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## AFRICAN-AMERICAN CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

### Congregational Studies: A Brief Overview

Over the last two decades, interest in congregational studies has increased. Recently, this increased pursuit has become more than an exercise in social science research, data gathering for comparative analysis, and forecasting trends in the religious life in our nation. Among recent studies, note Wind and Lewis,<sup>1</sup> Ammerman,<sup>2</sup> Franklin,<sup>3</sup> Ammerman,<sup>4</sup> Miller,<sup>5</sup> Becker,<sup>6</sup> Billingsley,<sup>7</sup> Frank,<sup>8</sup> Carroll,<sup>9</sup> Wilkes.<sup>10</sup> Those texts, which have dealt exclusively with African-American congregations, have largely been narrative accounts of the story of the

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<sup>1</sup>See James P. Wind and James W. Lewis, eds., *New Perspectives in the Study of Congregations*, vol. 2 of *American Congregations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup>See Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Congregation and Community* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

<sup>3</sup>See Robert M. Franklin, *Another Day's Journey: Black Churches Confronting the American Crisis* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup>See Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, and Carl S. Dudley, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup>See Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>6</sup>See Penny Edgell Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Model of Local Religious Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup>See Andrew H. Billingsley, *Mighty Like A River: The Black Church and Social Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup>See Thomas Edward Frank, *The Soul of the Congregation: An Invitation to Congregational Reflection* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

<sup>9</sup>See Jackson W. Carroll, *Mainline to the Future: Congregations for the Twenty-first Century* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup>See Paul Wilkes, *Excellent Protestant Congregations: The Guide to Best Places and Practices* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

congregations. Notably among books in this category are Williams<sup>11</sup> and Freedman.<sup>12</sup> Others have shared stories of particular strategies that pastoral leaders have used with varying levels of achievement.<sup>13</sup>

Congregational studies are the disciplined study of a congregation's story. A primary objective is to gather information to discover that congregation's story, analyze, and interpret that story and determine ways in which the congregation has exhibited faithfulness and obedience as a people of God in a particular place. The study of congregations includes exploration into identity, theology, and context. Identity includes examination of denominational heritage. This, in turn, affects theological beliefs taught and embraced. Finally, the congregation exhibits its aliveness, responding to its context and the social change occurring in that setting. These perspectives guide us in engaging in the realistic study of congregations.

A major concern of particular congregational studies is to examine, discover, and share ways in which the research could help congregations envision new possibilities and shape their future for being faithful and effective agents in transforming the lives of persons in our society.

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<sup>11</sup>See Cecil Williams and Rebecca Laird, *No Hiding Place: Empowerment and Recovery for Our Troubled Communities* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992).

<sup>12</sup>See Samuel G. Freedman, *Upon This Rock: The Miracles of a Black Church* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993).

<sup>13</sup>See Kirbyjon H. Caldwell and Mark Seal, *The Gospel of Good Success: A Road Map to Spiritual, Emotional and Financial Wholeness* (New York: A Fireside Book, 2000).



## Objectives

This article reports research done as part of the national study of congregational life and comments on the emerging profile of African-American congregations. References are made to the national profile of congregations as developed through the *Faith Communities Today* study,<sup>14</sup> but no attempt is made either to engage in cross-denominational comparisons or in any detailed analysis of African-American congregations against the national profile. One of the resources that the *ITC/FaithFactor: Institute for Black Religious Life*<sup>15</sup> has developed enables that kind of comparative analysis. Although the particular focus of the essay is an examination of a national profile of African-American congregations, it also offers other ways of analyzing congregations to increase their self-understanding, and consequently, to empower them for more authentic activity for life and mission.

## African-American Congregations

The monumental study, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* by Lincoln and Mamiya,<sup>16</sup> filled a significant gap in literature on the Black Church in America. That study is now ten years old, and many changes have occurred

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<sup>14</sup>Carl S. Dudley and David A. Roozen, *Faith Communities Today: A Report on Religion in the United States Today* (Hartford, CT: Hartford Seminary, 2001).

<sup>15</sup>*ITC/FaithFactor: Institute for Black Religious Life* was established in October 2001 at Interdenominational Theological Center to promote and encourage research on the Black religious experience in the United States.

<sup>16</sup>See C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).

in the field. Mamiya now contends that the field is wide open, and there is still much work to be done. He notes a demographic trend: a declining white majority in the United States and a consequent increase of racial minorities (African Americans, Hispanic/Latino/a Americans, and Asian Americans) so that by 2050 the population projections are that whites will no longer be in the majority in the second half of the twenty-first century.<sup>17</sup> Cheryl Gilkes also confirms that there is "Plenty Good Room" for ongoing research. Like Mamiya, Gilkes claims that in the contemporary Black Church, some manifestations of change are the emergence of a Black middle class "and the geographic and social location of the new middle class. . . .changing gender relations evidenced by a continued dependence on women's work"<sup>18</sup> Even though there is an increase of women in the ministry, there are still denominations with difficulty in honoring the claims of women to pastoral leadership.

### A General Profile of African-American Congregations

The profile of African-American congregational life in the United States presented in this work is a result of a national survey. The results reported here are a collaboration between Interdenominational Theological Center and the Gallup Organization. The major respondents to the survey were pastors or their assistants. With this in mind, the

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<sup>17</sup>Lawrence H. Mamiya, "Research Issues and Trends in African-American Religion." Paper delivered at the *Black Church Congregational Studies Institute* (Atlanta: Interdenominational Theological Center, 1999).

<sup>18</sup>Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "Plenty Good Room: Adaptation in a Changing Black Church," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 558 (July 1998): 101-121.



nation's Black pastors report that their congregations are spiritually alive, and the future looks exciting and full of promise. The strength of their lives find focus in the spiritual realm, but they are also concerned with social justice issues and reach out to their communities with a wide variety of programs responsive to perceived needs.

Congregational life is not without conflict even though there is evidence of a strong spirituality. Where conflicts exist, they are frequently a result of financial differences and limited or dwindling financial resources. In some congregations conflicts arise around worship, particularly in center-city congregations "where social diversity is higher and financial resources are less available. Conflicts also are more evident in congregations located in new suburban areas where the funding may not be as limited [depending on congregation size and age] but the pressures to reach contemporary audiences are even stronger."<sup>19</sup>

A peculiar challenge for congregations is the assimilation of new members. However, a strong majority of Black churches in our study report doing well in nurturing new persons into their life and fellowship. Although few strong differences emerge based on the size of the congregation (small, medium, or large), effective assimilation of members is more important for women clergy (47 percent) compared with male clergy (37 percent).

When issues of worship, music, and sermon topics were probed, strong differences emerge, especially across denominational lines. This divergence perspective is also noticeable regarding the inclusion of women as pastors. Baptists and COGICs are least likely to affirm women in this role.

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<sup>19</sup>Dudley, *Faith Communities Today*, 38.

The review of the financial health of congregations reflects that a firm majority of pastors feel that their congregation's financial health is "good" (64 percent). This represents a perceived improvement in the financial health from five years ago when only 49 percent reported that it was good.

### **Congregational Life as Story— Issues of Identity, Culture, and Theology**

A generally accepted concept of the Christian congregation is a gathered community of faith with a story—individuals and members as a group, discovering and sharing life together, and seeking to witness to the common story of their life together under God in Jesus Christ. The identity of each congregation is shaped by history, circumstance, and doctrine. Further, these distinctions are reflected in ethnicity, location, and culture. Indeed, the ordered life in community is preparation for the life of mission in and to the world.

We have re-discovered that doing theology is everyone's task. Everyone who professes to have had an encounter with God in Jesus Christ and talks about ways in which that engagement affects their daily life is doing theology. Part of the congregation's story is the collective sharing of these separate encounters with God and the explorations into meaning and the discovery of challenges that those understandings present for individuals and the community.

Life in a congregation is the story of individuals and groups of persons engaged in a journey and adventure with God under the guidance of God's Spirit. It is a story of relationship and interaction. One might view it as a cyclical process of discovery and sharing: *my story, your story* and *our story* with God in a particular place. God, who provides



a diversity of gifts, has gifted every person. No one claiming an encounter with God comes empty handed to a congregation or faith community, whatever the nature of that commitment. Each person contributes to community life.

In the national profile, "sociologists report that denominationalism is declining in significance for congregational identity. . . . One also finds that the expression of denominational heritage tends to be stronger in those congregations with a distinctive racial/ethnic/national identity."<sup>20</sup>

### Context and Congregation

Every congregation is located in a particular geographic community which is an arena for mission and ministry. It lives in its life at a particular period in time. Context and time, therefore, are significant factors that influence and affect a congregation's life. Where these perspectives are not affirmed and acknowledged, a congregation lives for itself, behind closed doors, unconcerned about the realities of its life and the world around it. Congregations have the capacity to affect their context through the ways in which they organize themselves and how they engage their context. Conversely, the environment in which they find themselves affects their lives. Many congregations demonstrate both an understanding of these perspectives and a clear commitment in obedience to their God-given vocation to their community. The quality of congregational life is reflected in the quality of the life of persons who belong to that community.

Every congregation meets in a neighborhood. Every one

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 17.

has a setting to which it must relate. The effectiveness of the local church's mission is largely contingent on the way the congregation views its neighborhood and how the people in the community view the congregation. Where congregations are in touch with their own identity and community context, they are better able to define their purpose and involve their people in meaningful ministry. They develop a fresh imagination about mission and ministry in the place where God is calling them to serve and among people with whom their lot is cast.

An observation from the national profile states that the "religious community is increasingly less equal to residential community."<sup>21</sup> Since 1990 there is an increase in the number of congregants who commute more than fifteen minutes to worship. In African-American congregations, there is similar increase in commuters, but it is noted that there is a higher percentage of commuters in suburban congregations than in rural and urban. These data may have implications for the ways in which congregations respond to their communities in terms of social outreach.

### **Dimensions of Congregational Life: Worship, Sermons, and Music**

In African-American congregations preaching has always held a significant place in worship. The survey sought to discover the content emphasis of sermons. The overwhelming majority of pastors feel that their sermons "always" focus on God's love and care (83 percent), personal spiritual growth (74 percent), and practical advice for

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 17.



daily living (66 percent). Comparatively few report sermons always focus on social justice (26 percent), references to racial situations in society (17 percent), or references to Liberation Theology or Womanist Theology (12 percent). It is interesting that Black Presbyterians and Black United Methodists are less likely to report sermons "always" focus on practical advice for daily living and personal spiritual growth. No statistically significant differences emerged based on size of congregations in terms of sermon focus.

Carolyn Denard tells the story of her grandmother dying of Alzheimer's disease. It illustrates how far reaching is the effect of music and song in the African-American experience.

In a half hearted gesture to include her in our conversation. . . [I] asked, 'What were these other words, Grandmother?' 'A charge to keep I have. . . A charge to keep I have. . .' I repeated searchingly, not expecting a response. And then a miracle happened: as clear as a bell with no stuttering or moaning and from a woman who had not spoken her name clearly in a year she answered, 'A God to Glorify!'. . . A flood of hopeful thoughts raced through my mind. 'Did the ravages of Alzheimer's leave something intact after all?' 'Was there something in the soul immune from its destruction?' 'Was the song so deep in her memory as to be invincible, not wiped out by Alzheimer's, and its accompanying odyssey of medication, nursing homes, strange doctors, and new places?'<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Carolyn C. Denard, "Defying Alzheimer's: Saving Her Spirit in Song," in *My Soul Is a Witness: African-American Women's Spirituality*, ed. Gloria Wade-Nobles (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 133-134.

Music has always been an important element in most worship services. Slightly more than half the pastors report that spirituals are "always" included in their services (52 percent). Wide differences, as might be expected, are noted across denominational lines. Over one-half of Baptists, COGIC and CME clergy state that they always include spirituals in their services, only 21 percent of Black Presbyterians and 30 percent of Black United Methodists report this. Some differences emerge on the basis of educational background. Churches with seminary trained pastors are less likely to use spirituals in their services than those with no formal training, some Bible college, or other ministry training.

When the use of other forms of music was surveyed, relatively few pastors reported the use of modern gospel music (29 percent). Some congregations use dance or drama in limited ways. Few include Gospel rap. However, diversity in music types enhances the spiritual vitality in all African-American congregations.

Melva Costen observes:

[E]ven with increases in diversified ministries and congregational involvement in the total life of the community, spawned by faith experiences in worship, fresh ways of praising God in Jesus the Christ will burst forth in new and old ways of singing, preaching, praying, and offering thanks. The liturgy, God's work through the people, will continue through drama, dance, and the sharing of songs across cultures.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Melva Wilson Costen, "African-American Worship: Faith Looking Forward," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* XXVII (Fall 1999/Spring 2000): 1.



### Heritage, Theology, Teaching, and Doctrine

The survey examined elements of the worship service and noted that sacred scripture and the presence of the Holy Spirit are features that pastors feel are most important aspects of teaching in their congregations (61 and 66 percent, respectively, are characterized as “extremely important”). While historic creeds, doctrines, and traditions, as well as personal experience are considered significant, they are by no means a priority in terms of their levels of importance to those pastors interviewed. In the national profile, “congregations of historically Black denominations rate denominational connections the highest, while liberal protestant congregations report the lowest commitment to denominational ties.”<sup>24</sup>

### Assimilating New Members

Congregations welcome new people all the time. These persons are retained, however, as they are nurtured, assisted to learn the congregation’s story, become aware of its ethos, and are given opportunities to share their gifts and thus become involved fully in the life of that congregation. Where persons do not have these experiences and are not made to feel welcomed, they disconnect as readily as they cycle into the life of that congregation.

The strong majority of churches in the total sample of Black congregations do well in assimilating new persons into their life and fellowship. However, one reading of the statistics might suggest this is an important action item for

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<sup>24</sup>Dudley, *Faith Communities Today*, 19.

many churches. When this concern is placed alongside other aspects of the survey, diversity of programs, the worship experience, and denominational identity are contributing factors to the retention of new members. In the national profile, "Historically Black churches report more acceptance than other Christian groups (72 percent). And acceptance of new members is rated even more highly among some [religions of the world] (Bahá'í, Mormon, and Muslim) (80 percent), which include faith groups growing at an exceptionally rapid rate."<sup>25</sup>

### Participation in Programs and Outreach

Most clergy reported that their congregations participate in a wide range of religious and social programs throughout the year. Over nine in ten congregations have Bible study, prayer or meditation groups, community service, and youth programs. Large majorities of congregants participate in the remaining activities such as spiritual retreats, parenting or marriage enrichment, theological study, and young adult or singles programs.

Pastors surveyed reported that youth programs (92 percent) and cash assistance to families in need (86 percent) are at the top of the list of community activities and social programs. About three quarters are involved in food pantries or soup kitchens (75 percent) and voter registrations (76 percent). Although overall about 45 percent of the congregations are involved in social advocacy, AMEZ (62 percent) and Black United Methodists (63 percent) are far more likely to report this involvement. This same denominational pat-

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 32.



tern is evident regarding health programs or clinics.

It is interesting that clergy who are paid pastors, either full-time or part-time, as opposed to those who have volunteer positions, are more likely to report being involved in any of the activities and programs that were surveyed. This same pattern emerges when the size of a congregation is considered. The larger the congregation, the more likely there is involvement in nearly all of the activities or programs. Similar findings are in the national profile. An additional note in this regard: “. . . older congregations do not differ from more recently organized groups in the number or kinds of social ministries (except that the most recently organized are less likely to be involved”).<sup>26</sup> “When it comes to the willingness of congregations to go beyond service and become more involved in social issue advocacy or community organizing, historically Black churches rate both issues more highly than all other faith groups.”<sup>27</sup>

### Congregational Size and Finances

The average number of members on the congregational rolls of all the churches interviewed is about 500. This varies widely based on denomination and represents an estimate only. Baptists report having the highest average at about 704 while Black Presbyterians have the lowest (194). Among the other denominations, COGICs, 255; AMEs, 516; CMEs, 312; AMEZs, 255; and Black United Methodists report 430. It is important that these are estimates of church rolls and not a regular estimate of participation in each church.

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 49.

When reviewing these data by the "median" estimate rather than the "mean," the estimates appear much lower.

Pastors and senior lay leaders report an average of 100 members participate regularly in the religious life of their church. A majority of the churches (58 percent) claim that their number of regularly participating adults has increased 5 percent or more, while only 7 percent has realized a decline. A separate question regarding church attendance on a typical Sunday reflected the mean average attendance is 278. Baptists report a much higher attendance, and CMEs, AMEZs, COGICs and Black Presbyterians report a lower attendance. It is important to observe that the percentage of regularly participating adults and typical church attendance is significantly lower than the estimate of numbers on the church rolls.

The national profile noted that congregations in the historically Black denominations tend to have more participants from low-income households.<sup>28</sup> Congregations that report vitality also express a clear sense of purpose, and this positive assessment extends across the spectrum of denominational groups. "Older, smaller, town and rural churches are less likely to claim a sense of purpose and vitality. . . . Feelings of vitality occur most frequently in traditional Black congregations and significantly less often in Liberal Protestant congregations."<sup>29</sup>

Nearly all pastors report that some members tithe (95 percent). Pastors were then asked the percentage of members who tithe. The average is about 45 percent. Specifically, 3 percent report that less than 5 percent of their congregation tithe while 11 percent report that 5 - 10 percent tithe and 16 percent report that 11 - 25 percent tithe and 19 percent report

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 20.



that about 26 - 49 percent tithe while 41 percent report that 50 percent or more tithe. A total of 10 percent are unsure of the percentage of members who tithe in their congregation. These are estimates only. The overall financial health of the congregations interviewed appears stronger. When pastors were asked to describe the financial health of their churches five years ago, only 49 percent said that it was "good."

### Leadership and Congregational Life

Leadership is a function that can be exercised by several persons within congregations. In studying congregations, leadership becomes an activity by which tasks are accomplished. These include, among others, enabling the congregation to gain a realistic self-understanding of its history—its particular story and the circumstances of its life; assisting a congregation to experience a vision of its life and purpose under God, and helping it to make manifest that vision in their life in congregations to fulfill their own calling as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Effectual pastoral leadership seeks to empower the congregation to be faithful to its identity as people of God and make obedient witness through its life in congregation and community of the world. "A pastor who exhibits religious authenticity is one who is trusted—and granted personal authority—because he or she has "head and heart" together; that is he or she is trusted as both being competent and having spiritual depth. . . . Calling and competence, office and personal authority are not mutually exclusive."<sup>30</sup> Congregations need a pastoral leader with a deep sense of vocation; but also one who is equally competent and com-

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<sup>30</sup>Nancy T. Ammerman, ed., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 172.

mitted to empowering others to effect transformation, through the Spirit, in their own lives and the lives of others.

Overall, the highest level of ministerial education for pastors/churches interviewed is post-master of divinity work or degree (30 percent), Bible college or some seminary (26 percent), seminary degree (24 percent) and 9 percent report none. Only 4 percent report an apprenticeship and 3 percent a certificate or correspondence program. Pastors of Black Presbyterian and Black United Methodist churches are more likely than pastors of the five remaining denominations to have a post-master of divinity or doctor of ministry degree. COGIC pastors are least likely to report any formal ministerial training. The mean age of the pastors of the congregations interviewed is 55 and most (96 percent) are male. In the national profile, the following observation is noteworthy concerning the age of Black pastors. "Aging leadership affects every group, but the challenge is particularly pronounced in some groups. Indeed, the average religious leader of Catholic/Orthodox and historically Black denominational is less than a decade away from the typical retirement age of 65, while the Evangelical Protestant and World groups' leaders have 50 percent more time until they reach 65."<sup>31</sup>

Three-quarters of the pastors of the congregations interviewed are paid—full or part-time (75 percent) while 23 percent are in a volunteer position. COGICs are more evenly divided between those who have a paid position (49 percent) and those who have volunteer pastors (48 percent). In a separate question, the survey found that a total of three-quarters of the pastors work full-time while 13 percent work

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<sup>31</sup>Dudley, *Faith Communities Today*, 65.



full-time as a pastor but are supplemented by outside employment and 9 percent are part-time pastors. An additional question asked pastors whether they served another congregation—a total of 8 percent serve another congregation.

Lyle Schaller has suggested that there is a paradigm shift in the leadership of congregations. The role of pastoral leader is to free up the laity for greater responsibilities.

The clergy are being asked to identify, enlist, nurture, disciple, train, place, support, and resource teams of lay volunteers who will do the work. . . . This may also be the most demanding role for ministers in terms of vision, competence, creativity, leadership, dedication, strategy formulation, hard work, long hours, faithfulness, and skill in interpersonal relationships.<sup>32</sup>

The kind of leadership that will empower congregations in mission and for ministry is transforming.

The transforming leader is critically involved in envisioning, communicating and creating an improved future for self, any other person, group or organization. . . . The transforming leader also has a well-defined sense of mission, purpose, values, goals, and strategies which are based upon a deep understanding of people and the aims which are being served, and a clear understanding of the cultural, political and economic environment surrounding the change endeavor being attempted.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Lyle E. Schaller, *Innovations in Ministry: Models for the Twenty-first Century* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 59-60.

<sup>33</sup>Terry D. Anderson, *Transforming Leadership: New Skills for an Extraordinary Future* (Amherst, MA: Human Resource Development Press, 1992), 72.

All of this means that pastors must be open to nurture, and prepare persons for shared leadership for the tasks that need to be achieved so that congregations can fulfill their mission in the church and world.

### **Signs of Vitality in Congregational Life**

There have been recurring statements about the spiritual vitality of congregations. Vital congregations have a clear sense of purpose and explicit member expectations are strictly enforced. They have a more positive assessment about the future. There is a distinct connection between clarity of purpose and the quality and quantity of financial support.

Preaching and worship in vital congregations call people to conversion, and commitment to a new way of looking at the world, to a turning around of all their accustomed patterns of thinking and living. Vital congregations help persons to discover their gifts. The nurture and forming of disciples is part of the primary task of every congregation. Persons are encouraged to practice care and hospitality. Members in congregations that are alive are led to discover God in the center of their lives; and they constantly seek moral discernment, and through varied ministries join in witnessing to God's concern for justice, hope, and peace. In vital congregations, God's people are prepared, in their God-talk as well as their God-walk, to labor to bring the Kingdom of God into everyday life.

### **Examining Congregational Health as Foundation to a Greater Future**

Congregations need to be given the opportunity to engage in self-evaluation in a retreat setting. We are further suggest-



ing that congregations develop an ongoing process to check out their health. Lyle Schaller states that those who seek "to identify the marks of a healthy church focus on such words as love, servanthood, compassion, humility, faithfulness, worship, forgiveness, obedience, justice, prayer, community, teaching and martyrdom."<sup>34</sup> This exploration into the health of the congregation may be a significant revelation and learning for many persons. It has possibilities for empowering them to achieve even greater things for God's glory.

### Conclusion

The results of a national survey of African-American congregational life provide an understanding of its strengths and vitality. The findings will continue to assist Black church leadership to meet the challenges and provide guidance for our common life in American society and beyond. There is a need to explore certain issues:

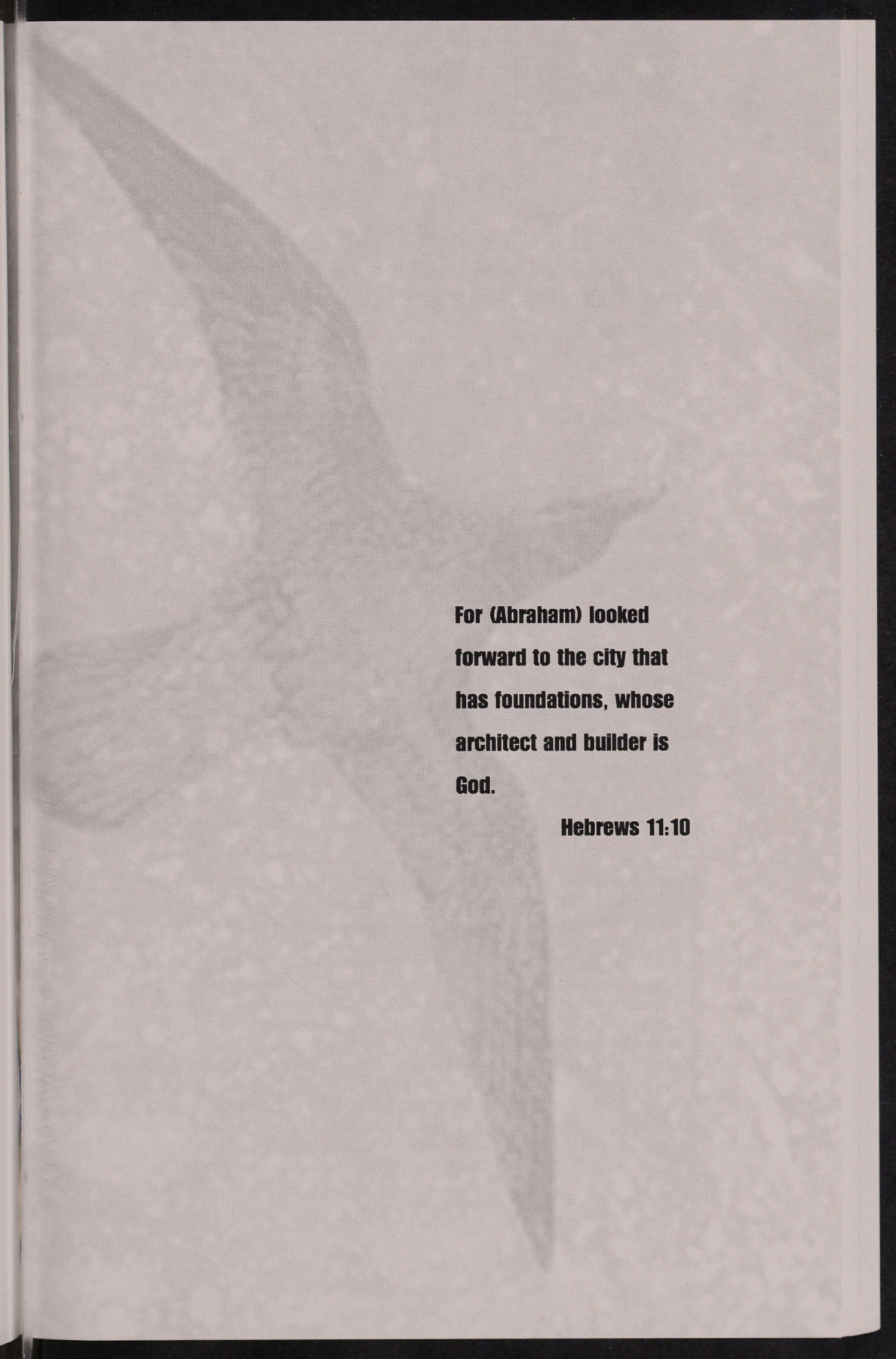
- How will congregations accomplish new goals if additional income is procured?
- How does the motivation for addressing human need arise from understandings other than sermon focus?
- Where is the teaching for such activities located?
- The survey indicated that pastors who are seminary trained are less likely to use spirituals in their services than those with no formal training. Continued dialog in congregations and among representative groups or persons may yield insights on this subject.

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<sup>34</sup>See Schaller, "Marks of a Healthy Church," in *The Parish Paper of the Yokefellow Institute* (Richmond, IN: The Institute, Fall 1983).

- How can congregations create more opportunities for persons to hear and respond to the call of God for lives of full-time service?
- How can congregations respond more effectively to the issue of women in pastoral leadership?





**For (Abraham) looked  
forward to the city that  
has foundations, whose  
architect and builder is  
God.**

**Hebrews 11:10**



