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Cross-training Christians for rural servant-leadership : an exploration of the role of a congregation in nurturing leadership in the community of Wessington Springs, South Dakota

John H. Paulson

CROSS-TRAINING CHRISTIANS FOR RURAL SERVANT-LEADERSHIP:

AN EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE OF A CONGREGATION

IN NURTURING LEADERSHIP IN THE COMMUNITY OF

WESSINGTON SPRINGS, SOUTH DAKOTA

by

JOHN H. PAULSON

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ABSTRACT

Cross-Training Christians for Rural Servant-Leadership:
An Exploration of the Role of a Congregation in Nurturing Leadership in
the Community of Wessington Springs, South Dakota

by

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This study explores the relationship between what is learned and experienced in the Christian faith community and people's involvement in collaborative leadership within the rural community of Wessington Springs, South Dakota. The author makes use of Martin Luther's theology of the cross and his teachings regarding Christian vocation, including the calling of parents as family leaders. This approach to leadership development employs a missional ecclesiology, with attention to the Triune God's transformative, sending work in the world, and examines contributions from knowledge about civil society and human and social capital. Asset mapping is examined as a tool for leadership development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many different people in a variety of locations are responsible for my carrying out this research project. To name them in any particular order is to risk misinterpretation of their relative importance. Unfortunately, however, too many people often go unthanked—especially in the church—for fear of offending anyone by thanking anyone in any particular order.

First thanks should probably go to the people of Our Savior's Lutheran Church and Wessington Springs, South Dakota. Without their participation this project would not exist. Thanks also go to Our Savior's for helping to fund my time in the Doctor of Ministry program and for enduring numerous studies and projects throughout my five-year course of study.

I am grateful to my colleagues in the initial cohort of the Doctor of Ministry program in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary, whose example of scholarship and dedication helped to challenge me, and whose encouragement helped keep me in the program when the journey seemed overwhelming. We all, of course, owe to Dr. Craig Van Gelder, lead professor for the program, a debt that cannot be repaid, for his work in designing our course of study, for his unwavering determination, his patience with a group of pastors who at times like Jesus' own disciples sometimes just "didn't get it," and his modeling of a teaching style intent on helping students succeed. To Dr. Gary Simpson, Dr. Alvin Luedke and Sheila Smith, who all accompanied Craig as fellow

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANF *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, American Reprint of the Edinburgh Edition

BC *Book of Concord*: *The Confessional Writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*

ELCA Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

LW *Luther's Works*, American Edition

To my father, Oscar, a farmer and a hard-working servant,

whose leadership at home and in the church

set an example for me to follow.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The shortage of leaders in rural communities is a much-discussed fact of life for

those who live in those communities. It has also been widely discussed in both academic

and professional publications. From health care to education to local government, in

community organizations and in the church, the shortage of qualified leaders impacts

every aspect of rural life. The leaders who are present are often spread thinly over a

multitude of boards and committees and are easily susceptible to burnout. The shortage of

young visionary leaders is especially noticeable in many communities, caused in no small

part simply by the shortage of *young men and women* in rural areas. The median age, for

example, in Wessington Springs, South Dakota, population 1011, is 55.4, with over 40%

of its population age 65 or over.[1] Jerauld County, in which Wessington Springs sits, has

the second-highest median age in the state in that same census.[2]

The issue of adequate and sufficient leadership was raised in the past year at Our

Savior's Lutheran Church, in Wessington Springs, as leaders pursued a strategic planning

process that proposed starting additional ministry teams to carry out the vision developed

by the Strategic Planning Team. It became obvious to team members that in order to do

the kinds of things they believed the congregation was being called to do, new leadership

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[1]U.S. Census Bureau, "American Factfinder." Factsheet created for South Dakota, Age and Sex 2000, http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_%20lang=en (accessed February 15, 2007).

[2]Ibid.

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would have to be developed within the congregation. Team members also discussed the shortage of people willing to take leadership in community organizations. The need for leadership development in both church and community led me to wonder how working to develop *congregational* leadership might at the same time foster leadership growth in the community at large, as well as how attempts to develop leadership in the community might help the church. Thus the idea of *cross-training* for the development of rural community leadership was born.

The Thesis Question

This thesis explores the ways in which the church in a rural/small-town setting might both learn from and model for the larger community ways of identifying and nurturing servant-leadership for the larger community. In particular, it explores the ways in which developing the sense of *congregation* as community, along with people's *concept* of community might be catalysts for developing leaders skilled in exercising *collaborative* leadership in the varied **communities**[3] to which they relate (including but not limited to the congregation and the geographic communities in which they live). *To be specific: How might collaborative servant-leadership developed and modeled in the congregation impact leadership development in the community at large?* This study concentrates on one particular rural community centered in and around Wessington Springs, a county-seat town of about 1000 people in south-central South Dakota, and on the faith community of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, an ELCA congregation with active members in six counties and an average worship attendance of 94.7 in 2006.

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[3]An explanation of the way in which I am using the words *community* and *communities* in this thesis, including the use of the boldface **community/ies**, follows in the text.

A Word about *Community(ies)*

I am using the words *community* and *communities* in a variety of ways in this

thesis. That fact could cause some confusion. Where it appears in boldface type,

community or **communities** refers to the varied geographic, social, and/or ideological

groupings of which people may be a part. As explained in chapter 2, these may include

cities, townships, counties, and school districts, social and service clubs, congregations

and families, or work-related organizations. **Communities** help to give people a sense of

place, identity, and solidarity in the world.

When the words appear in normal type, they can be understood in the way in

which one would normally be used in the particular context, e.g., "the rural community,"

"the community of Wessington Springs," "community development," "community

building" or "the church is a community." Acknowledging that the word *community* can

be used in many and varied ways, my use of **community/communities** in boldface is a

way to make those varied uses more explicit.

Importance of the Research

This research is important for both rural congregations and rural communities.

Ronald J. Hustedde and Angie Woodward have identified the nourishment of diverse

leadership as a critical factor in the well-being of rural communities.[4] Within the

Christian community, Alan Roxburgh et al. have indicated that the presence of Spirit-led

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[4]Ronald J. Hustedde and Angie Woodward, "Designing a Rural Leadership Program," Agricultural Communications Services Online Pubs, IP-54, Cooperative Extension Service, College of Agriculture, University of Kentucky, 1996, http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/ip/ip54/ip54.pdf (accessed December 25, 2005).

leaders "capable of transforming its life and being transformed themselves" is key to forming missional communities of faith.[5]

Traditional notions of leadership have focused on the individual leader as heroic *great man* or *great woman*. Increasingly, however, sociologists have acknowledged that the growing complexity of life and society in general and in rural communities in particular, demand a leadership philosophy "centered on community building and shared leadership."[6]

Such collaborative leadership builds *social capital* in the community. Likewise, developing social capital is important for developing people capable of taking leadership in the community. Jan and Cornelia Butler Flora and Susan Fey note the importance of both bonding and bridging social capital for community prosperity and sustainability.[7] The only way for either to be gained is by bringing people together to work collaboratively.

The church, as a community of people, bonded in faith and bridged/joined together "in Christ," in spite of their external differences (Gal 3:28),[8] is an obvious place in which to begin nurturing the kind of collaborative leadership necessary for the rural

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[5][Alan J. Roxburgh], "Missional Leadership: Equipping God's People for Mission," in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 183.

[6]Hustedde and Woodward, "Designing a Rural Leadership Program."

[7]Cornelia Butler Flora, Jan L Flora, and Susan Fey, *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003), 52.

[8]All biblical citations are from *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Collin's, 1989).

community. The church is a community in itself but not *for* itself. The mission of the church is to witness to the reign of God both present in the world and yet to come.[9]

At the same time, there are likely people in our congregations who have gifts and training for collaborative leadership that have been developed through their work, their community activities, even through family interaction. These gifts and experiences are needed by the church as we seek to discover what living in community means for the church in the particular context in which it stands. The give-and-take between the church and the world, between the gospel community and its members living out that gospel in their daily lives—the ability, that is, for each to learn from the other—is what I am calling *cross-training*.

The church exists in the world. It both has something to say to the world and something to learn from it. Jesus frequently used outsiders (both people outside of the Jewish faith and those outside of acceptable social circles) to illustrate lessons of faith. The apostle Paul used pagan idols to point to the reality of Christ (Acts 17:22-31). Similarly today, I believe, God can use what is in the world but not necessarily in the church to point to God's intention for both.

Nancy Tatom Ammerman notes how "*the social processes of community formation govern the rise and fall of congregations, and the spiritual energies generated in congregations help to shape the social structures of communities.*"[10] It is my assertion that such cross-training of leadership is a necessary part of this give-and-take between

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[9][George R. Hunsberger], "Missional Vocation: Called and Sent to Represent the Reign of God," in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 108.

[10]Nancy T. Ammerman, "Organized Religion in a Voluntaristic Society," *Sociology of Religion* 58, no. 3 (1997): 203. Italics in original.

rural congregations and communities. David Stark, among others, illustrates how the

Bible and secular leadership models can both be applied for effective leadership in both

church and community.[11]

Two Particular Communities of People:
Families and Senior Citizens

Of particular interest for this research are two particular **communities** or

groupings of people: families where children still reside in the home and senior citizens.

Where over forty percent of a community is aged sixty-five and over, as it is in

Wessington Springs, *senior-citizens* are an important **community** of people to consider.

How and to what extent they respond to the call to take or accept the mantle of leadership

can greatly impact an aging rural community's ability to grow and flourish. Health, of

course, is a major issue here, as are perceptions and traditions within both the elderly

population and the wider community. I will explore some of those perceptions and

traditions in this study.

Families are a source of both present and potential leadership. David W.

Anderson and Paul Hill discuss the power of families to give life and mobility to the

church by nurturing faith in the home.[12] Research has shown faith modeled in the home

to have a relationship to Christians' involvement in civil society.[13] Martin Luther saw

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[11]David Stark, *Christ-Based Leadership: Applying the Bible and Today's Best Leadership Models to Become an Effective Leader* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2005).

[12]David W. Anderson and Paul Hill, *Frogs without Legs Can't Hear: Nurturing Discipleship in Home and Congregation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003).

[13]Jerry Z. Park and Christian Smith, "'To Whom Much Has Been Given . . .': Religious Capital and Community Volunteerism among Churchgoing Protestants," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39, no. 3 (2000): 282.

parents as possessing both spiritual and temporal authority unsurpassed by any on earth.[14]

The perception of parents as potential sources and generators of leadership for the church

and the wider community will also be explored here.

Theories, Theology, and Models that Inform this Thesis

Servant Leadership

Servant-leadership is a term used by Robert Greenleaf to describe a way of

leading in which the highest needs of others are considered first.[15] My use of the term

also depends highly on Jim Collins' description of *Level 5 leadership[16]* and on Stark's

interpretation of that form of leadership for the Christian church. Stark, for instance,

describes how the most effective leaders are perceived by others, e.g., as being 1) willing

to take appropriate responsibility for their actions and to admit their mistakes; 2) able to

understand and make use of appropriate processes, instead of playing political games in

pursuit of their goals; 3) willing to telling the truth, even when doing so might reflect

badly on themselves or the organizations; 4) open to others' ideas; 5) authentic and

inspiring trust; and 6) genuinely gracious toward and accepting of others.[17]

Undergirding this for me is a *missional theology*, which understands the triune

God as a sending God and the church to be sent by God (and, in turn, called to send its

people) to proclaim in word and deed the redemptive reign of God, whose intent is to

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[14]*The Estate of Marriage*, in *LW* 45:4.

[15]Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 13.

[16]James C. Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap—and Others Don't* (New York: Harper Business, 2001).

[17]Stark, *Christ-Based Leadership*, 30.

restore all of creation to the state intended at the Creation. Luther's teaching about

vocation helps inform the role of the Christian in community leadership as a person freed

by virtue of his/her baptism to practice his/her faith in whatever he/she is placed by God,

whether that be in government, business, the family, or the church. Luther's *theology of*

the cross further helps one understand the Christian's servant role as it explores the role

of the cross as an antidote to sin and selfishness that comes without our asking in our

vocation.[18]

<div style="text-align:center">

Cross-Training: Sacred and Secular Together in
Community Leadership Development

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The idea of a cooperative process between church and community—and the likely

benefits to both—is at least in part what led to my use of the phrase cross-training in the

title of this paper. Cross-training in sports refers to

> two or more types of exercise . . . performed in one workout or used alternately in
> successive workouts. A distance runner in training, for example, may also lift
> weights twice a week, perform daily stretching exercises, and do high-intensity
> bicycle sprints every Tuesday.[19]

As I am using it, *cross-training* refers to training leaders simultaneously in things

temporal and spiritual, using both the church and more secular community resources to

facilitate this training. There is also, however, an intended play on words in the use of the

word "cross." I believe that regular reference to and reflection on the cross and

resurrection of Jesus Christ can help both church and community leaders see beyond the

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[18]Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004, previously published, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 53.

[19]Bryant Stamford, "Cross-Training: Giving Yourself a Whole-Body Workout," *The Physician and Sportsmedicine* 24/9 (1996): par. 2, http://www.physsportsmed.com/issues/1996/09_96/cross.htm (accessed December 27, 2005).

limits imposed by a more traditional view of leadership education as well as beyond the limits of what is thought possible by the community itself.

Focusing on the Christian understanding of the cross in the midst of our leadership roles emphasizes the self-emptying nature of leadership Jesus himself modeled and to which those who follow him are called (Phil 2:5-11). Such a framework for leadership must necessarily lead to an abandonment of greed and self-interest, both of which have been cited (positively, no less!) as being motivators for the growth of modern society.[20] Focusing on the resurrection, on the other hand, can lead both congregations and communities away from a perverted notion of the cross (and/or the Fall) that would see death and decline as inevitable, even holding them up as a badge of honor. In an aging community, focusing on cross and resurrection along with lifelong Christian vocation can serve as good medicine for those who see their time of service to the community as over or nearly so.

The apostle Paul wrote that the cross is an offense both within and outside of communities of faith (e.g., 1 Cor 1:23). The challenge of talking about the cross in a way that will not immediately alienate people who look at faith differently leads me to at least start with leaders who are already a part of the Christian community. My research, therefore, will focus on people who worship or otherwise participate in the particular congregation I serve, Our Savior's Lutheran Church.

Pursuing this study was made easier by work already done as part of strategic planning processes conducted, coincidentally, both at Our Savior's and in the Greater Wessington Springs/Jerauld County area during the years 2004 and 2005. The strategic planning process at Our Savior's indicated a need to increase the leadership capacity of

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[20]E.g., "Greed with John Stossel," ABC News Special (ABC News, 1998).

both our congregation and the community of Wessington Springs. The man who chaired

the Strategic Planning Team at Our Savior's is an acknowledged community leader who

has expressed an intense interest in leadership development in the community. The

strategic planning process in the community of Wessington Springs likewise included

leadership development among its goals. Some groundwork, therefore, had already been

laid toward the process of community leadership development and some initial steps

already made in that direction.

Much of the previous leadership literature dealt with developing individual

leaders for work either in the church or in the secular realm. I have already mentioned the

turn from considering leaders as *great men* or *great women* to a more collaborative

approach. There is theological grounding in such an approach. The concept of

perichoresus, which originated with John of Damascus in the seventh century, suggests a

choreography or dance of persons relating to one another, according to George Cladis, in

"intimacy, equality, unity yet distinction, and love."[21] Cladis uses it as a basis for

collaborative ministry in the church.

From a secular and more empirical perspective, Hustedde and Woodward see the

most innovative organizations in this country, "including those in rural settings,"

employing a leadership philosophy centered not on improving individuals but on

> community building and shared leadership and for two major reasons. First, the
> growing complexity of problems in rural communities does not lead to easy
> solutions. A leader cannot assimilate the amount of information available to
> address problems. So, he or she needs to rely on the experience of each member
> of the organization or community. Second, a growing percentage of people in

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[21]George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 4.

communities and organizations are no longer content to behave as docile followers but want to share responsibilities and decisions.[22]

Particularly among Midwestern rural folk with their often well-deserved reputation for independence, the very idea of collaborative leadership can be countercultural, if not downright heretical. The idea that one must die to oneself in order for community to prosper would be a powerful word to those who hold their independence dear. On the other hand, rural leaders and rural communities are discovering that, beset by dwindling numbers of people, dollars and other resources, they must indeed work together with each other and/or with others sectors of society in order to get any major improvements accomplished.

Similarly, authors like Stark and others have illustrated how sacred and secular concepts can work together to produce effective leaders. Anti-religious forces (or at least those forces opposed to the intrusion of any particular religion into secular society) notwithstanding, I can see potential for such an effort on the part of congregations. This is true particularly in a community like Wessington Springs, which until the mid-1960s was home to a Free-Methodist college, and also until about that time, had no establishments that served hard liquor.

Other Key Terms

I have already explained above my use of the words *community/ies* and *cros-training*. Other terms I use in this thesis include the following. *Leadership* refers to those activities that lead to growth and transformation in an organization. *Collaborative leadership* refers to leadership that "empowers and encourages others to work together in

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[22]Hustedde and Woodward, "Designing a Rural Leadership Program," 1-2.

ways that strengthen and transform communities" and/or organizations.[23] *Social capital*
refers to the norms, values, and relationships within social organizations that facilitate
coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit and which enhance the benefits of other
forms of community capital.[24] *Civil society* refers to the constellation of organizations
within a society to which people belong that exist outside of both commercial and
governmental activities of that society, but which nevertheless benefit it.[25]

<div align="center">**Personal Interest**</div>

My interest in this topic is fueled in large measure by a thought that came to mind
as I was completing an early assignment in this Doctor of Ministry program which I
called "Learning to Drive, Learning to Teach, Learning to Lead: Mapping My Growth in
Life and Leadership." Reflecting on the process by which I myself became a leader in the
church, as well as on my vision for the Youth and Family Ministry Team formed as a
result of my work for the course, I found myself proposing a vision that "Our Savior's
Lutheran Church (and possibly Wessington Springs) will be known for its excellence in
developing leaders through its youth and family ministry program."

This is not something I would have dreamed up on my own. I have to attribute the
planting of this absurdly ambitious vision in my mind either to the work of the Holy
Spirit or to some other force willing (or certifying) my insanity. I choose to believe that
the former is the case. I have often noticed that the things in my ministry which have the
most visible and lasting impact have required little effort or imagination on my part. Most

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[23]Ibid.

[24]Flora, Flora, and Fey, *Rural Communities*, 52.

[25]Gary Simpson, "God in Civil Society: Prophetic, Sapiential, and Pacific," in *Living out Our Callings in the Community*, ed. Fred Gaiser (St. Paul: Centered Life, 2006), 8.

of it has seemed to come from outside of me. That observation, along with the genesis of

the aforementioned vision, makes me all the more interested in pursuing this subject for

my thesis.

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Wessington Springs and Jerauld County

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Data from the 2000 U.S. Census help to give a better picture of the community of

Wessington Springs and greater Jerauld County. Table 1.1 compares the percentage of

various age groups in Wessington Springs, Jerauld County, the state of South Dakota and

the nation as a whole. Notable is the percentage of 18 to 24-year-olds in Wessington

Springs, which is half the percentage in either South Dakota or the nation. The percentage

in the county is slightly above that of Wessington Springs, due to the tendency of retired

farmers to move into town and that of the elderly to move where the most services exist

for them. Neither the villages of Lane or Alpena have much in the way of senior services.

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TABLE 1.1
Age Group Percentages
Wessington Springs and Other Areas*

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Age Range	Wessington Springs	Jerauld County	South Dakota	United States
Under 18 yrs.	15.4	21.4	26.8	25.7
18-24 yrs.	5.1	6.9	10.3	9.6
25-44 yrs.	15.6	19.8	27.3	30.2
45-64 yrs.	23.3	26.2	21.2	22.0
65 yrs. & over	40.5	25.6	14.3	12.4
Median Age	55.4	46.3	35.6	35.3

* U.S. Census Bureau, "American Factfinder." Fact Sheets created for South Dakota,
Age and Sex 2000, http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_%20lang=en
(accessed Apr. 26, 2006).

Table 1.2 shows the percentage of various age groups in the workforce. This is significant, because, whereas retired people might be thought to be more available for work in volunteer organizations, nearly half of those people age sixty-five and over living in Wessington Springs are employed, compared to less than a quarter in the nation as a whole. Percentages in most other age groups are also much higher (note the 100 percent figure for 20-24-year-olds), partly due, I expect, to a rural work ethic that both motivates residents to work and at the same time can discriminate against those thought to be *unworthy poor*, who are able-bodied and yet unemployed.[26] It is likely that those who cannot find work in the area simply leave town.

TABLE 1.2
Percent of Population in the Workforce*

Age Range	Wessington Springs	Jerauld County	South Dakota	United States
16 & over	55.1	60.5	68.4	63.9
16-19 yrs.	78.1	37.5	50.8	40.5
20-24 yrs.	100.0	71.9	72.6	65.4
25-54 yrs.	91.9	83.9	82.6	75.5
55-59 yrs.	76.0	59.3	71.6	64.7
60-64 yrs.	71.2	82.1	56.3	45.0
65-69 yrs.	46.7	44.6	35.0	23.7
70 & over	9.8	14.0	11.4	8.3

* U.S. Census Bureau, "American Factfinder." Fact Sheets created for South Dakota Employment by Age and Sex 2000, http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_ %20lang=en (accessed Apr. 26, 2006).

A higher percentage of women are in the workforce, as well, in both Wessington Springs and Jerauld County than in the nation. One hundred percent of women ages

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[26] Flora, Flora, and Fey, *Rural Communities*, 95-96.

twenty to twenty-four living in Wessington Springs are in the workforce, versus only

sixty-four percent in the nation. Among women sixty to sixty-four, twice as many are

employed as in the U.S. population.

Educational level can be an important factor in community involvement. J. Miller

McPhereson and Thomas Rotolo, for instance, indicate that participation in organizations

increases with educational attainment.[27] As a state, according to the 2000 census, South

Dakota was below the national average in the percentage of the population (21.57%

versus 24.4%) for the nation) who had completed a Bachelor's Degree.[28] In Wessington

Springs, however, the percentage was only 14.7.[29] Jerauld County's share of four-year

college graduates was even lower at 12.3%.[30] Some of those figures changed with the

2005 census, but the data was not uniformly available for all geographic divisions at the

time of this writing.

Demographics alone do not define a community, however. In her remarks to the

first anniversary of the Springs Parish Nurse Program in Wessington Springs, Carol

DeSchepper, director of the Avera Parish Nurse Center commented,

> When the term "community" is used, the notion that typically comes to mind is a
> place in which people know and care for one another—a kind of place in which

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[27]J. Miller McPherson and Thomas Rotolo, "Testing a Dynamic Model of Social Composition: Diversity and Change in Voluntary Groups," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 2 (1996).

[28]U.S. Census Bureau, "American Factfinder." Language, School Enrollment, and Educational Attainment: 2000, United State—States; and Puerto Rico, GCT-P11, http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_%20lang=en (accessed April 26, 2006).

[29]U.S. Census Bureau, "American Factfinder." Fact sheet created for Wessington Springs, South Dakota, Language, School Enrollment, and Educational Attainment: 2000, South Dakota – City, GCT-P11, http://factfinder.census.gov//home/saff/main.html?_%20lang=en (accessed April 26. 2006).

[30]U.S. Census Bureau, "American Factfinder." Fact sheet created for Jerauld County, South Dakota, Language, School Enrollment, and Educational Attainment: 2000, South Dakota – County, GCT-P11, http://factfinder.census.gov//home/saff/main.html?_%20lang=en (accessed April 26. 2006).

people do not merely ask, "How are you?" as a formality, but care about the answer. Indeed, that is exactly the kind of place that Wessington Springs is."[31]

Those words cannot simply be dismissed as meant to make people feel good, for while the statistics for Wessington Springs are not available, De Schepper did quote statistics about South Dakota that rank it among the top for caring and volunteerism. In 2005, 40% of people between thirty-five and sixty-four years of age in South Dakota volunteered. That is nearly 7% higher than for the Midwest as a whole and 12% higher than in the United States as a whole. In addition, South Dakota was among the top ten states in the nation for its volunteer rate among senior citizens.[32] That level of volunteerism is evident, as well, as I think you will see in chapter 5, among the members of Our Savior's Lutheran Church.

Methodology

In pursuing the answer to my research questions I have employed a modified form of a sequential mixed-method explanatory research approach.[33] The first step involved trying to discern the various **communities** in which members of Our Savior's are involved. Through a *group mapping process* I invited congregational participants to discern and name the various **communities** in which they live, work, shop, communicate, and serve. [34] I have employed this process in other contexts to try to discern the shape of

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[31]Carol DeSchepper, Presentation to Springs Parish Nurse Program, Wessington Springs, SD, January 22, 2007.

[32]Corporation for National Service, "State Trends and Rankings." Factsheet created for South Dakota, http://www.nationalservice.org/pdf/VIA/VIA_synopsis_SD.pdf (accessed February 18, 2007).

[33]John W Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, 2d ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 215.

[34]Flora, Flora and Fey, 9, discuss briefly the variety of communities to which rural people might belong..

the community in which people live. In this case I attempted to map the *different*

communities in which our members participate in order to show both the divergence and

the potential multiple impact of our life together as a congregation.

I used the information gathered in the mapping session to devise a *questionnaire*

that explores congregational members' involvement in their various **communities**: as

participants, leaders, observers, etc.

Variables included the following:

- **Communities** in which people are involved and their roles in those **communities**
- The perceived effect that people's involvement in these **communities** has on their church life and leadership skills (positively or negatively)
- The perceived effect that people's church life has on their life in these **communities** and on their leadership skills (positively or negatively)
- Their assessment of their own leadership/effectiveness in the various **communities**
- Questions regarding their observation of how other people's involvement in church life affected their involvement in community life and vice versa.
- Descriptive variables such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, schooling, church affiliation, location (town or country), etc.

The results of the questionnaire were then analyzed both to learn some of the

characteristics of Our Savior's members with respect to leadership in the community and

to determine connections between the variables, for instance, between people's

involvement and/or leadership in non-church communities and their

leadership/involvement in church groups and vice versa.

To help flesh out the numbers, I conducted *interviews* with two groups of people:

six members of Our Savior's who are parents with children still in school and six

members who are sixty-five years of age or over. I chose the first group in order to 1) get

additional insight into congregational members' ideas about leadership, 2) affirm their

leadership role as parents, and 3) help them consider how that leadership role might

impact and be impacted by the way both they and their children are involved in other facets of community leadership. This comes out of Luther's understanding of vocation—specifically, out of his understanding of parents as providers of both spiritual and temporal leadership for their children.[35] I chose to interview retired people, because of the need, both because of demographics and for the sake of inclusiveness, to make use of their knowledge and gifts in nurturing leadership in church and community.

The research for this thesis focused on one Lutheran congregation in the city of Wessington Springs. As such, it might not be generalizable to other rural communities; however, the cross-connections in rural communities in many cases may be similar enough that the results of this research will be instructive to people in other congregations and communities, regardless of whether their own communities resemble Wessington Springs, or perhaps, whether they are even rural.

The research took an unexpected turn when two ELCA stewardship specialists were invited to present a workshop based in part on an asset-mapping process designed by Luther Snow[36] and outlined by ELCA Congregational Ministries staff in their book, *The Great Permission.*[37] While not incorporated *per se* into the research for this thesis, the workshop became a kind of unintentional *action research*[38] and a living-out of the potential being explored in this thesis.

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[35]*The Estate of Marriage,* in *LW* 45:46

[36]Luther K. Snow, *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004).

[37]Bob Sitze, Laurel Hensel, and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Division for Congregational Ministries, *The Great Permission: An Asset-Based Field Guide for Congregations* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2002).

[38]Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 2d ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999).

Ethical Concerns

Ethical issues were, of course, a concern in the course of collecting the data for this study. Care was taken that peoples' comments in the group mapping process were not misused, nor that those with different levels of community activity or networking opportunities would be made to feel inferior (or *superior*) to others. No specific comments in the mapping process were recorded, nor did they make their way into the research. While others in the group had access to that information, the information was shared willingly. Our Savior's church council approved the use of their congregation's name in this paper.

More issues of confidentiality arose with the interviews. Names, when used, were changed, however, and the tapes of the interviews were destroyed after the data was reviewed and recorded. There were potential issues of confidentiality with the questionnaire, as well; however, no names were requested on the forms, and numbers used to determine which questionnaires were returned (to allow for follow-up post cards) were placed only on the return envelopes, which were separated from the forms by the church secretary upon receipt. Finally, there is the change process itself. Simply raising people's awareness of their own social interconnections can either raise or lower their sense of perceived power.

One role of rural pastors that seems consistent with what I tried to do in this process is that of "missional leader and change agent."[39] One could broaden that role to include the rural church as a whole. Shannon Jung, et. al. ask the question, "How would the American rural church appear to the local community if, instead of presenting a small

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[39]Shannon Jung et al., *Rural Ministry: The Shape of the Renewal to Come* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 207.

group of people intent on institutional survival, it was viewed as a force for community

strength and change? What would this say to the community about Christian

discipleship?"[40] It is that question, really, that drove my own inquiry about the role of the

church in strengthening leadership potential in the rural community.

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[40]Ibid., 219.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

At Issue: The Need for Leaders in Rural Communities

A survey of the literature from several states and various disciplines quickly
reveals a need for developing leadership in rural communities of the United States.
Joseph Amato and John W. Meyer present a relatively dismal view of rural leadership
potential, at best suggesting the need for older community members to take on more
leadership responsibility.[1] Hustedde and Woodward are more even-handed, noting the
difference between communities that promote diverse leadership and those that do not.[2]

The need for leaders is evident in articles from fields as diverse as education,
community housing, and the arts—and of course, the church itself. A 2006 article in *The
Lutheran* quoted Wigniton of the Fund for Theological Education as saying that, across
denominations, "the question is, 'Will the church have the leadership it needs as we move
into the future?'"[3] In rural areas the shortage of ordained leadership has led to some
creative efforts like the Nebraska Synod's (ELCA) IDEA (Invite, Discern, Excite, Act)
program for developing both clergy and lay leaders.[4]

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[1]Joseph Amato and John W. Meyer, *The Decline of Rural Minnesota* (Marshall, MN: Crossings Press, 1993), 40.

[2]Hustedde and Woodward, "Designing a Rural Leadership Program," 1.

[3]Cindy Novak, "Who Will Wear This Shirt?," *The Lutheran*, January 2006, 13.

[4]Ibid., 14.

The church, however, is far from the only entity having to deal with a shortage of leaders. A report sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction indicated a shortage of leaders as being among the greatest challenges in general in rural communities and a lack of true leadership and vision as the greatest challenge facing rural leaders themselves. A lack of leadership development opportunities, added to the isolation and other social costs of leadership in small communities, easily lead to burnout.[5]

Milan Wall, in an article published in conjunction with the 2004 National Rural Housing Conference, cites eight different challenges facing leaders in the area of rural housing, including "doing more with less," the pace and unpredictability of change, and the what he calls "fear of 'assassination." Leaders, he says, "risk the reality that someone, someday, will try to 'take them down a notch or two' and, in extreme cases, attempt to remove them from office."[6]

One might say that the issue is sometimes not so much a lack of leadership as a clash of values and/or cultures. According to Martin Giese, this clash of cultures often is not identified as such, because people are often unaware of the culture in which they live.[7] This clash nevertheless becomes the root of misunderstanding and conflict between

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[5]*Summary of the Official Proceedings: Rural Policy Network Forum* State Superintendent, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction in partnership with Learning Point Associates, 2004, 6-10, http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/rural/pdf/ri_sum.pdf (accessed April 25, 2007).

[6]Milan Wall, "Eight Challenges Facing Community Leaders," *Rural Voices*, The Magainze of the Housing Assistance Council, Spring 2004, 25, http://www.ruralhome.org/manager/uploads/Voices_Conference04.pdf (accessed March 14, 2007).

[7]Martin Giese, "The Distinctive Context of Rural Ministry," in *Abundant Harvest: Essays on Rural Life and Ministry in Honor of Dean and Elsie Freudenberger*, ed. Victor Klimoski and Lance Barker (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools, 2002), 46.

rural pastors and the congregations they serve and, indeed, is behind much of the conflict and dysfunction in organizations in general in rural communities.

Frank Tillapaugh notes, that for the church, rural values of "sameness, harmony, maintaining the status quo, smallness, [and] being established" are often at odds with those of an increasingly urban and mobile society, which values change, diversity, conflict management, bigness and mobility.[8] Some of those same values can cause rural/small-town pastors and other leaders to accommodate rather than innovate. Richard Doebler notes how small-town pride ("We know best.") can stifle fresh insights, while an emphasis on what's *good enough* can inhibit the drive for excellence.[9]

Giese identifies six *tensions* that can emerge from this culture clash, which pastors and lay leaders need to manage creatively in order to be effective in rural ministry: independence-interdependence, autonomy-submission, tensions concerning managerial style, tensions concerning goals, the tension arising from the perception of work, and the ministry "beyond survival" tension.[10]

One tension emerges, for instance, in the way rural people view management. Generally speaking, the farmer or rancher is CEO of his own operation. Even on Main Street in Wessington Springs, few businesses have more than a couple of owners and a handful of employees. "Few workers take orders from anybody else, and even the offering of friendly advice is normally approached very cautiously so as not to threaten

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[8]Frank Tillapaugh, "Giving an Ingrown Church and Outward Focus," *Leadership* 9, no. 3 (1988): 23.

[9]Richard Doebler, "Staying Sharp in a Small Town," *Leadership* 20, no. 3 (1999): 53-55.

[10]Giese, "The Distinctive Context of Rural Ministry," 54-55.

autonomy."[11] The clash comes when someone comes into the community expecting to operate by more corporate standards.

> Blue collar workers come to church conditioned to respond to orders. White-collar workers come to church understanding the principles of multi-level management and the dynamics of people management. Farmers come to church understanding neither. To the agrarian mind, goal setting may seem presumptuous, even an affront to God. . . . Most successful farmers and rural businessmen do have goals. However, they are quietly set and loosely held to allow for flexibility and to shield the rural person from feelings of failure and disillusionment when goals are shattered by the unpredictable and uncontrollable.[12]

In addition to the clash of cultures, Giese says that these tensions may also result from discrepancies between rural people's espoused ideals regarding rural life and their actual practices (for instance, the romantic notion of community togetherness, versus the reality, in many cases, that any accommodation to interdependence versus independence is really only for one's own survival), as well as resistance to needed change. In the midst of all of these tensions, he cautions pastors of rural churches to "exercise their leadership authority with kindness and discretion."[13]

Developing Rural Human and Social Capital

Given all of these inter-related cultural and sociological factors, the process of developing leadership potential in rural communities must necessarily involve more than developing individual leaders; there are larger issues of *human and social capital*, along with varying notions of a *civil society* and the changing patterns of *civic involvement*—both secular and church-related—at work here.

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[11]Ibid., 49.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid., 54.

I have already mentioned the work by Flora, Flora, and Fey in the area of rural

capital.[14] They describe *human* capital as including:

> those attributes of individuals that contribute to their ability to earn a living,
> strengthen community, and otherwise contribute to community organizations, to
> their families, and to self-improvement.[15]

Depending on the source, examples of human capital might be schooling, skills and

knowledge gained from experience, in addition to virtues like honesty and punctuality.

Health is another asset of human capital, and is of particular concern in a

community with as many elderly people as Wessington Springs has. There is, not

surprisingly, a correlation between health and income: the higher one's income, the better

one's health. An additional factor enters in with rural people.

> Rural residents are more likely than people in urban areas to engage in behaviors
> that can harm their health because their level of self efficacy is often low. For
> example, smoking among people twelve to seventeen years of age was highest in
> the more remote rural areas and generally lower in central cities.[16]

Health is an increasingly important issue in communities like Wessington Springs, with

their aging populations. A rural leadership study that did not address the health of its

participants would therefore be lacking, especially in light of Jesus' ministry of healing

and wholeness.

Improving *social* capital is another aspect of community development. Flora,

Flora, and Fey describe two kinds of social capital: bonding and bridging. They define

bonding social capital as the connections among "individuals and groups of similar

backgrounds." *Bridging* social capital "connects diverse groups within the community to

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[14]Flora, Flora, and Fey, *Rural Communities*, 52.

[15]Ibid., 80.

[16]Ibid., 100.

each other and to groups outside the community."[17] The presence of—and balance between—bonding and bridging capital are important in order for communities to change. A lack of such capital leads to suspicion and the formation of factions, both of which work to resist the process of change. An imbalance in either direction can result either in *clientelism* (when bridging social capital is high but bonding social capital is low)*,* where "the relationships formed within and outside the community are predominantly vertical," or conflict (when the bonding aspect is high but bridging social capital is low), because the community is "organized against an outside entity or itself."[18] Encouraging a healthy balance between bonding and bridging social capital would also, therefore, be an important part of any leadership development process, not simply developing individual leaders.

Cornelia Flora notes that strengthening relational skills increases farmers' marketing effectiveness. Increasing globalization and industrialization make it difficult for farmers "to maintain a constant share of the value chain." The links in that chain tend to be driven by relationships—with those who supply the inputs and provide the market for agricultural products as well as with fellow producers. "Relational skills reduce the cost in carrying out the increasing number of tasks critical to farm success."[19]

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[17]Ibid., 60.

[18]Ibid., 61.

[19]Cornelia Butler Flora, "Skills for the 21st Century: Relation Building," *Rural Development News* 22/2 (1998): 3, http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/newsletter/Summer98/flora.html (accessed February 22, 2006).

The Role of Civil Society

Civil society is a term created within the last decade or so to describe entities often categorized on the basis of what they are not: i.e., neither part of government nor of business. The Red Cross, for instance, is a non-profit organization. It is also often described as "a 'non-governmental organization,' an NGO or an INGO—an 'international non-governmental organization.'"[20]

Gary Simpson has loosely defined civil society in the positive as "that vast, spontaneously emergent, ever dynamic plurality of networks, associations, institutions, and movements for the prevention and promotion of this, that and the other thing."[21] Jurgen Habermas has provided a more comprehensive description of civil society's territory:

> [T]he associations range from churches, cultural associations, sport clubs and debating societies to independent media, academies, groups of concerned citizens, grass-roots initiatives and reorganizations of gender, race, and sexuality all the way to occupational associations, political parties and labor unions.[22]

Alan Wolfe sums up the term more succinctly as describing "those forms of communal and associational life which are organized neither by the self-interest of the market nor by the coercive potential of the state."[23]

Actually, one might say that civil society sits both between and within the boundaries of the political state, the market economy and the *lifeworld,* that arena in (or,

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[20]Simpson, "God in Civil Society," 8.

[21]Ibid., 12.

[22]Jurgen Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig J. Calhoun, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 453.

[23]Alan Wolfe, "Is Civil Society Obsolete?" in *Community Works: The Revival of Civil Society in America*, ed. E. J. Dionne (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998), 17.

for Shakespeare, the stage on) which we live our lives that includes culture, values, personal relationships, etc. From this vantage point, betwixt and between, civil society possesses two distinct aspects as it turns toward, on one side, the political/economic world and, on the other, the personal lifeworld.

Civil society exhibits what Simpson calls its *sleuthing* aspect as it seeks out both evidence for and causes of various social ills. It exhibits its *sluicing* aspect as it channels the results of this detective work into public, political, and economic channels where it both amplifies and fortifies public opinion toward the goal of social action.[24]

In both the U.S. and Europe, *partnerships* is a term being increasingly used to "capture the multilateral links among central government and local government, the private sector, and community-based groups and associational structures of civil society."[25] Stephen Aigner, et. al., found that such partnerships, along with the encouragement of a "new empowerment paradigm" utilizing a grass-roots, "bottom-up" approach to community development, were effective in leveraging dollars to make a "strong, positive and significant difference" in rural areas of persistent poverty in the United States.[26] Mixed-method research was done using thirty-three rural Empowerment Zone/Enterprise communities as defined by the Clinton-Gore Administration as the database. They discovered in particular that "the role of civil society is vital when the 'top-down' view dominates during the phase of strategic visioning/planning."[27]

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[24]Simpson, "God in Civil Society," 16-18.

[25]Stephen M. Aigner, Cornelia Butler Flora, and Juan M. Hernandez, "The Premise and Promise of Citizenship and Civil Society for Renewing Democracies and Empowering Sustainable Communities," *Sociological Inquiry* 71, no. 4 (2001): 494.

[26]Ibid.: 496-502.

[27]Ibid.: 502.

Civil society, Simpson argues, needs faith communities. He identifies civil society as:

> God's preferential location for discerning, discovering, innovating, communicating, and enacting social moral wisdom. This also sets the table for our church communities as prophetic and sapiential public companions with that [vast array of entities] that make up civil society.[28]

Simpson identifies several examples of the church (especially the Lutheran church in this country) acting as public companion, from Adults Saving Kids, a program, supported by various ELCA synods and organizations, that is designed to protect young people from sexual exploitation, to *Sal y Luz* (Salt and Light), a project that connects three peace sanctuary churches to six Midwest communities.[29] All of the examples cited are evidence of the church taking leadership in bringing God's redemptive reign to bear on the lives of oppressed people, both here and abroad. This is more than leadership for the sake of saving or preserving a community. This is leadership that *saves lives*. This is where the church, I believe, can be a catalyst for change in rural communities that are far too often interested merely in their own survival.

The Dispute over Civic Engagement

Social capital and civil society come together in what some have termed *civic engagement*, meaning the extent to which individuals are involved in public life. Scholars had been debating for some time the health of American civil society when Robert Putnam published his now famous book, *Bowling Alone*, exploring "the complex of factors behind the erosion of America's social connectedness and community

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[28]Simpson, "God in Civil Society," 21.

[29]Ibid., 26-43.

involvement over the last several decades,"[30] and thus fueling the debate in the halls of academia and beyond. Just as in the debates about the decline in mainline Christianity, there continue to be discussions about the validity of Putnam's argument, both on empirical and theoretical grounds.[31] Some skeptics question whether civic engagement is indeed even a thing to be pursued, at least when it is pursued in a sort of mediocre, half-hearted way that only serves to empower the most extreme voices around an issue. For that reason, Morris Fiorina argues that *either* high *or* low levels of civic engagement are preferable to merely "some."[32]

Many have offered suggestions for the revitalization of civic engagement in America. I will not give them all here, but since this thesis is an examination of the potential for nurturing leadership in the broader community, and since one needs to be *engaged* in the community in order to be a community *leader*, such suggestions need to be addressed in some fashion.

In order to encourage increased involvement among young people, Putnam proposes a list of suggestions from a return to civics education in the schools, to the encouragement of community service programs, participation in extracurricular activities (including an updated version of Scouting), part-time employment and "new means of social-capital formation on the job."[33] Skocpol suggests extending or building what she

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[30]Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 277.

[31]Skocpol and Fiorina, "Making Sense of the Civic Engagement Debate," 6.

[32]Morris P. Fiorina, "Extreme Voices: A Dark Side of Civic Engagement," in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 418.

[33]Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 406-07.

calls "multiplex associations" (like Scouting, for example) that mix "politics and civic

activity with family life and socializing. Multiplex associations draw people in and help

to sustain public discussions that resonate with the values and needs of ordinary

citizens."[34]

Skocpol identifies religious congregations as one existing source of such

interactions. "It is hardly incidental that family-oriented civic movements continue to be

mobilized out of religious networks and values." This is true, she says, not only in

conservative Christian organizations but in interfaith networks, as well. "When social and

political activities intertwine, specific issues and instrumental public policy choices do

not have to bear all the weight—as they do in the class-skewed world of advocacy group

politics."[35] Clearly, the church has a role to play in increasing the civic engagement of its

people, for betterment (one would hope) of communities.

Congregational Involvement in Civil Society

Congregations' influence in the encouragement of social capital/civil society/civic

engagement is also a question of some debate. Sociologists have noted that participation

in congregations provides individuals with access to social networks that encourage

voluntary activities outside the church.[36] The benefits go both ways, of course.

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[34]Theda Skocpol, "Advocates without Members: The Recent Transformation of American Civic Life," in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 504.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Pui-Yan Lam, "As the Flocks Gather: How Religion Affects Voluntary Association Participation," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 3 (2002): 405.

Ammerman, in her study of congregations, found a reciprocal relationship between the

welfare of the congregations and the communities they served.[37]

Pui-Yan Lam found that four different dimensions of religiosity (participatory,

devotional, affiliative, and theological) promote participation in voluntary associations.

On the other hand, Lam discerned a competitive effect between religious and secular

activities, noting, "while the 'weak ties' formed in churches and other religious

organizations encourage participation in other groups, the responsibilities attached could

also prevent individuals from involvement in secular voluntary activities."[38]

Civic engagement by congregations tends to vary by denomination. Mark Chavez,

Helen Giesel and William Tsitaos found that mainline congregations "are more likely to

engage in and encourage activities that build connections between congregations and the

world around them"[39] (that is, in activities that build bridging social capital) than either

conservative Christians or Roman Catholics. Specifically, Philip Schwadel found a

relationship, if weak, between Christians' civic participation and their understanding of

the Bible.

> [C]hurch members with more literal views of the Bible belong to fewer nonchurch
> organizations than those with less literal views of the Bible, although the
> relationship is not very strong.[40]

Others, including Lam, have found similar connections.[41]

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[37]Nancy Tatum Ammerman and Arthur Emery Farnsley, *Congregation and Community* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

[38]Lam, "Religion and Voluntary Association Participation," 415.

[39]Mark Chaves, Helen M. Giesel, and William Tsitsos, "Religious Variations in Public Presence: Evidence from the National Congregations Study," in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*, ed. Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 122.

[40]Philip Schwadel, "Individual, Congregational, and Denominational Effects on Church Members' Civic Participation," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44, no. 2 (2005): 165.

The only exception to that is in the area of political activity. There, Roman

Catholics took the lead. Chavez, et. al. cite a number of explanations for these findings,

from the territorial, government-connected European roots of many mainline

denominations (Robert Wuthnow), to regional differences in institutional culture (Peter

Dobkin Hall), to levels of other-worldly religious beliefs among non-mainline Protestants

(Wilson and Janoski) to the relative prominence of white, mainline Christians have

enjoyed in civil society during most of this nation's history.[42]

Ammerman, too, notes the greater tendency of mainline Protestants to be involved

in civil society.

> They are simply more connected than other Christian churches, and they are more
> likely to make connections with organizations that are not explicitly religious in
> their identity and mission. The practice of working across religious and secular
> boundaries is part of the mainline heritage, as is the habit of tending to the
> material needs of those beyond their own membership.[43]

She, too, did not find evidence of any extensive political activism or community

organizing among mainline churches, although the work they did do—like operating a

soup kitchen or a food pantry—still served to increase social capital through the meeting

together of church volunteers and community participants in such programs.

Comparing Roman Catholics specifically to American Lutherans, James C.

Peterson and Gary L. Lee found the difference in civic engagement to hold at a

significant level only "for residents of towns and for men with relatively high-status

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[41]Lam, "Religion and Voluntary Association Participation," 145.

[42]Chaves, Giesel, and Tsitsos, "Religious Variations in Public Presence: Evidence from the National Congregations Study," 123.

[43]Nancy T. Ammerman, "Connecting Mainline Protestant Churches with Public Life," in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*, ed. Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

occupations."[44] They note that socio-economic factors are "generally stronger determinants of social participation among Lutherans than Catholics,"[45] but that Lutherans were generally more involved in voluntary activities *within* the church than were Roman Catholics.[46]

In general, community involvement by congregations is overwhelmingly supported by the public, according to Wuthnow. Almost nine out of ten people, he learned, would like religious groups to be more active in both encouraging people to do volunteer work and promoting a greater sense of community involvement.[47] However, he also found that the majority of Americans *do not* want religious groups or mainline Protestant congregations to be more active in bringing religious values to bear on public policy.

How Much Involvement? Capacity of Individual and Organizations

Encouraging civic engagement is one thing. The question arises, however, in the midst of changing patterns of such engagements, about the factors that determine civic involvement on both the individual and organizational level. McPherson and Rotolo, proceeding from studies that have sought to correlate the number of group membership per individual with various sociodemographic characteristics, developed a model of how the system of individuals and groups fits together to form society. They note, for

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[44]James C. Peterson and Gary C. Lee, "Religious Affiliation and Social Participation: Differences between Lutherans and Catholics," *Journal of Voluntary Action Research* 5, no. 1 (1976): 90.

[45]Ibid.: 91.

[46]Ibid.: 86.

[47]Robert Wuthnow, "Beyond Quiet Influence? Possibilities for the Protestant Mainline," in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Role of Mainline Protestantism*, ed. Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans (Berkeley: University of California press, 2002), 29.

instance, a study that indicated a strong correlation between a person's educational level and the number of groups to which he/she belongs.

McPherson and Rotolo go further, however, and borrow from bioecology the term *carrying capacity* to study the capacity of a civic environment to effectively involve its members. For instance, they realistically argue that "human individuals have finite time and other resources for participating in groups."[48] They argue that organizations, too, have their limiting factors, and that organizations compete for various kinds of members; moreover,

> changes in the composition of groups depend on the other groups that are vying for the same kind of member. When there are many such groups and competition is intense, a group will have difficulty recruiting and retaining such members. When competition is low, groups will be more likely to recruit and retain members.[49]

While competition for members of *any kind* is often a reality in rural communities, a closer look at the variety of individuals within the community might suggest ways to involve a greater number of people in a greater number of organizations, thereby reinforcing an attitude of abundance in the community, and at the same time giving more people an opportunity to learn the kinds of cooperative skills one can learn by being involved in voluntary groups.

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[48]McPherson and Rotolo, "Diversity and Change in Voluntary Groups," 182.

[49]Ibid.: 200.

Leadership Defined and Illustrated in the Literature

Finally we come to the issue of leadership itself. Leadership can be defined in different ways. In fact, it is more often illustrated than defined. Flora indicates that the term "has become a code word for the social aspects of community development."[50]

So what makes for an excellent leader—in this or any other situation? Jim Collins, in his study of twenty-eight companies that made the jump from "good to great," saw in their leaders "a study in duality: modest and willful, humble and fearless."[51] He bestows the title of "Level 5 Leaders" to those who

> channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It's not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious—*but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves.*[52]

Collins describes a framework he and his colleagues devised, made up of three stages, each with two key concepts, driven by a *flywheel* that slowly builds momentum as it turns. Though he says he tried to downplay leadership, the presence of Level 5 Leaders appeared as a consistent factor in companies that made the transition from good to great. In *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* Collins adapts his model to organizations not driven by the profit motive (governments, schools, churches, and other non-profits), substituting the *resource engine*, made up of "time, money, and brand" for the economic engine.[53] Still, Level 5 Leadership remains as a key factor in the overall framework.

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[50]Flora, "Skills for the 21st Century: Relation Building," 1.

[51]Collins, *Good to Great*, 22.

[52]Ibid., 21.

[53]James C. Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great* (Boulder, CO: Jim Collins, 2005), 18. "Brand" in this case "refers to how well your organization can cultivate a deep well of emotional goodwill and mindshare of potential supporters."

Leadership is not, however, simply the result of having a superior (if humble) man (or woman) who leads simply through wisdom, and virtue and the respect of others. Neither, says Gary Wills, is the leader ingratiating, bowing to others' needs in an effort to win friends and influence people (what he calls the Dale Carnegie model). A leader, says Wills, "is one who mobilizes others toward a goal shared by leader and followers."[54] Life, he says, is "trinitarian;" giving rise to three ingredients needed for leadership. Like the three-legged stool, "Leaders, followers, and goals make up the three equally necessary supports for leadership."[55]

Peter Steinke takes a systems approach to leadership. Borrowing from Murray Bowen and Edwin Friedman, Steinke notes the power of leaders and followers to influence one another for good or for ill, depending on the capacity of leaders to be a *non-anxious presence*, that is, to define themselves both in relation to and apart from others.[56] He cites the example of an early-twentieth-century explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton, and his crew, whose expedition to cross Antarctica was jeopardized when their ship was crushed between huge blocks of ice. The ship's captain observed how, in the midst of impossible circumstances, Shackleton remained calm and reassuring. Shackleton, on the other hand, noted how his own spirits had been buoyed by the crew, illustrating the "cross-pollinating effect of the non-anxious presence."[57]

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[54]Garry Wills, *Certain Trumpets: The Call of Leaders* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 17.

[55]Ibid. For another Trinitarian aspect of leadership see the next chapter.

[56]Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006).

[57]Ibid., 37-38.

Still, what might be called collective or collaborative leadership remains somewhat unexplained. Betsy Hubbard, attempting to enlighten those who would make leadership development grants to non-profit organizations, acknowledges this. "While interest in collective leadership is high in both the nonprofit and private sectors, knowledge about the practice of collective leadership is more limited."[58] There is a tendency, she says, to separate individual and organizational needs when designing leadership development processes, which is not always helpful. Leadership development, she says, is an investment in capacity, both in terms of individuals and organizations.

Pilot and ELCA seminary president Michael Cooper-White uses the Bible and aviation as springboards for talking about leadership in the church and the world. Far from "flying solo," truly effective leaders "must be connected in an interdependent system."[59] Individually and with others, good leaders create "lift" that allows others to soar, plan carefully their destination, monitor key "instruments" like financial and attendance records to determine organizational health and function, know who is in command but at the same time rely on the "crew" for support, encourage teamwork and even cross-training to keep things running smoothly, and finally, understand that "leadership is gift and grace, not skill or human prowess."[60] He illustrates these qualities for examples from business, government and the lives of biblical leaders like Noah,

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[58]Betsy Hubbard, *Investing in Leadership Volume 1: A Grantmakers Framework for Understanding Nonprofit Leadership Development* (Washington, D.C.: Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, 2005), 12, http://www.geofunders.org/_uploads/documents/live/FINAL-InvestinLeadership%20Vol1.pdf (accessed June 4, 2006).

[59]Michael L. Cooper-White, *On a Wing and a Prayer: Faithful Leadership in the 21st Century*, Lutheran Voices (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), 16.

[60]Ibid., 85.

Moses, Ruth and Naomi, Jesus and *Syzygus*, Paul's "loyal [and to most people virtually unknown] companion" in Phil 4:3.[61]

Lorin Woolfe also illustrates various qualities of leadership with examples drawn from the Bible and business. His list includes honesty and integrity, purpose, kindness and compassion, humility, communication, performance management, team development, courage, justice and fairness, and the establishing of processes for further leadership development.[62] Indeed, he says, "The greatest leaders—Jesus and Moses in biblical times, Jack Welch [former CEO of GE] and Roger Enrico [of PepsiCo] in modern times—ensured that their "organizations would thrive long after them by their commitment to developing leaders who would renew and carry on their mission."[63] Kurt Senske sees the tragic events of September 11, 2001 and the stories of corporate deception and greed that came out of Enron, Tyco, WorldCom, and the like as a call for people to renew the link between their faith and their worklife and an awakening for both non-profit and for-profit leadership to "the age-old idea that values and organizational success are indeed inseparable."[64] He sites examples as diverse as Target, Charles Schwab, and the Salvation Army to illustrate his points.

On a less exalted (but no less important!) level, Gary Gunderson describes leaders who work—and work on—the boundaries, both in terms of being in "the space between

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[61]Ibid., 78.

[62]Lorin Woolfe, *The Bible on Leadership: From Moses to Matthew: Management Lessons for Contemporary Leaders* (New York: American Management Association, 2002), xi.

[63]Ibid., x.

[64]Kurt Senske, *Executive Values: A Christian Approach to Organizational Leadership* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), xi.

the structures, organizations, and groups,"[65] as well as being on the margins of society. Indeed, says Gunderson, boundary leaders often see themselves as being marginalized: out of sight and often out of the minds of most people. "They often underestimate their power and overestimate their weakness.[66] But that very sense of weakness and their presence in the margins are what give boundary leaders their strength. "The most powerful function of boundary leadership is to change the relationships between the humans involved in the systems."[67]

If one looks for models of specifically "Christian leadership" in books and articles, one could come the conclusion (at least I have) that those models are not only to be found in works labeled "Christian," nor are works that one might label as "Christian" only about leading the church. Stark has combined in his book, *Christ-Based Leadership,* ideas from some of the most popular secular books on leadership and the organic biblical leadership model that is the body of Christ, which is the apostle Paul's image of the church itself. Stark's questions are thought-provoking and humbling to any who would assert themselves as worthy of the title of leader and include:

- What is the truth of your ambition?
- Who is the Lord of your leadership?
- Do you believe in the people you're leading?
- What is your definition of success?
- Who are you here to serve?[68]

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[65]Gary Gunderson, *Boundary Leaders: Leadership Skills for People of Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 59.

[66]Ibid., 67.

[67]Ibid., 59.

[68]Stark, *Christ-Based Leadership*, 9.

Stark differentiates between two prominent leadership styles, one based on the modern concept of command and control, the other more postmodern in nature, illustrated by those who lead by example and encouragement. He quotes James O'Tool in calling this latter style *Rushmorean leadership*, characterized by the presidents enshrined on that national monument (what an apt image of leadership for people in South Dakota!). *Rushmorean* leaders "possess authenticity, integrity, vision, passion, conviction and courage, and they lead by example rather than coercion."[69]

He takes Collins' *Level 4* and *Level 5 Leadership* concepts and differentiates them according to how they appear to outsiders and their effect on other employees. With respect to overall personality qualities, he categorizes the two in the following way:[70]

WHAT DO WE SEE IN THEM?

Level 4 leadership	*Level 5 leadership*
Need to be right, others wrong	Take appropriate blame and responsibility for their actions
Can't apologize or admit their mistakes	Will admit their mistakes and assume that no one is perfect
See political gamesmanship as an appropriate tool to get what they want	Understand that appropriate processes are an important check and balance to their vision and leadership
Lie easily, find scapegoats, and blame others	Tell the truth, even when it reflects badly on them or causes a setback for the organization.
Afraid of others' ideas and may reframe them into their own.	Open to others' ideas and will quickly give credit where it's due.
Tend to be inauthentic, as if wearing a mask.	Exude an authenticity that garners trust
Central messages are law-based; everyone must measure up to their standard	Central messages are grace-filled; everyone is accepted and challenged to stretch further

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[69]Ibid., 14.

[70]Ibid., 30.

Woven in amongst many of these writings on leadership is the call to team building and team playing. The message of John Maxwell's book, *Developing the Leaders around You,* is, ". . . you can't do it alone. If you really want to be a successful leader, you must develop other leaders around you."[71]

Cladis looks to the Trinity as the supreme model of team-based ministry in the church. He cites Letty Russel's book, *Church in the Round,* in its image of "round table leadership" that reflects the trinitarian "circle fellowship of God," in which distinctions between clergy and laity are eliminated.[72] More on this in the next section.

Daryl Heasley, writing in the quarterly newsletter of the Northeast Rural Development, lists among the qualities of transformational leaders that they

> build quality partnerships by promoting a shared vision and affirming shared values amongst partnership members. They develop common ground, a common vision for the future. And work cooperatively through consensus: they build coalitions.[73]

Senior Citizens in Leadership Roles

It was mentioned in the introduction that Wessington Springs ranks high in the number of people sixty-five and older among its population, even for a rural community. Indeed, Freeman observes, "Elderly may well constitute our only increasing natural resource."[74] That statement rings true, particularly considering that in just twenty years

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[71]John Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders around You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 2.

[72]Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church*, 5.

[73]Daryl Heasely, "Network '98," quarterly newsletter for Northeast Rural Development (December 1998), 4, http:// www.cas.nercrd.psu.edu/ newsletter/Dec98/dkh_comments.html, (accessed December 27, 2005).

[74]Marc Freeman, "Towards Civic Renewal: How Senior Citizens Could Save Civil Society," *Journal of Gerontological Social Work* 28, no. 3 (1997): 243.

the whole of the living Baby-boom population will be between sixty and eighty years of age, depending on where one draws the demarcation line.

It also points to a need here to address the issue of nomenclature. What do we call this group of people over sixty-five, and furthermore, who are we talking about when we talk about senior citizens and/or the elderly? For the record, I would like to consider in my discussion all of the congregation's and community's residents who are sixty-five and older. This section will nevertheless use a variety of terms to talk about people in this age group. Part of that is due to the different ways they are named in the literature, as well as the different categories of people within an age group that, these days, can extend out forty years. Part of the problem lies, too, in how people in this age group talk about themselves. There are seventy-year-olds who will not go near a senior citizens' center, because they do not consider themselves old enough. There are people—in Wessington Springs and elsewhere—who keep working well into their seventies or even their eighties. To call them retired seems a misnomer.

That said, I want to address the question of how one might encourage and support retired or semi-retired people in taking a more active role in community leadership. Many older retired people, especially, express the belief that they have served their time and now want to let the younger generation take over. Where that generation is lacking or low in number, however, the abdication of leadership by people sixty-five and older may not be an option.

Amy Qiaoming Lui and Terry Besser, surveying small towns and rural communities in Iowa, found that elderly people do want to be a part of their community. In fact, many are "actively engaged in volunteer work and have made substantial

contributions to their communities."[75] They also found that formal ties are especially

important to elderly people. Neither informal ties nor norms of collective action were

significant indicators of community involvement, they found; however, "formal

organizations may represent interpersonal invitations to get involved and provide them

direct links to the community."[76]

Health concerns and aging itself may mean that even younger retired people may

not be able to carry the full burden of leadership of which they may have been formerly

capable. Collaborative leadership, on the other hand, might make it possible for two or

three people to take on the leadership role normally assigned to one leadership position.

This model is presently being tried in a limited way, with both retired and non-retired

members, in missional action teams produced by Our Savior's strategic planning process.

Initial response indicates that it can lead to more a more willing embrace of leadership

roles. Such an experiment provides a prime opportunity for teaching and modeling team-

based or collaborative leadership for both the congregation and the community at large.

On the other hand, (as expressed by a retired teacher in my congregation) it is

possible that people over sixty-five may not be as open to a collaborative style of

leadership, not having had the same experience with this style as younger age groups may

have had. Still, older members of the community tend to be quite civic minded. If, as

noted above, collaborative leadership is a relatively new concept to *everyone* in a

particular rural community, and *everyone* is being challenged to learn to cooperate in

leadership for the good of the community, even older seniors might well be enticed to

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[75]Amy Qiaoming Liu and Terry Besser, "Social Capital and Participation in Community: Improvement Activities by Elderly Residents in Small Towns and Rural Communities," *Rural Sociology* 68, no. 3 (2003): 343.

[76]Ibid.: 361.

join in the challenge. Attention to this issue would seem to be an important part of the process of rural leadership development.

A study of seniors' centers in Canada indicated that "common assumptions about retirement, the characteristics of seniors, and the nature of leadership and power act as formidable barriers" to seniors assuming leadership roles in these centers of social and recreational activity for senior citizens.[77] Sandra Cusack cites a number of issues that arose regarding senior volunteer leadership. These were:

- The need for more people to share leadership
- People going on and on at meetings
- Concerns about how to balance the needs of the organization with sensitivity to the needs of individuals
- Older traditional leaders not wanting to give up and younger people not willing to get involved
- New members who do not speak English not willing to volunteer
- People lacking confidence and not feeling that they have leadership skills
- Not enough personal contact, encouragement and support
- The need for Board development to make meetings more effective and give everyone a voice, complicated by resistance from traditional leaders who do not think they need training.[78]

While the study was done in Canada, I expect a similar list of issues could be collected in any senior center in this country, and for that matter, in many congregations with a majority of older members. Cusack points to the support and encouragement of professional staff as a key component in empowering volunteer leadership among seniors. I expect this would also be a key factor in congregations.

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[77]Sandra A Cusack, "Leadership in Seniors' Centers: Power and Empowerment in Relations between Seniors and Staff" *Education and Aging* 13, no. 1 (1998): 51, http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&lr=&q=cache:ll6q_RJ11TYJ:www.triangle.co.uk/eda/13-01/cusack.pdf+leadership,+seniors (accessed March 15, 2007).

[78]Ibid.: 64.

Among professional leaders, leadership styles can change as they grow older. Studying a sample of twenty-four mayors over a period of one year, Schubert found that the level of verbal activity (one might also say active direction) in leadership increased with age to a high in the mid-fifties, and then decreased as the mayors aged through their sixties and seventies, with active leaders becoming less active and passive leaders becoming more passive.[79] Political experience was found to interact with age to affect activity; thus, older more experienced mayors tended to be less active in their roles. This may reflect either a higher degree of confidence in their position, decreasing energy, or both. The sample size obviously is small enough to raise some questions, but the study at least points to some potential differences in leadership style between younger and older leaders as well as the changing styles of leaders as they themselves age.

Certainly, as Lui and Besser argue, rural elderly residents are "an important community resource. Community leaders and policy makers would be wise to adopt a more positive attitude toward elderly people as a potential resource, encourage them to get interested in the community, and facilitate their involvement."[80]

Congregations could be a starting place for this positive attitude toward senior citizens. As with other age groups, research indicates a relationship between worship attendance by senior citizenship and the size and diversity of their social network,[81] which by definition increases their social capital. Unfortunately, social interactions *within* congregations can also be a source of discouragement for senior citizens. One study

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[79]James N. Schubert, "Age and Active-Passive Leadership Style," *American Political Science Review* 82, no. 3 (1988).

[80]Liu and Besser, "Rural Elderly Community Participation," 362.

[81] William Alex McIntosh, Dianne Sykes, and Karen S. Kubena, "Religion and Community among the Elderly: The Relationship between the Religious and Secular Characteristics of Their Social Networks," *Review of Religious Research* 44, no. 2 (2002): 116.

found that "troublesome social encounters are prevalent [in congregations], and that they are a significant source of distress for elderly people."[82] So while congregations can be a means for seniors to broaden their range of social contacts and, in turn, leadership opportunities, if congregations are to be leaders in nurturing senior citizens for community leadership, they will need to find ways to deal with negativity and the stress it evokes.

Servant Leadership as a Model for Leadership in the Twenty-first Century

Much of what has been already said about leadership in the twenty-first century might be explained by a single phrase made popular in the later part of the twentieth century by Robert Greenleaf in his book, *Servant Leadership.* The servant-leader is, Greenleaf says, first and foremost a *servant*. "It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."[83] The order is important to Greenleaf, although he allows that is possible also for leaders to learn to be servants.

Among the characteristics of the servant-leaders that Greenleaf mentions are

- A sense of direction
- The ability to listen
- Facility with language
- The ability to withdraw and reflect
- Community building
- The ability to conceptualize

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[82]Neal Krause et al., "Negative Interaction in the Church: Insights from Focus Groups with Older Adults," *Review of Religious Research* 41, no. 4 (2000): 527.

[83]Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 13.

Greenleaf applies the principles of servant-leadership to a variety of fields, from business to education to the church. The servant-leader model, which arose out of the turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s, is quickly becoming the model for leadership in our own century. Hustedde and Woodward mention it in conjunction with rural community development.[84]

Servanthood is fundamental to Max De Pree's concept of leadership. "Leadership is a concept of owing certain things to the institution. It is a way of thinking about institutional heirs, a way of thinking about stewardship as contrasted with ownership.[85] Included in De Pree's view of leadership is a *covenantal relationship* between an organization and its people that itself includes such things as intimacy, respect for persons and accountability.

Peter Block would do away with the concept of leadership entirely, or, at least, would diminish its importance. The fact that we have to keep modifying the term (*good* leadership, *strong* leadership, *participative* leadership, *servant* leadership) suggests, he says, that something is wrong. For Block, strong leadership is inadequate for making the fundamental changes required in organizations, for while it does connote initiative and responsibility (two worthy attributes in any organization) the term is "inevitably associated with behaviors of control, direction, and knowing what is best for others, "[86] From the standpoint of those who are led, "The wish for leadership is in part our wish to rediscover hope and, interestingly enough, to have someone else provide it for us."[87]

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[84]Hustedde and Woodward, "Designing a Rural Leadership Program" 2.

[85]Max De Pree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 12.

[86]Peter Block, *Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993), 13.

[87]Ibid., 14.

While De Pree uses the term *stewardship* to help define servant-leadership, Block develops the concept of stewardship as an *alternative* to leadership. "Stewardship asks us to be deeply accountable for the outcomes of an institution, without acting to define purpose for others, control others or take care of others."[88] Stewardship, for Block, carries with it the concept of service without naming the concept of leadership. "There is pride in leadership, it evokes images of direction. There is humility in stewardship, it evokes images of service. Service is central to the idea of stewardship.[89]

Block goes beyond traditional, churchly uses of the term (financial responsibility and the right use of one's talents) to include within stewardship the political dimension of the right use of power. In fact he defines the term as "the choice to preside over the orderly distribution of power."[90] Specifically, "One intent of stewardship is to replace self-interest with service as the basis for holding and using power."[91] This hearkens back to Jesus' warning to his disciples against the abuse of leadership.

Block's concept of stewardship is like servant-leadership in another way: it refuses to avoid pain—for oneself as well for others. It expects honesty in all relationships and refuses to take responsibility for solving other people's problems in a way that is patronizing or controlling. It avoids dependency in favor of empowerment. While Block writes primarily for the business community, he acknowledges the place of stewardship in schools and government institutions. While he acknowledges the religious

[88]Ibid., 18.

[89]Ibid., 41.

[90]Ibid., xx.

[91]Ibid., 42.

nature of the term and the contribution of religion (Gandhi, for instance), the book is more about the living out of democratic values than it is about living out one's faith.

Values and *character* are crucial to the leadership development process described by Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol and Ken McElrath in their book *The Ascent of a Leader*. In it they describe a two-part leadership ladder—an extension ladder, actually—made up of both character and competence. The competence ladder is what most people mean when they talk about climbing the ladder of success. It is composed of four rungs:

- Discover what I can do.
- Develop my capacities.
- Acquire title or position
- Attain individual potential.[92]

What they call the character ladder is longer and contains five rungs:

- Trust God and others with me.
- Choose vulnerability.
- Align with truth.
- Pay the price.
- Discover my destiny.[93]

When the two ladders are put together, the rungs of the two ladders alternate, with trust being the first step. There is no either-or, black-or-white choice, say the authors, but a both-and choice.

> Although this may sound contradictory, to climb both ladder represent the only reasonable way to rise to positions of influence with character intact. To reject the duality is to reject reality and growth.[94]

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[92]Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 46.

[93]Ibid., 140.

[94]Ibid., 142.

An interesting thing happens, however, when the two are put together: the longer character ladder also transforms the shorter ladder. "Discover what I can do" becomes "Discover what I can do with God and others." "Develop my capacities" becomes "Develop my own capacities in team." "Acquire title or position" becomes "Acquire positions that match who I am." Finally, "Attain individual potential" becomes "Attain God-designed potential."[95]

What makes the real difference, however, are not the individual rungs of the ladder but the two rails, which hold the ladder together and allow it to extend. On one side is an *environment of grace* [96] that accepts people as they are and allows, even expects them to grow and change. In such an environment, people are invited to make a positive contribution, "even when their suggestions require significant changes or their questions test long-held assumptions."[97] This is reminiscent of the theme of Bill Easum's book, *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers,* that permission-giving churches thrive.[98]

Relationships of grace—relationships that allow for trust, growth and accountability—are the other side of an environment of grace. "Developing healthy relationships in an unhealthy environment is nearly impossible, as is constructing a positive environment with a group of negative people. You can't climb a ladder with one rail missing."[99]

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[95]Ibid., 144.

[96]Though the authors acknowledge that the word "grace" is most often used in relation to theology, they note how it also can be viewed from a sociological and even meteorological perspective.

[97]Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath, *Ascent of a Leader*, 31.

[98]William M. Easum, *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers: Ministry Anytime, Anywhere, by Anybody* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).

[99]Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath, *Ascent of a Leader*, 31.

Church/Congregational Leadership
in Community Development

That's not to say that the attempt to work for an orderly distribution of power in both church and community is foreign to the church's mission. For Greenleaf, the church's role in developing and supporting strong leaders to serve in the community around it is second only to its responsibility to develop an egalitarian leadership structure of its own. "If this can be the serious mission of a group of churches, then the central conceptual resource that stands behind those churches will become the architect of the more just, more loving, more serving society."[100]

John B. Mitchell et al. illustrate the unrealized potential for the church to be an effective force in community decision-making. In their study of fourteen small, southern Ohio communities, over ninety percent of the influential people in the communities identified themselves as church members and over two-thirds attended two-thirds or more of the worship services. While many indicated that the church was "the organization that provided them with the greatest personal satisfaction," they did not perceive the church as presently being very important in local decision-making.[101]

Shannon Jung and Kris Kirst, on the other hand, found that the vital rural congregations they studied in 1995 took it for granted that they would be involved in the community." Frequently people forgot to tell us about their local mission projects. There is a sense that community-mindedness is very much what these congregations are about." The negative side of this might be that "in very few cases did the congregation think

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[100]Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 82.

[101]John B. Mitchell, Eldon C. Schriner, and Edward D. Lafontaine, "Influentials and the Church in Small Communities," *Review of Religious Research* 11, no. 3 (1970): 196.

systematically or carefully about the future of the community or take steps to insure its

future health."[102]

Rural Development specialist Mary A. Agria compiled a dozen stories of rural

congregations attempting to act out their faith in missional ways in their communities.

> They chronicle how people with vision sought to transform their communities by incorporating in them the resources of congregations—practicing communities of Christians seeking to live out their beliefs about new life in times of change and transition.[103]

Some of the stories involve successes, some disappointments. That in itself is refreshing.

Issues addressed include rural health and support for caregivers, the exodus of young

people from rural communities, overcoming congregational differences, community

response to tragedy, and the demoralization of rural communities due to multiple losses.

The fact that the stories are all linked with biblical texts and illustrate a wide array

of change agents—from "small groups of individuals working out their faith in a secular

setting"[104] to ecumenical partnerships involving several congregations—is an

encouragement to anyone who is looking for evidence that the church has a legitimate

and redemptive role to play in rural society.

The kind of faith-induced efforts toward transformation documented by Agria is,

unfortunately, not universal. Bob Roberts notes the irony that "America is growing

churches by the thousands each year without transforming communities at the same

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[102]Shannon Jung and Kris Kirst, *Revitalization in the Rural Congregation: What We Know, What We Need to Know* (Dubuque, IA: Center for Theology and the Land, 1995), 20.

[103]*Building Healthy Communities: Stories of 12 Healthy Communities in the Midwest* (Dubuque, IA: Center for Theology and the Land, 1995), i.

[104] Ibid.

rate."[105] He describes his vision for a church that challenges every member "to serve the community locally and globally," what he calls *glocal impact*, "an interactive relationship between our vocations and ministry that would enable us to impact the world both locally and globally."[106] Laypeople, equipped to have an interactive relationship with God, transparent faith, and connections with others, and using their God-given gifts and abilities, are free in ways many pastors and professional evangelists are not, to go anywhere and be the living body of Christ in the world. One of the products of this *glocal impact*, he says, is community development, not solely in an economic sense (although it could be that, too), but through "integral involvement in the community culture and morality."[107] He cites examples of public school teachers and a principal, a tax preparer, and other community workers connected with the congregation he pastors engaged in work in their own neighborhoods and in other countries that literally changed lives.

John F. Else and Keith Stephenson describe the change brought about by Christian plantation workers working with the church in Indonesia. Suffering under increasingly dismal working conditions resulting from the plantation's corporate owners' management techniques, day laborers on the plantation turned to and received help from the *Gereja Maihi Injili Minahasa* (GMIM), the "established church" (80 percent of the people belong to it) in that region.[108] Church leaders engaged in raising the consciousness

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[105]Bob Roberts, *Transformation: How Glocal Churches Transform Lives and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 128.

[106]Ibid., 109.

[107]Ibid., 127.

[108]John F Else and Keith Stephenson, "Church Leadership in Community Change," *Encounter* 49, no. 2 (1988): 131.

of the people "through a program of developing the church members through [Bible study and] discussion, pastoral care, sermons, devotional talks, prayers and worship."[109]

Two factors in this example are important and relatively unique from a Western perspective. One is what the authors describe as the unitary view of life among the people of Indonesia, as opposed to the "separation of church and state, individual and group, spiritual and material" common in the western world.[110] The second is the way in which the local pastor and congregation are seen as a vital link to a whole range of governmental and non-governmental agencies and resources which can be (and in many cases were) called upon in situations.

What is interesting about this case study is that, for the most part, the consciousness raising that provoked the change came via traditional forms of ministry, although the texts and themes used in that ministry were often chosen in response to the specific issues being addressed. The church body's chosen theme of freedom and unity was helpful, too, in raising people's hopes for change in the first place. The change did not come without conflict, nor were all of the hoped-for goals met. In fact, many of the same obstacles to change that one might foresee in working with a small town in the U.S. were encountered here. Whether the latitude granted the church in Indonesia for addressing the problems would be granted a congregation in Wessington Springs, South Dakota, is uncertain. Not having any one *established church* would make a difference in the process.

With or without such an established church, individual beliefs can still make a difference. De Pree is an example of one for whom his Christian values help to form his

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[109]Ibid.: 143.

[110]Ibid.: 146-47.

corporate leadership style. De Pree makes no secret of his Christian values, particularly as they pertain to his understanding both of the value of persons created in God's image[111] and of the leaders as servant.[112] For De Pree, "beliefs come before policies or standards or practices.[113]

Strengthening Families as Part of Strengthening Community Leadership

A 2002 study by the YMCA and Search Institute found that parents rarely seek support in their parenting. Most are attempting to go it alone. When they did seek help, parents were most likely to turn to their families and friends and least likely to turn to community resources.[114] African-American parents surveyed indicated a greater tendency to turn to community resources for support; however, parents in a predominantly white rural community like Wessington Springs would likely react similarly to the majority of those surveyed in the study. One key resource for parents in the study—but one that was often lacking—was a strong relationship with their spouse or partner.[115] Taken together those two findings suggest that the most influential means of support for parents is to be found within the family—immediate or extended—itself.

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[111]De Pree, *Leadership Is an Art*, 63.

[112]Ibid., 12.

[113]Ibid., 55.

[114]Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Peter C. Scales, and Jolene L. Roehlkepartain, "Building Strong Families: Highlights from a Preliminary Survey from YMCA of the USA and Search Institute on What Parents Need to Succeed," Abundant Assets Alliance, 2002, 2, http://abundantassets.org (accessed October 15, 2006). Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents said it was "not true" that they were mostly like to turn to community resources for help. The report did not make clear whether "community resources" included people's churches or other faith communities.

[115]Ibid., 4.

Among the kinds of support that parents found most helpful were simple

encouragement—others telling them they were doing a good job as parents—and having

other adults around whom they trust to spend time with their children. Over seventy

percent of the parents surveyed indicated that the latter factor would help them as parents.

Another seventy percent said getting advice from trusted professionals—doctors,

teachers, religious leaders—was helpful.[116] This is in keeping with other research about

the value of having adults other than parents involved in some significant way in a child's

life.

Anderson and Hill emphasize the importance of a partnership between the

congregation and the family in nurturing faith in the home. This faith-nurturing

partnership appears to have an impact on civic engagement, as well, according to Jerry Z.

Park and Christian. They found, "according to religious socialization measures, only the

'families' importance of faith' was significant in increasing the odds of non-church-

related volunteering for churchgoing Protestants."[117]

The Challenge of How to Do Leadership Training in the Rural Community

In discussions with members of Our Savior's Intentional Leadership Development

Team it became clear that it was necessary to find and equip people for leadership in both

the congregation and the larger community. How best to do that, however, was not clear.

One businessman suggested bringing in a motivational speaker. The local community

development director pointed out that leadership development had been integrated into

the community's strategic planning process, through the formation of teams with specific

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[116]Ibid., 10.

[117]Park and Smith, "Religious Capital and Community Volunteerism," 282.

goals and responsibilities. Still, she acknowledged, some of the teams had not done much

to pursue their goals.

How does one actually teach the ability to lead? One view of leadership is to

"mobilize people—groups, organizations, societies—to address their toughest

problems."[118] Formal leadership classes and seminars can only go so far with that. As

Parks observes,

> it is one thing to teach knowledge of the field, and it is quite another to prepare
> people to exercise the judgment and skill needed to bring that knowledge into the
> intricate systems of relationships that constitute the dynamic world of practice.[119]

One of the things I want to argue is that we in the church do not have to do it alone, nor

do our community businesses and organizations have to do it alone.

Cross-Training as a Concept for Leadership Development

Cross-Training is most often associated with training in two or more areas for

sports and fitness. It has also been used, however, as an effective tool for motivation in

business and other organizations. Claire Belilos describes cross-training as it is used in

the hospitality industry. Employees train for one day in a different department or a

different position within his/her department. Undertaken with careful planning, such

cross-training can increase knowledge and skills, improve understanding and cooperation

between departments and improve over-all motivation within the organization.[120]

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[118]Sharon Daloz Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught: A Bold Approach for a Complex World* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2005), 9.

[119]Ibid., 5.

[120]Claire Belilos, "Cross-Training as a Motivational and Problem-Solving Technique," CHIC Hospitality Consulting Services, 1999, http://www.easytraining.com/crosstrain.htm (accessed January 6, 2006).

The Information Technology Services at the University of Texas at Austin implemented a cross-training program. "This is a unique opportunity for the support staff to share their knowledge, gain new perspectives on solutions in the workplace, and learn the skills they may need to be flexible," said L.B. Brady, director of administration for ITS. "We believe it to be a very valuable step in their training to provide excellent coverage for each area in ITS."[121]

Cross-training in journalism has students learning to write for both print and broadcast media in order to enhance their employment potential. According to Rich Gordan, associate professor and chair of the new media department at Northwestern University, "We want them to be excellent in their ability to produce for one medium, but to be conversant in many media."[122]

Cross-training from a Christian perspective might be just a cute phrase to take advantage of the athletic mindset of many Americans. At St. John Neuman Catholic Church in St. Charles, Illinois, however, "Cross-Training" refers to:

> . . . an integrated approach to youth ministry and religious education for 6th, 7th and 8th graders. The basic components of Cross Training include: religious/faith-learning opportunities and experiences; human development education; opportunities for fun, recreation and involvement in a Church setting; and service experiences.[123]

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[121]"Cross Training Under Way for ITS Administrative Staff," Information Technology Services, University of Texas at Austin, June 25, 2003, http://www.utexas.edu/its/news/its-headlines/062003/crosstraining.html (accessed June 17, 2006).

[122]Lydia Lumm, "The Cross-Training of Future Journalists," *Black Issues in Higher Education* 21, no. 11 (2004), http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=13876318&site=ehost-live (accessed March 12, 2007).

[123]St. John Neumann Catholic Church, "Education and Formation: Middle School Cross Training," http://www.stjohnneumannchurch.org/Education/middleschool_ed.html (accessed June 17, 2006).

This, actually, is not too far removed from what I am envisioning as a congregational

approach to community development.

Some Sample Processes for Leadership Development

Robert C. Messner developed a leadership development program with the

acronym S.E.R.V.I.C.E. in response to the need to redevelop teacher training in a large

urban congregation. The letters stand for:

S   Study Course: Take an approved course in person or by correspondence.
E   Educational Planning: Devise goals and procedures to improve one's own
         knowledge and/or experience in his/her area of service.
R   Reading Project: Read two books of the Bible along with one other book
         not previously read, with a written summary of what was learned.
V   Visitation Experience: Make two visits: one requested by a pastor or
         church staff member and one to another church in a similar situation.
         Write up a brief report on the visits.
I   Interest Expansion: Observe and assist in an activity in the church about
         which one knows very little.
C   Convention Attendance: Attend at least one plenary session and two
         workshops at a Christian education convention or conference and prepare
         a written report of information received.
E   Evaluation Period: Arrange an opportunity to be observed and
         constructively evaluated in one's area of service, along with a follow-up
         conference with the evaluator. Attention to focus on progress and
         improvement.[124]

This program is oriented toward the individual person, allowing the individual to

decide when and how long to pursue each individual step in the process, and in what

order. Designed for use in the congregation, it might also be developed for use in a

community setting, engaging people in the particular areas of service and leadership in

which they are currently involved or potentially interested and using the scripture reading

and reflection components as means for achieving deeper learning. *Cross-training* in this

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[124]Robert C. Messmer, *Leadership Development through S.E.R.V.I.C.E.* (Cincinnatti, OH: Standard Publishing, 1989), 15.

instance would mean simultaneous study/experience in areas of Christian faith and community leadership.

Hustedde and Woodward highlight one model of community leadership development created by a task force at the Michigan State University Extension Service. "The task force's vision is focused on 'the development of energized communities of co-leaders and co-learners committed to concerted action for a collective vision'" and is shaped by "community, vision, learning and action."[125] The program aims to

- Develop leadership programs that foster trust, respect, and appreciation of diversity in the community;
- Help community members develop a vision of what they want to become;
- Stimulate learning communities where people expand their collective thinking and learn together;
- Stimulate action and encourage "leadership by doing."[126]

The authors note that these particular goals may not be appropriate for every community, but that it is important to establish clear goals for any community development program. "Without clear goals, the leadership programs fall into the trap of being a set of interesting activities that have little impact."[127] Recruitment goals should also be clear, whether one wants to attract prospective or seasoned leaders, or a mixture.

Community trusteeship is another foundational concept for community leadership development. Trustees, "'hold the community in trust.' They take responsibility for and act rooted in the past, present, and future."[128]

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[125]Hustedde and Woodward, "Designing a Rural Leadership Program," 2.

[126]Ibid.

[127]Ibid., 5.

[128]Ibid., 2.

Attitudes and beliefs nurtured in these programs include self-knowledge, caring, service, listening, vision, as well as the ability to define and articulate a community's concerns. Some knowledge of a few key local issues that can be well-developed is important, including "how the community is pulled and tugged in different directions by certain issues and…how some of those differences might be resolved." The community's history and diversity should also be explored.[129]

Public skills taught include active listening, collaboration, conflict resolution, as well as evaluation, facilitation, imagination, and team building. Educational resources from both inside and outside the community can be drawn upon for these lessons.[130]

These are two approaches to leadership development: one, more content-oriented in nature, from the perspective of the congregation and the other, more relationally-oriented, from a community development perspective. It is interesting to me that this is so—that the more relational model comes not from the church but from the so-called secular world. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to suggest a particular model for community leadership development.

Luther Snow's congregational asset mapping process is another method that has been used to build congregational leadership, particularly in the ELCA. Asset mapping begins by helping people and whole congregations discover their God-given gifts. From there it moves to helping them connect these gifts to the gifts of others in order to "do good things for ourselves, our neighbors, and in the world."[131] While asset mapping

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[129]Ibid., 3.

[130]Ibid.

[131]Snow, *The Power of Asset Mapping*, xiii.

works in any size congregation in any context, it is a process particularly suited to rural and inner-city situations that often have all too many reminders from within and without of what they lack. It is a process that allows congregations and whole communities to see their cup of gifts as half-full rather than as half-empty and to act on the basis of an attitude of abundance, rather than at attitude of scarcity.

That attitude not only affects congregations. In Canada it kept a whole province— or rather, its Chamber of Commerce—from beginning a major strategic planning effort, called *Action Saskatchewan 2005.* According to Paul Martin, the Chamber discovered that before it could embark on strategic planning it had to deal with an "attitude thing"— specifically, the attitude of scarcity that permeated the whole province. The province, Martin says, was "caught in the grip of despair." The attitude was destructive, because it assumed one person's gain was another person's loss. Thus, "we do what we can to undermine success, on the misguided assumption that we will get more if someone else gets less."[132]

Harboring an attitude of scarcity is more than destructive and self-defeating. It can be seen as both a product and a breeder of sin. Walter Brueggeman observes that Christians "are torn apart by the conflict between our attraction to the good news of God's abundance and the power of our belief in scarcity -- a belief that makes us greedy, mean and un-neighborly."[133] He also notes biblical examples of the transformation that comes from adopting an attitude of abundance. For Brueggemann, adopting an abundance

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[132]Paul Martin, "Abundance-Based Thinking Replacing Scarcity Mindset," Saskatchenwan Chamber of Commerece, 2003, http://www.saskchamber.com/documents/236Action_Saskatchewan _Special_Feature_6.pdf (accessed February 15, 2007).

[133]Walter Brugguemann, "The Liturgy of Abundance, the Myth of Scarcity," *The Christian Century*, March 24-31, 1999, 343.

mentality has the potential to feed the world. Martin, too, sees the transformational possibilities—in terms of economic development, at least—of abundance-based thinking for Saskatchewan.

Recently, ELCA stewardship staff have taken the asset-based, abundance-based way of thinking and developed a workshop for church leaders entitled "Growing Leaders for More Effective Ministry." It uses the concept of asset mapping, based on Snow's work, along with an asset-based, permission-giving leadership style outlined in a book entitled *The Great Permission.*[134] The workshop empowers leaders by helping them connect their various individual and communal assets in order to address opportunities and challenges in their congregations and communities.

Obviously, many, if not all, of the issues raised above have their theological and ecclesiological dimension. Many of them are addressed in scripture. Indeed, just as in the case of the leadership literature itself, making the distinction between what is spiritual and what is merely good practice can sometimes be a challenge when one is talking about the congregation's role in nurturing community leadership. It is, however, to the more specifically biblical-theological issues regarding this research that I now turn.

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[134]Sitze, Hensel, and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Division for Congregational Ministries, *The Great Permission*.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Mission of the Rural Church

Central to the question of the role of congregations in developing and nurturing

leadership in the rural community (or any community, for that matter) are questions about

the identity and mission of the Christian church and of the congregation. It is easy, for

instance, to imagine a congregational member asking, "Why is my church getting

involved in community development? Don't we have enough to do within our own

walls?" It is just as easy to imagine a non-member asking, "Who do you think you are

getting involved in community politics?"

Questions of identity and mission belong together; *identity* being the church's

"foundational self-understanding" and its *mission* being the purpose for which the church

exists.[1] Craig Van Gelder argues that the latter flows out of the former, i.e., "The church

does what it is."[2] Craig Nessan sees a movement back and forth between the two.[3] Both

point to what Bosch calls an "emerging ecclesiology . . . [in which] *the church is seen as*

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[1]Craig L. Nessan, *Beyond Maintenance to Mission: A Theology of the Congregation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 6.

[2]Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 128.

[3]Nessan, *Beyond Maintenance to Mission*, 6. Italics in the original.

essentially missionary,"[4] an ecclesiology made explicit in the title of Guder's (edited)

book, *Missional Church.*[5] The term *missionary* is construed here to mean more than the

historical sense of a person sent by a denomination or missionary society to a foreign

country to *convert the natives*. A missionary church both is sent and sends its people into

the world (including the world outside the front door) for the sake of the world and for

the mission which God has already begun.

<div align="center">Missio Dei as a Starting Point for a Missional Church</div>

A missional ecclesiology, then, takes its cue from a *God* who is engaged in

mission. God's mission, or *missio Dei* is:

> God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and
> with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church
> and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate.[6]

As in the case of the church (and thus as a model for the church in its missionary

activity), God's mission arises out of God's identity as a loving, sending God. The

Trinity exemplifies a God who is both relational and missional: three persons intertwined

with each other in a choreography (*perichoresis*) and engaged in sending activity both of

one another (the Father sending the Son, Father and Son together sending the Spirit) and

of humankind (most explicitly stated in Jesus' sending of his disciples in the name of the

Triune God in Matt 28).

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[4]David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission,* American Society of Missiology Series; No. 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 372.

[5]Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998).

[6]Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 10.

This sending activity is first and foremost to announce God's reign over all things, a reign that is made clear biblically from Genesis through Revelation. It is a reign announced both through command and promise: in the *shema* of Deut 6, in the repeated and longsuffering deliverance of God's people Israel, in Mary's announcement of the reversal of fortune at the coming of the Messiah (Luke 1:46-55), in Jesus' redemptive enthronement on the cross, right through to the vision of the river of life in Rev 22. The announcement of God's reign represents both a "yes" and a "no" to the world,[7] both an expression of God's love for the world and God's opposition to the principalities and powers that attempt to obscure and overpower the reign of Christ over the world. The mission of the *church*, then, is to *represent* the reign of God[8] both through being and doing, and in doing, through proclamation and through action (word and deed). Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk define a *missional church* as

> a community of God's people who live into the imagination that they are, by their very nature, God's missionary people living as a demonstration of what God plans to do in and for all of creation in Jesus Christ.[9]

For most people the opportunity to witness and/or participate in this demonstration, this representation of the intent of God's reign, happens through the local congregation. Darrell Guder paraphrases a pronouncement of the World Council of Churches when he defines, "*the* vital instrument for the fulfillment of the missionary vocation of the church" as being the local congregation.[10] It is the congregation (or

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[7]Ibid., 11.

[8]Efrain Agosto, *Servant Leadership: Jesus & Paul* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 77ff.

[9]Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World,* Leadership Network Series (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), xv.

[10]Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church,* The Gospel in Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 145.

congregations working together in ecumenical partnership) that stands to have a greater impact in any particular community (especially, I would assert in a particular *rural* community) than would any abstract notion of "the church."

Nevertheless, to echo Van Gelder, what *the church is* the local *congregation* is also called to *be and do*, i.e. to represent the redemptive reign of God in the world, restoring that which the powers of sin and evil have obscured and hindered. In this case it is to be the presence of a strong and redemptive leadership within the particular rural/small-town community in which it is situated.

<div align="center">Elements of a Rural Missional Theology</div>

In one respect, that call to particularity is no different in the rural community than in any other. On the other hand, while admitting that there is neither a single description of "rural America" nor any single vision for its future, Jung, et. al. point to some specific characteristics of rural life that deserve mention as one explores God's mission for the rural congregation.[11]

One characteristic the authors perceive in rural settings is the importance of *community*, with the church community seen as the incarnational presence of Christ. Another is a sense of the *active presence of God* that provides a moral and spiritual center that holds in the midst of sometimes chaotic change. Roxburgh and Rominuk emphasize the importance for missional leaders of the ability to discern God in the midst of all of

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[11]Jung et al., *Rural Ministry*, 128ff.

this change.[12] Also, a *sense of place* calls rural people to attend to what God is doing here and now in the place that we share in "God's garden".[13]

A different sense of *time* also exists in rural agricultural areas (as opposed to areas that are more populated by people who work in cities but live in the country). Mark Yackel-Juleen notes that in many places on the northern prairie, "life is still organized around the rhythms of agriculture which in turn is conducted according to the score of creation."[14] People who are oriented primarily to the clock can easily experience at least an inner conflict, if not outer conflict as well, especially when

> church council meetings would go for at least two hours whether we had forty-five minutes of agenda or an hour and a half, except in the spring and fall when the urgency of planting or harvest took precedence.[15]

Jung, et. al. also point to some ways in which what they call a *theology of context* calls into question some aspects of rural life that "have detracted from the spiritual quality of a place" and call for transformation.[16] Indeed, Mary Jo Neitze observes,[17] "the danger of place-basedness of churches [as] that of lapsing into nostalgia." For Jung et al., hospitality, traditionally considered to be a rural quality, calls Christians to *respect otherness*, that is, to look for ways in which God might be calling God's people to a different future than has been previously envisioned, through people who might be

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[12]Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 24.

[13]Jung et al., *Rural Ministry*, 139.

[14]Mark Yackel-Juleen, "Land-Sculpted People," in *Abundant Harvest: Essays on Rural Life and Ministry in Honor of Dean and Elsie Fruedenberger*, ed. Victor Klimoski and Lance Barker (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools, 2002), 73.

[15]Ibid., 74.

[16]Jung et al., *Rural Ministry*, 142.

[17]Mary Jo Neitz, "Reflections on Religion and Place: Rural Churches and American Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44, no. 3 (2005): 245.

different from us. Examples of this call might be found in the challenge of incorporating Asian immigrants into rural communities in Southwest Minnesota, or in our own situation, with the ambivalent attitude toward Hispanic workers in neighboring Alpena, South Dakota.

Acknowledging *suffering* and *brokenness* and reclaiming *hope* and *power* in the cross and resurrection are indispensable parts of any Christian theology. Jung et al. emphasize their importance to rural communities as they struggle with economic, social and even physical (i.e. weather) climate changes that often seem to be outside of anyone's control.

In rural, as in inner-city situations, God's history with God's people both before and after Christ can be a powerful source of hope and comfort. Roxburgh and Romanuk remind us that time after time, "God turns up in the most godforsaken places."[18] A old shepherd named Abram, a murderer named Moses, the gentile woman Ruth, a teenaged girl named Mary, and of course, the cross and empty tomb are all reminders that "[t]hroughout Scripture God's future comes from the bottom up in the most unlikely people and places."[19]

All of these aspects of a rural theology—the active presence of God in community, continuity, change, suffering and more—incorporated into leadership development in rural congregations, have the potential, it would seem, to nurture transformational leadership for the communities in which God has placed and to which God has called them. That calling is the subject which I will take up next.

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[18]Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 21.

[19]Ibid.

Vocation

While Guder describes the "missionary vocation of the church" as a whole,[20] a natural place for Lutherans to turn when talking about the *individual's* leadership role in the **communities** in which they participate is to Martin Luther's writings on Christian vocation and to interpretations of those writings. Gustav Wingren wrote the classic interpretation of Luther's teachings on vocation, which has been recently republished for a new generation.[21] Marc Kolden, Michael Bennethum, Kenneth Hagen, and others have also worked to throw fresh light on Luther's thoughts for this new age.

In response to those who considered life in holy orders or the priesthood as the highest means of serving God, Luther boldly claimed that every task of a Christian's life and every role—whether mother or merchant, ploughman or prince—was an opportunity to proclaim the gospel. Parents were equated with priests and bishops with regard to the rearing of their children, and the laborer was encouraged to use his/her tools as means of carrying out God's work in the world, simply by using them in a way that honored God.

> You have as many preachers as you have transactions, goods, tools and other equipment in your house and home. All this is continually crying out to you: "Friend, use me in your relations with your neighbor just as you would want your neighbor to use his property in his relations with you."[22]

Luther taught that God had established certain "orders of creation" as a means of ordering life on this planet.

> This life is profitably divided into three orders: (1) life in the home [to this Bennethum would add the workplace], (2) life in the state; (3) life in the church. To whatever order you belong—whether you are a husband, an officer of the

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[20]Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 145.

[21]Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 120.

[22]*The Sermon on the Mount,* in *LW* 21:237

state, or a teacher of the church—look about you, and see whether you have done full justice to your calling.[23]

For Luther, one's vocation was not bound to an occupation. Vocation, he taught, also arises out of one's *station* (or stations) in life, the various roles one plays or positions one fills in the various orders (home, state, church, etc.). Wingren defines vocation as "a station which is by nature helpful to others if it is followed."[24] As such, vocation is directed toward the neighbor and what is helpful to him/her. This is true not only in relationship with the individual neighbor, but it holds true for one's community, as well. "All Christians have callings to serve God by seeking the common good in every aspect of life in which they find themselves or which they choose to enter."[25]

Vocation is therefore by nature both relational and oriented toward the community and even society in general. Indeed, Wingren maintains that there are no private callings. "In the earthly realm man always stands in *relatione*, always bound to another.[26] Each earthly station, or role one plays in society, has its relationships. As human relationships are manifold, so are the "stations" one may find oneself in, e.g., parent, spouse, employer, member of the town council, worker in the church, etc.

One might sum all this up in the following statement by Luther:

Thus every person surely has a calling. While attending to it he serves God. A king serves God when he is at pains to look after and govern his people. So do the mother of a household when she tends her baby, the father of a household when

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[23]*Lectures on Gensis: Chapters 15-20* in LW 3:217.

[24]Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 4.

[25]Marc Kolden, *The Christian's Calling in the World*. Centered Life Series (St. Paul: Centered Life, 2002), 27.

[26]Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 5.

he gains a livelihood by working, and a pupil when he applies himself diligently to his studies.[27]

Furthermore, if we believe God is active in calling people to service in the midst of our various vocations, then perhaps the idea of leadership itself needs to be expanded. When one thinks of a leader, one might immediately think of the local mayor, the school superintendent or school board president, the bank president or the head of the Chamber of Commerce. However, one can and ought to exhibit leadership in one's own home.

> Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal.[28]

These comments come in the midst of Luther's polemic against church authority; nevertheless, it is easy to see how they portray parents as leaders in their own right, in a way "both spiritual and temporal."

Luther's thoughts on vocation go broader, however, than simply Creation and the Law as used to order that creation. Kolden stresses that Luther holds creation and redemption together. The acts of love that the new self willingly does in response to the gospel are the same acts that the law requires. "And for Luther, the actions are set firmly in our vocations. Vocation without gospel is only drudgery or condemnation . . .The gospel invites us to see our vocation as a concrete way of expressing our faith—not as a limitation on love but as a channel for it.[29]

Hagen agrees that there is a gospel aspect to vocation as well. He critiques Wingren's classic work on vocation, saying that Wingren over-emphasized the Law and

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[27]*Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 15-20* , in *LW* 3:128

[28]*The Estate of Marriage* (1522), in *LW* 45:46.

[29]Marc Kolden, "Luther on Vocation," *Word &World* 3/4 (1983): 389.

Creation and in so doing confused Luther's two kingdoms.[30] At times, however, Hagen's reading of Luther is not far from Wingren's own.

Luther saw vocation in two ways: spiritual and external. Our spiritual calling comes to us in Holy Baptism and is the same for all. Our external vocation is different for each according to the work God has given him/her.[31]

At the same time, our calling in both cases—in every case—is to follow Christ.

> The call embraces the Christian's life from beginning to end. We are called out of darkness to the gospel through baptism. We are to call upon the name of the Lord in prayer and praise. We live our callings both on earth as children of the heavenly father and as fathers and mothers, teachers and pastors. And in the last day we will be called out of the grave. In each of these cases, the operative word is *vocare/vocatio.*[32]

Vocation, the Cross and the Rural, Servant Church

Central to Luther's concept of vocation was a theology of the cross. Wingren, arguing against Otto Ritschel, maintains that this was not only true of the later, mature Luther, but "from the beginning vocation was viewed as a means of making the cross real in the life of the Christian."[33] The connection between cross and vocation follows naturally from Luther's belief that the crosses we bear are not of our own choosing. "The cross is not to be chosen by us; it is laid upon us by God, i.e. the cross comes to us uninvoked in our vocation."[34] The cross appears in one's vocation as an antidote to sin

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[30]Kenneth Hagen, "A Critique of Wingren on Vocation," *Lutheran Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2002): 256.

[31]Ibid.: 261.

[32]Ibid.: 263.

[33]Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 53.

[34]Ibid.

and selfishness, a way of repressing and reforming the *old man* in us and a partner with baptism in prompting daily repentance.[35]

Hagen criticizes Wingren for pairing vocation with the cross of Christ in only a negative way. "Here we hear of the toils of a broken world in which we bear our cross in service of the neighbor."[36] However, Wingren also sees the cross as the means by which resurrection comes. "Through the cross Jesus came to Easter, and only in him are life and resurrection to be found."[37] Luther himself says that the cross can be used to bear fruit. "When God imposes a cross—to be a *Christianus* is to be a *crucianis*—it is for the dual purpose of being purged and bringing forth greater fruit."[38] This tracks with Jesus' own teaching about death in John 12:24 and Old Testament images about being refined gold (see esp. Mal 3:3).

With respect to Moses, for instance,

Luther says, when God calls, he *dringt* and *zwingt* (presses and compels; pushes and shoves we might say) and then there is great action, as happens here. God acts and liberates his people through the calling of Moses.[39]

As with the cross, there is not only suffering and death but redemptive power as well in one's vocation. And where there is vocation there is mission—mission that, as *missio Dei*, drives Christians and Christ's church into the world.

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[35]Ibid., 55.

[36]Hagen, "Critique of Wingren," 261.

[37]Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 58.

[38]Hagen, "Critique of Wingren," 262.

[39]Ibid.: 263.

Discipleship of the crucified Christ is characterized by a faith that drives its adherents into the world with a relentlessness and a daring they could not manage on the basis of human volition alone.[40]

For Luther, vocation is a call to service. "The purpose of our calling (*vocati* and *vocation*) is to serve; Luther emphasizes over and over that "we have been…called into such a ministry through baptism."[41]

Marsha Jark-Swain comments particularly on the power of a theology of the cross to speak to the rural situations of decline and loss. Luther made clear the paradox of the cross in his Heidelberg Disputation, in which he declared,

> A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is. This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil. . . . It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God's.[42]

Jark-Swain comments,

> If we can find good in evil, see the love of God in the cross and otherwise find in the theology of the cross an understanding of redemption, we can make sense of the farm communities we find today. Here the American theology of progress is believed but the believer doesn't see the progress that should follow the hard work. Signs of the struggles for survival in small towns and in rural areas cry out for a theology that can arm Christians with hope and bring a message of good news into places that have known despair.[43]

This message about the cross is a message also to me, personally, as I listen to the voices of despair in communities in which I have served. In Wessington Springs as in the

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[40]Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 183. Italics in the original.

[41]Hagen, "Critique of Wingren," 263.

[42]*Heidelberg Disputation* (1518)*, in *LW* 31:52.

[43]Marsha Jark-Swain, "Luther's Theology of the Cross and Rural Life" (D.Min. Thesis, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1990), 9.

last community I served, people look to communities around us that are in a greater state of decline and declare, "that's where we will be in ten years." Even as I want to deny that prophesy, too, and work ever harder to defy the odds, I hear Luther's words, not as a summons to defeat, but as a recognition that all of our efforts must be grounded in a God who, in Christ, suffers (Moltman[44]) and who raises and is risen from the dead. This same God calls whole communities to repentance (e.g. Nineveh in the book of Jonah) and redeems them, despite the most dire predictions (or even the wishes!) of their prophets.

The Cross, Community, and the Reign of God

Marit Trelstad makes a helpful connection between the cross for individuals and for community. She argues for a restoration of a covenant theology focusing on the reign of God, based on the biblically-stated covenantal relationship between God and God's people.

> In both the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament, God's offer of a covenant relationship leads to a broader vision of salvation that includes restoration, peace, and justice for all creation. This is the kingdom or reign of God of which Jesus preached. In this context, the cross signifies the human rejection of God. Nonetheless, God perists in renewing the covenant, offering an inviolable relationship, and this continues to be extended, even today, despite the crosses and persecutions we inflict on ourselves and others.[45]

Placing the cross within a covenantal framework, she argues, brings together the individual and communal aspects of salvation (or individual and communal *redemption,* one might say, invoking the image of the redemptive reign of God).

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[44]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

[45]Marit A. Treslstad, "Lavish Love," in *Cross Examinations: Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today*, ed. Marit Trelstad (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 110.

Individual salvation is coupled with communal salvation in God's continual choice and election to offer relationship to humans. Following this, communal salvation in the form of justice and love becomes the vocation and ultimate vision for all of society and creation.[46]

A communal working together for justice and love is indeed a sign of the redemptive reign of God as portrayed in scripture, both Old Testament and New. It is only possible when we place our own individual needs and agendas under the sign of the cross and become servants of Christ and of each other for the betterment of all.

The Cross and Servant-Leadership

As one can see from the above discussion, talk of the cross of Christ in the context of leadership leads almost inevitably to servanthood. Many have quoted Jesus' command to his disciples to lead as servants. Phil 2:5-11 demonstrates how taking up the mantle of servanthood led for Jesus himself to taking up the cross. Jesus himself noted the connection in his statement that "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for man" (Mark 10:45). He cautioned his disciples, likewise, not to exert their leadership over others as their pagan counterparts did. "It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant" (Matt 20:26).

Efrain Agosto directly connects the way of the cross with servant-leadership in the church. He sees servant-leadership as being Christological in nature, taking Jesus as its model.[47] It is clear from the Scriptures that both Jesus and Paul labored against popular models of leadership that emphasized power and glory. In contrast to that, "Paul

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[46]Ibid., 123.

[47]Agosto, *Servant Leadership: Jesus & Paul*, 48.

consistently identifies the tasks of leadership with service and sacrifice."[48] Agosto is also

realistic about failure. He cites both Jesus' disciples and Paul's remarks about his own

weakness as evidence.

Agosto, writing from the perspective of an urban Hispanic ministry, sees a cross-

based servant-leadership as being evangelical. "A new life in Christ carries with it the

call, especially in leaders, to sacrifice so that others might hear and live out the good

news."[49] The gospel imperative means that the development of new leaders must

continue, because the need is great (Luke 10:2).

Agosto also sees servant-leadership as redemptive. Reconciliation, that is,

bringing together divided parties within the community, is for him the "*sine qua non* of

gospel leadership."[50] Overarching all of this is Jesus' concern for the poor and the

outcast, which should be "the fundamental quality of gospel leadership."[51] The powerless

are empowered as they are both engaged in and served by servant-leadership in the

church and the wider community. Although he does not use the term, Agosto's view of

leadership is wholly missional in nature.

Mission (not *missions*) is at the heart of Roberts' vision of Christian's serving in

their vocations to further the work of the kingdom of God both locally and globally

through community, corporate and even government connections. Writing out of an

evangelical background, he says that, in contrast to evangelists and missionaries whose

only goal is to win converts to Christ by getting them to pray what he calls "the sinner's

[48]Ibid., 118.

[49]Ibid., 205.

[50]Ibid., 207.

[51]Ibid., 96.

prayer," he believes Christians "must love people and serve them regardless if they "say the prayer."[52]

The cross and servanthood may have been most profoundly connected by the work of Gary Simpson. Speaking about the Christ hymn in Phil 2, Simpson noted that in the Greek world of Paul's day, the servant or, actually, slave (*doulos*) stood between his/her master/mistresses and the earth—actually, between the master and death itself. They labored eighteen hours a day in the fields and other places, and in so doing, freed their masters to be fully involved in civil society. The slaves, of course, were not able to be so involved.

Therefore, when the hymn states that Jesus "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave . . . and became obedient unto death" (Phil 2:7-8), we see Jesus, as a servant/slave, placing himself between human beings and death.[53] When Paul exhorts his fellow Christians, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5), he is inviting every follower of Jesus into the role of a slave who, having been freed in Christ, now goes about freeing others for service in the community. In the case of senior citizens, this would meant that the church and church people have a role in standing between seniors and anything that might inhibit them from full participation in the community. In Wessington Springs, for instance, the churches together and individually, along with their members, help support a community bus service, used by mature seniors and children alike to get out and around to participate in the affairs of the community.

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[52] Roberts, *Transformation*.

[53]Gary Simpson, class lecture, August 29, 2002, at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Further Biblical-Theological Reflection on Leadership

As in the secular literature, much has been written about leadership from a biblical and/or Christian perspective in the last twenty years. Some books, like Kennon Callahan's *Effective Church Leadership*,[54] focus largely on practical matters of programs and parking lots. Others, like Lorin Woolfe's *Biblical Leadership*, look at qualities and characteristics of biblical and/or secular leaders. Stark[55] goes in another direction, taking biblical and secular models of leadership and describing images of a Christ-centered style of leadership for the church that is equally applicable to the workplace and even the family. Ironically, some of the most *spiritual* books on leadership have come from the *secular* world (if one can truly make such distinctions). For instance, Greenleaf's *Servant-Leadership* notes the model of leadership commanded by Jesus himself:

> You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:42-45)

It is not surprising to find authors like Stark attempting to apply biblical truths to leadership insights from business in an effort to come up with a Christian model for leadership in both the church and the world. If, as Luther taught, the way we carry out our various earthly roles ought to be founded on faith, and especially on service, then, for the Lutheran Christian, one's leadership in any of these areas—home, business, government, or the church—ought also to evidence those same principles. Jesus' advice to his

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[54]Kennon L. Callahan, *Effective Church Leadership: Building on the Twelve Keys* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990).

[55]Stark, *Christ-Based Leadership*.

disciples regarding servant-leadership, found in all three synoptic gospels, is as applicable to the lords of business as it is to leaders in his church.

Jesus modeled this servant-leadership not only as he hung on the cross but in his actions both before and after his crucifixion, the most obvious being the washing of his disciples' feet as they celebrated the Passover together (John 13:1-17). There is set the example of servanthood within the community of faith that his disciples were to follow, knowing that they would soon be taking leadership of that community in his absence.

Greenleaf observed that not only individuals, but whole institutions can demonstrate servant-leadership. He noted that while institutions in general have become suspect to many, he would like to see both this country's churches and schools become catalysts and examples for reclaiming and redefining the institution, as

> a gathering of persons who have accepted a common purpose, and a common discipline to guide the pursuit of that purpose, to the end that each involved person reaches higher fulfillment as a person, through *serving and being served* by the common venture, than would be achieved alone or in a less committed relationship.[56]

While not a theological statement (it may, in fact, carry too much of the idea of "self-fulfillment" for some) it does relate to the scene in John just mentioned, where both the servant and the one served are glorified. Even as Jesus commands his disciples to be servants, Peter's initial refusal to be served is met with Jesus' response that unless he allows himself to be washed, Peter will "have no share" with him (John 13:8).

But back to basics: a theology of leadership has to start with the question of "Who's really in charge?" or as Stark puts it, "Who is Lord of your leadership?"[57] If

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[56]Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*,, 236.

[57]Stark, *Christ-Based Leadership*, 43.

God's mission is about announcing God's reign over all things, then there can be only one in charge. Even Jesus, Stark notes, admitted that he could do nothing by himself, but looked to his Father in heaven for his example (John 5:16-20), because in allowing himself to be incarnated on earth, the Son of God/Son of Man had emptied himself (Phil 2:7) of all foreknowledge of the specifics of his mission here on earth.[58]

Having acknowledged that we can do nothing without God, the next step is to acknowledge that we can accomplish nothing without the help of others. One oft-quoted definition of a leader is simply a person who has followers. There is more to leadership than that, but such a definition does point out rather obviously that a leader is nothing without other people.

Jesus' work could not have continued and the church would not exist without the disciples. Josiah's famous reforms (2 Kgs 23:1-24) would have gone nowhere without others to help carry them out. More than that, however, the Bible illustrates how *shared* leadership leads to more effective ministry. Jethro's advice to Moses resulted in seventy more judges serving God's people, which not only greatly reduced Moses' workload but no doubt also both seriously shortened waiting lines and sped up the process of justice for the people.

The next step from *shared* leadership is *collaborative* leadership. Biblically, collaboration among human leaders has strong support. Judges chapter 4 tells the story of the victory scored when Deborah and Barak collaborated to defeat King Jabin of Canaan. Jesus himself urged collaboration on the part of his disciples.

> Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. (Matt 18:19-20)

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[58]Ibid., 44.

While one might come to the conclusion that Jesus alone designed the curriculum for his disciples, that is not true. It is because of the disciples' questioning that we have the explanations of Jesus' parables like that of the sower and of the weeds in the field. It is because the disciples wanted to learn how to pray that we have the Lord's Prayer. Most importantly, it is because Jesus decided not to tell but to ask his disciples exactly who they thought he was that we have Peter's rock-solid confession, "You are the Messiah" (Mark 8:29).

When it came to picking a new leader after the death of Judas Iscariot, collaboration was the name of the game (Acts 1:15-26). Again, when it came to choosing those who would be deacons, in charge of distributing bread to the widows and orphans, it was a group process that was used (Acts 6:1-6). Paul and Barnabas worked together to build up the church in Antioch and were guests of the church (Acts 11:26). The list of collaborators—in Acts and elsewhere—goes on.

Spiritual Gifts

> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. (1 Cor. 12:4-6)

The descriptions of biblical leadership above demonstrate some of the diversity of gifts that have been used to carry on the faith from generation to generation. The early Christian church, it seems, had to deal no less than today with the struggle over whose gifts were more important. Just as today pastors and organists, youth directors and directors of Christian education, church councils and unofficial church leaders may vie for power at various times and places, so in Paul's day there were disputes over who had say over what and whose spiritual callings would be more highly valued.

Documenting and examining the range of literature on spiritual gifts could itself fill a thesis. For now I will make reference to just one book, which works spiritual gifts together with a variety of other factors for what I consider a more or less holistic view of Christian service. Jane Kise, David Stark and Sandra Krebs Hirsch identify spiritual gifts as "special instruments God gives us for the unique tasks of the Church."[59] While some spiritual gifts might be considered exclusively spiritual (tongues or prophesy, for instance) many spiritual gifts are related to one might call "natural gifts" or "life gifts;" God simply takes those gifts "to a different pitch [e.g., in the case of teaching]; conveying spiritual truth as opposed to conveying other truths such as mathematical theories."[60]

Among the gifts Kise et al. list is that of leadership. They note that Paul's requirement for leadership is *diligence* (Rom 12:8), defined in various sources as care, attention, a steady effort, and/or "earnest and persistent application to an undertaking".[61] They also link leadership with teamwork. "Excellence in leadership happens when one person convinces two or three others to work on the same common goal; surrounding him or herself with dedicated, knowledgeable people who perform their tasks in a consistently superior, coordinated manner."[62] People with the spiritual gift of leadership have confidence in their vision and can inspire confidence in others, are willing to make unpopular decisions, and "can see in advance what people can achieve."[63]

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[59]Jane A. G. Kise, David Stark, and Sandra Krebs Hirsh, *Lifekeys: Discovering Who You Are, Why You're Here, What You Do Best* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), 61.

[60]Ibid.

[61]*Dictionary.com*, s.v. "Diligence," http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=diligence.

[62]Kise, Stark, and Hirsh, *Lifekeys: Discovering Who You Are, Why You're Here, What You Do Best*, 99.

[63]Ibid., 101.

Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts makes it clear that, as in the case of Jesus'

disciples, having the gift of leadership does not make one person more important than

another. He acknowledges that there are different types of callings, even giving them

what would seem to be an order of priority.

> And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. (1 Cor 12:28)

> The conversation, however, just like the one regarding servanthood, takes place in

a context of a conversation about love. Only four verses after the above words about

spiritual gifts comes the famous *love chapter*, which begins,

> If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. (1 Cor 13:1-2)

Love, obviously (it really needn't be stated, but I will nonetheless) is a critical

component in the Christian life, both in leaders and in those who follow. It is what led

many in Tertullian's time to remark, "See . . . how they love one another . . . how they are

ready even to die for one another. . . ."[64]

Images of the Church

Rural people tend to communicate by telling stories. They favor the concrete over

the abstract. They like to see what they are getting before they buy it. Herewith, then,

some images or pictures of the church from scripture to help one imagine a community in

which missional leaders might be born and nurtured.

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[64]Tertullian, *Apology* 39 (*ANF* 3:46).

Community and Communion of Saints

> We asked people what [was] the most meaningful spiritual experience they had had in their churches. Over and over again they told us that it was the small group or the cottage meeting or the faith-sharing group that got together and prayed and read their Bibles and disclosed something of their faith life and what was going on their personal lives.[65]

> All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47)

The Bible is clear that the Christian faith both grew out of and grew *because* of people's experience in community. Jesus did not travel alone but gathered around him a community of twelve to be his primary audience and learning community. Many of these twelve would go on to achieve notoriety as leaders of Christ's church after his ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Even as leaders are not formed individually in a vacuum, so Christians cannot develop in a vacuum. The church is that community of believers to whom Jesus gave the command to make disciples. The command was first given to the gathered disciples (not just one) and was both passed down and executed in and on behalf of the Christian community that is the church.

While the church itself is a missional community, calling and sending Christians to follow Christ and lead others, its mission gets acted out primarily in and through *particular* communities called congregations. Christian leaders—both clergy and lay— are both formed in and called to particular congregations. "The church as the Christian community in a particular location is the context in which theology is shaped, believed,

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[65]Shannon Jung and Russ May, *Transforming Congregations: Leadership Practices That Form Communiites for Mission* (Dubuque, IA: Center for Theology and the Land, 2000), 6.

lived and transmitted to others."[66] Likewise, Christians who have been called to exercise leadership in the various communities where they live, work, learn, and play, are both products of and dwell (i.e., worship, lead, serve, etc.) in particular communities of faith.

This does not negate the existence of a church that spans community boundaries, even eliminates them. Paul, in Gal 3:28, notes that boundaries of ethnicity, social strata, gender, and even religious heritage are eliminated for a church that is "one in Christ." Jesus himself regularly crossed and/or transgressed social and community boundaries on his mission to announce and bring the reign of God to people. The church is both contained within and larger than any particular community, but the church, nevertheless, *is* community, formed (called, gathered, enlightened, sanctified,[67] *and sent*) by the Holy Spirit, for the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ to bring glory to our Father in heaven.

This community (communion) is made of saints both alive in this world and resurrected in the next. It bears the marks of those who have gone before—some good, some troublesome—as well as those who are still alive in the flesh (again, some good, some troublesome). While belief in the communion of saints allows Christians to be reunited at the table with all the saints who have gone before, the lives they lived and the effect they had on the congregation while alive can itself leave a lasting mark on both congregations and whole denominations. While talk of family systems belongs in another chapter, a knowledge of ways in which the "sins of the fathers" are visited on current communities of faith and patient attention to those effects can provide opportunities for truly redemptive actions on the part of those in leadership.

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[66]Jung et al., *Rural Ministry*, 130.

[67]*Small Catechism*, in *BC* 341.

The City on a Hill

There are many images of the church in scripture, from the body of Christ to the people of God, to a ship at sea. A photograph I took while preparing for a strategic planning session at Our Savior's reminded me of still another: the city on a hill. Jesus says in Matt 5, "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt 5:14). The picture, taken from a hill just outside of town, shows the city of Wessington Springs, down below, at dusk, with lights just beginning to come on. While that is just the reverse of Jesus' image of the city on a hill, it does not make the image any less powerful for me. Moreover, even the lights of a city situated in a valley can cast a glow in the night sky, so that one knows even before coming over the hill that it is there. Furthermore, it was pointed out to me that while Wessington Springs appears to be in a valley or even out of sight when looking from one direction, it rises up onto the very hills upon which I was standing, and thus can be seen quite clearly from another direction. It is all a matter of perspective.

Especially in a small town, what goes on in the church bears witness to our view of Christ, as does the behavior of those who belong to it. If we live out our true calling as Christians, we will be a light to those around us, illuminating how Christ at work in and among a community of people can and does make a difference.

At some level there is in most communities, I think, an assumption that it *should* make a difference. That Greenleaf picks the church and the school (both powerful institutions in any small town) as the exemplars of a new model of institution reinforces that belief. "Unless the churches and schools can do this, I see little hope that the remainder of our institutions, whose pretensions are less noble, will have reason to strive

to improve."[68] On the other hand, if all of the participants, "from the janitor to the most

esoteric scholar,"[69] are able to find fulfillment as persons (Jesus might say "have life . . .

abundantly" [John 10:10]) within those particular communities, others may take notice

and follow suit.

> Now we are saying that in a society dominated by a complex of institutions, the
> first such in a the history of the world, the quality of life *within* churches and
> schools may have more to do with their influence on society than what they teach
> or advocate.[70]

That is not to say that the church's reputation as an outward-reaching organization

is unimportant. When the local community development leader, an infrequent worship

attender, but nevertheless one who describes herself as "spiritual," wanted to start a

"Welcome Wagon" program in the community, she turned to the churches—specifically

to the ministerial association, which is an organization comprised of all of the pastors in

town and, by extension, of the congregations they lead. Her thinking was that it would be

in the churches where she would most likely find people willing and eager to reach out to

people moving into the city. This was not to be an overtly evangelistic effort, simply a

way of welcoming people to town, finding out a little about them and helping them to

learn a little about the city and the businesses, organizations, and churches that are here.

Five of the congregations responded with volunteers, but only a few of those volunteers

have been fully involved. Without a doubt, we have the potential of being far better lights

than we are.

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[68]Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 239.

[69]Ibid., 238.

[70]Ibid., 239.

Of course, Christians' ability to be light (and/or salt) is not contingent solely on how we participate in community affairs. While, as we have said, the way people lead in their businesses and organizations can and ought to reflect their faith, the way in which leadership is played out in congregations can itself be a witness to the community. Unfortunately, what happens all too often in the church is not *leadership* but mere *management*, and sometimes even that is done poorly.

But *what if* we fully equipped, trained, and nurtured our leaders in a way that their leadership cast an unmistakable glow over the rest of the town? What if people saw or even heard about (which, in a community where so many are related, would not take long) committee meetings where things actually were accomplished, where God's work was being done and people's lives were being changed? Would they not wonder what was going on? Would they not want to shine a light on that congregation and/or inquire as to how to import some of that light into their own organizations? Two verses after his comments about the city on the hill, Jesus says, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16). That last part is important: we do not work to improve the leadership capacity in our congregations in order that we *the congregation* might be glorified but that *God* might be glorified.

<div align="center">A Holy People, Set Apart and Different</div>

> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Pet 2:9)

The church, Peter proclaimed, is a people whom God regards as holy, set apart and somehow different from our neighbors. While, as the previous chapter makes clear,

the church can learn much about leadership from the world of business and secular

organizations, we cannot merely copy them. The writer of 1 Samuel argues that Israel

made a mistake in seeking to have a king just like the other nations around them.

> But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to govern us." Samuel prayed to the Lord, and the Lord said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. (1 Sam 8:6-7)

> Speaking on God's behalf, Samuel told the people,

> And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day. (1 Sam 8:18)

> As a holy people we are set apart as different, but not merely to *be* apart (i.e., by

ourselves). Barrett emphasizes the idea of a holy (and mission-driven) people when she

writes,

> The church as an alternative community can make a powerful witness when it chooses to live differently from the dominant society even at just a few key points. An important task of the church is to discern what are those key points at which to be different from the evil of the world. . . . To discern those points of dissent is to be a missional church.[71]

> Van Gelder expresses the idea of holy people set apart for mission when he says,

"God desires to have a special people who will live in right relationship with him and

demonstrate to the world the full possibilities of redeemed living."[72]

As a holy *and redeemed* people, we need not fear touching what is "common," as

the Old Testament calls it. Far from the Levitical notion that what is common or unclean

profanes what is holy, Jesus showed the power of the holy to cleanse what was not. His

healing touch in a single day healed a hemorrhaging woman and raised a little girl from

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[71]Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 127.

[72]Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 136.

the dead (Mark 5:21-42). He was—and his people can be—like the tabernacle itself and its contents of which Moses was told, "you shall consecrate them, so that they may be most holy; whatever touches them will become holy." (Exod 30:29)

Once again the cross enters into the conversation. Hall points out how both the cross and the resurrection send Christians into the world—a world that may, in response, reject them.

> Faith in the crucified one means courage to love the world and to seek one's place in it despite both the world's indifference and one's own yearning for security and comfort.[73]

Seeking one's place, however, does not mean merely finding where one "fits in." For Douglas John Hall it means *engaging* the world in a way that both is "open to the host culture" and yet "embodies an alternative that is not present in the world, at least in an obvious way."

> The object of the Christian presence in the world is to *engage* the world. A Christian community cannot *engage* the world if it merely *reflects* the world…In biblical terms, the disciple community is to be in the world yet not *of* the world— or (to turn the dialectic on its other end and so get both emphases straight in their essential tension and suggestiveness) not *of* the world but most decidedly *in* it.[74]

The Body of Christ

"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor 12:27). Paul emphasizes that what we do as the church we do not do alone as individuals. Therefore, neither as leaders do we lead alone. At a minimum, leaders must have followers. Pastors are nothing without the congregations they serve. Evangelists are worthless without an audience to whom to preach conversion. Likewise a mayor without

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[73]Hall, *The Cross in Our Context*, 54..

[74]Ibid., 56.

a city or a bank president without depositors are unthinkable. The wise leader—whether

in the church or in the secular world—knows that it takes many people working together

to get the job done. The church bears witness to that fact when it practices being the

body.

> The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect. (1 Cor 12:21-23)

Since exclusions and division happen easily in rural community life, this is one

area where the church in particular ought to take both a visible and vocal leadership role,

both as its members practice leadership within the congregation and as they go out into

the wider community.

Grace-filled Leadership in Community

It would be quite common for a Lutheran treatment of *anything* to begin with

grace. Leadership is no exception. I have chosen to place it last, partly because it reflects

some of my own learning in the process of constructing this thesis. An attitude of grace

and acceptance is the last of Stark's five characteristics of Level-5 leaders. His

observation that such leaders' "central messages are grace-filled" was explicitly left out

of the description that I used in constructing my leadership survey for the congregation.

Instead I chose to use the last part of Stark's description: that others are "accepted and

challenged to stretch further."[75] As I reflect on that decision, I believe that I was trying

too hard to translate Christian beliefs into non-religious language, even though the survey

was meant for Lutheran church members, and even though research has shown *grace* to

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[75]Stark, *Christ-Based Leadership*, 30.

be one religious word that almost everyone understands, whether they are a church member or not. While *acceptance* is certainly an acceptable word with which to replace the word "grace," it carries only part of the meaning. Moreover, using the word "grace" itself (along with the word "accepted") might help congregational members—especially *Lutheran* congregational members—to understand more clearly that the theology they hear preached from the pulpit it transferable to everyday life.

Grace is evident in Jesus' teaching about servant-leadership. It is evident in his extraordinary patience with disciples, who often misunderstood or simply did not hear his teachings. It is particularly evident in his handling of those like Peter who, while trying to do their best for him, often let him down. Even when faced with out-right denial in the face of death, Jesus' response is one of love. (John 21:17)

Grace is evident, too, in Paul's teaching about community and in his patient witness to Christian communities who often strayed from the ways in which he had instructed them. His words about love (*agape*) in 1 Cor 13 are not only spoken to individuals but to the whole community, as it seeks to live in the Spirit of the risen Christ. His explicit words about grace in passages like Eph 2:8, while speaking to the work of salvation, speak also to those leaders who might seek to boast in their accomplishments, neglecting the gift of support and partnership that has been given them by God, through those with whom and for whom they are working.

Indeed, grace is the basis of two recent works on leadership development and, while unintentional, I expect, it can be found lurking behind the scenes in a third. Harvard Business professor Ronald Heifetz uses in-class case studies of leadership *failures* (including his own) to teach adaptive leadership skills, that is, leadership skills that are

able to deal with the type of complex changes being experienced today that call for a

transformation of heart and mind rather then simply using what knowledge and skills are

at hand.[76] Parks quotes Heifetz as saying to a student, concerning the professor's teaching

style, "I can't think of any encyclopedia for you to learn more from that the encyclopedia

of your own failures and successes."[77] To be given the opportunity to do that is an

experience of grace.

As mentioned in chapter 2, Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath use two aspects of

grace—environment and relationships—as supports for their leadership ladder built on a

combination of character and competence.[78] Likewise, Bob Sitze et al. use grace as a

starting place for their conversation about asset-based leadership development in the

church.[79]

> "Grace" is where God is . . . Bound up in Jesus Christ, grace is where your loving
> God starts looking at you . . . You're saved and blessed and graced away from
> selfishness. You're graced and washed clean so that you can go about your
> life as a steward of God's grace. You're newly created so that you can give your
> life away.[80]

Wonder of wonders, grace brings us back to the cross and servanthood.

Modeling Christian Leadership in Church and Community

The body of Christ, sent into the world as a light in the darkness, into the

communities it inhabits, to model a form of leadership that is cross-shaped, servant-

based, communally discerned, contextually based, collaboratively employed, gift-

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[76]Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught*, 10.

[77]Ibid., 42.

[78] Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath, *Ascent of a Leader*.

[79]Sitze, Hensel, and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Division for Congregational Ministries, *The Great Permission*.

[80]Ibid., 10.

empowering, and above all, acknowledging and subject to God's active, gracious, and reigning presence: this might be at least a beginning of a theology of the church's role in developing leadership for the rural community.

Often congregations—and pastors—have been content to have the gospel preached to their people, hoping that it might have an impact on their lives both inside and outside the church. It would seem, however, that congregations themselves can and ought to be models of servant-leadership and cross-shaped cooperation, equipping their people to take that model out with them into the world. This is the other half of "cross-training" that I am suggesting in this thesis: not only that congregational and community leadership practices can inform one another but that the church has something unique to bring to that exchange of practices that is able to stand between any clash of cultures (rural-urban, insider-outsider, etc.) and work redemption in and among individuals and organizations, as they attempt to deal effectively with the complexities of rural community life.

All of this would suggest, as well, the need for integrating the above description of collaborative Christian leadership into the very *process* for researching the potential for such a model of community leadership development. Indeed, the use of a collaborative model in the design of the mixed-method research process for this study has, I would assert, done just that. To paraphrase Marshall McLuhan, the medium becomes the message. Or, as Van Gelder says, "A church does what it is."[81]

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[81]Van Gelder, 128.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Question(s)

The question I am pursuing in this thesis is, "What potential impact might come from the encouragement of a collaborative, servant model of leadership in a rural congregation, specifically Our Savior's Lutheran Church, with respect to increasing the capacity of its members for leadership in the various **communities** within and around the larger community of Wessington Springs?" A related question is, "How might the collaborative leadership experience that people have from involvement in their **communities** impact their leadership capacity within the *congregation*?" These two questions together comprise the cross-pollination implied in the term *cross-training*.

The general exploratory nature of these questions necessitated exploratory research. For the most part, I used a sequential mixed-method exploratory approach.[1] An initial *qualitative* phase consisted of a group mapping process with congregational members. This process was used to help derive the major categories and questions for a *quantitative survey* of a sample of the congregation as to their experiences with collaborative leadership. Another part of the qualitative process was to be a set of interviews with parents of school-aged children who are members of the congregation. Because of scheduling issues, most of these were delayed until after the questionnaires

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[1]Creswell, *Research Design*, 215.

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were already returned. The interviews still provided data about the role of leadership

experiences within families, but they did not enter into the design of the questionnaire.

Quantitative Phase, Part One:
The Communities Mapping Process

Sunday-morning worship participants at Our Savior's Lutheran Church were

asked to participate in the mapping process, a variation of a process I learned and adapted

while working in interim ministry in South-Central Wisconsin. Forty-three people, a little

less than half the average number at worship, remained after worship, gathering first for

coffee and conversation around tables in the church fellowship hall.

After explaining the purpose for the exercise, I asked for a show of hands to

determine the range of ages present. Participants were given a two-sided worksheet on

which to record their individual responses (see appendix A, page 199).

Two sets of responses were requested. On the first side of the sheet were

questions pertaining to the various geographical communities to which participants

belonged, including place of residence, telephone exchange, school district, and cities

where they do their shopping. Since not all of those present were actual members of our

congregation (some were active participants but not yet members), I also asked for the

name and location of their congregation. Finally, I asked participants to name the location

of the person farthest away from Wessington Springs with whom they regularly

correspond.

On the second side of the sheet were a list of types of organizations culled both

from Habermas' list of civil society types or organizations[2] and my own knowledge of

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[2]Jurgen Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," 453.

the community. The names of these various types were spaced in rows and columns across the page. Participants were asked to list under each type the names of all of the various **communities** (clubs, organizations, networks, and other groups of people) in which they are involved, based on location, social system, and/or common identity.[3] Types of **communities** included:

- Political parties
- Professional organizations and networks
- Labor unions
- Agricultural cooperatives, buying and marketing organizations, or networks
- Government boards and councils
- Sports and recreation clubs
- Arts organizations
- Academic clubs or organizations
- Alumni associations
- Interest groups
- Service clubs and organizations
- Social clubs
- Fraternal organizations
- Health and wellness clubs
- Support groups
- Internet chat services
- Youth groups like FFA, 4-H, and Scouting
- Congregations
- Other

People were encouraged to go beyond these examples, using their judgment or asking for assistance where a group might not fit under a particular type, and using the named types to help generate a starting list. They were encouraged to list only those groups to which *they themselves* belong, not simply to write down every different group they could imagine. I acted as facilitator for this process, making my way around the tables to assist people as needed.

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[3]Flora, Flora, and Fey, *Rural Communities*, 9.

Following this, participants were asked to gather in groups of three or four in order to pool and expand their lists. Finally, the groups were asked to combine into tables of about eight participants, where all of the lists were placed on sheets of newsprint. One person at each table recorded the responses. The recorders and others shared some of the results. I promised the group that I would share the full results with them at a later date. The whole process took about half an hour.

Participants were encouraged to note both the potential *assets* that are available to the congregation and the potential *impact* the congregation has on the larger community, because of the congregational members' involvement in the **communities** noted through this process. Following the mapping process, the newsprint lists were combined and a master list of **communities** constructed to be used as part of the survey.

One part of the congregation was not represented at all at this event: the youth. It so happened that the high school prom was held the night before we went through the mapping process. Since I was intent on learning about their involvement in their **communities**, I arranged to meet with the youth group separately. There was a conflict that night, as well, and only three of the potential nine showed up. Nevertheless, between the youth and their adult leader, we were able to affirm and add to the list I had already made up, including the category *musical groups.* Since even adults may be involved in musical groups, the youth not only assisted with identifying their own list of **communities** but helped the process to better represent the whole congregation.

Quantitative Phase, Part Two: The Questionnaire

For the quantitative portion of the research, a questionnaire was sent to one hundred sixteen members of Our Savior's who have been identified by communion records and other means as worshiping in the congregation at least once a month. About two-thirds of these participated in a previous survey done in 2005 on marriage and family support in the congregation. Because of the high rate of return (97.33 percent) of those surveys, the less personal nature of this research, and the fact that the majority of the congregation is aware and supportive of my work on this thesis, I anticipated having at least an adequate rate of return for this survey.

In advance of the mailing, notices were placed in the congregation's bulletin informing members and others about this research and the upcoming survey. As an added encouragement regarding the usefulness of the survey, I mentioned some results of both the 2005 study and the group **communities** process in various situations leading up the mailing of the questionnaires. Stamped and numbered return envelopes were included in each mailing. Follow-up postcards were mailed to members who did not return their surveys within two weeks, and a reminder was made during the announcements in worship.

A five-section questionnaire of twenty-one questions was used. The first section consisted of standard background information questions adapted from the marriage and family research paper.[4] They included such things as gender, marital status, school grade completed, worship attendance, previous church affiliation, and year of birth. Questions were also asked about the respondents' place of residence and whether they were a native

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[4]This list of questions was developed for the cohort by Sheila Smith.

of the place they now live. These two questions were intended to provide more specific

information about community identification.

The second section asked respondents to identify those **communities** (identified

in the questionnaire as "groups, organizations, or networks," rather than simply as

communities), as determined from the mapping process and interviews, of which they

are a part. These were divided into nine types, with six general or specific kinds of

communities in each type, with a seventh option being *other*, with a space provided to

specify the unnamed **community**. For instance, under the heading of *Government* I listed

city government, county government, township board, school board, county commission,

and election board. Under *Business and Agriculture* I listed specific organizations derived

from the group process: Chamber of Commerce, Farm Bureau, Farmers' Union,

Wessington Springs Area Development Association (listed simply as "Development

Association, since there is only one in the county), and two area farmers' cooperatives.

Again, I tried to include the full range of those **communities** and affiliations that

emerged from the initial qualitative phase of the research. A final question asked

respondents to indicate in how many of the groups listed they had held a leadership

position such as an officer, board member, team captain, coach, or administrator. Four

choices were given: one, two, three or more, and "none" (see appendix B, page 201).

The purpose of this section, while qualitative in appearance, was to determine the

actual (or approximate) *number* of different **communities** in which people participate. I

expected that most people, if simply asked, would probably under-report the number, but

once they actually started listing them, that number would start to grow. This was

apparent in the **communities** mapping process I led in the congregation.

A third section asked about participants' leadership experiences, using multiple-choice questions. The five questions in this section asked about people's perceptions as to reasons for their effectiveness in their various **communities**. The first of these asked people to name the most significant reason for their ability to have a positive influence on the groups and organizations of which they were a part, with response ranging from a very self-centered, "I worked very hard to accomplish what I wanted to get done," to the very other-centered, "People listened to each other and worked together." The second question was directly related to collaborative leadership: "In those groups or organizations in which you held a leadership position, to what extent were you able to work with others to achieve agreed-upon goals?" Five possible responses were given, ranging from "Extremely well" to "Poorly," and "I don't know." The third question was an adaptation of material I found in De Pree,[5] as well as Luther's view of vocation as focused on others: "To what extent do you believe that your involvement in the various groups, organizations, or networks in the community improves the lives of others in the community?" The fourth question asked about the impact of health on organizational participation, and was motivated by my own observation (chapter 2) that a rural leadership study that did not address the health of its participants would be lacking, I asked, simply, "To what extent does your health limit your ability to be an effective participant in the groups or organizations of which you are a part?" A five-level multiple-choice response was asked for, ranging from "very much so," to "no limitations" and "I don't know."

Finally, I asked a question about *cross-training*, as it pertains to the cross-pollination of leadership skills between church and community. This question might have

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[5]De Pree, *Leadership Is an Art*.

been grouped with the last question in a final section on *cross-training*, but for limitations

of space and formatting. Participants were asked to check the one answer out of four with

which they most closely agreed:

1. My involvement in my congregation has helped me acquire leadership skills that I have used in other community organizations.
2. My involvement in community organizations has helped me acquire leadership skills that I have used in my congregation.
3. Both 1 and 2 are true.
4. Neither 1 nor 2 are true.

Part Four attempted to measure respondents' agreement with Collins' *Level 5*

leadership practices[6] as explained from an experiential perspective by Stark.[7] Using these

practices helped me incorporate several aspects of servant leadership, including

authenticity, vulnerability, and collaboration. Stark intentionally compares *Level 4* and

Level 5 leadership styles in a way intended to make it clear to the reader that the latter is

to be preferred. I found, however, that the *Level 4* descriptions, which were intentionally

phrased in a negative manner, were difficult to rephrase in a way in which they could be

answered truthfully by respondents. Following, therefore, the practices of various

professional leadership assessments, notably James Kouzes' and Barry Posner's

Leadership Practices Inventory,[8] I included only the positive Level 5 statements from

Stark's comparison. This also served to help respondents consider those practices by

themselves, apart from any other potentially less desirable practices. I altered Stark's

phrasing slightly in order to form understandable questions and omitted one of Stark's

seven descriptions, making for a total of six questions in this section.

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[6]Collins, *Good to Great*.

[7]Stark, *Christ-Based Leadership*, 30.

[8]James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) Participant's Workbook*, rev. 2d ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2001).

The final part of the questionnaire consisted of only one question, intended to learn the amount of formal leadership training respondents had received while involved in their various groups and organizations. Possible responses were: 1) Several weeks, 2) one to two weeks, 3) Less than one week, 4) Less than one day, and 5) None. This concluded the questionnaire.

The questionnaire contained few obviously religious or faith-based questions, other than one descriptive question about worship attendance (which alone would be used to determine congregational involvement), another about previous church membership and the cross-training questions about the affect of church and community leadership experiences on each other. Part of this stemmed from a desire to conserve space in the questionnaire. Part of it was due to having already conducted a more faith-based research study with the congregation on marriage.

Finally, the six questions taken from Stark about leadership style contained within them a character of servanthood consistent with Christian values. Interestingly, I omitted from my questions the one explicitly Christian word Stark used in his description of Level 5 leadership, namely *grace*. The fact that more explicit Christian language was not used may be as much due to unconscious as conscious choices on my part. I will reflect on this further in a later section of this thesis.

Analysis of the Questionnaire

The responses to the questionnaire were entered in SPSS for analysis. I utilized descriptive statistics to provide an overview of the data results, and used inferential statistical tests, including chi-square cross tabulations and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to analyze the relationships between the variables. I was interested, for

example, in how differences in age and the various **communities** in which respondents are involved (including the community of life-long Lutherans) related to their experience of, views on, and participation in, leadership. I wanted to look at how experience in *congregational* involvement and leadership affected their thoughts on leadership, particularly with respect to a servant leadership style. Finally, I wanted to look for factors relating to both the number of groups and organizations to which these church members were involved and factors relating to the number of organizations in which they had a leadership role.

Qualitative Phase: Interviews

The qualitative phase of the research was composed of interviews with two particular groups of people. The first group was comprised of six parents with children still in public school, selected from the membership of Our Savior's. Given the general exodus of children from the community after graduation, children who are still in school are more likely to still have an impact on the community through their interaction with others. This idea came about through a conversation with a Head Start teacher, who noted that many of the parents with whom she worked had more than they could handle between work and parenting, without taking on any further leadership responsibilities in the community.

I came up with the idea of interviewing several Head Start parents, both to act on that conversation and affirm the parents' role as leaders simply *as parents*, in light of Luther's view of parental vocation. Only one Head Start parent agreed to be interviewed, however, and he was not a member of Our Savior's. Conversations with other community leaders had convinced me to keep the sample within the confines of the congregation. I

chose, therefore, to conduct my interviews with parents from Our Savior's, which would still allow me to affirm parents in their vocation as I collected the data I was seeking from congregational members. These interviews were conducted during or shortly following the survey process, during the spring of 2006.

The choice of a second group was made after colleagues pointed out their relevance to my research. This group consisted of six members of Our Savior's, from sixty-seven to eight-six years of age, who, though retired, are still active in leadership in either the congregation or the community. They were interviewed in late October and early November, 2006.

Participants were interviewed one at a time, using either audio tape or a digital audio recorder to record their responses. An equal number of male and female participants were interviewed. Two married couples were selected, one within each group (parents with children in school and senior citizens). The participants were told in advance that they would be interviewed regarding their ideas on parenting and leadership, that this was for my doctoral thesis and that their names would be omitted or changed when the research was published.

After some initial conversation, participants were asked to state their name and age, the former merely for my records, the latter to be used, particularly with the retired interviewees, to help differentiate between age groups and to look for differences between older and younger retirees. The content of the interviews varied slightly, depending on the group. I will highlight some of the questions below; however, the full list of questions can be found in appendices C and D, pages 203-204.

With both the younger parents and the retirees, the first questions included:

- the person's definition of leadership,
- the extent to which they considered themselves a leader,
- their evaluation of their leadership skills,
- how or where they had attained their leadership skills,
- the different **communities** (families, groups and organizations) in which they participated, and
- the extent to which they were involved in leadership within these groups and organizations.

The next set of questions differed between the two groups. The younger parents

were asked:

- their perceptions of themselves as leaders in their families, both as parents and spouses (all those in this category were married, with their spouse living at home) and.
- how they saw their leadership learning and activities in the home impacting people beyond the home.

The senior citizens were asked at this point:

- how their involvement in the community had changed since retirement (or age 65),
- what factors, if any, had contributed to the change.
- any needs that they saw in the senior or retirement population that might need to be addressed if they were to continue or increase their involvement in community leadership activities,
- their perception of how increased sharing of leadership might impact the leadership activity of retired people (based on Cusack's study of senior centers in Canada).[9]

All interviewees were then asked about:

- the extent to which their leadership learning in the church and in the community had impacted one another and
- the impact of faith on their leadership activities.

The interview questions were field tested with two community members who are

not members of the congregation, and some alterations were made. The results of the

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[9]Cusack, "Leadership in Seniors' Centers," 64.

interviews were recorded, coded, and placed in tables for comparison. Further

explanation of this coding and analysis process can be found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

This research set out to determine the potential for a rural congregation,

specifically, Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Wessington Springs, South Dakota, to have

an impact on leadership development within the various **communities** that both make up

Our Savior's and to which it relates. I am using the word **communities** in bold type to

represent the varied geographic, social, and/or ideological groupings of which people

may be a part. Examples of these **communities** are families, both nuclear and extended,

cities, towns, and other geographical distinctions, businesses, and the many and various

community groups and organizations, outside of either government or business, that

make up what is referred to as *civil society*.[1]

All of these **communities** and the relationships generated by them work together

to form the *social capital* of a town or place that are important for community prosperity

and sustainability.[2] This social capital both enhances and is enhanced by local

congregations and, I would argue, helps to increase the capacity to generate effective

leadership in communities where individual *leaders* are often in short supply.

What might a Lutheran congregation like Our Savior's be able to add to the

equation? Given a missional theology that acknowledges God's action in the world

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[1]Simpson, "God in Civil Society."

[2]Flora, Flora, and Fey, *Rural Communities*.

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(God's redemptive reign), the Christians' calling to carry that action into our daily lives and relationships (our baptismal vocation), and to live out that vocation, in part, through leadership that exemplifies the servant heart of Jesus that was obedient even to death on the cross, the potential is great indeed. The extent to which this potential is realized might be governed in part by the extent to which its members are involved in the social fabric of the community, their willingness to work together to achieve **community** goals and objectives, their understanding of God's action behind their leadership, their acceptance of their baptismal vocation and the cross in daily life, and their appropriation of the servant message of Jesus Christ.

Quantitative Analysis

Communities Group Exercise

Forty-three members of the worshiping community (most but not all of whom were members of Our Savior's) turned out for the **communities** group exercise. Those forty-three people represented less than half of the average worship attendance of 92.5. They were asked for information about their mailing addresses, telephone exchanges, school districts, and communities where they were employed and where they shop. People indicated that they shop in five different cities. The range for the other categories was limited to Wessington Springs or Woonsocket, sixteen miles away. They were not asked to specify whether they lived in town or out of town in this exercise.

While the range of residences did not vary much, when I asked those gathered for the farthest distance anyone lived from them with whom they corresponded, responses totaled twenty-nine different cities, states, and countries and ranging from other

communities within South Dakota, to Florida and Washington state in the U.S., to Latin America, Europe, Iraq, and Hong Kong.

What was most surprising was the number of groups and organizations represented by the forty-three people gathered. Seventy-six different groups and organizations were identified, including local and regional government, service and support groups, institutional governing boards, and, of course, church groups. That makes an average of 1.76 *different* groups and organizations per person gathered. In truth, any particular group or organization could and did involve several different people and any particular person could and did belong to several different organizations. The results of this exercise, as I said earlier, were used to formulate the groups section of the questionnaire (see appendix B, page 200).

<div align="center">Categorical Data from Questionnaires</div>

As was stated in the previous chapter, 116 questionnaires were mailed to members of Our Savior's who, it was determined from records, attend worship at least once a month. Of those, 113 were returned, for a response rate of 97.41%.

Data from the questionnaire were entered into SPSS statistical software for analysis. I performed certain transformations on the data to enhance the ability for analysis. Year of birth was transformed into age. The age of the respondents, in turn, was transformed into ranges in two ways. First I grouped the ages for comparison with the general U.S. Census statistics. I further combined some of these groups in a way such that I could get a sufficient number of respondents in each category. I also broke out those aged eighty and over as a separate category. The response to the question about the number of groups/organizations to which people belonged was transformed into ranges,

as well. Chi-square cross-tabulation was used to help determine whether the effects of certain variables on others were worth further investigation.[3]

Background Data from the Questionnaires

Table 5.1 is a summary of the background information gleaned from the questionnaire. With respect to age, only those active members of Our Savior's who were fifteen years of age or older were asked to complete the survey; therefore, the median age of those who responded to the survey was higher than in either Our Savior's or Wessington Springs as a whole: 62.5 for the survey respondents versus 55.4 in the 2000 census of Wessington Springs. The youngest was seventeen and the oldest ninety-one years of age. About 30% were between fifty and sixty-five years of age, and about one-third (32.1%) were eighty years of age and above. Only 10% were less than thirty years of age. Over half the respondents (59.3%) were women, which nearly equaled the 2000 Census figure (60.3%). Nearly seventy percent said they were married, twenty percent were widowed, ten percent had never married and less than one percent said they were divorced.

Table 5.2 compares the age statistics for the survey sample from Our Savior's with those of Wessington Springs and Jerauld County. Note that the percentage of eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds lies between that of the city and the county, a reflection of the rural nature of the congregation, even though the building is located in town.

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[3]David Stockburger, *Introductory Statistics*, 2d ed. (Cincinnatti, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing, 2001), 252.

TABLE 5.1
Background Characteristics of Survey Sample

Characteristic	Number	%	Characteristic	Number	%
Age Range			Grade Attained		
17-29 years	12	10.7	Eighth	7	6.3
30-49 years	12	10.7	Ninth to Eleventh	8	7.2
50-65 years	33	29.5	Twelfth	46	41.1
66-79 years	19	17.0	One-three yrs. college	25	22.1
80 and above	36	32.1	Four yrs. College	19	17.0
			Graduate work	8	5.4
Total	112	100.0	Other	1	0.9
Median Age = 62.50			Total	112	100.0
S.D = 20.942					
			Mean = 13.1		
Gender			S.D. = 2.58		
Female	67	59.3			
Male	45	39.8	Previous church membership		
			Always Our Savior's	52	46.4
Total	112	100.0	Other Lutheran	32	28.6
			Other Christian	22	19.6
Marital Status			No previous church	4	3.6
Married	76	67.9	Other	2	1.8
Widowed	23	20.5			
Divorced	1	0.9	Total	112	100.0
Never married	12	10.7			
			Current Residence		
Total	112	100.0	Wessington Springs	78	69.0
			Alpena Village	1	0.9
Worship Attendance			Rural Jerauld County	18	15.9
Usually every week	65	57.5	Hand County	3	2.7
Several times/month	31	27.9	Beadle County	10	8.8
About once/month	10	9.0	Aurora County	3	2.7
Several times/year	1	0.9			
Other	4	3.6	Total	113	100.0
Total	111	100.0	Native of Current Residence		
			Yes	53	47.7
			No	58	52.3
			Total	111	100.0

Back to table 5.1, six distinct geographic areas were represented among those surveyed, including two municipalities and four counties. The largest percentage of respondents (69 %) was from the city of Wessington Springs.

TABLE 5.2
Age Group Percentages
Community and Survey Sample

Age Group	Wessington Springs*	Jerauld County*	Our Savior's Sample
Under 18 yrs.	15.4	21.4	1.8
18-24 yrs.	5.1	6.9	6.2
25-44 yrs.	15.6	19.8	9.7
45-64 yrs.	23.3	26.2	32.7
65 yrs. & over	40.5	25.6	48.7
Median Age	55.4	46.3	62.5

* U.S. Census Bureau, "American Factfinder," Fact Sheet created for South Dakota, Age and Sex 2000. http//:www.factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_%20langen=en (accessed on Apr. 26, 2006).

About fifteen percent listed rural Jerauld County as their residence, with eight percent residing in nearby Beadle County. At least one other municipality in Beadle County may have been represented, but the number of members known to be living there was not large enough to merit including it as a separate response in the survey. Instead, the community is included as part of its county. The majority of members (52.3%) said that they were not natives of the specific geographic area in which they now live, although they may indeed have moved less than a mile from where they were born. Asking how far respondents had moved from their original home might have revealed more useful information.

Worship attendance tended not to vary greatly among respondents, particularly since respondents were picked *because* of their frequency of attendance. A majority of

respondents (57.5 %) reported that they attended worship "usually every week." Another

27.9 percent stated that they attended "several times a month," for a total of over eight-

five percent between the two. Less than one percent stated that they attended only several

times per year. Attendance tended to be more regular among those sixty-five and over,

but a chi-square test showed not enough significance to warrant further study.

The average level of education attained among respondents was one year beyond

college. The median was twelve years. Indeed, the greatest percentage of respondents

(41.1%) had completed twelfth grade. Just over 22% had completed anywhere from one

to three years of college; 17% had completed four years of college. Educational

attainment ranged from eighth grade to four years of graduate work.

**Findings Regarding Membership and
Leadership in Groups/Organizations**

Table 5.3 shows the number of groups and organizations in which respondents

said they participated. Only three out of the 113 members surveyed indicated that they

did not belong to any groups or organizations, while 18 (15.9%) said they belonged to ten

or more groups or organizations. The greatest percentage of respondents (36.3%) said

they belonged to anywhere from one to three groups or organizations. The average

number of groups per person was 2.12. Twenty people, or 17.7% of respondents, said

they belonged to exactly three groups or organizations, the largest single number of

respondents for any particular number of groups or organizations.

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TABLE 5.3
Congregational Members' Participation in Organizations

Number of Groups (Range)	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Zero	3	2.7	2.7
One to three groups	41	36.3	48.9
Four to six groups	26	23.0	61.9
Seven to nine groups	25	22.1	84.1
Ten or more groups	18	15.9	100.0

N = 113
Minimum = 0
Maximum = 14
Mean = 2.12
S.D. = 1.115

While neither age nor worship attendance were significantly related to respondents' involvement in community groups and organizations, the relationship of their involvement in groups within the congregation to their total organizational involvement was worthy of note. Table 5.4 compares the number of church groups in which people were involved with the number and percentage of respondents who said they were involved in groups (church and non-church) in increasing ranges of participation. The percentages are of the number of respondents at each level of *church-group* involvement (zero through three groups).

Note that those who said they were involved in just two groups at church were much more likely to be involved in other groups, with nearly half (47.1%) involved in a total of ten or more groups. Note, too, however, that that amounts to only eight people. Over 80% of these same respondents were involved in seven or more groups, whereas just over a third of those who said they were involved in just one group at church were involved in three or fewer groups total.

TABLE 5.4
Comparison of Church Group Involvement and Involvement in
Outside Groups and Organizations

	Range of Organizational Involvement*									
	No Groups		1-3 Groups		4-6 Groups		7-9 Groups		10+ Groups	
Number of Church Grps.	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0	3	8.1	22	59.5	8	21.6	3	8.1	1	2.7
1	0	0.0	17	34.7	14	28.6	14	28.6	4	8.2
2	0	0.0	2	11.8	1	5.9	6	35.3	8	47.1
3	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	42.8	2	28.6	2	28.6

N = 110
Pearson Chi-Square = 45.292
Degrees of Freedom = 12
Probability = 0.000

* Some rows may total more than 100% due to rounding error.

Chi-square tests revealed that the effects of the number of church groups and the range of organizational involvement are not independent, and so these variables are contingent on each other. These variables have a significant effect on each other, $X^2(12)$ = 45.292, p<.001. Twelve cells (60%), however, had an expected count of less than 5. The significance changed when the results were controlled for age and other independent variables.

Far fewer people said they had been involved in organizational *leadership*. Nearly a quarter of the respondents said they had not held a leadership position in any of the groups in which they participated (see table 5.5).

TABLE 5.5
Congregational Members' Leadership in Organizations

Number of Groups	Number of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Zero	26	24.5	24.5
One	25	23.6	48.1
Two	20	18.9	67.0
Three	15	14.2	81.1
Four	13	12.3	93.4
Five	4	3.8	97.2
Six	3	2.8	100.0
Total	110	100.0	

Mean = 1.89
S.D. = 1.629

That may or may not be true, since the question could have been misleading. After asking, "In how many different groups and organizations are you involved?" I asked, "In how many of the groups/organizations marked above have you held a leadership position such as an officer, board member, team captain, coach, or administrator?" In talking with people after the survey was sent out, it was apparent that some people understood the question to be asking about their present leadership involvement, whereas others understood it to be asking about their *history* of leadership involvement, that is, those groups in which they had had a leadership role *at any time*. That said, the average respondent said he/she had held a leadership role in 1.89 different groups, the maximum number being six.

The types of organizations in which members of Our Savior's said they were involved were quite varied. Table 5.6 shows the number of survey respondents who said they were involved in each of the nine different types of organizations listed on the questionnaire. The table shows the total number of people who said they were involved in

each *type* of group. Each type was broken down into six individual groups or types of

groups plus a miscellaneous "other" category. For example, the category, "Government

groups and organizations" was divided into city government, county government,

township board, school board, county commission, election board, and "other." In this

case "county government" and "county commission" might overlap, an oversight that

was caught after the fact. "Arts & Crafts" included musical groups, the local arts council,

and quilters, among others. The "other" category included several different historical

societies, political parties, and the Springs Area bus board. The full list of organizations

listed in the questionnaire can be found in appendix B, page 200.

TABLE 5.6
Members' Individual Organizational Involvement by Organization Type

Response	Number	Percent
Government	19	16.8
Business and Agriculture	41	36.3
Professional	28	24.8
Health	7	6.2
Service	61	53.9
Support	26	23.2
Arts & Crafts	24	21.3
Social	39	34.5
Sports and Recreation	46	40.8
Church	73	64.6
Youth	22	19.5
Other	40	35.4
None	3	2.7

As one can see above, the largest percentage of people reported that they are

involved in church groups of one kind or another (presumably excluding congregations as

a whole). This is not surprising, since it would be expected that most people (in this case

roughly two-thirds) who are active in worship would be involved in at least one other group or organization within the church, and also since all female members of the congregation are at least nominally involved in the Women of the ELCA.

Next in percentage, just over half of the respondents (53.9%) said they were involved in service groups of one kind or another, from the volunteer fire department, to the local community club, to Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, whose branch organizations help provide funds and workers for many individual and community needs and projects. This, too, would be expected, with Christianity's emphasis on service.

Rural communities are known for their emphasis on sports. With a golf course across the street from the church building, several people involved in bowling, and a community soccer program that is about four years old, just over forty percent of the respondents indicated that they were involved in recreation and sports, either as an active participant or as a "booster," helping to raise money or otherwise support the high school athletic teams.

Being a county-seat town, much of the activity in Wessington Springs revolves around government of one sort or another, and since the congregation of Our Savior's comes from throughout the county, and given the sparseness of the rural population, involvement in a township board or rural commission is not unlikely. About a sixth of the congregational sample reported that they were involved in some kind of government body or organization.

Health care is the largest employer in Wessington Springs; however service on health-related boards and committees drew one of the smallest responses. Only seven people out of 113 (6.2%) reported being involved in such things as the hospital or clinic

(Horizon Healthcare) board, the parish nurse health cabinet, Friends of Mental Health, which relates to an area counseling center, or hospice. That number has changed since the survey was taken, due to increased activity within the parish nurse program. The low numbers, however, may be a result of the sense that it takes special knowledge, training, or leadership expertise to be involved in making health-related decisions.

The numbers change somewhat when the number of individuals involved in each type of organization is multiplied by the number of organizations *within* each type in which people are involved. For example, Sam Smith might be involved in the country club, a bowling league, and the high school athletic boosters, all of which are related to sports and recreation. Sarah Worth, on the other hand, might be involved in the quilting club, the arts council, and a community choir, all of which are under the category of "arts and crafts." Counted as individuals involved in each *type* of organization, Sam and Sarah count only as one person, but, in fact they are involved in *several* organizations *within* each type; thus, their involvement in each type (and as a whole) is multiplied. The resulting figure from this calculation is therefore more representative of Our Savior's total involvement in the life of the community. Table 5.7 displays that total involvement, the number of individuals involved in each type (from table 5.6) and the ratio of the two figures.

It is evident that the respondents tended to be involved in more than one group or organization within each type. Business and agriculture, health, service, social, sports/recreation, church, and youth organizations appear, in particular, to have attracted multiple group memberships.

TABLE 5.7
Members' Organizational Involvement by Organization Type

Response	Number of Individuals	Total Involvement	Ratio of Involvement per Type
Government	19	21	1.11
Business and Agriculture	41	65	1.59
Professional	28	32	1.14
Health	7	10	1.43
Service	61	84	1.38
Support	26	30	1.15
Arts & Crafts	24	28	1.17
Social	39	53	1.36
Sports and Recreation	46	63	1.37
Church	73	104	1.42
Youth	22	31	1.41
Other	43	67	1.68
None	3	—	—

The largest single area of involvement, in terms of total number of people, was in service organizations; however, the largest area for multiple memberships occurs with the "other" category, with a ratio of 1.68 groups or organizations per individual. This may illustrate Gary Simpson's definition of civil society as "that vast, spontaneously emergent, ever dynamic plurality of networks, associations, institutions, and movements for the prevention and promotion of this, that, and the other thing."[268] For obvious reasons there is no comparison figure for the "none" category.

Findings Regarding Group
Members' Experiences

Tables 5.8 and 5.9 show the results of questions asked about members' experiences in the groups and organizations in which they were involved. Table 5.8 shows the responses to the question, "To what extent do you believe that your

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[268]Simpson, "God in Civil Society," 12.

involvement in the various groups, organizations, or networks in the community

improves the lives of others in the community?" Nearly 70% responded that this was

somewhat true. Over 21% percent replied "Very much so," whereas a total of 9.6% said

that their involvement made "hardly any" or "no improvement" in the community. About

a quarter of the respondents (26.5%) either did not respond to this question or said they

did not know. Their responses are not included in the table below.

TABLE 5.8
Church Members' Belief that Their Membership in Community Organizations
Improves the Lives of Others in the Community

Response	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
No improvement	2	2.4	2.4
Hardly any	6	7.2	9.6
Somewhat	57	68.7	78.3
Very much so	18	21.7	100.0
Total	83	100.0	

There appeared to be a relationship between grade attained and worship

attendance on members' belief that their involvement in community organizations

improved the lives of others. However, chi-square tests indicated not enough responses in

some categories to produce an accurate effect.

Table 5.9 shows members' responses to the question, "Of the groups or

organizations you participate in that have the most positive influence in the community,

what do you believe is the most significant reason for that influence?" About 9% said

they thought that influence resulted from their individual effort, i.e., "I work very hard to

accomplish what I want to get done." About 21% said they thought the organizations'

effectiveness was a result of others working with them individually ("Others listen to me and follow my lead," or "I help others do their best"). Fully 70% of those who responded, however, said they believed the effectiveness of the organizations in which they participated resulted from true collaboration, "People listen to each other and work together." Thirty-six respondents indicated they did not know or did not complete the question.

TABLE 5.9
Reasons Organizations Were Thought to Be Effective

Reason	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
I work very hard.	7	9.1	9.1
Others listen to me and follow my lead.	5	6.5	15.6
I help others to do their best.	11	14.3	29.9
We listen to each other and work together.	54	70.1	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

A related question asked, "In those groups or organizations in which you hold a leadership position, to what extent are you able to work with others to achieve agreed-upon goals?" Table 5.10 shows the results of that question. Of those who completed the question, almost one quarter said they were able to do this "extremely well," while three-quarters said they were able to do it "fairly well." About one-third of those completing the questionnaire either responded that they did not hold a leadership position or left the question blank.

TABLE 5.10
Leaders' Perception of Organizations' Ability to Work Together Toward Goals

Response	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poorly	0	0.0	0.0
Not Very Well	1	1.3	1.3
Fairly Well	56	74.7	76.0
Extremely Well	18	24.0	100.0
Total	75	100.0	

Effect of Member's Health on
Organizational Participation

I have already addressed the importance of individuals' health (both physical and spiritual) to community capital. Tables 5.11 and 5.12 deal with that effect, as expressed by survey respondents. I expected health to be an especially important concern in a congregation and community with a large percentage of elderly people. I asked, "To what extent does your health limit your ability to be an effective participant in the groups, organizations, or networks of which you are a part?" Responses, seen in table 5.11, were surprisingly positive.

Exactly fifty respondents (53.2%) said that their organizational participation was "not at all" affected by their health. Another 15% said there was hardly any effect on their organizational life. A little over 25% said that their participation was somewhat affected. Only six people, or about 6% of the respondents, said that their participation was "very much" affected by their health.

TABLE 5.11
Organizational Participation Affected by Health

Response	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all	50	53.2	53.2
Hardly any	14	14.9	68.1
Somewhat	24	25.5	93.6
Very much so	6	6.4	100.0
Total	94	100.0	

Age range had a significant affect on people's responses, as table 5.12 shows. Respondents aged sixty-five and older were much more likely than younger groups to say that their participation was somewhat or very much affected by health. A Chi-square test for independence revealed that age and the degree to which respondents' health affect their organizational participation were not independent, and thus were contingent on each other. These variables have a significant effect on each other, $X^2 = 67.019$, p<.001.

Leadership Learning and Its Effect
on Church and Community Life

It has been my experience that formal leadership training can be a great asset, both in allowing individuals to gain the confidence they need to take on leadership responsibilities in church and community life and in improving the quality of leadership that those volunteers are able to deliver. At the same time, quality leadership training is much more difficult to obtain in rural communities, especially when those communities are far removed from major cities as is Wessington Springs.

TABLE 5.12
Organizational Participation Affected by Health by Age

Response	Percent according to Age							
	30-49 Years Number %		50-64 Years Number %		65-79 Years Number %		80+ Years Number %	
Not at all	10	90.9	24	77.4	4	25.0	1	4.0
Hardly any	1	0.1	5	16.1	2	12.5	6	24.0
Somewhat	0	0.0	5	6.4	10	62.5	12	48.0
Very much so	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	24.0

Looking at table 5.13, it was surprising, therefore, that close to 30% of respondents reported that they had received anywhere from one week to several weeks of formal leadership training. That, of course, is over a lifetime. Another 33% reported that they had received no formal leadership training at all, and 8.2% had received up to a day of formal training.

Respondents' age had an appreciable effect on the amount of leadership training only insofar as more respondents aged eighty and over had no leadership training compared to those in other age groups. Otherwise, there were not sufficient numbers of respondents in each category for an accurate test.

Now we come to one of the central questions of this thesis: to what extent does what people learn about leadership in the congregation affect their leadership in the community, and to what extent does what they learn about leadership in community organizations impact their congregational life? This is one of the aspects of what I call "cross-training." The answers to survey questions in this area are reported in table 5.14.

TABLE 5.13
Members' Formal Leadership Training

Response	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	32	33.0	33.0
Less than one day	8	8.2	41.2
Less than one week	29	29.9	71.1
One to two weeks	12	12.4	83.5
Several weeks	16	16.5	100.0
Total	97	100.0	

When asked whether their "involvement in my church has helped me acquire leadership skills that I have used in other community organizations," 6.6% of respondents (six people) agreed that it had. Five respondents (5.5%) agreed with the statement, "My involvement in community organizations has helped me acquire leadership skills that I have used in my church."

However, more than 52% of those taking the survey responded that both statements were true. In other words, they indicated that what they had learned in *both* their involvement in church *and* community life had helped them acquire leadership skills that they had used in the other venue.

On the negative side, more than 35% of respondents said that neither statement was true. Neither church nor community involvement had helped them acquire leadership skills they could use in the other. Nearly 20% did not respond at all to the question.

TABLE 5.14
Cross-training Between Congregational and Community Leadership Learning

Response	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Church involvement helps community leadership	6	6.6	6.6
Community involvement helps church leadership	5	5.5	12.1
Both statements are true.	48	52.7	64.8
Neither statement is true	32	35.2	100.0
Total	91	100.0	

"Level 5 Leadership" Measurement

David Stark[269] developed a list of six characteristics or practices of leaders that Jim Collins determined allowed them to take organizations from "good to great" [270] (see chapter 2 of this thesis, p. 29). This kind of leadership Collins described as "Level 5 leadership."[271] Stark described these characteristics or practices as being how others experience the leader. The last section of my questionnaire asked respondents to rate their own tendency to exhibit five of these characteristics or practices on a four-point Likert scale. Specifically, I asked, "Please indicate how often you engage in the following practices when you are in a leadership position by circling the number that corresponds to your response." Table 5.15 shows both the number and the percentage of responses to the five questions.

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[269]Stark, *Christ-Based Leadership*, 30.

[270]Collins, *Good to Great*.

[271]Ibid., 21.

TABLE 5.15
Level 5 Responses in Members

Characteristic	Always		Regularly		Sometimes		Seldom		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent*
Take Blame	30	32.0	54	58.7	8	8.7	0	0.0	92	100.0
Admit Mistakes	35	37.0	48	51.6	8	8.6	2	2.2	93	100.0
Tell the Truth	41	47.0	36	41.4	10	11.5	0	0.0	87	100.0
Open to Others' Ideas	38	40.4	51	54.3	4	4.3	1	1.1	94	100.0
Model Authenticity	26	31.0	43	52.4	13	15.9	0	0.0	82	100.0
Accept and Challenge	15	17.2	40	46.0	31	35.6	1	1.1	87	100.0

* Some rows may total more than 100% due to rounding error.

It is notable that almost none of the respondents rated themselves as "seldom" exhibiting any of these characteristics or practices. The majority, in fact, rated themselves quite highly, saying that they either "always" or "regularly" exhibited them. If one takes these responses at face value, one would have to say that the members of Our Savior's who responded to this survey are quite exceptional leaders. However, since Stark wrote about these characteristics as being how other people see leaders, and all of this information is self-reported, there is considerable room for error in these responses, and they are probably of limited value for statistical purposes.

Regression Analysis of Questionnaires

Variables Used

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analyses were conducted to determine factors related to involvement and leadership by Our Savior's active members in church and community groups and organizations. Certain variables were transformed into binary categorical variables for this purpose. They include:

- Marital Status (Not married, Married)
- Worship Attendance (Less than Weekly/Weekly)
- Lutheran Background (Not Lutheran, Lutheran)
- Wessington Springs Resident (No/Yes)
- Believes Participation Improves Lives[272] (Does not/Does improve)
- Formal Leadership Training (Less than one week/One week or more).

Other variables were left as continuous variables. They included age, grade

attained, number of organizations, number of church groups (in which respondent

participated), and number of groups led. The remaining variable, gender, was categorical

to begin with. A test for collinearity among the independent variables was conducted.

Correlation of the independent variables did not reveal any collinearity problems.

**Factors Related to Total Church and
Community Group Involvement**

An OLS regression analysis was conducted to determine factors related to the total

number of groups and organizations in which active Our Savior's Lutheran Church

members were involved, both in the congregation and the surrounding community(ies).

The results are shown in table 5.16. Independent variables considered were gender,

educational level (grade attained), age, marital status, worship attendance, Lutheran

background, Wessington Springs residence, improves lives, and formal leadership

training. The regression model was significant, $F(9, 63) = 3.742$, $p<.01$.

Worship attendance was significantly, positively related to the number of groups

participated in. The number of groups in which members participated was greater for

those who attended worship weekly than for those who attended less than weekly, which

was the reference group. This was significant at the .05 level.

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[272]The survey question was, "To what extent do you believe your involvement in the various groups, organizations, or networks in the community improves the lives of others in the community?"

TABLE 5.16

**Results of the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression for Church Members'
Total Group/Organizational Involvement**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient b	Standardized Coefficient B	t-value
Intercept	3.217	0.000	1.342
Gender	-0.264	-0.039	-0.336
Grade Attained	0.095	0.076	0.651
Age	-0.027	-0.152	-1.282
Marital Status	0.644	0.086	0.720
Worship Attendance	1.996*	0.295	2.619
Lutheran Background	-1.212	-0.162	-1.349
Wessington Springs Resident	1.181	0.169	1.521
Believes Participation Improves Lives	1.165	0.104	0.892
Formal Leadership Training	3.306**	0.462	4.097

N = 73
$R^2 = 0.348$
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.255$
$F_{9, 63} = 3.742**$

* - Significant at the .05 level
**- Significant at the .01 level

Formal leadership training was significantly, positively related to the number of groups participated in. The number of groups in which members participated was greater for those who had a week or more of formal leadership training than for those who had less than a week (the reference group). This was significant at the .01 level.

The R^2 value of 0.348 means that the model explains 34.8% of the variance in the dependent variable. The adjusted R^2 value was 0.255

**Factors Related to Non-Congregational
Group/Organizational Involvement**

Table 5.17 shows the results of an OLS regression conducted to determine factors

related to the number of groups and organizations in which active church members were

involved beyond the congregation. These included, but were not limited to, groups and

organizations such as governmental boards and councils, arts and crafts organizations,

and service and social clubs. It also included such things as cemetery associations, which,

while church-related, are, at least in the case of Our Savior's, separate from normal

congregational functions, and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, a Lutheran fraternal

insurance and financial entity that involves a variety of people in service to the

community. Independent variables included gender, grade attained, age, marital status,

worship attendance, Lutheran background, Wessington Springs resident, improves lives,

leadership training, and church group participation. The regression model was significant,

$F(10, 61) = 3.302$, $p<.01$.

Wessington Springs residence was significantly, positively related to the number of

non-congregational groups and organizations in which members were involved. The

number of groups members participated in was greater for residents of Wessington

Springs than for non-residents. This was significant at the .05 level.

Formal leadership training was significantly, positively related to the number of

non-congregational groups and organizations in which members were involved. The

number of groups members participated in was greater for those who reported having one

or more weeks of formal leadership training than for those who had less than a week of

training. This was significant at the .01 level.

TABLE 5.17

**Results of the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression for Church Members'
Involvement in Community Groups Outside of the Congregation**

	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient	
Variables	b	B	t-value
Intercept	2.338	0.000	1.052
Gender	-0.518	-0.085	-0.724
Grade Attained	0.082	0.073	0.620
Age	-0.032	-0.201	-1.670
Marital Status	1.212	0.181	1.458
Worship Attendance	1.327	0.217	1.769
Lutheran Background	-0.628	-0.094	-0.724
Wessington Springs Resident	1.434*	0.229	1.998
Believes Participation Improves Lives	0.613	0.061	0.514
Member Church Groups	0.305	0.093	0.775
Formal Leadership Training	2.575**	0.401	3.334

N = 72
$R^2 = 0.351$
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.245$
$F_{10, 61} = 3.302**$

* - Significant at the.05 level
** - Significant at the .01 level

The R^2 value of 0.351 means that the model explains 35.1% of the variance in the

dependent variable. The adjusted R^2 value was 0.245.

**Factors Involved in Church and
Community Group Leadership**

Table 5.18 shows the results of an OLS regression conducted to determine factors

related to the total number of church or community groups in which active church

members were involved in leadership. Independent variables included gender, grade

attained, age, marital status, worship attendance, Lutheran background, formal leadership

training, and church group membership. The regression model was significant, $F(8, 81) =$

2.265, p<.05.

Church group membership was significantly, positively related to the number of

groups/organizations in which members were involved in leadership; as the number of

church groups in which participants were members increased, the total number of groups

in which members were involved in leadership also increased. This was significant at the

.01 level.

TABLE 5.18

**Results of the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression for Church Members'
Leadership Involvement in Church and Community Groups**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient b	Standardized Coefficient B	t-value
Intercept	0.340	0.000	0.305
Gender	0.403	0.125	1.176
Grade Attained	0.041	0.066	0.611
Age	0.000	-0.005	-0.440
Marital Status	0.174	0.052	0.458
Worship Attendance	-0.188	-0.058	-0.491
Lutheran Background	0.194	0.052	0.463
Member Church Groups	0.649**	0.357	3.115
Formal Leadership Training	0.578	0.165	1.500

N = 90
$R^2 = 0.183$
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.102$
$F_{8, 81} = 2.265$*

* - Significant at the.05 level
** - Significant at the .01 level

The R^2 value of 0.183 means that the model explains 18.3 percent of the variance in the dependent variable. The adjusted R^2 value was 0.102.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

Respondents to the survey tended to be slightly older than both the general area population and the worshiping congregation as a whole, due to the sampling procedure, with about one-third being over the age of eighty. The majority had at least a high-school education, were married, lived in Wessington Springs, and worshiped nearly every week.

The average respondent reported being a member of about two groups or organizations, the largest percentage being church, service, sports and recreation, business and agriculture, and the ubiquitous "other"; however, a broad range of involvement, both individual and cumulative, was reported. The average respondent reported having a leadership role in just under two organizations, with one-quarter having no leadership role at all. While neither age nor worship attendance appeared to affect this, involvement in church groups appeared to increase the likelihood of people's involvement in the community, especially in service-oriented groups.

Those surveyed tended to believe that their involvement in church and community organizations improved the lives of others in the community, and that they were effective because people listened to each other and worked together. That belief tended to increase with the level of education. Most, if they were involved in organizational leadership, believe that they were able to work with others fairly well in order to accomplish goals. Half of those surveyed said their community involvement was not at all affected by their state of health, although, predictably, the percentage of respondents reporting that their

state of health affected their community involvement increased as respondents' age increased.

In terms of how or what they learned from their community involvement, about two-thirds of respondents indicated that they had received less than a week of formal leadership training in their lives, with one-third having no training at all. This was especially true of those in younger working years and those over eighty. However, over half said that their involvement in church and community activities has helped them acquire leadership skills that they were able to use in other areas, what I have called "cross-training." On the other hand, 35% said they had experienced no such cross-training effect.

Those who responded to the survey saw themselves as exhibiting on a regular basis most of the characteristics and practices of exceptional leaders, as described by Stark and Collins. Because the answers were self-reported, with no objective tests, their responses are probably of limited usefulness. Results of the OLS regression will be summarized and interpreted in the next chapter.

**Qualitative Interviews Regarding Leadership
in Home, Church, and Community**

How do people perceive leadership in the rural community of Wessington Springs? To what extent do they see themselves as leaders? What leadership skills do they see in themselves? To what extent is leadership cross-training taking place between church and community? That is, what are church members taking from their experiences as congregational leaders out into the community, and what are they bringing back into

the congregation from their leadership experiences out in the community? Are there

differences depending on people's age and experience?

These were just a few of the questions I sought to answer or answer further in the

interviews I conducted with members of Our Savior's Lutheran Church. In addition, I had

questions that pertained specifically to two groups of people: parents with children still in

school and people sixty-five years old and above, the latter of which make up forty

percent of the population of Wessington Springs.

As a parent of four children, I find my own ability to participate in community

organizations limited, because of already competing demands of work and family. Added

to that are the many school activities that demand parents' attention, as either chauffeurs

or fans. Some families are struggling simply to make ends meet financially, and cannot

even conceive of having any real role in community life other than what is absolutely

necessary. None of this is peculiar to Wessington Springs, or even to rural America in

general; however, when leadership is stretched thin, all of the challenges tend to be more

noticeable.

Senior citizens, too, can find leadership a challenge. Many continue to work after

formal retirement, and those who do not (and even some who do) often find themselves

limited in what they can do by health or simply available energy. All of these issues

entered in as I explored leadership in congregation and community via personal

interviews with members of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Wessington Springs, SD.

The Interviews

Twelve interviews were conducted between June and November of 2006, six with

parents of children (hereafter referred to as "parents" or "younger parents,") still in

school and six with people over the age of sixty-five (some of whom are also parents of grown children, but who will be referred to simply as "senior citizens" or "seniors") who had some leadership role in the congregation and/or community. Both groups were split evenly between male and female. Some of the interviews were conducted in the pastor's study, some in members' homes, and one at the person's place of business.

One interview had to be redone, because of an error in recording. That reduced the spontaneity of the interview; however, much of the same information was collected during the second interview as during the first. I was able to remember some of the answers from the first interview, and these were brought back into the second interview for verification and to get them on record.

After transcribing the recorded interviews, I highlighted key words and phrases in the transcriptions. These words and phrases, or shortened forms of them, were placed in two tables (a separate table for each group) for comparison, with each question and each interviewee having a row or column, respectively. Each word or phrase was then given a letter of the alphabet. Similar answers were given the same letter. The answers were then grouped further, and each grouping was highlighted in a particular way, in order to facilitate categorization.

<center>The Interviewees</center>

The people I interviewed were all members of Our Savior's. Names have been changed for the sake of privacy, although, given the small-town nature of Wessington Springs, their identity could probably be readily determined by anyone familiar with the congregation and its members.

Each group consisted of six men and six women. Parents included the following: Neil is a middle-aged businessman who has been active in community and government affairs for several years. He is married with three children. Brad is a young farmer-rancher in his thirties, who is married and has two young children. Jim is also in his thirties, is married and has two small children, and works in county government. All three men were raised in the area, with Jim having moved back to town within the last few years.

Susan is a teacher in her thirties, who has two small children. Melissa is also in her thirties, is married with two children, and works in administration. She is probably the most involved in community life of the three women. Linda is a homemaker in her late twenties, who is married and has two small children. All three women grew up in or around Wessington Springs.

Among the senior citizens, Frank is semi-retired, married, and in his late sixties. He has traveled and been employed in a number of blue-collar jobs in different communities. Russ is a seventy-year-old married and retired farmer. Ed is a semi-retired professional, married, and in his late sixties. Elaine is a retired teacher, married and in her late sixties. Dorothy is also married and retired from teaching, and is in her early eighties. Mabel is retired, widowed, and has been heavily involved in both church and community activities throughout the years. All six senior citizens, in fact, have been and remain quite involved in both church and community life. All but Frank grew up in or around Wessington Springs.

Leadership as Defined by the People

When asked to define leadership, most of those interviewed chose to begin by focusing, in a more concrete fashion, on *leaders* rather than *leadership*. The most common response was simply, "Someone who can take charge," or "Someone who can get things done;" however, Linda also described a characteristic of a leader as "someone who has confidence." Russ said a leader is someone with strong principles. Ed was one of the few to actually define leadership itself, as "the ability to look over a situation or a process, and develop a plan and go with it, and implement it according to your past experience, where you have succeeded or where you have accomplished something along that line."

Those comments might lead one to believe that people view leadership as a one-person affair; however, most of the comments demonstrated the need for a leader to work in concert with others. Neil and Jim defined leadership in part as being able to show others what needs to be done and how to do it. Leadership, for Jim, was by example as much as by what one says. That idea was echoed by Frank, who said that a leader is "a guide for others who are willing to follow along and help with a certain job."

The women were even more relational in their answers. For Melissa, a leader was one who "can work with all kinds of people" and "is willing to share ideas and input." Linda described a leader as one people trust as a "source of ideas." For her a leader was "a role model . . . someone to kind of look up to." She described leadership as "something to look forward to or to learn from." Susan gave the most complete answer, defining leadership as having people work,

> not only under but with you to get a common goal reached. I think it goes with all
> the process of planning, and commitment, and just that personality, where people

look to you and go to you all the time, because they know that things will get done, to the satisfaction of the majority of the people.

Neil reflected both the individual and corporate nature of leadership, as well as the "take charge" attitude, when he defined leadership as "someone taking the bull by the horns and doing what they believe is right, and encouraging others to help in the direction that you want to go, as far as accomplishing those goals." Dorothy revealed a potential leadership issue when she immediately characterized a leader as not being "too bossy. I try not to be, and I think you have to encourage people, tell them the good parts of what we're trying to do." However, the most profound answer came from Mabel. Leadership, she said, is "when you are able to get people to do the things that come natural to them without feeling obligated or burdened."

Leadership Self-Perception

When asked, "To what extent do you consider yourself a leader?" most of those interviewed were fairly humble. All but one of the twelve respondents placed themselves at or below six on a scale of one to ten when asked to rate their leadership skills. It should be noted again that the younger parents were not picked because of their leadership roles or abilities, whereas the senior citizens were. At least two people in each group, however, responded that they didn't see themselves as strong leaders. Mabel noted that she never thought of herself as a "special leader." Brad remarked that he is not a "powerful" leader, nor did he seem himself as a "brainstormer." Russ noted that, while he has served in a leadership capacity and could "back people up," he never considered himself a leader.

Neil acknowledged the role that circumstances had played in his leadership.

Just because I was in some situations or positions in the past, I believe I *am* a leader in that aspect, because I've been in situations where I've had to, where I

was a leader of a group [such as a government body] . . . . [W]hen we'd get into some tight spot or situation, I had to form my opinion and then, I felt I [had to], not so much convince them, but influence is the word I'd like to use.

Mabel noted the role that spouses can play in encouraging leadership, as well as the responsibility involved. "My husband used to say that whoever I wanted to follow me always did. And that frightened me, in that I have to be very careful where I step."

Susan acknowledged that she had a leadership role in school: teaching, coaching, and working with children. In the broader community, however, she said her role was limited to helping others who are more acknowledged leaders. Jim led with a comment about being a parent, then followed with his idea of leadership in his job. "I try to do my job as professionally as I can. I try to show people that I'm there to help."

More than one of the senior women demonstrated the challenge of getting older. When asked if she was a leader, Elaine replied, with a sigh, "I used to be, but I don't know as I am any more. I used to be able to just go forward with preschool and everything, and everybody, it just…everything got done." Now, however, "I'm getting to the point where I am tired, so I don't . . . know if I want to be a leader any more."

When asked about particular leadership *skills, m*any of the respondents—the younger parents, especially—listed the ability to listen. Jim remarked, "I'm not one who goes out and just walks up to people and starts talking to them, but if people approach me . . . I try to take the time for everybody." Many of those interviewed described themselves as "easy to talk to" or "personable."

Several people also expressed an interest in helping people. Mabel commented, "Wherever someone needs help, if I can possibly do it, I will certainly give it to them, and if I can't, I'll find someone who can." That sentiment was echoed by Neil and Jim.

Both noted their interest, as part of their role in government, in answering people's

questions and responding to their needs, even if it was out of their particular area of

responsibility. Neil described an incident where, as a city official, he was able to respond

to a woman's concern that actually involved the county. Even though it was a county and

not a city issue, he said he went to the county commission and helped get it resolved, and

it left him with a good feeling. "I just never forgot that," he said.

Organizing was another skill that made it into some of the women's comments, in

particular. "Everything's got to be organized," Elaine said, "No matter what I'm doing. I

want to see what I have to do, and I want to organize it, get it done. Susan noted that

organization and problem solving went hand in hand with teamwork.

> I think you have to listen to your team, whether it's a small team or a community-wide team, however you're going to look at it, to see what the goal is to be reached, and try to find something that, if it's too broad a goal, then what small steps can you take to that? And I think some of the skills, you know, to listen to the people, to try to organize and . . . make smaller teams to start making those steps up to that big goal. And I think that with work people, you can be able to say, "This is what we have to do; this is why we have to do it."

At least two of the older woman highlighted encouragement as among their

leadership skills. Mabel, especially, noted, "It's easy for me to smile. It's easy for me to

give encouragement."

Other qualities surfaced. Melissa described herself as trustworthy; Brad, as

"willing to work" and having a certain amount of "outdoor knowledge" that not everyone

might have. Neil described himself as having common sense and being "able to talk to

people on their level." He also described himself as being direct. "What I say is how I

feel," he said. On the other hand, Frank and Russ commented on the necessity of trying to

get along with people and trying to see more than one side of a situation. Russ described

this as being "level-headed." All of these factors were considered to be leadership skills or traits by those interviewed.

Getting to the Source of Leadership Skills

So, from whence do these skills and traits come? How are they acquired? Specifically, where or how did these twelve people acquire the leadership skills they possess? Some of those interviewed—especially the senior citznes—said they believed leadership to be an innate quality. "I think they just come by it naturally," Dorothy reflected. That does not mean that it is effortless. She also said that leadership is something "you work at."

Frank recalled how, as a child, he got his peers up and active.

We moved quite a lot when I was in grade school, and, come into this one school, and none of the kids wanted to do anything. They wanted to sit on the porch at the school, or twiddle their thumbs and complain. So I started, "Come on, you guys, we're going to play ball or something today, or tag, or whatever. We can't sit here. Time drags on too bad, just sitting around. I think that's where I got started. 'Cause, well I only went there for…well, I went there in March when I was a seventh grader, so that wasn't very long, and then my eighth grade year I went to that school, and, well, before I was out of the seventh grade, the teacher got me aside and said, "I'm glad you came, Frank," she says, "because these kids never did anything before you came." So, I guess that's kind of what started it.

At least half of the interviewees said that they were influenced by one or more of their parents. Susan, especially, said she learned from her father.

My father, I feel, really did a lot for this town, and so I think watching him do that [was formative]. My mother, as well: she was an active member and did a lot of stuff. . . . I think a lot of it was my parents, and watching them volunteering their time or their labor, or whatever it was.

Several senior women mentioned their parents as a source of their leadership skills—especially their mothers. Dorothy recalled how her mother "worked at" raising her and her siblings after her father died. "It was tough to make a living, but she was a

good mother." Elaine recalled how her mother's words encouraged her throughout her life. "My mother always inspired me, because [she said] I could do anything I wanted to." Once, Elaine said, she contemplated taking a job for which she did not feel qualified. "I didn't think I could do it, and [her mother] had even passed away, and it was just like in my sleep that night, she or someone else came to me and said, 'You can do it,' and I called and said, 'I can do it,' and I did it."

Other sources of leadership skills were cited, as well. In this farming/ranching community 4-H has played a large role in the lives of young people and their parents alike. Two of the parents credited 4-H for their development as leaders, and one said he continues to be involved in the program, even though his children are not yet old enough to join.

Education was another factor, although Dorothy was not sure of its role. Brad noted, "Education-wise I could come back and use what I'd learned back here for people that didn't have the education. . . .Going to college . . . teaches you to be a leader, or you get left out." Frank recalled reading biographies as a child. "I read about different people and what they'd done, and I guess, so to speak, they were leaders, too."

Several of the interviewees had received formal leadership training through their work or because of their community leadership responsibilities. Those involved in government or business especially noted how training had helped enhance their leadership skills. Melissa said that she had taken leadership development classes through her work. "I feel I have some of the qualities . . . for leadership, just from the learning here." For others it was a whole combination of things. Brad said that he believed

parents, family, school, and community members were all involved: "a combination of a lot of different things."

Two interviewees differed significantly from the rest in their responses. When asked about the source of his leadership skills, Russ replied,

> Observation, I suppose, and kind of knowing people. I've kind of got the ability to know what people are thinking. Sometimes I always thought I should have been a psychiatrist, because I can kind of figure people out sometimes.

Only one out of the twelve people interviewed credited God with their leadership skills. Mabel was forthright about the source of her gifts. "Whatever I have and whatever is mine," she said, "God gave it to me. I have not been trained. It just came, and God gave it to me. It was one of my blessings."

Gauging Involvement in **Communities**

Community involvement varied widely among those interviewed. The younger parents seemed, for the most part, much more invested in their family-based **communities** than in community *organizations*. Some are involved in the community because of their work. One, in particular, is heavily involved, claiming membership in eight to ten organizations, including his own professional organization as an insurance agent.

The rest of the parents could name only three organizations, at most, to which they belonged, which ranged from agriculturally-related (4-H, Angus Producers, Farm Bureau, and various cooperatives) to professional (for teachers, certain business people, and government employees), to sports (coaching for high school sports and the community soccer league, golfing, and the trap club). One parent, however, could not name any church or community group in which she was actively involved.

Family members, on the other hand, seemed to command a good deal of attention for people in both groups. Each of the younger parents could name from six to ten different family units within their birth or extended families (including spouses' families), with whom they related at least once a month, the average being eight. Among the senior citizens, that number ranged from three to twelve, with an average of just over seven.

Church and community involvement was greater, over all, among the senior citizens interviewed than among the younger parents, with group participation ranging from three to twelve among the senior members. Most were involved in around four different groups, with a mix of church and community organizations. The level of education did seem to increase the likelihood of people being involved in more groups..

In terms of actual group *leadership*, one of the parents, Neil, claimed the most leadership roles, being an officer or board member of at least four different organizations. Next in line was Ed, who helps lead three groups. Russ claimed not to have a leadership role in any organization, even though he serves in an elected leadership position.

> I'm just a member I guess. I don't conduct any meetings or start any meetings or anything like that I'm the head of. I put my input into it. Anything that's going on I put my input into it, but I don't lead anything.

Likewise, Mabel, who is president of a community service organization, claimed not to be a leader of anything.

Leadership in the Home

With the parents, at this point, I moved to the main focus of their interviews: leadership in the home. I asked these parents the question: "How do you practice

leadership in your home?" I focused on two particular aspects of this: leadership as a parent and leadership as a spouse.

In terms of parental leadership, teaching children the ability to discern between right and wrong was a major point of agreement, although not all of the parents gave that answer. Teaching was definitely in the forefront. Three of the parents talked about teaching their children to do household or outdoor chores, both how to do them *correctly* and *why* things were done the way they were. Some talked about parental leadership in terms of simply *involving* their children in daily tasks. As Susan said about parenting her three-year-old son,

> To be a leader . . . just realizing that they can help in some small way, like if it's cooking, then he can stir something, or . . . that he's part of the team, I guess, as a family unit. When he makes a mess, he has to have responsibility to try and clean that up.

Brad observed,

> My kids are getting old enough now, or [his daughter] is six now . . . . She's taking an interest outside, and I try to explain to her what I'm doing from day to day, as far as, you know, why we get the cows in, and what we're going to do that day, or why we plant the corn at this time, and, you know, why we do other things, I guess.

Susan also talked about encouraging reading in her children, especially her three-year-old. "I think as a parent I really try, you know—and that comes with being a teacher, too, but—for [him] to take an interest in books. You know, he sees myself [sic] reading a book or a novel, and then reading to him, as well is very important."

Some of the parents also talked about parental leadership as being about building character in their children: encouraging them to be kind, raising them "with a good attitude toward others," and teaching them to be "good people." Part of this, they said,

was done by example, because, as Brad said, "they repeat everything you do at this point—good and bad."

Listening, too, was important, especially to Neil. "I'm there to listen is the main thing. They're not afraid to talk to me. We have a very open family. Sometimes you almost take a step back, but it's nice to have that trust." Finally, Linda mentioned the importance of maintaining a good relationship between herself and her husband as being part of her parental responsibility.

"How do you practice leadership as a spouse?" This question elicited a range of responses. At least two of the men acknowledged that their wives had a stronger sense of leadership in the home than they did. Jim said,

> I think [she] teaches me a lot, because she's been through a lot. She's lost a lot more family members than I have, and just showing how strong she is just kind of gives me a lot of positive . . . If I get a little negative or something, I have to take a little step back and remember that my life's, well . . . I could have it a lot worse. It sort of puts everything in perspective.

Linda talked about being supportive of her husband, "Just to try to give a hundred percent of my attitude and time and things toward him, and show him how I'd like him to be to me. I guess I never considered it a leadership role, but . . . lead how you would like others to, you know, be or lead or act . . ."

Susan acknowledged that she started out taking too much of a leadership role.

> That's one of the things that I really have to work hard with as a spouse is not to be the only spouse, I guess. . . We had to come to terms that, you know, we had to go fifty-fifty more to where it was a comfort level for both myself and for him to do some of that responsibility stuff . . . In terms of being a leader and a spouse it was to a point to where my personality just took over and I did a lot of stuff, and then I just became too overwhelmed with once we got kids and more stuff at work.

For the two interviewees who live on farms, leadership in the home also tended to mean dividing responsibilities, with the wife taking on more of the financial responsibilities. This has been a tradition in many farm families down through the years.

Family Leadership's Impact beyond the Home

I asked all six parents, "In what ways does the leadership you practice at home affect people outside your own family: in school, in groups and organizations, other gatherings of people, even the community as a whole?" Some of the interviewees answered this with respect to their children, others in terms of their own personalities or how they are in relationship to their spouse as a couple. Still others talked about the potential impact on the community in terms of the family as a whole.

Neil talked about the impact his children make, even among their peers, because of their caring attitude toward others. He also talked about how they have taken responsibility for their own faith, and how they are having an impact in their own home, by, for instance, taking the lead in reminding everyone to say grace before meals.

Linda talked about how she and her husband balance each other out and about her own attitude toward people. "I like being friendly. . . . I don't like judging people, or [to be] the first to say, "Oh, they're different," . . . and I guess maybe if people see that in the community . . . I would hope they would see *something,* other than something bad." Brad saw a definite potential for his leadership at home to have an impact in the community (for better or worse) through consistency in action.

> Oh, I would say, yeah, it does . . . I mean, how you relate with your spouse or with your kids is probably how you interact or relate with the other people that you deal with, too. . . . I mean, if they act the way they're supposed to at home they're going to act that way in public, too.

Jim talked about the ability of a family or couple to lead by example.

> I hope that somebody can see what kind of family we are and inspire them to do things, if they're having problems. Just like a friend of mine was going through problems, and I was doing a lot of . . . just trying to help him out as much as I could, giving him ideas of what to try and things that have worked for me—for Susan and me.

Susan talked about how the balance that she and her husband are working on in their family, as well as stability of a family can not only be an example for others but can actually help the family to have more energy for community involvement.

> I definitely feel that if you're strong at home, and you're comfort[able], where you have that balance . . . then when you go out . . . you're going to have some energy, you're going to have more places to share that energy, or your talent or whatever you're going to have to share.

Retirement's Effect on Community Involvement

Each of the senior citizens were asked how their involvement in community life had changed since retirement and the factors that led to that change. Answers varied. Frank and Elaine said they had become more involved in church activities. Elaine, especially noted how her involvement had changed.

> It's mostly all just with church now, where before it was Boy Scouts, YMCA, youth group . . . it was mostly all youth stuff, even years back. I just never had time to be involved in all this fun stuff.

Ed, on the other hand, said he has become more involved in community organizations, especially on boards and committees. Dorothy said she has become more involved in the community quilting group. The main factor in both cases was increased time to *be* involved. Russ said he didn't believe that his involvement had changed at all.

Frank said that his increased involvement in the congregation has come simply as a result of his commitment to the church, which he credited to his parents' encouragement.

> I think I'm interested in what's happening in the church, not only just the worship part of it, but hopefully something we're all doing here is…well, what I see is, we are getting some new members, and this interests me, because I would like to see this…I mean, some day I'm going to be gone too, and I would like to see this situation where it's going to keep on going and growing, hopefully, and I guess that's my biggest concern about it. I mean, it's something it needs to be here.

Mabel described a gradual change in her involvement, due to health.

> The first years it didn't change. I was able to do most any of the things that I did, and I did do them, but eight years ago I had cancer surgery, and I took chemotherapy, and that made me very, very sick . . . . I also lost my hearing at that time, and I still have very poor hearing, but I feel very fortunate that I am still able to do things, or I was able to do things after the surgery. But a year ago—or is it two years?—I had emergency surgery, and I did not know I was sick . . . . That left its body mark, too . . . I just feel grateful to be alive and do the things that I can do.

Increasing the Capacity of Senior
Citizens as Community Leaders

With forty percent of the population of Wessington Springs being sixty-five years and over, any attempt to increase the number of church and community leaders will likely have to involve that segment of the community. I asked the senior citizens I interviewed what needs they saw they or their peers might have "in order to be effective leaders."

Mabel mentioned the possibility of bringing people together for shared activities, combining socializing (and perhaps organizing) with things people enjoyed doing.

> Maybe bring your knitting or your crocheting, your patching, anything that you could do, and we could get the bus to bring them to a meeting place, and, although we need church affiliated gatherings, sometimes when you say, "It's at the church," you turn people off, so maybe at the Senior Center. The Senior Center is intending to build a new center, and that would be an ideal time, when

that is built, to use it to these advantages, because people would like to see it, and I think you'd get people out. They could visit and do these things, too.

Not surprisingly, needs related to declining health was one issue that was raised. Elaine, especially, mentioned its importance with regard to people of retirement age and older carrying out their role in society.

> I don't know. From what I see of the elderly, they haven't got the strength or energy to *be* leaders. The health is a big problem in this town. Even my two sisters. They're a little older than I am, but we all have arthritis, which really runs you down. More and more the women, like in church, they're saying, "We can't do it any more," so that's a tough question, especially with, like I say, so many of them having such health problems.

Dorothy reflected on the need for both patience and persistence.

> They say, "So and so won't do this, won't do that," but I think people need to realize that, everything in the church—you don't *have* to do it, right? There's a lot of that in [the women's organization], but what do they need? Maybe a good push. I don't know . . . . I think our [organization] needs to somehow or other have something that interests the young people, and I don't know how we can go about doing that.

<div align="center">

Shared Leadership as a Factor
in Involving Senior Citizens

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As mentioned earlier, the ability to share leadership was an important issue identified by members of senior centers in Canada.[273] I asked the senior members I interviewed how much of a factor they believed sharing leadership was "when seeking to involve seniors in leadership, either in the church or in the community at large." Most of them agreed that it was a factor, but to varying degrees.

Russ noted that there is an advantage in being able to share different ideas. Dorothy indicated a desire to "give people every chance to be involved, but don't push." Ed mentioned the advantage of sharing responsibilities in reducing the investment of time

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[273]Cusack, "Leadership in Seniors' Centers," 51.

by any one individual. He also mentioned a need, especially on a professional level, to

understand and be comfortable with "the advice or knowledge of the other fellow that he

was sharing with you, because you'd want to both be on the same page, otherwise you

might be just contradicting each other, which doesn't work."

Like Dorothy, Frank mentioned the challenge of sharing leadership with younger

members of the congregation.

> I see one of the problems that we have now is so many of the ones who are, well, quite a bit older than I am yet, have been doing this for so long, and they're wearing down, and, then there's guys like my age group that's stepping in and trying to fill these shoes and carry stuff on, and hopefully drag a few along, but, it's kind of hard sometimes, say, for me, to drag these younger couples along that's got kids or whatever. We're kind of on a different wavelength.

Elaine did report some success, however, in sharing leadership with

younger members of the women's organization.

> Well, I think that helps, 'cause it's just like with our women's group, where we have someone in charge of something, we have two women, and we kind of have one that's younger and one that's older, and so that way they don't feel so pressured. I mean, I'm talking about the women, you know, older even than I am. Last night we just had a meeting, and . . . the one group needed someone, so they were asking someone older, and I think that helps, to have an older one and a younger person together. The younger person was saying, you know, "I just need someone sometimes just even to do calling or things like that," and that's something the elderly person can do. If they can't do the actual physical stuff, they can do the phone calling maybe from their home or something like that.

Sharing leadership with younger people can be hampered, however, by older

leaders who refuse to let go, as Mabel noted.

> We seem to have a problem with the thoughts of our young people, and many of them that I have heard talk, and that I have spoken to, they say, "Well we can't do anything, because the seniors want to do all of it. They think we don't do it right." And so I'm wondering if we don't need to let the seniors back down to some of the lesser things and attempt to get our young people more involved.

Leadership Cross-Training Between
Home and Community

Is there cross-training that goes between what parents are learning and practicing at home and what they are learning and practicing in the community? I asked, "To what extent do what you learn about leadership in your home and in the community influence each other?"

"I'm sure it falls back and forth," said Neil. "I don't know, as you get older and you learn more things, you know, if it's the right direction, you use those skills whether you're at home or whether you're at work, or whether you're at play."

Susan agreed that success in one area is transferable to others. "If you have success in one area, you're going to take what you think worked and use that in the other places, and I think that, you know, it all intertwines . . . I don't think that one area can be successful and all of the other areas not be."

Melissa said that she has found her learning at work has had an impact both in her family and community life. "I think . . . what I've gotten through leadership training here [as work] has, you know, kind of rolled over into the house, so like I'm using what I learned here at home." As a soccer coach it helped, "just knowing how to run the little kids and keep them on track."

Brad said that simply having children has changed the way he relates to people. "I've probably learned to be more patient than I was before I had kids and a family and stuff; in which [he is] dealing with other people, instead of just getting upset and not listening. You kind of learn to listen to other people's ideas before you jump to conclusions."

Jim answered in a completely different way. Because of his job, he finds that work and home can have *too* much impact on one another, so his emphasis is on keeping them separate.

> For me, I'd have to say, using a lot of skills that I kind of tend to keep in my job, I take a lot of verbal abuse. I just don't want to let that overflow into my family life, whereas, if I had a bad day, I don't want to take it out on my kids or my wife, so I've got to kind of do it both ways, but whereas, if I had a bad day at home, you know, when I was watching kids, and then I got to work. . . I can't just take it out on somebody, you know.

<div align="center">Leadership Cross-Training
between Church and Community</div>

Senior citizens were asked the more general question, "To what extent do what you learn about leadership in your church and in community organizations influence each other?" (While this question could also have been asked of the younger parents, as it turned out, few of them were involved to any great extent in congregational groups.) This question usually had to be explained or expanded a little, as in, "How much of what you pick up about leadership in working in church organizations do you take into your work in community organizations, and vise versa?"

At least half of the seniors agreed that learning to work together was an important lesson to be learned in any situation. Dorothy, for example, noted that her experience teaching helped her, "because you have to learn to give and take." Russ noted the advantage that comes from having experience in different contexts.

> Well, you learn how people think in different situations, you know . . . you just kind of got a sixth sense about it, that in this organization people think different, but in another setting, well, they think a little different. You got to kind of compensate for that.

Ed, on the other hand, observed the similarities of how things work in different contexts.

> Well, I think . . . all of the leadership, then, as far as I'm concerned, would be kind of geared the same way, because you're used to that. And so consequently, I wouldn't be real comfortable if [one were to] try to switch completely to some other type, or other approach.

Faith's Effect on Leadership

When asked how their faith impacted their leadership, most of those interviewed agreed that their faith had an impact on who they were as individuals, as well as helping them endure difficult times and gaining some perspective on life. Linda said that for her, faith was simply something that had always been there, and that it allowed her to "take what comes." Neil agreed.

> I think my faith is always a reminder of what's important, no matter what you're doing, in the community or anywhere else. Sometimes it's a rough and rocky road, and my faith gets me through that. I have no doubt in my mind that if you have faith in God, that it makes you a different person . . . all the way around.

Melissa, too, reflected on the personal affect of faith on her life and character. She said that her faith gave her a set of values that made her an honest person and helped give her a "positive daily attitude. " Susan said that both her faith and her faith *community* helped give her what she called a "strong core."

> When you go to church, or you go to the activities there, and express your faith, then that's a strong element, you know, that there's always going to be people that will support you, whether it's a good time or a not-so-good time, you know, you always have that faith, and then at home, you know the small things like grasping hands and saying table prayer or reading books about where do kisses come from, or, you know, things like that . . . I think instills just more wholeness in a person . . . you can find that sense of security from somewhere else.

Jim said that, for him, his faith helped preserve his integrity. "Trying not to let things influence the kind of person I am. The way I look at it comes down to being professional, and yet treat people how you want to be treated, basically . . . Treat people with respect—help respect others." Ed added other positive character traits that were inspired by faith, including honesty, fairness, and the attempt to "treat each individual as they're all on the same basis."

Brad said that having children has impacted his faith life.

> Since I've gotten my kids . . . I've taken a bigger role in my faith, I'd say, trying to teach them faith is good, and you need to have it, where before we were younger adults or whatever, and didn't really think about it much until we were going to teach or be the leader or whatever and trying to teach our family, or even other young kids . . . that going to church is good, and you should go, and things like that. . . . I suppose my faith has done that to me, where I've just taken maybe more of a leadership role in my family.

Faith, like everything else, tends to mature with age. Many of the senior members observed how their faith helped them understand different points of view, even, for Russ, regarding faith itself. Mabel said that her faith helped her deal with some of the uncertainties of life, as well as the difficult decisions.

> Well I feel that faith . . . that God will show me the way, and if there's no way that I'm shown something about it, then I know that I'm on the wrong track, and I have found that too, and if you just sit back and say, "Which way shall I go?" First thing you know, you've got a brand-new idea, and you take off. And that is one of God's blessings.

Frank said that faith played a part in his decisions, but that at some point one also needs to go ahead and act. "You say a little prayer to yourself, and then you do something about it. You gotta get it done."

Summary of Findings from the Interviews

The twelve members of Our Savior's who were interviewed for this thesis represented a diversity (or what passes for diversity in Wessington Springs) of parents and senior citizens in the congregation. While most of the former were in their twenties and thirties, the latter ranged from late sixties to late eighties. Occupations (and former occupations) varied from farmers to blue-collar workers to professional people to a stay-at-home mom.

Likewise, their perceptions of leadership varied somewhat. For many, leadership meant simply to "get things done." Although most focused mainly on individual leaders, at some level being a leader also meant, as Melissa said, "to work with others toward a common goal." Leadership involved confidence, planning, organization and commitment, an ability to share ideas, to lead by example, and to inspire trust and confidence. Most rated themselves average as leaders, at best, with the ability to relate to people and listen sitting alongside the ability organize and help solve problems.

These congregational members indicated aspects of leadership that are both natural and acquired. Many said they had acquired leadership skills from their parents, but they had also learned them through workplace training and involvement in community activities such as 4-H and city government. At least one said that he learned by observing. Only one mentioned God as the ultimate source of her leadership skills.

In terms of community involvement, the younger members tended to be less involved in community organizations, with family being the most prominent **community** that they shared. Other than family, youth organizations (particularly 4-H and youth soccer) were most prominent among the organizations these parents participated in, either

with their children or with other children. Older members seemed to split their time more equally between family, church, and community, but church activities tended to retain the most commitment.

The younger parents tended to see leadership with their children in terms of teaching them right from wrong, building character and self-esteem, involving them in family tasks and chores, encouraging academic skills, and simply "enjoying watching them grow." As spouses, they worked at communication and sharing responsibilities. For the younger farmers, this tended to mean the wives taking care of the financial end of things. At least two of the men acknowledged the debt they owed to their wives; at least one of the women saw her role as "giving a hundred percent" to her husband. Leading by example showed up here, as it did in other times in the interviews.

These family members acknowledged that the leadership that they experience and practice in their homes has an impact in the community, both by providing positive examples of family life and through the actions of their children toward others, including their peers. Most also saw a reciprocity between what they learned about leadership in their homes, workplaces, and community organizations.

Seniors also acknowledged the reciprocity of leadership lessons learned in church and community, with advantages gained both from similar and differing experiences. Consistency and change were also noted in their church and community involvement, related in opposite ways to increasing time and/or decreasing energy. Health—both their own health and the health of others for whom they cared—was a concern expressed by some but not all of the senior citizens interviewed.

All of the senior citizens appeared to see an advantage to sharing leadership, due to the addition of shared ideas, time, and/or energy. Nevertheless, there was also the recognition of the need to "be on the same page" in certain situations. How exactly to achieve shared leadership was a question for some, especially with younger members. Involving younger members in the work of church and community was seen both as a need and a challenge, and from both ends of the age timeline.

Finally, these twelve members said that faith guided their leadership mostly by helping them maintain their sense of identity and purpose, by helping them to make wise decisions and act on them, and by helping them to endure difficult times. The implications of all of these findings for rural ministry and rural leadership development is the topic I will take up next.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of quality leadership for sustaining healthy, vital rural

congregations and communities can hardly be overstated. As Steinke has observed, those

who are in the best position to enhance the health of a system are

> precisely those who have been empowered to be responsible, namely the leaders.
> They are the chief stewards, they are the people who are willing to be accountable
> for the welfare of the system. They set a tone, invite collaboration, make
> decisions, map a direction, establish boundaries, encourage self-expressions,
> restrain what threatens the integrity of the whole, and keep the system's direction
> aligned with purposes.[274]

Steinke writes those comments in the course of applying family systems thinking to

congregational leadership. It is reasonable to assume that the more a congregation or any

other community resembles a family system (consider the inter-related nature of many

rural communities), the greater the leaders' potential impact. Add to that the anxiety level

generated by change and/or decline in rural communities, and the importance of healthy,

empowered leadership increases all the more.

This thesis set out to discover the potential for a single congregation, Our Savior's

Lutheran Church, to impact the leadership of the rural community in which God has

placed it by learning and demonstrating (or, as I said in chapter one, developing and

modeling) collaborative servant-leadership within its own ministries. Simply

understanding the meaning of the word *leadership*, however, can be a difficult enough

task, especially for people who like to think in more concrete terms of a single *leader*.

World Vision's Ted Engstrom attests to the challenge of defining leadership, even as he

sets out to describe the formation of Christian leaders:

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[274]Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*, xiii.

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> We are able to define what managers do, but the closest we seem to be able to come to a broadly acceptable definition of leadership is, it is what leaders do. Then when we try to define leaders, about all the agreement we get is that leaders lead.[275]

Among the twelve Lutherans interviewed for this thesis, definitions of leadership ranged from the ability to "take the bull by the horns," to the ability to work with others toward a common goal, to the more analytical view of perceiving, planning, and proceeding on the basis of past experience. Descriptions of leadership *qualities* varied, too, and included the ability to listen and get along with people, to organize, to give encouragement to others, and, finally, being "willing to work." As varied as they are, taken together, these definitions and descriptions might actually form the basis for more comprehensive model of rural leadership—or of leadership in general.

A Vision of Leadership for the Rural Community

Leadership that is active, collaborative, goal-oriented, and encouraging is surely needed in rural communities and congregations, which have 1) often seen themselves as victims of change beyond their control, 2) tended to be wary of setting long-term goals, 3) inherited an independent mindset that pulls together primarily in times of crisis, and 4) often adopted a pessimistic view of their own and others' capabilities. That this hopeful description of leadership arose from among the people of Our Savior's Lutheran Church is encouraging. Note, however, that the description came not from one person but from the combined reflections of a dozen church members. Nor is it likely that any one of them possesses skills in all four areas of leadership in equal amounts. Collaboration, therefore, appears to be the key.

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[275]Theodore W. Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 19.

More than collaboration, however, is necessary if the rural church is to have a unique role as a catalyst and/or a model for shaping community leadership in a godly way. The people of Babel collaborated and wound up in a heap of trouble (Gen 11:1-9). Rural and urban communities alike have cooperated to produce such fiascos many times since. What is needed, therefore, is a belief in God's activity in the world that goes before and is present in the midst of human activity, a *missional theology* of leadership that acknowledges rural realties while employing guiding images of God's activity in the world that both resonate with and challenge the values and experiences of rural people. Roxburg and Romanuk lay out a description of missional leadership that both discerns God in change and works to create change by transforming congregational culture.[276]

Jung et al. help provide the missional context when they balance the rural sense of community and place with a respect for otherness, strengthen the notion of God's active presence in the world with a theology of suffering and hope (i.e., the cross), and claim the power all Christians have, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit, to act in service to God and their neighbor. [277] Referencing Calvin, they assert that it is the Christian's vocation to do so. "We are called to our vocations to exercise power; we are to be the agents of Christ."[278] In Luther's view of vocation, this calling is acted out on the farm, in the marketplace, in government, as well as in the home.

Supporting Parents as Leaders in Home and Community

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[276]Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*.

[277]Jung et al., *Rural Ministry*, 127-52.

[278]Ibid., 151.

Parents have their own peculiar calling, according to Luther, in addition to whatever other vocation they may have in the world. Within that calling they have the power to shape leaders who, in turn, will respond to the calling God has given them. "Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray" (Prov 22:6). Indeed, many of those interviewed traced at least some aspect of their leadership ability to their parents. Already, some of the parents I interviewed were able to look with pride at signs that their children were indeed following their lead in both piety and service, while others still had that moment to look forward to. The parents from Our Savior's with whom I visited who were still raising their children all took seriously their calling as parents, although they did not necessarily express it *as* a calling. Worthy of note is that most of these parents spoke of their efforts at maintaining a strong relationship with their spouses, a key source of parental support that is not present in all families.[279]

Many of those interviewed were also aware of the extent to which their leadership experiences at home, at work, and in the community informed each other. So, for instance, a woman who gains experience attending to her children at home and is given training in organizational leadership at work may become more confident about taking on the responsibility of coaching her son's league soccer team. Coaching the soccer team, in the meantime, may give her new insight into her son's behavior at home or school and additional leadership experience that she can take back with her to work. Similarly, the man who pursues a degree in agriculture to become a better farmer is also better equipped to lead a 4-H group, and his experience in 4-H and in the world may help him perceive some things that he would like to teach his children.

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[279]Roehlkepartain, Scales, and Roehlkepartain, "Building Strong Families," 5.

While much of this cross-training may take place outside the normal bounds of the church, much can also be done by the church itself to support the home-based leadership training ground, especially when it comes to recognizing God's daily activity in people's lives. Anderson and Hill stress the importance of the partnership between church and home for nurturing faith in children.[280] That partnership can be used not only to teach skills for passing on Christian faith and values, but also to encourage and support parents as they struggle to meet conflicting demands of work and home, school and community. Two-thirds of the parents surveyed by Search Institute and the YMCA are hungering for that kind of support. In addition, seventy percent said that having other adults whom they can trust to spend time with their children would be a help.[281] The church can and ought to be a source for such trusting relationships.

Supporting Senior Citizens in Leadership

It is interesting to note that none of the aspects of leadership defined by those interviewed for this study are restricted by age. The ability to pursue a goal in collaboration with others in a way that it is encouraging and supportive of others is not the property of any one age group. True, it may be more difficult for some, depending on the goal. Yet, one of the best examples of community leadership in this study was an eighty-six-year-old woman, Mabel, who said that if she could not do what she was asked, she would find someone who could. Others have recognized that same quality as being a major factor in the community leadership of the much-younger Neil.

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[280]Anderson and Hill, *Frogs without Legs Can't Hear*.

[281]Roehlkepartain, Scales, and Roehlkepartain, "Building Strong Families," 9-12.

Shared leadership has been identified both in previous research and in this study as being an important factor in encouraging leadership by senior citizens—both on the older and younger ends of the spectrum. Participants in a Canadian study of seniors' centers mentioned it as an issue for them,[282] and some of the seniors I interviewed for this study mentioned it as being both helpful for accomplishing goals, and sometimes difficult to attain. Where it has been helpful, it has been an example of servanthood, where each person provides something the other cannot (or at least cannot provide as easily). It is akin to the slave exerting him/herself so that the master can be involved in the community,[283] although in this case each is a servant to the other. It also has tended to have a multiplying effect, that is, the more people were able to share leadership responsibilities, the more people were willing to take on those leadership responsibilities, with the assurance that they would not be carrying the full load.

Where, on the other hand, sharing leadership has been difficult to attain—whether in the congregation or in the larger community—it has tended to resemble what Jesus observed in the Gentiles as leadership that "lords it over" those below (e.g., in Matt 20:25). Jesus' call to servanthood is explicit and demanding: "It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant" (Matt 20:26). It is a call that was modeled by Jesus himself for his disciples, with basin and towel, on the night before his death (John 13:1-15) and in his life lived in obedience to his Father, as illustrated in the Christ hymn of Phil 2.

Servant-Leadership: Leadership

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[282]Cusack, "Leadership in Seniors' Centers," 64.

[283]Simpson, class lecture, August 29, 2002.

Prompted by a Desire to Serve

To a large extent, the people interviewed for this study exemplify what Greenleaf calls *servant-leaders*. The desire to serve moves them to lead.[284] Men and women, young and old alike who were active leaders in the community expressed a desire, first and foremost, to help people. That desire, in some cases, was passed down from generation to generation. In some cases that desire also drove them to include others in their role as servant-leaders, as Mabel, in particular, noted, "Wherever someone needs help, if I can possibly do it, I will certainly give it to them, and if I can't, I'll find someone who can."

Not all saw themselves as leaders, by any means. Humility has often been cited as a mark of a true leader. Block singles it out as a mark of stewardship as opposed to leadership.[285] In Russ' case, that humility took the form of being willing to "back people up" after assessing the merits of a proposal. In Mabel's case, it came out partly in her acknowledgement of her responsibility as a leader to "be very careful where I step."

A sense of servant-leadership was present in the responses to the questionnaire, where it asked about the reasons people believed the organizations in which they participated were effective. Over 84% responded by saying either that they helped others do their best or that people listened to each other and worked together.

The Impact of Communities of Grace

Related to an attitude of servanthood is an attitude of grace. Grace is a word that is fundamental to Lutheran theology but still too scarce in actual congregational practice. Grace as a key to effective Christian leadership is as evident today as it was in Jesus'

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[284]Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 13.

[285]Block, *Stewardship*, 41.

dealings with his disciples. Grace—God's unmerited love for the world—is the basis for our relationship with God. Likewise, grace-filled environments and relationships inspire trust, creativity, hope, and a host of other positive outcomes. They become like the handrails of a ladder that lead to growth of both the individuals and organizations.[286] That does not mean that those organizations are necessarily easy-going. Stark, for instance, views grace in leadership as meaning that "everyone is accepted and challenged to stretch further."[287]

Fortunately, there was substantial evidence of grace in the way members of Our Savior's talked about leadership. Mabel evidenced grace when she described leadership as being "able to get people to do the things that come natural to them without feeling obligated or burdened." Dorothy showed her graceful side in trying not to be "too bossy."

Grace was evident in Russ' desire to support other leaders in their endeavors. It was also evident in the shared leadership Elaine described, where older and younger women worked together to make the best use of each others' abilities. Many of those interviewed acknowledged the need for those in leadership positions to be gracious in their relationships with others.

On the other hand, there is always room for growth. While the Level 5 analysis turned out to be less than perfect, in the area where Stark in his analysis explicitly mentions grace (although I did not—see chapter 2, page 40 and chapter 4, page 103), there appeared to be either uncertainty or confusion. There was a fairly even split (40% versus 35.6%) between those who said, respectively, that they "regularly" or

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[286]Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath, *Ascent of a Leader*, 32.

[287]Stark, *Christ-Based Leadership*, 30.

"sometimes" were able to "accept and challenge [others] to stretch further." This was the only area in that set of questions where such uncertainty existed.

Some needed growth in the practice of grace is also evidenced in Mabel's observation of the way in which some older women make it hard for younger ones to step forward and take charge, because the younger ones "don't do it right." That this complaint is a common one nearly anywhere one goes does not make it any less important to address.

**The Potential of a Servant People to Exercise
Leadership in a Rural Community**

This study was conducted in order to determine the potential for members of Our Savior's Lutheran Church to have a positive impact on leadership development for the rural community in which God has placed it. I believe that that potential does exist.

A Congregation Involved in Its Community

From a purely empirical standpoint, members of Our Savior's are involved in nearly every aspect of community life in Wessington Springs and the surrounding area. The 113 active members surveyed for this study claimed membership in no less than seventy-two individual groups and organizations, not counting those grouped within each category under the label of "other." Individually, members were involved in an average of two groups or organizations each, with the maximum being fourteen. Those numbers represent a commitment to church and community that did not seem to be affected significantly by either age or health individually, although the combination of aging and poor health does serve to limit people's involvement in the community. Sharing leadership, as mentioned earlier, can serve to mitigate some of the effects of aging on

community involvement, as can using an asset-based approach to look at what people are able and perhaps even eager to do, rather than at what they cannot do.

The only two factors that appeared to relate significantly to church members' involvement in the community were worship attendance and the amount of leadership training people had. Those who worshiped weekly were likely to be involved in more groups or organizations than those who worshiped less than weekly, and those who had a week or more of formal leadership training were likely to participate in a greater number of groups and organizations in church and community.

Leadership training remained significant when the civil society universe was narrowed, so to speak, to include groups and organizations not specifically related to congregational life. While cause-and-effect cannot be determined from this research, it does appear that the level of leadership training is related in some way to people's willingness to get involved in their community. That training may come from the workplace, through school, or even via the church, although congregations have not always done a very good job of training its leaders, nor have those leaders always responded well when training is offered. Perhaps making use of some of those who are receiving leadership training in some formal manner to teach some basic concepts of collaborative leadership would be a less threatening way to go about it. Intentionally inviting cross-training of leaders in such a way not only would be a way for those who had received the training initially to further internalize it, but, given the right choice of individuals, could build upon established relationships within the congregation (yet another **community** of identify and influence) and raise the self-esteem of all concerned.

A couple of other factors should be noted with respect to members' community involvement. Members who lived in Wessington Springs itself were involved in more groups outside the congregation than were those who lived in the country or in surrounding towns. That is predictable, as there are simply more organizations in town than in the country. Flora, Flora, and Fey note that, for rural people, the sense of community may not be as much tied to a particular town as to a particular place;[288] therefore farmers and ranchers might not identify as closely with nearby towns as the residents of those towns. They may, in fact, identify with any number of towns, depending on what needs are met there: family, school, church, employment, etc. Also, those who live in the country often have schedules that inhibit them from getting heavily involved in community activities.

With regard to community leadership, the number of church groups and organizations in which members were involved was directly related to the number of organizations—in church and/or in the larger community—in which they exercised leadership. It would appear that congregational involvement beyond worship has at least some relationship to people's willingness to take up the mantle of leadership.

Ammerman, Farnsley,[289] and others have noted the cross-benefits people receive from their involvement in church and community organizations. Over half of Our Savior's active members appear to agree. Our Savior's appears typical of mainline congregations, and specifically Lutherans,[290] that value community involvement,

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[288]Flora, Flora, and Fey, *Rural Communities*, 7.

[289]Ammerman and Farnsley, *Congregation and Community*, 3.

[290]Peterson and Lee, "Religious Affiliation and Social Participation: Differences between Lutherans and Catholics."

although whether or not members of Our Savior's had a previous Lutheran church background, that is, whether they *grew up* Lutheran, did not seem to affect their community involvement.

A Congregation Called to Missional Servant-Leadership

Our Savior's Lutheran Church has a huge potential to impact community leadership by virtue of its involvement in the community. The kind of impact that involvement has, however, will be determined by the attitudes and practices congregational members bring both to their interactions within the congregation and in the community at large. Clearly, those congregational members who are involved in leadership in some way see themselves as having positive, selfless, affirming, even grace-full (although I did not use the word in the survey) leadership characteristics. Between sixty and eighty percent rated themselves highly on the Level 5 leadership scale I adapted from Stark.[291] The weakness of using that scale, as I said earlier, is that it is not designed as a tool for self-evaluation but as a way of demonstrating what other people see in two different types of leaders.

Likewise, roughly three-fourths of those surveyed said that they were at least fairly able to work together with others to achieve goals, although only a quarter said they were able to do this very well. If, as I have noted, collaboration is to be a major factor in developing leadership for the rural community, this is one area that may have to be explored further.

Collaboration, however, is something that can be modeled and taught by nearly any organization or institution. In fact, it may be that congregational leaders can learn and

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[291]Stark, *Christ-Based Leadership*, 30.

even have learned, some of these skills outside the church better than within. While

teamwork is a vital part of being the body of Christ, if we as the church want to have a

unique and even transformational impact on community leadership, we must take

seriously a missional approach that acknowledges and seeks to learn what God is doing in

our midst. Acknowledging the triune God as the model and source of our ability to work

together is one place to start. Acknowledging the Creator God as the source of our

individual leadership abilities is another.

For parents raising children in the community, acknowledging God as the source

of both their vocation as parents and of the baptismal vocation of every family member

can play a crucial role in how the family involves itself in both the church and the

community. Undertaking family service projects, for instance, is one of the four keys

Anderson and Hill mention as being essential for nurturing children in faith in a way that

they can carry into adulthood.[292] The effect on community involvement of children who

grow up watching parents who are involved in the community was evident in more than

one of the members I interviewed. That impact can only be increased when children

themselves are involved, and where they are encouraged to see God active in the world

through their service.

Significantly for me, only one out of the dozen people I interviewed for this study

volunteered their belief that God had been working behind the scenes, shaping them for a

leadership role in life. Several spoke, when asked, about the role of faith in shaping who

they are as individuals. Others talked about their faith in God as a resource in difficult

times, as the psalmist proclaims, for instance, in Ps 46:1. Only Mabel, however, readily

acknowledged God's role in determining the direction and outcome of activities that she

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[292]Anderson and Hill, *Frogs without Legs Can't Hear*, 150-60.

sought to undertake. Cultivating the notion of God's active involvement in both leadership development and community change will be crucial if Our Savior's is to have any significant impact *as a church* in forming and modeling courageous leadership of its community.

<center>Regarding the Congregation's Capacity
to Impact Rural Leadership</center>

Rural congregations have an important place in the life of their communities. It is in the congregation where life passages are celebrated, it is there where neighbors, in many cases, still meet to talk about the weather, crops, as well as family joys and sorrows. There social capital is formed and nurtured, as people from various walks of life mix and merge their ideas and their lives. There people involved in various community organizations and activities receive encouragement and share ideas. There, too, the faithful gather, week after week, to hear a word—sometimes hopeful, sometimes challenging—about a God who is present and active in their lives, who both rejoices and suffers with them, and who calls them to move beyond themselves and their particular **communities** to be salt and light to an ever-changing world.

The rural church, more, I suspect, than churches in some larger areas, is really a city on the hill. It is both a visible reminder of the presence of God's people in their midst and an illustration, for all to see and hear about, of the difference that presence can make in the lives of those who attend and are involved there. Where there appears to be no appreciable difference, people will lose interest and go their separate ways. Where it appears that something different may be going on there, a way of being with one another

that is more encouraging and perhaps more challenging in a positive way, it is possible

that people will pay attention.

Likewise, where the congregation takes the time to pay attention to changes going

on in the community and asks the crucial question about God's role in those changes,

even more can happen. Missional leadership in the congregation can help make both

things happen:

- by asking about, acknowledging, and announcing God's active presence both globally and in the local context;
- by attempting to actively join God's activity in the community;
- by working together with others to achieve goals that arise out of observing God's activity;
- and by encouraging a community spirit that revels in the gifts each member brings to the **community**, whether that be the community of the church, the town, the family, or the world.

Beyond that, missional leadership takes seriously the church's prophetic and even

redemptive role in civil society, becoming a public companion with the poor and the

outcasts of society.[293]

The seeds for such leadership are already present in Our Savior's Lutheran

Church, especially among the active members. It has a heavy investment in community

involvement; it can appreciate the gains that come from shared leadership; and it is a

source of encouragement for many—from families with young children to the elderly,

and many in between. It evidences caring for those who are poor and/or struggling in life,

although that caring is shown more often in individual ways than in public advocacy.

Congregational members are involved, for instance, and take leadership in the

local food pantry and other entities that respond to individual and community crises. The

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[293]Gary Simpson, "Church as Public Companion: Entering God's Pacific Mandate," in *Living out Our Callings in the Community*, ed. Fred Gaiser (St. Paul: Centered Life, 2006), Simpson, "God in Civil Society."

congregation itself helps support some of those efforts by its mission offerings. However, there is an advocacy aspect, as well. One member fought hard to establish a community bus service that helps transport elderly people and others who might otherwise not be able to be involved in community service. Another member teaches students in a Head Start program that helps not only children but their parents attain skills that may one day aid in their role as community leaders.

The congregation is just beginning, I believe, to explore and appreciate what God might be up to in the various **communities** to which it relates. Some changes are needed, but change has also occurred, through intentional efforts to pay attention to God's activity and by setting goals that pertain not only to its own welfare but also the welfare of the larger community.

Encouragement for the Rural Pastor

The rural pastor—any rural pastor—must take seriously his/her calling to be a missional leader among and with the congregation he/she serves, in order to help raise up other missional leaders for the sake of the community as a whole. Especially in the rural congregation, the pastor is often seen as a relative outsider who may leave at any time. On the other side of things, it must be admitted that pastors have been known to react to a call to enter rural ministry as if it were a call to exile, from which they try to extricate themselves as quickly as possible. While others will reject that description, even to a people who had been exiled to a city that was not their own, Jeremiah proclaimed, "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare"(Jer 29:7). The rural pastor can take heart from the observations of those who maintain that God not only can but *is* doing

something new through missional leadership that cultivates a biblical imagination, lives

the incarnation, proclaims that God's future is among God's people and, at the same time,

that God consistently shows up in the most apparently godforsaken places[294]—like a

cross on a garbage heap, or drought-stricken Jerauld County, South Dakota.

For Further Research: A Hypothesis and More Questions

If a hypothesis is to be formed from this research it might be this: that giving rural

congregational members, who are heavily involved in community life, an understanding

of leadership that takes into account our need to work in a grace-filled relationship with

both God and each other to bring about the change that God envisions will increase the

effectiveness of leadership throughout the community. To simplify: Teaching and

modeling a grace-based, collaboratively enacted leadership style in a single congregation

can noticeably increase effectiveness of leadership in the whole community. The seeds

are present in the people of Our Savior's now and are still being sown (see below). Still,

there is much cultivating to be done.

There is also more research that can be done. For instance, more research might

be done on the impact of collaborative leadership on people's willingness to accept

leadership responsibility. More, too, might be done to study the extent to which the

amount of leadership training available to people increases their willingness to accept

leadership roles. What kind of leadership training might be most productive for a rural

community that values independence in everyday life but has experienced the value of

pulling together in a crisis? How does one's theology impact the amount and type of

involvement in rural community life? How does one even measure that? I myself found it

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[294]Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 16-21.

difficult at times to integrate theological concepts like the grace and the cross into a sociological questionnaire, and all too easy to ignore such concepts altogether.

Given the great need for rural leadership development, the apparent shortage of formal research in this area is troublesome. One encouraging development is the appearance in 2006 of an online, peer-reviewed journal or of rural research, published by the North Central Regional Planning Commission in cooperation with Kansas State University. In 2006, the journal included articles by Cornelia Flora, Susan Fey, and Milan Wall, among others.[295] Equal opportunities for research into rural congregational leadership would be welcome.

Acting on the Research: A Leadership
Workshop for Wessington Springs

While there is great value in speculating on the role of a congregation in developing leadership potential in the community it serves, the rural resident, especially, will insist that mere speculation will not get the job done. One part of the prescription for a rural missional leadership put forward in this section is that it is *active*. More importantly, it speaks of *God's* continuing activity of redemption and transformation through the work of the church and its people. It is fitting, then, that I close this section by describing an activity that arose without my intent (although once alerted to the opportunity, I did guide it along) in the last few months before the completion of this thesis.

By coincidence or God's design, as I was completing the research for my thesis, I received an e-mail from Mark Quade, a stewardship specialist for the Evangelical

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[295]"NCRCRD Research Featured in New Online Journal," *Rural Development News* 29, no. 1 (2007) 8. The *Online Journal of Rural Research* can be found at http:www.ojrrp.org.

Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). He asked about my interest in hosting a workshop

he was calling "Growing Leaders for More Effective Ministry." It was designed, he said,

to help individuals: 1) identify their gifts for leadership in themselves and others, 2)

consider how God might use those gifts for ministry, and 3) learn how to build

community guided by the Holy Spirit. His would be an asset-based approach to

leadership development, using the book, *The Great Permission: An Asset-based Field

Guide for Congregations*,[296] which is itself based in part on Snow's book, *The Power of

Asset Mapping.*[297] The workshop would include work on specific issues in the

congregation and community and would require follow-up, led by a three-member team

that would emerge from the workshop itself.

I immediately saw this as an opportunity to pursue what my research was telling

me needed to be done: 1) give our congregational leaders—present and potential—some

formal leadership training, 2) give them specific training and experience related to

building community and collaborative leadership, and 3) do it in a positive manner, using

asset-based thinking stressing an attitude of abundance rather than the attitude of

negativity and scarcity that so often prevails in rural communities. Suddenly, research

meant to be merely exploratory in nature—a "what if?" question—was becoming

community-based *action research* with the real potential to make a difference in a wide

range of **communities**.[298]

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[296]Sitze, Hensel, and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Division for Congregational Ministries, *The Great Permission*.

[297]Snow, *The Power of Asset Mapping*.

[298]Stringer, *Action Research*, 11. Stringer describes the primary purpose of action research as "a practical tool for solving problems experienced by people in their professional, community, or private lives."

I also saw this not only as a gift to Our Savior's but as a way to introduce the whole Christian community to the benefits of grace-based, Spirit-driven, action-oriented, collaborative leadership. With the blessing of the workshop leaders from the ELCA churchwide staff, Our Savior's Intentional Leadership Development Team, and the church council, the workshop was opened up to leaders from every congregation in town. On that basis, funding was secured from the South Dakota Synod, ELCA, and the Wessington Springs Area Community Foundation. Without the multi-congregational involvement the funding would not have been as forthcoming. Keith Mundy, an assistant director of stewardship for the ELCA, was added as a second workshop leader, due to the expanded scope of the event.

The Intentional Leadership Development Team and I decided that it was best to work through congregations, instead of opening the workshop up to the whole community, for two reasons. For one thing, the congregations would provide more of a community of accountability when it came time for the follow-up part of the process. Secondly, while the presenters were both open to and experienced in leading the workshop in secular settings, focusing on congregations allowed them to come at the process from an intentionally Christian perspective. God's presence and activity in the process would be overtly acknowledged and prayerfully requested in a way that would not be as easily done in a community setting. At the same time, room would be allowed for discussion and action regarding community-wide issues. Therefore, the workshop would be congregationally based but still recognizing the community context and possibly working toward its transformation. This would, it seemed, be a workshop for missional leadership.

The workshop, led by Quade and Mundy, took place at Our Savior's on Saturday, February 3, 2007. Twenty-seven individuals from six of eight Wessington Springs congregations participated, including two pastors, the Catholic priest and a seminarian's spouse, attending in his place. Among them, as intended, were leaders from the various congregational leadership boards and councils. Also in attendance, however, were the local bank branch president, the medical center administrator and director of nursing, the community parish nurse, and the community development director. Looking around the room, one could also spot leaders from several arts, social, and service organizations. Five members of the local chapter board of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, from both the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregation and our own, also attended. Some of these I had invited specifically. All but one were leaders, in one way or another, in their congregations.

The workshop used biblical accounts along with community and personal examples to illustrate qualities of Christian leadership. Participants completed a learning styles inventory to help discern their own preferred modes of operation. The leaders described and led an asset mapping process to help people discover some of the gifts and abilities in the room and link them together in order to come up with creative means to deal with five identified community issues.

Finally, Quade and Mundy helped lay some groundwork for follow-up by the Ministerial Association. Those attending from Our Saviors met the next day after worship to begin their own follow-up discussions. Conversation afterwards with the community development director, a Thrivent board member, and a member of the Senior Citizens organization indicated that all of them saw the potential to use what they had learned

from the workshop in their community work. Within Our Savior's alone, the intent is to introduce the asset-mapping process to men's and women's groups, the church council, and other teams and committees. I intend to invite other community leaders who were present at the workshop to share their responses at an upcoming quarterly leadership breakfast sponsored by the Wessington Springs Area Community Foundation. The development director has indicated a desire to introduce the process to her board. Thus the potential for transformation begins, moving from a single Lutheran congregation to the community it serves, and back again.

EPILOGUE

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

When I reflect on the five years in which I have been enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary, the word that comes to mind is "adventure." It has indeed been an adventure: personally, professionally, and pastorally, and one which I think I can safely say has taken all twelve pastors who enrolled in it on a ride none of us could have expected.

One question with which we began this course was, "What is God up to?" That question has flavored both my studies and my ministry throughout the past five years. It may even have been in the wind before I first heard it asked out loud. Several members of this first cohort of the Doctor of Ministry Program in Congregational Mission and Leadership have told fascinating stories of how they came to be involved in the program. The apparently Spirit-driven nature of those stories is really no different, of course, than those one might hear from a first-year Master of Divinity student. One actually comes to expect these things after a while.

As in all such cases, one of the things that this adventure has affirmed for me is that God will find a way to accomplish that which God wants done. A corollary to that is that the degree of pain involved for those whom God chooses to work to accomplish those things often depends in large part on the extent to which they are willing to accept the initial proposition as fact: that God *will* find a way to accomplish that which God wants done. What, then, have I learned about what God is up to through this five-year study of congregational mission and leadership?

An Adventure Personally

In light of the above, one of the things this adventure has affirmed is my *dependence on God* to accomplish *in me* that which God wants done *through me*. Amid conflicting pressures of family, work, and studies, somehow what needed to be done got done. This is not a new discovery, but it is one that was made all the more clear with the increased workload demanded by this course of study.

It also affirmed a sense of balance in my life. For example, my mother-in-law noted that, in the midst of trying to complete a thesis draft on deadline, I took time out to help one of my sons sell popcorn for Cub Scouts. It was just something that had to be done, and, because I trusted God to accomplish what God wanted done, I was able to do what my son needed done, as well.

Related to that, reading about leadership and the research I pursued regarding leadership in families moved me to look at my own leadership role in the home and my role in shaping the leadership capacities of my children. I especially began to look at what life lessons I wanted to pass on to my son who is entering his pre-teen years, and to begin the process of doing that.

Attempts to achieve balance resulted at times in a synergy between activities of body, mind, and spirit. When I joined the wellness center at the hospital across the street at the start of a new semester of studies, I used my treadmill time to listen to a CD recording of a Luther Seminary Convocation presentation that sent me in some new directions and gave me several new resources to pursue. Intentional times of Spirit-led devotions in the classroom heightened the sense of God's presence there. Prayer for and

by my academic colleagues became an important part of the process. All in all, I believe I

grew in my self-confidence as a father, a leader, a pastor, and a man.

An Adventure Professionally

This adventure has allowed me to gain knowledge and experience in leadership,

something that I have already mentioned is sorely needed in rural communities. It has

helped me to acquire a wide knowledge-base of resources, both human and published. It

has also given me hands-on experience in research methods and, more importantly,

perhaps for future ministry, in the area of strategic planning.

Again there has been synergy. The community of Wessington Springs engaged in

a strategic planning process before we engaged in that as a cohort with our congregations.

I was privileged to be a part of the community process, which helped to feed into what

we did as a congregation. What we did as a congregation continues to have an impact in

what is going on in terms of leadership development in the community, as well.

In terms of my own leadership development, work that we have done in this

program has helped me to realize more fully some of my leadership strengths and

challenges. I discovered, for instance, through a leadership evaluation process involving

lay congregational leaders, that they had seen what I myself had perceived: that as much

as I desire to share leadership with others, some of my actions were self-defeating in that

regard. I continue to work in that area.

An Adventure in Ministry

The personal, professional, and pastoral tend to run together in this thing called ministry. In particular, this adventure has illustrated and affirmed for me the power of families to affect one's ministry and vice versa. Family relationships had a direct impact on the development of one of my projects for this course, as I studied the formation of team-based ministries and wrestled with trying to co-lead a ministry team with my wife.

Along with learning about balancing work and family, I have also been learning how to say, "I can't do it all." After Our Savior's Youth and Family Ministry Team was formed to give the volunteer youth workers a break, I still found myself doing far too much of the organizational work. It was only when I spoke up and made my limits clear that a new leader was elected, and the team took off on its own. Reminding myself of that lesson is a continuing challenge.

The movement away from direct pastoral involvement is not easy, however, in a congregation used to the pastoral model. Such a movement needs strong leadership from someone other than the pastor (or at least in addition to him/her). That was the case in ministry teams formed as a result of the strategic planning process Our Savior's pursued as part of my coursework. In one instance, the leadership came from a council member; in another it came from the community parish nurse. Continued follow-up proved essential in moving the teams toward their agreed-upon goals.

Nevertheless, it was follow-up done in collaboration with others. Planning for the "Growing Leaders" workshop was both inspired by the ideas of the Intentional Leadership Development team and approved by them. It was funded in part by synod and community grants and led by ELCA Churchwide staff. While I tend to be collegial by

nature, learning to do planning in this way is one significant result of my work in this D. Min. program.

The work that the congregation and I have done together in the past five years has served to strengthen my belief that the most effective things that go on during my ministry are done without much effort on my part. Time and again I have been reminded of the Holy Spirit's activity in the church as things just "seem to happen" at the right time. Likewise, some things that I have introduced with much fanfare have gone nowhere. Ministry is always, for me, a humbling experience.

My research on leadership allowed me to enter into some meaningful discussions with people with whom I might not normally have visited at such length or in such depth. It is hard to know what dividends that may pay further down the road. For now it is enough that I have affirmed them as members of the body of Christ, gifted in their own particular ways for ministry, and they have taught me something about the complexities of leadership in the congregation and the community.

Last but not least, this course has taught me about the value of using social-science research to enhance the mission of the church. Even before I launched into the deeper research required for this thesis, I was using descriptive analysis to help the congregation understand both itself and its community better. Having access to area demographics actually became a source of encouragement at one point, when I was able to show that Our Savior's had at least double the percentage of children under five among its regular worshipers as there was in the city or county as a whole. Encouraging demographics are not always easy to find in a rural community, so this was an unexpected surprise for this rural pastor—and probably for the congregation, as well.

An Adventure for the Congregation

As surely as this program has been an adventure for me, it has also been an adventure for the congregation I serve, Our Savior's Lutheran Church. The congregation took a bold step when they not only voted to call a pastor who would be engaged in Doctor of Ministry studies, they also voted to pay half of my tuition. Out of that they gained primarily two things.

Discovering a Greater Sense of Identity and Purpose

In agreeing to enter into a strategic planning process with me, the congregation and its council embarked upon a process that led to forming a new mission statement and new goals for ministry. While mission and goal statements can be ephemeral things and can take a while to take hold, there are indications of some movement in that direction, including one individual's attempt to restate the mission statement in a shorter form, something that I will look at carefully in the next year. I suspect that a statement that truly comes from the people can be more effective than one attained through a formal process, especially among rural people intent on speaking clearly in their own particular language.

One area where the congregation's sense of mission has improved is in the way it spends its money. Money can be a major issue for congregations; however, in the past four years, Our Savior's has moved steadily toward a goal that was *only* a goal before I came: giving ten percent of its income to work outside the congregation. I believe that this year we will actually make it. I credit the renewed sense of mission encouraged by this program as being at least partly responsible for this movement.

Expanding Variety and Involvement
in Congregational Ministry

One of the first results in the congregation from my work in the Doctor of
Ministry program in Congregational Leadership and Mission was the formation of the
Youth and Family Ministry Team, which I mentioned above. Previously the congregation
had no team or committee responsible for ministry to or with its youth. One volunteer
alone was doing most of the work. The Youth and Family Ministry Team not only took
over responsibility for overseeing that work, but, inspired by a baptismal youth and
family ministry model, it expanded the concept of youth ministry to include helping
families pass on their faith to their children. Formation of the Youth and Family Ministry
Team was a direct result of a personal review of my own leadership development, which
included a healthy dose of ministry by the congregation while I was growing up in the
church.

Our Savior's youth and family ministry, in turn, has, I believe, been responsible
for renewed involvement, both in worship and in Sunday school, by families with young
children, due to an intentional investment of both time and money in affirming the role of
parents in nurturing their children's faith. In 2006, Our Savior's had a preschool Sunday
school class for the first time in several years, partly, I expect, due to a miniature baby
boom in the congregation and community, but also due, in my opinion, to this intentional
focus on passing on the faith in families. More research could be done to determine the
source of this growth in involvement.

In addition to providing the impetus for hosting a congregational leadership
workshop, the congregational strategic planning process referred to earlier provided a
basis, among other things, for involving congregational members in the fledgling

community parish nurse program. Members of the Community Caring Team, which arose out of the process, found a concrete role in and received training through the parish nurse program. Many of those team members are now involved in making regular visits to shut-ins and other members desiring congregational attention, and others are being recruited to serve, and one recently was elected to the church council for the first time.

Congregational involvement in the parish nurse program impacts not only its own members but the whole community of Wessington Springs and its outlying areas, as volunteers interact with members of other local congregations through the community Health Cabinet. That impact may be spread even further as congregational members share their stories, insights, and resources with other congregations around the South Dakota Synod. Some initial steps have been taken, for example, toward offering a synod-wide rural caring ministries conference next fall, in order to showcase our community's parish nurse and prayer shawl ministries along with ministries in rural congregations throughout the state. Obviously, the adventure is far from over!

The Process as an Adventure

I would expect that the process of pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree is an adventure however one might go through it. This particular process was made even more so by at least three factors: the initiation of a cohort-based model of instruction, in which twelve students moved through the entire D. Min. program together, as one class, and the fact that I was part of the initial cohort of both that *model* and a whole new program in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary. Students were, quite literally, helping to create both the curriculum and the operators' manual for that program. Often curriculum was in the process of being written as we were experiencing it

(borrowing from industry, one might call it "just-in-time" curriculum formation), and feedback solicited from the cohort throughout the process has helped to further shape and improve both the curriculum and how it is delivered.

Study of Statistics Raises Program's Demands

Any D. Min. program can be challenging, with 2500 or more pages of reading to do each semester, along with papers and projects to complete, on top of the regular demands of work and family. One thing that made this program more challenging for most of us was the inclusion of two semesters of statistics. David Stockburger's observation proved true that for many students, "statistics is initially greeted with mixed feelings of fear and anger."

> In some cases, it is the first time that course material does not come easily to the student, with the student not understanding everything the instructor says. Panic sets in, tears flow, or perhaps the student is simply never seen in a statistics classroom again.[1]

I personally remember a heated phone conversation with a student instructor, arising out of my own frustration with the material, which for me bears witness to those observations. Fortunately, most of the cohort remained in the program despite those frustrations, and the result is that we have been trained in some sociological tools that, as mentioned, can be both extremely helpful and often extremely expensive to acquire for congregations interested in engaging in mission in the local context.

The Cohort as Community for Learning and Growth

That brings me to the major difference I have seen in this program from some other D. Min. programs I have known about. In many programs I am familiar with the

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[1] Stockburger, *Introductory Statistics*, x.

student is virtually on his or her own, with the aid of a single advisor. The student takes various seminars at various times, as they apply to his/her studies. He/she enters the research phase with this knowledge in hand, but with little or no idea of either research methodology or thesis design. This I have witnessed personally in visiting with—indeed, in a way, mentoring—a D. Min. student in another process.

In this D. Min. program, careful attention was paid to helping students understand and move through the process. One professor remained with the cohort for the bulk of the process as the lead teacher, bringing in other professors and instructors as needed and logistics dictated. Most importantly, the cohort model reduced (although it did not totally eliminate) the feeling of isolation that can plague a pastor engaged in Doctor of Ministry studies. Unfortunately, unfamiliarity with the D. Min. degree or too much familiarity with older models has left some pastors and even synod officials with a sense of skepticism about the program and those who pursue it. Having nine to eleven other people going through the process at the same time helped assure each of us that at least *someone* understood.

Another unique feature of this program was the inclusion of regular intercessory prayer. It helped us become a more caring community. More than once I found myself reaching out to D. Min. colleagues in search of answers or simply a listening ear in the midst of difficult situations. As our research developed for our theses, I also found myself borrowing both ideas and sources from them, as well. As ten out of twelve students who began the program in 2002 move with relative confidence toward completion of their degrees in 2007, a process that was designed to respond to the eighty percent dropout rate found in some other D. Min. programs across the country appears to have worked.

Meanwhile, my friend who is struggling under the old model is far less confident regarding his fate. The cohort model is clearly one with possibilities for growing future leaders in congregational mission.

That is not to say that the cohort model has been without its own challenges. The fact that we were all together on the same schedule may have limited creativity in some cases, or forced some research processes to proceed before the time was right. On the other hand, there was an amazing amount of flexibility, and God's hand was evident even in those processes that initially seemed out of sync with reality, moving us again to respond with awe and gratitude to the evidence of God's reign among us.

In many ways, this program has exemplified what Robert Banks refers to as a missional model of theological education, a process combining the intellectual, spiritual, practical, and communal formation "undertaken with a view of what God is doing in the world, considered from a global perspective."[2] Certainly, any program of theological studies that keeps before the students the question of God's vision and purpose in the world is bound to be an adventure.

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[2]Robert J. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 142.

APPENDIX A

COMMUNITIES MAPPING PROCESS WORKSHEET

MAPPING YOUR COMMUNITIES
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
April 30, 2006

1. Town where you live and/or receive your mail: _____ .

2. Town where your telephone exchange is (If different from your mailing address). _____ .

3. Town(s) where you are employed (if applicable): _____ .

4. Town where your children attend school (If different from your mailing address): _____ .

5. Towns where you shop: _____ .

6. Congregation to which you belong: _____ .

7. With whom do you regularly correspond (yearly or more) who lives the farthest away from Wessington Springs? _____ . Where is the person located? _____ .

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8. List below, under their respective categories, the various families, groups, organizations or other networks of which you are a part:

Family Surnames

Prof. Organizations

Gover't. Boards/Councils

Alumni Associations

Ag. Organizations

Arts Organizations

Service Clubs/Orgs.

Coops.

Academic Clubs/Orgs.

Social Clubs

Rec. Clubs

Sports Teams

Sports Clubs

Youth Clubs/Organizations

Political Orgs.

Veterans Organizations

Fraternal Orgs.

Labor Unions

Support Groups

Health/Wellness Clubs

Interest Groups

Internet Chat Services

Other

APPENDIX B

LEADERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey on Church and Community Leadership

PART I.	Background Information

Please fill in one circle per question. Please shade circles completely like •

Q1. Are you:
   ○ Female   ○ Male

Q2. Current Marital Status
   ○ Married   ○ Divorced   ○ Never Married
   ○ Widowed   ○ Separated   ○ Don't Know

Q3. What is the highest grade in school that you finished and received credit for? (Choose one.)
   ○ No School   ○ 8th Grade   ○ 4 Yr College Work
   ○ 1st Grade   ○ 9th Grade   ○ 1 Yr Graduate Wk
   ○ 2nd Grade   ○ 10th Grade   ○ 2 Yr Graduate Wk
   ○ 3rd Grade   ○ 11th Grade   ○ 3 Yr Graduate Wk
   ○ 4th Grade   ○ 12th Grade   ○ 4 Yr Graduate Wk
   ○ 5th Grade   ○ 1 Yr College Work   ○ Other _____
   ○ 6th Grade   ○ 2 Yr College Work   ○ Don't Know
   ○ 7th Grade   ○ 3 Yr College Work

Q4. On average, how many times do you attend worship services in this congregation?
   ○ Usually every week   ○ Several times per year
   ○ Several times a month   ○ Once a year or less
   ○ About once a month   ○ Other _____

Q5. Which one of the following statements describes your church experience prior to becoming a member of this congregation?

   ○ I have always been a member of Our Savior's or the congregations that formed it.
   ○ I was a member of another Lutheran congregation before joining here.
   ○ I was a member of a church in another Christian denomination
           Please identify the denomination _____
   ○ I was not a member of any church prior to joining this one
   ○ Other _____
   ○ Not applicable

Q6. In what year were you born? Please complete the year.   19_____

Q7. Where do you live?
   ○ Wessington   ○ Rural Jerauld   ○ Aurora County
      Springs City   County   ○ Buffalo County
   ○ Alpena Village   ○ Hand County   ○ Sanborn County
   ○ Lane Village   ○ Beadle County

Q8. Are you a native of the place you now live?
   ○ Yes   ○ No

Survey on Church and Community Leadership

PART II.	Your Community Involvement in Groups and Organizations

Q9. *Please indicate the groups, organizations, or networks in which you are involved.*

Government
- City Government
- County Government
- Township Board
- School Board
- County Commission
- Election Board
- Other _____

Support Groups
- Alzheimer's
- AA
- Weight Watchers
- Low Vision
- Grief
- Cancer
- Other _____

Recreation/Sports
- Springs Country Club
- Foothills Rodeo Assoc.
- Bowling Team
- Trap Club
- Athletic Boosters
- Hunting/Wildlife Clubs
- Other _____

Business & Agriculture
- Chamber of Commerce
- Farm Bureau
- Farmers Union
- Development Assn.
- Amkota Cooperative
- Wheat Growers
- Other _____

Service Groups & Orgs.
- Volunteer Fire Dept.
- Relay for Life
- Prayer Shawl Group
- Community Club
- PEO Sisterhood
- Thrivent Chapter
- Other _____

Church
- Women's Organization
- Church Council
- Ministry Teams
- Youth Group
- Men's Prayer Breakfast
- Cemetery Associations
- Other _____

Professional
- Education
- Music
- Law
- Medicine
- Gov't. Employees
- Labor Union
- Other _____

Arts & Crafts
- SACOTA
- Musical Group(s)
- Music Boosters
- Rubber Stamp Club
- Flowers & Garden Club
- Quilters
- Other _____

Youth (All ages answer)
- EYE
- 4-H
- Sports Team(s) _____
- Girl Scouts
- FBLA
- FCCLA
- Other _____

Health
- Horizon Health Board
- Weskota Manor Board
- Hospital Board
- Health Cabinet
- Frnds. of Mental Health
- Hospice
- Other _____

Social/Special Interest
- Red Hat Society
- Tuesday Sues
- Fraternity/Sorority
- Veterans Organizations
- Alumni Association
- CFEL
- Other _____

Other
- Opera House Boosters
- Shakespeare Gardens
- Historical Society
- Springs Bus Board
- Food Pantry
- Political Party
- Other _____

Q10 In how many different groups and organizations are you involved? (Count all marked above. Please include multiples of same type of group, such as music or sports.)

Place number here. _____

Q11 In how many of the groups/organizations marked above have you held a leadership position such as an officer, board member, team captain, coach or administrator?

Place number here. _____

Survey on Church and Community Leadership

PART III.	Your Leadership Experiences

Please select one choice per question.

Q 12   To what extent do you believe that your involvement in the various groups, organizations, or networks in the community improves the lives of others in the community?

    1 Very much so
    2 Somewhat
    3 Hardly any
    4 No improvement
    5 I don't know.

Q 13   Of the groups or organizations you participate in that have the most positive influence in the community, what do you believe is the *most significant* reason for that influence?

    1 I work very hard to accomplish what I want to get done.
    2 Others listen to me and follow my lead.
    3 I help others to do their best.
    4 People listen to each other and work together.
    5 I don't know or not applicable.

Q 14   In those groups or organizations in which you hold a leadership position, to what extent are you able to work with others to achieve agreed-upon goals?

    1 Extremely well
    2 Fairly well
    3 Not very well
    4 Poorly
    5 I did not hold a leadership position

Q 15 To what extent does your health limit your ability to be an effective participant in the groups, organizations, or networks of which you are a part?

    1 Very much so
    2 Somewhat
    3 Hardly any
    4 Not at all
    5 I don't know.

Q 16 Please check the statement with which you most closely agree.

    1 My involvement in my church has helped me acquire leadership skills that I
      have used in other community organizations.
    2 My involvement in community organizations has helped me acquire leadership skills
      that I have used in my church.
    3 Both 1 and 2 are true.
    4 Neither 1 nor 2 are true

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PART IV.	Your Leadership Practices

Please indicate how often you engage in the following practices when you are in a leadership position by circling the number that corresponds to your response.

	Always	Regularly	Sometimes	Seldom	Don't Know
Q17. I take appropriate blame and responsibility for my actions.	1	2	3	4	8
Q18. I admit my mistakes and assume that no one is perfect.	1	2	3	4	8
Q19. I tell the truth, even when it reflects badly on myself or causes a setback for the organization.	1	2	3	4	8
Q20 I am open to others' ideas and will quickly give credit where it is due.	1	2	3	4	8
Q21 I model an authenticity that encourages trust.	1	2	3	4	8
Q22 I accept everyone and challenge them to stretch further.	1	2	3	4	8

Part V	Formal Leadership Training Received

Please mark the one best response.

Q 23   How much total formal training (workshops, conferences, classes, etc.) in leadership, communication, or cooperation have you received as a result of your involvement in community organizations, groups, or networks other than your church?

☐ Several weeks,
☐ One to two weeks
☐ Less than one week
☐ Less than one day
☐ None?"

Thank you for your help!

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW
ON COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Parents with School-age Children

1. How would you define leadership?

2. To what extent do you consider yourself a leader?
    a. On a scale of one to ten, where one is having absolutely no leadership skills, and ten is having excellent leadership skills, how would you rate your leadership skills?
    b. What leadership skills do you possess?

3. Where did you acquire your leadership skills?

4. With how many different groups of people do you associate?
    a. Family relations: With how many different family units within your extended family do you relate at least once a month?
    b. Community organizations
    c. Youth organizations
    d. Farm or Business organizations
    e. Professional organizations
    f. Recreational groups
    g. Church groups
    h. Political parties/organizations
    i. Support networks

5. To what extent are you involved as a leader in any of these groups?

6. In what ways do you practice leadership in your home?
    a. As a parent.
    b. As a spouse

7. In what ways does the leadership you practice at home affects people outside your own family: in school, in groups and organizations, other gatherings of people, even the community as a whole?

8. To what extent do what you learn about leadership in your home and in the community influence each other?

9. In what ways does your faith affect your leadership?

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW ON COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Senior Citizens/Retirement Age

1. How would you define leadership?

2. To what extent do you consider yourself a leader?
 a. On a scale of one to ten, where one is having absolutely no leadership skills, and ten is having excellent leadership skills, how would you rate your leadership skills?
 b. What leadership skills do you possess?

3. Where did you acquire your leadership skills?

4. With how many different groups of people do you associate?
 a. Family relations: With how many different family units within your extended family do you relate at least once a month?
 b. Community organizations
 c. Youth organizations
 d. Farm or Business organizations
 e. Professional organizations
 f.. Recreational groups
 g. Church groups
 h. Political parties/organizations
 i. Support networks

5. To what extent are you involved as a leader in any of these groups?

6. How has your participation changed since retirement?

7. Given the proportion of retired people in our congregation and community, a lot of the burden of leadership will probably have to fall on them. Are they any particular needs that you see you/they might have in order to be effective leaders?

8. In a study of senior citizen centers in Canada, people said that they saw a need for more people to share leadership in their organization. How much of a factor do you think that is when one seeks to involve seniors in leadership, either in the church or the community? (How easy, difficult, necessary and/or helpful is it?)

9. To what extent do what you learn about leadership in your church and in community organizations influence each other?

10. In what ways does your faith affect your leadership?

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