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Christine D. Chapman*

A STORY BEHIND THE DATA

Introduction

This article presents a case study of *Project 2000* data used to develop a profile specifically for a particular congregation. A megachurch in southwest Atlanta explored its profile against the total sample of African-American congregations nationally and against its denominational sample to pursue fundamental questions related to spiritual vitality and social outreach programming. The purpose of this congregational study is to examine ways spiritual vitality impacts the congregation and how important this is to the effectiveness of its social outreach programs.

Background

The objective of ITC/FaithFactor Project 2000¹ is to gain a comprehensive understanding of Black and predominately Black congregations across the nation. While this was achieved, the *Project 2000* study does not reflect what the findings look like when translated into actual church experience. This study compares and contrasts a particular church against *Project 2000* findings in order to compare an individual congregation's profile against the national profile of Black congregations.

Additionally, the consequence and value of churches as agents of spiritual and social transformation represents a crit-

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¹See Michael I.N. Dash, Stephen C. Rasor and Christine D. Chapman, "ITC/FaithFactor Project 2000 Study of Black Churches" (Atlanta: ITC, 2001).

ical area of inquiry. Growing social science data point to a strong link between spiritual vitality and demonstrated social outreach. Greater understanding of this role is needed to enable congregations to perceive the interaction between religious commitment and social change.

The goal of this case study is to compare and contrast data developed through *Project 2000* with a particular church experience. The purpose is:

- To describe a setting for ministry of a Black megachurch;
- To demonstrate ways in which social outreach is impacted by spiritual vitality; and
- To reveal the importance of spirituality and its linkage with congregational social service ministries.

Methods and Analysis

This church was chosen because the researcher is a member who also disseminates *Project 2000* data at the national level. Seeking to model approaches in which congregations can use data derived from *Project 2000*, the writer employed essential questions to enable self-examination. These were developed by Michael I. N. Dash, director of *Project 2000* who also directs ITC's Ministry and Context. The questions are:

- Does the denominational and national profile reflect what you know and experience in this congregation?
- What are those items in the profile described that confirm your reality?
- What are those items or situations described that are different, and what is the extent of the difference or variance?

In particular, the congregation in this case study wanted to

explore the following:

- How does our congregation express spiritual vitality?
- How does our spiritual vitality impact our social outreach programming?

The case study included interviews with church staff, lay leaders, volunteers, and community members; participant observation of church services, outreach programs, meetings, and activities; descriptions of the church's outreach ministries; collection of church documents and budget information; and an assessment of community demographics, needs, and resources.

Part I of this study is an examination of Cascade United Methodist Church using thirteen categories developed by ITC/FaithFactor Project 2000 Study of Black Churches. The data reflect both the total sample and United Methodist information and provide the context for information specific to this church. Through comparison with Cascade's data to United Methodist Church (UMC) data and total *Project 2000* sample data, a framework is developed for understanding the relationship between spiritual vitality and its impact on congregational social service ministries. Part II is a further analysis of the characteristics of spiritual vitality and the number and type of social outreach programs at Cascade UMC. The analysis provides learning about Cascade's role in spiritual and social transformation.

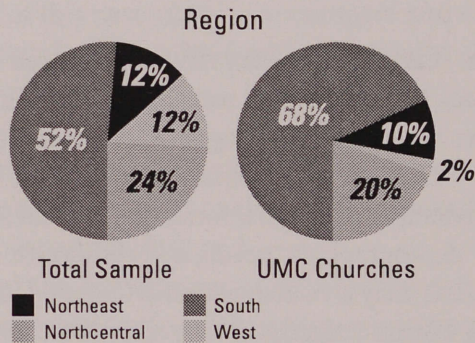
Part I

Examination of Data

Distribution of Black Churches by Region in the USA

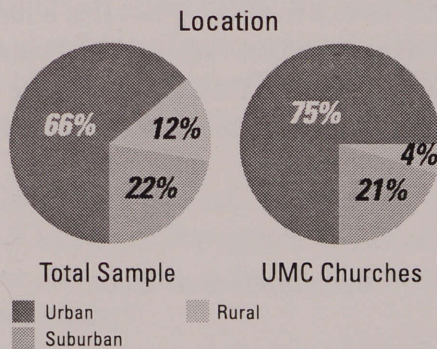
Over half of the Black churches in the total sample, including the UMC denomination, are located in the South. The

Methodist denomination, founded in Georgia in the late 1700s, has a significant proportion of its congregations in the South. Cascade UMC was established in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1926.



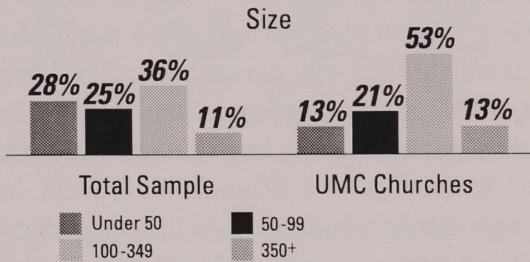
Distribution of Churches in Rural-Urban Locations

Most of the Black churches, including the UMC denomination, are located in urban areas. Cascade UMC is in southwest Atlanta in a first-ring suburban location.



Size of Congregations Among Black Churches

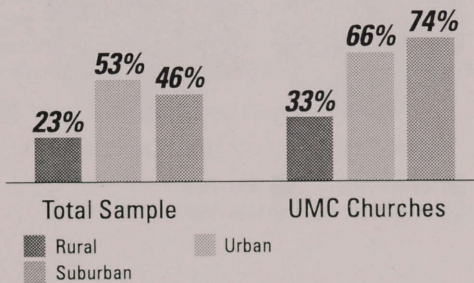
Over half of the churches in the total sample of Black churches have less than 100 regularly participating adult members (28 percent have under fifty members). However, Black congregations in the UMC denomination tend to be larger with less than 30 percent having under 100 members. Cascade UMC has over 5000 members and is categorized as a megachurch.



Location of Churches of 100 or More Active Adult Members

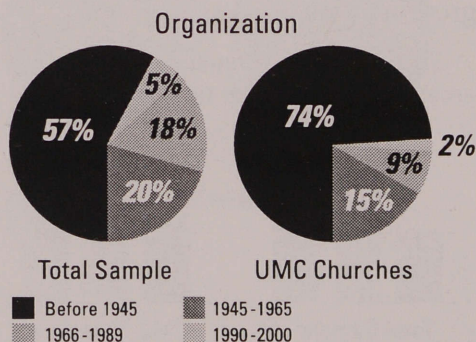
Black churches of 100 or more active adult members (able to support a full-time pastor) are more likely located in cities and suburbs than in small towns and rural areas. The greatest proportion of these larger churches of the UMC denomination are in suburban and urban areas. Cascade UMC has built larger facilities three times and has moved twice in order to accommodate its growing congregation.

Size of Church & Type of Community
Percent of Churches with 100+ Active Members



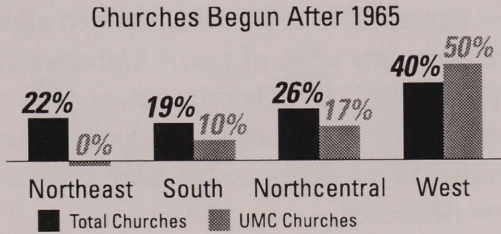
Year Congregation Organized

Over half of the churches in the total sample of Black churches were organized before 1945. Few UMC churches have been organized within the last decade. Cascade UMC began in 1926 in a store building and erected its first church structure in 1927. In 1939, Cascade began work on a new building, but this effort was suspended in December 1941 due to World War II. The new sanctuary was completed in 1947 with a seating capacity of 425. Between 1948 and 1954, the church grew so rapidly that another sanctuary was built in 1955 with a church school building and parsonage. But by 1970 the process of racial transition had begun, and the congregation grew smaller. A large portion of Cascade's facilities was sold to the Board of Education in Atlanta. In 1974, a dynamic, young, Black minister with proven expertise in transitional church ministry was appointed pastor. Cascade began to grow again. The congregation outgrew its church building, having to hold two morning services and install television monitors in order to accommodate the growing membership. In 1986, it became necessary to begin building again—a "cathedral" to house its 2600 members. Cascade is the first predominantly Black United Methodist Church to build a structure of this size and magnitude since 1970.



Year Churches Organized in Different Regions

Black churches organized after 1965 are more likely located in the western United States. This recent westward expansion in numbers includes the UMC denomination.

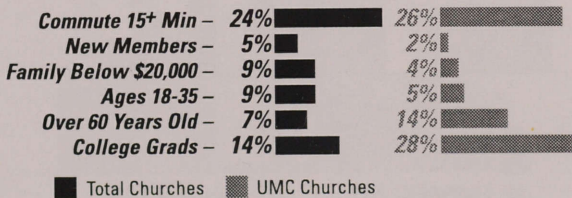


Characteristics of Actively Participating Adults

Distribution of Member Characteristics

UMC congregational participants reflect demographic characteristics similar to the total sample of Black churches only in the area of time to commute. With UMC congregations there is a slight variance in new members, families below \$20,000 in annual income, number of congregants between eighteen and thirty-five and over sixty years of age, and number of college graduates.

Demographic Profiles

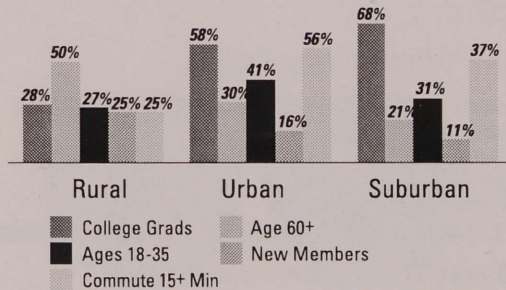


Distribution of Member Characteristics by Rural-Urban-Suburban Location

Among the three locations, there is a significant difference in the presence of college graduates in suburban and urban areas compared to rural areas. Urban churches have slightly higher percentages of persons between eighteen and thirty-five and over sixty years of age. A higher percentage of persons attending UMC churches in urban areas are more likely to commute over fifteen minutes to church as those in rural and suburban areas. Rural congregations have a greater number of new members.

As a suburban church, Cascade UMC is representative of UMC findings with even higher percentages in all areas. Factors contributing to this include proximity to the Atlanta University Center, the largest consortium of predominantly Black colleges in the nation; the extraordinary economic growth of Atlanta during the last twenty years; and the subsequent phenomenal growth of the black middle- and upper-middle class in the Atlanta area. Cascade UMC is physically located in an area of Atlanta known as Cascade Heights.

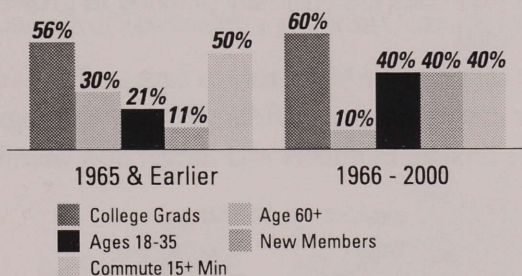
Demographic Profiles



Distribution of Member Characteristics by Year Church Was Organized

In a comparison of churches established before 1965 and since, the percentage varies significantly in the surveyed items.

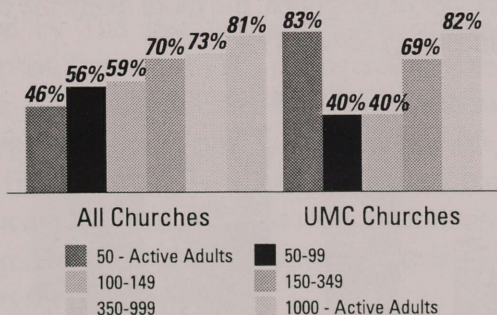
Demographic Profiles



Membership Changes in Black Churches Since 1995

A small majority of the Black churches, including those of the UMC denomination, has increased at least 5 percent over the last five years. Only a small minority of Black churches has decreased 5 percent or more in membership since 1995. Cascade UMC has experienced an extraordinary growth rate of 71 percent since 1994.

Growth in Membership by Size
Percentage of Churches that Have Grown Since 1995

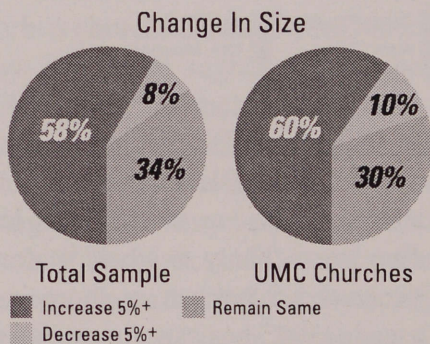


Characteristics of Growing Churches

Percentage of Growth by Size

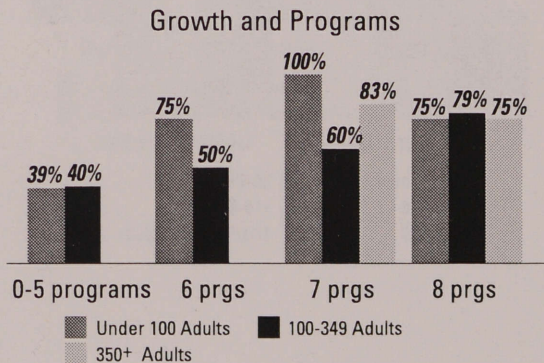
In the total sample of Black churches, including the UMC denomination, the larger the membership, the more likely a 5 percent or more growth occurred in the last five years. Reasons for this include:

- Larger churches are typically situated in growing population areas.
- Larger churches are better able to have staff and volunteers.
- Larger churches have a wider diversity of programs that engage present members and attract new members.



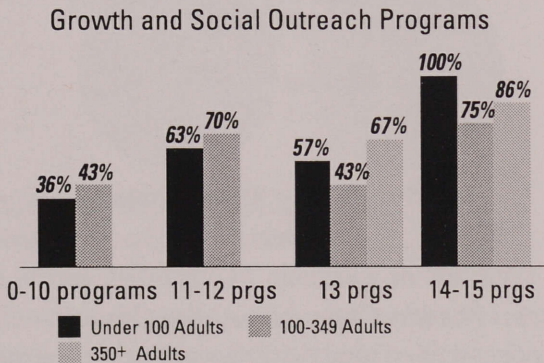
Growth and Diversity Since 1995

Larger churches offer greater variety of programs to members. However, even in churches of different sizes, the greater the number of programs, the more likely the church has grown in membership since 1995.



Growth and Social Outreach Programs

Larger churches offer a greater variety of programs to members. However, even in churches of different sizes, the greater the number of programs, the more likely the church has grown since 1995. A complete analysis of Cascade's social outreach programming's relationship to spirituality is discussed in Part II: Analysis of Spirituality and Social Outreach Programming.

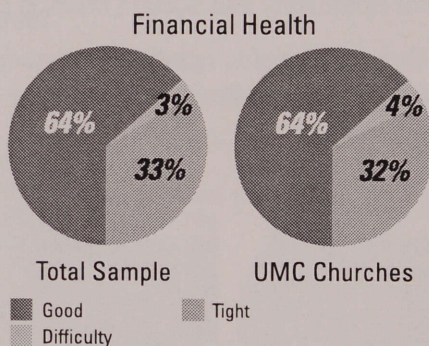


Financial Health of Black Churches

Financial Health

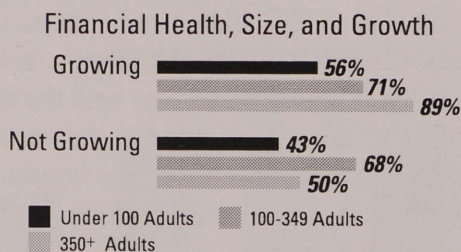
A majority of the full sample of Black churches surveyed is financially stable. It seems that only a small percentage of Black congregations are in serious difficulty. A recent study completed by The Institute of Church Administration and Management, located at ITC, discovered that associated giving in the Black Church includes the church member's age, income, spirituality, religiosity, and how well the church manages its financial affairs. What appears to motivate Black church members to give to their respective houses of worship is their spirituality and commitment to keep God's covenant to support the church.

Commensurate with its extraordinary growth pattern, Cascade has experienced strong financial growth on the average of a 13 percent increase in giving patterns over the past five years. Several factors contribute to this financial stability: superior record keeping, use of demographic information in fundraising efforts, and a formal stewardship program.



Financial Health, Church Size, and Growth



Larger churches of the UMC denomination are more likely to be in good financial health than smaller churches. Similarly, churches that have grown 5 percent or more since 1995 are more likely to demonstrate good financial health. Even among growing churches, however, the larger churches still have an advantage. Cascade with its 71 percent growth rate since 1994 exemplifies this *Project 2000* finding.



Financial Health and Proportion of Low-Income Families

The financial health of a church depends on its size and financial resources. Churches with a large proportion of adult members with family incomes less than \$20,000 a year are significantly less likely to be financially stable than churches with adults with higher incomes. The churches in the best financial health are clearly the larger churches with relatively few low-income families.

Financial Health and Proportion of
Low-Income Families

National - 30% 
UMC - 21% 

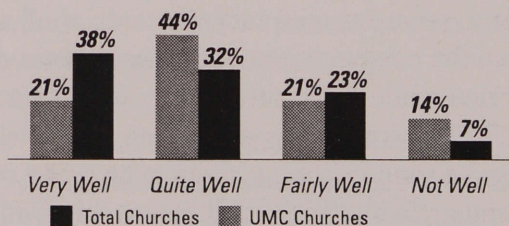
Congregational Life and Vitality*Assimilation of New Persons*

The strong majority of churches in the total sample of Black churches do well in assimilating new persons into the life and fellowship, including churches of the UMC denomination. Cascade's 71 percent membership growth rate since 1994 can be attributed to two patterns for assimilation. The first relates to the method of assimilating visitors into its fellowship. Greeters are stationed at strategic spots throughout the vestibule to record names and addresses of all visitors. A member from the congregation reads these names during the worship service while the visitors are asked to stand and be recognized. The entire congregation then sings (while using sign language) a song inviting visitors to be a part of the congregation, ending with communal fellowship with persons greeting visitors and friends with hugs and handshakes.

The second pattern for new member assimilation includes a call to join the church at the end of each service. After a public introduction to the congregation, membership committee

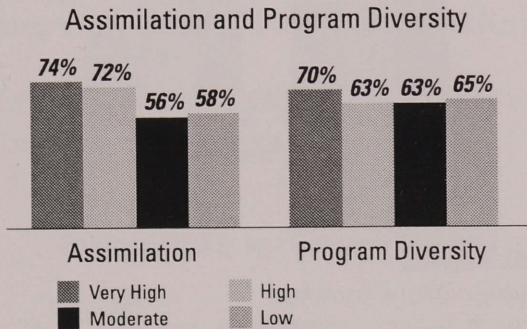
persons take them to a location near the sanctuary to complete general information forms, including signing up for a day-long workshop held each month. This experience introduces new members to available activities and to key persons representing these endeavors. New members are "assigned" a class name, i. e., the class of Mark, the class of Paul, etc. for a period of eight weeks. These classes have numerous social and church committee activities in which new members are invited to participate, developing a base of friendships and common-core interests. This nurturing class acts as "old members" to new members who are added each week for the eight-week period. A specific area in the sanctuary is set aside for this class to sit each week. This allows for a level of familiarity with routines of the worship service and each other to solidify assimilation and bond with the church. At the end of the assigned time, the class "graduates" and participates in a special ceremony honoring their commitment during a worship service. Often when new members begin participating in specific activities related to the worship service, they are cited by the pastor for their involvement.

Assimilation of New Persons



Assimilation and Program Diversity

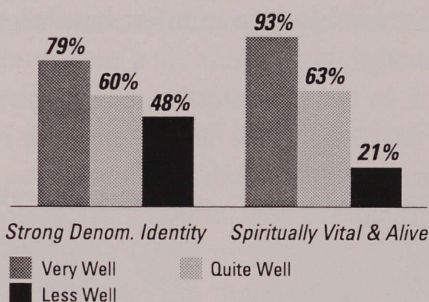
The effectiveness with which UMC congregations assimilate new persons and retains them is not related to region of the country or rural-urban location. Larger churches have the advantage in offering program diversity and worship experience. However, size is not that important; larger churches are only slightly more likely than smaller churches to incorporate new persons easily.

*Assimilation of New Persons, Denominational Identity, and Church Vitality*

UMC congregations that demonstrate strong expression to their heritage and are spiritually vital assimilate newcomers well. As part of the eight-week assimilation of new-members program at Cascade UMC, a core component of the class is related to Methodist practices, polity, and theology. Topics covered in new-member assimilation include: church data, history of Cascade, summary of Cascade church structure, ministry divisions, summary of Methodist history, African-American United Methodist heritage, summary of United Methodist structure, brief history of Christianity, stewardship, tithing, and Baptism. Over half of the new persons join-

ing Cascade UMC are from other denominations. Even for those persons transferring membership from another United Methodist church, this educational process is reaffirming, encouraging, and enlightening.

Assimilation and Church Characteristics

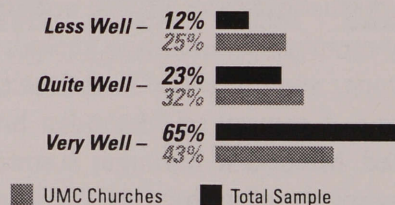


Church Vitality

Spiritually Vital Churches

Almost all leaders of Black churches, including those of the UMC denomination, believe being spiritually vital characterizes their congregation. Ways in which spiritual vitality are expressed within Cascade UMC is discussed in Part II of this study: Analysis of Spiritual Vitality and Social Outreach Programming.

Spiritually Vital and Alive Churches



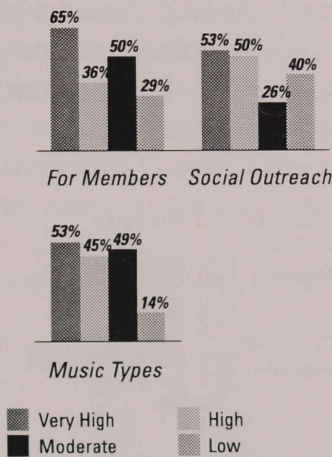
Spiritual Vitality and Program Diversity

UMC church leaders who view their congregations as spiritually vital are likely to characterize their congregations as:

- Helping members deepen their relationship to God;
- Being excited about the future of their congregation;
- Assimilating new members into the life of congregation;
- Working for social justice; and
- Giving expression to its denominational heritage.

Diversity of programs contributes to spiritual vitality by attracting new members and involving them in the church.

Spiritual Vitality and Program Diversity



Spiritual Vitality and Music

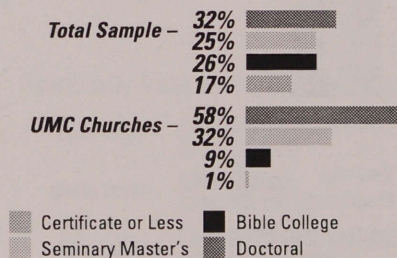
Diversity in music, i. e., spirituals, modern gospel, gospel rap, and dance enhances congregational spiritual vitality in Black churches, including UMC churches. Cascade UMC has five choruses (women's chorus, men's chorus, chancel choir, gospel choir, and contemporary music choir) as well as a classically trained interpretive dancer who performs on special occasions.

Pastoral Leadership

Clergy Education

A small minority of pastors of Black churches have a certificate degree or less for ministry. Half attended Bible college or seminary. In the full sample of Black churches having a pastor with a seminary master's degree, nearly a third have continued with formal education for ministry. Pastors of UMC churches are equally well educated. Cascade's pastor has a doctor of ministry degree, and the four associate pastors all have master of divinity degrees. One of the four associate pastors is enrolled in a doctor of ministry program.

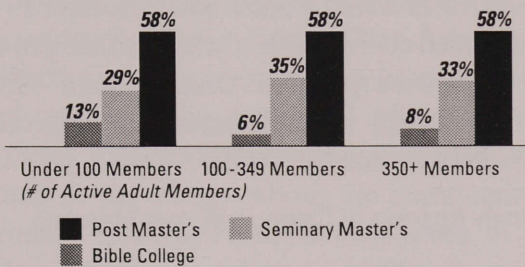
Education for Ministry



Education and Size of Church

Education does not directly affect the extent to which pastors report their congregations as being spiritually vital, helping members deepen their relationship to God, being excited about the future, assimilating newcomers, or working for social justice. However, the more educated clergy are likely to pastor larger congregations.

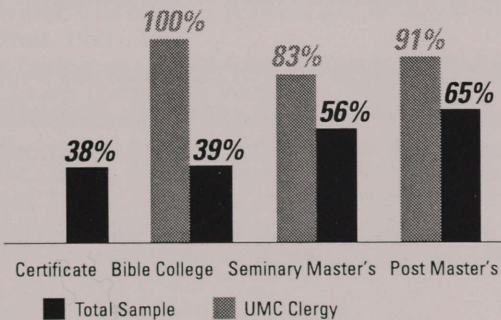
Size of UMC Church & Pastors' Education



Women Pastors

In the total sample of Black clergy, the better educated the pastors, the more favorable they are toward women pastors. UMC pastors, however, are highly in favor of clergywomen in each level of educational attainment. Cascade's senior pastor has included a woman associate pastor on the staff during both his tenures at Cascade (1974 - 1985 and 1992 - current). The pastor shares preaching with the woman associate pastor on an equal basis.

Strongly Approve of Women Pastors

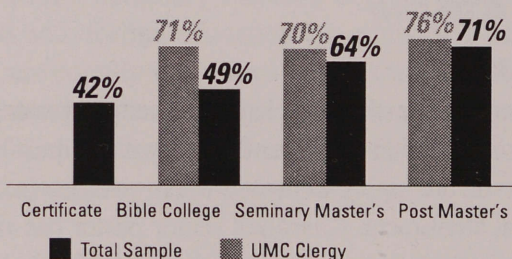


Protest Marches or Civil Rights Issues

In the total sample of Black clergy, those with seminary degrees and particularly doctoral degrees are more likely to approve of clergy being actively involved in political action. UMC clergy, regardless of their educational attainment, on the whole, approve of clergy involvement in protest marches and civil rights issues.

Cascade's pastors since 1974 have both been civil rights leaders and active in social justice issues. Joseph E. Lowery, nationally acclaimed civil rights leader in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference pastored Cascade from 1986-1992.² Walter L. Kimbrough, national leader on socio-economic resources, has led Cascade since 1992.

Strongly Approve of Clergy in Protest Marches

**Part II****Analysis of Spiritual Vitality
and Social Outreach Programming**

The Black Church in the United States has a long history of spiritual vitality and social outreach. Regardless of the denomination, Black worship has several commonalities:

²See John Lewis, *Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).

- Praise and thanksgiving to God while being spiritually nourished;
- Affirmation of God's providence and power;
- Common historical taproot which extends deep into the nurturing center of the African heritage; and
- Struggle for survival as African people in America.³

From the African taproot came a Christian worldview, or "sacred cosmos," that permeated every aspect of life.⁴ W. E. B. DuBois was probably the first African-American scholar to discern that the origins of African-American religious leadership are deeply embedded in traditional African culture.⁵ Among freed African Americans, the spirit of African kingship was transmitted to the clergy whom the community viewed as their primary leaders. From earliest times to the present, Black clergy have been acknowledged as the titular heads of their local communities, have enjoyed the highest respect and loyalty of their people, and can be relied upon to care for their material needs.⁶ As the only stable and coherent institutional area to emerge from slavery, Black churches were not only dominant in their communities, but they also became the womb of Black culture and a number of major social institutions.⁷ Andrew Billingsley, in his study of over 1800 Black churches involved in social reform, found as a group, Methodist

³Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 13.

⁴Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: MacMillan, 1967), 52-54.

⁵See W. E. B. DuBois, *The Negro Church* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903).

⁶See Peter J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

⁷See C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).

churches are likely to be actively involved in community outreach programs.⁸ That which follows is an examination of Cascade Methodist Church's assessment of church vitality and the role it plays in social outreach programming.

Spiritual Vitality

Before examining spiritual vitality, a definition is required. For the purposes of this study, spiritual vitality involves individuals and communities in a tripartite and cyclical process: a liberating encounter, a liberating reflection, and a liberating action.⁹ Any discussion of spirituality begins with a note of personal engagement and is greatly enhanced when done in the presence of others.¹⁰

How is spiritual vitality sustained at Cascade? As a liberating encounter, it is initially often experienced through the process of joining the church. Being a member at Cascade becomes a liberating encounter through a deliberate series of activities supported by the church community, leading to active involvement. Included in these endeavors is a strong encouragement to participate in the wide range of biblical studies, which provide a "liberating reflection" to complete the tripartite and cyclical process defined above.

As a new member, one's initial encounter is through the Discipleship Ministry whose mission is to nourish the spirit of new members with unconditional love, receiving them with

⁸See Andrew Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁹See Michael I. N. Dash, Jonathan Jackson, and Stephen C. Rasor, *Hidden Wholeness: An African American Spirituality for Individuals* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1997).

¹⁰See Edward P. Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997).

open arms, so that we can transform the world through unity and be in right relationship with one another and with the Eternal God. Discipleship Ministry work areas include:

- Intake - responsible for intake of new members during all worship services
- Communications - responsible for corresponding with new members on a regular basis
- Orientation - conducting classes for new members one Saturday each month. Current Cascade members function as facilitators or administrators.
- Confirmation - organization of new members for their New Member Confirmation Service held on the Sunday following the orientation class.
- Nurture - outreach to church family via cards, flowers, visits, and phone calls.

During orientation, new members are encouraged to identify areas of interest and become involved in Cascade's social action ministries. Focus areas are: nurture, outreach, witness, and worship.

Nurture activities include:

- Children's Ministries
- Christian Education
- Church School
- Family Ministries
- Marriage Enrichment
- Singles Ministry
- Torchbearers (older adults)
- Good Choices, Inc. (Youth banking program)

Outreach activities include:

- Church & Society (Habitat house)
- Health & Welfare
- Higher Education (provides a “link” between Cascade and local campuses)
- Girl Scouts
- Recreation
- Missions
- Homeless Ministry
- Interracial Ministry
- Resurrection (provides support for families who have experienced death in the family, care for a disabled family member, broken relationships, employment problems).

Witness activities include:

- Caregivers (visitation)
- Evangelism
- Discipleship
- Prayer Ministry
- Communications
- United Methodist Men
- United Methodist Women

Worship activities include:

- Music (5 choirs)
- Ushers
- Communion Stewards
- Lay Leaders
- Sign Ministry

- Drama
- Confirmation Classes (taught by senior pastor)
- Celebration of Life Ministry (bereavement and birth)
- Acolytes
- Greeters
- Weddings

In addition to the above activities, members can participate in a range of services related to the ongoing operation of the church:

- Church Council
- Staff-Pastor-Parish Relations Committee
- Finance Committee
- Trustee Board
- Support Services (program management, food services, traffic, bus drivers, custodial staff, nursery staff, security, operations).

The diversity of programs contributes to spiritual vitality by attracting new members and involving them into the life of the church. Annually, Cascade conducts a church-wide "Leadership Retreat" where over 1000 members participate in planning the following year's activities. In the break-out sessions leaders of particular ministries make reports to the larger focus area leaders. Ministry focus areas are nurture, outreach, witness, and worship.

Each ministry completes a "Ministry Action Plan" for the upcoming year, including the purpose of the ministry, identification of "guiding scripture," a list of activities, how each program will fit into Cascade's annual theme (2001 is "*Spiritually Transforming the World*") implementation steps, dates and times

for program activities, and budget. Additionally, Cascade has adopted a wide rather than narrow definition of the role political agency impacts spiritual vitality. Although Cascade leadership does not advocate particular political personages, it does give attention to the concept of the "political" as essential to the notion of spiritual vitality. Church members are encouraged to vote; political leaders are invited and honored in church services; and members are encouraged to express their spiritual empowerment into political empowerment—all within the rubric of "being a light in the community."

Congregational Social Service Ministries

Diversity in the types of programs for social outreach contributes to congregational vitality. Black churches have a unique history of being the single most important institution embodying goals and purposes that pertain primarily to the welfare of Black people. That uniqueness is significant because in America there have been no other enduring institutions with such purposes.¹¹

Cascade has a significant history of community social outreach programs. For example, it has participated in the Cascade Community Outreach Fund for over thirty years. On the first Sunday of each month, funds are collected during all three worship services for this purpose. One hundred percent is distributed for immediate need purposes. Two hours on the Tuesday following Community Fund Sunday, eight to ten staff members participate in a "hotline," answering requests for emergency financial assistance for both members of the congregation and the larger Atlanta community, although requests

¹¹Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 9.

from the community far outnumber requests from the congregation. Areas of assistance include: mortgage, rent, and utilities. Assistance also includes counseling and financial management advice. Cascade is a referral organization for the United Way, Salvation Army, St. Vincent De Paul, and several local social service agencies, processing over seventy requests each month.

Traditionally, at the end of most Protestant church services, a benediction or blessing is pronounced. This is oriented toward the people in the congregation and "blesses" them and the work they do. At Cascade there is no blessing at the end of services. Instead, there is a tradition of "Sending Forth," which is specifically designed to communicate a commitment to social outreach. In this "Sending Forth," all members are exhorted to become involved in outreach activities. This encouragement is intentional and is based on Christ's model of "sending disciples out two by two" to work in the world. At Cascade, upon leaving the physical sanctuary, one goes out being the church. The ceremony of sending forth consists of three components: joining hands, symbolizing connection that one is not by oneself in the work of community outreach; movement symbolizing rhythm, reaching out and being involved in outreach should be a part of the rhythm of one's life rather than just an activity; and song based on scripture, Philippians 4:13 "We can do all things [in] Christ who strengthens us." At the end of the chant, hands are raised, symbolizing that we are being sent out on a "positive note." We *can* do all things in Christ who strengthens us.

Often, social outreach programs sponsored by churches focus on immediate needs. Although Cascade has numerous outreach ministries with this type of orientation, it also has incorporated a "futurist mentality." Examples include the

Higher Education Ministry and Interracial Relations Ministry.

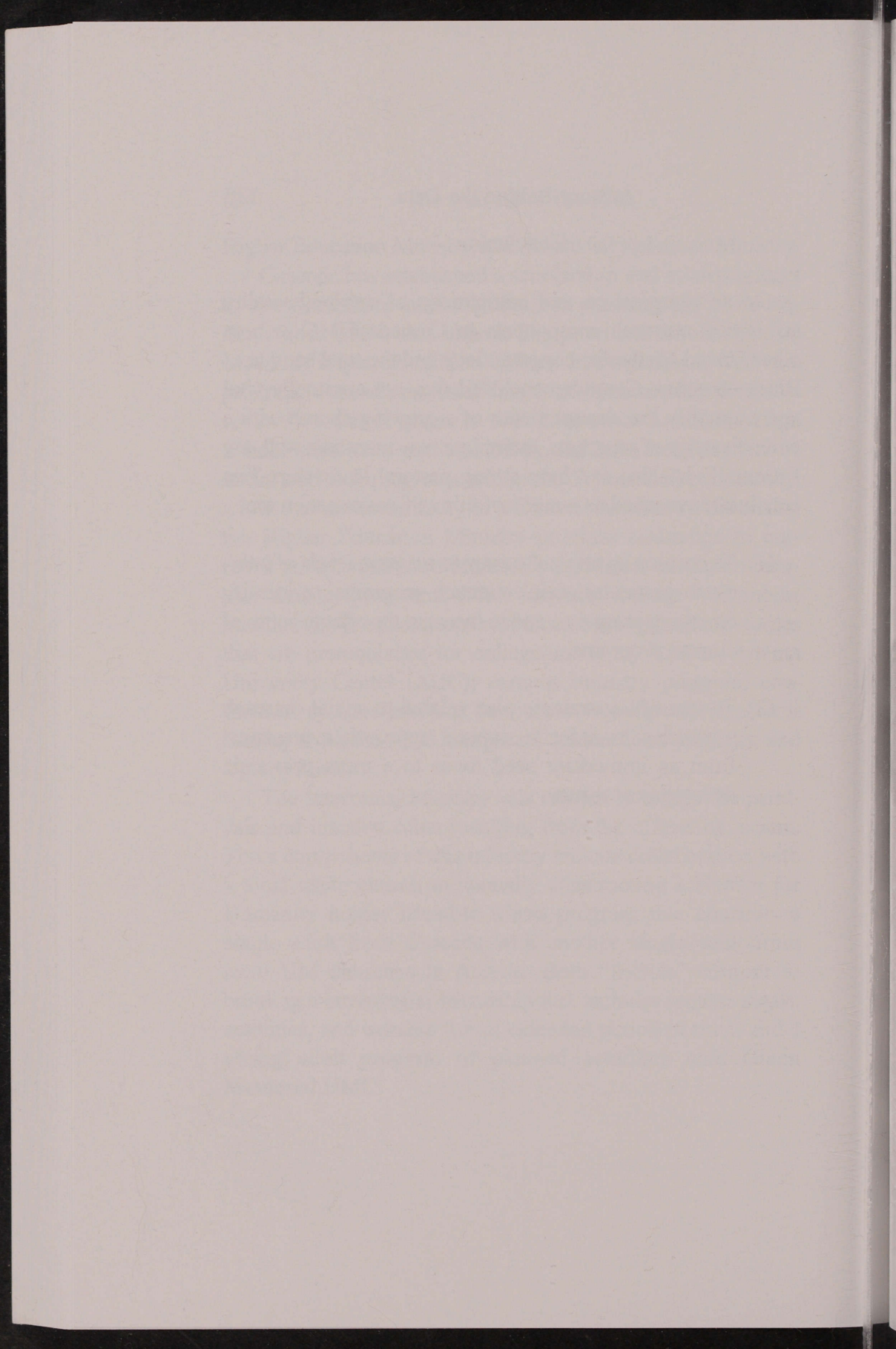
Cascade has established a scholarship and awards budget to assist members and individuals in pursuing higher education. Since 1984, this church has provided scholarships in excess of a quarter million dollars. In conjunction with this program, Cascade has established the "Summerhill Incentive Award," which is given to two students at Southside High School who have participated in and have been leaders of social outreach programs within the Summerhill community, a low-income community in southwest Atlanta. Additionally, the Higher Education Ministry provides assistance to outreach groups interested in developing higher education/campus ministry programs. Other activities include workshops; middle-school educational resources for high school studies that are prerequisites for college/university studies, Atlanta University Center (AUC); campus ministry program; ecumenical symposium; bus service to worship services each Sunday from the AUC campuses; student loan program; and a grant fund.

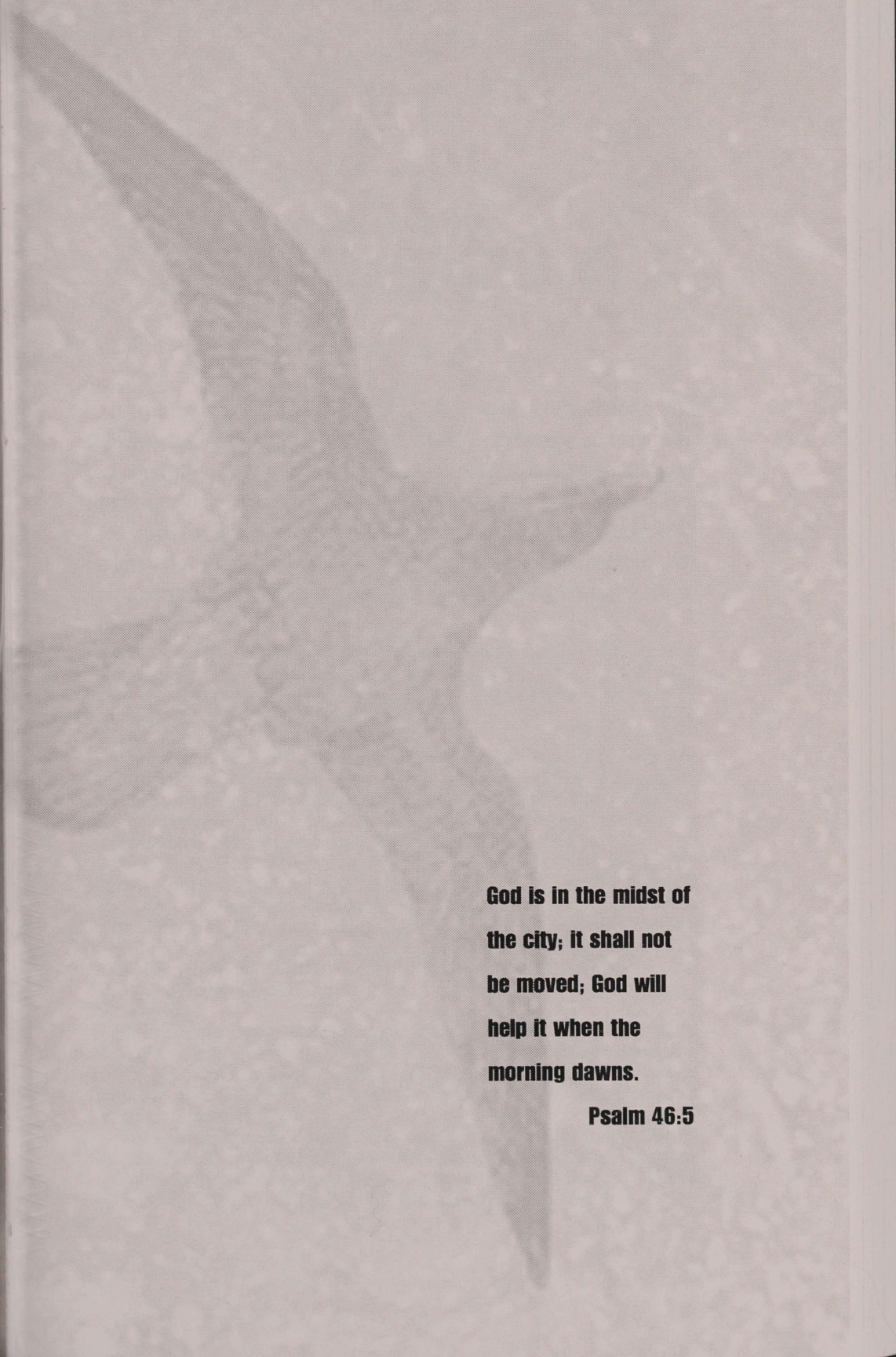
The Interracial Ministry was created to bridge the paralysis and inaction often resulting from the effects of racism. Three components of this ministry include collaboration with a local white church in annually constructing a Habitat for Humanity home; friend-to-friend program that connects a single adult from Cascade with another single adult from local UM churches in Atlanta. Both "friends" commit to building a cross-racial friendship that includes regular meals, activities, and worship for an extended period of time; and a young adult program of planned activities with Glenn Memorial UMC.

Conclusion

In an examination and comparison of spiritual vitality and social outreach components in Cascade UMC to both other United Methodist congregations and the total sample of Black churches, Cascade concluded they are spiritually vital and exemplify the characteristics of a growing church with a wide diversity of programs, assimilate new members well, are financially healthy, and have strong pastoral leadership. Two conclusions reached as a result of this self-examination are:

- (1) To develop an internal survey to measure levels of interest in particular social outreach programs, to identify emerging programs, and to measure the effectiveness of current programs.
- (2) To identify a strategic plan related to social outreach ministries in order to expand appropriate programs from an immediate need focus to a more economic development thrust.





**God is in the midst of
the city; it shall not
be moved; God will
help it when the
morning dawns.**

Psalm 46:5

