

ABSTRACT

A Study of the Impact of a Community Building Workshop Upon the Sense of Community of First United Methodist Church of Alexander City, Alabama

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This work is a study of community building in the local church. The author evaluates the implementation of a Community Building Workshop based upon the work of Scott Peck as developed by the Foundation of Community Encouragement. The workshop was qualitatively evaluated utilizing the insights of David Chavis and D. M. McMillan into the Psychological Sense of Community.

The author describes the theories of M. Scott Peck and Chavis and utilizes the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's work, Life Together, to analyze various approaches to community in light of theological insights.

The workshop raised issues of the authenticity of community within the church as a whole and between staff and members in particular. There seemed to be significant differences between the sense of community experienced by staff as opposed to that experienced by members. This was analyzed in terms of the four major components that Chavis and McMillan propose as constitutive of a sense of community. The tendency towards what Peck calls "pseudocommunity" seems to be a powerful factor in inhibiting the church's mission; especially in meeting the needs of its members who must

overcome the effect of "pseudocommunity" in order to surface their needs. This resulted in a seemingly high emotional connection while the integration of member's needs was consistently observed as the lowest scale within the study.

The author concludes that the Community Building Workshop is a significant intervention that, if used carefully, could significantly help the church to experience a deeper level of community. The workshop is not seen as a panacea in the struggle for community within the church.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the
dissertation entitled

A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF A COMMUNITY BUILDING WORKSHOP
UPON THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY OF FIRST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH OF ALEXANDER CITY ALABAMA

presented by

Lewis Hunt Archer

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

Wilmore, Kentucky

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**A Study of the Impact of a Community Building Workshop
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Church of Alexander City, Alabama**

by

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A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry

at Asbury Theological Seminary

April 1993

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With gratitude to Ginny, Mom and Dad without whose faithful support this document would never have come together.

CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Study

This project/dissertation describes and evaluates the implementation of a Community Building Workshop held for the staff and laity of a large United Methodist Church. The goal of this ministry intervention was to nurture a servant community of laity, staff and clergy as they sought to be in ministry for Jesus Christ.

The Problem to be Studied

First United Methodist Church of Alexander City is a large (1300 members), growing United Methodist Church (57% growth in the 1980's) located in East Central Alabama. This writer served as the Associate Pastor of the Church. The Senior Minister arrived in June of 1991. The staff at that time consisted of 23 full and part time employees. There were 13 Day Care workers and teachers, a Senior Pastor, Youth Worker, Music Director, Children's Ministry Director, Organist, Secretary, Financial Secretary and Staff Assistant. The church had a dynamic program and offered ministries to people of every age and station. The work of the church was being done by staff and congregation members with rushed and harried lifestyles. Programs of the church were competing within the community with activities such as little league athletics, lake recreation and work weeks that often lasted 70 or 80 hours on a regular basis. Church members were mobile, educated and assertive.

The church staff was expected to produce excellent programming with a high degree of professionalism in order to reach the families of this community. This expectation required an "up-tempo" pace of activities and a great deal of continuous effort to keep the programs of the church at a level of excellence which would attract and keep "baby-boomers."

In spite of some very positive indicators about this congregation there were some points that caused concern. Although worship attendance and membership had grown considerably, Sunday School attendance had remained the same over the past 10 years. 1991 actually saw decline in Sunday School attendance. Participation in small relational groups like Sunday School classes is seen by many as key to the assimilation of members and the development of a church that meets the relational needs of members (Samples 34).

This church prided itself on its ministries to hurting people. There was in fact a good degree of acceptance of people who had gone through such experiences as divorce or substance abuse. However, the ministries of the church that were specifically designed to meet the needs of hurting people attracted almost no member participation. Two such ministries were the divorce support and Codependents Anonymous groups in the church. There were several divorces a year in the congregation and there were also a large number of people who have dealt with codependency issues attending the church. Yet, people who were members did not usually attend these meetings.

This same tendency was seen in the fact that special weekend events designed around need-oriented topics such as Marriage Enrichment, Financial Concepts for Christians and Divorce Recovery Workshops were all supported by the church as good

ideas, yet were not attended by members. There were definite, expressed needs, yet attendance was dismal.

One other factor troubled the water. There had been a very high rate of turnover in the staff. First Church had 10 youth directors in 9 years. Other positions had experienced similar kinds of upheaval. People who had held these positions were often still active in the church yet they had not been able to sustain their ministries as staff persons. Lay persons who served on the staff had discussed the sense of loss they experienced as they changed roles from member to staff person. One expressed it as "I lost my church." A member who became a staff person crossed a line that moved one from the role of "consumer" to that of "employee;" the transition was especially stressful. To do the tasks of ministry while diminishing one's sense of community and support as well as fulfilling full time responsibilities at another job, as part-time church employees must often do, may have been a contributing factor to the high rate of turnover seen in this congregation's staff over the previous few years.

Taken together these factors might indicate that although there were some notable strengths in this congregation, members did not see the church as a place for intimate fellowship or for need fulfillment in their personal lives. This phenomenon could be seen as a lack in the community life of the church. Members were enthusiastic about other persons' needs being met but avoided situations which might surface their own brokenness and need for spiritual and emotional wholeness.

"To participate in the building and sustaining of human community is to 'do' ministry" (Mutual Ministry 61). The church's ministry is adversely affected by the tendency, present in all human groups, to live in what Scott Peck calls

"pseudocommunity...the members attempt to be an instant community by being extremely pleasant with one another and avoiding all disagreement" (The Different Drum 86). This tendency results in the repression of healthy conflict and the openness that is necessary for true intimacy. Pseudocommunity can lead the church into dysfunctional behaviors.

One factor that is present in any religious institution is the pressure exerted by role expectations that Church members will be models of faith and "goodness." This attitude can sometimes be magnified into a strong expectation that group members will hide their own feelings and opinions and needs in order to maintain a smooth, "positive" facade.

Staff members and leaders may be especially susceptible to the unreasonable assumption that their authority depends on presenting an "image" rather than an authentic life of faith and struggle for the congregation. A question posed by this project is whether or not the church is capable of being the church for staff and congregation together. Can the church be in community, or are the lines of professionalism and pressures for image management so powerful as to prevent this kind of intimacy from existing in the church? The New Testament clearly expresses the conviction that spiritual growth takes place within an intimate fellowship. Without that intimacy, growth becomes more difficult. Issues of spiritual growth will not easily surface in an environment lacking a sense of community. "The experience of salvation is incomplete and not fully biblical without genuine experience of the church as the community of God's people and agent of the kingdom" (Liberating the Church 17).

Methodology for the Project/Dissertation

Since 1987, and the publication of The Different Drum, Scott Peck and the Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE) have developed a theoretical framework and methodology for bringing a sense of community to groups of all kinds. The methodology is utilized in Community Building Workshops (CBW) sponsored by the Foundation. This project/dissertation includes a qualitative evaluation of the church's "Psychological Sense of Community" based on the insights of community psychology as represented by the work of David Chavis, as well as the implementation of a Community Building Workshop designed to deepen the congregation's sense of community.

Peck defines community as "a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to 'rejoice together, mourn together,' and to delight in each other, make others' conditions our own" (59).

The Process of Community Formation

Peck's theory of how community forms is that groups reaching community pass through four stages. The first is pseudocommunity. In this stage a group functions by a supposed homogeneity. People within the group try to maintain unity by conforming their thoughts and opinions to those which are expected by the group. There is very little open conflict in pseudocommunity.

The second stage posited for a group's journey to community is chaos. Chaos is characterized by attempts to "heal, fix or convert" group members who have in some way surfaced an unmet need or problem with the group. Chaos is the struggle of a group to

reimpose pseudocommunity upon individuals who have broken the assumptions of pseudocommunity.

The third stage takes place if groups do not revert to pseudocommunity. This stage is called emptiness. In emptiness, members of the group have acknowledged the reality of the otherness of the people in the group. Participants can share a concern and pat answers are not given. Solutions to problems are not quick in coming but there is a sense of respect for differences and an acceptance of each other's expressions of struggle.

In Peck's theory community is the fourth stage. Community comes as a gift of the Spirit. The reality of love and connection and power is given to those groups that are able to persevere through the process.

The Workshop

A Community Building Workshop is a two or three day intensive group experience that leads a group of persons with divergent ideas and experiences to form a community. The workshop is led by outside "facilitators" who have been thoroughly trained in the dynamics of community by the Foundation for Community Encouragement. These facilitators assist the group as it passes through the stages of community formation.

The facilitators begin the session with the reading of a parable used in Peck's book The Different Drum (13-15). The group is given some instructions and the "rules for community building" that were developed in The Different Drum. At this point the group takes on a life of its own and people are encouraged to speak as they feel moved.

Typically, the group experiences the stages of community building with some key guidance from the facilitators. The facilitators describe at what point in the community

building process the group finds itself. Occasionally they will intervene if individuals are monopolizing the process. [In workshops this author has experienced, some individuals were spoken to between group sessions if the facilitators felt that was necessary.]

The sessions are long and intense. The group spends at least 10-16 hours interacting before processing the experience. The opportunities for experiencing pseudocommunity, chaos, emptiness and community are not controlled by the facilitators. The facilitators reflect to the group the nature of the group's dynamic and do not actually interact with the group as a part of the community building process itself.

A group normally goes through a rather painful time as participants remove the behavioral "masks" of every day behavior and take the risk of vulnerability necessary for the advent of community. The experience of chaos within the group is often characterized by intense conflict or despair. Members of the group may want to give up the process and often say so. It is the period of chaos that is the most difficult for many participants. It is also an indispensable part of moving towards community.

If the stage of chaos is successfully negotiated by the group, emptiness occurs. Groups members stop trying to control one another. They let go of their expectations. When this emptiness is complete the group members will move into a state of community with one another.

Concluding the workshop, the last day of the session is usually devoted to processing the experience and taking decisions as to the future of the group that has gone through the community building process.

The project evaluated in this dissertation is the implementation of a Community Building Workshop at First United Methodist Church. Workshop participation was

encouraged by the personal invitation of key lay people, this pastor and the senior pastor. The event was also promoted at the Administrative Board and Council on Ministries meetings and through the bulletin and the newsletter. Materials were gathered that have been used in other churches. These resources were used for promoting the CBW in this church. A videotape of interviews of workshop participants in a CBW held at a Lutheran church in Ohio was available.

Research Questions

The questions researched in this project are as follows: What was the nature of First United Methodist Church's Psychological Sense of Community (PSI)? Would a Community Building Workshop utilizing the workshop model of The Foundation for Community Encouragement be effective within this church setting and create a deeper sense of intimacy and connection for the congregation and staff? How could this workshop be implemented within a local church in a way that would allow the broadest possible participation?

This workshop was a pilot project for the "Task Force on Building Community Within the Christian Church" of the Foundation for Community Encouragement and the adaptation of the workshop to the local church setting was an integral part of this project.

Instrumentation

This project/dissertation includes a review of literature relating to community within the Christian church and in the literature of the discipline of community psychology expressed in the writings of David Chavis and others in order to build a theoretical framework to guide the formation and evaluation of the project. The review

also includes literature and data gathered by the Task Force for Community within the Christian Church. This task force is a sub-group of the Foundation for Community Encouragement. A study of Christian community models in light of Peck's model is a part of this process as is an evaluation of some of the Biblical models of community formation within the New Testament.

Research for the paper includes an analysis of the First United Methodist Church staff history over the previous ten years. This includes the results of interviews of current staff members and information from files available within the church office. Staff interviews were also utilized to analyze the staff's sense of community.

The dissertation includes a qualitative evaluation of the sense of community experienced by both lay and staff participants. "Pre" and "post" workshop questionnaires were administered to participants. The author utilized the Sense of Community Index developed by David Chavis. This is an instrument for determining the Psychological Sense of Community within a given setting. The Index is used to help form the dissertation's qualitative analysis of the apparent impact of the workshop upon the sense of community experienced by participants. The Index was administered to the entire congregation one month prior to the workshop. It was given as planned, to the participants in the workshop before the workshop began, and again one month after the workshop.

The Sense of Community Index utilizes four subscales that measure the four major factors Chavis and McMillan posit as the constitutive elements of a psychological sense of community. The four subscales are Membership, Influence, Reinforcement of Needs and Shared Emotional Connection (Chavis and McMillan). The dissertation

utilizes the Chavis theory of a sense of community to evaluate the impact of the workshop through the means of interviews with the staff, the SCI and feedback from key lay people throughout the development and implementation of the project.

The theoretical framework for the workshop is the model developed within The Different Drum. This framework is critiqued in chapter two. The critique utilizes juxtaposition of views from the disciplines of psychology expressed by Peck as well as insights developed by David Chavis in his theory of a Psychological Sense of Community, along with theological insights into community, most especially those put forward by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Life Together.

Theological Perspective

Theological assumptions underlying this project/dissertation include that of a Universal Atonement. This approach is the foundation for the inclusiveness of the Community Building model. The Gospel includes us by grace, not by background or homogeneity. The grace of God transcends the particularized divisions of the human family and allows for community in Christ without the minimizing, denying or eliminating of differences. The biblical picture of the foundation of the church does not show many humans initiating community until the Spirit drives them by persecution, visions and ecstatic revelation towards an inclusiveness that shook the foundations of the ancient world.

The project also assumed pneumatological immanence. God is not only the source of human community but the Holy Spirit is actively present within each human life and group. God is seeking to reestablish the lost bonds of a broken humanity which

have been torn by sin. Human community is not a human achievement, it is a charism of the Spirit.

Peck argues that there are techniques or skills that one can use to encourage the development of a sense of community within a church or other organization.

This paper operates on the assumption that community is a gift of the spirit given to those who are in union with one another through the shared presence of Jesus Christ. Is there anything one can do to facilitate receiving the gift of God? If community is a gift, must we therefore wait passively for the gift to overtake us? The church has historically embraced means of grace, concrete actions such as worship, Bible study and prayer, that give one a special openness to grace. Wesley spoke of instituted and prudential means of grace (Works, 8: 323-324).

Peck's work develops a framework for the process of community formation within the church that might be considered on a par with prudential means of grace that make the life in the Spirit more of a reality. Such things as journal keeping , revivals and keeping the Christian year have all been justified as ways of actively opening lives to God and thereby receiving that which is a gift. The means should not be confused with the end. The end of the process of community building is the gift of being the body of Christ. A community building process based on this approach may provide a way to approach community formation as a ministry intervention.

Peck's model is not "taken from Scripture," but the assumption of this project is that his methodology and fundamental approach to community formation merits exploration.

The Community Building Workshop experience can "work" for groups of varying sizes in business, industry or the church. The aim of the community building workshop at First United Methodist Church was to reach a portion of the leadership of the congregation and other lay persons hungering for authentic community. It was hoped that they might choose to nurture such a new-found community in some sort of an ongoing fashion. Community groups are often formed as a result of the workshop experience. This writer hoped to change the expectation of Christian leaders towards deeper spiritual and community values as they saw that community is actually a possibility for their church. The author's hope was that even those who did not participate in an ongoing community group would take the skills learned in the workshop into the life of the congregation at large.

The senior pastor envisioned the Community Building Workshop as a supplement to what was already occurring within the congregation in the area of Disciple Bible Study and the Emmaus Walk, both of which were active within the church.

Variables for the Study

The independent variable for this study was the Community Building Workshop and the work done in preparation for it. The dependent variables were the results of the qualitative analysis of the church's Psychological Sense of Community (PSC), the PSC of the staff and the impact the workshop had upon staff and lay participants.

The study was developed to explore the possible interrelationships between the disciplines of community psychology, theology and the work of building community in the local church. More qualitative analysis is possible and desirable as workshops are conducted in the future. These would enable correlative studies of the impact of the PSC

upon a variety of factors such as staff burnout, pastoral longevity, church growth, new member assimilation and spiritual formation. This study does not attempt to assess the long term effects of the workshop on the participants or upon the church as a whole.

Chapter 2

Precedents in the Literature

This study examines and assesses the impact of a Community Building Workshop, (CBW) upon the congregation and staff of First United Methodist Church in Alexander City, Alabama. This chapter seeks to establish in more detail the theoretical framework of the project and its evaluation, introduced in chapter one.

The Psychological Sense of Community

This project draws its theoretical framework from several sources. David Chavis has worked within the discipline of community psychology to develop an instrument that measures the Psychological Sense of Community (PSC) upon the basis of the definition and theory he developed with McMillan. Their definition of a psychological sense of community is, "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (Chavis and McMillan "Sense of Community: a Definition and Theory" 9). Research has shown a correlation between a group's sense of community and "an individual's ability to function competently within it" (Chavis and McMillan 8).

Their definition quoted above includes four basic elements: Membership, Influence, Integration and Fulfillment of Needs, and Shared Emotional Connection.

Membership, in this sense, is "a feeling that one has invested part of oneself to become a member and therefore has a right to belong." It includes the idea that there are boundaries to the group. These boundaries are used to provide "emotional safety" and "identity" to the group. Persons with a sense of membership feel as if they fit in with the group. Symbol systems and personal investment are keys in maintaining the group's clarity about membership (9-10).

The participants with a strong sense of community feel that they matter to the group and that the group matters to them. Influence, the second basic element in a psychological sense of community, is a two way track in which influence must flow in both directions to be considered effective (10). Persons who feel influenced by the group without having input of their own and persons who feel they influence the group while not being influenced themselves will not have a high sense of community.

Integration and fulfillment of needs is the third component of Chavis' concept of a sense of community. Chavis also calls this component reinforcement. According to this theory, "need fulfillment is a primary function of a strong community" (12-13). A sense of community develops as one's own needs are met through participation in a group. It also develops as one sees the needs of others met. Persons who do not sense that their needs are met through the commitment required for participation may leave the group altogether or become discouraged, alienated and they may feel used.

Shared Emotional Connection is the final component of Chavis and McMillan's theory. "A shared emotional connection is based, in part, on a shared history. It is not necessary that group members have participated in the history in order to share it, but they must identify with it" (13). Within the component of emotional connection there is

a factor of a spiritual bond between people in groups having a high PSC (Chavis and McMillan 14) . Emotional Connection is a product of social contact and high quality interaction. A strong sense of emotional connection gives the participant a sense of unity with the group. Chavis and McMillan describe emotional connection as "the definitive element for true community" (14).

The work of McMillan and Chavis is based upon a body of research developed under the influence of Paul Saranson within the discipline of community psychology. Saranson argues that the Psychological Sense of Community is the conceptual center of the discipline of community psychology (Saranson, "Psychological Sense of Community, An Emerging Conceptual Center"). A wide body of research has developed that focuses the import and meaning of psychological sense of community. A high PSC has been shown to be correlative to competence within a group (Glynn), it has been shown to be associated with "less depersonalization, less emotional exhaustion and more personal accomplishment" in the corporate world (Pretty et. al. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* (in Press)). PSC has been shown to have a negative intercorrelation with student burnout and psychological symptoms on the college campus (Pretty, *Journal of College Student Development* May 1990). Work is being done to determine the utility of the theory and its measurement instrument as a predictor of behavior within neighborhoods ("Sense of Community in the Urban Environment: A Catalyst for Participation and Community Development," *American Journal of Community Psychology* vol. 18 no. 1 1990) .

Shinn has argued that religious institutions can play a role in the empowerment that community psychology seeks to bring to society (563). She feels that religious

institutions can give legitimacy to community psychology efforts and that community psychology can help make ministries of churches more empowering.

Chavis has developed a Sense of Community Index (SCI) that measures the overall sense of community experienced within a group and contains sub-scales that measure the four basic components of a sense of community as discussed above.

Theological Reflection

Chavis and McMillan have delineated a theory of the sense of community that has theological relevance as well as practical significance for the church. These factors, membership, integration and fulfillment of needs, influence and emotional connection all are reflected within the arenas of theology.

The church struggles with the nature of its community. In recent years, writers have bemoaned the loss of a sense of community in western culture (Bellah et al Habits of the Heart). Many theologians have also struggled with the nature of the church as community. One seminal thinker of this century was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His work on community, Life Together, gives us opportunity to gain insights offered by theological thinking in the area of community. Insights from his work can illumine the interrelationship between community psychology and theology.

The disciplines of theology and psychology approach the issue of community in diverse ways. The psychologist begins with the human element of community. The theologian begins with God. This difference in approach is evident in the writings of Peck and Chavis whose approaches are basically (though not exclusively) psychological and in Bonhoeffer's book Life Together, whose approach is basically (though not exclusively) theological.

Bonhoeffer speaks of true and false, human and divine community. He describes psychological community in terms of a visionary dream that would try to put community on the basis of some kind of human homogeneity, such as sinlessness (28). He sums up the contrast between true and false community with the statement, "The basis of the community of the Spirit is truth; the basis of human community of spirit is desire" (31). He describes the desire that leads to "human" community, "Such desire of the human soul seeks complete fusion of the I and Thou, whether this occur in the union of love or, what is after all the same thing, in the forcing of another person into one's sphere of power and influence" (33). The danger the church faces is that something other than the Word of Grace in Jesus Christ will substitute as the shared valent event forming the community.

Parker Palmer speaks of this reality, "False communities are idolatrous. They take some finite attribute like race, creed, political ideology, or even manners, and elevate it to ultimacy" (A Place Called Community 17). Because the foundation of the emotional connection of a false community is something less than the encounter with Christ, it might be possible that a high emotional connection does not signal a healthy sense of community.

Bonhoeffer urges service of others as an essential evidence of true community. The sense of community to be sought in the church is not in homogeneity but in heterogeneous bodies of believers united by the power of the Word of Christ. This spiritual community provides what Moltmann calls unity in diversity. "The goal ...is not unity in uniformity, but rather a unity in diversity" (Jurgen Moltmann, "Knowing and Community" On Community 170).

The hope of the Christian Church is that human beings, joined together through Jesus Christ, can know one another through the unveiling that comes in diversity without attempting to eliminate that diversity. This requires the church to give up "human love" which seeks absorption of the beloved (Life Together 33). "I must release the other person from every attempt of mine to regulate, coerce, and dominate him (sic) with my love...spiritual love... will respect the line that has been drawn between him (sic) and us by Christ, and it will find full fellowship with him in the Christ who alone binds us together"(36).

Peck, like Bonhoeffer, speaks of true and false community. Peck describes true community as a community based on truth; however, the truth he describes is not theological truth but truth-speaking founded in immense respect for the individual journeys of the others in one's community. For Peck, the authenticity of a community is measured by the degree of openness and intimacy possible within the dynamics of the group. Peck's vision for community is undergirded by a theology, mostly unarticulated, while Bonhoeffer's vision of community is fundamentally theological.

In Life Together Bonhoeffer sets the boundaries of true community as the people gathered by justification through faith in Christ. This community is true because its theology is true. The community is established as a fellowship of sinners standing under the judgement of the word of God. Peck describes acceptance of one another but does not refer to theological categories when doing so.

In Life Together Bonhoeffer begins discussing the boundaries of community and the basis of community. In doing this he separates himself from non-theological thinkers. When he turns to more practical aspects of community life in the latter part of

his book he leaves room for dialogue with the other disciplines as he deals with the human realm of community. These commonalities (discussed below) do not resolve the conflict in understanding between the humanistic discipline of community psychology and the discipline of theology. It is possible that both disciplines could contribute to deepening the community life of the church.

In spite of the real differences between Bonhoeffer's perspective and that of Chavis or Peck, there are points at which they inform one another. In the summation given below, Chavis' categories of membership, need fulfillment, influence, and emotional connection are discussed in relation to Bonhoeffer's views from Life Together and views of other Christian writers. These points of congruence occur in Bonhoeffer when his thought turns from theology per se to practical matters about the life of the church.

Elements of membership are dealt with by theologians. Baptism is the Church's sacrament of belonging, of belonging to Christ and the church community. Those who are baptized are baptized into the body of Christ and into Christ (I Corinthians 12:13). Membership is a vital component in modern ecclesiology. The assimilation of members has become more of a focus as it has become apparent that church membership must involve incorporation into a community if such membership is to be a significant factor in life. Schaller, speaking of the large church, says "the second most important question to be raised in developing a church growth strategy in large congregation concerns the congregation's ability to assimilate new members" (Schaller, 88); that is, to bring them into the life of the community. The assumption is that if the new members do not experience a sense of community they will soon become inactive. The desire to belong,

to be a part of a visible Christian Community, is affirmed by Bonhoeffer though he states that some Christians are unable to find Christian Community due to circumstances of this life. "The believer feels no shame, as though he were still living too much in the flesh, when he yearns for the physical presence of other Christians. Man (sic) was created a body, the Son of God appeared on earth in the body, he was raised in a body" (20).

The disciple comes to Christ out of a sense of need. As Bonhoeffer states, "a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ" (Life Together 21). Salvation is a gift that comes to us in our brokenness and so our sense of need draws us to the community. We seek to join with other believers in order to encounter the Word of Christ. Needs are met in the community as the Word of Christ becomes manifest in its life. If members sense that genuine needs are being met authentically, their sense of community and the wholeness that accompanies community is likely to rise.

The Christian community is to be a place where the disciple is influenced by the Word of Christ spoken and lived through brothers and sisters and a place to speak that word written on the heart of the believer. Each gift is given and is to be used in the community. Bonhoeffer speaks eloquently of this concept of influence, "...in a Christian community everything depends upon whether each individual is an indispensable link in a chain. Every Christian community must realize that not only do the weak need the strong, but also that the strong cannot exist without the weak. The elimination of the weak is the death of fellowship" (Life Together 94).

The final factor in McMillan and Chavis' definition of a psychological sense of community is emotional connection. A sense of togetherness and positive interaction within the community of faith is a part of a sense of community. The depth of emotional

connection is keyed to what the authors call "event valence." This means that the significance of the events shared affects the depth of emotional connection experienced. Theologically one would expect churches to have a significant emotional connection based upon the cosmic significance of the redemption offered humanity through Jesus Christ. If the experience of redemption is the shared valent, one might expect the church to be a place of immensely high community. Bonhoeffer's prime concern is that nothing be substituted for Christ and the redemption of the cross for the justification of sinners as the shared valent event that forms the Christian community. For him, any emotional or psychological community is secondary to the fundamental reality of the church as the body of Christ.

From Theory to Method

The project involved in this study was analyzed through the lens provided by McMillan and Chavis. Chavis' SCI was utilized to explore the question of, "What was the nature of the Psychological Sense of Community present in First United Methodist Church before the intervention?" The inventory was used to answer a second question: "What impact did the intervention appear to have upon the sense of community of the participants?" A questionnaire was developed and utilized in a scheduled, structured interview setting to qualitatively assess the key church staff's sense of community. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of each component of the McMillan-Chavis theory and provided insight into the unique position of the church staff with regard to their sense of community.

Are there ways to teach the principle relational skills needed to enhance the psychological sense of community within today's Church? A method currently being utilized, and referred to briefly in chapter one, is the Community Building Model developed by Scott Peck in his book, The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace (A Spiritual Journey Toward Self-Acceptance, True Belonging, and New Hope for the World). This model was developed in the early 1980's on the foundation of work done in "T Groups" and "Marathon" groups. It is the basis of the work of The Foundation for Community Encouragement. The Foundation sponsors community building workshops around the country in varied settings such as business, church and city government.

The Community Building Model of Scott Peck

The disciplines of psychology and theology have both struggled with the definition of community. It is difficult to define. Human communities are varied in setting and location and purpose. Peck says, "We can define or adequately explain only those things that are smaller than we are" (Peck 59).

Peck has developed the following definition used in Different Drum: "A group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to 'rejoice together, mourn together,' and to delight in each other, make others' conditions our own" (59).

The Foundation for Community Encouragement has developed a working definition for community which is the basis of the model's implementation in their workshops:

"A community is a group of two or more people who, regardless of the diversity of their backgrounds (social, spiritual, educational, ethnic, economic, political, etc.) have been able to accept and transcend their differences, enabling them to communicate effectively and openly and to work together toward goals identified as being for their common good"

("Community Described," Foundation for Community Encouragement).

To further grasp Peck's vision of community it is necessary to understand what he proposes as the characteristics of authentic human community.

According to Peck, authentic community is characterized by certain attributes. These attributes are what differentiate a crowd or a group from an authentic community. Whereas Chavis cited Influence, Membership, Emotional Connection and Integration of Needs, as elements that determine one's perception of community, Peck terms the several characteristics of community to be Inclusiveness, Consensus, Realism and Spirituality. Let us examine each characteristic as given by Peck.

Inclusiveness

The first quality is inclusiveness (61). An authentic community prefers inclusion to exclusion. Peck acknowledges that long term communities may not be totally inclusive; even individuals who have been excluded from his workshops are mentioned in his book (124). The principle he communicates is that inclusivity builds community

while exclusivity destroys it. The desire to create "community" by excluding those who do not fit into a particular mode is a powerful force but, according to Peck, will not result in community as defined above.

Inclusiveness creates the need for the second major characteristic, commitment. Sticking with the process of building deep relationships with people who may be strikingly different than oneself requires commitment and is fundamental to Peck's vision of community.

Consensus

Peck argues that decision making by communities will be consensual rather than hierarchical (63). Consensus is rooted in his concept that "All are leaders" (72). An individual is called to exist within the group in openness and integrity, thereby requiring an environment which allows for graceful conflict (70), and a sense that it is safe to be honest (67).

Realism

Peck's community is realistic. It does not avoid conflict or try to impose expectations upon reality (64). It attempts to be self-aware, or what Peck calls "contemplative" (65). This realism is similar to Bonhoeffer's rejection of "false" community.

Spirituality

Finally, for Peck, community is a spiritual phenomenon. He says that "the spirit of community is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit" (75). In other words, for a group to become a community in the sense defined by Peck, the work of the Spirit is required. In Peck's view, it does not necessarily follow that community only happens when people

call on the name of Jesus; he also points out that there are plenty of examples of people calling on that name with no sense of community at all (75). In Wesleyan terminology, community is a prevenient gift of the Holy Spirit. Not every church is a community. Not every community is a part of the church. Every community is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

How does a group move from an aggregate of people to a community? Peck describes this process as fourfold. The group goes through the process of moving from "pseudocommunity" to "chaos," to "emptiness," to "community."

The Phases of Community

Pseudocommunity is a means of "conflict avoidance" (88) in which the group maintains a surface unity by "white lies" that enable the appearance of conformity to be maintained.

When someone finally breaks with pseudocommunity and opens the group to conflict, "chaos" ensues in which group members try to restore their "erring" member by means of what Peck calls healing, fixing, converting, judging. These attempts to restore pseudocommunity often fail. If the group continues, the attempts to hide conflict become obviously futile and the group ceases to try to fix the problems.

A new phase begins in which the group lets go of the barriers to communication. The group members let go of their expectations and preconceptions. They let go of prejudices. They cease to make theology or ideology the foundation of community. Most of all, group members let go of the need to control (86). This phase is called emptiness.

The next stage is the gift of community. When members in a group stop hiding or obliterating the differences between them something new happens. Community happens. A sense of peace and acceptance comes. The group continues to have disagreements but there is a qualitative difference. As Peck says, "An extraordinary amount of healing and converting begins to occur - now that no one is trying to convert or heal. And community has been born" (104).

Design for Community

Having described community, Peck turns to the question of how to bring community into existence. He phrases his question like this, "Could groups be brought into community not by crisis, not by accident, but by deliberate design? The answer is yes" (83). Peck describes various "rules" for community building in his description of the process of community formation. These include: listen actively, do not avoid conflict, do not generalize, do not try to heal, fix, convert or solve when people open up and make themselves vulnerable, do not escape chaos by organization, do not judge, and let go of prejudices and any other barriers to communication (these are distilled from Peck's chapter 8).

The summary given above is a very condensed presentation of Peck's model. His book goes on to project what community could do for the Christian Church, the U.S. Government and for the cause of world peace. For the purposes of this analysis the focus is upon the actual process of community formation and its relevancy to the Church.

Theological Analysis

The fact that the church is the community of those joined to Jesus Christ differentiates its life from that of any other particular community. The fact that it is also a human community establishes a certain commonality between the church and other human communities. Howard Snyder describes the Christian Church as the "Messianic Community" (The Community of the King 71).

The obstacles to community within the Church are often similar to those in the rest of the world community. The Holy Spirit forms the Christian community in those who unite themselves to Christ. When present, this community is characterized by love, holiness and the joy of God as people connect with one another in a powerful way and find new life through Jesus Christ. The individual is born into the body of Christ upon regeneration. The community of the Church is the environment within which discipleship and obedience are possible (Snyder 59). Apart from true community discipleship is atomized, people are judged, fixed, converted and excluded as they are in any other human group. But, true community within the church manifests the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ (Snyder 69).

Christian community is formed in the preaching of the possibility of a new human community united to Jesus. Those who come to this community enter through confession. This confession can only take place when people are convinced that there is real possibility of transformation. This possibility is evidenced by the kerygma and the presence of the Spirit confirming the word through the already - believing community.

If authentic community does not exist then the invitation to Jesus degenerates into an invitation to pseudocommunity. That might make us "twice as fit for hell" in that an

invitation to pseudocommunity is an invitation to pseudoconversion. Entry into the community of Jesus is only possible when we acknowledge our brokenness and unworthiness to enter on any basis other than the grace of God through Jesus. "All fall short" is the first acknowledgement required for entry to the Christian community.

Secondly, those who enter must believe that in Jesus Christ a new life is offered by forgiveness of sins. Without the promise of forgiveness confession becomes a futile exercise. Jesus has died, bearing our sins and the sins of the whole world. God accepts us as we are.

In the sacrament of baptism the church acknowledges the confession of brokenness. In the waters of baptism allegiance is given to the new community and a break with the false ways of our past is announced. The initiate is born again after his or her death to the past. In effective baptism the initiate begins a journey into the community of faith. Community in the church has been formed. Now, the question is, how can community be maintained?

Much more work can be found in the area of community maintenance than in community formation in the Christian Church. We have many examples of community maintenance within the tradition of the church. The rules of Benedict and Francis, the class meetings of John Wesley, and the General Rules of the Methodist Societies were all attempts to structure an environment that would allow the power of community through the Holy Spirit to blossom. These structures are necessary for community maintenance. Even the ongoing community groups reported in FCE's newsletter report structures that are developing around their common life. These structures can become ways of "organizing out of chaos" (conflict avoidance) and can threaten authentic community in

subtle ways. In Community and Growth Vanier says, "There is always a temptation, because of the need for security, to plan a community beforehand, in all its details. Ideas then precede life and want to govern it. But that is not usually the way the Spirit works" (110). In spite of the concerns about covenants, they have been seen as a necessary way of establishing group boundaries and structures. Groups such as "Covenant Discipleship Groups" and "Emmaus Reunion Groups" are notable examples of groups and covenants enhancing community within the United Methodist Communion.

Just as the individual believer must die in baptism to enter the community, the church itself must die to its past without this new member and come to life as a new community reformed by the presence of the new member.

Each new member of the community forces the community go through a process of formation once again. A new person thrusts the community back into the process of chaos, emptiness and community once more. The body of Christ cannot responsibly ask its initiate to die in baptism only to force the initiate into pseudocommunity by refusing its own death. Moltmann describes the pain of this process, "We feel the contradiction of the different. We notice the demand of the new. The pain indicates that we must change ourselves if we want to understand the alien, to perceive the different, and to comprehend the new" (Moltmann, 169). The church only stays the same with new members by either refusing to receive new members at all or by living in pseudocommunity. There will always be pain in the church as the body is added to. When a new person comes in, the old community dies to some degree in order to give birth to the new. Death is painful and so avoiding the process is more typical than not. This is one reason the church goes through waves of new growth followed by decay. If the church must continuously die

and be reborn as God brings new people, how does the community define itself? Snyder considers the church to be the Messianic community, the agent of God's kingdom in the world (73).

Peck's model gives the church a means of developing and deepening its sense of community. It gives hope for developing greater inclusivity and more tolerance for those outside the faith.

The characteristics he uses to describe community resonate with the view of the church in which the "strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak" (Romans 15:1).

A dynamic of the book of Acts and indeed of much of the New Testament is the drive toward greater inclusiveness within the church. The church moves from Jews in Jerusalem to include gentiles from all over the Roman empire. The letters of Paul are driven by the need to integrate gentiles into the faith community. Using Peck's lenses of community process, it would seem that Paul is struggling to move the church beyond the chaos caused by the inclusion of the Gentiles by encouraging the Jewish believers to empty themselves of their prejudice and preconceptions of how God can reach people (Romans 3,4 and 5). He points to the universal brokenness of the human family resulting from sin and proclaims the universal redemption won by Jesus Christ on behalf of all, Jew and Gentile.

The book of Acts focuses its portrayals of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon inclusion of different groups within the church, Jews of the diaspora (Acts 2:7-12, Samaritans (Acts 8:4-17), people of different races (Acts 8:26-39), former persecutors (Acts 9:17-18), and finally the Gentiles (Acts 10). For an extended treatment on this aspect of the book of Acts, see James D. G. Dunn's book, Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Peck associates the advent of community as the descent of the Holy Spirit (The Different Drum 75). The New Testament community is formed by the proclamation of the word of Jesus. Peck's experience of the Spirit in community can occur quite apart from the proclamation of Christ. This presents a theological bind for the Church. The church is in desperate need of the kind of community that Peck describes.

Howard Snyder has seen this need and says, "much that I have seen and experienced in the contemporary church ... has led me to question seriously whether the church as we know it can ever be renewed" (Snyder, preface). This author has the same concern.

Vanier describes the hunger for community that belongs to the church in our age. "People are crying out for authentic communities where they can share their lives with others in a common vision, where they can find support and mutual encouragement, where they can give witness to their beliefs and work for greater peace and justice in the world" (Community and Growth 2).

The defining characteristic of the church has always been Jesus Christ. Unity, freedom and love are all based upon the atonement but there are voices today that are calling for a theocentric rather than Christocentric church. They assume that relinquishing Christocentrism will cause a greater increase in the world's sense of community. They call for the pursuit of a new community based on the world's great religions, syncretizing their beliefs just enough to be come acceptable to one another. This is fallacious if one accepts Peck's view of community development.

If one must let go of Jesus or deny his claims to be the way, the truth and the life in order to be accepted by another faith, that one is not accepted. If non-Christians are

not accepted by the Christian community apart from a relationship with Jesus then they are not accepted. Community is formed by dying but not by untruth. Community based on untruth is pseudocommunity. The community of the church is founded by and in and through Jesus Christ. It is maintained by the presence and power of the reigning Christ.

The doors are open to all and the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh precisely because Jesus died and rose and triumphed and atoned. Where genuine love takes place inside or outside the church, it is the fruit of the death of Jesus and the activity of the Holy Spirit either in the faithful or in those receiving the prevenient gifts of the Holy Spirit. Community cannot be formed by denial of deep seated convictions of the nature of truth. To demand that one change views without conviction of their truth for some purpose of "unity" is to ask for pseudocommunity.

Peck's community building model also has some interesting implications for the role of preaching in the community of faith. Authentic preaching can be seen as a means of leading the faith community into chaos if it is in pseudocommunity, to emptiness if it is in chaos.

The Apostle Paul entered into synagogues that had elements of pseudocommunity. Jews, proselytes and "God fearers" were together with different status. Women were relegated to a low status and Paul came preaching Jesus Christ. Chaos repeatedly ensued (II Corinthians 11:24-25). Results varied but a new community often came into being through his preaching. The new quality of the community was described by his statement in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

The day of Pentecost can be viewed, in some ways, through this lens as well. The Jews are gathering for the feast from nations around the known world. The preaching and the signs of Pentecost throw the crowd into chaos, "Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?' Some, however, made fun of them and said, "they have had too much wine" (Acts 2:12-13) .

Peter preaches and emptiness can be seen as the crowd is pierced to the heart and asks "what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). They are instructed to be baptized and repent that they may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. They are incorporated into the Messianic community.

There is a uniqueness to the Christian community in that it is a specifically messianic community whose existence is through union with Jesus Christ. However, one can see the dynamics of community formation taking place that are common to other human communities and are harmonious with Peck's model.

It is this author's judgement that although Peck's model is not complete in that it does not deal with the theological foundation for the grace of community, it is nevertheless helpful in giving the church tools with which it may be able to deepen and enhance its life.

Applicability to the Local Church

The Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE) has established a task force for Building Community in the Christian Church. Workshops have been held in a variety of denominations with some success. The task force is interested in discovering how the FCE model can best be utilized in churches across the country. The proposed

method for pursuing this is through series of test or pilot churches that will host Community Building Workshops (CBWs). These events will be monitored by the task force and the long term effects of the CBW will be examined in attempts to refine and adapt the model for specific usage in Christian churches.

Several factors could hinder the implementation of a CBW within a local church. The process of a workshop requires three full days. This takes a person away from work and therefore requires a great deal of commitment on the part of the participant before the workshop is ever brought into the local church. In addition to the length of the workshop, cost is a factor. The standard FCE workshop is \$1500 per day. This fee is beyond the reach of small and even mid- sized congregations. There are leader-sponsored workshops that are considerably less expensive that can be arranged if an FCE facilitator agrees to sponsor a church's workshop.

These factors make it imperative that a CBW be carefully introduced to a local church. It cannot be done quickly or capriciously. Groundwork needs to be laid in terms of the theology and Biblical basis for seeking community within the church. This might be accomplished through a Bible study series or a series of group meetings before the CBW.

A new possibility has arisen through the development of a new organization called "Quest for Community" which intends to provide promotional services in the form of a visit to local congregations to promote the concept and make arrangements for a CBW in that local church.

A study of The Different Drum would be another positive option. Several Sunday School classes in a large church might agree to study the book before the

workshop. This would help prepare the people for the workshop and give them a better idea of what to expect. Such a study could increase the chances for a positive experience.

Groups in the church may already be seeking community. In United Methodist churches it may be expected that people who are in twelve- step recovery programs would be receptive to much of what goes on in a CBW. Another group may be people who are active in Cursillo groups such as the Emmaus Walk and reunion groups within the United Methodist Church. Graduates and participants in Disciple Bible Studies may also be especially receptive to this process.

The Community Building experience is very intense. People open up at a profound level. There is usually a prolonged period of struggle before community is achieved. People need to be warned in advance of this probability. FCE always does warn people at the onset and asks each participant to commit to stay for the entire experience. The intensity of the experience needs to be strongly emphasized in introducing the workshop to a congregation.

The church is a place that is "supposed" to be a community of love and acceptance. It is unpleasant to discover that others may not experience the church as a caring community. A CBW is confrontational before it is comforting. The idea of what a church "ought" to be makes the introduction of a CBW problematic. A pseudocommunity spends its energy denying that it needs anything other than what it already has; a CBW confronts the image with reality and begins the fight for community.

The question of authority is inevitably brought up in regard to a CBW. The pastor who is willing to be a participant in a CBW must be willing to shed the image of

being the "perfect" Christian. He or she will be invited to be open and vulnerable to his or her flock during a CBW. The experience might be a threatening one for both pastor and laity since laypersons have as much role in placing pastors on pedestals as pastors do. Both Vanier and Snyder see church empowerment taking place through the utilization of all of the gifts of all of the people of God. The priest or pastor has a role in Vanier and Snyder's vision of community, but it is not a role that calls for or even permits isolation as a means of maintaining a pastoral facade. Vanier says they must be "transparent" (247). Snyder goes so far as to say that in his study of the New Testament, "We are left, then, not with a pastoral office as such but simply with the pastoral function" (93). The pastor and staff of the church are part of the people of God. They share in both the brokenness and calling of the people of God through their baptism and therefore are at least theoretically available for openness within the community of faith. This perspective may be considered threatening by some since it involves a change of role expectations. The pastor's transition from being an example of someone above and beyond the laity, to being someone who is part of the people of God called to a particular role, might be intimidating. A strategy for dealing with this resistance is to be found in the affirmation of the giftedness of pastors and an affirmation of their role as community builders in their own right.

The church is structured in an attempt to maintain ongoing community in a meaningful fashion. Snyder argues that all church structures are "para-church" (165); that is, they exist for the sake of the Messianic community. They do not supplant the need for community and they do not give any guarantee that community will be

maintained within the church. That task belongs to the Holy Spirit and the people of God.

Community maintenance has been tried over the centuries within the Christian Church. One effort to maintain community is the development of a way of life or rule that will protect the community by giving it order and direction. St. Benedict developed the most notable example of a rule of life, but it is not by any means the only one. A modern attempt at community maintenance is The Jerusalem Community Rule of Life (Pierre-Marie Delfieux). It is quite similar to the Rule of Benedict in that it is largely focused on poverty, chastity and obedience but it leaves more flexibility as it is adapted to an urban setting.

Covenant Discipleship groups and Emmaus Reunion groups may also be thought of as ongoing community efforts. These involve a covenant and mutual accountability as the basis of their meetings.

Ongoing community groups that arise from CBWs could develop covenants that include traditional spiritual disciplines as well as the rules of community building. This focus would give continuity with the spiritual formation tradition without overlooking issues pertaining to community that often are left out in spiritual formation efforts.

The technique of community building and maintenance in The Different Drum is a hopeful development in the history of the church. It gives some handles to a very slippery issue, how to develop community and instill a sense of community among church folks. As a part of the study the author attended a CBW workshop and later attended a meeting of the Task Force on Building Community in the Christian Church.

Both events included the experience of forming community with extraordinarily diverse groups of people. The task force added the doing of a task as a community and was especially eye opening. There was a freedom to create and contribute. There was disagreement without rancor. There was the attempt to listen and contribute with all feeling free to lead when moved to do so.

In the author's own spiritual development, the experiences rekindled a hope that God can indeed renew the church and that ministry can be utilized in the service of the kingdom of God in authentic human relationships within the institutional church.

The difference between the workshops this writer had experienced previously and the one held at First United Methodist Church was that the first two involved short term relations while a church is an ongoing setting. Multi-generational dysfunction and the hurdles of histories among the persons with whom one is seeking to build community are present. In short it may be easier to experience a sense of community with those who have sought out, paid for and travelled hundreds of miles to experience community than with the persons with whom one lives day to day. Vulnerability in a local setting has long term consequences. To build a safe place of community requires risk on the part of those who undertake to build community within the church.

A part of the inquiry of this project consisted of evaluating the adapting, planning, implementation, and effectiveness of a CBW specifically for the local setting. This evaluation was chiefly done through the interaction that took place between the author and Quest for Community during the development of the project and through the cooperation of a group of 8 lay leaders within the congregation. They met several times to give input and feedback about the project. Minutes of their meetings constitute part of

the data of this project.

CHAPTER 3

Design of the Study

The study was designed to assess the effectiveness of a Community Building Workshop in deepening the sense of community experienced by the members and staff of First United Methodist Church. The workshop was designed to help participants experience community together and to develop skills conducive to the development of community within their particular setting. The purpose of the workshop was to develop an environment that would allow a greater degree of "confession," the removing of masks that Bonhoeffer called the "break-through" to community (Life Together 112). The research instruments and approaches utilized in the study were selected to provide information on the effectiveness of the workshop in meeting this goal and to give useful feedback in the implementation of workshops in other church settings.

Research Questions

The specific questions approached in the study are: 1. What did the Sense of Community Index reveal about the sense of community of First Church? 2. Was the Foundation for Community Encouragement workshop effective in this setting in terms of deepening the congregation and staff's sense of community? 3. What was learned about the implementation of the workshop within local churches?

Population

Data was collected from several groups. These groups were the worshipping congregation, the participants in the workshop, the congregational reflection group that provided feedback on the implementation of the workshop, and the key church staff persons.

The worshipping congregation was chosen as the control population because of the ease of collecting the data and because the active members of a congregation give a picture of the actual dynamics of that congregation. The largest possible group of subjects for analyzing the congregation's sense of community for this study was the members and constituents of First United Methodist Church of Alexander City. The Church Membership was 1300 at the time of the administration of the inventory. The number of constituents at the time of the study is uncertain. Inactive members might be very informative, but they would also include out-of-town members, members who have become active in other churches and who have simply not been involved in the life of the church for quite some time. Their experience of the church's sense of community would be valid but it would be based upon experience from months and even years before. It was felt that the worshipping congregation was deemed the best sample population for the purpose of this study.

Another group of the population analyzed in the study consisted of the staff and church members who participated in the Community Building Workshop. These people were self-selected. No one was forced to attend the workshop and it may be assumed that they were highly motivated to participate in the event. This is evidenced by the

major time investment involved in the experience. Each participant agreed to participate in the entire three day event, and with one emergency as an exception, they all followed through on this commitment. They also each paid a participant fee to cover the cost of materials. Costs for the event were partially defrayed by the church budget and donations. All participants were church members ranging in age from the mid 20's to mid 70's.

After the workshop, a subgroup of the workshop participants, including the author, chose to participate in an ongoing community group that met weekly for 1 1/2 hours for three months. Nine of the fifteen participants in the workshop took part in the ongoing group.

Throughout the time leading up to the workshop and afterwards, the author met with a small group of eight church leaders as a focus group for developing the project. This group was referred to as a Congregational Reflection Group. These people met with the author over a period of a year to give feedback on the development of the project and to serve as a sounding board in the development and promotion of the workshop. This group included newer members and older ones as well as staff and church members. Not all of these people participated in the event itself but all were instrumental in its development. They were selected on the basis of their influence in the congregation, their willingness to serve and their diversity of gender and tenure within the congregation.

The church staff was another focus of the research. At the time, the staff included a minister of music, children's ministry director, organist, youth director, senior pastor, financial secretary, program secretary, staff support person, and the author as

associate pastor. It was thought that the staff's unique position in the congregation merited special attention to the sense of community experienced by these people. The senior pastor's spouse was included in this sample as she also relates to the church in a unique way due to her relationship both to the pastor and the church. Ten people participated in the interviews.

Instrumentation

Several instruments were utilized in order to assess the impact of the Community Building Workshop.

David M. Chavis has developed an instrument for assessing the sense of community of a group. This instrument is called the Sense of Community Index. The instrument has been utilized in the field of community psychology (Pretty, Chavis, McMillan) and has been found to have a coefficient alpha of .71. The referent for the survey was "church" as per the instructions accompanying the instrument. The index was to be administered to the worshipping congregation one month prior to the workshop, to the workshop participants immediately prior to the workshop, and to the workshop participants one month after the workshop.

The author utilized minutes taken from each Congregational Reflection Group meeting as a source of data for content analysis upon this group's assessment of the CBW.

Participants in the workshop gave the author written responses evaluating the workshop. These responses were collated into a table utilizing the four axes of the sense

of community theory of Chavis in order to apply content analysis to their feedback (see Appendix 3).

The sense of community of the staff of the church was qualitatively evaluated through the use of an interview protocol developed by the author for this purpose (Appendix 2). The author developed this protocol by using Chavis and McMillan's theory of a sense of community. Twenty three questions were developed based upon the specific components of Chavis' theory. This protocol was designed to give the author an opportunity to categorize responses in a qualitative content analysis of staff responses. The interview was a scheduled, structured setting. All of the interviews were held in the author's office at the church so that the effect of setting would be the same for all interviewed. The interview was begun with an informal introduction of the purpose of the interviews and their place in the author's dissertation project. Each subject was assured of anonymity. Most questions were specific, but some were more open ended, allowing for greater latitude on the part of the subject (Goetz and LeCompte 119-132).

The author was a participant observer in all of the above groups. His observation and reflection form an integral component of the data utilized in this study.

Data Collection

Having determined the means for data collection, the project was implemented in the spring of 1992. The Sense of Community Index developed by David Chavis (Appendix 1) was administered three times in three months. The index was given to the worshipping congregation on February 16, 1992. During both worship services, the index was handed out to the congregation and then immediately taken up by ushers in the

service. The author explained that the index was a part of his doctoral work. No reference was made to the Community Building Workshop or to community at all. Of the 552 in attendance, 333 returned completed indexes. These responses served as a control for the indexes to be administered to the workshop participants. Some of the indexes were not returned presumably because some of the count of attendance were children who were either too young to fill out the form or had left for children's church. Some were visitors who may not have felt comfortable giving their opinions and some may have resisted the idea of filling out a survey during the worship service. The responses were collated and tabulated in percentile terms for later use.

The SCI was administered to participants in the CBW prior to its beginning on March 13. As participants registered for the event they were asked to take a few moments to fill out the form. All participants turned in their forms. These results were tabulated and recorded in the same manner as the first results.

One month after the workshop, the SCI was sent to the participants by mail. When some responses were not forthcoming the author individually contacted the participants and obtained the completed forms. These were tabulated in the above manner.

Several months before the workshop the author began working to interview the staff. As scheduling became a problem, not all interviews were conducted before the workshop took place. The results of the interviews, when completed, were analyzed for content and the answers were broken down into components of Chavis' theory: Emotional Connection, Membership, Influence and Reinforcement.

One week after the Community Building Workshop, the participants gathered to decide about the possibility of an ongoing community group. At this time the author asked them to write an evaluation of the weekend and to mail it in. Seven of the 15 took the time to do this. The results were analyzed in light of Chavis theory and correlated with the four scales.

The author's observations and reflections upon the experiences of the workshop were written in response much like the other participants. These reflections are utilized in the analysis of the nature of the process of implementing the workshop and continuing the process of working for community with the ongoing community group.

Variables

The independent variable of this study was the workshop itself. The dependent variables are the expressions and responses to the experience as assessed in the instruments utilized to evaluate the event. The information is evaluated in a qualitative manner through analysis of the interviews, indexes, written responses and Congregational Group minutes. The authors' own experience of the workshop also impacts the evaluation of the data. The utilization of the Sense of Community Index gives a semi-quantitative view of the impact of the workshop on the participants' sense of community, but the utilization of the interview format and the nature of the various impacts of the ongoing group upon the congregation as a whole make qualitative analysis the center of the data analysis.

Control for the analysis is provided by the Sense of Community Index applied to the worshipping congregation. This provides a "base line" from which to evaluate the

participant response to the index. Another control provided is the input given by Bill Linden of the FCE task force for Community in the Christian Church and Quest for Community. His input was especially valuable as an objective foil for the author whose view of the event was inevitably more enmeshed with his role as associate pastor than would be an outsider's view.

Factors that needed consideration in evaluating the data were the considerable breadth of possible motivating factors behind the participation in the event itself. The senior pastor of the church had just begun his ministry at First Church less than a year previous to the workshop. He was following upon a ten year ministry by his predecessor in which the church grew by over 50%. Motivation to simply get to know him, to impress him or to control him may have been a part of the mix. Loyalty to the author and to the church could also be factors skewing the interview results or in terms of answers given to the Sense of Community Index. Those factors are compensated for to some degree in the process of unmasking that took place during the workshop. The author also took these factors into account when he evaluated the experience of the project as a whole.

The author relies heavily upon content analysis in approaching the data. Correlations are suggested very tentatively and long term results of the process are entrusted to the future.

CHAPTER 4

Findings of the Study

This study was designed to answer three questions about the implementation of a Community Building Workshop at First United Methodist Church. These questions were: What did the Sense of Community Index reveal about this congregation? Was the FCE workshop effective in this setting? What was learned about implementing the workshop in a local church?

Information about these research questions was derived from the research tools utilized in this study: the Sense of Community Index (SCI), the interview format utilized in the staff interview process, the written feedback offered by participants in the workshop, the feedback offered by the Congregational Reflection Group and the participant observation of the author in all phases of the workshop and the ongoing group that developed after the workshop.

The Sense of Community Index (SCI Appendix 1) revealed data describing the sense of community of the worshiping congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Alexander City at the time of its administration. The SCI was administered to the worshiping congregation during the primary worship services held on February 16, 1992. The membership at First United Methodist was 1300. 552 people attended worship on February 16 and 303 persons filled out the SCI. The result of the SCI is shown below in figure 1. Results of all three Indexes are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Results of SCI's administered during project (percent of positive response)

	Reinforcement	Membership	Influence	Emotional Connection	Total SCI
	%	%	%	%	%
Congregation	77.1	78.8	85.6	90.3	83
Pre-CBW	64.4	71.1	88.8	91.1	78.8
Post-CBW	68.8	86.6	100	84.4	85

The lowest scale in the congregation survey was the inventory's Integration and Fulfillment of Needs (or reinforcement) scale. The scale measures the sense of need fulfillment for the participant as well as the participant's sense that others needs are met by their participation in the referent group. This scale measured 77.1% as opposed to an overall sense of community of 83%. The highest scale was that of Emotional Connection at 90.3%. A lower score on the reinforcement of needs scale indicates that participants in the survey felt less that their needs and the needs of other members were met by participation in the life of the church and more that they were emotionally connected to the church. Emotional connection is described by Chavis and McMillan ("Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory," 13) as being based on "a shared history. It is not necessary that group members have participated in the history in order to share it, but they must identify with it." The results of the inventory for the congregation as a whole indicate that the strongest element of the group's sense of community is a strong identification with and experience of a shared history rather than the actual integration and fulfillment of needs through the ministries of the church. In every inventory taken of

members of the church, the needs fulfillment scale scored lowest of all. This included both the Congregation as a whole and the Workshop participants both

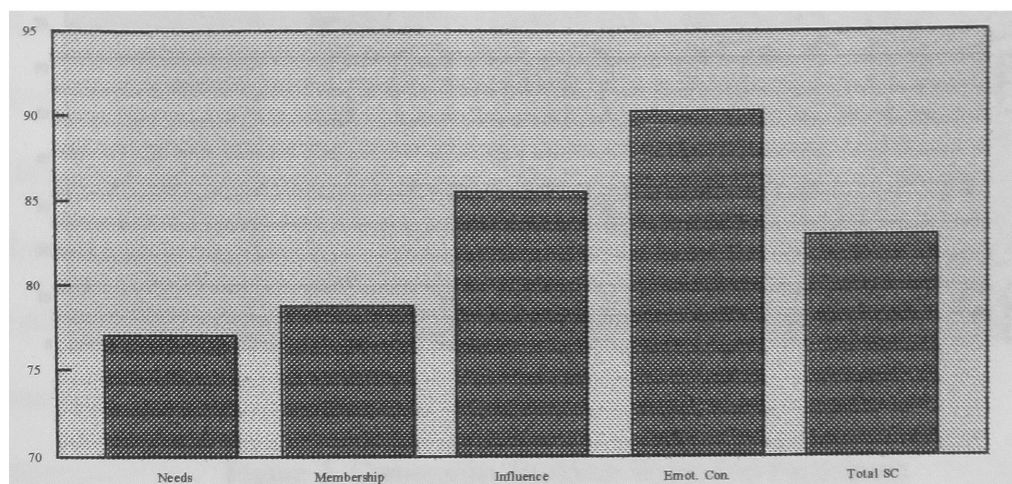


Figure 1 Sense of Community Index of Worshipping Congregation
N=552 n=303

before and after the workshop (see figures 2 and 3). The consistency in the strength of emotional connection and the concurrent weakness in the sense that the people's needs were being met could indicate a tension within the congregation's sense of community. It may be that an SCI with a small group within the church as the referent rather than the congregation would offer very different profiles than the member's feeling about the congregation as a whole.

Another evaluation of the Church's sense of community was that conducted with the staff. The staff interview process did not utilize the SCI but used interview questions, (appendix 2) that were strictly based on components of Chavis' theory of the Psychological Sense of Community (Chavis, "Sense of Community: A Definition and

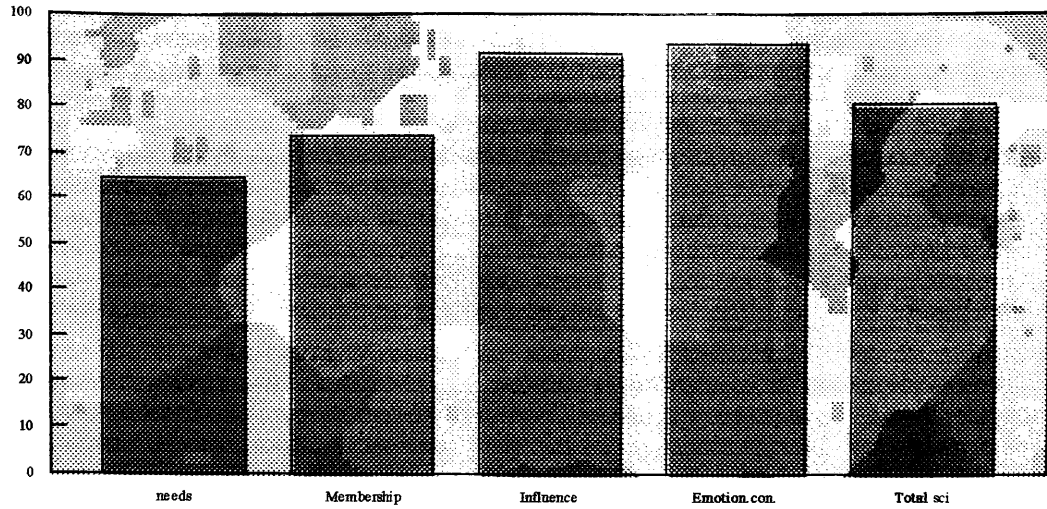


Figure 2 Community Building Workshop Participant
Pre-Workshop Sense of Community Inventory Results N=15 n=15

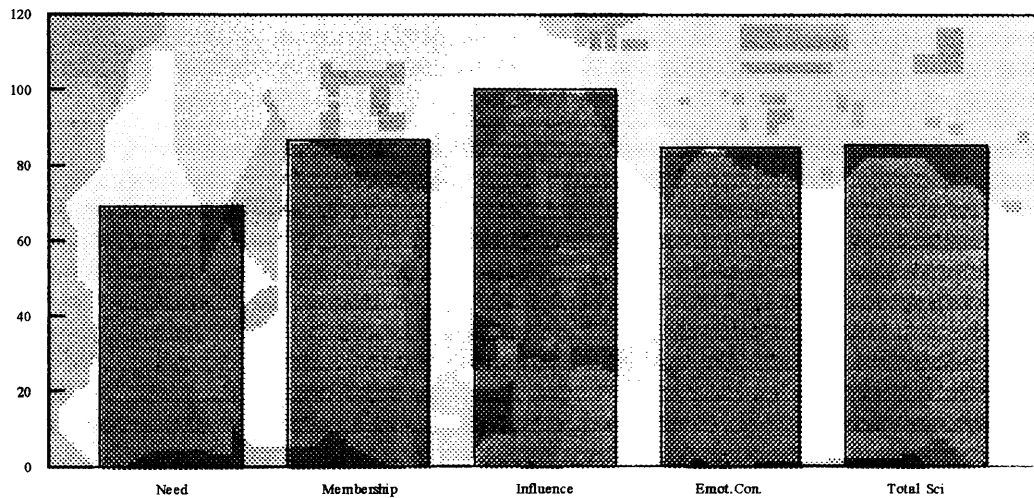


Figure 3 Community Building Workshop Participants
Post-Community Building Workshop Sense of Community Index N=15 n=15

Theory"). Answers seemed to reveal that while the staff's sense of influence or empowerment was high, other components of a sense of community were weak. Over half of the staff members felt that they were not emotionally safe with church members as a whole. Over half did not feel a strong spiritual bond with the congregation. One half of those interviewed did not think that the congregation had a set of shared values. They did not tend to spend much time with other members outside of the church setting. Staff members did not cite their work as a detriment to their spiritual life or sense of community, but they seem to have a different sense of community than the congregation as a whole. A more quantitative analysis would be necessary to correlate the variables that might lead to this situation.

The effectiveness of the Community Building Workshop in this setting was evaluated by the administration of the SCI before and after the workshop as well as by written responses offered by participants and the development of an ongoing community group that met for several months after the workshop. Participants in the workshop gave written responses which the author evaluated in light of Chavis' scales of the sense of community. The Congregational Reflection Group also provided valuable feedback. The director of Quest for Community who was an observer/participant in the workshop, also gave extensive feedback. The author's observation of this group also gave insight into the effectiveness of the CBW at First United Methodist Church.

CBW participants showed a similar profile to the congregation as a whole prior to the workshop. After the workshop, their total sense of community went up while their sense of shared emotional connection went down (see figure 2). The workshop was

apparently empowering for several participants. This may be demonstrated by the change in the influence scale after the workshop.

The participants in the workshop were both staff and church members. While both staff and members gave positive feedback about the experience, barriers to communication were present throughout the time of the workshop as well as in the ongoing community group that existed for several months after the workshop. These inhibitions were expressed in the group and were never totally overcome. Staff members were reluctant to express themselves in front of other staff members and in front of church members. They expressed both a fear of disloyalty to other staff and a fear of repercussions from members. While participants reported that relationships increased in depth through this time, the basic dilemma was never solved. Staff members and church members were not able to function easily in a community environment. A desire to do so was evidenced by the commitment to the group made by 9 of the 15 participants to an ongoing group. The group met weekly for 1 1/2 hours for several months. That is a considerable investment of time and shows a good deal of interest. An ongoing sense of Community was desired but not attained in a sufficient degree to maintain the group.

It remains to be seen whether or not the CBW has had a lasting impact on First United Methodist Church. Even those who were critical of the experience have stated that the principles of community taught in the workshop have become apparent to them and several have resolved to seek community in their work place, Sunday School classes and in the staff. These all may have a positive long term impact but that remains to be seen. Much will depend upon the ongoing commitment to authentic relating within the staff and the congregation.

The effectiveness of the workshop was mixed. Participants evidenced a greater ability to confess their needs and concerns with one another; however, barriers still remained and new ones arose as time went on. For some participants it was a life changing experience: "I was not just touched but changed somewhat by the experience of community at the workshop." For others it was a frustrating exercise: "I did not reach community with the group." The barriers to community were made clear and people made an effort to overcome them while learning a great deal about themselves. The workshop was effective in breaking through the easy assumptions people tend to make about one another in church but it did not break through the difficulties one might have hoped. "I would say that most of the people in the group reached that bondedness which we call the stage of community, but there were exceptions..the level of community was not deep" (Bill Linden, Quest for Community).

Much was learned in the process of introducing the congregation to the workshop. The Congregational Reflection Group gave valuable feedback to the author about what concerns might be taken into account in holding a Community Building Workshop in another church. The primary obstacles for the group members were: time, money and clarity about what the workshop is and what it would do for the participants.

The workshop is an intensive three day process. It involves almost constant processing and can be exhausting. It is difficult to convince people to take three full days, which for most involves a day off from work, in order to seek something as abstract as community.

In an attempt to accommodate work schedules, the workshop was abridged somewhat for this particular effort. It was the opinion of the facilitators and the director

of the task force that the Workshop might have led to a deeper sense of community had it been a longer one. Members of the Congregational Reflection Group felt strongly that they might have benefitted from a more specific orientation about what Peck calls the "rules" of community building and the process of Pseudocommunity, Chaos, Emptiness and Community.

It was also suggested that a series of preparatory meetings with the leader of Quest for Community might have prepared and motivated more people to participate in the workshop. The workshop's length and disorienting nature gave rise to discussion of this need in order to prepare the participants for the experience. A particularly good illustration was shared in a Congregational Reflection Group meeting subsequent to the workshop, comparing the CBW with the Emmaus Walk. Breaking a horse can be done two different ways, gently and slowly, or by simply riding the horse until it's too exhausted to resist any more. The CBW felt like the latter to one participant.

A community building workshop is expensive. New ways may need to be developed to finance the workshops if the workshops are to be held in more churches.

In response to the experience of this workshop and others, Quest for Community has developed a new methodology for introducing the Community Building Workshop to a congregation. A congregation prepares for a workshop through a six month to one year process of self study and Bible study. This is supported by Quest For Community which also assists in locating facilitators to lead the workshop itself. It is felt that churches need a thorough preparation for the workshop in order to enhance and deepen the sense of community experienced by the participants as well as to build enthusiasm, support and participation in the workshop itself.

Some increase in the sense of community among the participants in the workshop is evidenced through the SCI. It cannot be said that the CBW directly affected the congregation's sense of community as a whole. This might happen in time as participants apply what they learned in their relationship to the church. The workshop did not bridge the gap between staff and church members. It did reveal the need for progress in this area and it did make evident the desire to deepen the sense of community within the staff of the church.

A great deal was learned about the promotion of the workshop within a local church. The new process for implementing a workshop by Quest for Community may well be enhanced by the experience gleaned at First United Methodist Church.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

This project/dissertation has examined the needs and realities of Christian community in the church. It has utilized the insights of community psychology and one significant method of intervention, the Community Building Workshop, to deepen the sense of community experienced by church members, staff and clergy in a large growing church.

The insights of theologians such as Bonhoeffer have focused the issue of community within the church to include the questions of authenticity of community and the source of community. Community psychologists have provided tools that helped assess the depth of community experienced and the components of the sense of community experienced by church members. Scott Peck has provided a theoretical underpinning and a methodology for deepening the community experienced within the church.

The obstacles to an ongoing, authentic community within the church are real and were encountered in the process of this study. The high emotional connection seemingly indicated by the SCI for the congregation coupled with a lower sense of need fulfillment may reveal the presence of what Peck calls pseudocommunity. According to Chavis, a sense of emotional connection is derived from identifying with a shared history experienced by, or identified with, the members of the group. To surface *need* could be

inhibited because confession might call into question the adequacy of the group's shared values and threaten the group's sense of emotional connection. The apparent difference evidenced between need fulfillment and emotional connection may well inhibit the effectiveness of the congregation. A strong emotional connection may be obtained at the expense of meeting one's needs. This repression of need could be an example of what Peck describes as "pseudocommunity." It might also be what Bonhoeffer describes as an "'immediate' relationship of one to another..." in which "the desire of the human soul seeks a complete fusion of I and Thou, whether this occur in the union of love or what is after all the same thing, in the forcing of another person into one's sphere of power and influence." He also describes this phenomenon as "human absorption" (Life Together 32-33).

The clergy, lay staff and members of the church found themselves struggling to get beyond image to substance in relating to one another. While the congregation had a very high sense of emotional connection, the staff seemed to have had a high sense of influence while their sense of emotional connection was the lowest of the four components as shown by the frequency grid in appendix 4. It might be supposed that the staff's daily interaction with the work of the church and parishioners may have given staff a heightened sense of influence while distancing them from the emotional connection experienced by the church as a whole. Another factor could well be that staff persons felt an expectation to show a degree of loyalty to the shared history and apparent values of the congregation while at the same time they were forced to confront the loss of emotional connection in their own sense of community. This expectation might have set up an internal dissonance that could adversely affect the spiritual growth and

professional development of church staff persons. Issues of power and reputation came into play. Time constraints made necessary by a consumer lifestyle impacted the quality of the workshop. Varied expectations of what community meant to different people influenced the event.

The Community Building Workshop was very effective in drawing participants beyond pseudocommunity into the struggle to share together. However, leaving pseudocommunity does not inevitably lead to ongoing community. The workshop was not uniformly effective. Some participants were "left behind" and did not ever feel that they were a part of the group. The workshop did not "fix" the church but it did equip each participant with new relational skills. It did challenge each participant to evaluate his or her role in the church. It had an effect on the *shape* of the sense of community experienced by the group. Influence seemed to increase while emotional connection seemed to decrease. Further research may explore the relationship of this change in the components of influence, emotional connection and need fulfillment.

The SCI seems to indicate that the sense of emotional connection within the congregation was greater than the sense of having member's needs met through the church community. Whether this is a self re-enforcing pattern that causes needs to be repressed in order to maintain the emotional connection evidenced by the congregation is not empirically demonstrated by the SCI. It does seem that further studies along this line could provide valuable insights into the way Christians bond together. The workshop may be seen as effective in teaching principles of community building to the participants.

The author has struggled with the issues involved in this study and feels that the church must clarify the nature of its community as being the people gathered by the

Christ. The church exists with its reconciliation to God as its shared valent event. If the church substitutes cultural factors as the "glue" that holds it together, the people will of necessity move to some sort of pseudocommunity.

Several fruitful avenues for research are indicated by this study. The Sense of Community Index might be a useful instrument for pastors, denominational executives and church consultants to use in work with the church. Studies could be made of the possible relationship of sense of community to burnout of clergy and church staff. Is there a correlation between membership assimilation and sense of community? Can an instrument be developed that might assess the foundation of a particular community? Is there a relationship between the sense of community and utilization of spiritual disciplines? What are the indicators that a community building workshop would be an appropriate intervention in a particular local church? Could the SCI be used as a part of that assessment process?

The Community Building Workshop itself can be a focus for continuing research. What will be the impact of the extended time of preparation and consultation that Quest for Community envisions in the future? Will more extensive preparation make the impact of the Community Building Workshop more enduring? Are there ways to bring a deeper sense of community to church staffs and clergy? It might be that ongoing community groups of clergy or groups of clergy and lay people would be effective.

A particularly useful avenue of research might be to try to evaluate the long term impact of a CBW and its ongoing community group upon the sense of community of a local church. Such a study could provide key insights into community maintenance.

The search for community is a universal human quest. The Community Building Workshop is one way of pursuing intimate community in a culture that is increasingly polarized into hyper-individualistic behavior on the one hand and participation in smotheringly oppressive structures on the other.

The church in the United States is trying to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and build a community of faith in a culture that is, by many accounts, losing its sense of community. In order to do this more effectively the church may find itself developing a new model for community. Some of the tensions present in this study might inform that development.

One tension apparent in this study has been that between a consumer mentality of program-centered churches and the mentality of servanthood in Christ described by Bonhoeffer. For Bonhoeffer community within the church is developed and sustained by the exercise of spiritual gifts of ministry and love. A danger in today's church may be that the church will attempt to maintain community through professionally staffed programming rather than the cultivation of servanthood. The apparently diminished emotional connection experienced by the staff of First church may reflect a larger dynamic within the church at large.

Another tension surfaced in the study is the issue of building community for the staff. It may be that more attention needs to be paid to support and ministry for lay staff who do not have the kind of "outside" community ordained people may find through the Annual Conference and other peer groups. In this study, the staff/member connection was difficult to establish and maintain. This may become an increasingly important issue as churches turn increasingly to bi-vocational staff.

What will be the shared valent of the church? Utilizing homogeneity of culture as a marketing technique for church growth could tilt towards a church that will increasingly build its ministries around uniformity rather than the reconciliation of the Gospel. A sense of community may be experienced in many places and groups. That sense of community may be beneficial and even in some way spiritual but the church is called to be a community founded on the redemption of Jesus Christ.

Theological commitments and doctrinal clarity, however, need to be held with humility and love. Peck's "tools for community" (the attempt to refrain from 'fixing, converting, healing') may well be utilized within the church to maintain its truth with reverence for those who differ or exhibit other kinds of diversity.

Peck's and Chavis' writings are valuable contributions to the dialogue that may take place between theology and psychology on the issue of community. Their perspectives and those of theologians such as Bonhoeffer may not provide a unified theory in themselves, but they can spur the church towards a more effective model of community and ultimately a more authentic manifestation of the body of Christ on earth.

Appendix 1

Sense of Community Index (Administered to Groups within First United Methodist Church of Alexander City, Alabama)

The following questions are some things that people might say about their church. For each of these statements please tell me if it is mostly true or mostly false about our church simply by circling "True" or "False". Thank you for your help!

1. I think my Church is a good place to belong. True False
2. People in this Church do not share the same values. True False
3. Other members and I want the same things from the Church. True False
4. I can recognize most of the people who attend my Church. True False
5. I feel very at home in this Church. True False
6. Very few of the other Church members know me. True False
7. I care about what other Church members think of my actions. True False
8. I have no influence over what this Church is like. True False
9. If there is a problem in this Church our members can get it solved. True False
10. It is very important to me to be a member of this particular Church. True False
11. People in this Church generally don't get along with each other. True False
12. I expect to be a member of this Church for a long time. True False

True = 1 False = 0 Total Sense of Community Index = Q1 - Q12
Coefficient alpha .71

Subscales: Membership = Q4+Q5+Q6

Influence = Q7+Q8+Q9

Reinforcement of Needs = Q1+Q2+Q3

Shared Emotional Connection = Q10+Q11+Q12

*Scores for Q2, Q6, Q8, Q11 need to be reversed before scoring.

Appendix 2

**Staff Interview Protocol(Used to Qualitatively
 assess the Sense of Community of the staff of
 First United Methodist Church of Alexander City, Alabama)**

Name:

Phone:

Years Employed:

Position

Member? Y N

Gender: M F1. When you worked for our Church did you

feel like you really belonged to the Congregation? If you were a member before working for the church did your sense of belonging change when you became a staff person?

2. What would you have to do to feel like a "real" member of this church?

3. Was (is) the church a "safe" place emotionally? Can you really be yourself around the members and other employees?

4. Did (do) you feel that you fit in with the people of this congregation?

5. Are you willing to make sacrifices for the church? What kind of sacrifices?

6. Do (did) you have a strong personal stake in whether or not our church is successful?

7. What are the strongest symbols of our Church?

8. What events (communion, baptism, marriages, holidays etc.) are the most meaningful in our church? How important are they?

9. Do you feel that you have (had) an opportunity to make a real difference in the life of our Church?

10. Do you feel that being a part of our church has had a real impact on your life?

11. Do you feel that people in the church appreciate your work?

12. Do you feel that the church significantly meets your needs?

13. Do you feel positively about being associated with the people who comprise our congregation?

14. Do you feel that our church has its fair share of capable and competent members?

15. Do you think that our congregation has a set of shared values? What are some of these?

16. Do you see many of our members on a **regular** basis (at work, at recreation, friendships, civic clubs)?

17. Would you rate the quality of your relationships with other church members as **high** or **low**?

18. Do you leave church meetings and events with a feeling of accomplishment and completion?

19. Have you taken what seemed to be emotionally risky actions on behalf of the church or individuals within it?

20. Do you feel you have (or had) a significant financial or voluntary time investment in the ministry of our church?

21. Does our church honor people for their achievements? How?

22. Does our church humiliate members for their failures? How?

23. Do (did) you sense a strong spiritual bond with our congregation? What is that like?

Appendix 3

**Staff Interview Results Tabulated as Percent of
Possible Positives In Sense
of Community**

<p>Reinforcement</p> <p>Possible Positives 50 Actual 40 80%</p>	<p>Influence</p> <p>Possible Positives 20 Actual 17 85%</p>
<p>Possible Positives 50 Actual 36 72%</p> <p>Membership</p>	<p>Possible Positives 80 Actual 50 62%</p> <p>Emotional Connection</p>
<p>Total Positives Possible 200 Actual 143 71.5%</p>	

Appendix 4

Format for Integrating Participant Responses

<p>Reinforcement of Needs "I have become more and more aware of the needs that I have for community we were committed to the idea of sharing with one another even if that meant we had to overcome the natural defense reactions that we had* "needed some new reviving in my Christian life." *Didn't know what to expect during the weekend--not a great defined need.* "great experience for me." Influence takes responsibility about ongoing grp.*I have become more aware... of the opportunities</p>	<p>(for community) that are all around me* I was not just touched but changed somewhat by the experience of community at the workshop *we will all be more aware of our duty to God and the church which is the people*I am not giving up on finding community within the church*lack of depth*lack of influence felt during first part of session goes with a sense of lack of direction * forced to deal with some issues in my life Membership felt a degree of emotional security developed in the grp** It took us a long time to get over the notion</p>	<p>that the way we act around folks at church is not really all there is to community. I mean we are polite, we aren't close to people we are around all the time*I did not reach community with the group* "with the group I still did not feel safe"* I may be shamed and alienated by the group..I am willing to risk this I cannot stand the pretending game*Those who share vulnerably early in the process are rejected and if there is time later can get back into the group* First 2 paragraphs are 'I' second two are "we"*put in a</p>	<p>loving...community of believers Shared Emot. Connection sensed a "great deal of bonding" *I felt fortunate to have this experience with the individuals that were there.we were committed.*"I grew to love each person there."*My journey will continue along with my new friends.*I bonded with quite a few people in the group*I would say that most of the people in the group reached that bondedness which we call the stage of community, but there were...the level of community was not deep..*felt bonding take</p>
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