy church.<sup>31</sup> Typically, the third sign is that the church needs to be big enough to meet the needs of the community. If this is true, most small churches are terminal cases. An interesting contrast exists between the

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31

C. Peter Wagner, Your Church Can Be Healthy (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), pp. 21-24.

The seven vital signs are: 1. Pastoral leadership, 2. A well-mobilized laity, 3. Church must be big enough to provide the kind of services to meet the needs of the community, 4. Right balance among groups, 5. Homogeneous principle, 6. Evangelism, 7. Priorities properly arranged in biblical order.

church growth theories of Fuller and the sympathetic mode of McCormick.

A useful measurement for the small church was produced by Rene O. Bideaux, formerly of the Hinton Rural Life Center. His paper, "Pastor and Parishoner Health: Indicators for Effective Ministry" is based on medical research. Seven indicators are listed.<sup>32</sup>

"A Study of Mission and Ministry in Small Membership Churches" and a summary of that study was administered by Judy C. Matheny of Hinton and will be used as an evaluative instrument in this project. The questionnaire was filled out by 374 persons from 136 churches in the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church. The results reflected a positive spirit among the church leaders polled.<sup>33</sup>

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Rene O. Bideaux, "Pastor and Parishoner Health: Indicators for Effective Ministry." Hinton Paper No. 9, Hinton Rural Life Center, Hayesville, N.C.

The seven indicators are: 1. How does the local church or minister react to the situation in which the minister or local congregation is living? 2. What is the self-image which the minister or local congregation displays? 3. How does a pastor or local congregation react to the District Superintendent and other denominational leaders? 4. What kind of "god" does the minister or local congregation announce? 5. What action, what works are revealed by the minister and parishioners? 6. What is the congregation's or minister's outlook toward the future? 7. What are the signs of humor?

33

Judy C. Matheny, "Summary: A Study of Some Vital Churches," Hinton Rural Life Center, 1982.

The United Methodist Board of Discipleship's Section on Education directed Warren J. Hartman to survey membership trends in that denomination in the late 70's. He took the sample from 330 pastors and from over one thousand laypersons. The sample reflected both the tenacity of the small church to survive, and the prominence of lay leadership in directing local programs. In that same report, Hartman also sketches a profile of the growing small church. Small churches were found to be oriented to personal relationships, and committed to a caring ministry. The members were characterized by loyalty in church attendance and giving.<sup>34</sup> Pastors were listed as the key personnel in the churches.

### Story Theology

Story theology is a kaleidoscope of theology, biography, autobiography, myth, poetry, parables, and case studies with a common denominator of narrative as being the most natural vehicle of human expression. This review will begin with some surveys of the story movement, continue with works in the area of theology and literature, and end with its application to preaching.

James Barr traces the present decline of biblical theology to a failure of the older theology to critically

examine the source materials in the Old Testament. To him, the Albrightian (Albright, Wright, et. al.) school produced polemics rather than critical theologies. He agrees, however, that story is the basic literary genre of the Old Testament.<sup>35</sup>

Focusing on three early story theologians (Novak, Keen and Cox), Stanley T. Sutphin credits the origins of the movement to the sensitivity to secularism in theology, the same movement that spawned the Death of God movement. Harvey Cox is cited as the most popular of these theologians, who synthesizes the religious moods of contemporary society,<sup>36</sup> especially urban man.

In another volume Lonnie Kliever depicts various contemporary movements in theology, including story theology. He reviews the writings of Dunne, McClendon, and McFague as being representative of myth, biography, and parable, as they relate to story. The current emphasis is either on finding story in theology or finding theology in modern literature.<sup>37</sup>

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35

James Barr, The Scope and Authority of the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980).

36

Stanley T. Sutphin, Options in Contemporary Theology (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977).

37

Lonnie Kliever, The Shattered Spectrum (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981).

An important issue of Interpretation is a thematic one with several crucial articles on story.<sup>38</sup> In the first of these, Gabriel Fackre, the author and editor, cites narrative as man's way of orienting himself in the succession of time and memory. Today's rootless culture only enhances his need for story. Fackre's definition of story both here and elsewhere in his writings on theology will be used to determine the parameters of history and story.<sup>39</sup>

Another thematic issue was published by the editors of Theology Today. In one of the essays in this issue, George W. Stroup III, sorts out the span of story theology into understandable divisions. Stroup asks some hard questions of story theologians concerning the future of story, but concludes by urging further systematic investigations by concerned theologians.<sup>40</sup>

Walter Brueggemann's incisive and systematic exploration of the Old Testament has produced two valuable volumes for this study. In the first, the author has a bet with the reader that he can find an effective philosophy of Christian

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Interpretation 37 (October, 1983).

39

Gabriel Fackre, "Narrative Theology: An Overview," Interpretation 37 (October 1983): 340-352. Much of the same material is contained in his book The Christian Story (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

40

George W. Stroup III, "A Bibliographical Critique," Theology Today 32 (July 1975): 133-143.

Education through discovering Old Testament principles for the perpetuation of knowledge. "The Disclosure of Binding" is a chapter on educational methods, and the foremost method for the Israelites was story.<sup>41</sup> The second work is a dialectic between Israel's plight of land and landlessness. The rootlessness of much of Israel's history necessitated the story to generate self-identity in the hearts of the new generation.<sup>42</sup>

Charles E. Winqvist has brought pertinent essays together in a significant volume. His thesis is that story, because of its mnemonic power, brings meaning to an otherwise directionless world. Homecoming, to Winqvist, is the journey of the self, from irrelevance to affirmation of the purpose of human existence. It "is not a return to the past but it is a becoming into a future."<sup>43</sup>

Sydney E. Mead affirms the importance of story in the process of self-identity and this story is the story of self in relation to one's community. Story is the linkage between self and others in the group the individual is most

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41

Walter Brueggemann, The Creative Word (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

42

Walter Brueggemann, The Land (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

43

Charles E. Winqvist, Homecoming: Interpretation, Transformation, and Individuation (Missoula, Montana: Scholar's Press, 1978), p. 9.

associated with in everyday life. History is not an array of events; rather it is the linkage of an individual with others in the span of time.<sup>44</sup>

L. Shannon Jung indicates that story has the power not only to communicate, but also to redirect behavior. Story, to Jung, is able to tie one's own experiences with those of others which brings self-comprehension as well as understanding of other people. The better stories are those which "help us understand the interrelation of our particular joys, struggles, disappointments, hopes, and anxieties" with those of others.<sup>45</sup>

In one of his many books on theology, John Shea contends that we are the stories that God tells. Man returns the compliment by telling stories of God. He affirms that "stories are first: we are second. We are born into a community of stories and storytellers. In interpreting our traditional stories of God, we find out who we are and what we must do."<sup>46</sup>

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44

Sydney E. Mead, History and Identity (Missoula, Montana: Scholar's Press, 1979).

45

L. Shannon Jung, "Ethics and the Image of Self in the Theology of Story," Religion in Life 46 (1977): 364-377.

46

John Shea, Stories of God: An Unauthorized Biography (Chicago: Thomas Moore Press, 1978), p. 9.

John J. Navone examines the narrative quality of religious experience, especially as expressed in one's "travel stories."<sup>47</sup> In another study, Navone and Cooper collaborated to produce an ambitious study of story theology. This work outlines almost every aspect of story imaginable, beginning with a threefold propaedeutic (Historiographic, literary, philosophical) and continuing with nine "moments" which include 120 theses of story theology. The biblical orientation of the latter chapters centers on the narrative elements of the life of Christ.<sup>48</sup>

A different pattern to story was sought by James McClendon's unique approach to the exploration of theology. The author contends that biographical narrative is uniquely suited to teach and illustrate Christian theology. His method utilizes biographies of unique and forceful people in the community and in the world who serve as patterns for belief and behavior for others.<sup>49</sup>

The rabbinic tradition of story (Haggadah) as opposed to the rational approach (Halakah) is accented by Belden C. Lane. The tradition of story, through the use of paradox or

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John J. Navone, Toward a Theology of Story (Slough, England: St. Paul Publications, 1977).

48

John J. Navone and Thomas Cooper, Tellers of the Word (New York: LeJacq, 1981).

49

James W. McClendon Jr., Biography as Theology (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974).



surprise endings brings the hearer abruptly face to face with the inescapable truth. The narration teases the listener into hearing what otherwise would be ignored.<sup>50</sup>

That black theology is basically narration constitutes the argument of James H. Cone. The story of liberation has been the very soul of black preaching and singing. Cone's continued research into black theology serves to perpetuate that tradition.<sup>51</sup>

James B. Wiggins brings together essays by specialists in several areas of story, and constitutes a basic reader for the researcher.<sup>52</sup> Wiggins notes the collapse of the barrier between fact and fiction in "Within and Without Stories." Scientific man in spite of the forces of secularism, ironically turns to narrative forms for expression. He sketches the history of story as it merges with religious thought, bringing the reader to the most recent developments in narrative theology. All creative thinking includes imaging, says Michael Novak in "Story and Experience." His own shift in radical politics is recounted in narrative

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Belden C. Lane, "Rabbinical Stories: A Primer on Theological Method," The Christian Century 98 (1981): 1306-1310.

51

James H. Cone, "The Content and Method of Black Theology," Journal of Religious Thought 32 (1975): 90-103.

52

James B. Wiggins, ed., Religion as Story (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

form. Also in the Wiggins collection, James Hillman using Freud as a focal point, analyzes the psychological implications of story in "The Fiction of Case History: A Round." Freud becomes a narrator of story as he writes out case studies at the end of his busy day. Dealing in dreams and fantasies of his patients, Freud slips out of the realm of clinical psychology and into the realm of narration. <sup>53</sup>

Other writers have specialized in metaphor as source material for story theology. To these, the gap between the temporal and transcendent is best closed through the parabolic because of the demands it makes on one's faith. <sup>54</sup>

Sam Keen, a pioneer in the field and a self-styled avant-garde theologian, contributed several works to story. Keen looks at life through his own autobiographical experiences which tend to give his writings a faddish tinge. <sup>55</sup>

Harvey Cox writes about festivity and fantasy which, according to him, needs to be developed and utilized to

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Ibid.

54

Sallie McFague TeSelle, Speaking in Parables (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); John Dominic Crossan, The Dark Interval (Niles, Illinois: Argus Communications, 1975); Brian Wicker, The Story Shaped World (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975).

55

Sam Keen, To a Dancing God (New York: Harper and Row, 1970); Apology For Wonder (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

combat the onslaught upon the human spirit by the deperson-  
alized world in which it exists.<sup>56</sup>

Describing the movement in one's experience from the profane to the sacred, Michael Novak sees the journey as a series of "standpoints" in that experience. Standpoints are the plateaus in one's life in which these experiences are gathered and reflected upon. Story is the connecting link that brings meaning to these experiences. He applies these insights from that journey and experience to the needs of the community in which the traveler lives.<sup>57</sup>

A seminal study of human experience and the place of narrative in one's existence was distilled into a pungent essay by Stephen Crites. Crites uses the insights of Augustine to lay the foundation for the thesis that narrative is of the essence of life rather than merely the expression of its experience.<sup>58</sup>

### Storytelling and Preaching

Two applications of story are storytelling and preaching, and for the interests of this study, preaching is especially

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Harvey Cox, The Feast of Fools (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969).

57

Michael Novak, Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978).

58

Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 34 (September, 1971): 291-311.

important. Frederick Beuchner pleads for power words and stories to preach the gospel with proper concern for the listener. He practices what he preaches as his popular editions of sermons testify.

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Craddock's discovery of Kierkegaard's insights into narrative preaching reformed his own views of sermon preparation and delivery. He advocates creative preaching with the disciplines of writing one's own parables and other imaginative materials for use in the pulpit.

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Richard A. Jensen maintains that story is the ideal method for preaching to this rootless generation. Story has enough distance to engage the listener's attention and enough power to make the gospel experiential. Story preaching is pitched to the right hemisphere of the brain or the imaginative area of the mind. This brings participation by the story listeners.

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A caution is offered by Richard Lischer who writes, "Preachers in particular have been overtaken by a naive estimation of the simplicity of storytelling, as though

59

Frederick Buechner, Telling the Truth (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977); A Room Called Remember (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984).

60

Fred B. Craddock, Overhearing the Gospel (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978).

61

Richard A. Jensen, Telling the Story (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980).

stories bear a self-evident quality not possessed by other rhetorical forms."<sup>62</sup>

James Earl Massey, an accomplished speaker in his own right, opens the door to better understanding of the homiletical task from the perspective of black preaching. It has long been known that black preachers excel in imaginative preaching through memory and story.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, two dissertations have been helpful in this study, both from the McCormick Theological Seminary. They are testimonies to the usefulness of storytelling in the context of the local church.<sup>64</sup>

### Self-Image

Much of the material for self-image will come from the small-church literature. Aside from this, several books in social psychology will be useful in defining the terms self-esteem and self-image.

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Richard Lischer, "The Limits of Story," Interpretation 38 (1984): 26-38.

63

James Earl Massey, The Responsible Pulpit (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 1974).

64

David M. Crow, "Storytelling and Church Revitalization" (D. Min. diss., McCormick Theological Seminary, 1980); Stuart E. Whitney, "An Inquiry in the use of Story as a Means of Creating Community" (D. Min. diss., McCormick Theological Seminary, 1981).

Morris Rosenberg, traces the development of one's self-esteem from four elements: reflected appraisals, social comparison, self-attribution, and psychological centrality. Rosenberg's well-known ten point scale was first used with adolescents in the Baltimore public school system.<sup>65</sup>

Another useful inventory is Stanley Coopersmith's twenty-five point questionnaire used mostly with adolescents. He contends that self-esteem is primarily formed by parental modeling and instruction.<sup>66</sup> Wells and Marwell reviews the field of psychological self-esteem tracing both the historical and theoretical developments of the study. Their detailed definitions of the self-concept will be helpful to this project.<sup>67</sup>

Most of the self-esteem material is psychologically oriented and is outside the scope of this study. However, one experiment might interest the researcher in this field. Peter Perrotta and John A. Meacham administered an experiment among older persons attending a senior center in Buffalo, New York. The authors programmed a regular schedule

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Morris Rosenberg, Conceiving the Self (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

66

Stanley Coopersmith, The Antecedents of Self-Esteem (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1967).

67

L. Edward Wells and Gerald Marwell, Self-Esteem: Its Conceptualization and Measurement (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1976).

of reminiscing for therapeutic reasons among one of three groups (two were control groups).<sup>68</sup> The results were inconclusive, a characteristic outcome of most psychological self-esteem interventions the writer has reviewed. The whole self-esteem field, by the researchers' own admissions, is hampered by imprecise definitions and inadequate methods of measurement.

It is apparent that an abundance of material is available to the researcher who studies the self-image of the small church. After assimilating the information, one can begin to identify some premises on which to build a research project.

#### Assumptions

Out of the review of literature, four assumptions are evident:

1. The small church is a unique species. The conclusion from small church researchers is that the small church is a different species from the mid-sized or large church simply because it is a single-cell organism. This assumption is basic to all other areas of small church

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Peter Perrotta and John A. Meacham, "Can a Reminiscing Intervention Alter Depression and Self-Esteem?" International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 14 (1981-82): 23-30.

research, either in this study or in others, in church programming and in denominational expectations.<sup>69</sup>

2. A low self-image is characteristic of the small church. From the writer's research, at least 31 reasons for low self-image in the small church have been identified.<sup>70</sup> Schaller makes the point, "If there is something approaching a universal beginning point for small-membership churches seeking to plan for tomorrow, it is strengthening the self-image,"<sup>71</sup> Loren B. Mead, director of the Alban Institute, says in a preface to a book on the small church, "In the Protestant denominations, particularly, small, economically marginal or sub-marginal congregations provide more worries for clergy and executives than any other single issue."<sup>72</sup> Almost every book and journal article in the field reiterates the insight that "many a small-membership church suffers from a feeling of little worth. Its sense of discouragement and defeat is a millstone around its neck. Leaders may believe there is little for small-membership

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Schaller, pp. 27-41.

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A fuller exploration of these reasons will be made in chapter two.

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Schaller, p. 58.

72

Loren B. Mead in Unique by Dudley (from the introduction).



churches to celebrate, little to hope for, and little reason<sup>73</sup> to think that anyone would want to join the church."

3. Memory is part of the natural rhythm of the small church. The traditions, seasonal activities, and major events are especial times of celebration among the members of the small church congregation. The lives of pastor and people are recalled, including humorous or embarrassing moments. Dudley describes the small church, in this respect, as "carriers of history."<sup>74</sup> He says, in another place, "Small churches typically find their identity in the shared experiences of the past. Because the small church looks to the past, it differs from the larger congregations<sup>75</sup> in its perception of time and of space." Another churchman articulated the flipside of this principle as he investigated problematic churches, not necessarily small ones:

Lack of a sense of history is a major source of the trapped feeling people get in congregations. Congregations which do not know their history are in bondage to the whim of the moment. They have no anchor in their own traditions and experience, and they are closed off from a perspective that would let them see where they are in order to make responsible choices about where they want to go.<sup>76</sup>

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Crandall and Sells, p. 9.

74

Dudley, in New Possibilities by Walrath, p. 53.

75

Dudley, Unique, p. 10.

76

Loren B. Mead, New Hope for Congregations (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), p. 94.

4. Story is the natural bridge between memory and identity, between the past and the future. Story is essential to discover meaning and self-identity in the contemporary world. One theologian states:

To live without a story is to be disconnected from our past and our future. Without a story we are bound to the immediacy of the moment and we are forever losing our grip on the reality of our own identity with the passage of discrete moments.<sup>77</sup>

Story is a biblical, intergenerational, exercise, commanded by God in both testaments. The recital of the passover story merged the past with the present and sowed seeds for shaping the future for newer generations. One author contends that the Jewish writers were convinced that a recital of the acts of God in Israelite antiquity "contained lessons for the shaping of contemporary and future events."<sup>78</sup>

Another writer states that the recital of history assisted the new generation to find self-identity. But this identity is located within the individual's community. And so, "if we are to understand and individual's unique personhood...it is necessary to study the complex traits that make up his community."<sup>79</sup>

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Charles E. Winquist, p. 2.

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Navone, Tellers, p. 2.

79

Sydney E. Mead, p. 11.

The Lord's Supper in the New Testament was commanded by the Lord to be kept until His return. The word anamnesis indicates not only remembrance, but also rehearsal, or an acting out of an event. And indeed, communicants act out the Lord's Supper through symbols and actions.

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After examining these themes that are central to this study, a statement can now be formulated which will guide the reader in the remaining chapters.

### Hypothesis

The four previous assumptions direct us to this theory: story has power to bring hope and renewal to the small congregation. Therefore, the hypothesis of this proposal is that a carefully constructed project of history-gathering and story-recital will improve congregational self-image of a small church.

In order to clearly communicate the meanings of the main ideas contained in this hypothesis and in other aspects of this study, a series of definitions will be offered.

### Definitions

Self-image. A person's or group's perception of itself, and in this case, a small congregation's perception.

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Colin Brown, ed., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), pp. 244-245. See Luke 22:19, I Cor. 11:24-25.

In this study, the term self-esteem will be used as a synonym.

Self-esteem. Essentially, this term is used to define how well a person likes himself or how one perceives his worth. The writer will use the term in the same sense as the authors in the small church literature use it. Self-esteem, in this sense, will refer to the group's perception of who they are, or the group's discernment of their importance in the community and in the larger whole of the denomination.<sup>81</sup>

Story Theology. In the field of theology, story is a particular approach to understand the power of narrative to transfer theological meaning, and to discover self-identity.<sup>82</sup>

Narrative Theology is a synonym.

81

The term self-esteem is a sub-set of the self concept. It means, essentially, that a person looks at oneself and makes a value judgment on that self. Closely related to the term self-esteem is self-image. It is simply the self a person believes himself to be or the self a group believes itself to be. No value judgement needs to be made on that image. The difference between these two terms is the additional sense of worthiness or unworthiness the term self-esteem embraces. The writers in the field of the small church use the two terms interchangeably. Thus, the writer's use of these two terms will be in the non-technical sense. See Rosenberg, pp. 5, 8; David Statt, Dictionary of Psychology (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1981), pp. 111-112.

82

The broad span of story theology can be seen in Sutphin's statement about Harvey Cox as a synthesizer. He says, "His methodology, which is typical of the cultural or story theologian, makes use of a variety of perspectives and disciplines such as personal biography and experience, soc-

Story Preaching. The application of story theology and the principles of storytelling to the discipline of preaching.

History-recital. A term coined to include history-gathering and storytelling. It is an expansion of storytelling to include drama, visual arts, fine arts, crafts, and other media as means to communicate significant events in the life of the congregation.

Small church. In this research paper, a small church is one that averages 75 or less in morning worship. Carl Dudley, in another approach to the definition of the small church, views the small church as a single-cell primary group. Although the term "small" in his sociological definition is relatively accurate, nevertheless, since statistics are readily available, a numerical definition is still the most practical one. <sup>83</sup> Furthermore, the term small church in this study denotes the typical church, mostly rural, or small town, having been established long enough to have a sense of history.

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iology, phenomenology, history, symbolic analysis, comparative religions, ecumenical understanding, scientific technology, and theology." Sutphin, Options, p. 11.

83

The writer settled for a numerical definition for the purpose of simplicity. Ray's ten-point definition is cumbersome. Dudley's definition of a "single caring cell embracing the whole congregation" (Effective, p. 35), needs further explanation. It seems that a definition that

Declining environment. This term means social factors in a geographical area that lead to a decline in population, economy, housing and land use.<sup>84</sup>

Static environment. This is the writer's term that refers to social factors in a geographical area that lead to a static population, economy, housing, and land use.

Because of the practical nature of the project, these definitions are slanted to the most utilitarian usages of the particular terms. After making these distinctions, one further step needs to be made in order to make this first section complete--a description of the methodology.

### Methodology

Two questions are pertinent here. The first is, how does the researcher in small church studies utilize the

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tallies 150 to 200 members is really describing mid-sized churches. Recently, several pastors of Wesleyan churches met for a large church conference in Phoenix. To be admitted to the club, one must pastor a church of 500 or above average attendance in the Sunday school, Wesleyan Advocate, July 15, 1985. So the discussion expands to a definition of a small church, mid-sized church, or a large church. The figure of 75 or below in average worship attendance more nearly fits the small church. Schaller helps us here by saying that "one-fourth of all protestant congregations on this continent have fewer than thirty-five people in attendance at the principle weekly worship service, and one-half average less than seventy-five" in Different, p. 11.

84

Hoge and Roozen use the term "contextual." Jackson W. Carroll simplifies it to "local factors external to the church" in "Understanding Church Growth and Decline," Theology Today, 35 (1978): 70-80.

material in the theoretical framework to initiate a story-recital project within one small church congregation? The second is, how does one measure the impact of the project on the members of that congregation?

To begin with, an effective project would engage the total participation of the people--children, youth, and adults. The project would seek to involve those who are part of the church but not attending such as the shut-ins. It would involve former lay and clergy members who could share their memories with the present congregation.

The development of the project would be based on Fackre's distinction between history and story, a distinction which will be further considered in chapter three of this study. Fackre says that in a narrow sense history is "a chronicle of events based on emperical investigation."<sup>81</sup> Story utilizes these historical events but under the control of a narrator, so that the events are arranged in a plot according to the narrator's vision. In its more narrow focus, story becomes "an account of characters and events in a plot moving over time and space through conflict toward resolution, [emphasis mine]. From this distinction between history and story, the project would be divided into

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81  
Fackre, p. 5.

82  
Ibid.

two parts--history gathering and story-telling. The first part would feature the gathering and recording of events in the history of the church. The sources would include written records, diaries, journals, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings and oral history. As the historical facts would be sifted, stories and our story would emerge. This would lay the foundation for the second phase. The participants would tell the story using sermons, drama, and visual arts.

Members of the Congregational Reflection Group, a committee chosen earlier to aid this writer in his involvement in the D. Min. graduate program at Asbury, would divide responsibility to implement the two phases of the project. Three sub-group visual projects would be created to enhance the telling of the story. The women of the Wesleyan World International (WWI-the missionary society) would fashion a "family-of-God" quilt. The youth would build a wooden model of the original frame church. The children would help assemble a story banner to be used in a children's program in the spring. The two phases of the project would culminate in a series of celebrative services using the varied forms of story to illustrate our story.

In looking back on the completed project, one can say it followed these proposed guidelines quite precisely. One addition was made to provide the participants with illustrative material. A fund of slides and prints were made of church-related photographs.



Secondly, an effective project would measure the whole adult population of the congregation. A pre-test/post-test would be utilized to measure the self-image of the church before and after the project was implemented. The Matheny questionnaire would be adapted and used to measure the self-image. As a matter of fact, additional measurements were utilized to help gauge the effects of the project. A nearby United Methodist Church agreed to be a control group, taking both the pre-test and post-test. In addition, a one-page questionnaire was utilized 17 weeks after the completion of the project, and an eight question personal interview schedule was administered between the 26th and 34th week following the completion of the project. It was thought that both the additional information and the larger time gaps between the conclusion of the project and the administration of the additional questionnaire would aid the researcher in evaluating any permanent results. A complete description of the project will appear in chapter four of this study, and the results of the questionnaires will appear in chapters five and six of this study.

Before one can describe the projects and its results, a consideration of self-image in the small church would be helpful. Further, one hopes to capitalize on one of the strengths of small church members--the power of memory. That will be the subject of the next two chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Small Church and Self-Image

As has been previously noted in this study, the small church has its particular strengths and weaknesses. It is not within the scope of this study to give a complete and balanced picture of the small church. Others have done that quite well in the several volumes on the subject. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to acquaint the reader with one particular problem, that of low self-image common in small congregations and to propose one beginning point of renewal from among many that are possible.

#### General Characteristics, Benefits, and Impediments

The structure of the small church has been characterized as relational or personal rather than functional; that is, people care about people.<sup>1</sup> Persons are more important

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Paul O. Madsen, The Small Church--Valid, Vital, Victorious (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1975), p. 29; Ronald K. Crandall and L. Ray Sells, There's New Life in the Small Congregation (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1983), p. 93; Lyle E. Schaller, The Small Church Is Different (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), p. 19; Douglas Alan Walrath, New Possibilities for Small Churches (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983), p. 47.

than creeds or liturgical forms. The small church is a single caring-cell, with interrelated family ties.<sup>2</sup> Members of small churches are conservators of the past; memories of special occasions are preserved, and the church building is a treasury of history.<sup>3</sup> The small church is a carrier of history that emphasizes continuity instead of change.<sup>4</sup>

Because of these characteristics, the small church has its benefits. Everyone knows everyone else and all have a sense of family where everyone is needed and appreciated.<sup>5</sup> In areas of administration and worship, the leadership style is simple and efficient. The application of teaching and preaching is immediate and practical.<sup>6</sup> The pastor is a friend and "lover," a generalist rather than a specialist.<sup>7</sup>

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Crandall and Sells, p. 1; David R. Ray, Small Churches are the Right Size (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982), pp. 44-45; Schaller, pp. 21, 34; James E. Cushman, Beyond Survival (Parsons, West Virginia: McClain Printing Co., 1981), p. 4.

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Ray, p. 48; Walrath, New Possibilities, p. 53; Carl S. Dudley, Making the Small Church Effective, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), p. 75; Cushman, p. 4.

4

Walrath, New Possibilities, p. 53.

5

Douglas Alan Walrath, Finding Options for Ministry in Small Churches, (New York: Professional Church Leadership (NCC), 1981), p. 2; Ray, p. 43.

6

Ray, pp. 49-50.

7

Ray, pp. 50-51; Carl S. Dudley, Unique Dynamics of the Small Church, (Washington, D. C.: The Alban Institute, 1977), p. 18.

The small church is durable despite outside pressure to  
change its simple styles.<sup>8</sup>

Its impediments are many. Small churches are blemished  
with a penchant for insufficient programs, inadequate wor-  
ship resources, and unskilled leaders. They are often dis-  
regarded as unimportant by denominational leaders.<sup>9</sup> Often  
the property is marked by deterioration and obsolescence.<sup>10</sup>  
The small church has a history of short-term pastorates.<sup>11</sup>  
Outsiders often see the small church as an unsociable and  
parochial institution that is irrelevant to the life of the  
community.<sup>12</sup> It is sometimes looked upon by denominational  
leaders as resistant to interventions and programs for co-  
operative ministries.<sup>13</sup> Especially when compared with its  
larger and more affluent cousin in the suburbs, the small

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<sup>8</sup>  
Walrath, Options, p. 23; Schaller, p. 28; Dudley,  
Effective, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup>  
Madsen, pp. 19-27; Thomas Newman, "Administration and  
the Rural Church," Church Administration, 26 (Jan. 1984):  
24-25.

<sup>10</sup>  
Crandall and Sells, p. 93; Ray, p. xii; Cushman,  
p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>  
Jackson W. Carroll, ed., Small Churches are  
Beautiful (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 109.

<sup>12</sup>  
Madsen, p. 37.

<sup>13</sup>  
Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>14</sup>  
Walrath, Options, p. 25.

church carries a psychological scar of low self-esteem. This latter impediment is the focus of the rest of the chapter.

### Causes of Low Self-Image

Almost every recent volume on the subject of the small church refers to the phenomenon of low self-image. The reasons are many but can be grouped into four aspects of congregational life: leadership, sacred space, environment, and group problems.

#### Leadership

The first aspect of congregational life affected by low self-image relates to leadership in the small church. To begin with, pastors and lay leaders may not be aware of the strengths intrinsic in smallness. Small groups, despite their limitations are durable entities. These groups are more intimate, more informal, and more caring than larger groups. Larger groups have more influence, more power to change the environment, and more visibility. Because larger churches are more influential and more visible, they attract more attention from denominational leaders; the intimacy and durability of small churches are valuable, but

are also often overlooked. Pastors need to take a second look at the possibilities in the vineyard in which they labor.<sup>16</sup>

Not only quality, but quantity is a factor. Sheer numbers make the small church nearly a majority. Schaller makes the point that "if the average attendance at the service is used to measure size, one half of all Protestant churches in the United States and Canada average fewer than seventy-five at worship and a fourth average fewer than thirty-five at worship."<sup>17</sup> Leaders who are not cognizant of these factors will miss opportunities for ministry based on present strengths yet undiscovered.

A lack of communication contributes to low self-image. Members of small groups assume the persons within that group know all that is happening, when this assumption may not be true. Information, in a more structured setting such as a larger group, flows on a regular schedule through anticipated channels. Often the small congregation issues information in spasms, leaving the impression that the leadership has only a casual interest in the affairs of the congregation.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>  
Schaller, p. 58.

<sup>17</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>  
Ibid., p. 59.

Coupled with this is the lack of long-range planning. Goal setting is viewed as unnecessary, partly because of past disappointments when goals were consistently not met. Unrealistic planning tends to stifle initiative in future goals and programs. The doubtful future of a congregation dampens enthusiasm for strategy. Also, so many times, the pastor and congregational leaders are too busy "putting out fires" and otherwise meeting current needs to arrange for long range planning, and this in turn may have the appearance of negligence.<sup>19</sup>

The small church is chronically short of resources such as money, new ideas, and skilled workers.<sup>20</sup> Aversion to new ideas is partly caused by the failures of the past.<sup>21</sup> People in small churches often assume incorrectly that leadership in small groups is innate rather than developed or that training brought into a small church from the secular world will suffice. Leaders, therefore, often fail to provide leadership training for lay workers.<sup>22</sup>

Improper handling of conflict can cause discouragement among the members of a small congregation. One reason is

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19

Ray, pp. 170-174.

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Madsen, pp. 17-19.

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Crandall and Sells, p. 97.

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Ray, pp. 152-153.

the close network of kinship and friendship in the church and in the community, and the interconnectedness between the two.<sup>23</sup>

One variant of this is a factor stressed by Dudley:

In issues of great intensity, the primary group does not manage the conflict, they fight.

They can afford to fight, because they are not held together by rational commitments, nor the outcome of any particular decision. The ties that hold most small churches are in their past: family and people, space and territory, history and tradition, culture carrying in the Christian faith.<sup>24</sup>

This means that larger groups handle conflict through more structured means, but the primary group has a more direct, a more open method. Nevertheless, conflict, ineptly managed, can be cancerous in a primary group because of the intensity of relationships and the interconnectedness of family ties.

Pastoral discouragement contributes to a low self-image in a small congregation.<sup>25</sup> This is always a double-edged problem because the contextual problems that inhibit growth will dampen the pastor's enthusiasm; conversely, the pastor's gloom could retard congregational growth. Preaching can become uninspired and bland, or defensive, proclaiming a theology of judgment instead of a theology of grace. A discouraged shepherd will cause the people to feel neglected

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23

Ibid., pp. 168-172.

24

Dudley, Unique, p. 20.

25

Madsen, p. 47.



and worthless.<sup>26</sup> Also, the pastor's attitude toward tenure could become a problem. The small church, traditionally, has been looked upon as a stepping stone to higher service.<sup>27</sup> Crandall and Sells reflect on this pursuit:

Many small membership churches experience a passing parade of pastors, or long periods when no pastor is assigned or available. The perception grows that they only provide 'on-the-job-training programs' for a mixed variety of beginning pastors, or they are side-lines to the pursuit of education, or they are 'churches of the last resort' when no other places can be found for certain pastors.<sup>28</sup>

The pastor, being the key leader of the church, sets the pace in attitudes and understanding, which in turn motivates the people, tipping the scale of self-image accordingly.

Denominational leadership often bears its share of guilt in its perception of the small church. To some, the small church is deemed a failure because of its size and its inability to record gains in the areas of attendance and in finances.<sup>29</sup> The small church often needs subsidy to stay viable. So often the struggling small congregation has no choice in the matter. The determination to survive is very

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Ray, p. 169.

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Schaller, pp. 60-61; Ray, p. 38; Marshall Shelley, "Where Size Makes a Difference," Leadership 4 (Fall 1983): 48-49.

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Crandall and Sells, p. 92.

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Dudley, Effective, p. 15; Schaller. pp. 56-57.

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strong in these churches. When pastors are needed, "low-potential churches are left to their own devices and take the road of least resistance, accepting a person who may ask for less and who may share in the support through secular work."<sup>31</sup>

Another problem is that denominational leaders tend to come from and attend larger churches which, in turn, bends their attention and preference toward the larger church. Even denominational literature is filtered through the experience of the larger church. In countless articles written by small church pastors, the cry is for understanding and for adjustment in the denominational materials in behalf of the small congregation.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, one obvious cause of low self-image is simply the small church leadership's failure to evangelize. Madsen said it in the 70's:

Too many small churches are small, but not because of lack of potential for growth. They are small because they have not accepted the mission which is 'to go into all the world, beginning here at Jerusalem.'<sup>33</sup>

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Schaller, pp. 38, 39, 60; Robert B. Greene, "Four Priorities of the Rural Church," The Christian Ministry 14 (May 1983): 7.

31

Madsen, p. 46.

32

Crandall and Sells, p. 93.

33

Madsen, p. 44.

Crandall and Sells said it in the 80's:

Growth is possible for the small membership church. Almost 60 percent of the population of the United States claims no active association or involvement in a local church. There are persons you can reach, persons open and receptive to the gospel and to your program, ministry, and fellowship.<sup>34</sup>

Another writer believes the small church does not grow for a simple reason: if it did, the coziness of a single cell organism, where each member knows every other, would be shattered. For these, the risks from growth in numbers are too great and therefore, small congregations, perhaps unconsciously, choose to "remain who they are: a single-cell,<sup>35</sup> primary group." One can conclude, despite these difficulties, a successful missional thrust garners new families which, in turn, brings a sense of success and a higher evaluation of the self-image to the small church.

### Sacred Space

The second aspect of congregational life affected by low self-image is a small congregation's relationship to sacred space. One of the most visible problems of small<sup>36</sup> churches is the half-empty (or half-filled!) sanctuary. This difficulty is accentuated by memories of former years

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34  
Crandall and Sells, p. v.

35  
Dudley, Unique, p. 16.

36  
Schaller, p. 20.

when the pews were brimming with people on Sunday mornings. Present parishoners can carry a subliminal feeling of guilt when they associate the present situation with the former. The sense of failure saps the congregation's energies in efforts to revitalize the church. In turn, the lack of people could dampen the spirits of the pastor, producing un-inspired and unprepared preaching. Psychologically, it is true that a packed auditorium encourages inspiration, and the converse, a half-empty sanctuary fails to excite the preacher.<sup>37</sup>

Discouraged members tend to neglect church buildings. The poor appearance of church property testifies to the scarcity of people, finances, and enthusiasm. Older facilities are, for the most part, inadequate for present needs. Lack of nursery space, poor rest room locations, absence of ramps for the handicapped, or insufficient recreation areas for the youth, reflect a difficult situation for congregations who meet in older facilities.<sup>38</sup>

One other problem should be mentioned here. The history of worship and liturgy often hands the small church too much "baggage" for its size and abilities. The small congregation excels in the simplicity of worship, but often

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Ibid., p. 61.

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Crandall and Sells, p. 93.

tries to follow the pattern of larger churches without<sup>39</sup> having the resources in music or worship leadership. It is this writer's observation that this problem is accentuated when the members visit larger churches and bring back glowing reports of programs and activities simply not feasible in their small congregation. It is further compounded when members view programs on television sponsored by super-churches complete with well-trained choirs and carefully coiffured clergymen.

All these factors are related to sacred space, space that is far too ample for the present worshippers, yet sacred to the memories of the older "storytellers" of the congregation. Often this emptiness is discouraging to the pastor and people. It is space that can become neglected by lack of concern or resources. And it is space that needs a type of worship that matches the simple life-styles of the people.

### Environment

The third aspect of congregational life affected by low self-image relates to the impact of the environment on the small church. In a culture that prizes bigness and prosperity and belittles smallness and scarcity, the small church

is in an unfavorable position.<sup>40</sup> Its needs are either minimized or ignored. A twin curse exists in smallness. One is that the single-cell organism can only tolerate a small amount of growth in the network of relationships before it overloads. The other is that if the small church chooses to grow (if it is contextually possible), it ceases to be a single-cell organism.<sup>41</sup> A curious exception to all this exists in our culture. Pockets of "smallness" are still prized. People flock to see reconstructions of pioneer life or attend a small church homecoming. But realistically the small church is considered marginal by the culture, and by the community. One source speaks to this issue:

We don't expect to see the preoccupation with bigness and the admiration of the large church disappear overnight. Mass churches will characterize American Protestantism for some time to come. Across evangelical America, the dream of creating the largest and fastest-growing church is still very much alive and will remain so.<sup>42</sup>

Rapid changes in the flux of population and cultural shifts tend to bewilder leaders of small congregations.<sup>43</sup>

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Crandall and Sells, p. 90; Ray, p. 41.

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Dudley, Effective, pp. 48-51.

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Robert W. Lynn and James W. Fraser, "Images of the Small Church," in Beautiful, p. 16.

43

Crandall and Sells. pp. 91-92; Madsen, pp. 20-25; Walrath, Options, pp. 5-6.

Walrath's insights are worth noting. He says that in the years following the Second World War, especially during the 60's, the effect of population migration out of the rural areas and into the cities has eroded "the small church's traditional constituency. In fact, many churches which were not small have recently become small both in rural areas and in city neighborhoods."<sup>44</sup>

Youth are caught in this dilemma, leaving home and roots, out of necessity, to study or to work. Crandall and Sells claim this exodus hands the church a doubtful feeling about the future because of the attrition rate of its future leaders. In fact, cultural and population changes affect all kinds and all sizes of churches, but the impact on the small congregation becomes a terminal matter.<sup>45</sup>

Adding fuel to the fire is the issue of a single standard of numerical measurement for church success or failure.<sup>46</sup> Ray comments on this:

There is no question that in most religious circles the bigger church is considered the better church. Therefore, many small churches, in order to measure up, have become big churches. When a church gets large enough to measure up, however, it usually stops growing.<sup>47</sup>

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44  
Walrath, Options, pp. 5-6.

45  
Crandall and Sells, p. 92.

46  
Madsen, p. 28; Ray, pp. vii-viii.

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Ray, p. 34.

All this contextual mix of cultural and population transition must be taken seriously both by local church and denominational leadership. Walrath's research has led him to a difficult and yet fruitful discovery: "The real causes of the painful problems besetting small congregations will not be discovered by searching inside. The causes are beyond inside. Most of them originate outside the church." He considers this to be the "key discovery" of all his research in this area.<sup>48</sup>

It seems that from these insights about the critical problem of environment that no congregation, no matter its location, has ever insulated itself from the problem of change, but some churches are located in places where that change is critical to the church's survival. Contextual problems are powerful. The understanding of these environmental forces are critical to church revitalization.

### Group Problems

The fourth aspect of congregational life affected by low self-image is problems within the group. If it is true that the small church is a primary social group, then the small church takes on small group characteristics. Internal problems relating to stress within the group stand apart and now need to be considered.



Often the memories of older members are a snare to realistic assessment of decline in the church. Dudley calls this the "Abuse of Memory". That is, the memory of the inflated glory of the past brings a residue of guilt to the present: "The older members are often saddened at the memories. But the middle generation, the present church officers, often feel guilty that they cannot equal the feats of the past--even if conditions have changed."<sup>49</sup> Some who know the history well will say, "Our church will never be what it used to be." On the other hand, the memories could be painful; past failure overshadowing present victories.<sup>50</sup> In either case, the group does not project optimism toward the future because of potent memories of yesteryear.

Small groups can become closed groups. Crandall and Sells claim this is a result of a failure to evangelize: "When members no longer are concerned about reaching new people...they turn inward to themselves, and are closed to new people, new opportunities, and new ministries."<sup>51</sup>

In a closed system, such as this, visitors are not warmly welcomed; feelings of distrust arise within the group, bringing low spirituality; low spirituality affects church attendance, making it a duty instead of a joy. A

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Dudley, Effective, p. 84.

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Schaller, p. 61.

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Crandall and Sells, p. 13.

small group in this condition looks at the attendance charts and see only a bleak future. Ray summarizes this problem: "Like any church, small churches have their problems. They can be ingrown, fractious, and provincial; they can use their small size as an excuse for inactivity and mediocrity."<sup>52</sup>

Another aspect of small group life is that small groups do not satisfy everyone's ego needs. Some seek larger churches with more activity, more prestige, and expanded educational and worship programs. To these, the small group is too intimate, too powerless, and too unimportant in relation to their style of living and their goals in life.<sup>53</sup>

#### Breaking the Downward Spiral

In observing all four aspects of congregational life affected by low self-image--problems of leadership, problems related to sacred space, the impact of the environment, and internal group problems--one inevitably discovers a phenomenon of inbreeding. Madsen suggests:

Smallness can breed smallness when one studies genetics. While people may change some of their characteristics over a long period of years because of diet, better living conditions, and similar factors, it is

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Ray, p. xv.

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Ibid., p. xii.

also true that family characteristics are perpetuated. Small churches must take care that they do not produce small people.<sup>54</sup>

When the same author discusses psychological attitudes, he identifies a "descending spiral" when this inbreeding has occurred over the years.<sup>55</sup> This cyclical characteristic needs further expansion; here are some examples. If a church suffers from area outmigration because of social change, then other factors emerge that accentuate the difficulty. Having fewer people results in less money. A reduction in finances results in a curtailment of ministries and programs. This in turn makes the church less attractive to outsiders and results in fewer new families. Once again, this downward spiral results in a further reduction in people and finances. The church property deteriorates. The morale of the group is lowered, not because of one reason,<sup>56</sup> but because of several, each preying on the other.

The spiral could start at another place. If the church suffers as a result of a failure of mission to the community, the same phenomenon could occur. Fewer people mean

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Madsen, p. 44.

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Ibid., p. 33; See also Crandall and Sells, pp. 12-16. Crandall and Sells describe this decline as being in five stages: 1. Period of contentment and enough. 2. Church turned inward. 3. The Pharisaic posture--thank God we're not like them! 4. The period of blaming and fighting. 5. The death of the church.

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Madsen, pp. 53-54.

less income, a curtailment of ministries and programs, deterioration of property, all resulting in low self-image of the group. No matter where the cycle begins, the end result is the same: low morale of the group.<sup>57</sup>

Breaking the cycle has been the goal of many research projects with each researcher convinced of the effectiveness of his particular solution. Church growth writers urge members in small congregations to rouse from their slumber, canvass their community, and otherwise discover new families and innovative ways to minister to them.

The small membership churches must search again in the familiar surroundings of their highways and byways to discover the people who are unreached by the church. Leaders must listen, probe, reach, and care for new people whose needs and concerns are often neglected.<sup>58</sup>

Leadership strategy is another avenue which is offered to break the cycle of decline. Installation of organizational procedures which promise to activate the present membership, is recommended to revitalize the small church. In this leadership model, new people will be attracted to a fresh image of efficiency. The present membership is trained in new areas of leadership. Some will be surprised at their latent abilities. A host of D. Min. studies have

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Ibid., pp. 33-34.

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Crandall and Sells, p. 10.

focused on organizational principles to bring revitalization  
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to the small congregation.

Some advocate innovative worship and liturgical programs as a deterrent to the downward spiral. To these writers, the assumption that contemporary persons are immune to creative worship is a naive premise that needs to be challenged. Gibson believes that "a fundamental task for leaders of small congregations is to persuade the congregation  
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to become intentional about its liturgy." Willimon and Wilson suggest that

small churches will recover their own unique sense of mission and will restore their positive self-image only when they recover and boldly reclaim the fundamental significance of Sunday for their congregational life and for the life of the universal church....pastors of small membership churches will need to view preaching and worship leadership as their primary pastoral activities.<sup>61</sup>

Other researchers approach the problem of the downward spiral through more unique means. One study utilizes the

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Boozer, C. H. "Sustaining and Strengthening the Small Church Through Leadership Development" (D. Min. diss., McCormick Theological Seminary, 1979); D. D. Armstrong, "Leadership Development in the Small Church" (D. Min. Diss., McCormick Theological Seminary, 1980); and Donald E. Neel, "A Design for Planned Change: Collaboration of Presbytery with Small Churches: A Model for Strategy Development." (D. Min. diss., McCormick Theological Seminary, 1977), are only three such studies.

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Walrath, New Possibilities, p. 39.

61

William H. Willimon and Robert L. Wilson, Preaching and Worship in the Small Church, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), pp. 42-43.

power of storytelling in church renewal.<sup>62</sup> Others hope for revitalization through a study of the particular church environment where contextual difficulties are encountered. The hope is that out of such studies, task forces will emerge to formulate and implement corrective measures.<sup>63</sup>

Schirer and Forehand suggest cooperative ministry as an option for small church renewal. Six types are outlined: multi-church parish, yoked field, extended ministry, satellite ministry, cluster group, and shared facilities.<sup>64</sup> As a matter of fact, Walrath's insights into cooperative ministries are rather discouraging. In his report to the Program Committee for Professional Church Leadership (NCC) he summarizes his discoveries: "We have discovered over the past ten years especially, that cooperative efforts among congregations are complex and difficult to establish."<sup>65</sup> This conclusion came after Walrath and his colleagues engaged in intensive research among many denominations, but nevertheless, as Schirer and Forehand have shown, cooperative ministries

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David M. Crow, "Storytelling and Church Revitalization" (D. Min. diss., McCormick Theological Seminary, 1980).

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Walrath, Options, p. 25; Madsen, pp. 80-86.

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Marshall E. Schirer and Mary Anne Forehand, Cooperative Ministry: Hope for Small Churches (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1984), pp. 23-34.

65

Walrath, Options, p. 25.

have proved successful in many places, and remain a viable option for the small church leader.<sup>66</sup>

Efforts are made to train pastors through institutes for continuing education using materials and insights focusing on the needs of the small church. Denominational leaders are urged to create programs for helpful interventions to guide small churches through change.<sup>67</sup> Others call for a different starting point, a program of reaffirmation which seeks to find strength from within the group itself. Walrath concludes:

My experience leads me to believe that the most effective attempts to help the small church are those that concentrate energy on drawing out its assets, rather than those that assume it needs to change into something other than small in order to be viable.<sup>68</sup>

David Ray's experiment at The Trinitarian Congregational Church in Warwick, Massachusetts, was implemented using only the strength of the local congregation, without intervention from the denomination.<sup>69</sup>

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Schirer and Forehand, loc. cit.

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Walrath, Options, pp. 19-23; see also Loren B. Mead, "Judicatory Interventions Can Help Small Congregations" in New Possibilities pp. 77-87; Madsen, "Mutual Responsibilities" in Valid, pp. 109-126; Theodore H. Erickson, "New Expectations: Denominational Collaboration with Small Churches" in Beautiful, pp. 159-174; Dudley, "Are Denominations Viable?" in Effective, pp. 158-178.

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Walrath, Options, p. 24.

69

Ray, pp. 6-9.

Coupled with this emphasis on pastoral training is an emphasis on a fuller understanding of growth; churches can grow inwardly as well as outwardly.<sup>70</sup>

And so, one can see many antidotes to the downward cycle. Some suggest solutions that utilize interventions from without. Others choose to work within the strengths already in the small congregation. This emphasis on self-understanding, self-affirmation, and the more adequate comprehension of church growth, especially in the reference of the small church, is the one the writer has chosen in order to develop a relevant contextual project for his particular congregation. This is not saying that missional programs, community surveys, leadership training, emphasis on worship, and cooperative ministries are irrelevant, but only that an emphasis on reaffirmation of a small congregation, who it is, and where it is, seems to be the logical beginning point, especially for a congregation with a reasonably long history. In fact, one particular tack was chosen for the contextual project: to exploit the past in order to bring inspiration and strength to the present.

#### Reaffirmation Through Study of Roots

In recent small church writings, one observes a call to respect the past. To the authors of these writings, the

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Crandall and Sells, pp. v-vi.



starting point is not a direct plunge into outreach and leadership programming, but rather, a project of reflection on the reasons for the existence of the church. Cushman calls for a prepared time of reaffirmation which utilizes a celebration "of the history and tradition of the congregation" with "a printed history and tradition of the church, or setting aside special times of the year to celebrate the the history and traditions of the church." Further steps are the studies of doctrinal distinctives, denominational ties, the meaning and purpose of worship, and the role of the pastor as mentor to the congregation. The teaching task of the pastor includes understanding "the culture, history," and "life situations of the people" in order to help "create their own theology and worship forms."<sup>71</sup> An earlier writer shares this view, but for a more utilitarian reason. Madsen pleads with beleaguered churches who are in the midst of drastic cultural changes to stay in place and minister in light of this fact: "Churches must be conscious of the long stream of history and their responsibility for their part in it."<sup>72</sup>

Ray's experience in renewal actually started with a study of the history of his small church. He says this is

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Cushman, pp. 118-120.

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Madsen, p. 89.

important because most of the congregation "will have a personal tie with the characters and saints, holy moments and symbolic episodes that are the remembered history" and that "the maintenance and fulfillment of their shared history is in their hands."<sup>73</sup>

When speaking about rural churches, a rural-urban mission director claims the study of the past "discovers the honor of invested lives and victories at great expense" and that "new people can come to appreciate the church in light of its importance in the fabric of community life. All this will add dignity to the past and create a more positive self-image for the church."<sup>74</sup>

It is in the annual events of the small church that these shared memories contribute the cohesion and tenacity to the congregation and help it to exist in the face of change. This is why, Schaller believes, the small church that remembers "tends to be an institutionally tougher congregation than the identical size church that has minimized the importance of shared experiences."<sup>75</sup>

Carl Dudley exploits this tendency of the small church to remember the past as does no other writer in the field.

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Ray, p. 48.

74

Robert E. Wiley, "The Rural Church: Issues in the Eighties," Church Administration 26 (Jan. 1984): 21-23.

75

Schaller, p. 134.

He characterizes the small church as "carriers of history"<sup>76</sup> and this history can give leaders "a leverage for change."

It is this "identity in the shared experiences of the past" that differentiates the small congregation from the large "in its perception of time and of space."<sup>77</sup>

Dudley admits memory can be abusive: "Old, closed, ingrown, ultra-conservative, prejudiced, independent, disconnected, oligarchical, and hung up on the past" are some of the descriptive terms that relate to an abuse of mem-<sup>78</sup>

ory. Memories, which are "not as traumatic as the crisis of the passing moment," can create barriers and avoid pres-<sup>79</sup>ent responsibilities by evoking images of past glory.

Conversely, memories can be beneficial. To Dudley, the model for meaning is biblical memory that focuses on the redemptive acts of God and affirms that "we are part of an unfolding drama of faith."<sup>80</sup>

It "allows us to select from our past that experience which is useful in the present" offering "images and models of the past that inspire us in the face of immediate problems." Dudley claims that memory

<sup>76</sup>

Dudley, "The Art of Pastoring a Small Congregation," in Walrath, New Possibilities, pp. 53-54.

<sup>77</sup>

Dudley, Unique, p. 10.

<sup>78</sup>

Dudley, Effective, p. 83.

<sup>79</sup>

Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>80</sup>

Ibid., p. 83.

provides "the strongest motive for ministry in the small cell of caring Christians" because "our memory tells us more about who we are than who we were, more about our hopes and fears for the future than what really happened in the past."<sup>81</sup>

One of the projects Dudley suggests is the church shield and coat of arms. He affirms that a project of history research can have a

positive effect on the young, the elderly, the new members (by adoption into history), and on the general membership. They can be enlivened by tape recordings, photographs, and slide presentations, by congregational worship, and even by a full pageant or historical drama.<sup>82</sup>

Dudley affirms two purposes for a research project related to the history of the church:

First, these mirrors of our experience should help to the surface our unspoken feelings about church membership and our commitments to the Christian faith.... Second, by seeing who we are, in faith, we can better decide who we want to become.<sup>83</sup>

These insights were utilized by this writer when designing the contextual project for his congregation.

But mere history is not enough. The recital of events is less than inspiring to all but history aficionados and geneological buffs. One must breathe life into the array of

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81  
Ibid., pp. 85-86.

82  
Ibid., p. 88.

83  
Ibid., pp. 89-91.

historical data. History must be translated into story by its storytellers, argues Dudley, because

churches can attempt only what they can imagine. Memory grows with new experience, and tradition builds on significant events. Storytellers who remember events through the eyes of courage and hope can turn memory into ministry.<sup>84</sup>

And so, history is transported from memory to hope, from the past to the future, over the natural bridge called story.

At this point in this study, it would be well to remind the reader that, for the purposes of the research project, the focus of this chapter has centered on one problem among many that are common in the small church. Actually the small church has many sterling qualities as the writer has briefly noted. One of these is the power of treasured memories. Yet to be explored is the power of story, the medium through which memories find expression. What is so unique about memory and story which give them a preferred place in the small church? Why are stories so potent in strengthening community in congregations as the previous writers have suggested? For part of the answer, the small church researcher must turn to a study of story, the subject of the next chapter.

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Ibid., p. 86.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Story--The Natural Bridge

The supposition that story is an inseparable part of the small church congregation is not an exaggeration to the pastor of such a church. Stories are related with relish by the storytellers within these congregations. Sad stories, humorous stories, and sacred stories are all part of the warp and woof woven into a larger story, and this larger story is embedded in the congregation's history. The small church researcher needs to study the nature and power of story in order to exploit its influence in such a setting.

The development of this chapter will proceed along four lines: the characteristics of story vs. history, the nature of story (or narrative), the beginnings of the development of story theology, and, finally, the power of story. The first three are brief and introductory in nature. For the purposes of this study, the accent will be upon the fourth--the power of story.

#### Story and History

Gabriel Fackre makes a significant distinction between history and story. In its broader meaning, story "is an

account by a narrator of events and participants moving in some pattern over time and space."<sup>1</sup> This general definition includes both history and story. But in a narrower sense, history is a "chronicle of events based on emperical investigation."<sup>2</sup> Story uses these historical facts, but under the control of a narrator, so that the events are arranged into story form complete with a plot, all shaped by the narrator's vision. With this in view, story has a dimension that history lacks. In its more narrow focus, story becomes "an account of characters and events in a plot moving over time and space through conflict toward resolution"<sup>3</sup> [emphasis mine].

As Navone and Cooper demonstrate, the line between story and history is as difficult to maintain as it is to define.<sup>4</sup> But, generally speaking, history can be transformed into story. That is, the array of facts in time and memory can be examined, the narrative elements located and

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriel Facre, The Christian Story (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> John J. Navone and Thomas Cooper, Tellers of the Word (New York: LeJacq Press, 1981), pp. 3-18. These writers contend that historiography is not objectively simon pure. History has always had writers who "shape" the array of facts.

dramatically presented, all controlled by the narrator's vision.

### The Nature of Narrative

One of the early statements on narrative theology was made by Stephen Crites. Narrative, instead of being an expression of life, is rather of the essence of life. He says, "I want to argue that the formal quality of experience through time is inherently narrative."<sup>5</sup> In this essay, Crites examines another essence of human existence--music, and so it is no surprise that music and narration are always combined in primitive folk culture.

Crites draws a distinction between two types of stories--sacred and mundane. Sacred stories are not necessarily religious, but they are stories that reveal the narrator's world view. "These are stories that orient the life of people through time, their life-time, their individual and corporate experience and their sense of style, to the great powers that establish the reality of their world."<sup>6</sup> Mundane stories are the expressive elements of story embodying language, roles, scenes, and other narrative devices. But "all

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5

Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 34 (Sept. 1971): 291.

6

Ibid., p. 295.



a people's mundane stories are implicit in its sacred story, and every mundane story takes soundings in the sacred story."<sup>7</sup>

Crites then explores the "experiencing consciousness" of the self--something between the sacred story and the mundane story. Human consciousness, too, in a basic sense is narrative in form, and so "the stories give qualitative substance to the form of experience because it is itself an incipient story."<sup>8</sup>

Crites forms a distinction between memory and recollection. The memory is a sequence of events stored in the mind, so that "all the sophisticated activities of consciousness literally re-collect the images lodged in memory into new configurations, reordering past experience."<sup>9</sup> In this sense recollection rearranges memory into narrative form. The storyteller recalls the images and rearranges the sequence of events (memory) into stories. Over a period of time the same recollections, using the same memories, could take on new meanings through new insights gained during the maturation process.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>8</sup>  
Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>9</sup>  
Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid.

Crites searches the Confessions of St. Augustine to explain the phenomenon of the inner form of experience. Augustine was aware that only the present moment exists; past, present and future are really the present of things past, the present of things present, and the present of things future. And so Crites concludes:

I want to suggest that the inner form of any possible experience is determined by the union of these three distinct modalities in every moment of experience. I want further to suggest that the tensed unity of these modalities requires narrative forms both for its expression (mundane stories) and for its own sense of the meaning of its internal coherence (sacred stories). For this tensed unity has already an incipient narrative form.<sup>11</sup>

In view of this, we can see that:

Our sense of personal identity depends upon the continuity of experience through time, a continuity bridging even the cleft between remembered past and projected future.<sup>12</sup>

The burden of narrative is to tie all these modalities of the past, present, and future so that "we imbibe a sense of the meaning of our own baffling dramas from these stories, and this sense of its meaning in turn affects the form of a man's experience and the style of his action."<sup>13</sup>

Augustine provides the reader with an excellent example of the power of memory, that reaches into the past and helps

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11

Ibid., pp. 301-302.

12

Ibid., p. 302.

13

Ibid., p. 304.

shape the future. He relates the boyhood incident of his and his companions' theft of the pears from an orchard. He ponders his motives for such an act and makes some interesting observations about such behavior. This meditation was made years later after his conversion in Milan and demonstrates that an individual in a certain point of time utilizes the modality of the past to bring meaning to the present and, in the particular case of Augustine, profoundly affect the future.<sup>14</sup>

Narrative theology assumes many roles and takes on many expressions, but nearly all its exponents subscribe to the essential credo that Crites sets out in this formative essay: narrative is of the essence of human experience rather than its expression. The bridging of the past, present, and future, and the practical applications from this insight have profound implications for the understanding of the power of story.

#### Story Theology in its Beginnings

The emergence of story theology can be traced to at least two developments in modern religious studies. The first development was the effort of some to fill the vacuum left by the so-called "collapse" of biblical theology.

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14

F.J. Sheed, trans., The Confessions of St. Augustine (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1943). pp. 31-37.

15

This was the school of thought led by Wright and Albright. The second was the protest of certain avant-garde theologians against the perceived dualisms embedded in traditional Christian theology in particular and religion in general: the dualisms of sacred vs. profane, body vs. spirit, and affective vs. cognitive.<sup>16</sup>

In the first of these developments, the failure of the older biblical theologies (Albright, Wright) stemmed from the neglect of the application of textual criticism and redaction to the biblical text itself. Story theology retained the premise of the older theologies that the principle form of the Old Testament was narrative. They divided over the suppositions drawn from that premise.<sup>17</sup> In the field of canonical studies, Hans Frei offers an important mediating view--to let scripture tell its own story through its own variety of genres.<sup>18</sup>

In the second development, that of a reaction against the dualisms presented by traditional religion, several

15

James Barr, The Scope and Authority of the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), pp. 1-17.

16

Stanley T. Sutphin, Options in Contemporary Theology (Washington, D. C.: University Press of America, 1977), p. 13.

17

Sutphin, pp. 10-13; Barr, p. 3 ff.

18

Hans Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

theologians jumped into the fray with their particular brand of cultural theologies. They saw the development of humanity from a celebrating, story-telling, and singing people, to a rational, logical, and thereby unimaginative people. Thus the Dionysian person (dancing, celebrating, singing) was superseded by the Appolonian individual (logical, rational). One of these writers, Sam Keen, offers us the median Tempestivus person as the man for all seasons, one who embraces the better of the two former types. He claims: "Homo Tempestivus avoids the extremes that lead to the Apollonian and Dionysian pathologies without sacrificing the virtues of either god."<sup>19</sup>

Cox offers the reader a way to personal affirmation through festivity and fantasy; festivity that posits self-understanding in celebration of events in one's past and present, and fantasy by jubilant expressions of hope for the future.<sup>20</sup>

From this radical beginning, narration theology has galloped in all directions at once and tilted with many "windmills." But the central attraction is in the nature and power of story itself. Story through myth, traditions,

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19

Sam Keen, Apology for Wonder (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 198.

20

Harvey Cox, The Feast of Fools (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 75-81.

biography, autobiography, parable, metaphor, and other forms, has the power to tell "more than what the storyteller tells."<sup>21</sup> Story invites, teases, puzzles, intimidates, and intrigues the reader. It offers either distance or intimacy to the aroused mind. Some find religion in story, that is, in novels, drama, and even chronicles of suffering (such as the holocaust literature).<sup>22</sup> Others find story in religion.<sup>23</sup>

Narrative theology is largely unorganized because of the large spectrum of disciplines it embraces, but many believe it will eventually build a bridge across the divided theological landscape through the one unifying principle: that story has a permanent power and place, both in scripture and in human experience.<sup>24</sup>

### The Power of Story

In a sense, to understand the power of story is to grasp the heart of all narration. This section will deal

21

Amos N. Wilder, "Story and Story World," Interpretation 37 (1983): 353.

22

Wiesel, Wicker, Wiggins, et. al.

23

Crossan, TeSelle, Navone and Cooper, Facre, Beuchner, et. al. Of course a great deal of overlapping occurs between these two distinctions.

24

Thomas Finger, "What is Narrative Theology? Theologians Take a New Look at Storytelling," Christianity Today 27 (Oct. 1987): 84; Katherine Anne Cunningham, "The Conversation of Faith," Christian Ministry 17 (March 1986): 9-11.

with three aspects of story and its influence on the story-tellers and story-listeners alike. The first section will search out remembered promises; the second the power of story to find place; and the third will look at an important principle in story, the principle of selectivity.

### The Power of Remembered Promises

From the previous inquiry one discovers that a feature of story is that it spans the modalities of the past, present and future. Only those who know the promises of the past can expect the fulfillment of them. <sup>25</sup> For example, the driving force of Christianity is the expectation of the fulfillment of promises made by our Lord during His ministry on earth. Even much of the New Testament genre that speaks of the hope of the future is narrative (parables, apocalyptic visions).

The opposite is true also. The way one searches the past is controlled by the future. Those who hope turn to the past for further confirmation of the basis for that hope. For example, those who look forward to the fulfillment of eschatological promises turn again and again to the records of the promises made in the past for the purpose of reassurance. And so, it is argued, much of the hopelessness

in our culture is due to the ignorance of the promises of the past which are the basis for the Christian hope.<sup>26</sup>

One may look at a biblical pedagogical method for an illustration of hope kept alive in the hearts of a special community. The Bible itself is replete with stories and in its complete form is a story of its own. The narratives of the Old Testament are familiar, but at certain junctures in the life of Israel, Yahweh gave specific commands to repeat the stories, especially the deliverance stories. The people were to reiterate the commandments to their children daily; this constant repetition would etch the commandments into the collective memory of the community. Further, Yahweh commanded: "Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."<sup>27</sup> The visual images of "tying" and "binding" would not be lost in the imagination. And as the years would pass, the curiosity of the new generation would be aroused. When one would ask, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees, and laws?" the parent would respond with the story:

We were slaves of Pharoah in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the Lord sent miraculous signs and wonders--great

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26

Navone and Cooper, Tellers, p. 27.

27

Deut. 6:8-9 (NIV).



and terrible--upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers.<sup>28</sup>

And like all good parents, the lesson was not lost:

The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. And if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.<sup>29</sup>

Brueggemann notices a shift in mode from the question "what is the meaning?" to the answer "we were slaves of Pharaoh."

The Torah does not answer every question. It picks the ground quite selectively. The response of the adult is authoritative. It does not let the child determine the ground. But it is also honest to the child. It concedes ignorance. More than that, it honors mystery. It assures the child that there is much that we do not know, and cannot know. So the question perhaps cannot be answered in the form in which it is asked.<sup>30</sup>

The parent answers the child's question with a story. "In that way the child learns both about the deep conviction of the adult and about the precarious foundation of our faith."<sup>31</sup> Brueggemann's conviction is that story does not

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<sup>28</sup>  
Deut., 6:21-23 (NIV).

<sup>29</sup>  
Deut., 6:24-25 (NIV).

<sup>30</sup>  
Walter Brueggemann, The Creative Word (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), p. 22.

<sup>31</sup>  
Ibid.

answer every question but "it is our primal and most characteristic mode of knowledge."<sup>32</sup>

But not every story will do. It must be a select story, i.e., Israel's deliverance from Egypt. This story was built into the Passover ritual; and the essentials were preserved in the New Testament form, the Lord's Supper. In fact, New Testament believers are commanded to "rehearse" (anamnesis) the crucifixion through tangible elements of the broken bread and cup of wine. The hope of the return of Christ is kept alive through story and ritual.<sup>33</sup>

The effect of story is that it forges a community in which narrative shapes the memories and experiences of the newer generations. In fact it builds a "counter-community" --"counter to the oppression of Egypt, counter to the seduction of Canaan, counter to every cultural alternative and every imperial pretense."<sup>34</sup>

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32

Ibid., pp. 22-23.

33

I Cor. 11:24. "Every Lord's Supper is a fresh dramatization of the crucifixion," Margaret E. Thrall, The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible, I and II Corinthians (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 84; "Christians are to enact the Lord's Supper in a recollection of Jesus which has the form of active representation as the action of Jesus and the disciples are repeated," Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 56.

34

Brueggemann, Creative, p. 27.

For the Israelites, the hope of deliverance from the desert prison of Sinai to a land of plenty was kept alive by the pedagogical method of story. In a sense, this same hope of deliverance from oppression is perpetuated through black preaching. Much has been written on the subject of story preaching in recent years, but story was not a novelty to the blacks in America. James Cone says that:

The form of black religious thought is expressed in the style of story and its content is liberation... white theologians built logical systems; black folks told tales. Whites debated the validity of infant baptism or the issue of predestination and free will; blacks recited biblical stories about God leading the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, Joshua and the battle of Jericho and the Hebrew Children in the firey furnace.<sup>35</sup>

A further distinction between white and black preaching was a theological one. Because of the social oppression and injustice, the blacks did not need argumentation to prove the existence of God "because the God of black experience was not a metaphysical idea. He was the God of history, the Liberator of the oppressed from bondage."<sup>36</sup>

Other thinkers in the field of story preaching find a subtle but subversive element in story preaching. Craddock's indirect methods derived from a discovery in the life

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James H. Cone, "The Content and Method of Black Theology," Journal of Religious Thought 32 (1975): 91.

36

Ibid., p. 92.

of Kierkegaard. When a boy, Kierkegaard overheard a grandfather talk to his grandson about important and religious matters. The act of overhearing the conversation gave Kierkegaard enough distance to participate and he was deeply touched by what he heard. From this, Craddock developed a theory of preaching which seeks to kindle the imagination of the preacher and people alike (especially those who have heard the story over and over).<sup>37</sup> The form of story makes an "end run around the left hemisphere of the brain," says Jensen.<sup>38</sup> In the same vein, Jensen affirms that "people have grown weary of constant eyeball to eyeball confrontation and direct encounter...stories have a future among us."<sup>39</sup>

Not only preaching, but storytelling has benefited from the spate of interest in narrative. One source of interest is the Jewish tradition of Haggadah (truth through story) as opposed to Halakah (truth through reason). The teller of tales, usually the Rabbi, titillates the imagination of the story listener through paradox: "the way of surprise and the unexpected ending--when the hearer is caught off guard

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37

Fred B. Craddock, Overhearing the Gospel (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), p. 13 ff.

38

Richard A. Jensen, Telling the Story (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), pp. 142-143.

39

Ibid., p. 116.

and encountered by a truth unanticipated." <sup>40</sup> But one doesn't have to be Jewish to enter into the delights of tales with a theological purpose. Many evangelists in the American holiness movement were spinners of tales which held throngs entranced through the use of vivid imagination and flaming rhetoric. Who can doubt that the story listeners who sat on rough benches in the brush arbors, or who trod the sawdust trails of the tabernacles of this land were deeply affected and made significant decisions under the spell of the storyteller.

And so, whether by sermon or tale, narrative has power to stimulate hope in the remembered promises. Moreover, the mnemonic qualities of sermons well preached, or tales well told, make the experience not only instructive, but memorable.

The Power of Story to  
Find "Place"

It is not enough to remember the past and anticipate the future. What about the "present of the present" (using Fackre's terminology)? Amos Wilder challenges the story listener to put memory to use. Memory, Wilder says, "must structure this impermanence and 'place' us in this or that

reassuring pattern or chart or story which can thus also illuminate the present and the future."<sup>41</sup>

One of the pervasive problems of our time is that of self-identity in a pluralistic society. As Sydney E. Mead has pointed out, the problem is acute not only because modern man has so many groups to identify with ("family, church, gang, student body, faculty, university, ethnic group, state, nation, Western Civilization, Christendom, humankind, the animal kingdom, the universe") but because one must choose "a mythical or historical community in which to find his identity."<sup>42</sup> Mead's criticism of some present forms of Christianity is that it

is no longer providing for its members a relation to the kind of transcendent community necessary for the achievement of stable identity. That this is sensed by many theological school professors and ministers is suggested by the frenetic quality of much of their writing and activity, their scrambling after fads, their bandwagon complex, and the phenomenal exodus from their ranks into 'relevant' work.<sup>43</sup>

The community Mead envisions is a universal one where individuals can identify with the rest of humanity both in the evolutionary process of the race and in the timeless universe of the future.

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Amos N. Wilder, "Story and Story World," Interpretation 37 (Oct. 1983), p. 359.

42

Sydney E. Mead, History and Identity (Missoula, Montana: Scholar's Press, 1979), p. 12.

43

Ibid., pp. 14-15.

Story promises to bring meaning to a culture starved to find a "place." The mobility of the population, at least in America, indicates a trend toward an increasingly rootless generation. This feeling of anomie is reflected in the writings of social chroniclers, novelists, dramatists, playwrights, and media producers. It is revealed in the tastes, fashions, and entertainment of people. Many long for a sense of belonging to someone or something permanent and meaningful even as the Israelites longed for a "place" throughout the years of desert wanderings. According to Brueggemann, our culture and Israel's culture share the same central problem: not meaninglessness, but rootlessness. Brueggemann assesses this problem as a failure of the "urban promise" in which

concerned persons ... could lead detached, unrooted lives of endless choice and no commitment. It was glamorized around the virtues of mobility and anonymity which seemed so full of promise for freedom and self-actualization.<sup>44</sup>

But story brings faith, for

we know in our time about the hunger for rootage and the yearning for turf. We know about the destructive power of coveting and the anxiety of displacement. And we know from time to time about gifts given and promises kept.<sup>45</sup>

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44

Walter Brueggemann, The Creative Word (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), p. 4. In a footnote, Brueggemann points a finger at Cox's The Secular City.

45

Ibid., p. 14.

And when Israel claimed the land, settled the land, and developed the land, they lost the land through the same cycle of problems most landed people face. They failed to remember the past. The desert was far away, buried in the consciousness of former generations. The record of deliverance was hidden in a closet in the temple. But when the people again wandered throughout the nations of the world, the same yearning for "place" returned. The cry of the exiles speaks eloquently:

How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?  
 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill.  
 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.<sup>46</sup>

The communal quest for "place" is not the only journey in human experience. Self-identity is a personal quest as well. Michael Novak characterizes it as a "voyage" of the self; a passage into the inner discoveries of the person. He defines religion rather broadly. The term does not necessarily embrace only theists, but it does embody a self's longing after the awesome and mysterious in all of life's experiences.<sup>47</sup>

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Psa. 137:4-5 (NIV).

47

Michael Novak, Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), pp. 2-4.



Novak describes this process into religious awareness as being a spiral (rather than layers) of ascending experiences with a series of plateaus called "standpoints." Standpoints embrace six progressive and illuminating components: experience, imagination, insight, consciousness, self-criticism, and consciousness expressed in deeds.<sup>48</sup> The ascent up the mountain is not merely an act of the will, but includes occasional serendipitous experiences that lift the soul upward. Novak characterizes this phenomenon as "the flight of the dove."<sup>49</sup>

Religion is a conversion from the profane to the sacred --that is, from the visceral and practical to the imaginative and celebrative, although not completely excluding the profane, for the sacred, too, has its earthy dimensions.<sup>50</sup> The clarifying principle, to Novak, is a shift from "ideas" to "imagination in which those ideas are rooted, and through which they contact the concrete world of human experience." In fact, "experience, imagination, and remembered and projected action (story) are, in several respects, prior to ideas, notions, and theoretical propositions."<sup>51</sup>

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48

Ibid., pp. 16-24.

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Ibid., p. 59.

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Ibid., pp. 32-42.

51

Ibid., p. 57.

But whether communal or personal, the cutting off of the past withers the vine of hope for the future. In the words of Navonne, the "integrating structure" of the present is story

that organizes our feelings and forms a sense of continuous identity with our past and our future. Story brings a temporal context of meaning to the immediacy of the moment; otherwise, we would be forever losing our grip on the reality of our own identity with the passage of discrete moments.<sup>52</sup>

### The Principle of Selectivity

One of the more satisfying aspects of memory is the privilege and power of selectivity. Memories can be triggered by chance encounters with sights, sounds, people, and other stimuli in one's experience. A far-away train whistle could evoke long buried childhood memories. The smell of hot yeast bread could release a flood of home-oriented memories.

Frederick Buechner speaks of memories. He writes about a dream in which he checked into a hotel room. In this room he felt comfortable and happy, but as dreams do, the images changed and he found himself in another room. This time he felt strange and lonely. He went to the desk and inquired whether the first room was yet available. The clerk said it

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Navone, Toward, p. 39.

was always available; all one had to do was to ask for it by name. "The name of the room" the clerk told him, "was Remember."<sup>53</sup>

Buechner builds a sermon around this vision. One kind of memory, he says, surprises us by their appearance. We encounter them by chance, either happily or sorrowfully. But in "the room called Remember...we can enter whenever we like so that the power of remembering becomes our own power."<sup>54</sup> It is not memories that pop up willy-nilly in our consciousness that, for the most part, shape our lives and our conduct; but it is, rather, the stories we intentionally choose to remember that have the power to change us.

In one sense, our search for meaningful stories depends on our vision of the future. "We will find in the past whatever we seek for the future," declares Navone and Cooper. "If what we seek is trivial, the past we discover will be trivial. If what we seek is noble, what we find will be splendidly human."<sup>55</sup>

Memories can enrich us or debase us. "Hate-memories" are perverse in that the passions they arouse and the associations they recall blind one to the good and beautiful of

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Frederick Buechner, A Room Called Remember (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 3.

54

Ibid., p. 5.

55

Navone and Cooper, Tellers, p. 27.

the present. Hate-memories, by accenting the worst in any person, race, or nation, actually perpetuate "evils and human failures," say Navonne and Cooper. Hate-memories can focus attention on the sins of others, blinding one from one's personal sin and guilt. Therefore, "every woman and every man and every society" are "responsible to future generations for the way in which the past is viewed."<sup>56</sup>

The stories we embrace impact our attitudes and ethical behavior. The principle of selectivity is inherent in McClendon's theological method which proposes to shape one's theology through select biography. But not every life can be utilized by the biographer. One must choose persons carefully. McClendon declares that among peoples "there appear from time to time singular or striking lives, the lives of persons who embody the convictions of the community, but with new scope or power."<sup>57</sup> This selectivity is guided by the biographer's perception of ethical character. That the biographer exercises subjective judgment in choosing the proper personality is a critical insight made by Stroup. He shows a concern for who will make the choice of the proper individual to be presented to the community as

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56

Ibid., p. 30.

57

James W. McClendon Jr., Biography as Theology (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), p. 37.

a worthy individual to follow. Nevertheless, Stroup sees merit in McClendon's theological method.<sup>58</sup>

The ultimate story, for the Christian, is not a story of saints or striking personalities: it is the story of God. Although the Christian storyteller is conditioned by traditions and community (church) life, the focus is on the story of Jesus--a story that shapes both traditions and the community, and spans the past and future with hope.<sup>59</sup>

The thrilling message that scripture reveals is that the focus of God's attention is not on Himself, but upon man. "We are the story God tells," says Shea, and "the conviction that we are God's story releases primordial impulses and out of a mixture of beligerance, gratitude, and imitation we return the compliment. We tell stories of God."<sup>60</sup> In a personal and redemptive sense, without man, God would have no story-listeners.

In chapter 2 the writer has examined the areas of the small church which are linked with the problem of low self-image. In persuing the subject of the small church, the investigation has also shown commendable elements, one of

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George W. Stroup III, "A Bibliographical Critique," Theology Today 32 (1975): 135-137.

59

Navone and Cooper, Tellers, pp. 246-263.

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John Shea, Stories of God: An Unauthorized Biography (Chicago: Thomas More Press. 1978), p. 8.

which is the hallowing of memories which are expressed through story. The exploration of story has been the subject of the present chapter. So this brings us to the description of the contextual project where one congregation, through narration, visual arts, and applied arts seek, first, to discover story, and second, to share it with others.

In a community of faith, it is important to rehearse those intertwining stories, the story of God and the stories of His people as they shape their existence according to the vision of the overarching story of hope for their lives. It is a room where anyone can enter at will. It is a room to ask for by name. It is a room called Remember.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Contextual Project

This chapter will describe the planning, development and implementation of the contextual project. The chapter begins with a brief description of the church's context and continues with a report of the congregation's activities during the history-gathering, story-telling project. The major source for the particularities of the varied activities were taken from this writer's daily entries in his Journal.

#### The Context

To acquaint the reader with the setting in which the contextual project was carried out, descriptions of the denomination, the local church, and the environment are offered.

#### The Denomination

The Wesleyan Methodist Church was organized in Utica, New York in 1843 in response to the Methodist Episcopal Church's failure to oppose slavery. The present denomination came about by means of several mergers, the most notable being between The Wesleyan Methodist Church and the

Pilgrim Holiness Church in 1968. Historically, the denomination emphasized moral and social reform, and later holiness or Christian perfection, but more recently the accent has been on church growth through evangelism and missions.<sup>1</sup>

### The Church

The Bakers Corner Wesleyan Church was organized in 1870 by the circuit pastor J. W. Hiatt with 35 members, 33 of whom were converted in a series of fiery revival services held in a nearby Wesleyan Methodist Church. The church was first called Liberty Wesleyan Methodist Church and initially met in a log cabin in the village until a suitable wooden frame building was built in 1871. It was a one-room structure lighted first with kerosene lamps and later with gas lamps. It was heated by two pot-belly stoves that stood in the center of the church.

The present building was constructed in 1917. It is a brick veneer structure with a seating capacity of 125. Sunday school rooms are on the first floor, adjacent to the sanctuary, and in the full basement. Recently the church has enhanced the sanctuary with a series of improvement projects. The church was part of a circuit of four churches, (for a few years five, and once six), one of which was

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Lee Haines Jr., "A History of the Indiana Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1867-1971" (Th.M. Diss., Christian Theological Seminary, 1973), pp. 1-18.



a free black church, the center of a rural black community. The circuit continued until 1929. The present parsonage was willed to the church in 1934 upon the death of a beloved member of the congregation.

### The Environment

The church building is located in Adams Township, Hamilton County, Indiana, which had a 1980 population of 4307, half of whom live in nearby Sheridan, a town 4.7 miles due west of Bakers Corner. A cluster of 15 homes surround the church and farms surround the village on every side.

The population in the township grew until the turn of the century, then declined steadily until 1950. Since 1950 the population has stabilized. The attendance at the church grew until 1917, then declined until the 70's. Since then, church attendance has remained about 40 to 50.

The community is no longer a business center. The era is now past when the community supported a school, a physician's office, a blacksmith shop, a telephone exchange, and a thriving general merchandise store. The church and the sorghum mill, which operates for only a few weeks each year, are the lone survivors.

### The Work of the Congregational Reflection Group

The Congregational Reflection Group (CRG) was organized November 14, 1982, following this writer's first involvement

in the D. Min. program at Asbury Theological Seminary. At that time, seven members (four men and three women) of the congregation were selected to work with the pastor in planning and implementing a contextual project suitable to the needs of the people. Dr. Wayne Goodwin, the then director of the D. Min. studies at the seminary, came November 20, 1982 for his on-site visit and CRG orientation. Subsequently, the group met 21 times over a span of 4 years. Included in this time-span was a 15-month period of inactivity due to a restructuring of the project in 1985. A fellow Wesleyan pastor in the same district as Bakers Corner was secured in February, 1984 as an on-site supervisor, but mostly as a consultant to this writer.

The CRG began as a support group for the pastor in his involvement in research on the small church, continued as a resource group in shaping a research questionnaire for the project, but concluded as a task group to implement the approved project. When this task phase began, the history-gathering effort was given to the whole group, but later more specific assignments were made. The group began its work following the pre-test given November 10, 1985. The ideas for two of the three sub-group projects were submitted for consideration and approval. The Wesleyan Women's International (WWI) were to make a Family-of-God quilt. The Junior Department were assigned a children's story banner. The third project was kept secret from all but one member of

the CRG, the person who was to oversee the project. Only the seven persons working on the project knew about it. It was thought the secrecy would increase the suspense in the project and build interest in the presentation service. This project would be a wooden model of the original frame church. The historical information would flow from the CRG to the sub-group leaders who would use the information to shape the particular project.

The group began its work in a general fashion but tasks became more specific in early spring. A two-and-one-half-hour meeting was held Saturday March 31, 1986 to finalize the story-telling phase of the project. The history of the church was divided up into four 30-year periods representing four phases of the church's history:

1870-1899, "The Early Years"

1900-1929, "The Years of Growth"

1930-1959, "The Years of Challenge"

1960-1986, "The Years of Struggle"

The sources would prove to be church records, newspaper files, diaries, written histories, personal interviews, and family records, including photographs related to the life of the church. Using a 35 mm. camera equipped with a zoom lens, slides would be taken of various photographs illustrating various aspects of church life. This file would be made available to the CRG for use in their presentations. The visual aspects of the project would be supplied by the

slides, drama, sub-group projects, displays, and other memorabilia such as the church secretarial and treasury records.

The CRG met informally many times as they shaped the presentations. Four services were planned by the group to present the story (and stories) of the life and history of the church:

1. In order to acquaint the congregation with the Methodist roots, a guest would be invited to present this information at some date in May, 1986.

2. In order to teach the children about the stories from the congregational life, a "Children's Day Exercises" was planned for the evening of June 1, 1986.

3. A worship service was planned for Sunday morning, June 8, 1986; a church historian would be invited to speak to the congregation.

4. The finale would be the CRG's presentation of the church's history using narration illustrated by slides. This presentation would take place the afternoon of June 8, 1986.

The CRG members became deeply involved in the assigned tasks and various sub-group projects. Five presenters began gathering the material for their narrations. They combed through church records, newspaper microfilms, scrapbooks, diaries, district church records, and photographs. They engaged others in sharing memories by means of interviews,

telephone calls, and casual conversations. Both slides and prints were made from selections from the borrowed collections. A history file was started where material could be arranged for use by the CRG.

### The Instruments

The questionnaire formed by the pastor, CRG, and consultants was not used in the contextual project. Instead, a questionnaire used by Judy Matheny of the Hinton Rural Life Center, Hayesville, North Carolina was selected and administered both as a pre-test on November 10, 1985 and a post-test July 13, 1986. In the original survey by Matheny, the questionnaire was filled out by 374 United Methodist leaders from 136 churches in the Southeastern Jurisdiction of that denomination. To each of the 136 churches, the questionnaire was self-administered by 1) the pastor 2) one layman 3) one lay-woman, and 4) one youth, all assumed to be the leaders in the congregations. The results of this study were published in February 1980 under the title, "A Study of Some Vital Churches."

Following the post-test in July, a one-page questionnaire was administered to the whole Bakers Corner congregation. This questionnaire was taken from the Matheny instrument, but focused on the project itself instead of the general self-image of the church.

The final instrument consisted of interviews with members of the congregation using a schedule consisting of eight questions. The instrument was designed to give opportunity for free expression of opinion.

### The Sub-Group Projects

The three sub-group projects will be discussed in this section. The women's project--the Family-of-God quilt, the children's story banner, and the youth's model church were all designed to visually illustrate certain aspects of the church's life, either in the past or in the present.

#### The Family-of-God Quilt

On December 10, 1986, following the regular monthly WWI chapter meeting, the group approved the creation of a Family-of-God-Quilt which would depict in a visual form the present families of the church (see plate I, page 193). Each family of the church would create an appropriate design with the names of family members on an 8-inch square of cloth. In a subsequent meeting some members voiced misgivings because of the shortness of time, but the WWI officers resolved to organize their group and proceed with the project. The officers met with the pastor at the church February 3, 1986 to plan the quilt. The quilt would consist of 37 family squares and three center squares. Two center squares would depict the two church buildings in the congregation's history, and one the name of the present pastor.

The size of the quilt, its placement in the sanctuary (it was to be displayed as a wall hanging), and the inclusion or exclusion of representative families were all decided at this crucial meeting. This writer noted this in his Journal:

This morning I met with the WWI officers at the church and made decisions concerning the project. They decided on cream colored squares with a rust border..40 squares for 37 families. Already the project has:

1. Brought a resolve among the officers to involve themselves in the project despite the criticism.

2. Made all of us face squarely the issue of inclusion/exclusion--that is, who would be included and who would be excluded on the quilt. They decided to include as many as were attending some sort of meeting or auxiliary--it is a great victory.

3. Provoked the officers to ask about the purpose of the project. I thought they knew, but evidently they did not. Shifted the concept slightly to "Family-of-God" quilt.

4. Made all of us want to reach out to the fringe families who could not be included on the quilt. One of the persistent problems of the small church has been the exclusive attitudes in the groups. Perhaps this quilt will expand our horizons.

Cream colored 8-inch squares were given to 37 individuals representing families in the church, Sunday school, or auxiliaries. Included were shut-ins, nursing home residents, as well as regulars. Throughout February and March the embroidered squares were finished and returned to the quilt committee of the WWI. The 40 squares were handed in and sewn together into five sections with the 2-inch rust-colored calico joining strips--all by Easter Sunday, March 31, 1986. That Sunday afternoon slides were made of each family's square. These slides would be used with others in

the project presentation the afternoon of June 8 to depict the church of today. This presentation would be the finale of that afternoon's program.

The five sections were sewn together into a top. The top, along with the backing and polyester batting, were taken to a professional quilter who hand-stitched the quilt using a quilting frame. When the quilt was returned, the edges were trimmed and bound. A strip was added to the top and bottom on the back to accommodate the drapery rods. The whole project was completed by April 24. The quilt, measuring 54 1/2 by 84 inches now hangs on the west wall of the sanctuary. Its squares demonstrate in its design the variety and uniqueness existing in the family of God.

### The Story Banner

The Junior Department Story Banner evolved as a tool to initiate the children of the church into both the history of the church and beliefs the church considers important (see plate II, page 195). Appropriate stories, uncovered by the CRG during its history-gathering phase, were selected to illustrate important moments in the history of the church. Eight stories were chosen and symbols created to represent these stories. These symbols were cut from felt and glued on a felt background surrounding a ninth symbol: the emblem of the Wesleyan Church. The eight symbols are:



1. Circuit preacher. This symbol represents both the early years of the circuit and the important role of the minister in the life of the congregation. The concept slightly differed from the circuit rider who travelled greater distances, but the general idea was the same.

2. Original frame church. This symbol represents both the primitive life of the early congregation and the importance of worship to that congregation.

3. Black slave. This symbol represents both the early anti-slavery roots of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the importance of social concern.

4. The pot-belly stove. This symbol represents both an exciting incident in the life of the early congregation and the importance of revival services to that congregation.

5. The pistol. This symbol represents both a life-changing incident and the power of the gospel to convert individuals.

6. The communion set. This symbol represents both a story about a crisis in the church and a deep desire to continue fellowship with all members of the circuit (black and white).

7. The present church building. This symbol represents both the desire of the congregation for an improved place of worship and the organizational abilities of the people.

8. The parsonage. This symbol represents both the acquisition of property in the community for the pastor and

family and the power of stewardship. Other buildings served as the parsonage but the present home was given to the church in 1938.

The banner was begun April 11, 1986 when this writer sketched six symbols (two more were added later) surrounding the church emblem and handed the sketch to his wife (the Junior Department Superintendent). She collected pictures of the symbols from various sources and by the process of enlarging/reducing, xeroxed the nine patterns used for the symbols. A 37" by 67" maroon felt background was selected for the banner. The symbols were carefully cut from colored felt. When the cutting was finished, the children came in small groups to the church basement to help in the gluing process. As the symbols were being glued, this writer and his wife told and retold the eight stories. This oral transmission of the stories was considered an integral part of the learning process. The children, in turn, retold the stories to those who attended the "Children's Day Exercises." The stories had been written in a simple style suitable for telling to the children. One such story is the story of the pot-belly stove, one of two which heated the frame church.

One time in the old church, the people had a revival service. This was in the winter time when the stoves were hot. Suddenly the floor gave way underneath one of the stoves. Men ran to the stove and caught the hot stovepipe and pitched it to one another

until it was pitched out of the door. Men picked up the hot stove and carried it out the door. Meanwhile the people who were at the altar kept on praying.

Another such story is about the pistol.

One time three brothers lived in Bakers Corner. They were very angry at another man whom they supposed was at church. One of them took a pistol and they went to the service intending to shoot the man. But the preacher preached a powerful sermon, and instead of shooting the man, the three brothers went forward to the altar of prayer and were saved. Each became a preacher and one later became a teacher in a Christian college.

And so, one by one, all eight stories were related to the children. The banner was finished Saturday night, May 24, 1986 to be used in the "Children's Day Exercises" the next weekend.

### The Model Church

The purpose of the model church was to provide an intergenerational learning experience for the youth of the church (see plate III, page 197). By seeking information from the older members of the church, the youth would gain an appreciation of the "storytellers" of the congregation. In addition, they would discover much about the religious roots of the community and church. On the other hand the older members would deepen their friendship with the youth. The idea of the model church was inspired by the youth because of their fascination for plastic models. As it turned out, because of some unforeseen technical difficulties, as many adults as youth worked on the project. One

member of the CRG was assigned the task of overseeing the project.

A small postcard photograph was found of the frame church and from this picture a poster-sized print was made. This print became the most useful source for building the model church. Even the pitch of the roof was calculated from this print. Two other resources were necessary. The memory of several older adults and one oil painting of the interior of the frame church became primary sources. A dollhouse scale (1/12) was decided on because of the necessity of buying some of the furnishings and electrical components made to the 1/12 scale.

The size of the model was arrived at by measuring a nearby church nearly like the original one. This was on February 22, 1986, but it wasn't until May 7 that the project began in earnest. This day, a friend of the church donated five sheets of 3/8" plywood for the project. On Saturday, May 10, one youth and three men cut the frame for the model on a borrowed table saw. The following four weeks were filled with frantic activity as the youth came to the parsonage basement night after night to nail siding, glue the floor, pews, pulpit and altar-rails, paste wallpaper, and paint the model and its furnishings. Some furniture was purchased at various craft stores with money the youth gleaned from paper drives. Two pot-belly stoves, a pump organ, two pulpit chairs, and a communion table with ceramic

plate and drinking glass (this is the way they took communion!) added authenticity to the model. Even a church mouse and mousetrap were set into place. The electrical components were the final touch. These were three kerosene lamps hung from the ceiling over the center aisle, and two kerosene hurricane lamps on the wall over the pump organ (electrically lit). These electrical components were installed Saturday, June 7, 1986, and the model was set in place in the sanctuary at midnight, on the eve of the homecoming services. The construction of the model, having been surrounded by secrecy, was a delight to those attending the homecoming services. The model is 35" by 57" and stands 34" from base to the top of the roof. Since the day of the homecoming, 5,100 triple-lapped pine shingles were nailed on the roof. These were cut out on the table saw in the same manner as the siding and other finishing strips.

As recently as December 1986, a Christmas tree was made for the model and a candle added to each of the four windows.

#### Heritage Days

The work of the CRG and other congregational leaders culminated, as had been planned, in a series of four services named "Heritage Days."

Firstly, the Methodist roots were explored May 5, 1986, when Professor Wilbur Williams of Marion College presented

"The Lord's Horseman," a recital about the life and labors of Rev. John Wesley. Guests from two other nearby churches also attended the recitation. The women of the CRG served refreshments following the recital.

Secondly, the Junior Department shared their discoveries June 1, 1986, in an evening service entitled "Children's Day Exercises." The front of the church had been decorated to resemble the inside front of the frame church. Props included a wallpapered background with an electrically lit hurricane lamp on the wall, a plywood pump organ, a pot-belly stove made from an oil barrel, and wooden rustic pews. Fresh bouquets were brought in from the nearby gardens to decorate the front of the sanctuary.

The whole service followed the pattern of children's programs in former years. Fourteen children participated in the service. Each child recited an assigned "piece" memorized for the occasion. The group sang 7 songs from memory. Three stories from the life in the early church, written by the oldest active member of the congregation, were dramatized by the children. Children volunteered to share the stories they had learned using the story banner as a guide. Following the benediction, refreshments were served in the basement, some donated and made by the children.

Thirdly, the morning service of Homecoming, held June 8, 1986, featured as speaker, Dr. Lee Haines, historian, and General Secretary of Education and the Ministry of the

Wesleyan Church. Old fashioned and period dress was worn by several members of the congregation. A basket dinner in the basement followed the morning service.

Fourthly, the CRG's History Project Presentation was held the afternoon of the June 8, 1986 service. Four presenters narrated the history of the congregation using selected slides to illustrate stories from the life of the congregation. The finale was narrated by a fifth presenter who described the church of today using side by side projectors and two large screens. As the family quilt block was shown on one screen, other slides depicting various aspects of that family's life were shown on the other screen. The three sub-group projects--quilt, story banner, and model church--were presented by the respective sub-group leaders using slides to depict the development of the particular project.

Other aspects of the homecoming services included:

Firstly, the display of church records, first communion set, original photographs, and other memorabilia.

Secondly, the continuous showing of history slides using a large carousel slide viewer. This viewer was located in the basement of the church where groups could sit and activate the slides according to their particular interests.

Thirdly, prints of photographs from the newly formed history file were displayed on the altar.

Fourthly, the three children's stories dramatized at the "Children's Day Exercises" were repeated at the appropriate interval during the June 8 history presentation.

Fifthly, special souvenir bulletins were printed for each service. The design for the bulletin for the "Children's Day Exercises" was designed by one of the children. This writer made the mock-up for the homecoming bulletin. Historical photographs were used for the front.

At the end of the June 8, 1986 afternoon service, the work of the CRG, after 21 formal meeting spanning three years and eight months, was completed, however, the task of administering three more questionnaires, compiling and analyzing the results, and writing the dissertation still lay ahead for this writer. The results and analysis of all the questionnaires will be the subject of the next chapter.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Description and Summary of the Instruments

The writer administered a series of evaluative instruments to discover the impact of the contextual project on the Bakers Corner congregation. The pastor of the Boxley congregation administered the pre-test/post-test to his congregation. This chapter will describe the methods used to administer the questionnaires, and discuss the results of the instruments used in both churches. The most important results will be listed in the various appendices located at the end of this study. The reader can turn to them as needed using the references to locate the particular question under discussion.

#### The Churches

The Bakers Corner Wesleyan Church, as noted earlier in this study, is a 117-year-old congregation located in the village of Bakers Corner. The village is located 25 miles north of Indianapolis and 4.7 miles east of the town of Sheridan (2000 population). The congregation is one of 74 in the Central Indiana District of the Wesleyan Church.

The Boxley United Methodist Church is a 150-year-old congregation located 5 miles northwest of Bakers Corner. The church building is in the center of the village of Boxley which is slightly larger than Bakers Corner.

Both churches are rural and located in the same township. Both record approximately the same Sunday school and worship attendance. Boxley and Bakers Corner suffered from the outmigration that characterized the early part of the 20th century and the eras of the Great Depression and World War II. Both churches experienced a gradual decline in attendance during the last 40 to 50 years. In the writer's project, the Boxley congregation served as the control group, taking both the pre-test and post-test approximately the same time as Bakers Corner. Although both churches were involved in history-related celebrations, the major variable was the intensive history-recital project at the Bakers Corner church.

#### The Questionnaires

The questionnaire used for both pre-tests/post-tests for the Bakers Corner and Boxley measurements was developed by Judy Matheny of the Hinton Rural Life Center in Hayesville, North Carolina. It was essentially designed to discover outstanding characteristics of already vital small churches. The first step of the questionnaire was developed by sending letters to the district superintendents in the Southeastern

Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church asking them to identify the small churches in their districts that were "ministering to their total community, involving new leadership, growing in membership...(and) in general, [were] alive and vitally at work extending the body of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

In the next step, a list of 200 churches was collected. To these, a preliminary general information questionnaire was sent and out of this number a total of 136 responded. A comprehensive questionnaire was sent to four individuals in each of the 136 congregations--one each for the pastor, one layman, one laywoman, and one youth or young adult. Matheny handled 374 questionnaires from these churches. This comprehensive questionnaire was the one chosen as the pre-test/post-test for the Bakers Corner and Boxley congregations. The term "pre-test/post-test" is used throughout this study to indicate the Matheny instrument. Four designations were given to facilitate the flow of information: Bakers Corner Initial, BCI; Bakers Corner Final, BCF; Boxley Initial, BXI; and Boxley Final, BXF (see appendix C, pages 162-168).

Some revisions were necessary to adapt the questionnaire to the local context. Question 1 was changed from a check list of ten activities or programs to a rating, from 1 through 10, of that same list. In retrospect, the word

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Judy C. Matheny, "Summary: A Study of Some Vital Churches," Hinton Rural Life Center, p. 1.

should have been "rank" instead of "rate." A future use of the Matheny questionnaire should consider this change for the sake of precision. Two other sub-questions were changed because the term "United Methodist Church" appeared in the original Matheny form. One of the questions needed only a minor change but the other question, 5.35, was replaced.

Since the range of the Matheny instrument covered nine areas of mission and ministry, it only generally measured congregational self-image. In view of this fact, a one-page questionnaire was designed from page 2 of the Matheny instrument in order to narrow the focus to the history-recital project. The designation for this instrument is Bakers Corner Project, BCP (see appendix A, pages 158-159). This questionnaire was administered only to the Bakers Corner congregation. It was given 17 weeks following the end of the history-recital project in June, 1986.

A further probing of the Bakers Corner congregation was planned to discover some longer-range effects of the project. A series of personal interviews was conducted in December 1986 and January 1987, 26 to 34 weeks following the close of the history-recital project. The interview style was designed to give the respondents freedom of expression. Eight questions were asked, four of which were specifically tied to the history-recital project and four of which were general questions about the congregation. Only the results of the first four are pertinent for this study. This questionnaire

is called the Bakers Corner Personal Evaluation, BCPE (see appendix B, pages 160-161).

### Scoring the Pre-test/Post-test

A computer program was designed to receive the information from the pre-test/post-test questionnaires. Both an input and an analysis program were written to handle the data. The analysis program was designed to compute mean, standard deviation, and correlation of any two questions. In addition, the program can examine either the whole population or subpopulations.

The pre-test/post-test essentially had six types of responses, (see appendix C, pages 162-168).

1. In question 1, the respondents were asked to rate the 10 activities or programs from 1 through 10 on the list provided from 1 in their "order of effectiveness."

2. In question 2 individuals were asked to rate the strength of the church in involving persons "so that they can respond to God's call to serve Him." A five-point scale was used ranging from "not very strong" to "very strong."

3. Questions 3.1 and 3.2 required written answers. In order to facilitate the computer, the answers to 3.1 were grouped into six categories of activities or programs: "children's programs," "youth programs," "mission programs," "Sunday school," "special services and meetings," "outreach programs," and "no response."

Question 3.2 sought the ways the selection in 3.1 influenced the congregation. The answers were grouped into 7 categories: "educational," "fellowship," "evangelistic outreach," "involvement in activities," "stimulates interest and motivates action," "meets physical needs," and "no response." The numbers 1 through 7 were respectively assigned to these responses. These categories were used in the pre-test/post-test only. Since the one-page questionnaire, BCP, was brief, the answers for 3.2 were summarized rather than listed in the groups above.

4. In question 4, the respondent was asked to rate the importance of each of a series of 10 items to the event or program chosen in 3.1. A five-point scale was provided ranging from "least" to "most" in "degree of importance." In both questions 2 and 4 the number circled was entered into the computer program.

5. Question 5 employed the Likert five-point scale with five choices: "strongly agree," "agree," "uncertain," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." The numbers 1 through 5 were assigned in that order. Two sub-questions, 5.24 and 5.39, were reverse or negative questions. In those two cases the total mean scores of whole populations were adjusted for the sake of accuracy. To arrive at the corrected number, the total mean score was subtracted from 6. In effect, this subtraction reversed the scoring on each of the two negative

questions. If the questionnaire had had more negative questions, a reverse scoring procedure would have been devised.

On the back of each questionnaire, personal data was collected: lay-clergy, sex, age range, educational level, leadership position(s), and either years of membership or attendance. Because of the small number in the total population, the age ranges were grouped into three categories: "younger" (ages 13 through 34), "middle" (ages 35 through 64), and "older" (ages 65 and beyond). The educational levels were grouped into two categories: "up through high school," and "beyond high school." Answers to the leadership position(s) were collected into eight categories: "none," "financial," "administrative," "clerical," "educational," "ceremonial," "administrative and educational," and "administrative and ceremonial." The ceremonial category included such positions as ushering, song leading, piano or organ playing, or other worship-oriented ministries.

#### Summaries of the Results of Two Questionnaires

The results of the one-page Bakers Corner Project will be discussed first and the results of the Bakers Corner Personal Evaluation second because of the more direct focus on the history-recital project. The pre-test/post-test will be considered last because of the more general applications to the self-image of the congregation. References to the

appendices will assist the reader to refer to the appropriate questions under discussion.

Summary of the Bakers  
Corner Project, BCP

These one-page questionnaires were filled out by 29 individuals, 11 of whom were male and 18 female. In the age subpopulation, 8 were "younger," 9 "middle," and 12 "older." In the education subpopulation 20 were "up through high school" and 8 "beyond high school."

Question 3.2 seeks to know how the history-recital project, including the four services of celebration in May and June, 1986 influenced how individuals responded to God's call to service (see appendix D, pages 169-170). The statements were collected into 9 groups: "learning about the church's past," "more involvement and cooperation," "fellowship," "confidence in the future," "encouraged outreach," and "don't know" (listed in order of frequency).

Although the presentations were designed to include both the past and present aspects of the congregational life, clearly most of the people remembered the information about the past. Only two remarks were made about confidence in the future. The pre-test/post-test had one question about the future and none about the past. It might be well to note that the one question about the future in BCI and BCF recorded an increase (see appendix F, page 179).



Many indicated an increase in the level of satisfaction because of the increased involvement in the project, especially the three sub-group projects. These ten statements about involvement are consistent with 5.4 in the pre-test/post-test (see appendix F, page 179). Also, the lack of statements about outreach and social activity is consistent with similar questions in the pre-test/post-test (5.9 and 5.13, appendix F, page 179).

In question 4.1, as individuals looked back 17 weeks after the project ended in June 1986, they rated "lay leadership" and "pastoral leadership" higher than 4.1 in the Bakers Corner post-test BCF, and rated "evangelistic outreach," "congregational attitude toward change," "missional outreach," and "Christian education" lower (see appendices D, page 170, and F, pages 177-178 for the comparative scores). This seems to indicate both an increased appreciation for leadership in the church and at the same time a sobering view of the present state of the outreach programs or that the people did not regard the project as designed to move in this direction.

Nearly all the answers to BCP were positive about the project and seemed to demonstrate an appreciation for the CRG's attempt to recite the strengths of the past and present and involve the congregation in its tasks.

Summary of the Bakers Corner  
Personal Evaluation, BCPE

The writer administered this series of personal interviews to 32 individuals from week 26 through week 34 following the close of the history-recital project in June, 1986. Of these 32 individuals, 21 were females and 11 were males. In the age range, of these 32 persons, 10 were "younger" (13-34), 8 were "middle" (35-64), and 14 were "older" (65 and above). In the educational range 21 of the 32 were educated "up through high school" and 11 "beyond high school." In the leadership and membership categories, 19 claimed some kind of leadership position in the church and 14 indicated membership.

In the first question, the writer asked the respondents to gauge their level of involvement in the history-recital project (see appendix E, pages 172-174). Out of the 32 interviewed, 6 indicated a high involvement, 14 a medium, and 12 a low involvement.

Of the 6 who rated themselves high, 5 indicated a leadership position (83 percent) and 5 indicated membership in the church (83 percent). It is also noted that 5 of the 6 were educated "beyond high school."

Of the 14 who rated themselves medium involvement, 8 held some kind of leadership post (57 percent) and 5 were members (36 percent).

Of the 12 who rated themselves low involvement, 5 held

leadership positions in the church (41 percent) and 4 were members (33 percent).

It seems from this information, that those who were already highly involved in the church as leaders and members were also highly involved in the project, and those who were not highly involved in the leadership and membership also were not highly involved in the project.

Question 2 had two parts (see appendix E, pages 172-173), The interviewer first asked about the personal beneficial effects of the projects. (In compiling the responses of question 2 through 4, the writer regarded each statement as a unit. Some individuals made more than one statement.) The responses were grouped into 7 categories: "understanding through study of history" (20 statements), "involvement in activities" (8 statements), "enjoyment" (6 statements), "fellowship" (5 statements), "use of skills" (2 statements), "future benefits" (1 statement), and "very little" (1 statement).

The second part of question 2 sought to flesh out any problems connected with the project. Five individuals cited 1 problem apiece, and of these 2 had to do with the short time span the CRG had to complete its work, 1 had to do with problems related to the history presentation, and 2 were minor.

Question 3 expanded question 2, asking for an opinion about the effect of the project on the whole congregation

(see appendix E, page 173). The answers were grouped into 6 categories: "understanding through study of history" (10 statements), "involvement in activities" (9 statements), "pride in accomplishments" (9 statements), "enjoyment" (6 statements), "outreach" (2 statements), and "caution" (1 statement).

In question 4, the interviewer sought to discover how the project affected the self-image of the people (see appendix E, pages 173-174). The responses were collected into 5 categories: "pride in accomplishment" (16 statements), "example from past history" (8 statements), "fellowship" (6 statements), "involvement" (3 statements), and "enjoyment" (1 statement).<sup>2</sup>

When one looks at the statements made in questions 2 through 4, a pattern seems to emerge. A list can be made of the combined areas of interest:

Appreciation of history	38
Pride in project	25
Involvement and cooperation	20
Enjoyment	13
Fellowship	11

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2

The other four questions on this schedule focused on the general characteristics of the congregation and are useful to the pastor and leaders, but will not be utilized in the specifics of the more narrow history-recital project (see appendix B).

Use of skills	2
Cautions	2
Future benefits	1

After a half-year's distance from the end of the project, the people in retrospect remembered the history that was presented. One must realize that many of the remarks about history came from those who were highly involved in the history-gathering phase of the project such as the CRG members and project leaders. No doubt this "hands-on" intensive study left a vivid impression on their minds. In addition, it is well to remember that the three visual projects are on display every Lord's Day in the sanctuary of the church. When people gather, they see tangible reminders of the investments they made and the pride associated with these efforts.

Almost no negative statements were made about the contextual project itself, but the people (91%) expressed concern over the lack of people in the congregation. They cited this either as a major weakness of the church or a challenge for the church. This information came from questions 6 and 7 of the schedule (see appendix B, page 161).

In summary, the congregational members were appreciative of the history and proud of the sub-group projects. At the same time the same pattern of high-low involvement persists. Coupled with this is the acute concern for the lack of younger people in the church. The project was not

designed as a tool for outreach or a springboard for social action. Outreach was mentioned twice, but more than likely, only in reference to guests who attended the special services. The contextual project had a narrow focus--to explore the effect of a program of history-recital on the self-image of one congregation. Other dimensions of self-image will be discovered from examining the results of the pre-test/post-test.

Summary of the Results of the Pre-test  
Post-test, BCI, BCF, BXI, BXF

The Matheny instrument (see appendix C, pages 162-168) was used as the pre-test/post-test questionnaire for both the project group (Bakers Corner) and the control group (Boxley). The changes made in this instrument to accommodate the local context are already described on pages 114-115 of this study. In summarizing the results, it seems best to begin with the general description of the results and move to the more particular. The beginning point will be to discuss the total whole population scores and total averages. The next step in the discussion will be to look at the overall results for both church groups. Finally the discussion will narrow to 10 questions, 6 selected through the Wilcoxon procedure (which will be explained in that section) and 4 other pertinent ones selected because of the

more significant increase or decrease in the scores. Therefore, as indicated, this discussion will begin with the whole population scores.

### Overview of the Whole Population Scores

For the most part the Bakers Corner project group only slightly improved its adjusted score (see appendix F, page 182) or from 165.2 to 167.2, a gain of 2.0. The Boxley control group also improved from 163.2 to 168.3, a gain of 5.1. In an ideal setting, the control scores would remain approximately the same while the project scores would register a significant increase. Of course this did not happen in the Bakers Corner/Boxley results. Although the results were not ideal, nevertheless, the use of a control was valuable to the project group. The writer was able to more accurately compare the results and evaluate the dynamics of the project.

It might be noted here that at Boxley more "middle" and "older" individuals took the post-test than the pre-test. In Bakers Corner, more "younger" and less "middle" filled out the post-test than the pre-test (see appendix F, page 182). As a general rule, in the subpopulations, males scored higher than females. In the age levels, "middle" scored higher than "younger," and "older" scored higher than "middle" or "younger." In the education level, those educated "beyond high school" scored higher than those educated

"up through high school." So it seems to this writer that Boxley's gain of "middle" and "older" and Bakers Corner's loss of "middle" and gain of "younger" respondents affected the anticipated results. As a matter of fact, neither church gained significantly. The total averages for Bakers Corner remained the same (3.7) and for Boxley gained .1 (3.6 to 3.7). When one overviews all the results, one sees a particular dynamic emerging. A certain displacement takes place, that is, the scores for certain significant questions increase while at the same time the scores for others decrease. This pattern will become clearer as one further studies the results of individual questions.

Having assessed the results of the whole population scores, it will be well to take a comprehensive look at the results of the pre-test/post-test.

#### Overview of the Pre-test/ Post-test

The results of the questionnaires revealed that at Bakers Corner, 27 individuals filled out the pre-test and 26 the post-test. At Boxley, 28 individuals filled out the pre-test and 25 the post-test (in the subpopulation breakdown see appendix G, pages 184-187, and for the rest of this section refer to appendix F, pages 176-183).

On question 1, which asked the respondent to rank the 10 activities or programs listed, the pre-test/post-test at Bakers Corner reaffirmed the congregation's estimation of



Sunday school in its life. Sunday school ranked first among the ten programs or activities in both tests. Worship was second, "outreach-beyond" seventh and social issues last in each case. Evangelism dropped from sixth to eighth. Boxley, in contrast, scored "worship and fellowship" or Sunday school third or fourth. Evangelism remained in sixth place in both tests. Because of an improper method of filling in the responses in question 1, many of the answers were flawed in the pre-tests, but a significant improvement came in the post-tests.

Question 3 presented an acute problem in the "no response" category in both sections of the question (3.1 and 3.2). The respondents at Bakers Corner reduced the "no response" number on the posttest, but the problem persisted with Boxley. When a researcher is working with a whole population, some lack of response with written answers can be expected, but Boxley's lack of response in the posttest remains a mystery. In the 45 sub-questions of question 5, the number of responses was excellent in all cases. It seems the Likert scale of response, as used in question 5, was easily understood by the individuals who responded. In 3.1 Bakers Corner increased in the "special services" category while Boxley decreased. In 3.2 the people in Bakers Corner in the post-test and in Boxley in the pre-test chose items in 3.1, more than any other, which "stimulated interest and motivated action." The number in the "evangelistic"

category dropped in the Bakers Corner post-test. To reiterate, the reason might be the focus of interest in one direction and the lack of time or energy to include another focus.

In question 4, the respondents rated the importance of a series of 10 items in relation to the program or event named in 3.1. Bakers Corner increased the score of the "attitude toward change" by .9 but dropped .3 from the post-test score seventeen weeks later in the one-page questionnaire, BCP. The rating of the pastor's influence dropped on the BCF post-test but picked up on the one-page questionnaire. The Boxley congregation logged an increase in organizational abilities. Both churches responded with an increase of the importance of the community to the event selected.

The big picture for Bakers Corner and Boxley is the high place Sunday school and worship presently hold and the lower estimation the congregational members have for evangelism and social issues.

In the 45 sub-groups of question 5, generally speaking, both congregations scored highest on the staple items in the church's menu: items such as Sunday school (5.5), worship (5.1), and preaching from the Bible (5.12). They scored lowest in social justice issues (5.31), witnessing (5.36), leadership training (5.23), and new ways of doing things (5.41). They were uncertain about areas such as

involvement in leadership positions (5.4), attracting new members to the church services (5.7), and social services for the aged (5.13). Improvements for Bakers Corner were in the areas of involvement (5.4), attracting new members (5.7), and hopefulness for the future (5.11). Losses for Bakers Corner were in the areas of enthusiasm for the annual Vacation Bible School (5.3), mission studies (5.25), and pastoral visitation (5.32). On the first issue, for the first time in many years a Vacation Bible School was not held at the Bakers Corner church. Instead the leaders of the Boxley and Bakers Corner congregations conducted a cooperative Bible school at Boxley. As far as the issues of missional studies and pastoral visitation are concerned, the explanation might be that the efforts of pastor and people were directed to the history-project throughout the first half of 1986, taking away energies from these two concerns. At Boxley, a drop in score occurred in the question of persons really different being welcomed (5.29), and the Sunday school being important to the church's life (5.14). Both Bakers Corner and Boxley's scores on the ministries of the Sunday school and worship agree with the rankings they gave them in question 1.

The two reverse questions deserve special consideration. Both were questions dealing with the role of the pastor, one in which the church depends on the pastor to bring new people into the church (5.24), and the other in

which the church allows the pastor to make most of the decisions about the programs in the church (5.39). On the Bakers Corner post-test, the scores decreased, indicating perhaps, an increased involvement by lay people in these areas. Boxley's score in 5.24 increased slightly, indicating little change, but decreased in 5.39.

Other questions could be considered here in the general overview, but these that have been reviewed are sufficient for the purposes of this study. Other comparisons are also available. One is a comparison of the original Matheny mean scores of the 45 sub-questions of question 5 with the same sub-questions in the Bakers Corner/Boxley instrument.

#### Comparison of the Pre-test Post-test Scores with the Matheny Scores

The development of the Matheny instrument has been described on pages 113-114 of this study. It is well to keep in mind that the results reflected the image of "vital" churches, or churches that were well organized and made significant contributions to the community in which they were located. If we assume this is true, then a comparison can be made of the results from the Bakers Corner/Boxley mean scores with the original whole population scores to see how "vital" the programs and activities are at the two churches.

Some preliminary observations are necessary to understand the comparison between the two instruments. To begin

with, only the 45 sub-questions of question 5 can be meaningfully compared. In the Bakers Corner/Boxley instruments, question 1 was changed from checking to ranking. The use of question 2 would be flawed because of the different structure of question 1. Questions 3 and 4 were concerned with individual written selections and so could not be useful for comparisons. Only the 45 sub-questions can be used (see appendix C, pages 162-168).

Judy Matheny separated the 45 sub-questions into 9 groups of 5 each: "caring and supportive fellowship," "worship and spirituality," "the way the church organizes itself and plans," "lay leadership," "attitude toward change," "pastoral leadership," "evangelistic outreach," and "missional outreach" (see appendix H, pages 188-190). These are the groups which will be compared. In order to avoid an overabundance of comparisons which could become meaningless, only the Bakers Corner/Boxley post-test scores will be used.

The Matheny scores were higher than the Bakers Corner post-test scores in 7 out of the 9 categories. The two exceptions were "pastoral leadership" and "Christian education and nurture." The Matheny scores were higher than the Boxley post-test scores in 8 out of 9 categories. The exception was "missional outreach." Bakers Corner was even with the Matheny scores in "evangelistic outreach" and Boxley was even in "Christian education and nurture."

In the total averages for the 45 sub-questions of question 5, both Bakers Corner and Boxley averaged 3.7 compared with the 3.9 Matheny scores.

Using these 9 categories to compare Bakers Corner with Boxley, another overview can be made. Bakers Corner scored higher than Boxley in "pastoral leadership," "Christian education and nurture," and "evangelistic outreach." Boxley scored higher in "caring and supportive fellowship," "lay leadership," "attitude toward change," and "missional outreach." The total average scores for "worship and spirituality," and "the way the church organized itself and plans" were even.

Both sets of comparisons, the Matheny with Bakers Corner/Boxley and Bakers Corner with Boxley were informative in contributing to the whole self-image picture. Especially for the Bakers Corner project group, 3 of the 9 categories are areas for concern: "worship and spiritual life," "lay leadership," and "attitude toward change."

The Matheny comparison is helpful in introducing the final effort to discover facets of self-image that need to be discussed. The writer now turns to 10 important questions that demonstrate some kind of change between the scores of the pre-tests and post-tests. Scores for both Bakers Corner and Boxley will be discussed, however the focus will be upon Bakers Corner, the project group.

### Overview of Ten Specific Questions

In this final effort at comparisons, 6 questions were selected for discussion through the Wilcoxon procedure. Essentially, the Wilcoxon test for matched pairs reveals which question in a questionnaire demonstrates with 95 percent confidence that the change (either increase or decrease) is a significant change in the direction indicated. (For a further description of this sociological procedure see appendix I, pages 191-192.) The questions that showed this kind of change were 2, 5.7, 5.14, 5.15, 5.32, and 5.39. In addition to these 6 questions, 4 others will be described because of the increase or decrease they demonstrated. These were 5.4, 5.11, 5.18, and 5.38 (see appendix G, pages 184-186 for the subpopulation scores).

Six questions from the Wilcoxon sort. Only one of the questions, number 2, is not part of the 45 sub-questions of question 5. Question 2 asked about the particular church's ability to involve persons to respond to God service (see appendix G, page 184). In the whole population scores, Bakers Corner improved its score by .5 while Boxley dropped .1. The biggest increase in BCF was the male subpopulation with an increase of 1.2. In the age range, it was the "younger" group with an increase of .6 and "middle" with an increase of 1.0. Those educated "beyond high school" gained .9. Involvement was a key observation by respondents in BCP

(see page 169) and BCPE (see page 172). The two sub-questions in number 5 that used the concept "involvement" were 5.4 and 5.28. These two questions also increased. This does not deny the fact that other questions imply involvement in the church programs and activities.

Question 5:7 makes inquiry about the congregation's effectiveness in attracting new people to the church services (see appendix G, page 184). The whole population scores increased .7 at Bakers Corner and .2 at Boxley. At Bakers Corner, all the subpopulations and at Boxley all but those educated "beyond high school" showed gains. All these scores are in the "disagree" to "uncertain" range. However, both churches increased their scores. Perhaps the people at Bakers Corner perceived the project as an incentive for attendance.

Question 5.14 asks about the Sunday school being the most important activity to bring people into the fellowship of the church (see appendix G, page 185). Bakers Corner increased .2 while Boxley decreased .3. This is consistent with question 1 where Bakers Corner ranks Sunday school as number 1 in the list of activities or programs and Boxley lists worship as first. According to the records, the Sunday school at Bakers Corner has always posted higher attendance than the worship services.

Question 5.15 asks about the importance of our church working with other churches in the area (see appendix G,



page 185). The increase for both Bakers Corner and Boxley was slight but important according to the Wilcoxon procedure. Bakers Corner increased .3 and Boxley .2 in the whole population scores. The two churches, because of their close proximity occasionally share services. In August 1986, the two churches held a cooperative Bible school, a first in their history. In addition, both churches are actively involved in the local ministerial association.

Question 5.32 asks about the pastor spending time with the people in the congregation (see appendix G, page 186). In the whole population scores Bakers Corner's score dropped .4 while Boxley's dropped .1. The largest decrease in BCF was .7 in the "younger" subpopulation. In the same subpopulation Boxley dropped .3. The scores at Bakers Corner reflect the writer's involvement in the contextual project. While much contact was made with the people through the activities of the project, nevertheless, the deeper and more satisfying encounters with the people decreased as the time-pressures mounted in the pastor's schedule. Pastoral visitation has been an unwritten expectation of this congregation and this decrease, although not critical, is nevertheless an accurate assessment.

Question 5.39 is one of the reverse questions and asks whether the people allow the pastor to make most of the decisions in church programming (see appendix G, page 186). The whole population scores dropped .5 for Bakers Corner and .2

for Boxley. Because of the negative construction of the question, the drop in scores was a desired result. In other words, a slight improvement in lay participation might be indicated. If so, it is welcome news for both churches. Perhaps the participation of the people in the history project influenced this score.

Examination of four other questions. The results of four other questions justify this writers analysis. These are: 5.4, 5.11, 5.38, and 5.41 (see appendix G, pages 184-187).

Question 5.4 asks whether more people in the congregation are involved in leadership positions (see appendix G, page 184). In the whole population scores, Bakers Corner increased by .7 and Boxley by .2. In the subpopulation for BCF, males increased by .9, "younger" .9, and educated "beyond high school" 1.1. In the subpopulation at Boxley, the males increased .7, "older" .9, and educated "up through high school" .5. As indicated in question 5.2, involvement was a key concept in the contextual project. It was a concept reflected by the congregational members themselves rather than one interjected by this writer.

Question 5.11 asks if the respondent believes the congregation feels hopeful about the future (see appendix G, page 185). For the purposes of measuring self-image, this is the most important question in the pre-test/post-test. Gains were made by both churches. Bakers Corner gained .5

and Boxley .4 in the whole population scores. In the age subpopulation for BCF, the "older" increased 1.0 while the "younger" group remained the same. A coefficient of correlation was made for this question which attempted to find some pattern in the correlation tables, but none was found. One of the major premises of this study is that an inquiry into the past can bring hope to the future. A cautious observation can be made that the project did increase that hope.

Question 5:38 asks if the respondent can find personal understanding and support in the church (see appendix G, page 186). In the whole population scores, Bakers Corner increased .2 and Boxley stayed even. The largest increase in the BCF subpopulation was the "younger" age group with a plus .6. Both BXI and BXF were higher than BCI and BCF. The "younger" age subpopulation in BXF dropped .7 while "middle" gained .2 and "older" .5. The whole population scores were in the "agree" range of the Lickert scale which is consistent with the small church literature's assessment<sup>3</sup> of the relational character of the small congregation.

Question 5.41 seeks to know if the congregation likes to try new ways of doing things (see appendix G, page 186). In the whole population scores, Bakers Corner dropped .3 and

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David R. Ray, Small Churches are the Right Size (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982), pp. 42-52.

Boxley remained the same. One would think the scores would increase for Bakers Corner because of the innovations in the history-recital project. Perhaps the respondents were thinking of the overall programs of the church. Another possibility might be that the image of the history-recital project would be something "old" rather than something "new." The scores for both churches are low which reflect the conservatism of the congregations. In the subpopulations, the biggest losses for BCF were the males with .6, "older" with .6, and educated "up through high school" .4.

These 4 questions along with the previous 6 demonstrate something of the dynamics of the history-recital project. Gains and losses in whole population scores exist side by side. One might realize the limitations of energy in the small church. It seems only a few programs can be carried out at the same time because of the limitation of resources and people.

#### Summary of the Results

In summary, the one-page questionnaire documented the Bakers Corner congregation's appreciation for the project and the memories connected with it. The personal evaluation instrument demonstrated that those who are already involved in leadership positions were those individuals who assumed leadership roles in the contextual project. The people shared their increased appreciation for the history they

learned, and the involvement and cooperation with others they enjoyed. But they also shared their misgivings about the lack of people in the congregation. The people of two churches cooperated twice in filling out a questionnaire (BCI, BCF, BXI, BXF) which would reveal something about their self-image. The results seemed to reveal some of the fluctuations of self-image within the life of the small group. Key areas in the self-image slightly increased while other areas slightly decreased. The small church is a living organism with hopes and dreams of a better tomorrow. There is no doubt that the most significant effect of the series of measurements on the lives of two churches is the questions raised in the minds of those who participated.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Summary and Conclusions

The first part of this chapter is an abbreviated overview of this study in both its theoretical and practical aspects. The second part will offer some conclusions to this inquiry.

#### Summary of this Study

This study consists of two larger divisions, that of the theoretical and the practical. In the first of these, the study of the literature on the small church has led to a focus of attention on the particular problem of low self-image common to small congregations. It was found from the literature that low self-esteem stems from 16 problem areas grouped under four headings: leadership, sacred space, environment, and group problems (see pages 44-57). It was found that often the different problems were interrelated, that is, problems in one area of church life affected other areas. This interrelatedness often triggered a "descending spiral" of events which, in turn, further compounded the problems. Various solutions were offered in order to break this spiral (see pages 57-63).

Not only were the impediments of the small congregation outlined, but also its strengths were explored. One of the strengths is that of its ties with the past through memory and its ties to the present through deep friendships. The small church has unique strengths such as only a small group can offer. Because of close family ties the small church is resilient, which perhaps makes the small church the most durable unit in small rural communities. Because of its size, it offers intimacy. Because of its needs, certain individuals who otherwise would not find a place of service are given leadership positions. Because of its close-knit nature, a high degree of involvement is possible by all or most of the members (see pages 41-42).

One small church strength is the sacred memories common to the people, especially where the congregation has been established for a reasonably long period of time. And, as the story theologians tell us, the past can offer strength for the present, and project hope into the future. Select memories of the past can help orient oneself in the present unrooted age. Story can give power to reorder one's life according to a larger story, all shaped by collective group memories (see pages 63-68).

This aspect of memory blossomed into a perusal of the literature on story theology, especially the areas that would shed light on the nature and power of story. Narrative theology was found to be a rather broad discipline and

so an effort was made to narrow the study to aspects of story that related to memory, whether individual or corporate (see pages 77-93).

It was here that a distinction was drawn between story and history. History is an array of events formed into a logical pattern and recounted by a narrator. Story adds two elements to history: a plot and conflict and its resolution (see pages 69-71).

Scripture itself was found to be replete with incidents and commands involving story. Also, tapping into a philosophical vein, story was found to be of the essence of experience rather than merely its expression.

In getting back to the subject of the "downward spiral" triggered by a compounding of problems in the small church, it was found that solutions to break the spiral were not lacking. But because of the static population growth pattern in the area of the writer's church, it was thought best to align the project with those theories that proposed to break the spiral by discovering and enhancing the strengths inherent in the small congregation rather than depend on intervention from outside the group (see pages 52-55).

The research question of this study, then, has been to probe the effect of a history-recital project on the self-image of one small congregation. It was the hypothesis of this inquiry that such a project would prove to be a catalyst for such an improvement (see page 34).



The second section of this study is the practical application of theory to one particular small church situation, in this case, the writer's congregation (see pages 95 ff.). A history-recital project was designed to involve the whole congregation in a study of the past and present. The history-recital time-line was divided into two parts: history-gathering and storytelling. The seven-member Congregational Reflection Group directed both phases of the study. The CRG planned four services of celebration as a means to present their findings in narrative fashion. The idea behind the four services of celebration was to transform history into story using visual arts, drama, and narration. The three sub-group projects: the Family-of-God quilt by the women, the story banner by the children, and the model church by the youth, served to visually and permanently express some aspect of the church's life, both past and present. A pre-test/post-test was secured for both the project group (Bakers Corner) and the control group (Boxley). In addition, two other instruments were used to measure the effect of the project at Bakers Corner. With the final evaluative phase completed in January 1987, the work of the CRG was completed.

#### Conclusions of this Study

The conclusions of this study will be divided into three parts. Firstly, the conclusions drawn from the

research question will be examined. Secondly, the personal benefits to this writer will be shared. Finally, suggestions for further study will be given. In all these three areas the writer's observations and opinions will be included in the discussions.

#### Conclusions Drawn from the Research Question

The statement of the problem was "how will a project of history-recital (including drama, visual arts, storytelling, and preaching) culminating in services of celebration, influence the self-image of a small church?" (see page 6). The hypothesis was "a carefully constructed project of history-gathering and story-recital will improve congregational self-image of a small church" (see page 34). After completing the project and analyzing the results of the instruments, the major question remains "did the project accomplish its goal of improving the self-image of the Bakers Corner congregation?"

In order to answer this major question, two other questions must first be answered. The first one is "did the project include all the components of history-recital which are drama, visual arts, storytelling, and preaching as the statement of the problem indicates?" To answer this, the reader is referred to chapter 4 of this study (page 94 ff.). A careful reading of this chapter will demonstrate that all

the components were included in the project. In fact between the time of the submission of the proposal for this project and the actual implementation of the project by the CRG, added features were included such as slide copies of church-related photographs and newspaper articles and a separate service for the children's program in which the story banner was used. As far as the sub-group projects were concerned, the story-banner was first conceived as a church shield and coat of arms but the concept was soon changed to a story-banner with story-symbols. The model church was first thought of as a small structure such as the models used in high school architectural drawing classes. This concept was soon changed to a doll-house sized model which greatly enhanced the visual aspect of it, although it greatly complicated the building of the structure. Only the Family-of God quilt remained exactly as it was envisioned at the first.

The presentations abounded with stories (see pages 108-111). The presentation of the "Lord's Horseman" by professor Williams, by the CRG in the final presentation, and by the children in the "Children's Day Exercises" were replete with historical accounts and anecdotes. The pastoral sermons leading up to the time of the special services had as its themes the importance of remembering the acts of God in the lives of the people. The sermon by Dr. Haines in the homecoming morning service had as its focus the work of God

in the local church's past and present. So all these elements of drama, visual arts, storytelling and preaching were included in the project.

The Second question that needs to be answered before addressing the research statement is "was the project 'carefully constructed' as indicated by the hypothesis?" In this writer's thinking, there is no question that the CRG or the project leaders did their work carefully. This writer noted in his Journal of Theological Reflection in an entry dated June 8, 1986, after the project presentation:

It was all over. I was elated and all the people were elated. They were so complimentary. I was on top of the world. All the long hours of toil paid off. All the agony of research by the CRG was worth it--the hours spent on the banner and the model church were worth it. Dr. Haines was pleased but the best compliment came from Francis Ott [former pastor]. He is a fastidious person and likes to see things done properly. He was so complimentary and I appreciated it.

Of course this entry reflects a high emotional response. It is often observed that the elation of the moment soon cools and a more realistic appraisal must be made later. For this reason the post-test was not given immediately following the series of services but 5 weeks following. This is also the reason the one-page questionnaire (BCP) was given 17 weeks and the personal interview (BCPE) 26-34 weeks following the close of the project presentation. But now, nearly one year from the close of the project, this writer's opinion of the project has not changed. It was "carefully crafted."

The major research question remains to be answered which is "did the project accomplish its goal of improving the self-image of the Bakers Corner congregation?" The answer is a cautious one but affirmative. One remembers from chapter 5 that the total whole population scores of the pre-test/post-test for both the intervention group and the control group increased but slightly (see appendix F, page 182). Little can be learned from the whole population scores since the control group increased slightly more than the project group. However, individual questions relating to the people's involvement (2, 5.4) and hope for the future (5.11) indicated a favorable improvement. Although the scores demonstrated only a slight increase following the intervention, one must look at the other two instruments as well.

When one examines the results of the Bakers Corner Project (appendix D, pages 169-171) and the Bakers Corner Personal Evaluation schedule (appendix E, pages 172-175), one can see a high degree of appreciation for both the information received and the involvement experienced in connection with the history-recital project.

Further, in these questionnaires, one can see a high degree of pride and satisfaction expressed by the people in the sub-group projects. The history presentation brought surprises even to the older people who know more of the past

than the rest of the people. In the three sub-group projects, the people have tangible evidences of the efforts of those days. The quilt, model church, and story banner are displayed in the sanctuary. The 500 slides and photographs, written narratives and videos of the Heritage Days are now a permanent part of the church life.

On the other hand, the project did not accomplish some things that would have been desirable. It did not increase the attendance in Sunday school or worship, that is, on a long range basis. It did not gain new members for the church. The church has lost some attendees and gained a few others. The church does have a new young adult class in its Sunday school and some new young adults attending, but the congregation has few numbers of children or youth to boast about. These are the factors that gender a cautious statement but an affirmative one.

### Other Conclusions

Another measurement could be to compare the results of this project with the deficiencies of the small church as listed in chapter 2 (pages 44-57). In other words, did the project improve in the four general areas of leadership, sacred space, environment, and group characteristics? The project could not begin to cope with the environmental problems such as static population and lack of employment. But it seems the project did improve the other three areas, that is, leadership, sacred space, and group characteristics.

Rather than reiterate what happened in the whole project, one sub-group project has been selected as an illustration of what happened in the rest of the programs. The Family-of-God quilt provides such an example.

Good leadership by the Wesleyan Women's International (WWI) was evident from the beginning. After a problematic start the officers appointed a quilt committee to oversee the work. Another committee was formed to cut the material. Another committee took the quilt squares to the homes of families in the church and gave instructions about the type of embroidery work to be done. The quilt committee would oversee the piecing of the squares and the quilting of the top to the back. Time lines were set and met quite promptly. Money was raised within the group to purchase the materials and pay for the quilting process. Good organizational procedures were followed throughout the development of the quilt. The quilt itself demonstrates good craftsmanship.

As for the sacred space, the quilt as well as the other sub-group projects are on display in the sanctuary reminding the people that they are a larger family. It seems to heighten the feeling of one family at worship.

One can say, also, the quilt project aided in some group characteristics such as mutual care and support. A story that came out of the quilt project is about one woman who was living alone and convalescing following surgery in

the winter of 1986. She was the first to begin work on her square and the first to finish. Others heard about her skill and took their square to her to embroider. After conferring with the particular family, appropriate designs were made and embroidered. In all, she completed about one-third of the 37 squares. she later testified to the therapeutic benefits from this work. The families were so appreciative of her work, they pooled money and bought her a leather-bound Thompson Chain Reference Bible as a gift. This story illustrates the care and concern of the individuals within one group for others.

While on this subject, and tapping into another measurement, even gentle humor is evident in some of the family squares on the quilt. The Hoover square pictures a vacuum cleaner as a symbol. One Pickett square depicts a picket fence with the family names embroidered on it. One of the Raines squares features raindrops falling on flowers. Of course the Robbins square has two orange robins embroidered on it. According to Bideaux, the seventh health indicator for a small church is "what are the signs of humor?" (see page 17). If so, this congregation is robust!

One final observation might be made about the effect of the project on the self-image of the congregation. One subgroup participated and made an excellent contribution, yet this group did not participate in the measurements. They, of course, were the children. One only has to view the



videotape of the Children's Day Exercises held on June 1, 1986, to see the enthusiasm of 14 individuals who were an integral part of the history-recital project, but whose responses were not able to be measured by the standard instruments used in the evaluative process.

#### Personal-Benefits

This writer now has the privilege of sharing some of the benefits he has received because of his involvement in the history-recital project. The benefits have been myriad but four are offered.

The first personal benefit is a deeper appreciation for the people of the Bakers Corner Wesleyan Church. The process of helping the CRG collect information and sift through church-related photographs offered by the families yielded many serendipitous stories for the researchers. Humorous and sad stories alike abounded. One tale is told of the rather prim preacher who chased a lad who had just "tick-tacked" his window at Halloween time. While chasing after the fleeing youth he tripped over a neighbor's low chicken-wire fence and wallowed in a flower bed while the lad was sprinting far down the road. Funeral services for children provide a poignant memory to the people. So many died from typhoid fever during one period of the church's life. Tragedies such as these tug at the pastoral heart whether near or far removed from the event. Also, some moral failures

were discovered and remembered. One preacher in the 117 year history "fell from grace." One woman's comment, made years later, spoke volumes. She said, "and just to think he left his heel prints on our altar!" So the history-gathering phase of the project offered choice opportunities to see deeper into the treasured memories of the people and deepen the love of the pastor for them.

This writer has found that rural people are a far cry from the stereotypical rustics sometimes depicted in the media. Most are intelligent and God-fearing individuals who bind themselves with others in the community through mutual concerns and interests. Their lives are tied to the soil and to the seasons. Rural church folk are patient with the pastor and with one another. Most conflicts are solved by their deep friendships which engender a sense of forbearance with one another's faults and peccadilloes. The personal involvement in the project illuminated these insights and brought discovery to many others.

The second personal benefit is the greater appreciation of the skills the people loaned to the project and to the church. The chairperson of the CRG is a retired college professor who exhibited fine organizational skills through the over 21 meetings the group held. One couple whose interest in geneology and another whose graduate studies in the field of history easily found an outlet for their interests in the history-gathering phase of the program. One

other individual keeps the records of the farming corporation of which he is a part, and also holds the position of church treasurer. Another exhibited skills in wood and metalworking and headed up the construction of the model church. Others had skills in photography, art, crafts, and were all tapped for the various sub-group projects. One man helped collect newspapers and loaned his pick-up truck to haul and sell them to raise money for the model church accessories. It was interesting to see all the various skills the people had and were willing to use for such an endeavor. It brings to mind that so often the skills of the people are not utilized in the work or worship in the church.

Another benefit from the project is an increased respect for the research method. So many conclusions made by church leaders are based on minimal evidence. This is not to depreciate the difficulties encountered in social research, for many exist. At least, however, an attempt to study the problems of the church and discover solutions in a disciplined manner is far better than depending on hunches or hearsay. As far as this writer knows, the series of evaluative instruments described in this study were the first ever to be administered to the Bakers Corner congregation. Some responses were predictable but others were not. By reading over and over the response to the various questions the

writer believes he knows the attitudes and feelings of the people in a far deeper manner than would otherwise be possible.

One final personal benefit is an observation about the role of the pastor in the small church. There is no question but that the people expect strong leadership from their shepherd. When the pastor fails in the area of leadership, the people are more disappointed than a lapse in any other area of pastoral responsibility. The people will follow even to the extent of bearing up under a bungled program or two. This writer went through some "blue" days before the project began when he thought the whole endeavor would fizzle before it had a good beginning. Several entries in the Journal of Theological Reflection bear this out. The fear, however, was unfounded. The people were more than willing to perform the tasks set forth in the project proposal. It is hoped this insight will not be forgotten among the host of information the pastor needs to keep fresh in his memory.

These are but a few of the insights and benefits derived by being in the thick of such a history-recital project. But other programs need to be designed and other tasks need to be proposed in small church studies. A few of these will now be suggested.

### Suggestions for Further Research

Small church leaders need a standard self-esteem questionnaire for their congregations. Such a measurement would have many questions that relate to the respondent's emotions as well as those that ask about performance. Such an instrument would ask about the individual's feelings as related to the group or as related to sacred space. One might, for example, inquire as to how a person feels on Sunday morning when sitting in a half-empty sanctuary surrounded by memorials of the past, a past when the pews were filled.

The feeling tones of the parishioners are often neglected by researchers. For example, a layperson can perform tasks well, and do so for years without probing deeper into the wellsprings of motives and emotions. Such a self-esteem instrument would require much time to develop and validate. The writer and the CRG were developing such a questionnaire, but the lack of validation and the large time frame needed to test the questionnaire made further progress impractical.

Another suggestion would be to use the Matheny instrument as a pre-test/post-test in a similar context as Bakers Corner/Boxley but with a different intervention. This writer is curious to know if other programs of intervention would have increased or decreased the scores on the Matheny test. A program of outreach to the community or of evangelism

would be the most fruitful to study. Another would be a project of outreach-beyond such as an emphasis on missional awareness and information. Since the questions on missions fared less than satisfactory in the Bakers Corner/Boxley experiment, perhaps the researcher could take that particular tack.

The 7 health indicators by Bideaux (see page 17) offers a promising framework for a small church questionnaire. The study by Hartman might be utilized to develop such an instrument (see page 18 for a reference to this study). The seven vital signs by Wagner are less usable because of his large church orientation (see vital sign number 3, page 16).

The areas of research needed in the field of the small church are limitless. Despite a culture that savors bigness and in such a vital area as the small congregation, researchers dare not neglect the small church in their studies.

It is hoped that this study on the small church will provide a basis for other such studies. At any rate, the research-project herein described has greatly benefited one pastor and one congregation. Those who were deeply involved in this history-recital project will, no doubt, quickly commend such a study to others who seek to find meaning and purpose for today and tomorrow through an inquiry into yesterday.

APPENDIX A

Sample One-Page Questionnaire, Bakers Corner Project, BCP

3. Describe briefly one activity or program in your church which you are most excited about. In your opinion, how has it influenced the way people in your church respond to God's call to serve Him?

The activity or program:

Recent history-recital project, November 1985 to July 1986, ending in four services of celebration: "The Lord's Horseman", Children's Day Exercises, homecoming worship service with Dr. Lee Haines, and project presentation. Includes the three group projects: quilt, story banner, and model church.

How has it influenced:

4. Think about the activity or program you described in question 3. Then indicate your opinion about the importance of each item in the following list in relation to that event. Circle 1 for "least," and 5 for "most," and 2,3,4, for other degrees of importance.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS...	Degree of importance				
	<u>least</u>				<u>most</u>
(1) the lay leadership to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(2) evangelistic outreach to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(3) the way our local church organizes and plans to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(4) the pastor to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(5) the congregation's attitude toward change to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(6) missional outreach to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(7) the community in which the church is located to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(8) the caring and supportive fellowship of the people to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(9) Christian education and nurture to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(10) the worship and spiritual life of the congregation to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5



APPENDIX B

Sample Bakers Corner Personal Evaluation Schedule, BCPE

## HISTORY-RECITAL PROJECT SCHEDULE

1. How do you rate your involvement in the project?  
High            Medium            Low
2. How did it affect you personally?  
Benefits?  
  
Problems?
3. How did it affect the church?
4. How did the project affect the self-image of the congregation?
5. What are the strong points of our congregational life?
6. What are the weak points?
7. What are the challenges ahead for our congregation?
8. What other comments would you like to make about our congregation?

APPENDIX C

Sample Pre-test/Post-test, Bakers Corner Initial, BCI;

Bakers Corner Final, BCF; Boxley Initial, BXI;

Boxley Final, BXF

## MISSION AND MINISTRY IN SMALL MEMBERSHIP CHURCHES

This questionnaire was developed by Judy Matheny of the Hinton Rural Life Center in Haysville, North Carolina, an agency of the United Methodist Church, Southeastern Jurisdiction. It has been used to measure responses from many of the churches in that area. Minor changes were made by pastors Mark Miller and Max Kingsolver, to adapt the questionnaire to local settings.

Please complete this questionnaire and return it as soon as possible. Your signature is not required. Thank you for your help.

1. Think of the activities or programs of the past year which you feel were the most important in strengthening your church and enabling it to help people respond to God's call to serve Him. Please rate them 1 to 10 in order of effectiveness of your church in helping people respond to this call. 1=most effective. 10=least effective.

- (1) \_\_\_ Sunday school or other Christian education activities.
- (2) \_\_\_ Fellowship activities.
- (3) \_\_\_ Worship and spiritual life.
- (4) \_\_\_ Mission studies.
- (5) \_\_\_ Stewardship or giving.
- (6) \_\_\_ Outreach ministries in the local community to the elderly, low income, etc.
- (7) \_\_\_ Missional outreach beyond the local church and community.
- (8) \_\_\_ Involvements in social issues such as housing, employment opportunities, farming, land use, and hunger.
- (9) \_\_\_ Evangelism.
- (10) \_\_\_ Working and sharing with other churches.

2. How strong do you feel our church is in involving persons so that they can respond to God's call to serve Him? Circle 1 for "not very strong," 5 for "very strong," and 2,3,4, for other degrees of strength.

not very strong 1 2 3 4 5 very strong

3. Describe briefly one activity or program in your church which you are most excited about. In your opinion, how has it influenced the way people in your church respond to God's call to serve Him?  
 The activity or program:

How has it influenced:

4. Think about the activity or program you described in question 3. Then indicate your opinion about the importance of each item in the following list in relation to that event. Circle 1 for "least," and 5 for "most," and 2,3,4, for other degrees of importance.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS...	Degree of importance				
	<u>least</u>		to		<u>most</u>
(1) the lay leadership to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(2) evangelistic outreach to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(3) the way our local church organizes and plans to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(4) the pastor to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(5) the congregation's attitude toward change to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(6) missional outreach to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(7) the community in which the church is located to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(8) the caring and supportive fellowship of the people to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(9) Christian education and nurture to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5
(10) the worship and spiritual life of the congregation to that event.....	1	2	3	4	5

5. Listed below are some general statements about the life and work of a church. How do you agree or disagree with these statements in relation to your church? Please give your opinion of how your church has been doing in the past year and not what others in your church may think. abbreviations for the five responses are used throughout this section. Please refer to the scale listed for your convenience. Circle your response.

SD.....D.....U.....A.....SA.  
 (Strongly (Disagree)(Uncertain) (Agree) (Strongly  
 Disagree) Agree)

- |      |   |    |   |   |   |    |
|------|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| (1)  | Worship services are an important part of the life of our church.....                                       | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (2)  | Our members know and care about one another....   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (3)  | The children are enthusiastic about our annual vacation Bible school.....                                   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (4)  | More of the people of the congregation now are involved in leadership positions than they used to be.....   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (5)  | Sunday school is important to our church life..   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (6)  | Our church regularly finds helpful ideas from meeting with other churches in our area.....                  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (7)  | Our members effectively attract new people to our church services.....                                      | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (8)  | The people in our church give a lot of attention to Bible reading and prayer.....                           | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (9)  | Our church does a capable job of reaching out to those in need in our community.....                        | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (10) | Our church functions best when a pastor stays a long time.....  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (11) | The people of our congregation feel hopeful about the future.....   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (12) | Preaching which is based on the Bible is very important to us.....  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| (13) | Our church actively works for more adequate food, medical, and transportation services for the elderly..... | SD | D | U | A | SA |

SD.....D.....U.....A.....SA  
 (Strongly (Disagree)(Uncertain) (Agree) (Strongly  
 Disagree) Agree)

- (14) Sunday school is the most important activity  
 in getting people to join our fellowship..... SD D U A SA
- (15) It is important for our church to work and share  
 with other kinds of churches in our area.... SD D U A SA
- (16) It important to have an annual membership train-  
 ing class made available to our people..... SD D U A SA
- (17) The Holy Spirit works through our church when  
 our people helps those in need..... SD D U A SA
- (18) New members can change the way things are done  
 in our church..... SD D U A SA
- (19) Our church has a strong desire to support missionaries,  
 both in the United States and overseas..... SD D U A SA
- (20) I enjoy being with the people in our church.. SD D U A SA
- (21) Our church is organized so that members know  
 they have a voice in what is going on..... SD D U A SA
- (22) New people in our community enjoy visiting our  
 church..... SD D U A SA
- (23) Helpful leadership training is made available  
 to lay people in our church..... SD D U A SA
- (24) Our people rely mainly on the pastor to bring  
 new people into the church..... SD D U A SA
- (25) Our mission studies are effective in helping our  
 congregation become aware of the needs and hurts of other  
 people..... SD D U A SA
- (26) Our lay leadership has an important part in the  
 planning and decision making of our church... SD D U A SA
- (27) New members are encouraged to take leadership  
 positions in our church..... SD D U A SA
- (28) Effective involvement of our congregational members  
 has been the result of good planning..... SD D U A SA
- (29) Persons who are really different (race, creed,  
 etc.,) from our members are welcome in all our  
 church activities..... SD D U A SA
- (30) The members of our congregation find getting together  
 a meaningful experience..... SD D U A SA

SD.....D.....U.....A.....SA  
 (Strongly (Disagree)(Uncertain) (Agree) (Strongly  
 Disagree) Agree)

- (31) Our church works for social justice issues such as decent housing, job equality, etc..... SD D U A SA
- (32) The pastor spends time getting to know people in our congregation..... SD D U A SA
- (33) It is important for our church to support the benevolent programs of our church..... SD D U A SA
- (34) Our church warmly greets and welcomes visitors SD D U A SA
- (35) It is important to allow teens to have a voice in the life of the church..... SD D U A SA
- (36) Members of our congregation are effective in witnessing to to others about Christ..... SD D U A SA
- (37) Most of our planning and decision making is done through the official church board..... SD D U A SA
- (38) I find personal understanding and support in our church..... SD D U A SA
- (39) Our members tend to let the pastor make most of the decisions about our church program..... SD D U A SA
- (40) Most of the members of our congregation feel a responsibility to support the programs of the church..... SD D U A SA
- (41) Our church likes to try new ways of doing things..... SD D U A SA
- (42) In our community outreach, our pastor is the leader..... SD D U A SA
- (43) Personal commitment to Jesus Christ is one of the greatest strengths of our church..... SD D U A SA
- (44) Our lay people carry a lot of responsibility in serving others in the community..... SD D U A SA
- (45) The fellowship which our people experience creates a spirit of sharing and giving..... SD D U A SA



6. Are you a lay person or clergy person?  
(1)\_\_\_Lay (2)\_\_\_Clergy
7. Sex  
(1)\_\_\_Male (2)\_\_\_Female
8. Age range  
(1)\_\_\_13-19 (6)\_\_\_55-64  
(2)\_\_\_20-24 (7)\_\_\_65-74  
(3)\_\_\_25-34 (8)\_\_\_75 or over  
(4)\_\_\_35-44  
(5)\_\_\_45-54
9. Education level  
(1)\_\_\_Less than high school graduation  
(2)\_\_\_High school graduation  
(3)\_\_\_Some college but not graduation  
(4)\_\_\_College graduation  
(5)\_\_\_Beyond college graduation
10. What leadership position(s) do you hold in the church?
11. If a member, how many years?\_\_\_\_\_
12. If not a member, how many years attendance?\_\_\_\_\_

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

## APPENDIX D

## Results of the One-Page Questionnaire, BCP

Question 3.1: "Describe briefly one activity or program in your church which you are most excited about. In your opinion, how has it influenced the way people in your church respond to God's call to serve Him?"

The activity or program?

The recent history-recital project, November 1985 to July 1986, ending in four services of celebration: "The Lord's Horseman," Children's Day Exercises, Homecoming worship service with Dr. Lee Haines, and the Project Presentation. This includes three group projects: quilt, story banner, and model church.

Question 3.2: "How has it influenced?"

Each statement respondents made in 3.2 was considered as a unit. Some individuals made more than one statement. The answers and samples are grouped as follows:

Learning about the church's past. Nineteen statements were made such as: "People have become more educated about the church's past. This has sparked an interest in the youth about the community and church's heritage."

More involvement and cooperation. Ten statements were made such as: "Its gotten everyone involved in the church so they all feel like they belong and it makes everyone feel closer and happier."

Fellowship. Five statements were made such as: "Enjoyed the fellowship dinner and getting to see former ministers and members."

Confidence in the future. Two statements were made concerning the impact of the project on the future such as: "Made us more aware of our church both now and looking toward the future."

Encouraged outreach. One statement was made about the project's effect on outsiders. "Caused more appreciation for the church, its past, and its outreach to others."

Don't know. Two respondents did not know how to answer the question such as: "I really don't know how to answer. I heard positive and negative comments."

Question 4: "Think about the activity or program you described in question 3. Then indicate your opinion about the importance of each item in the following list in-relation to that event. Circle 1 for "least," and 5 for "most," and 2,3,4 for other degrees of importance."

HOW IMPORTANT WAS...	Whole Population Mean Score
(1) the lay leadership to that event.....	4.5
(2) evangelistic outreach to that event.....	3.1
(3) the way our local church organizes and plans to that event.....	4.4
(4) the pastor to that event.....	4.9
(5) the congregation's attitude toward change to that event.....	3.9
(6) missional outreach to that event.....	2.9
(7) the community in which the church is located to that event.....	3.8
(8) the caring and supportive fellowship of the people to that event.....	4.1
(9) Christian education and nurture to that event.....	3.9
(10) the worship and spiritual life of the church to that event.....	3.9
	Ave. 3.9

Question 6: "Are you a lay person or a clergy person?"  
 Lay 28 (Questions 6 through 10 are number of re-  
 sponses)  
 Clergy 1

Question 7: "Sex."  
 Male 11  
 Female 18

Question 8: "Age range."  
 Younger (ages 13-34) 8  
 Middle (ages 35-64) 11  
 Older (ages 65 and over) 12

Question 9: "Education level."  
 Up through High School 20  
 Beyond High School 8

Question 10: "What leadership position(s) do you hold in the church?"

None	12
Financial	1
Administrative	2
Clerical	1
Educational	3
Ceremonial	5
Administrative and educational	3
Administrative and ceremonial	2

Question 11: "If a member, how many years?"  
(Number of years) 8-8-65-4-6-10-50-15-9-15-15-45-8-8

Question 12: "If not a member, how many years attendance?"  
10-5-10-33-40-9-6-48-8-20-8-65-36-20-2

## APPENDIX E

Results of the Bakers Corner Personal  
Evaluation Schedule, BCPE

Question 1: "How do you rate your involvement in the project? High Medium Low."

Number of responses

High	6
Medium	14
Low	12

Question 2.A: "How did it affect you personally? Benefits?"

Understanding through study of history. Twenty statements were made regarding the importance of discoveries in the past experiences of the congregation, such as: "I became aware of our present church's place in the community. I have a greater knowledge of the history of the church--have a greater awareness that the spirit of the church affected the life of the church--found a correlation between the revivals with periods of greatest gains."

Involvement in activities. Eight statements were made such as: "People got involved in the project." "Felt good about my involvement in it."

Enjoyment. Six statements were made such as: "I enjoyed it. I enjoyed all the special programs."

Fellowship. Five individuals made statements such as: "I got to know some of the church [people] a lot better."

Use of skills. Two statements were made such as: "Use of skills not usually associated with church service."

Future benefits. One person responded: "On the quilt, I see a benefit. Future generations will see the quilt and remember--it will bring joy."

Very little. One individual indicated a limited benefit: "Very little because I wasn't involved in the project."

Question 2.B: "How did it affect you personally? Problems?"

Five individuals cited problems associated with the project; 2 had to do with the short time line, 1 with problems related to the history presentation, and 2 were minor. Two of these responses were: "As chairman of the CRG, I had a problem envisioning what was needed to be done and how to do it in the time we needed to develop it." "I became aware of sticky things in the past and so I had to make choices in presenting history so as not to step on toes."

Question 3: "How did it affect the church?"

Understanding through study of history. Ten individuals made statements such as: "The church had a greater awareness of its history and a knowledge of how the people in the church affected that history." "We learned the history of the church together."

Involvement in activities. Nine statements were offered such as: "It livened the church and fostered a sense of involvement. It helped people to feel they are part of the history." "It was a point of interest to be involved in the project. The people worked together."

Pride in accomplishment. Nine persons spoke of pride in the work, such as: "People saw it [quilt] as a unique piece of work. Thought the model church was the best. Had to go and see it several times that day [homecoming]." "They were proud of their work, especially the leaders of the projects."

Enjoyment. Six statements were made such as: "They liked it. They were encouraged by the project--heard lots of good comments on the program."

Outreach. Two statements were made such as: "It brought people in for the special services."

Caution. One individual had a reservation to express: "I wished it would have attracted more people into the church."

Question 4: "How did the project affect the self-image of the congregation?"

Pride in accomplishment. Sixteen individuals reported a sense of pride in their work such as: "They were proud of their projects--they were especially proud of the quilt." "It increased their pride--they were proud of their accomplishments."

Example from past history. Eight statements were made such as: "It showed that people in the old days were willing to build the church--it gave us a good example for today." "So as we look back on the past, it gives us a desire to be like the people who did so much for our community."

Fellowship. Six individuals made statements such as: "It made the people feel closer--helped one another."

Involvement. Three remarks were made such as: "All felt included--there wasn't anyone who felt left out--all were involved in one way or another."

Enjoyment. One person stated: "People enjoyed it and liked it."

Question 6: "Are you a lay person or clergy person?"  
(Questions 6 through 10 are "number of responses.")

Lay	32
Clergy	0

Question 7: "Sex."

Male	11
Female	21

Question 8: "Age range."

Younger (ages 13-34)	10
Middle (ages 35-64)	8
Older (ages 65 and over)	14

Question 9: "Education level."

Up through High School	21
Beyond High School	11

Question 10: "What leadership position(s) do you hold in the church?"

None	13
Financial	1
Administrative	4
Clerical	5
Educational	3
Ceremonial	3
Administrative and educational	3
Administrative and ceremonial	0

Question 11: "If a member, how many years?"

(Number of years): 20-65-8-10-10-11-8-8-50-10-4-46-6-15

Question 12: "If not a member, how many years attendance?"

(Number of years): 6-70-27-10-1-2-21-5-8-5-11-11-6-30-45-2-16-40



## APPENDIX F

Results of the Pre-test/Post-test, Bakers Corner Initial--  
BCI, Bakers Corner Final--BCF, Boxley Initial--BXI, and  
Boxley Final--BXF

Question 1: "Think of the activities or programs of the past year which you feel were the most important in strengthening your church and enabling it to help people respond to God's call to serve Him. Please rate [rank] them 1 to 10 in order of effectiveness of your church in helping people respond to this call. 1=most effective. 10=least effective."

The results:

Sub-question	BCI	Whole population			BXF
		BCF	BXI	Total ranking	
1. Sunday school	1	1	2	3	
2. Fellowship	3-4-5	4	3	2	
3. Worship	2	2	1	1	
4. Mission studies	3-4-5	6	10	9-10	
5. Stewardship	3-4-5	3	7-8	5	
6. Outreach-local	9	9	4	7	
7. Outreach-beyond	7	7	9	8	
8. Social issues	10	10	7-8	9-10	
9. Evangelism	6	8	6	6	
10. Sharing with other churches	8	5	5	4	

Question 2: "How strong do you feel our church is in involving persons so that they can respond to God's call to serve him? Circle 1 for 'not very strong,' 5 for 'very strong,' and 2,3,4 for other degrees of strength.

not very strong 1 2 3 4 5 very strong"

Mean scores for whole population			
BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
2.7	3.2	3.2	3.1

Question 3.1: "Describe briefly one activity or program in your church which you are most excited about. In your opinion, how has it influenced the way people in your church respond to God's call to serve Him?"

The activity or program:"

	Whole population			
	Total number of responses			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Children's programs	8	5	2	3
Youth programs	2	1	1	4
Mission programs	3	2	0	0
Sunday school	3	2	0	0
Special services	4	10	10	5
Outreach programs	1	2	1	0
No response	7	3	14	13

Question 3.2: "How has it influenced?"

	Whole population			
	Total number of responses			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Educational	3	5	2	3
Fellowship	2	1	1	4
Evangelistic	6	2	0	0
Involvement	1	3	0	0
Stimulates interest & motivates action	4	10	10	5
Meets physical needs	0	2	1	0
No response	11	3	14	13

Question 4: "Think about the activity or program you described in question 3. Then indicate your opinion about the importance of each item in the following list in relation to that event. Circle 1 for 'least,' and 5 for 'most,' and 2,3,4 for other degrees of importance."

How important was..	Whole population mean score				
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF	BCP
1. the lay leadership to that event....	4.1	4.1	3.3	3.9	4.5
2. evangelistic outreach to that event.	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.1
3. the way our local church organizes and plans to that event.....	4.1	4.3	3.3	4.3	4.4
4. the pastor to that event.....	4.7	4.3	3.7	3.9	4.9
5. the congregation's attitude toward change to that event.....	3.3	4.2	3.4	3.3	3.9
6. missional outreach to that event.....	3.6	3.3	2.7	3.5	2.9
7. the community in which the church is located to that event.....	3.3	3.7	3.2	3.5	3.8
8. the caring and supportive fellowship of the people to that event.....	4.3	4.3	4.0	3.8	4.1

	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF	BCP
9. Christian education and nurture to that event.....	4.2	4.3	3.4	4.1	3.9
10. the worship and spiritual life of the congregation to that event.....	3.7	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.9
AVE.	3.9	4.0	3.4	3.8	3.9

Question 5: "Listed below are some general statements about the life and work of a church. How do you agree or disagree with these statements in relation to your church? Please give your opinion of how your church has been doing in the past year and not what others in your church may think. Abbreviations for the five responses are used throughout this section. Please refer to the scale listed for your convenience. Circle your response.

SD.....D.....U.....A.....SA"  
 (Strongly Disagree) (Disagree) (Uncertain) (Agree) (Strongly Agree)

	Whole population			
	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Question 5.1: "Worship services are an important part of the life of our church."	4.6	4.5	4.1	4.5
Question 5.2: "Our members know and care about one another."	4.0	3.8	3.9	4.4
Question 5.3: "The children are enthusiastic about our annual vacation Bible school."	4.5	4.1	3.8	4.1
Question 5.4: "More of the people of the congregation now are involved in leadership positions than they used to be."	2.6	3.3	2.8	3.0
Question 5.5: "Sunday school is important to our church life."	4.6	4.6	4.0	4.0
Question 5.6: "Our Church regularly finds helpful ideas from meeting with other churches in our area."	3.1	3.6	3.1	3.5
Question 5.7: "Our members effectively attract new people to our church services."	2.5	3.2	2.9	3.1

	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Question 5.8: "The people in our church give a lot of attention to Bible reading and prayer."	3.5	3.7	3.6	3.7
Question 5.9: "Our church does a capable job of reaching out to those in need in our community."	3.5	3.4	3.1	3.8
Question 5.10: "Our church functions best when a pastor stays a long time."	4.2	4.2	3.1	3.4
Question 5.11: "The people of our congregation feel hopeful about the future."	3.3	3.8	3.4	3.8
Question 5.12: "Preaching which is based on the Bible is very important to us."	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6
Question 5.13: "Our church actively works for more adequate food, medical, and transportation services for the elderly."	3.0	2.9	3.2	3.4
Question 5.14: "Sunday school is the most important activity in getting people to join our fellowship."	4.0	4.2	3.5	3.2
Question 5.15: "It is important for our church to work and share with other kinds of churches in our area."	3.8	4.1	4.1	4.3
Question 5.16: "It is important to have an annual membership training class made available to our people."	3.3	3.4	3.9	3.8
Question 5.17: "The Holy Spirit works through our church when our people help those in need."	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.2
Question 5.18: "New members can change the way things are done in our church."	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.3

	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Question 5.19: "Our church has a strong desire to support missionaries, both in the United States and overseas."	4.0	3.9	3.5	3.5
Question 5.20: "I enjoy being with the people in our church."	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.5
Question 5.21: "Our church is organized so that members know they have a voice in what is going on."	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.7
Question 5.22: "New people in our community enjoy visiting our church."	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.4
Question 5.23: "Helpful leadership training is made available to lay people in our church."	2.6	2.7	3.1	3.6
Question 5.24: "Our people rely mainly on the pastor to bring new people into the church."	4.1	3.8	3.0	3.4
Question 5.25: "Our mission studies are effective in helping our congregation become aware of the needs and hurts of other people."	4.0	3.6	3.2	3.2
Question 5.26: "Our lay leadership has an important part in the planning and decision making of our church."	4.1	4.2	3.6	3.8
Question 5.27: "New members are encouraged to take leadership positions in our church."	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.7
Question 5.28: "Effective involvement of our congregational members has been the result of good planning."	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.5
Question 5.29: "Persons who are really different (race, creed, etc.,) from our members are welcome in all our church activities."	4.2	4.1	4.2	3.8

	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Question 5.30: "The members of our congregation find getting together a meaningful experience."	4.1	4.0	4.4	4.4
Question 5.31: "Our church works for social justice issues such as decent housing, job equality, etc."	2.4	2.5	2.8	3.1
Question 5.32: "The pastor spends time getting to know people in our congregation."	4.7	4.3	3.6	3.5
Question 5.33: "It is important for our church to support the benevolent programs of our church."	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.1
Question 5.34: "Our church warmly greets and welcomes visitors."	3.9	4.1	4.2	4.0
Question 5.35: "It is important to allow teens to have a voice in the life of the church."	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.8
Question 5.36: "Members of our congregation are effective in witnessing to others about Christ."	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.5
Question 5.37: "Most of the planning and decision making is done through the official church board."	4.3	4.1	3.9	4.2
Question 5.38: "I find personal understanding and support in our church."	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.0
Question 5.39: "Our members tend to let the pastor make most of the decisions about our church program."	3.4	2.9	3.0	2.8
Question 5.40: "Most of the members of our congregation feel a responsibility to support the programs of the church."	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.9
Question 5.41: "Our church likes to try new ways of doing things."	2.9	2.6	2.8	2.8

Question 5.42: "In our community outreach, our pastor is the leader."	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
	4.3	4.1	3.6	4.0
Question 5.43: "Personal commitment to Jesus Christ is one of the greatest strengths of our church."	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.2
Question 5.44: "Our lay people carry a lot of responsibility in serving others in the community."	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.8
Question 5.45: "The fellowship which our people experience creates a spirit of sharing and giving."	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.0

Total scores and averages.

	BCI		BCF		BXI		BXF	
	Total	Ave.	Total	Ave.	Total	Ave.	Total	Ave.
Whole Pop.	165.2	3.7	167.2	3.7	163.2	3.6	168.3	3.7

Question 6: "Are you a lay person or a clergy person?"

	Number of responses			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Clergy	1	1	0	1
Lay	26	25	28	24

Question 7: "Sex."

Male	11	8	10	9
Female	16	18	16	16

Question 8: "Age range."

Younger (Ages 13-34)	8	11	11	5
Middle (Ages 35-64)	11	6	9	12
Older (Ages 65 and over)	8	9	5	8

Question 9: "Education level."

Up through High School	19	14	15	18
Beyond High School	8	12	10	7

Question 10: "What leadership positions do you hold in the church?"

None	17	13	16	5
Financial	0	0	0	0

	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Administrative	0	3	4	7
Clerical	1	0	0	0
Educational	2	6	3	0
Ceremonial	2	1	0	0
Administrative and educational	4	3	2	1
Administrative and ceremonial	1	0	1	2

Question 11: "If a member, how many years?"

BCI (Number of years) 5-9-14-40-10-6-7-9-64-3-60-15-7

BCF 6-15-10-8-4-64-10-16-8-12-65-7-8

BXI 50-10-20-30-8-7-2-33-60-15-10-4-14-6-18-40-20-20

BXF 4-4-20-20-60-35-30-45-10-21-50-25-40-15-6-5-12-9-8-15-40

Question 12: "If not a member, how many years attendance?"

BCI (Number of years) 30-7-5-10-26-10-5-3-1-15-19-1-69-17

BCF 8-8-2-35-20-2-15-5-9-25-4-6-1

BXI 1-1-1-6-1-35

BXF 4-33-6-5



## APPENDIX G

## Select Subpopulation scores for the Pre-test/Post-test

Question 2. "How strong do you feel our church is in involving persons so that they can respond to God's call to serve him?"

	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Whole population	2.7	3.2	3.2	3.1
Male	2.4	3.6	3.2	3.1
Female	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.1
Younger	2.6	3.2	3.3	2.6
Middle	2.4	3.4	3.0	3.3
Older	3.4	3.1	2.8	3.1
Up through high school	2.8	2.9	2.8	3.1
Beyond high school	2.6	3.5	3.6	3.3

Question 5.4. "More of the people of the congregation now are involved in leadership positions than they used to be."

	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Whole population	2.6	3.3	2.8	3.0
Male	2.5	3.4	3.0	3.7
Female	2.7	3.2	2.5	2.7
Younger	2.4	3.3	3.1	3.4
Middle	2.5	3.2	2.4	2.8
Older	3.0	3.4	2.4	3.3
Up through high school	2.8	3.2	2.6	3.1
Beyond high school	2.3	3.4	2.9	3.0

Question 5.7. "Our members effectively attract new people to our church services."

	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Whole population	2.5	3.2	2.9	3.1
Male	2.4	3.0	3.2	3.3
Female	2.6	3.3	2.5	3.0
Younger	2.0	3.0	2.7	3.0
Middle	2.6	3.0	2.6	2.9
Older	2.9	3.6	3.0	3.6
Up through high school	2.6	3.1	2.4	3.2
Beyond high school	2.1	3.3	3.1	3.0

Question 5.11. "The people of our congregation feel hopeful about the future."

	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Whole population	3.3	3.8	3.4	3.8
Male	3.2	3.6	3.6	3.9
Female	3.4	3.8	3.1	3.7
Younger	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.4
Middle	3.4	4.2	3.3	3.8
Older	2.8	3.9	3.2	3.9
Up through high school	3.4	3.7	3.1	3.8
Beyond high school	3.1	3.8	3.6	3.6

Question 5.14. "Sunday school is the most important activity in getting people to join our fellowship."

	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Whole population	4.0	4.2	3.5	3.2
Male	4.2	4.8	3.3	2.9
Female	3.9	3.9	3.4	3.3
Younger	3.6	4.2	3.2	2.6
Middle	4.2	4.7	3.1	3.2
Older	4.2	3.8	4.0	3.4
Up through high school	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.2
Beyond high school	4.0	4.4	2.7	3.1

Question 5.15. "It is important for our church to work and share with other kinds of churches in our area."

	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Whole population	3.8	4.1	4.1	4.3
Male	3.8	4.4	3.8	4.2
Female	3.9	4.0	4.3	4.3
Younger	3.5	4.1	3.9	4.2
Middle	3.9	4.2	4.1	4.3
Older	4.2	4.1	4.4	4.3
Up through high school	3.9	4.1	4.3	4.2
Beyond high school	3.5	4.2	3.8	4.4

Question 5.24. "Our people rely mainly on the pastor to bring new people into the church."

	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Whole population	4.1	3.8	3.0	3.4
Male	4.4	4.1	3.0	4.1
Female	3.9	3.8	2.9	3.1
Younger	4.3	4.2	2.4	4.2
Middle	4.2	3.8	3.1	3.1
Older	3.9	3.3	3.6	3.6
Up through high school	3.9	3.7	2.9	3.2
Beyond high school	4.5	3.9	3.0	4.1

Question 5.32. "The pastor spends time getting to know people in our congregation."

	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Whole population	4.7	4.3	3.6	3.5
Male	4.6	4.3	4.1	4.0
Female	4.8	4.4	3.1	3.2
Younger	5.0	4.3	3.9	4.2
Middle	4.6	4.3	2.9	3.1
Older	4.5	4.4	3.8	3.7
Up through high school	4.7	4.1	3.1	3.2
Beyond high school	4.8	4.6	4.0	4.3

Question 5.38. "I find personal understanding and support in our church."

	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Whole population	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.0
Male	3.6	3.9	4.3	3.8
Female	3.6	3.8	3.8	4.1
Younger	2.9	3.5	4.3	3.6
Middle	3.9	4.0	3.8	4.0
Older	4.0	4.0	3.8	4.3
Up through high school	3.6	3.5	3.8	3.9
Beyond high school	3.6	4.2	4.1	4.1

Question 5.39. "Our members tend to let the pastor make most of the decisions about our church program."

	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Whole Population	3.4	2.9	3.0	2.8
Male	3.1	2.4	3.1	2.9
Female	3.6	3.1	2.9	2.7
Younger	3.5	3.3	3.2	2.8
Middle	3.3	2.5	2.8	2.5
Older	3.4	2.8	3.0	3.3
Up Through high school	3.7	3.0	3.2	2.9
Beyond high school	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.4

Question 5.41. "Our church likes to try new ways of doing things"

	Mean scores			
	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
Whole Population	2.9	2.6	2.8	2.8
Male	3.0	2.4	2.9	2.8
Female	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.9
Younger	2.6	2.5	2.8	1.6
Middle	2.7	2.8	2.4	3.3
Older	3.4	2.8	2.8	3.0
Up Through high school	3.1	2.7	2.8	3.3
Beyond high school	2.4	2.6	2.5	1.9

## Total scores and averages

	BCI		BCF		BXI		BXF	
	Total	Ave.	Total	Ave	Total	Ave.	Total	Ave
Whole Pop.	165.2	3.7	167.2	3.7	163.2	3.6	168.3	3.7
Male	166.3	3.7	166.9	3.7	165.3	3.7	166.0	3.7
Female	165.2	3.7	166.5	3.7	159.0	3.5	169.8	3.8
Younger	157.6	3.5	158.7	3.5	164.2	3.6	164.8	3.7
Middle	168.1	3.7	172.1	3.8	160.3	3.6	168.1	3.7
Older	169.8	3.8	172.7	3.8	158.7	3.5	170.3	3.8
UT high s.	160.8	3.6	163.5	3.6	156.0	3.5	168.4	3.7
B high s.	160.8	3.6	171.5	3.8	168.7	3.7	168.9	3.8

## APPENDIX H

## Question 5 of the pre-test/post-test

## Comparison with Matheny

The Matheny scores have been converted from the six-point scale to the Likert five-point scale used in the Bakers Corner and Boxley pre-test/post-test. Only the mean scores are recorded.

Caring and supportive fellowship					
	Matheny	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
5.20	4.7	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.5
5.30	4.3	4.1	4.0	4.4	4.4
5.45	4.3	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.0
5.38	4.3	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.0
5.2	4.2	4.0	3.8	3.9	3.9
Ave.	4.4	3.9	3.9	4.2	4.2
Worship and spirituality					
	Matheny	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
5.1	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.1	4.4
5.12	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6
5.43	4.5	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.2
5.17	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.2
5.8	3.2	3.5	3.7	3.6	3.7
Ave.	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.2
The way the church organizes itself and plans					
	Matheny	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
5.37	4.4	4.3	4.1	3.9	4.2
5.21	4.3	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.7
5.28	4.1	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.5
5.15	3.7	3.8	4.1	4.1	4.3
5.6	3.0	3.1	3.6	3.1	3.5
Ave.	3.9	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.8
Lay leadership					
	Matheny	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
5.26	4.2	4.1	4.2	3.6	3.8
5.4	4.1	2.6	3.3	2.8	3.0
5.44	4.1	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.8
5.40	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.9

	Matheny	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
5.23	3.6	2.6	2.7	3.1	3.6
Ave.	3.9	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.6

## Attitude toward change

	Matheny	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
5.11	4.4	3.3	3.8	3.4	3.8
5.27	4.0	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.7
5.29	3.8	4.2	4.1	4.2	3.8
5.18	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.3
5.41	3.4	2.9	2.6	2.8	2.8
Ave.	3.8	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.5

## Pastoral leadership

	Matheny	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
5.32	4.4	4.7	4.3	3.6	3.5
5.42	3.9	4.3	4.1	3.6	4.0
5.10	3.9	4.2	4.2	3.1	3.4
5.39	2.5	3.4	2.9	3.0	2.8
Ave.	3.7	4.2	3.9	3.3	3.4

5.35 was omitted from this section because of the change in the pre-test/post-test. The Matheny question is, "The pastor helps our members to understand the connectional nature of the United Methodist Church." The pre-test/post-test question is, "It is important to allow teens to have a voice in the life of the church."

## Christian education and nurture

	Matheny	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
5.5	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.0	4.4
5.3	4.3	4.1	4.3	3.3	4.3
5.23	3.5	2.6	2.7	3.1	3.6
5.25	3.4	4.0	3.6	3.2	3.2
5.14	3.1	4.0	4.2	3.5	3.2
Ave.	3.7	3.9	3.9	3.4	3.7

## Evangelistic outreach

	Matheny	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
5.34	4.5	3.9	4.1	4.2	4.0
5.7	3.8	2.5	3.2	2.9	3.1
5.22	3.7	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.4
5.36	3.1	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.5
5.24	3.1	4.1	3.8	3.0	3.4
Ave.	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.5

## Missional outreach

	Matheny	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
5.33	4.3	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.1
5.19	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.5	3.5
5.9	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.1	3.8

	Matheny	BCI	BCF	BXI	BXF
5.13	2.9	3.0	2.9	3.2	3.4
5.31	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.8	3.1
Ave.	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.6
Total ave.	3.9	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.7

## APPENDIX I

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

Due to variations in the respondents health, mood, or most recent experience, a slight variation in answers to the same questions given at different times is expected. In addition, such categories in the Lickert scale of responses as "disagree" and "strongly disagree" or other responses such as these are viewed differently by different individuals. To analyze the survey results, the researcher needs a statistical test which sorts the questionnaires and finds those responses that indicate a significant change (either increase or decrease) from a pre-test to the post-test on the same questionnaire and by the same respondent. The Wilcoxon signed rank test for matched pairs is ideally suited for this application.

As the name implied, the Wilcoxon test required matching the pre-test surveys to the corresponding post-test surveys. This was possible for most, but not all the surveys. Some respondents to the pre-test survey did not respond to the post-test survey, and some of the post-test respondents did not fill out the pre-test survey. This is partly the reason why some of the questions from the Wilcoxon sort had a smaller change in the mean scores than some of the others selected for closer scrutiny (chapter 5).

The basis of the Wilcoxon test is the assumption that a random change in a respondent's answer is as likely to be an increase as it is to be a decrease. So all matched pairs are divided into pairs that show a change and pairs that do not show a change. The pairs that do not show a change are not used in the Wilcoxon test. They serve only to reduce the sample size. The surveys which do show a change are listed in order of the size of the change. Each pair is assigned a number composed to the position in the ordered list of pairs and the sign of the change observed. For example; given three surveys, A, B, and C, with changes of +1, -4, and +2 respectively, the numbers assigned are +1 for A (the smallest change and in the positive direction), -3 for B (the largest change and in the negative direction), and +2 for C. Consider an example with two equal changes: +1 for A, -1 for B, and -2 for C. Since A and B are the



same size and occupy positions one and two, each is assigned the number equal to the average of the positions they occupy. So the numbers are +1.5 for A, -1.5 for B, and -3 for C. These numbers are then added together and the result compared to a table which gives the probability of that sum for the given numbers of surveys. For a complete explanation see Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), pp. 75-83.

One weakness of the Wilcoxon test is the necessity to determine the ordering of the sizes of several changes. As was mentioned earlier, a 2 to 3 change is not necessarily equal to a 4 to 5 change. However, calling them equal is approximately correct. Even as these assertions are suspect, they are certainly a less rigorous one than requiring that the scale be a linear one. In other words, the Wilcoxon test is well suited to the analysis of data which is somewhat subjective.

PLATE I

The Family-of-God Quilt

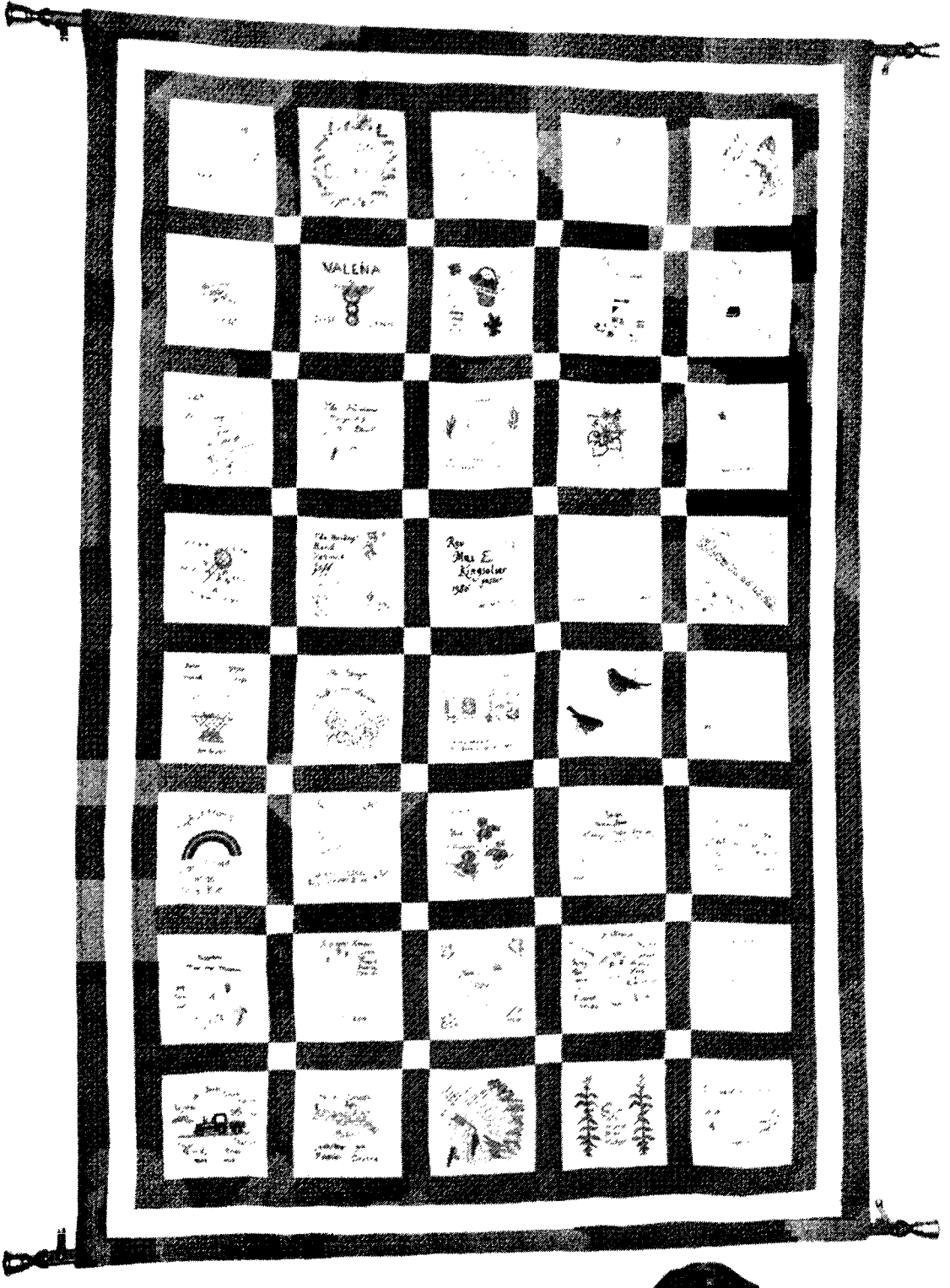


PLATE II

The Story Banner

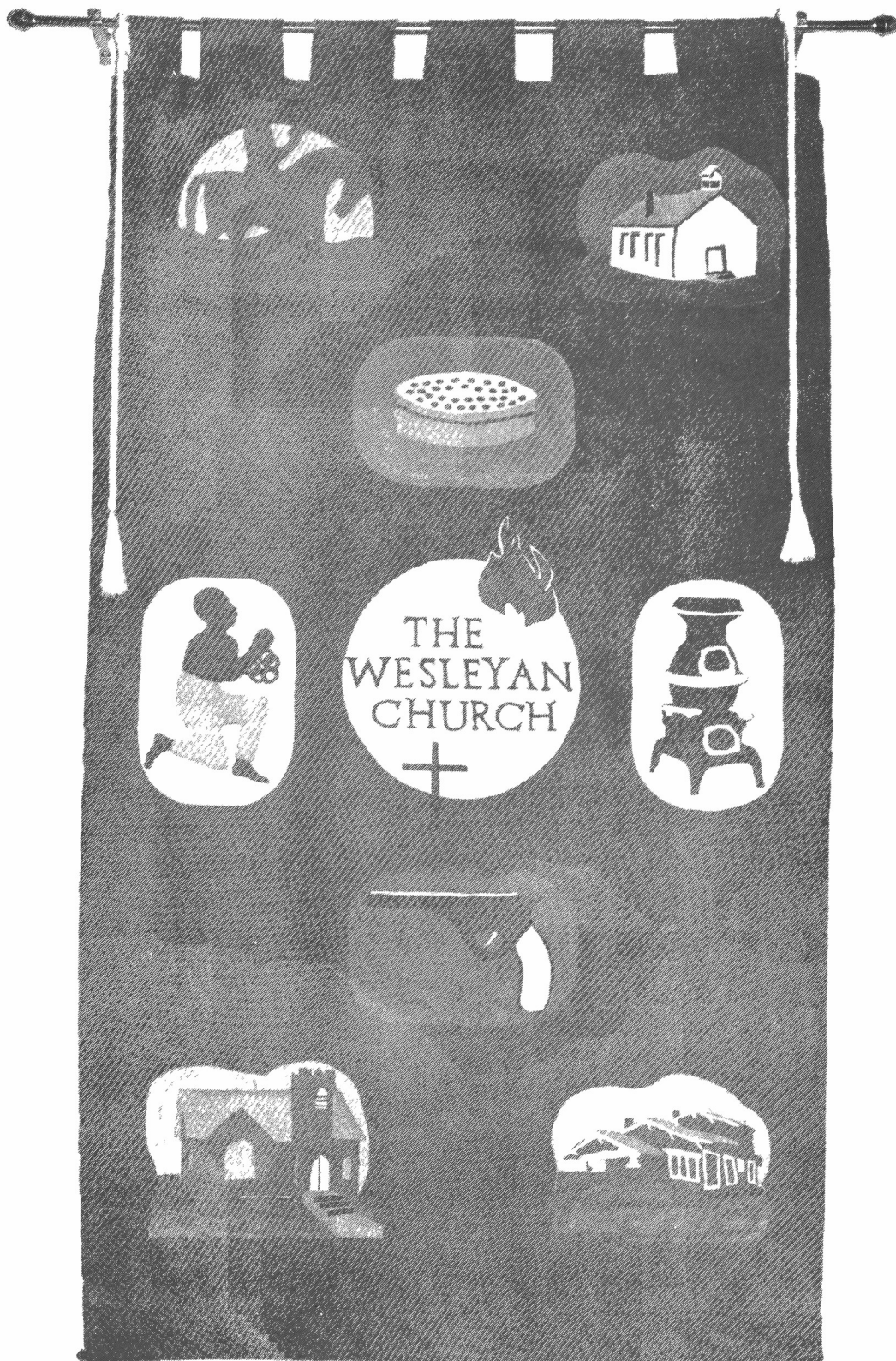
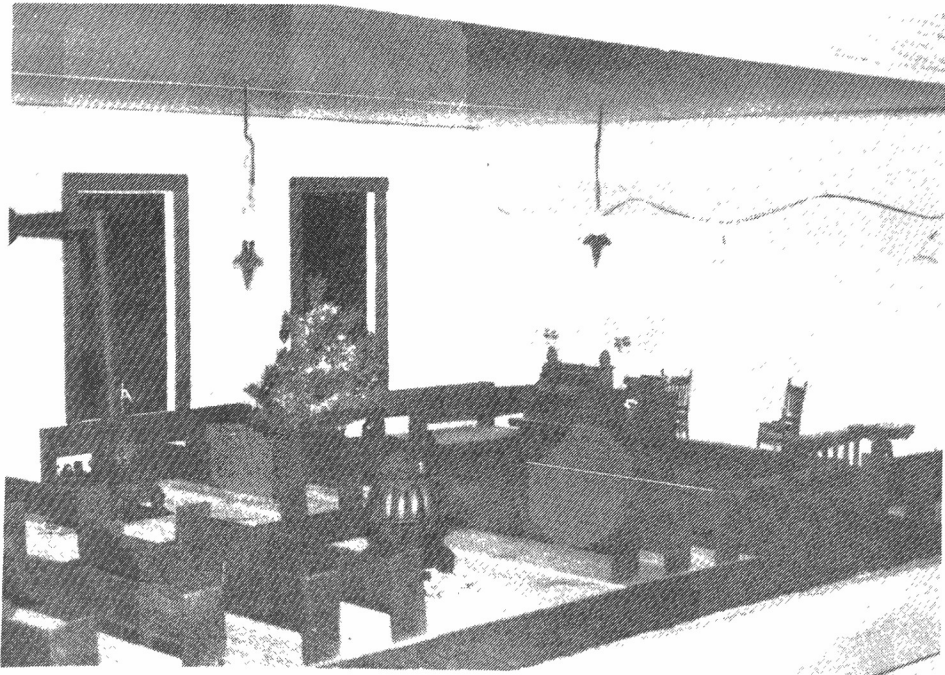
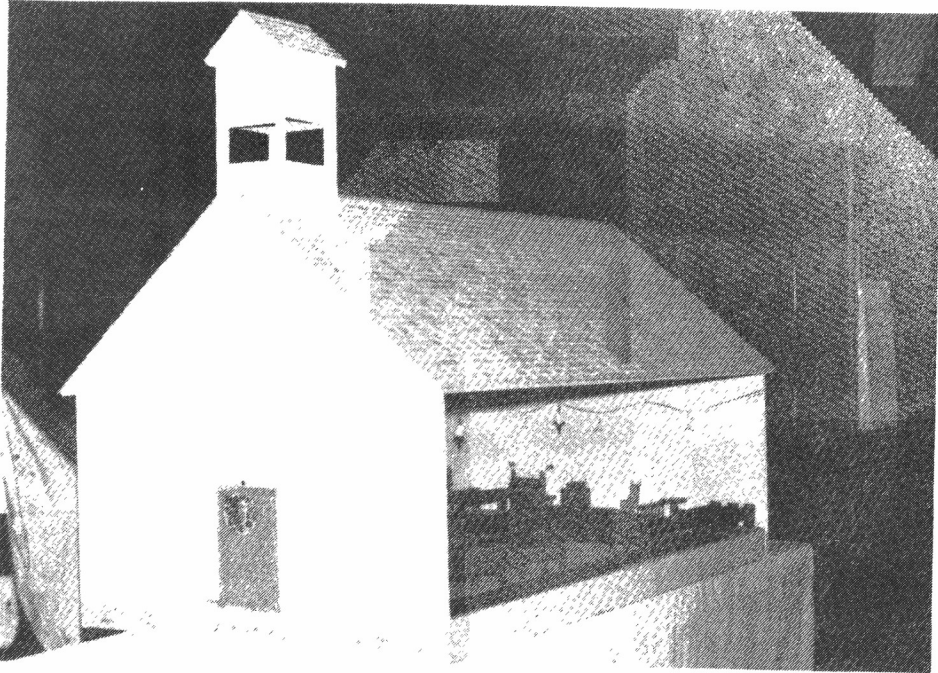


PLATE III

The Model Church



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