AN ANALYSIS OF CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP FACTORS

AND GROWTH OF MIDDLE-SIZED CHURCHES OF CHRIST

IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

AN ANALYSIS OF CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP FACTORS

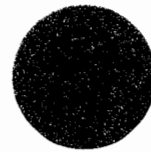AND GROWTH OF MIDDLE-SIZED CHURCHES OF CHRIST

IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES

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Hal K. Pettegrew (Chairperson)

Mark E. Simpson

Mark E. Simpson

Date____5/16/2003____

To Nancy,

my wife,

and to Jonathan and Claire,

my children,

for their patience and encouragement

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PREFACE

We have warmed ourselves by fires that we did not kindle. We have crossed bridges that we did not build. We have lived in houses that we did not construct. Although my name may appear on this work, many have assisted me in this process.

Dr. Hal K. Pettegrew, my supervising professor, has responded promptly to my inquiries with helpful advice and wise counsel. He has assisted me in applying critical thinking skills to the process of social science research. Dr. Mark E. Simpson, my second reader, has given appreciated and needed direction to this research.

My wife, Nancy, my children, Jonathan and Claire, extended family, and friends have been supportive and encouraged me as I have worked on this project. Many members of my congregation, the Central Kitsap Church of Christ, have also shown their support of me in this project. Your prayers as well as your words of encouragement have been critical to the completion of this project.

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I am also grateful to the three members of an expert panel who evaluated and verified my survey: Dr. Flavil Yeakley, Dr. John Ellas, and Mr. Gregg Strawn.

Finally, I am grateful to God for strength that has sustained me through the process of doctoral studies. May the name of the Lord be glorified through the church!

Mark T. McLean

Silverdale, Washington

May 2003

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH CONCERN

Middle-sized congregations face unique leadership challenges that must be

strategically addressed for continued congregational growth. David Womack found that

churches tend to stop growing at certain "barriers" of size: 35, 85, 125, 180, 240, 280, 400,

800, and 1200 (Womack 1977, 17). Growth barriers are "glass ceilings" composed of

leadership and sociological factors that hinder a congregation's further growth. A church

dealing with a numerical barrier has saturated its current social and leadership structures.

While the structures worked well to bring the church to its current size, the saturated

structures impede further growth. In order to break a growth barrier the church must change

the social and leadership structures that brought it success in the past.

Ellas found the 200 barrier to be the most documented phenomenon in church

growth studies (Ellas 1994, 44). The 200 barrier does not occur at exactly 200 in

attendance, but rather explains the phenomena commonly faced by congregations of 160-

240 in worship attendance. These congregations are "awkward-sized" congregations and

often frustrate their ministers (Schaller 1985, 8, 102). Congregations of this size are

churches in transition. Just as the teenage years are often a difficult time in the transition

from childhood to adulthood, so the middle-sized church of 160-240 finds itself in the

difficult transition from a small church to a large church. William Bridges observed, "It is

not the changes that do you in, it's the transitions" (Bridges 1991, 3). Middle-sized

churches often resist making the necessary transitions for the next level of growth.

Introduction to the Research Problem

It is God's will that the church grow through individuals being rescued from sin

and added to the kingdom (Womack 1977, 29). God does not will any to be lost in their sin

(II Peter 3:9; all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version). The gospel is

to be preached to "all creation" (Mark 16:15). There is more rejoicing in heaven over the

one lost sinner that is found than in the ninety-nine who need no repentance (Luke 15:7).

Therefore no congregation may be satisfied with its current size. There is always the need to

find "one more" individual to be saved from sin by Christ and incorporated into the local

body of Christ.

The middle-sized congregation often finds it difficult to add "one more" to its

body. Many members of middle-sized churches see the church as a "small church" and act

accordingly (Schaller 1985, 88). Everyone wants to know everyone else in a small church

of under 150 members (Gaede 2001, 37). A number of middle-sized churches of 150-250

act as a stretched single-cell body in their leadership structure (Gaede 2001, 28).

Anthropologist Robin Dunbar found that the largest "community group" in which one may

be in active relationships with the others in the group numbers about 150 members (Dunbar

1992, 469-93). A crucial issue in breaking the 200 barrier appears to be the assimilation of

new members into the local church (Sullivan 1988, 14). A stretched single-cell fellowship

of 150-250 does not have the "relational room" for new members. New members may be

verbally welcomed but relationally shunned in the overcrowded stretched single-cell church.

This situation may be addressed by changing the congregational self-perception as

a "small church" where "everyone knows everyone else" to a middle-sized church with a

multiplicity of belonging groups. The congregational self-perception as a "small church"

may be either intentional or unintentional. "Small church thinking" may result from a focus

on internal individual and congregational needs rather than a focus on God's vision for the future of the church.

The addition of appropriate staff may facilitate the development of a multiplicity of belonging groups within the congregation that are necessary for the successful assimilation of new members in the middle-sized church. Appropriate staffing does not guarantee growth, but appropriate staffing appears to be a prerequisite for growth beyond the 200 barrier.

Research Purpose

This research sought to explore the impact of the congregational leadership factors of self-perception, organizational structure, and inclusion mechanisms and attitudes associated with new member assimilation on the success of western American Churches of Christ in breaking the 200 barrier. Although a tremendous amount of research has been done on the subject of effective leadership for church growth, the express purpose of this study was to identify leadership factors that resulted in numerical growth for middle-sized western American Churches of Christ.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to middle-sized congregations that are, or within the last decade have been, in the 160-240 range of average Sunday morning worship attendance. Lyle Schaller considers congregations of this size "awkward-sized churches" that tend to frustrate their ministers (Schaller 1985, 8). When congregational conditions are favorable, the attendance is often in the range of 220-240, but with internal disruptions attendance may drop to 150-180 (Schaller 1985, 102). From the minister's perspective, churches of this size are too large and complex to be adequately served by one minister, but from the

congregation's point of view, the church is too small to afford additional ministerial staff (Schaller 1985, 103). From a lay perspective a church of 160-240 in attendance is often perceived as a "comfortable size" congregation (Schaller 1985, 102). It is large enough to offer a variety of quality ministries but small enough to know nearly everyone by name. Growth beyond the 200 barrier may require a change in congregational self-perception and vision.

The typical member of the middle-sized church of 160-240 thinks that the church is really a small church (Schaller 1985, 117). This self-perception of the congregation as a small church causes the church to maintain an inadequate organizational infrastructure that limits growth. The members of a middle-sized church tend to think of themselves as "one big happy family" and prefer to keep congregational life small and simple (Schaller 1985, 117). This attitude makes the inclusion of new members in the social life of the middle-sized congregation a difficult assimilation process.

Churches chosen for inclusion in this research are, or have been in the 160-240 range of average worship attendance during the last decade. These are churches that are, or have been dealing with issues of the 200 barrier.

This research was further delimited to leadership factors that influence church growth in middle-sized congregations. This study does not attempt to address community demographic factors, or other factors that may influence growth in the middle-sized congregation.

Research Questions

The following research questions were explored in the research of breakthrough congregations, growing congregations, stable congregations, declining congregations, and severely declining congregations in middle-sized western American Churches of Christ:

1. What organizational structures are characteristic of each type of church?

2. What assimilation strategies were implemented by congregational leaders?

3. What factors are characteristic of a congregation's self-perception of size and function?

4. What are the characteristics of belonging groups?

5. What leadership factors are related to growth?

Terminology

Assimilation strategies. Assimilation strategies are leadership choices made for the purpose of assisting members of the congregation to become an active part of congregational life. Assimilation strategies have typically included tools that build strong interpersonal relationships among members of the congregation or the assignment of ministry tasks or leadership roles in an effort to build investment and involvement in a congregation.

Belonging group. Belonging groups are social units in which individuals build significant relationships with other group members. In a congregational setting typical belonging groups include Sunday School classes, sports teams, youth groups, home groups, task teams (or committees), boards, or music groups.

Breakthrough congregations. Congregations that have grown from under 160 in attendance to over 240 in attendance during the last decade. Breakthrough congregations have successfully broken the 200 barrier within the last decade. See: *200 barrier.*

Declining congregations. Declining congregations had an attendance of 160-240 a decade ago, but today have an attendance of less than 160. Declining congregations have been unsuccessful in breaking the 200 barrier and have reverted to a smaller size.

Division Alpha congregations. Churches in growth categories 1 and 2 as defined in this study. These congregations have grown through the 200 barrier during the last

decade. It is assumed that these congregations are no longer dealing with significant issues of the 200 barrier.

Division Beta congregations. Churches in growth categories 3, 4, and 5 as defined in this study. These congregations are currently in the 160-240 range of average attendance. It is assumed that these congregations may be dealing with significant issues of the 200 barrier.

Division Gamma congregations. Churches in growth categories 1 and 2 as defined in this study. Ten years ago these congregations were above 160 in attendance, but are currently below 160 in average attendance.

Growing congregations. Congregations that have grown from 160-240 in average worship attendance to over 240 in average worship attendance during the last decade. Growing congregations have successfully broken the 200 barrier.

Severely declining congregations. Congregations that had an attendance greater than 240 a decade ago, but today have an attendance of less than 160. Severely declining congregations have broken the 200 barrier "in reverse."

Stable congregations. Congregations that had an average worship attendance of 160-240 a decade ago and today still average between 160 and 240 in attendance. Stable congregations are still dealing with issues of the 200 barrier.

SPSS. A computer software program that aids in statistic analysis of data. The SPSS program will be used to process data from the surveys used in this research.

200 barrier. The 200 barrier is a social phenomenon that is found in congregations of approximately 200 in attendance. The 200 barrier is a "glass ceiling" that limits numerical growth in a congregation when worship attendance averages approximately 200. The social forms and ministry systems that enabled the congregation to grow to

approximately 200 worshippers become saturated and will not allow further congregational growth to occur. Organisms that change significantly in size must also change in form (Mann 1998, 1). Churches must begin to change their forms in order to continue to grow in size. Static social forms tend to inhibit further growth as the congregation approaches about 200 in attendance. The 200 barrier usually occurs in congregations with an attendance of 160-240 (Schaller 1985, 8). The 200 barrier is not unique to Churches of Christ in the western United States but a phenomenon associated with many denominations and social groups.

Procedural Overview

Seventeen middle-sized congregations from the delimited population were randomly selected to participate in the research. These congregations represented all seven growth categories as defined in the study.

Two surveys were developed for use in the middle-sized churches selected for the study. The senior minister or another appropriate representative of each participating congregation was asked to complete survey "A" that solicited internal congregational demographic information. This information included average worship attendance from 1992 and 2002 and ministerial and secretarial staffing levels from 1992 and 2002. Survey "A" also inquired about the congregation's current use of eight common assimilation tools and information on the congregation's current belonging groups.

The senior minister or other appropriate congregational representative then chose a minimum of ten decade-long church members to complete survey "B." Survey "B" included Likert-response questions concerning congregational self-perceptions, perceived new member assimilation, and organizational structures of the congregation. The Likert-response survey was designed to measure the current and past tendency toward "small

church" thinking and the perceived effectiveness of assimilation structures. It also tested for perceptions characteristic of program churches and pastoral churches. Survey "B" also asked members to rate the work of the ministers of the congregation on an "outreach versus church nurture" continuum.

Both surveys "A" and "B" were evaluated and refined with the advice of an expert panel of leaders familiar with middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States. Both surveys "A" and "B" were field-tested in the researcher's congregation for clarity of design prior to being finalized and used in the research. The congregation used for field-testing the survey was not included in the research.

The data from all of the "B" returned surveys from each congregation was tallied to gain the congregational mean response for each question. The data from the congregational means on survey "B" was then entered into SPSS databases (SPSS is a computer program used for statistical analysis) along with the corresponding congregational demographic input from survey "A" from the senior minister or other appropriate representative of each congregation in the research. In addition to the more common statistical measures of percentage and mean, strong positive or negative bivarate correlations between sets of data were noted and applied to answer the research questions.

Research Assumptions

The following research assumptions underlie this study:

1. This study assumes the presence of a sociological growth barrier (the 200 barrier as described in this study). The 200 barrier is a "glass ceiling" that limits further congregational growth at approximately 160-240 in worship attendance. The social forms and ministry systems that enabled the church to grow to approximately 200 worshippers become saturated and do not allow further congregational growth to occur.

2. This study assumes that the 200 barrier is a sociological phenomenon rather than a theological phenomenon. Therefore precedent literature from other Christian denominations may be used as a framework from which to launch this study.

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENT LITERATURE

The field of church growth is a relatively young discipline. During the middle

1900's Donald McGavran began to study social principles from successful missionary work

(McGavran 1955). Others began to apply the social principles McGavran discovered to

ministry in American congregations in order to produce greater congregational growth.

Although the use of social science research as a tool for evangelism is a relatively recent

phenomenon, the impetus for evangelism reaches back to the founding of Christianity.

The Biblical Basis for Church Growth

Any ministry tool, including the principles of church growth, must be grounded in

Christian theology. Christian theology itself must be grounded in the life and teachings of

Christ and the apostles as found in the Bible.

The Universal Need for the Gospel of Christ

Christ envisioned the Christian faith to be a universal faith available to all people of

all social groups and backgrounds. During his ministry Christ left Galilee and Judea for a

brief ministry to the region of Syriophoenicia (Mark 7:24-30). There he cast out a demon

from a Greek woman. In the Great Commission he told his followers to "Go into all the

world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15) and "make disciples of all

nations" (Matt 28:19). After his resurrection Jesus told his disciples that they were to be his

"witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"

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(Acts 1:8). The missionary thrust of the Christian faith is evident in the life of Christ, his teachings, and his expectations of his followers. The gospel message was a message for the Jew and the Gentile, the slave and the free, and the male and the female (Gal 3:28). The coming of Christ was a message of good news for all the people (Luke 2:10).

The need for the gospel of Christ is universal. The Apostle Paul reminded the Roman Christians, "We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God'" (Rom 3:9b-10). The result of man's universal sin was universal spiritual death, for "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23a).

Christ came as God's sole remedy for mankind's universal problem with sin. "God made him who had no sin (Christ) to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). Christ, as the only sinless one, is the only one through whom we may have salvation from our sin (Acts 4:12). Jesus himself claimed to be the only way to a right relationship with the Father (John 14:6). Since faith in Christ is the only way for all mankind to escape spiritual death and enjoy an eternal relationship with God, all mankind is in need of the saving message of Christ.

The Missionary Development of the Early Church

The Lord prepared Peter to accept a mission to the Gentiles by revealing his will through a three-fold vision (Acts 10:9-16). Later Peter defended his extension of the Christian mission to the Gentiles by recounting that vision (Acts 11:1-18).

Since the gospel of Christ was indeed for all people, the second step in the missionary development of the infant church was the removal of man-made barriers that could hinder Gentiles from accepting Christ. Some Jewish believers had demanded that gentile converts to Christianity be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses in order to be

accepted as Christians (Acts 15:1). A meeting of Christian leaders in Jerusalem ensued to

consider this problem. It was Peter's judgment that the Jewish Christians should not make it

difficult for the Gentiles who were turning to God (Acts 15:19). This "Jerusalem Counsel"

issued a letter freeing gentile Christians from all but a small number of requirements from

the Old Testament (Acts 15:23-29). Social barriers were not to be placed in the way of

those who might accept Christ.

The third step in the development of the missionary nature of the church was the

effort to bridge cultural barriers that might hinder the acceptance of the gospel. The Apostle

Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

> Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to
> win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To
> those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under
> the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became
> like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under
> Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak,
> to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means
> I might save some. (1 Cor 9:19-22)

Paul was willing to sacrifice his own "comfort zone" for the sake of winning others to

Christ. All cultural barriers were removed in order to win as many as possible to the Lord.

The Thrust of the Church Growth Movement

The current Church Growth Movement seeks to identify social barriers that may

hinder the growth of the kingdom of God. Social principles alone will not win men for

Christ; conversion and spiritual growth is uniquely a spiritual experience. Yet conversion

and spiritual growth takes place within a social context. It is a purpose of the Church

Growth Movement to discover the social principles that allow the Spirit of God to have the

greatest effect upon human hearts within a given social context. Christians cannot cause

growth; one can only create a climate in which growth can take place (McIntosh 1999, 42).

All individuals matter to God; the Lord wills none to perish (2 Pet 3:9). The shepherd left the "ninety-nine" who were safe to seek the "one" that was lost. There is joy in heaven when one individual repents and turns to God (Luke 15:3-7). The church cannot afford to forget its missionary purpose. Congregations, as well as individual believers, should look not only to their own interests, but also to the interests of others (Phil 2:4). This "outward focus" includes the removal of social barriers that hinder the growth of the kingdom of God.

It is in the recognition of social barriers and the construction of socially acceptable "bridges" for the gospel that the church most effectively serves as "bridges of God" as envisioned by Donald McGavran (McGavran 1955). McGavran recognized that men like to become Christians without crossing linguistic, class, or social barriers (McGavran 1980, 198).

The Church Growth Movement affirms that there is a tension between being "in the world but not of the world." The biblical text must speak to the world through culture; otherwise the message is not relevant. Yet the desire to "win" the world through culturally effective means must not lessen the cost of true discipleship. The cost of discipleship must remain in tension with a culturally-relevant message (Rainer 1993, 91).

The 200 Barrier

Many researchers have recognized the existence of predictable, numerical barriers to continued congregational growth (Wagner 1998, 28). The 200 barrier is often experienced as a plateau or a "glass ceiling" in a congregation's growth. The 200 barrier is a sociological and leadership phenomenon that is found in congregations of approximately 200 in attendance. The social forms and ministry systems that enabled the church to grow to approximately 200 worshippers become saturated and ineffective and will not easily permit

further congregational growth. Organisms that change significantly in size must also change in form (Mann 1998, 1).

Ellas referenced the 200 barrier as the most fully documented problem in church growth studies (Ellas 1994, 44). The 200 barrier is by far the most consistent and predictable of all numerical barriers (Wagner 1998, 32). The 200 barrier, or any such sociological and leadership barrier, applies to religious groups of all denominations (Wagner 1998, 28).

Characteristics of the 200 Barrier

Ellas lists seven typical characteristics of churches dealing with the 200 barrier: They have only one paid minister, only one Sunday morning assembly, and one fellowship formation. These congregations often suffer facility crowding, possess small church attitudes, have inadequate member involvement, and have an average Sunday worship attendance between 150-200 (Ellas 1994, 44). Each of these seven characteristics affects the congregation's ability to attract and assimilate a significant number of new members. These seven characteristics are symptomatic of congregations of about 200 in worship attendance.

Rainer found that the 200 barrier is typically the result of a single-staff ministry with little or no lay support for ministry (Rainer 1994, 126). The most common prescriptions for churches at the 200 barrier are the addition of staff or the equipping of laypersons to do ministry (Rainer 1994, 126).

Wagner suggests five institutional factors as possible sources of the 200 barrier (Towns, Wagner, and Rainer 1998, 36). As congregations approach 200 in attendance they begin to lose the "family" feel of social intimacy. The desire to preserve social intimacy may prove to be stronger than the desire for the congregation to grow. As a congregation grows, the original leaders may feel their power begin to erode; the desire for control may

outweigh the desire for further congregational growth. The long-standing members may also quietly or even unconsciously oppose growth due to their desire to conserve their memories of the church "as it used to be." New people may be seen as a threat to the church. Change itself may be a threat as members desire to remain comfortable with their predictable patterns of "doing church" (Towns, Wagner, and Rainer 1998, 36-39). Changes in congregational size require changes in congregational forms (Mann 1998, 1). Many members may resist change in congregational forms, and hence limit church growth.

The 200 Barrier As a Church Development Issue

The majority of American churches are small. Seventy-five percent of congregations are 140 or less in average Sunday attendance, and 85% are 200 or less in average Sunday attendance (George and Bird 1993, 132). In smaller congregations the minister does a lot of "hands on" ministry with the congregation. The largest congregation that an "enabler" minister can effectively serve is about 175 attendees (Schaller 1980, 30). Clergy productivity is currently measured somewhere between 70-150 people served per minister (George and Bird 1994, 120). As congregations grow toward 200, a change must transpire in the delivery methods of ministry or the congregation will reach a plateau. As George and Bird suggest, the minister must move from a "shepherding model" to a "ranching model" of ministry. Rather than serving as the personal provider of congregational care (the shepherding model), the minister must become the administrator of congregational care through others (the ranching model) (George and Bird 1993, 85-97). Since 90-95% of ministers begin their ministry working under the "shepherding model" (George and Bird 1993, 88), it seems unnatural, and at times counterproductive, to change the model that has given the minister and the congregation success. The minister of the congregation growing toward 200 in attendance must not only shift the model for the

delivery of ministry toward "ranching," but he must also help his congregation to accept the

shift in the ministry paradigm. The difficulty of these paradigm shifts for both the minister

and the congregation contributes to the growth plateau known as the 200 barrier.

Lyle E. Schaller proposed that 40 is the most comfortable maximum size for face-to-

face social interaction (Schaller 1984, 48). C. Peter Wagner explains why a church must

move from a single cell organism to a multiple cell organism if it is to grow beyond 200 in

average attendance:

> The group dynamic theory that underlies this is the rule of 40. Forty people is the
> ideal size for everyone to maintain face-to-face relationships with everyone else. In
> a church setting the group can expand to 80 and sustain most of the interpersonal
> qualities. However, when it goes past 80 toward 200, the relationships are increasing-
> ly strained. By the time it gets to 150 most groups are so stressed out that they can
> no longer handle the thought of strangers entering the group and thereby increasing
> the stress. Without knowing they are doing it or without even wanting to, they relate
> to strangers like two identical poles of magnets. (Wagner 1990, 130)

This limiting social phenomenon is a key problem for the middle-sized congregation

that seeks to break the 200 barrier. Churches nearing 200 in attendance must "divide and

conquer." In order for growth to continue, churches nearing 200 in attendance must divide

their single-cell fellowship into at least two multiple fellowship groups. New member

assimilation requires "social space" in which new members of the congregation and guests

may successfully build relationships within the local body of Christ (Gaede 2001, 8).

Churches that fail to make "relational space" for newcomers by multiplying fellowship

groups tend to have a significant problem in visitor retention and new member assimilation.

Churches that are nearing 200 in worship attendance that seek to maintain a "single-cell"

structure are relationally "supersaturated" and unable or unwilling to assimilate new

members into their overcrowded relational network. Many leaders of congregations that are

nearing 200 in attendance fail to identify the "supersaturated" nature of their "single-cell"

fellowship

A Problem in Middle-Sized Congregations:
Organizational Change

A small congregation is not a microcosm of a large congregation but a totally different kind of organization (Sullivan 1988, 14). As organizations change significantly in size they must also change in form (Mann 1998, 1). The congregation averaging 250 in attendance is not just a larger model of the church averaging 100 in attendance. Thus the critical task in breaking the 200 barrier is not just congregational growth but organizational change. A transition in the form of the congregation is required in order to provide emotional and numerical "room" for new members (Gaede 2001, 8). Study of the precedent literature indicates that a key problem hindering growth in the middle-sized church is the problem of organizational change. The middle-sized congregation that decides to minister to its people through a comprehensive organizational structure rather than in a family-style fellowship is in a good position to break the 200 barrier (Sullivan 1988, 14).

An Introduction to Congregational
Self-Perception and Vision

This research will explore three interwoven factors of congregational leadership that relate to organizational change that allows for continued growth. The first congregational leadership factor for exploration will be congregational self-perception and vision. Congregations tend to "behave" as they "believe." If the majority of members believe that they are a "small church," the congregation will likely behave (and produce the organizational structures) of a small church. Churches often have to be taught to "act their size" rather than "acting their perceived size" in order for growth to continue. Schaller believes that the greatest barrier to growth in a middle-sized church is the tendency of the members to see the congregation as a small church and therefore to engage in behavior counterproductive to growth (Schaller 1985, 88). The problem of self-perception is not only

a matter of misreading the current size of the church. A lack of vision may underestimate God's future plans for the congregation. The problem of congregational self-perception and vision is foundational for the other two problems to be explored in this research.

An Introduction to Staffing Decisions

The second congregational leadership factor for exploration in this research study will be staffing decisions for the middle-sized congregation. The building of a growing congregational infrastructure for the middle-sized church usually requires the addition of a second professional staff person before the congregation breaks the 200 barrier. Not only is the right number of staff (ratio of staff to members) required, the work of staff must also be balanced in appropriate ministries (including outreach and infrastructure growth) in order for the congregation to continue its growth.

An Introduction to New Member Assimilation

The third congregational leadership factor for exploration in this research study will be building appropriate congregational infrastructure and inclusive attitudes as an aid in new member assimilation. It is not unusual for a congregation to want 100 new members but be unwilling to make any of the organizational changes necessary for the assimilation of 100 new members to occur (Mann 1998, 88). This topic will explore the development of congregational vision in conjunction with the development of church infrastructure and attitudes to aid assimilation of new members. The development of vision brings the project full circle back to the first topic of self-perception and vision of the congregation.

For matters of convenience the relevant precedent literature will be explored under the three topics of congregational self-perception and vision, staffing decisions, and new

member assimilation. These three leadership factors overlap and are mutually dependent upon each other.

Congregational Self-Perception and Vision

In a world of large institutions the middle-sized church looks small to many of its members (Schaller 1985, 90). There is a tendency for the members of a middle-sized church to perceive the congregation as a small church (Schaller 1985, 88). The "small church image" is "self-perpetuated through modest expectations based upon a perception of inadequate resources and limited potential" (Schaller 1985, 88). The "small church" is something more than a numerical description (Dudley 1978, 19). "Small church" is not so much about numbers as it is a state of mind (Wagner 1998, 29). The congregation should continually ask, "What business are we in? What does God want from us?" (Schaller 1983, 57). The key to church growth in the middle-sized congregation is the actions and attitudes of the laity (Schaller 1983, 63). It is not unusual for the laity in the middle-sized church to expect to be included in all decisions and demand that the minister act like a follower rather than a leader (Miller 1999, 32). Small congregations often want a "chaplain" rather than a "leader" as their minister. This paradigm is often difficult for the small-church minister to change.

Intentional and Unintentional
"Small Church" Mentality

The "small church mentality" may or may not be intentional. Many congregations plateaue below 240 in worship attendance because "they see themselves as smaller, weaker, and with fewer resources than is true" (Schaller 1993, 32). Such a weak self-image as a church may be partially due to staffing for maintenance rather than for growth (Schaller 1993, 39). Even leaders of congregations of 70-200 in attendance may

identify their congregation as a "small church." This limited self-esteem causes the leaders

to underestimate the importance of the various organizations within the congregation

(Schaller 1983, 70).

Yet the "small church mentality" may also be intentional. The small church

values social intimacy. Dudley believes that members of a small church "cannot make a

radical change in the size of the church without losing their motivation for belonging"

(Dudley 1978, 49-50). Those who value the social intimacy of the small church over growth

will make decisions for the present and future with no expectation of the church growing

larger. Their de facto prophecy then becomes self-fulfilling (Rainer 1998, 91). Perpetuating

the "small church" (single-cell) image keeps a church from growing (Schaller 1978, 59).

Those who intend to cultivate a small church, as those who intend to cultivate a Bonsai tree,

will keep the "pot" small (Hemphill 1991, 17), prune the "roots" to restrict nourishment

(Hemphill 1991, 37) and pinch off "new growth" as it occurs (Hemphill 1991, 49). The

stunted growth of the "Bonsai church" is the intentional result of choices made to control the

natural growth of the church.

Self-Perception As a Tool for
Congregational Transition

The middle-sized church is often in a transitional phase between the intimacy of

the small church and the "corporate development" of the large church (McIntosh 1999, 33).

The middle-sized church, like the human adolescent, often suffers from an "identity crisis"

through this transitional phase. It is more difficult for a congregation to accept itself as a

"middle-sized church" than a "small church" or a "large church" (Callahan 2000, 10). The

middle-sized church has lost the valued intimacy of the small congregation, but it is not

large enough to have developed the resources, programming, and staffing of the larger

church (Callahan 2000, 10). The middle-sized congregation may be viewed as an "adolescent congregation"—part child and part adult. The majority of middle-sized congregations do not develop into large congregations because they have not made the transition in their self-perception and vision toward "adult" maturity. Members of middle-sized churches are often concerned with losing the "intimacy" of the church as it grows. Under stress it is easier for an adolescent, or a church, to revert to "childhood" rather than to advance toward a more mature but challenging "adulthood."

Rothauge's Model of Church Development

In 1983 Rothauge published his small but seminal book, *Sizing up a Congregation for New Member Ministry*. Rothauge proposed that different sized congregations incorporate new members in different ways. "Family" congregations (usually up to 50 in attendance) incorporate new members through their relationship with a patriarch, matriarch, or other "gatekeeper" in the congregation. "Pastoral congregations" (usually 50-150 in attendance) incorporate new members by their relationship with the pastor. "Program churches" (typically 150-350 in attendance) incorporate new members through involvement in the programs of the church (Rothauge 1983, 5-26). Miller considers congregations of 101-300 in attendance to be "program churches" where several specialized programs operate simultaneously. In these congregations the minister's role is like that of a YMCA program director. Although the minister does not personally direct all of the programs, he coordinates the overall delivery of congregational programs and stays involved in the "big picture" of the entire organization (Miller 1999, 31).

The "family" and "pastoral" size congregations often perceive themselves as "one big happy family." Congregations that transition to a "program church" must give up being a "single cell" in which every member knows everyone else (Gaede 2001, 25). A number of

congregations with 150-250 in attendance are organizationally "stretched single-cells" that

are still organized as "pastoral sized-churches" (Gaede 2001, 28). These middle-sized

congregations still perceive themselves as "small churches" and act accordingly. A

significant number of new members will likely be seen as a threat to the stability of the

congregation because the congregation's capacity for new relationships is already stretched

beyond the expected limits for a single-cell fellowship. New members in such a "stretched

single-cell church" are much more likely to find close relationships with each other than

with the long-standing members of the church.

Anthropologist Robin Dunbar found that a community group of about 150 is the

largest group in which human beings can have active relationships with each other. The

human brain can only handle the complexities of active relationships in a group of no more

than 150 people (Dunbar 1992, 469-93). Any "pastoral" congregation larger than 150 thus

finds itself as a "stretched single-cell." This uncomfortable "stretched single-cell" situation

may be resolved by the acceptance of a multi-cell congregation (with the accompanying fear

of the lose of intimacy) or by reverting to a stable single-cell congregation of less than 150

in attendance. Middle-sized churches that persist in their self-perception as a "small church"

may do so in the subconscious hope that their size will decrease to match their perception of

their "ideal" church.

The middle-sized church of 160-240 is an "awkward-sized" church (Schaller

1985, 102). When things are going well, attendance may be in the 220-240 range, but

when disruptions occur, attendance may drop to the 150-180 range (Schaller 1985, 102).

The middle-sized congregation is too large to be served effectively by only one minister, but

the church does not perceive itself as large enough to need (and afford) a second staff

minister (Schaller 1985, 103). The middle-sized church sees itself as "too small" to have a

large number of developed programs (Schaller 1985, 103), yet it should have begun the transition toward becoming a "program church" (Rothauge 1983, 23).

Staffing Decisions in the Middle-Sized Church

Adding additional staff in the middle-sized church does not guarantee growth, but it is rare to find a growing church that is understaffed (McIntosh 1999, 95). Adequate staffing is necessary, but not alone sufficient for continued congregational growth. Congregations of all sizes need to consider their staff-to-attendee ratios, but the issue is imperative in the middle-sized congregation. For congregations of 175-225 in attendance staffing is usually the critical component of a strategy for sustained numerical growth (Schaller 1983, 78).

Staffing Ratios

During the twentieth century the ratio of full-time clergy to church attendees in the United States ranged from 1:150-1:200. The average was 1:156. Certainly a number of factors have contributed to that statistic. While it is beyond the scope of this research to explain those factors, it is noted that the historical average ratio of clergy to church attendees has been 1:156 during the last century (McIntosh 2000, 39).

During the 1950's it was not unusual to find a congregation of 300-400 in attendance adequately staffed by one minister. In the 1960's the recommended staff-to-attendee ratio was 1:250-300. In the 1970's the ratio had fallen to 1:175-200. In the 1980's the average recommended ratio was 1:125-150. During the 1990's it was not unusual to see recommended ratios of 1:100-125 (Westing 1997, 159). In 1965 Martin Anderson recommended a ratio as high as 1:500 (members, not attendees). In 1963 Herman Sweet recommended a ratio of 1:350-400 attendees (McIntosh 2000, 37). Changes in American culture, including the rise of the two-income household, have limited the amount of time

that the average church member volunteers in service to his or her congregation. The shift toward a "post-Christian culture" has also necessitated a lower ratio of staff for the congregation to continue an effective community outreach.

Today most writers recommend a staff-to-attendance ratio of 1:100-150. Ellas found that growing congregations averaged a ratio of 1:125, whereas declining churches averaged a ratio of 1:200. Ellas found staffing ratios one of four strong predictors of church growth (Ellas 1994, 42). Arn recommends a ratio of 1:150 (Arn 1987, 16). McIntosh recommends a ratio of 1:125-150 (McIntosh 1999, 93). Certainly the congregational situation (including the presence of skilled and willing volunteers) varies from one ministry context to another, but congregations cannot ignore the general trend that suggests the need for increased staffing. These staffing ratios are for "program staff," and do not reflect the need for secretarial and custodial staff.

It is not uncommon for the lay leadership of the middle-sized church to study staffing ratios and agree with the 1:100-150 recommendations yet still be unwilling to consider additional staff in the critical 160-240 size range. These lay leaders will be glad to consider additional staff when the attendance reaches 250-300, but not before. They fail to see that the church of 150-175 should begin to hire additional staff (McIntosh 2000, 42). Few congregations wait until they have 150 in attendance to hire their first staff member; nor can they afford to wait until they have 300 in attendance to hire their second staff member. Fledging congregations of 50-75 in attendance often hire their first full-time staff member with the hope that the staff member will help them grow toward becoming a congregation of 150. In a similar way, once the congregation passes 150 in attendance, it is the addition of the second staff member that will help the congregation to grow toward 300

in attendance. A failure to apply this logic has kept many single-staff congregations at the 200 barrier.

Frequently the middle-sized church is understaffed or staffed for better care of its members rather than for outreach (Schaller 1985, 129). The ratio of staff-to-attendees is important, but the purposes for which the staff members are hired are also important factors in congregational growth.

McIntosh's Ministry Fulcrum

McIntosh postulates a ministry fulcrum divided between "outreach" on left and "maintenance" on the right. Ministries on the "outreach" side of the fulcrum include finding people, keeping people, and celebrating with people. Ministries on the "maintenance" side of the fulcrum include educating people, overseeing people, and caring for people (McIntosh 2000, 20-25). The ministries farthest from the fulcrum (finding people and caring for people) are the most labor intensive for the minister. Early in a particular ministry the minister usually concentrates on the left side of the fulcrum (outreach). The more people the minister has in his "flock," the more time he will spend on ministries on the right side of the fulcrum (maintenance). The outreach side of ministry tends to suffer as the minister's "flock" grows and more time must be put into maintenance. The minister becomes a victim of his own success! McIntosh's fulcrum seems to assume an "enabler" style of ministry. The largest congregation that an "enabler" minister can effectively serve is about 175 attendees (Schaller 1980, 30). Unless the middle-sized congregation hires additional staff, the minister will find his outreach limited due to the high demands of maintenance ministry. The middle-sized church must be trained to do an increasing amount of its own member's care or additional staff must be put in place in order to carry the church beyond the 200 barrier.

Ministerial and Assimilation Functions
in Rothauge's Model

In 1983 Rothauge postulated his four-stage model of church growth (Rothauge 1983, 5). A church of 1-50 members is basically a "family church." A family, or a group of families, provides the lay leadership. New members are assimilated on the basis of their relationship to a core family or group. A minister, if called, functions as a chaplain rather than a leader in the congregation. The church of 51-150 in attendance is a "pastoral church." The church centers on the pastor. New people are assimilated into the congregation through their relationship with the pastor. The pastor is the "center of the wheel" and is present at most congregational activities. The congregation of 151-350 is a program church. New people are attracted to the congregation by the number and quality of its programs. Assimilation is accomplished through activity in a particular program. Congregations of more than 350 in attendance are "corporate churches" and are run similar to a corporation in the business world (Rothauge 1983, 31).

The transition from pastoral to program church is the most difficult transition for the minister (Gaede 2001, 37). Not only must the minister change from being an individual "shepherd" to a "rancher" as an overseer of his flock (George and Bird 1993, 19), but the congregation must also accept this difficult change. As the middle-sized church moves from a pastoral to program church the members must give up knowing everybody in the church by name and give up their ready access to the minister at all times (Gaede 2001, 37). Thus both clergy and laity find the "pastoral to program" transition difficult. A number of 150-250 member congregations remain "stretched" pastoral churches in their leadership structure (Gaede 2001, 28), but these churches are often on a growth plateau or are beginning to decline. Churches that desire to grow in size through the 200 barrier need to begin to change their ministerial structures.

The addition of a staff member serves as a catalyst to push the congregation through this transition from a pastoral to a program church. Additional staff may help to run more programs and break the congregation's image of "our minister" (singular) needing to be present at all functions. Often it is the addition of the second staff person that helps propel the middle-sized church toward growth. The addition of a second staff person does not guarantee congregational growth, but further growth is often dependent upon the work of a second staff minister.

The Single-Staff Minister of a Middle-Sized Church

The solitary minister of the congregation of 160-240 is often fatigued, frustrated, and bears a weight of guilt for "undone" ministry (Schaller 1985, 8). An effective staff member builds a ministry with 125-150 people (McIntosh 2000, 40). The largest number of people a minister can serve in the "enabler" mode of ministry is 175 (Schaller 1980, 30). George said an individual clergyman can only effectively serve 70-150 people (George 1994, 120). Miller suggested that one minister and one church secretary can lead a church of approximately 150 in attendance. At that point the congregation is in need of additional staff (Miller 1999, 32). It is clear that the solitary minister of the middle-sized church may find himself stretched, frustrated, and ineffective due to his workload.

The single staff middle-sized church often struggles with the assimilation of new members. If the church reaches 225-250 with a single minister, the number of members leaving the church often equals the number of those arriving (Arn 1987, 16). An additional minister will usually pull about ten couples around himself, including two to three from the present congregation and seven to eight new families (Sullivan 1988, 52). Additional ministry staff should be expected to aid in the assimilation of new members. The success of

additional ministers in new member assimilation will depend upon the focus of their ministries as well as the personalities of those involved. The role of additional staff in assimilation is of critical importance in the middle-sized church.

Adding Staff in the Middle-Sized Church

Additional ministry staff may help the middle-sized congregation rebalance McIntosh's ministry fulcrum between outreach and maintenance (McIntosh 2000, 25-34). If new staff members are asked to concentrate on outreach ministries, it is not unusual for their work to "pay for itself" in twelve months through increased contribution receipts from those they serve. The church may need to have saved only half of a year's salary at the time of hiring (Sullivan 1988, 51).

The best motivation for hiring additional staff is for the training of additional lay leaders (George 1994, 122). An effective minister can train up to fifty new lay leaders during his first three years (George and Bird 1993, 157).

McIntosh suggests the following additional reasons to add new staff (McIntosh 2000, 37): Staff should be added when the church is growing or on a plateau, or when much ministry work is not getting done. Staff should be added when there is obviously too much work for one minister or there is an assimilation problem in the congregation.

Both the perceived needs and the real needs of the congregation must be clarified when considering additional staff (Gaede 2001, 125). Congregations should beware of the tendency to add staff simply for maintenance functions (McIntosh 2000, 26). Often the second staff individual added is a youth minister. The youth minister may seek an outreach ministry with teenagers in the community, but the church "hired him" to take care of a maintenance function of working with their own children. The focus of a minister's work should be clarified during the hiring process.

The church should also be alert for improper motivation in its desire to add staff. For example, a congregation may wish to call an additional staff person to assist a likable but ineffective staff person, or a minister who is "too old" to relate to most of the congregation. Second staff should not be hired to cover up the inefficiencies of current staff members; nor should members of the congregation be hired as "projects" in order to help them.

The unspoken issue of the small church is survival; the unspoken issue of the middle-sized congregation is the allocation of resources (Towns, Wagner, and Rainer 1998, 83). The priorities of growing churches tend to be: staff, programs, and last of all facilities. Declining churches reverse those priorities: facilities, programs, and last of all staff (McIntosh 2000, 36).

The staffing ratios introduced earlier in this chapter reflect program staff. Secretarial and custodial staff members are not included in the staff ratios previously discussed.

**Secretarial and Part-Time
Ministerial Staff**

The best money a middle-sized church can invest in non-program staff is often in good secretarial help. A good secretary can significantly increase the work done by a program minister. Jones suggests a full-time secretary for every 200 members, or one secretary for every program staff person, whichever is greater (Jones 1988, 164). George and Bird recommend two secretaries for every program staff minister (George and Bird 1993, 158). The middle-sized church with only a part-time secretary is significantly understaffed. It is usually more cost-effective to hire additional secretarial help rather than add ministerial support staff.

For financial reasons the middle-sized church often considers adding part-time program staff rather than a full-time second minister. Arn recommends that a congregation of 150-200 attendees be staffed by one full-time minister and one part-time minister (Arn 1987, 17). The obvious advantage of part-time staff is the financial savings to the church; not only is the minister's salary part-time, but depending upon the situation, the congregation may not need to pay benefits in addition to the salary.

There are several drawbacks to part-time ministers in addition to their limited work hours. Good part-time workers may be hard to find. Often they are hired from within the congregation. Hiring a minister from within the church makes the minister harder to "fire" should the need arise. Part-time hires from within the church should be hired on yearly renewable contracts. Part-time hires should be charged with only one ministry responsibility.

Hiring Considerations

The natural tendency is for a congregation to fill the second staff position with a "maintenance" position rather than a "growth" position (McIntosh 2000, 26). If the second staff position emphasizes outreach, the staff member will "pay" for his salary as the church grows through his ministry (Arn 1987, 17). If an "outreach" position is funded, the church may need to have only six months salary saved when hiring takes place (Sullivan 1988, 51). Such optimistic financial results should not be expected if the second position hired is a "maintenance" position. It is not wrong to hire for "maintenance" reasons, but the church must be aware of balancing McIntosh's ministry fulcrum (McIntosh 2000, 24) between "outreach" and "maintenance" functions. If the senior minister is still strong on "outreach" functions, a "maintenance" oriented hire may be a wise choice.

The senior minister should play a key role in the staff selection (Westing 1997, 34), but the church must beware of hiring a "clone" of the senior minister. It is best to hire an associate minister who possesses unique gifts (McIntosh 2000, 26).

The middle-sized church, because of financial constraints, often hires a second minister at a low salary. This may result in an inferior minister or a minister with a short tenure. Hiring someone "straight from seminary" is not always the wisest move. A minister with at least two prior places of service is less likely to become disillusioned and move (McIntosh 2000, 68).

The Transition to a Multi-Staffed Church

When the size of a church changes, the form (social and leadership structures) of the church must also change (Mann 1998, 1). A surprising number of congregations with an attendance of 150-250 remain "stretched" pastoral churches (Gaede 2001, 28). The transition to a larger, multi-staffed congregation is particularly difficult on the congregation and the minister. The transition is difficult because the culture of the church is in flux (Mann 1998, 4).

The transition from a pastoral to a program church is particularly difficult on the minister (Gaede 2001, 37). He must change his style of ministry from individual "shepherding" to overseeing a "ranching" operation (George and Bird 1993, 85-99). The transition from pastoral to program church is also difficult on the members as they give up their ready access to their religious leader and the ability to know "everybody" in the growing congregation (Gaede 2001, 37).

The senior minister must add to his duties that of supervising his associate. The senior minister may be challenged as he relinquishes some cherished responsibilities to the associate, or conversely, he may wrongly "saddle" the associate with all his distasteful tasks.

The senior minister must also share the limelight and the love of the congregation with the associate. These changes present challenges of growth for the senior minister.

Both the congregation and senior minister need to realize that it may take three years for a new hire to perform at his peak (McIntosh 2001, 53). The addition of a staff member to the middle-sized congregation is often a necessary but trying experience for both the congregation and the minister.

Middle-sized churches, much like human adolescents, are in the middle of a needed but difficult transition. Staffing decisions are at the heart of both the pain and the promise of the transition. Middle-sized congregations do well to hire the right number of staff, fill the right position for a balance in outreach and maintenance, and hire the "right" person to serve. All three factors are imperative in order for additional staff members to be successful in assisting the congregation in continued growth. Wise hiring decisions lay a foundation for strong congregational growth.

New Member Assimilation in the Middle-Sized Church

The middle-sized church frequently has an inadequate system for new member assimilation and thus an excessive number of new members drop into a relatively inactive role within a year or two after joining the church (Schaller 1985, 103-04). This may be caused, in part, from the failure of the middle-sized congregation to move from the "pastoral" to "program" church. In the "pastoral church" new members are assimilated by their relationship to the pastor; in the "program church" they are assimilated through their participation in a congregational program (Rothauge 1983, 17, 25). There is a limit to the number of new members that can be successfully assimilated into the life of the congregation through their relationship with the minister. Sullivan expects that a newly

hired minister is able to pull seven to eight couples into the congregation through his relationship with them (Sullivan 1988, 52). The longer a minister serves in a particular place of ministry, the greater the tendency for the focus of his work to move from "outreach" to "maintenance" tasks (McIntosh 2000, 24). If the middle-sized church depends solely upon the minister to assimilate new members into the congregation, the congregation is not likely to experience significant growth. Thus the middle-sized congregation must move toward a "program" structure for the successful attraction and assimilation of new members.

Rainer found that congregations that have high expectations of their members were more successful in assimilating new members (Rainer 1999, 23). While Rainer found many different assimilation tools to be effective, Sunday School involvement became the best gauge of measuring successful assimilation (Rainer 1999, 29, 37) and the best tool for successful assimilation (Rainer 1999, 33, 47). New Christians who immediately became active in Sunday School were five times more likely to remain in the church five years later (Rainer 1993, 45). Rainer also found that high assimilation churches were more likely to ask prospective members to agree with a statement of faith (Rainer 1993, 57). When membership covenants were used, they were extremely effective in retaining new members (Rainer 1993, 63). Rainer also found that the greatest value of a "membership class" was not the information taught but the expectations of church membership conveyed (Rainer 1993, 60). Expository preaching was also found to be an aid in member retention (Rainer 1993, 69). The attitude of high expectations from members, coupled with the proper structures for growth, was found to assist in congregational growth. Congregations wishing to assimilate and keep their new members would do well to involve them immediately in a membership class that conveys high expectations, and then involve them in Sunday School.

Levels of Assimilation

Many churches are inclusive in outreach, yet exclusive in fellowship. People are

taught the gospel, baptized into Christ, welcomed into church membership, yet they may not

be incorporated into the friendship structures of the church (McIntosh and Martin 1992, 75).

Congregations tend to have large "membership circles" and smaller "fellowship circles"

(Schaller 1978, 69). The first step of congregational assimilation is reception into church

membership. When individuals are asked why they chose to unite with a particular

congregation, several responses are common: friendship ties, kinship ties, their relationship

with the minister, or they just "walked in" and felt at home (Schaller 1978, 74).

The second level of assimilation (the more difficult step) involves an individual's

reception into a fellowship circle within the congregation. Those who have moved from the

"membership circle" to the "fellowship circle" tend to identify their congregation with the

pronouns "we," "us," and "our." Those who do not yet consider themselves a part of the

fellowship circle tend to identify their congregation with the pronouns "they," "them," and

"their" (Schaller 1978, 70). Typically one-third to one-half of church members do not

consider themselves in the "fellowship circle" (Schaller 1978, 16). Those within the

"fellowship circle" tend to feel that the line is easily crossed, whereas those outside the

"fellowship circle" tend to see the boundary line as an insurmountable wall (Schaller 1978,

81).

Means of Assimilation

Schaller suggests four routes to inclusion in a congregation (Schaller 1978, 75-

76). The most effective route is for the new member to be assimilated socially before they

join the congregation. The new member may also be assimilated socially after joining the

congregation. The new member may accept a role or office, or a task as a worker. Those

who are not successfully assimilated within a year of membership tend to become inactive (Schaller 1978, 76).

Schaller suggests that most new adult members fall into five categories within a year of uniting with a particular congregation (Schaller 1978, 76). The ones least likely to become inactive members are those who formed meaningful face-to-face relationships within the congregation prior to joining the church. The second category of new members successfully finds a face-to-face relationship with a subgroup of the middle-sized congregation after joining. The third category of new members is assimilated into the congregation through their acceptance of a role or office that causes them to identify with the church. The fourth group is assimilated into the congregation through their acceptance of a task as a worker in ministry. The fifth category of new members fails to find a significant number of meaningful relationships, or a meaningful task or role, and tends to drop into inactivity.

Arn suggests that a new member needs to make a minimum of seven new friends within a congregation within six months in order to be "relationally stable" within that fellowship (Arn 1987, 23). "Friends" are defined as those who would be in touch with each other at times other than worship services. "Friends" have mutual interests and concerns, know each other's family names, and would miss each other when they are absent. Yeakley's research confirmed Arn's suggestions (Yeakley 1977, 54). Yeakley found that of a sampling of 50 congregational dropouts, none had developed as many as seven friendships within the congregation within six months of their conversion and church membership. Of a sampling of 50 converts who stayed in their congregations, 45 of the 50 had developed six or more friends within the six-month period (Yeakley 1977, 54). Yeakley's study shows a strong correlation between successful assimilation in a congregation and the development of

friendships in that church. Yeakley's study indicates that it usually takes more than one or two friends in a church for a newcomer to be successfully assimilated into a congregation. Yet one or two friends may serve as "gatekeepers" for social inclusion by helping the newcomer build relationship with others within the congregation.

Building Social Structures for Assimilation

It is leadership style and organizational structure, not just attendance, which defines the "size category" of the church (Gaede 2001, 10). A number of congregations of 150-250 in attendance are actually "pastoral" churches in structure (Gaede 2001, 28). A "pastoral church" is a stand-alone single fellowship group (Gaede 2001, 21). The middle-sized church that operates as a stretched single-cell has an extremely difficult time accepting new members into its single fellowship circle because "all the places at that table are already taken."

Gaede postulates that there are three primary social structures in congregational life. The smallest group is a group of 12 to 15 people; anthropologists call this a "sympathy group" (Gaede 2001, 17). This is the ideal size of a small home group or other primary reference group in the church. The middle-sized group is the "primary group" of no more than50 people. This intergenerational group functions like a family. The family church is a stand-alone "primary group" (Gaede 2001, 19). This group is the model for the adult Sunday School class or fellowship circle. The largest congregational social structure is the "community group," a fellowship of no more than 150 people. In middle-sized churches with two services, each service will be a "community group." As early as 1961 L. G. Tyler proposed 153 (from the number of fish in the miraculous catch of John) as the ideal number for a Christian community (Tyler 1961, 415-17). Tyler noticed that active Christian communities had difficulty growing above about 150 active participants. The "pastoral

church," typically with 50-150 in attendance, is a large stand-alone "community group" (Gaede 2001, 21). A "program church" may consist of ten to twenty small ("sympathy") groups, fewer than ten ("primary") family groups, and up to three "community groups" (Gaede 2001 23). All three levels of community are important in a congregational setting.

The transition from "pastoral church" to "program church" is one of the most difficult transitions that a church will ever navigate. Many aspects of the congregation's culture must change for the transition to be complete (Gaede 2001, 94). In the "pastoral church" the same small network of leaders becomes stressed as it tries to keep the church functioning. In a multi-celled "program" congregation the informal network is replaced by a system of boards and committees that draw leaders from all parts of the congregation (Gaede 2001, 112). The move toward a "program" church, and its accompanying decision to share leadership opportunities with many in the congregation, allows an increased number of "role" positions in which to assimilate new members. Long-term leaders of growing churches may find the process of "shared leadership" a difficult growing experience and may resist the structural changes that may engender further congregational growth past the 200 barrier.

Tasks or Leadership Roles As
Means of Assimilation

Arn suggests that declining churches average 27 tasks or roles per 100 members, plateaued churches average 43 tasks or roles per 100 members, and growing churches average 60 tasks or roles per 100 (Arn 1978, 10). Declining churches may have members doing multiple tasks rather than distributing the work among the membership.

Schaller suggests that middle-sized congregations review the vitality of six key organizations: the Sunday School, the men's fellowship, the women's fellowship, the

high school youth group, the adult choir, and the usher's club (Schaller 1983, 70). These organizations are vital not only for the services that they render but as task and social assimilation tools for the church.

The "Spirit" of the Congregation
As a Means of Assimilation

Oswald and Leas take a different approach to assimilation (Oswald and Leas 1987, 16). They maintain that successful attraction and inclusion of new members is not as much a matter of the organization of the congregation as it is the spirit of the congregation. Oswald and Leas found five factors as the most helpful in attracting and including new members in a congregation (Oswald and Leas 1987, 16): a positive congregational identity, congregational harmony, the pastor's ability to generate enthusiasm, congregational involvement in social service, and small group programming. Oswald and Leas found that most churches did not intentionally do much to welcome new people (Oswald and Leas 1987, 17). Instead, congregations who were successful at assimilating new members believed in inclusion and somehow communicated that belief to newcomers (Oswald and Leas 1987, 18). Oswald and Leas found attitudes more important than intentional assimilation structures for the successful inclusion of newcomers to a congregation.

Managing the Transition from a
Pastoral to a Program Church

The transition from the pastoral to program church is recognized as the most difficult transition of Rothauge's model (Gaede 2001, 37). A congregation may make an unconscious choice that it does not want any more members in order to preserve the pastoral (and stretched single-cell fellowship) model. Thus the best hope for congregational change involves the congregation in the decision to change (Mann 2001, 55).

Mann suggests a five-step model for congregational change involving the church as a whole in the learning and change process. This model takes about eight months to implement in a congregation (Mann 2001, 62). The first two months involve a congregational covenant for learning and the establishment of a learning team. During months three and four the learning team explores the character of the congregation through a study of attendance patterns during the last thirty years and reflection upon events in the congregation corresponding to changes in attendance. This study is meant to recognize the connection between faith and the past church context and assess the current barriers to growth (Mann 2001, 78-96). Mann's third step (month five) is to explore the current character of the community through demographic studies, reflection, and interviews (Mann 2001, 96-99). Mann's fourth step (months six and seven) is for the learning team to articulate the congregation's current vocation to the broader congregation (Mann 2001, 100-06). This step is meant to foster conversation within the broader congregation, leading to Mann's fifth step (during the eighth month), the adoption of a congregational plan (Mann 2001, 106-08). Mann's model stresses the importance of broad congregational learning (and hence congregational ownership of the plan). Mann views the "spirit" or culture of a church as more important than the organizational structures in the process of new member assimilation.

Profile of the Current Study

The precedent literature indicates that the leadership factors affecting the 200 barrier include congregational self-perception and vision, staffing decisions and organizational change, and new member assimilation. Unless the social structures of the congregation change, it is nearly impossible for the single-fellowship congregation of about 200 attendees to continue to attract and assimilate new members.

The precedent literature suggests that the 200 barrier will be surmounted through three critical interrelated elements: First, congregations must change their self-perception from being a "small church" to "middle-size church." The change in self-perception gives the church "permission" to change organizational structures. Second, congregations must build their organizational structures to accommodate a larger membership. Third, congregations are assisted in these changes as additional paid staff members are added to aid the senior minister.

The research study included the development and use of two surveys to discover relationships between church growth or decline at or near the 200 barrier and staffing decisions, congregational self-perceptions, and methods of member assimilation. The strength of various correlations from the surveys will give insight into the relationship between numerical growth and specific leadership strategies chosen by the middle-sized congregations studied.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This descriptive research sought to describe the leadership factors of growing and non-growing middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States. This research sought to identify the leadership factors of congregations that have successfully overcome the 200 barrier. This research project also sought to identify the common issues related to the 200 barrier, and to discover any "limiting factors" that might stymie growth at or near the 200 barrier.

Research Purpose

This research sought to explore the impact of the congregational leadership factors of self-perception, organizational structure, and inclusion mechanisms and attitudes associated with new member assimilation on the success of western American Churches of Christ in breaking the 200 barrier. Although a tremendous amount of research has been done on the subject of effective leadership for church growth, the express purpose of this study was to identify leadership factors that resulted in numerical growth for middle-sized western American Churches of Christ.

Research Questions

The following research questions were explored in the research of breakthrough congregations, growing congregations, stable congregations, declining congregations, and severely declining congregations in middle-sized western American Churches of Christ:

1. What organizational structures are characteristic of each type of church?

2. What assimilation strategies were implemented by congregational leaders?

3. What factors are characteristic of a congregation's self-perception of size and function?

4. What are the characteristics of belonging groups?

5. What leadership factors are related to growth?

Descriptive Research

This project was a social science descriptive research project. Selected pulpit ministers or other appropriate representatives in middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States were asked to complete a congregational survey to ascertain certain congregational demographic information. A second survey for decade-long members of the congregations studied included questions formulated from the researcher's study of the precedent literature that identify characteristics and issues of congregations at or near the 200 barrier. The answers to these questions were then related with information on church size and growth in an effort to discover any relationship that existed between congregational growth through the 200 barrier and attitudes and organizational structures from within the congregation. The existence of a relationship between any growth data and the organizational structures and attitudes does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship.

Population

The population for this study was the fellowship of Churches of Christ known for acappella singing in worship, a weekly communion service, and believer's baptism by immersion. This population was identified as the approximately 13,000 churches listed in *Churches of Christ in the United States* (Lynn 1991, 1994) or *National Directory of the Churches of Christ* (Kelly 1998).

Sample

The sample consisted of seventeen Churches of Christ that were reported to be in the 160-240 size range at some time between 1992 and 2002. The sample consisted of churches from the eleven western continental states as reported in *Churches of Christ in the United States* (Lynn 1991, 1994) and *National Directory of Churches of Christ* (Kelly 1998). Random sampling was used to identify at least fifteen congregations (including representatives from each growth category) for the research.

The researcher compiled a list from the directories mentioned above of all Churches of Christ in the eleven western continental states that have, or have had an attendance between 160-240 during the last decade (the list contained 160 congregations). The senior minister or other appropriate representative of every seventh congregation on the list was contacted by the researcher and asked to participate in the study along with his church until at least fifteen congregations were located and enlisted for participation and each growth category was represented.

Sample Delimitations

The sample was delimited from the broader population of Churches of Christ by geography and church size. The sample was delimited to Churches of Christ in eleven continental western states of the United States: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. The eleven-state region of the western continental United States is largely a mission area for Churches of Christ. It was anticipated that a study of this nature in a mission area might yield more definitive results than a similar study done in a region where Churches of Christ are numerous (transfer growth may be a greater factor in congregational growth in regions where Churches of Christ are numerous).

The sample was delimited to congregations with an average Sunday worship attendance between 160-240 as reported by *Churches of Christ in the United States* (Lynn 1991, 1994) and *National Directory of Churches of Christ* (Kelly 1998). It was assumed that churches of this size either are or have been dealing with issues associated with the 200 barrier.

Since Churches of Christ are independent congregations they vary on a number of issues and practices and represent a variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. These variances will not be considered in the study.

Limitations Of Generalization

1. The results of this research do not necessarily generalize to other faith groups.

2. The results of this study do not necessarily generalize to other Churches of Christ in other regions of the United States, nor elsewhere in the world.

3. The results of this study do not necessarily generalize to congregations outside the 160-240 range of Sunday morning worship attendance.

4. The results of this study do not necessarily generalize to past or future time periods, but apply only to the study period.

Instrumentation

Two surveys were developed for use in this research. Survey "A" (Appendix 1) solicited internal congregational demographic data from the pulpit minister or another appropriate representative of the congregation. The pulpit minister or other appropriate representative administered survey "B" (Appendix 2) to at least ten members of the congregation who have been in that church for at least ten years. Both surveys were validated by the use of an expert panel: Dr. Flavil Yeakley and Dr. John Ellas are church growth authors in Churches of Christ, and Mr. Gregg Strawn is a minister of a Church of Christ that has broken the 200 barrier. Both surveys were also field-tested in the researcher's

congregation prior to broad use (the researcher's congregation fits the size criteria of the study). Congregants in the researcher's church completed a survey evaluation (Appendix 3) as an aid in refining the surveys.

Surveys "A" and "B" were designed to answer the five research questions that frame this study:

Research Question 1: What Organizational Structures Are Characteristic of Each Type of Church?

The researcher studied the relationship between the number of staff positions per 100 attendees in a congregation and its growth or decline.

The researcher studied the relationship between the role of the staff on the outreach versus church nurture continuum in a congregation and the church's growth or decline. "Outreach" was defined as activities designed primarily for those not yet socially incorporated into the congregational structure. This included evangelism activities, working with church visitors, and working with new members who are not yet socially incorporated into the congregation. "Church nurture" was defined as ministry activities designed primarily for those who are already socially incorporated into the congregation as active participants.

The researcher studied the relationship between the positions of staff (pulpit minister, youth minister, education minister, outreach minister, administration minister, etc.) in a particular congregation and its growth or decline.

The researcher studied the relationship between the number of years of service of the current pulpit minister and the congregation's growth or decline.

The researcher studied the relationship between the hours of weekly secretarial work in a congregation and its growth or decline. This study compared the change in

weekly hours from 1992 to 2002. The weekly hours of secretarial work per 100 attendees was also compared to the perceived need of the secretary in the congregation (question 29 from survey "B").

Research Question 2: What Assimilation Strategies Were Implemented by Congregational Leaders?

The researcher studied the relationship between the number of congregational assimilation tools and the congregation's growth and decline.

The researcher studied the relationship between the number of belonging groups per 100 attendees and the congregation's growth or decline.

The researcher studied the relationship between the number of Bible class groups per 100 attendees and the congregation's growth or decline.

The researcher studied the relationship between the number of other belonging groups (non-Bible class groups) and the congregation's growth or decline.

The researcher studied the relationship between the number of new belonging groups (under two years old) and the congregation's perceived ability to assimilate new members as measured on the Likert-response scale questions of survey "B." The researcher also studied the relationship between the number of new groups and church growth.

The researcher studied the relationship between congregational growth or decline and the perceived assimilation ability of the church as measured by Likert-response questions 3, 4, 8, 20, 23, 26, and 32 on survey "B."

These studies have helped to better define the assimilation strategies that affect growth at or near the 200 barrier in middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States. The precedent literature indicated that new member assimilation was one of the

challenges for many congregations at or near the 200 barrier as they change from a minister-centered assimilation model to a program-centered assimilation model.

Research Question 3: What Factors Are Characteristic of a Congregation's Self-Perception of Size and Function?

The researcher studied the relationship between Likert-response question 2 and Likert-response questions 7, 11, 17, 21, 29, and 34. A high correlation may indicate that the congregation perceives itself as a small church.

The researcher studied the relationship between Likert-response question 1 and Likert-response questions 9, 13, 16, 22, 27, and 31. A high correlation may indicate that the congregation perceived itself as a small church in 1992.

The researcher examined churches that both scored high on small church perceptions in 1992 and low on small church perceptions in 2002. Scoring high on small church perceptions in 1992 was defined as a raw score of 28 or above on Likert-response questions 1, 9, 13, 16, 22, 27, and 31 ("agree" to characteristics of small churches). Scoring low on small church perceptions in 2002 was defined as a raw score of 14 or less on Likert-response questions 2, 7, 11, 17, 21, 29, and 34 ("disagree" to characteristics of small churches). The researcher studied the relationship between churches that both scored high on small church perceptions in 1992 and low on small church perceptions in 2002 and the following data: (a) change in size, (b) change in the number of ministerial staff, (c) change in the amount of secretarial work, (d) number of belonging groups per hundred attendees, and (e) the number of assimilation tools. Means and correlations were used to describe the relationships between high and low small church self-perceptions and the five leadership factors described above.

Research Question 4: What Are the Characteristics of Belonging Groups?

The researcher studied the relationship between the number of belonging groups per 100 attendees and congregational growth or decline.

The researcher studied the relationship between the number of new belonging groups (under two years old) per 100 attendees and congregational growth or decline.

The researcher studied the relationship between the number of Bible class groups per 100 attendees and congregational growth or decline.

The researcher studied the relationship between the number of non-Bible class groups per 100 attendees and congregational growth or decline.

The researcher studied the relationship between church growth or decline and the type of small group emphasis (Bible class groups compared to non-Bible class groups).

Research Question 5: What Leadership Factors Are Related to Growth?

The researcher studied the relationship between congregational growth or decline and the number of professional staff members per 100 attendees.

The researcher studied the relationship between congregational growth or decline and the years of service of the current pulpit minister.

The researcher studied the relationship between the growth or decline of the church and the characteristics of a program church (Likert-response questions 6, 12, 15, 18, 25, 30, and 35).

The researcher studied the relationship between the growth or decline of the church and the characteristics of a pastoral church (Likert-response questions 5, 10, 14, 19, 24, 28, and 33).

The researcher studied the relationship between the growth or decline of the congregation and the number of pulpit ministers who have served the church during 1992-2002.

The Likert-response questions characterizing pastoral churches, program churches, small church perceptions, and congregational assimilation ability were developed from information found in the precedent literature.

Survey "A" will offer an abstract of the study to be e-mailed to the pulpit ministers upon completion of the dissertation.

Procedures

The information that follows outlines the research methodology to be followed in the gathering and interpretation of data.

Expert Panel

Surveys "A" and "B" were sent to four members of an expert panel for evaluation and validation. Three members of the panel responded. The three members of the expert panel were two church growth authors in Churches of Christ and a minister who has led a church in breaking the 200 barrier. The members of the expert panel also completed an evaluation form for each survey to evaluate if the survey questions were clear and complete (Appendix 3). Members of the expert panel were asked if the survey indeed solicited information germane to the study of churches dealing with issues associated with the 200 barrier. The researcher refined Survey "A" and Survey "B" after receiving input from the members of the expert panel. The changes in the surveys were approved by the Research Ethics Committee of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary prior to the surveys being mailed to the research participants.

Field-Testing of the Survey

The researcher field-tested surveys "A" and "B" in his congregation (a church of about 200 in attendance). Survey "A" was field-tested by administration to the elders in the congregation; survey "B" was field-tested by administration to at least ten decade-long members of the congregation. Those completing survey "A" and "B" in the field test were also asked to complete an evaluation of the survey (Appendix 3). The researcher made minor refinements to the surveys following input from the field-testing procedures. The changes in the surveys were approved by the dissertation supervisor and the Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the general study. The congregation used in the field-testing of the surveys was not selected for participation in the general study.

Congregations Studied

Congregations studied are, or have been, churches of 160-240 in Sunday worship attendance as listed in the 1991 or 1994 edition of *Churches of Christ in the United States* (Lynn 1991, 1994) or the 1998 edition of *National Directory of the Churches of Christ* (Kelly 1998). Since Churches of Christ are a fellowship of independent churches rather than a denomination, no annual reports are made to a central agency. Attendance reports in the mentioned directories are based on surveys returned to the publisher or information gathered from informal means, including third-party information. The researcher acknowledges that these resources are incomplete and may be inaccurate, but they serve as the best sources known to the researcher for numerical data on Churches of Christ in the western United States.

From the study of precedent literature congregations of 160-240 are, or have been, dealing with issues of the 200 barrier. The researcher made a delimited list of all the congregations (from the directories mentioned) that have or have had an attendance between

160-240 during the last decade. For random sampling purposes, the pulpit minister or

another appropriate representative of every seventh church on the list was contacted by

telephone and asked to participate in the study. The researcher proceeded through the list of

congregations, contacting every seventh church, until seventeen churches (including at least

one from each growth category) agreed to participate in the study. Congregations called that

did not fit one of the seven growth categories outlined in the study were considered

extraneous congregations and were not included in the study. The researcher went through

the delimited list of congregations three times (selecting every seventh church) until an

adequate number of churches were contacted and the minimum number of survey results

returned. Thirty-two churches were randomly selected by this process in order to yield the

seventeen churches that actually completed their participated in the study.

Data-Gathering Procedures

The pulpit minister or other representative of each church selected for the study

received a packet by mail from the researcher including a cover letter of instructions, one

copy of survey "A," twelve copies of survey "B," and a stamped self-addressed envelope for

the surveys to be returned to the researcher. The pulpit minister or other congregational

representative was asked to complete survey "A" himself and administer survey "B" to at

least ten decade-long members of the congregation. The pulpit minister or church

representative chose how best to administer survey "B" in his congregation. They were

asked to have all surveys completed and returned to the researcher within two weeks.

The researcher made a reminder call to the pulpit minister or representative of the

participating congregations from which the surveys had not been returned within three

weeks of their initial mailing. Additional survey packets were mailed or emailed if the

original packet was lost or destroyed. If a congregation chose not to return the survey, the

researcher returned to the list of delimited congregations and called the pulpit minister of the next delimited congregation (choosing every seventh church from the delimited list).

When the surveys from each participating congregation were returned, data from all survey "B's" from the congregation were used to find the congregational mean for each question from survey "B." Then the congregational means for each question from survey "B" were entered into an SPSS data field along with data from survey "A" from the same congregation (congregations were assigned a number in the data fields). Each participating congregation was assigned a "growth category" (7 through 1) according to the data from survey "A." Data from churches that did not fit one of the growth categories was considered extraneous data and was not included in the study.

The data was entered into tables (outlined in chapter 4) and the common statistic measures of mean and percentage were applied to interpret the data. Bivariate correlations were run on data pairs to test for the strength of relationship between various pairs of data. The researcher acknowledges that a strong correlation does not prove causality but rather indicates the presence of a relationship between elements of data.

Once the relationships of the data on the survey were explored, the researcher wrote up a thorough report of those relationships, drew conclusions, made suggestions for future study, and concluded the study.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

When surveys "A" and "B" (Appendixes 1 and 2) were returned from the congregations studied, the data was analyzed in order to discover the relationships between various elements of data. The researcher acknowledges that a correlation between various elements of data does not necessarily infer a causal relationship. Yet a strong correlation between elements of data indicates that a relationship exists between the data sets studied.

Compilation Protocol

Raw data was sought from the 17 churches studied through the use of surveys "A" and "B." There were 157 survey "B's" returned from the 17 churches in the study. Once the surveys were returned from congregations participating in the study, church numbers were assigned to the surveys in the order that they were received, beginning with church number 1. The mean values for all the questions in survey "B" were established for each of the 17 congregations in the study by entering the data in SPSS and computing the analysis for means. These mean values for each congregation were then entered in SPSS fields along with the data from the same church from survey "A" in a master file of church surveys under the appropriate church number.

All data was manually put into the SPSS computer database program. The data was manipulated by means of the SPSS program as well as the use of a common calculator when needed. A master data field was constructed along with numerous secondary data fields for use in the study.

Growth Categories and Growth Divisions

Each church in the study was assigned a growth category according to the definitions given in the terminology section of this study. Breakthough congregations were assigned to growth category 7. These congregations grew through the 200 barrier (from under 160 to over 240) within the decade studied. Growing congregations were assigned to growth category 5 or 6. Category 6 churches grew from 160-240 to over 240 within the decade studied, successfully breaking the 200 barrier as defined in this study. Together, growth categories 6 and 7 comprise division Alpha (the four congregations in the study that have successfully broken the 200 barrier within the last decade).

Category 5 churches grew from under 160 to between 160-240 during the decade studied. Category 5 churches, although growing, are assumed to still deal with issues of the 200 barrier. Stable congregations (growth category 4) were between 160-240 during the decade studied. These congregations are assumed to still deal with issues of the 200 barrier. Category 3 churches declined from above 240 into the 160-240 range during the studied decade. The seven churches in the study in growth categories 3, 4, and 5 comprise division Beta (churches that are assumed to still deal with issues of the 200 barrier).

Category 2 churches declined from 160-240 to less than 160 during the studied decade. Severely declining churches were assigned to growth category 1. These congregations have declined from more than 240 to less than 160 in worship attendance during the last decade. The six congregations from the study in growth categories 1 and 2 comprise division Gamma (churches that have declined to the point that they may no longer be dealing with the issues of the 200 barrier). Congregations that did not fit one of the seven growth categories were considered extraneous congregations and were excluded from the study.

Data Formation

Non-numeric data was converted to numeric forms. Checklist data (from the assimilation tools section of survey "A") was converted to numeric forms. A checked item was listed as a "2" whereas an unchecked item was listed as a "1." Zeros were avoided in reporting data where they might skew the statistical analysis.

Sunday worship attendance from 2002 was divided by 100 in order to gain the factor for "per 100 attendees" used in the analysis of various data sets. For example, if the congregation averaged 250 attendees in 2002, 250 was divided by 100 yielding a "per 100" factor of 2.5. If the church had 25 belonging groups during 2002, then the 25 belonging groups were divided by the factor 2.5 to yield 10 belonging groups per 100 in attendance. This "per 100" factor was used to "level" certain congregational data.

Bias Control

Usable data from all the returned surveys was entered. Data was input into SPSS as received from the surveys. If a particular response was left blank on the survey, it was left blank in the SPSS entry for that data. If two numbers were circled on the survey, or if the response on the survey was illegible to the researcher, it was left blank in the SPSS entry.

Survey Validation

Survey "B" was validated by the use of an expert panel and split-half analysis. Four expert panelists were enlisted to provide input on the survey design and to validate the survey as appropriate for use in research concerning the 200 barrier. Three of the four expert panelists responded. Dr. Flavil Yeakley wrote the researcher a letter verifying that both survey "A" and survey "B" ask appropriate questions in order to collect data on the

subject of the 200 barrier. The other panelists gave constructive input that was used in finalizing the surveys.

The completed survey "B" was field-tested on decade-long members of the researcher's congregation (this congregation was not used in the study itself). A split-half analysis was run on the five sets of questions from survey "B" (as detailed on the interpretative notes on survey "B" as found in Appendix 2). The five sets of questions aimed to evaluate the congregation for "small church" self-perceptions from 1992, evaluate the church for "small church" self-perceptions from 2002, test for the perceived current assimilation ability of the church, test for present "pastoral church" tendencies, and test for present "program church" tendencies. The split-half analysis found that survey "B" had adequate internal reliability. Reliability scores for the five sets of questions ranged from .81 to .85 (within the normal range for social science research).

Research Findings

The data from the surveys was analyzed by the use of common statistical measures such as mean, percentile, and bivariate correlation. Correlations that are significant at the 0.05 level are considered adequately strong to show a relationship between sets of data in social science research. Correlations do not prove causality.

Research Question 1: What Organizational Structures Are Characteristic of Each Type of Church?

This research question seeks to identify relationships between patterns of growth or decline surrounding the 200 barrier and the organizational structures of the congregations studied. From the study of precedent literature it was assumed that the organizational structures of the congregations may have a relationship to the church's growth or decline at or near the 200 barrier.

Growth and Ministerial Staffing

In Table 1 each congregation was labeled with a growth category as outlined in

Chapter 3 and the section above on compilation protocol. The number of ministers per 100

attendees was assigned as variable 1. The congregational growth category was assigned as

variable 2.

Table 1. Growth and ministerial staffing

Church Number	Ministers per 100	Growth Category	1992 Attend.	2002 Attend.	Paid Staff 1992	Paid Staff 2002	Pulpit Min. in decade	Pulpit Min. (Years)
1	1.27	6	225	275	2.00	3.50	1	20.0
2	0.52	7	135	250	0.50	1.30	1	15.0
3	1.29	5	125	175	1.25	2.50	1	12.0
4	1.11	4	164	202	1.00	2.25	3	08.0
5	1.15	6	200	260	2.00	3.00	1	17.0
6	1.31	2	174	152	2.00	2.00	1	01.0
7	1.60	2	200	125	1.00	2.00	1	23.0
8	0.69	5	150	180	2.00	1.25	2	06.5
9	0.93	1	350	135	1.00	1.25	4	01.0
10	0.67	6	165	300	1.00	2.00	2	32.0
11	0.88	4	170	226	2.00	2.00	1	12.0
12	1.17	3	135	170	1.50	2.00	4	01.0
13	1.00	2	300	200	3.00	2.00	2	08.0
14	0.86	2	180	115	1.00	1.00	2	01.0
15	1.25	2	175	120	2.00	1.50	2	03.0
16	1.05	5	135	190	1.00	2.00	2	03.0
17	1.18	5	100	170	1.00	2.00	3	00.5

The average Sunday morning worship attendance in 1992 was assigned as

variable 3. The average Sunday morning worship attendance in 2002 was assigned as

variable 4. The number of paid staff in 1992 was assigned as variable 5. The number of

paid staff in 2002 was assigned as variable 6. The number of pulpit ministers during the last

decade was assigned as variable 7. The number of years of service of the present pulpit

minister was assigned as variable 8. This data from all the congregations studied is listed in

Table 1. In Table 2 the compiled data from congregations in growth categories 6 and 7

(division Alpha, or churches recently successful in breaking the 200 barrier) was compared

and contrasted with the data from congregations in growth categories 3, 4 and 5 (division

Beta, or churches that are within the 160-240 range of average attendance that have not yet

broken the 200 barrier).

Table 2. Growth divisions and ministerial staffing

Growth Division	Church Numbers	Mean Ministers per 100 Attendees	Mean Ministers per 100; Minus Church 2, 10	Mean Number of Pulpit Ministers in Last Decade	Mean Tenure in Current Church (Pulpit)	Mean Decadal Change in the Number of Staff
Alpha	1, 2, 5, 10	0.90	1.21	1.25	21.00	+1.08
Beta	3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 16, 17	1.03	1.03	2.29	06.14	+0.61
Gamma	6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15	1.16	1.16	2.00	8.00	-0.042

The data in Table 2 should be compared to the findings of the precedent literature

and interpreted in light of other Churches of Christ. The ratio of ministry staff to church

attendance has averaged 1 to 156 during the last century (McIntosh 2000, 39). This is

equilivant to 0.64 ministers per 100 attendees. During recent years church growth

specialists have generally suggested higher ratios for congregational growth: Ellas found

that growing congregations among Churches of Christ averaged a ratio of 1:125, or 0.80

ministers per 100 attendees (Ellas 1994, 42). Arn recommends a ratio of 1:150, or 0.67

ministers per 100 attendees (Arn 1987, 16). Current experts suggest a ratio of no less than

one minister for every 125-150 attendees in worship services (or 0.67 to 0.80 ministers per 100 worship attendees).

Ministers per 100 Attendees

The current research found that congregations that had broken the 200 barrier (division Alpha; growth categories 6 and 7) had a mean 0.90 ministers per 100 attendees, whereas congregations that may be dealing with issues of the 200 barrier (division Beta; growth categories 3, 4, and 5) averaged 1.03 ministers per 100 attendees. The mean ratios of churches that had broken the 200 barrier and those who had not both meet the minimum minister-to-attendees ratios suggested by Ellas, Arn, and other church growth authorities.

All of the churches in the study that had broken the 200 barrier had more than one staff member. The presence of a multiple staff does not predict growth (many multiple-staff congregations were stable or declining), yet growth through the 200 barrier may be predicated upon presence of more than one staff member.

The churches that broke the 200 barrier actually had slightly fewer ministers per 100 attendees than the churches still dealing with the 200 barrier. Churches 2 and 10 are inner city, predominately black congregations. These predominately black, inner city congregations have grown through the 200 barrier with only 0.52 and 0.67 ministers per 100 attendees. Further study will be needed to see whether or not cultural considerations affect optimum staffing ratios. If churches 2 and 10 are withdrawn from the category of churches breaking the 200 barrier, then the remaining congregations register a mean of 1.21 ministers per 100 attendees, or only 83 attendees per staff minister. Churches that were stable or growing, but had not broken the 200 barrier, had a mean of 1.03 staff members per 100 attendees, or 97 attendees per staff member.

Churches that broke the 200 barrier (division Alpha) added a mean 1.08 staff positions during the last decade. Churches in division Beta (congregations that may still be dealing with issues surrounding the 200 barrier) added a mean 0.61 staff members during the last decade. Churches in division Gamma (growth categories 1 and 2—churches that declined below 160 in average attendance during the study period) had a mean of 1.16 ministers per 100 attendees. Casual observation suggests that some of these declining congregations may have kept their leadership structures as larger congregations even though they declined in size, thus reinforcing the findings of precedent literature that ministerial staffing alone does not guarantee growth (McIntosh 1999, 95).

Ministerial Tenure

In churches in growth division Gamma (churches that declined below 160 in average attendance during the study period), the pulpit ministers had a mean tenure of 8 years (the maximum was 12 years). The churches in division Alpha (churches that had successfully broken the 200 barrier) the pulpit ministers had a mean tenure of 21 years. (The minimum tenure of a pulpit minister in a congregation that had broken the 200 barrier was 15 years.)

The division Alpha congregations (those who have broken the 200 barrier) had a mean 1.25 pulpit ministers during the last decade. This statistic warrants explanation since all pulpit staff in the division Alpha churches had served in their congregations for at least 15 years. The pulpit minister in church 10 has served his congregation for 32 years, but he began to fill the pulpit minister position only during the last decade. This study suggests that a long tenure is related to congregational growth through the 200 barrier.

Overall, the years of ministry had a positive correlation to the growth category of the church of only $p=.368$ (p=Pearson Correlation). There was a statistically significant

correlation ($p=.648$) between the years of ministry for the current pulpit minister and the

attendance of the congregation in 2002 (the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level; all

statistically significant Pearson correlations reported are at the 0.05 level unless otherwise

noted). There was a positive correlation of $p=.502$ between the years of ministry of the

current pulpit minister and the categorization of the church as a division Alpha church, a

division Beta church, or a division Gamma church.

The tenure of the pulpit minister had a stronger relationship to congregational

growth than the actual number of ministry staff that served in the church. While the

precedent literature suggests a minimum ratio of staff-to-attendees may be necessary for

growth through the 200 barrier, increasing an already adequate ratio does not appear to have

a strong relationship with growth through the 200 barrier. The tenure of a pulpit minister

has a stronger relationship with growth through the 200 barrier than the number of ministers

serving a particular congregation. Increasing an already adequate ministerial ratio may not

be as fruitful for growth as maintaining a lengthy ministerial tenure.

Growth and Ministry Emphasis

Table 3 studies the relationship between growth through the 200 barrier and the

perceived ministry emphasis of various staff members. The ministry emphasis of up to three

ministers in each church was rated on an "outreach versus church nurture continuum." The

results of that study were then compared to the growth categories of the churches studied.

The results reflect the perceptions of the decade-long members of the congregations studied.

These perceptions may or may not be equated with the actual ministerial emphasis of the

ministers involved, nor were these perceptions of members compared with the perceptions

of the ministers themselves. Outreach was defined as work with those who were not yet

assimilated into the fabric of congregational life. Church nurture was defined as "pastoral"

services, leadership development, and other functions with those who are already an

incorporated part of church life. A score of "5.0" would indicate a strong outreach ministry.

A score of "1.0" would indicate a strong congregational nurturing ministry. Staffing ratios

are also included in Table 3 for comparative purposes.

Table 3. Growth and perceived ministry emphasis

Church Number	Growth Category	Staff No. 1 Outreach-Church Nurture	Staff No. 2 Outreach-Church Nurture	Staff No. 3 Outreach-Church Nurture	Number of Full-time Staff per 100 Attendance
1	6	3.90	3.80	3.60	1.27
2	7	4.20	4.00	4.10	0.52
3	5	3.33	-	-	1.29
4	4	4.60	4.10	3.30	1.11
5	6	3.80	3.90	3.80	1.15
6	2	3.50	3.00	3.50	1.31
7	2	2.00	3.00	3.00	1.60
8	5	3.44	2.13	-	0.69
9	1	4.25	-	-	0.93
10	6	3.75	3.33	3.00	0.67
11	4	3.77	-	-	0.88
12	3	3.40	4.66	4.66	1.17
13	2	4.60	2.75	2.00	1.00
14	2	4.20	3.33	-	0.86
15	2	3.13	3.00	-	1.25
16	5	3.67	4.00	-	1.05
17	5	3.67	-	-	1.18

The researcher noticed that a number of the participants in the study left questions

36-38 blank. It is possible that a number of the participants found the directions for this

section too difficult to understand, the reflective and evaluative thinking process too

difficult, or their knowledge of the minister's work too limited to accurately evaluate. It is

also possible that a change from the Likert-response questions to the continuum format

proved confusing, as both had a 5-point scale. This inconsistent completion of questions 36-

38 on survey "B" may have skewed the results from this portion of the study. As the results of Tables 3 and 4 are discussed the reader is reminded that results may or may not be accurately representative of the churches involved in the study.

The Relationship between Growth and Ministry Emphasis: Pulpit Minister

There was a very slight positive correlation (p=.092) between the growth category of the churches in the study and the results of question 36. There was a stronger positive correlation (p=.492) between the growth category of the congregations in the study and the results of question 37 (the place of the second staff member on the outreach versus church nurture continuum). A slightly stronger positive correlation (p=.577) existed between the growth category of the church and the results of question 38 (the place of the third staff member on the outreach versus church nurture continuum). None of these three correlations was significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4 summarizes the results of Table 3 in the three growth divisions. The perceived role of the pulpit minister on the outreach versus church nurture continuum was only slightly different for churches in different growth categories. The overall mean score for all pulpit ministers in the churches studied was 3.72. Churches that had broken the 200 barrier (growth division Alpha) had a mean score of 3.91, whereas churches dealing with

Table 4. Growth divisions and perceived ministry emphasis

Growth Division	Staff No. 1 Outreach vs. Church Nurture	Staff No. 2 Outreach vs. Church Nurture	Staff No. 3 Outreach vs. Church Nurture	Mean number of staff per 100 attendees
Overall Mean	3.72	3.46	3.44	1.05
Alpha	3.91	3.75	3.63	0.90
Beta	3.80	3.78	3.98	1.03
Gamma	3.62	3.02	2.83	1.16

the 200 barrier (growth division Beta; growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean score of 3.80. Declining churches (the Gamma division) had a mean score of 3.62 on the outreach versus church nurture continuum. This research suggests that a slightly stronger tendency toward outreach exists for the pulpit ministers in the churches that have broken the 200 barrier. On average, pulpit staff members ranked higher on the outreach side of the continuum than did other staff members.

The Relationship between Growth and Ministry Emphasis: Associate Ministers

Of the 17 churches studied, 13 reported a least a part-time second minister. The mean score on the outreach-church nurture continuum was 3.46 for the second minister, slightly below 3.72 for the pulpit minister. Churches that had broken the 200 barrier (growth categories 6 and 7) had a mean score of 3.75 while churches that are assumed to still deal with the 200 barrier (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean score of 3.78. Churches that had declined under 160 in average attendance had a mean score of only 3.02 on the outreach-church nurture continuum for their second staff member.

Of the 17 churches studied, 9 reported a least a part-time third minister. The mean score on the outreach-church nurture continuum was 3.44 for the third minister. Churches that had broken the 200 barrier (growth categories 6 and 7) had a mean score of 3.63 for the third minister, whereas churches that were still dealing with the 200 barrier had a mean score of 3.98. (The results may be skewed since only two churches reported data in this category.) Churches that had declined under 160 in average attendance reported a mean score of 2.83. (Only three churches reported from this category, so the results may likewise be skewed by the low number represented).

The results of Table 4 may be studied in light of McIntosh's "ministry fulcrum" (McIntosh 2000, 20-25). McIntosh postulated that early in a congregation's history the minister's emphasis is on "outreach" functions (finding people, keeping people, celebrating with people), whereas later in a ministry the emphasis shifts to "maintenance" functions (educating people, overseeing people, caring for people). Taken as a whole, Table 4 indicates that the growing churches had ministers who emphasized outreach functions slightly more than maintenance (church nurture) functions. The greatest differences in ministry emphasis were not between churches that broke the 200 barrier and those who did not. The greatest differences in ministry emphasis were between churches that were growing or stable and those who were in decline.

The reader is reminded that the results of Tables 3 and 4 may have been skewed by inconsistent completion of this section of survey "B."

Growth and Secretarial Staffing

There was a slight negative correlation (p=-.197) between question 29 on survey B ("A full-time secretary is not needed in our church.") and the number of weekly hours of secretarial staffing.

Table 5 explores the relationship between congregational growth through the 200 barrier and secretarial staffing. The precedent literature suggested various ratios for effective secretarial staffing. Jones suggested a full-time secretary for every 200 members (Jones 1988, 64), but George recommended one or two secretaries for every program staff member (George 1993, 158). Table 5 illustrates the fact that middle-sized Churches of Christ are generally understaffed for secretarial help in light of the recommendations of either writer of the precedent literature.

Table 5. Growth and secretarial staffing

Church Number	Growth Category	Secretarial Hours 1992	1992 Hours per 100 in Attendance	Secretarial Hours 2002	2002 Hours per 100 in Attendance
1	6	25	11.11	30	10.90
2	7	00	00.00	00	00.00
3	5	02	01.60	12	06.85
4	4	00	00.00	15	07.42
5	6	30	15.00	30	11.54
6	2	00	00.00	24	15.79
7	2	16	08.00	20	16.00
8	5	12	08.00	12	06.66
9	1	16	04.57	16	11.85
10	6	00	00.00	00	00.00
11	4	00	00.00	00	00.00
12	3	00	00.00	00	00.00
13	2	40	13.33	30	15.11
14	2	15	08.33	10	08.69
15	2	20	11.43	20	17.39
16	5	00	00.00	16	08.42
17	5	00	00.00	12	07.06

The weekly hours of paid secretarial staffing varied as much as any variable in this study. During 1992 secretarial hours ranged from 0-40 hours per week in the churches studied, and during 2002 secretarial hours ranged from 0-30 hours per week in the churches studied. Eight (nearly half) of the churches studied had no paid secretarial help during 1992. These eight churches had a mean attendance of 147.25 attendees per week during 1992. Only four of these churches were still without paid secretarial help in 2002. These four churches had grown from a mean attendance of 151.25 weekly attendees in 1992 to 236.5 attendees per week in 2002—without the aid of paid secretarial help. Casual observation suggests that a cultural factor may be at work within the two largest of these four "non-secretarial" churches: Two of these congregations, numbering 250 and 300 worshippers in 2002, are predominately black inner city churches (the other two "non-secretarial" churches

in 2002 numbered 170 and 226 in weekly worship attendance). Just as these two

predominately black inner-city congregations had the lowest ministerial staffing ratios found

in the study (0.52 and 0.67 ministers per 100 attendees), these two churches also defy the

norm by having significant attendance but no secretarial staffing.

The Relationship between Church Growth and Secretarial Staffing

There was actually a negative correlation ($p=-.317$) between the number of paid

secretarial hours in 2002 and the category of church growth. There was also a negative

correlation ($p=-.309$) between the number of secretarial hours in 1992 and the growth

category of the church. It is noteworthy that nine of the seventeen churches studied

increased their secretarial hours per 100 attendees between 1992 and 2002, yet only three of

those churches were in a growing growth category (all in category 5). None of the churches

that broke the 200 barrier actually increased the number of secretarial hours per 100

attendees between 1992 and 2002. The six declining churches (growth categories 1 and 2)

actually averaged the greatest number of secretarial hours per 100 attendees: 14.14 hours of

secretarial work per 100 attendees. In contrast, the four churches that broke the 200 barrier

averaged 5.61 hours of paid secretarial work per 100 attendees. If the two predominately

Black inner city churches are removed from consideration (they had no paid secretarial

help), the remaining two churches that broke the 200 barrier had 10.90 and 11.54 hours of

secretarial help per 100 attendees, for a mean of 11.22 hours of paid secretarial help in 2002.

McIntosh recommends one "support staff" position for 150 attendees, and 1.5

such positions for 300 attendees (McIntosh 2000, 43). The needed number of secretarial

staff members varies, he says, by the type of ministry. A program-oriented ministry with

specialized ministerial staff needs more secretarial help than the "generalist" who

emphasizes pastoral care (McIntosh 2000, 43). Jones suggests one fulltime-secretary for every 200 attendees, or one secretary for every program staff member, whichever is greater (Jones 1988, 164). This research of middle-sized Churches of Christ indicates that increased secretarial assistance is not a predictor of growth. Casual observation suggests that many middle-sized Churches of Christ tend to cling to a stretched "pastoral church" model rather than adopt the size-appropriate "program church" model, as outlined by Rothauge (Rothauge 1983, 15-21). The transition from "pastoral church" to "program church" is considered the most difficult transition in the life of a congregation for the minister (Gaede 2001, 37). If this casual observation is correct it would partially explain why secretarial staffing is not correlated with growth in middle-sized Churches of Christ.

Research Question 2: What Assimilation Strategies Were Implemented by Congregational Leaders?

Research question 2 is meant to explore a variety of assimilation strategies often used in middle-sized congregations and study their relationship with congregational growth through the 200 barrier. New member assimilation is recognized as one of the pivotal elements of church growth in the middle-sized church. Often the smaller middle-sized church attempts to remain a "stretched single cell" congregation where everyone still knows everyone else (Gaede 2001, 28). That paradigm becomes increasingly difficult to maintain as the congregation grows past 150 in attendance.

Growth and Assimilation Tools

Table 6 examines the relationship between congregational growth through the 200 barrier and the use of various assimilation tools. The researcher recognizes that the mere "use" of a tool does not necessarily imply "effective use," but the effectiveness of each tool would be difficult to measure in such a broad study as the one undertaken.

Table 6. Growth and assimilation tools

Ch. Num.	Growth Cate-gory	Mem-bership Class	Seeker Class	Greet-ers	Organized Visitor Response	Buddy System	Record System	Staff Led	Vol. Led	Num. Of Tools	Tools per 100
1	6	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	4	1.45
2	7	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	4	1.60
3	5	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	4	2.29
4	4	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	5	2.48
5	6	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	4	1.54
6	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1.32
7	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1.60
8	5	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	5	2.77
9	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	5	3.70
10	6	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	4	1.33
11	4	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	4	1.54
12	3	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	4	2.35
13	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	1.50
14	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1.74
15	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	5	4.17
16	5	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	6	3.16
17	5	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1.18

The use or non-use of various assimilation tools is represented by "2" (use) and "1" (non-use) in the congregations indicated. There is only a $p=.278$ correlation between the growth category of a congregation and the number of assimilation tools used. As seen in Table 7, the number of tools used by the studied congregations varied from 2 to 6, with a mean of 3.82.

Table 7. Growth division and assimilation tools

Growth Division	Mean Number of Tools	Mean Number of Tools per 100 Attendees	Percent of Churches with Staff Led Outreach	Percent of Churches with Volunteer led Outreach
Alpha	4.00	1.47	75%	50%
Beta	4.29	2.25	29%	43%
Gamma	3.17	2.34	17%	17%
Mean	3.82	2.10	35%	35%

Correlations between Growth
and Assimilation Tools

Each of the four congregations that have successfully broken the 200 barrier during the last decade used four assimilation tools. The four congregations that have successfully broken the 200 barrier (division Alpha) used an average of 1.47 tools per 100 attendees, whereas the six declining congregations (division Gamma) had a mean of 2.34 tools per 100 attendees. The seven congregations in division Beta (more stable growth categories) had a mean of 2.25 assimilation tools per 100 attendees. It appears that increasing the number of assimilation activities does not necessarily correlate with increased congregational growth.

There is only a $p=.123$ positive correlation between the growth category of a congregation and its use of a church membership class. There is a $p=.228$ positive correlation between the use of a seeker's class and the growth category of the church. Since all the congregations studied used an organized system of greeters, the use of greeters cannot be correlated with growth. There is a slight negative correlation ($p=-.160$) between congregational growth and having a record system to track the attendance of newcomers. Since all but one congregation had an organized way to respond to visitors, and only one church used the "buddy system" to follow up with newcomers, correlations were not run on these assimilation tools and the growth categories of the congregations studied.

There was a positive correlation of $p=.318$ between a staff-led visitor follow-up program and the category of congregational growth, but only a positive correlation of $p=.250$ when the visitor follow-up program was led by a member of the congregation. Three of the four congregations that broke the 200 barrier had visitor follow-up programs led by a staff member; two of the four had visitor follow-up programs led by a volunteer. The strongest data inferred from Table 7 indicates that it is the presence of an outreach program,

and not necessarily who administers it, that relates most to congregational growth near the 200 barrier.

Growth and Belonging Groups

Lyle Schaller indicated that the new members of a congregation least likely to become inactive are those who formed meaningful face-to-face relationships within the congregation prior to joining the church (Schaller 1978, 76). Lyle Schaller also observed that the middle-sized church often has an inadequate structure for new member assimilation and thus a number of new members drop into a relatively inactive role a year or two after joining the church (Schaller 1985, 103-4).

Yeakley found that of a sampling of fifty congregational dropouts, none had developed as many as seven friendships within the congregation within six months of their church membership (Yeakley 1977, 54). This research tested the importance of belonging groups near the 200 barrier in Churches of Christ in the western United States.

Table 8 explores the relationships between congregational growth and the use of both Bible class and non-Bible class belonging groups. In order for a group to be considered a congregational belonging group, it had to meet at least monthly, have a minimum of five participants, and have all of the leaders (or at least 50% of the participants) from the church. The number of belonging groups from the various categories was recorded on survey "A" by the pulpit minister or other respondent from the congregation in the study. In order to "level" this information from congregations of various sizes, a "per 100" factor was added. Table 8 also explores the relationship between the number of new groups (groups formed within the last two years) and the growth or decline of the congregations at or near the 200 barrier.

Table 8. Growth and belonging groups

Ch. Num.	Growth Cate-gory	Bible Classes	Bible Classes per 100	Non-Bible Class Groups	Non-Bible Class Groups per 100	Total Belong-ing Groups	Total Belong-ing Groups per 100	New Groups	Percentage of New Groups to Total Groups
1	6	18	6.55	18	06.55	36	13.09	10	27.77
2	7	12	4.80	31	12.40	43	17.20	13	30.23
3	5	08	4.57	04	02.29	12	06.86	1	08.33
4	4	11	5.44	28	13.86	39	19.31	9	23.07
5	6	12	4.62	30	11.54	42	16.15	--	--
6	2	09	5.92	08	05.26	17	11.18	0	00.00
7	2	07	5.60	07	05.60	14	11.20	1	07.14
8	5	12	6.66	11	06.11	23	12.77	5	21.74
9	1	06	4.44	09	06.66	15	11.11	1	06.66
10	6	12	4.00	04	01.33	16	05.33	1	06.25
11	4	11	4.87	12	05.31	23	10.18	3	13.04
12	3	02	1.18	05	02.94	07	04.12	2	28.57
13	2	10	5.00	15	07.50	25	12.50	5	20.00
14	2	04	3.48	14	12.17	18	15.65	7	38.88
15	2	1	0.83	7	05.83	8	06.67	0	00.00
16	5	15	7.89	13	06.84	27	14.21	14	51.85
17	5	6	3.53	12	07.06	18	10.59	1	05.55

The data from Table 8 is summarized in Table 9 under the three growth divisions

of congregational growth in the study. Churches that have broken the 200 barrier (division

Alpha) report the highest data in all but one category (percentage of new groups).

Table 9. Growth divisions and belonging groups

Growth Division	Mean Number of Bible Classes	Mean Bible Classes per 100 Attendees	Mean Non-Bible Class Groups	Mean Total Belonging Groups	Belonging Groups per 100 Attendees	Number of New Groups	% of New Groups
Alpha	13.5	4.99	20.75	34.25	12.94	6.0	21.42
Beta	8.11	4.88	12.14	21.29	11.15	5.0	21.74
Gamma	6.66	4.22	10.00	16.17	11.39	2.00	12.11
Mean	9.18	4.67	13.41	22.53	11.65	4.56	18.07

Church Growth and the Ratio of Belonging Groups

The seventeen congregations in the study had a mean of 11.65 belonging groups per 100 in attendance. The four congregations that broke the 200 barrier during the decade covered by the study had a mean of 12.94 belonging groups per 100 in attendance. Three of the four congregations that broke the 200 barrier during the decade covered by the study had a mean of 15.48 belonging groups per 100 in attendance. The fourth congregation had the second lowest ratio in the study (only 5.33 belonging groups per 100 in attendance). The fourth congregation (church number 10) has reported a number of statistical anomalies that do not seem to fit the pattern of most of the other congregations. It is possible that the social and cultural norms of the predominately black inner city congregation may be significantly different from many other congregations included in the study.

The churches in division Beta (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean of 11.15 groups per 100 attendees in comparison to the higher ratio of the churches that were successful in breaking the 200 barrier (12.94 groups per 100 attendees). Even the five churches in the declining growth categories (growth categories 1 and 2) had a mean of 11.39 groups per 100 in attendance. It is possible that the congregations in the more stable growth category may be dealing with "saturated" groups that prevent newcomers from successfully finding a "home" in a belonging group. It is possible that the declining churches have kept a similar number of belonging groups to what they enjoyed in the past. Through attrition of attendees, their groups are smaller in size, thus increasing the number of groups per 100 in attendance.

Taken as a whole, there is only a $p=.079$ positive correlation between the number of belonging groups per 100 attendees and the growth category of the congregations studied. This weak bivarate correlation, apart from the earlier explanations of the above paragraph,

would point to a rather insignificant relationship between the number of belonging groups per 100 and the growth category of a congregation. A strong number of belonging groups per 100 attendees may be a predicator for breaking the 200 barrier, but other factors must also be present for the congregation to be successful in breaking the 200 barrier.

Church Growth and the
Ratio of Bible Classes

The four congregations that broke the 200 barrier had a mean 4.99 Bible classes per 100 in attendance, whereas the seven congregations in the "stable" growth categories (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean 4.88 Bible classes per 100 attendees. The six congregations that were declining (growth categories 1 and 2) had a mean 4.22 Bible classes per 100 in attendance. The number of classes per 100 attendees ranged from a low of 0.83 (church 15; growth category 2) to a high of 7.89 (church 16; growth category 5). Overall there was a weak positive correlation of $p=.168$ between the number of Bible classes per 100 in worship attendance and congregational growth.

Church Growth and the Ratio
of Non-Class Groups

The difference in non-Bible class groups was a bit more pronounced. The four churches that broke the 200 barrier (growth division Alpha) had a mean of 7.96 non-Bible class groups per 100 in worship attendance. The seven congregations in the "stable" growth categories (categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean 6.34 non-Bible class groups per 100 attendees. The six congregations that had declined (growth categories 1 and 2) had a mean 7.17 non-Bible class groups per 100 attendees. It is possible that the declining congregations kept a similar group structure to what they experienced several years ago, resulting in a larger number of groups per 100 attendees than the more "stable" congregations.

The number of non-Bible class groups per 100 attendees ranged from a high of 13.86 (church 4; growth category 4) to a low of 1.33 (church 10; growth category 6). Church 10 (a predominately black, inner city church, suggesting other influencing cultural factors) has registered a number of results that do not fit the patterns of other congregations. If the results of church 10 are removed from consideration, the remaining three churches that broke the 200 barrier had a mean 10.16 non-Bible class groups per 100 attendees. This compares to a mean 6.34 non-Bible class groups per 100 for churches in the more "stable" growth categories (growth categories 3, 4, and 5). Without church 10, churches that broke the 200 barrier had a significantly larger number of non-Bible class groups.

The churches that broke the 200 barrier (growth categories 6 and 7) had a mean 12.94 belonging groups per 100 in worship attendance. The more "stable" churches that were still affected by the 200 barrier had a mean 11.15 belonging groups per 100 in worship attendance. The declining churches (growth categories 1 and 2) had a mean 11.39 belonging groups per 100 in worship attendance. The total number of belonging groups ranged from a high of 19.31 groups per 100 in worship attendance (church 4; growth category 4) to a low of 4.12 groups per 100 (church 12; growth category 3).

The Importance of New Groups

The number of new groups (groups under two years old) ranged from 0 (church 6 and 15; both growth category 2) to a high of 14 (church 16; growth category 5). The only growth category 7 church had 13 new groups. When new groups were expressed as a percentage of the total number of belonging groups, the percentiles ranged from 0% (churches 6 and 15; both growth category 2) to 51.85% (church 16, growth category 5). The three congregations that broke the 200 barrier that reported the number of new groups had a mean 21.42% new groups (church 5 did not report). If church 10 is removed from the study

(a predominately black inner city church that has reported numerous data not in line with other churches of its growth category), then the two remaining churches that broke the 200 barrier averaged 29% new belonging groups. The more "stable" congregations (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean of 21.74% new groups. The declining congregations (growth categories 1 and 2) had a mean of 12.11% new groups. Overall there is a moderate positive correlation of $p=.459$ between the percentage of new groups and the growth category of the congregations studied. Table 10 shows the relationships between the various growth divisions and belonging groups within the congregations studied (without including church 10).

Table 10. Growth divisions and belonging groups without church 10

Growth Division	Mean Number of Bible Classes	Mean Bible Classes per 100 Attendees	Mean Non-Bible Class Groups	Mean Total Belonging Groups	Belonging Groups per 100 Attendees	Number of New Groups	% of New Groups
Alpha	14.00	5.32	26.67	40.33	15.48	11.50	29.00
Beta	8.11	4.88	12.14	21.29	11.15	5.00	21.74
Gamma	6.66	4.22	10.00	16.17	11.39	2.00	12.11
Mean	9.00	4.71	14.00	22.94	12.05	5.14	18.85

There is a moderate correlation of $p=.332$ between the use of home groups and the growth category of the congregations studied. There is a moderate correlation of $p=.346$ between the use of meal groups and the growth category of the congregations studied. There is a weak $p=.177$ correlation between the use of music groups and the growth category of the congregations studied. (The reader should keep in mind that Churches of Christ worship with congregational acappella singing. Choirs, worship teams, and special music are relatively rare in this fellowship. Casual observation would suggest that in over

90% of the congregations, all of the worship is directed by a single song leader leading the congregation in acappella singing.)

Belonging Groups and Perceived Assimilation Ability

The precedent literature suggested that new members are assimilated both through tangible congregational social structures and intangible congregational attitudes and values. The tangible congregational social structures include both friendships (Yeakley 1977, 54) and role responsibilities (Arn 1978, 10). The importance of the intangible congregational "spirit" (attitudes and values) in new member assimilation was championed by Oswald and Leas (Oswald and Leas 1987, 16).

In this study the "perceived assimilation ability" refers to the perceptions of the decade-long members of the congregation who completed survey "B." A new member, or a congregational dropout, might well have a different perception of the congregation's ability to assimilate new members. This research did not seek to evaluate the perceptions of newcomers to the congregation or congregational dropouts.

In Table 11 the perceived assimilation ability score was constructed by adding the mean survey scores from all the "survey B" results from each church for questions 3, 4, 8, 20, 23, 26, and 32. These questions were constructed to ascertain a congregation's self-perception of its ability to assimilate new members into their congregation. The questions were designed to measure perceptions of assimilation; actual results of assimilation may vary. There was a slight negative correlation ($p=-.130$) between a congregation's perceived assimilation ability score and the number of new groups formed within the last two years. This correlation was not statistically significant.

Table 11. Belonging groups and perceived assimilation ability

Church Number	Growth Category	Perceived Assimilation Ability	Bible Classes per 100	Non-Bible Classes per 100	Total Groups per 100	Percentage of New Groups to Total
1	6	20.05	6.55	06.55	13.09	27.77
2	7	18.70	4.80	12.40	17.20	30.23
3	5	21.50	4.57	02.29	06.86	08.33
4	4	25.00	5.44	13.86	19.31	23.07
5	6	23.40	4.62	11.54	16.15	--
6	2	19.77	5.92	05.26	11.18	00.00
7	2	17.30	5.60	05.60	11.20	07.14
8	5	23.60	6.66	06.11	12.77	21.74
9	1	23.48	4.44	06.66	11.11	06.66
10	6	23.40	4.00	01.33	05.33	06.25
11	4	27.61	4.87	05.31	10.18	13.04
12	3	22.50	1.18	02.94	04.12	28.57
13	2	19.09	5.00	07.50	12.50	20.00
14	2	19.74	3.48	12.17	15.65	38.88
15	2	24.28	0.83	05.83	06.67	00.00
16	5	22.88	7.89	06.84	14.21	51.85
17	5	21.90	3.53	07.06	10.58	05.55

Table 12 outlines the results of the perceived congregational assimilation ability according to the three growth divisions of congregations in the study. Alpha congregations scored the highest in three of the five categories of Table 12.

Table 12. Growth divisions, belonging groups, and perceived assimilation ability

Growth Division	Perceived Assimilation Ability	Bible Classes per 100 Attendees	Non-Bible Class Groups per 100 Attendees	Total Groups per 100 Attendees	Percentage of New Groups to Total Groups
Alpha	21.39	5.49	7.96	12.94	21.42
Beta	23.57	4.88	6.34	11.15	21.74
Gamma	20.61	4.22	7.17	11.38	12.11
Mean	22.01	4.67	7.01	11.65	18.06

Table 12 indicates that congregations that have broken the 200 barrier (division Alpha; growth categories 6 and 7) had a mean perceived assimilation score of 21.39. The congregations of division Beta had a mean perceived assimilation score of 23.57. The declining congregations (growth categories 1 and 2) had a mean perceived assimilation score of 20.61. The perceived assimilation scores ranged from a high of 27.61 (church 11; growth category 4) to a low of 18.70 (church 2; growth category 7).

There is only a moderate difference between the number of Bible classes per 100 attendees between churches in the various growth divisions. Churches that have broken the 200 barrier (division Alpha congregations) had a mean 5.49 Bible classes per 100 attendees in worship, whereas the division Beta congregations had a mean 4.88 Bible classes per 100 attendees. Rainer found Sunday School involvement to be the best gauge of measuring successful assimilation (Rainer 1999, 29 and 37). Rainer also found the Sunday School to be the best tool for successful assimilation (Rainer 1999, 33 and 47).

Churches that had broken the 200 barrier (division Alpha churches) had 25.55% more non-Bible class groups per 100 attendees than congregations in division Beta (7.96 compared with 6.34 groups per 100 attendees). Declining churches had a mean 7.17 non-Bible class groups per 100 attendees. It is possible that the declining churches tend to keep their past social structures, even though the number of participants in the groups may be diminishing.

There did not appear to be any significant correlations between the perceived assimilation ability of a congregation and the number of its belonging groups. There was a significant correlation (a positive correlation of $p=.607$; significant at the 0.05 level) between the number of assimilation ministries a congregation possessed and the perceived assimilation ability of the church. If a church has a large number of ministries targeted

toward new member assimilation, it tends to think it is successful in new member assimilation—whether or not such is actually the case. There was actually only a very weak positive correlation (p=.120) between the growth category of the congregation and it's perceived success in new member assimilation.

Research Question 3: What Factors Are Characteristic of a Congregation's Self-Perception of Size and Function?

Congregations, like individual people, tend to react more on the basis of their perceptions of reality than upon realty itself. Size designations, although helpful in studying congregations, are limited and refined by the congregations' self-perceptions of their size and function. A church of 200 attendees may "see" itself as a large church of 300 or a small church of 100. Various members within a congregation may have varying perceptions. The overall congregation's self-perception then can become a self-fulfilling prophecy of its growth or decline. Self-perception of size may in turn affect the congregation's methods of function.

Small Church Self-Perceptions and Growth or Decline

Table 13 is designed to study the degree of "small church" self-perceptions and growth or decline near the 200 barrier. There was a strong positive correlation (p=.610; significant at the 0.01 level) between the data from question 1 (small church perceptions of 1992) and the mean of questions 9, 13, 16, 22, 27, and 31 (questions meant to measure small church thinking in 1992). This strong positive correlation, the work of the expert panel, and the split half analysis done on the questions helps to confirm the internal validity of this portion of the survey.

Table 13. Small church self-perceptions and growth or decline

Church Number	Growth Category	Q-1 Small Church Perceptions In 1992	Mean of Q-9, 13, 16, 22, 27, and 31	Q-2 Small Church Perceptions In 2002	Mean of Q-7, 11, 17, 21, 29, and 34
1	6	3.70	3.47	2.40	2.62
2	7	3.90	3.08	2.60	2.73
3	5	3.60	3.03	3.50	2.17
4	4	2.30	2.60	1.80	2.82
5	6	1.90	2.45	1.50	3.18
6	2	4.38	3.44	3.88	2.95
7	2	4.66	2.83	4.66	2.95
8	5	2.70	2.03	1.80	2.82
9	1	2.50	2.91	3.50	3.39
10	6	2.36	2.97	2.25	2.76
11	4	3.88	3.48	3.00	3.72
12	3	3.33	2.89	2.88	2.76
13	2	3.10	3.04	3.20	3.06
14	2	4.12	3.32	4.25	3.17
15	2	3.13	2.69	4.25	2.98
16	5	3.55	3.18	2.78	3.06
17	5	3.09	3.12	2.91	3.15

The four congregations (churches 1, 2, 5, and 10) that successfully broke the 200 barrier (as defined by this study) all had lower mean scores on question 2 than on question 1 (see Table 13). Taken as a whole, the members of these growing churches have less of a tendency to see themselves as a small church today than they did ten years ago. Their small church self-perceptions, as measured by questions 1 and 2, dropped from 3.0 to 2.19 on the five-point Likert-response scale (Table 14). These Alpha division churches dropped from a mean score of 2.99 to 2.82 on the sets of questions meant to measure small church self-perceptions from 1992 and 2002. Table 14 illustrates the relationships between the three growth divisions and small church self-perceptions from 1992 and 2002. The results follow the anticipated patterns of self-perception.

Table 14. Growth divisions and small church self-perceptions

Growth Divisions	Means, Q-1 Small Church Self-Perceptions, 1992	Means, Q-9, 13, 16, 22, 27, 31	Means, Q-2 Small Church Self-Perceptions, 2002	Means, Q-7, 11, 17, 21, 29, 34
Alpha	3.00	2.99	2.19	2.82
Beta	3.20	2.90	2.67	2.93
Gamma	3.65	3.04	3.96	3.08
Mean	3.31	2.97	3.01	2.96

Four of the five declining churches (growth division Gamma) had higher scores on question 2 than on question 1 (Table 13). Taken as a whole, the members of these declining churches have more of a tendency to see themselves as a small church today than they did ten years ago (Table 14). These declining churches (Gamma growth division) went from a mean score of 3.65 for 1992 to a mean score of 3.96 for 2002 on the five-point Likert-response scale as they measured their perception of their congregation as a small church.

Is Size Perception a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy?

It may be questioned if these perception scores are predictive of growth and decline or simply reflective of growth and decline. The four churches in growth division Alpha that have broken the 200 barrier had a mean response of 3.00 on question 1, whereas the mean response on the set of six questions measuring small-church tendencies from 1992 was a similar 2.99 (Table 14). The six churches that declined (growth division Gamma) had a mean response of 3.65 on question 1, whereas the mean response on the set of six questions measuring small-church tendencies from 1992 was 3.04. The fairly stable

congregations (growth division Beta) had a mean response of 3.20 on question 1, and a

mean of 3.04 on the set of six questions measuring small-church tendencies from 1992.

Table 14 indicates that the mean answers (2.99, 2.90, and 3.04) to the six

questions testing for small-church self-perceptions in 1992 are very similar for churches in

all three divisions listed. This indicates that the respondents felt that a decade ago their

churches shared very similar organizational characteristics in the six areas tested (these six

questions measured tendencies of "small churches"). Yet on question 1, as they evaluated

their perception of their congregation as a small church in 1992, the respondents showed a

wider range of mean responses (3.00, 3.20, and 3.65). Those from declining churches

(Gamma growth division) were most likely to hold beliefs that their church was a small

church in 1992 (mean 3.65 on the 5.0 Likert-response scale). Members from Alpha division

congregations were less likely to hold beliefs that their church was a small church in 1992

(mean 3.00 on the 5.0 Likert-response scale). One might expect members of churches that

have grown and broken the 200 barrier to have a greater tendency to reflect upon their

congregation ten years ago as a "small church," but that is not what this research indicates.

Therefore it appears more probable that the perceptions of church size may be more

predictive of growth than reflective of growth. The members in the churches that have

successfully broken the 200 barrier within the last decade had a significantly lower

perception of their congregation as a "small church" in 1992 than the member in churches

that have been stable near the 200 barrier during the last decade. Those who saw their

congregation as a "larger church" were more likely to become a "larger church." Since the

mean organizational factors of the congregations are similar, the difference in perceptions

may account for the difference in growth. This research indicates that we tend to "behave as

we believe."

Congregational Self-Perceptions and
Selected Organizational Factors

This research has already examined the effect of congregational self-perception

and the role of various organizational factors upon a congregation's success in breaking the

200 barrier. Table 15 seeks to integrate those findings and see if there are relationships

between self-perceptions of congregational size and the strength of various organizational

factors. A correlation does not necessarily imply a relationship of cause and effect.

Table 15: Congregational self-perceptions and selected organizational factors

Church Number	Growth Category	Q-1	Mean of Q-9, 13, 16, 22, 27, 31	Staff Ministers 1992	Secretarial Hours 1992	Belonging Groups per 100 Attendees	Number of Assimilation Tools
1	6	3.70	3.47	2.00	25	13.09	4
2	7	3.90	3.08	0.50	00	17.20	4
3	5	3.60	3.03	1.25	02	06.86	4
4	4	2.30	2.60	1.00	00	19.31	5
5	6	1.90	2.45	2.00	30	16.15	4
6	2	4.38	3.44	2.00	00	11.18	2
7	2	4.66	2.83	1.00	16	11.20	2
8	5	2.70	2.03	2.00	12	12.77	5
9	1	2.50	2.91	1.00	16	11.11	5
10	6	2.36	2.97	1.00	00	05.33	4
11	4	3.88	3.48	2.00	00	10.18	4
12	3	3.33	2.89	1.50	00	04.12	4
13	2	3.10	3.04	3.00	40	12.50	3
14	2	4.12	3.32	1.00	15	15.65	2
15	2	3.13	2.69	2.00	20	06.67	5
16	5	3.55	3.18	1.00	00	14.21	6
17	5	3.09	3.12	1.00	00	10.58	2

The mean of questions 9, 13, 16, 22, 27, and 31 was meant to establish a score

reflective of small church self-perceptions from 1992, whereas question 1 straightforwardly

asked for agreement or disagreement with the statement: "In 1992 our congregation

perceived itself as a "small church." The scores of various churches on question 1 may be related to selected organizational factors, and the mean scores of questions 9, 13, 6, 22, 27, and 31 may be related to selected organizational factors.

There was a significant positive correlation (p=.610; significant at the 0.01level) between question 1 and the mean of questions 9, 13, 16, 22, 27, and 31 which test for small church perceptions. Thus, question 1 may be assumed to be a relatively accurate measure of small church perceptions from 1992.

There is a low negative correlation (p=-.247) between question 1 (small church self-perception from 1992) and the growth categories of the churches in the study. Churches that perceived themselves as a small church were less likely to be in the higher growth categories (breaking the 200 barrier). There is a moderately strong negative correlation (p=-.517) between question 1 and the number of assimilation ministries found in a particular congregation. Congregations that perceive themselves as a small church are less likely to have a broad spectrum of assimilation ministries. Assimilation in the congregations that perceive themselves as small churches may be done less through intentional programs than through relationships that develop informally in the social context of the congregation.

There was a slight negative correlation (p=-0.97) between congregational responses on question 1 and the number of congregational staff members in 1992. Churches with multiple staff members were slightly less likely to see themselves as a small church than congregations with a single staff member. Likewise, there was only a slight negative correlation (p=-.188) between the congregational results on question 1 and the number of hours of weekly secretarial work in 1992. Churches with fewer secretarial hours were slightly more likely to see themselves as a small church.

Possibly the biggest surprise in Table 15 was the small negative correlation

(*p*=-0.92) between question 1 and the number of belonging groups per 100 attendees in the

congregation. Congregations that perceive themselves as small churches have almost as

many belonging groups per 100 attendees as congregations that perceive themselves as

larger congregations. The perception of congregational size did not have a significant

correlation to the development of belonging groups. While the number of belonging groups

is important for growth, a congregation's perception of size does not appear to significantly

impede the development of belonging groups. Small church self-perceptions do not seem to

impede the development of a number of belonging groups within the congregation.

Table 16 places this data with the growth divisions of the churches in the study. It

is not surprising that the congregations that have broken the 200 barrier scored lower in

"small church" self-perceptions than congregations that are relatively stable near the 200

barrier or are declining.

Table 16. Growth divisions and congregational self-perceptions and
selected organizational factors

Growth Division	Q-1 Small Church in 1992	Mean of Q-9, 13, 16, 22, 27, 31	Staff Ministers in 1992	Secretarial Hours in 1992	Belonging Groups per 100 Attendees	Number of Assimilation Tools
Alpha	3.00	2.99	1.37	13.75	12.94	4.00
Beta	3.20	2.90	1.36	1.55	11.15	4.29
Gamma	3.65	3.04	2.23	14.93	11.38	3.17
Mean	3.31	2.97	1.49	10.35	11.65	3.82

***Research Question 4: What Are the Characteristics
of Belonging Groups?***

The precedent literature emphasized the importance of belonging groups to

general church growth. The middle-sized church often has an inadequate system for new

member assimilation and thus an excessive number of new members drop into a relatively

inactive role within a year or two after joining the church (Schaller 1985, 103-4).

Growth and Selected
Belonging Groups

Table 17 studies the number of belonging groups from each congregation

representative of social categories and compares that information with growth categories of

the churches involved. The various types of belonging groups were not specifically defined

on the survey; the respondent was left to categorize their congregational groups as they saw

fit within the categories listed on the survey. Only two congregations reported the use of

sports teams, so there were not enough sports teams reported in the congregations of the

sample to be statistically significant in the study. Therefore sports teams were excluded

from the statistical study.

Table 17. Growth and selected belonging groups

Church Number	Growth Category	Home Groups	Meal Groups	Sports Groups	Music Groups	Youth Groups	Task Group	Prayer Groups	Social Groups
1	6	02	02	00	04	01	00	02	02
2	7	10	02	01	01	01	04	02	04
3	5	00	01	00	00	01	00	01	01
4	4	15	01	00	00	03	02	01	01
5	6	14	06	01	01	01	03	00	00
6	2	00	00	00	01	01	00	02	02
7	2	02	00	00	00	01	00	00	01
8	5	02	00	00	00	01	04	01	02
9	1	01	01	--	--	02	--	01	02
10	6	00	00	00	00	00	01	00	00
11	4	01	01	00	00	01	00	00	01
12	3	02	00	00	00	01	00	00	00
13	2	05	01	00	01	02	00	00	02
14	2	00	02	00	00	01	06	01	03
15	2	03	00	00	01	02	00	00	00
16	5	08	01	00	00	02	03	01	01
17	5	01	01	00	00	03	00	01	01

Home Groups

Home groups were the most represented category of groups in most congregations. All but four congregations reported at least one home group. The number of home groups per congregation ranged from 1 to 15, with the mean being 5.5 groups among churches reporting home groups. All but one congregation reported having at least one youth group, but only six of the congregations reported having more than one youth group.

This study has already discovered a fairly strong relationship (p=.506; significant at the 0.05 level) between the total number of groups in a congregation and the growth category of that church as defined in this study. This study has also already discovered a moderately strong correlation (*p*=.459) between the number of new groups less than two years old in a church and its growth category as defined in this study. Table 17 endeavors to explore meaningful relationships between certain types of belonging groups and the growth categories of the congregations studied.

Congregations that have broken the 200 barrier (Alpha division churches) had a mean 6.50 home groups (Table 18). Congregations that may be still dealing with issues of the 200 barrier (Beta division churches) had a mean 4.14 home groups. Declining churches (Gamma division churches) only had a mean 1.83 home groups. The number of home groups varied more between growth divisions than other types of groups in the study.

Table 18. Growth divisions and means for selected belonging groups

Growth Division	Home Groups	Meal Groups	Sports Groups	Music Groups	Youth Groups	Task Groups	Prayer Groups	Social Groups
Alpha	6.50	2.50	0.5	1.5	0.75	1.75	1.00	1.50
Beta	4.14	0.71	0	0	1.71	1.29	0.71	1.00
Gamma	1.83	0.67	0	.33	1.17	1.00	.067	1.67
Mean	3.88	1.00	0.13	.50	1.41	1.44	.072	1.41

Other Groups

Congregations that have broken the 200 barrier (Alpha division churches) had a mean of 2.50 meal groups. Congregations that may still be dealing with the issues of the 200 barrier (Beta division churches) had a mean 0.71 meal groups. Declining churches (Gamma division churches) had a mean 0.67 meal groups.

Correlations between Types of
Groups and Growth Categories

There was a moderate positive correlation (p=.332) between the number of home groups and the growth category of the congregation studied. There was also a moderate positive correlation (p=.346) between the number of meal groups in a congregation and church growth category. There was a significant correlation between the number of sports teams in a congregation and the growth category of the church (p=.507; significant at the 0.05 level), but the number of sports teams reported in the congregations studied were too few for this statistic to have relevance to the study.

The number of music groups did not prove to have a strong correlation to the growth category of the church (p=.177). Casual observation suggests that this may be due to the fact that the worship music in most congregations of Churches of Christ consists entirely of congregational acappella singing lead by an individual worship leader. A small minority of congregations may use a praise team or any type of special music in the worship services.

The number of youth ministry groups had a moderate negative correlation (p=-.272) with the growth category of the church. All but one congregation reported having at least one youth group. Only six congregations reported multiple youth groups. None of the churches that had broken the 200 barrier (division Alpha churches) reported multiple

youth groups. The researcher was surprised by these results, and has no observations to offer in explanation of these results.

There was a slight positive correlation (p=.181) between the number of task groups and the growth category of the congregation. There was also a slight positive correlation (p=.190) between the number of prayer groups and the growth category of the congregations in the study.

In general, it is the number of groups, and not the type of group, that is statistically significant (p=.507; significant at the 0.05 level) in correlation with the church growth categories of the congregations studied. This study suggests that outside of Sunday School classes, it is the number of belonging groups, and not the type of belonging group, that is most critical to congregational growth. In six of the eight categories of groups found in Table 18, the Alpha division congregations had the highest mean number of groups. It appears to be the total number of groups, and not the types of groups, that has the greater relevance to breaking the 200 barrier. A variety of groups, however, is more likely to incorporate a higher percentage of the members of any specific congregation, and thereby may be more beneficial to the growth of the church.

Leadership and Gender Groups and Growth Category Studies

The number of leadership meetings and gender group meetings were not included in Table 18. These belonging groups are now reported in Table 19 along with the church growth category information. Leadership meetings that included at least five participants and were held monthly were considered belonging groups. (It is the experience of the researcher that the board of elders of many middle-sized Churches of Christ has fewer than five members.) Gender groups must, by definition, be exclusively male or female.

Table 19. Growth categories and leadership and gender groups

Church Number	Growth Category	Leadership Meetings	Gender Groups
1	6	2	2
2	7	2	3
3	5	0	1
4	4	1	4
5	6	2	2
6	2	2	0
7	2	2	2
8	5	1	0
9	1	1	1
10	6	0	2
11	4	0	1
12	3	1	1
13	2	2	2
14	2	0	1
15	2	1	0
16	5	2	1
17	5	1	4

Four of the churches reported no leadership meetings. This may be due to the criteria required by the study to consider a meeting a "belonging group." Seven churches reported two leadership groups, and six congregations reported only one leadership group. There was an extremely weak positive correlation (p=.034) between the number of leader's meetings and the growth category of the church.

There was a moderate (but statistically insignificant) positive correlation between the number of gender group meetings and the growth category of the congregation ($p=.368$). Three congregations reported no gender groups, and six churches reported only one gender group. Five congregations reported two gender groups, one church reported three, and two churches reported four groups. The four congregations that broke the 200 barrier (growth division Alpha congregations) had a mean 2.25 gender groups each (Table 20). The Beta congregations had a mean 1.71 gender groups each. The declining congregations (Gamma

division churches) had a mean 1.0 gender groups each. Table 20 summarizes this data

according to the growth divisions of the churches studied.

Table 20. Growth divisions and leadership and gender groups

Growth Division	Mean Leadership Meetings	Mean Gender Groups
Alpha	1.50	2.25
Beta	0.86	1.71
Gamma	1.33	1.00
Mean	1.24	1.59

The Alpha division congregations again led in the mean number of groups in

these two categories. This follows the general trend that Alpha congregations (those who

have broken the 200 barrier) tend to have more belonging groups.

Research Question 5: What Leadership Factors Are Related to Growth?

Survey "B" was designed to measure "program church" characteristics through

questions 6, 12, 15, 18, 25, 30, and 35. In Rothauges's model (Rothauge 1983, 5-26),

congregations of approximately 150 to 350 in attendance tend to assimilate new members

through the use of church programs. Smaller churches of 50-150 in attendance, known as

"pastoral churches" in Rothauge's model, tend to assimilate new members through their

relationship with the minister. Survey "B" was designed to measure "pastoral church"

tendencies through questions 5, 10, 14, 19, 24, 28, and 33. In Rothauge's model

congregations of a certain size may tend toward a certain model of assimilation, but it is the

assimilation model, and not the worship attendance, that truly determines how a church

operates in assimilation of new members. A congregation's structures and attributes may be

"ahead" or "behind" the congregation's numerical growth.

The numeric responses for each of the seven questions in each category were added together to find a cumulative "program church score" and "pastoral church score." A church's pastoral church score may be related to other pastoral church scores, and a program church's scores may be related to other program church scores, but the pastoral and program church scores should not necessarily be related to each other.

**Growth and Pastoral
Church Tendencies**

Table 21 measures general tendencies toward a pastoral church mindset. Congregations of the studied size (between 160-240 sometime during the last decade) should be expected to exhibit both pastoral church and program church tendencies; church scores in either category should be compared with similar scores in other congregations.

Table 21. Growth and pastoral church tendencies

Church Number	Growth Category	Pastoral Church Score	Q-5	Q-10	Q-14	Q-19	Q-24	Q-28	Q-33
1	6	22.10	3.70	3.20	2.90	3.00	3.00	2.50	3.80
2	7	23.90	2.70	4.30	3.80	3.70	3.10	2.20	4.10
3	5	23.81	3.30	3.80	3.50	4.30	3.50	2.30	3.11
4	4	21.00	2.30	3.90	3.20	3.50	2.80	1.90	3.40
5	6	26.80	3.20	4.10	4.40	4.70	3.90	1.70	4.80
6	2	23.86	2.62	4.50	3.00	3.00	3.62	2.50	4.62
7	2	17.27	2.66	2.67	1.66	2.00	2.00	1.66	1.66
8	5	24.30	3.20	3.90	4.00	3.90	4.10	1.50	3.70
9	1	27.51	3.50	4.33	4.33	4.33	3.66	3.20	4.16
10	6	22.48	2.33	3.50	4.16	3.91	2.33	2.25	4.00
11	4	27.04	3.66	4.44	4.22	3.88	4.33	2.11	4.44
12	3	25.42	3.33	4.17	3.66	4.17	3.66	2.60	3.83
13	2	26.41	4.20	3.30	4.10	4.00	4.00	2.72	4.09
14	2	26.48	3.62	4.00	4.00	3.75	4.12	2.62	4.37
15	2	26.26	3.63	4.25	4.00	4.00	3.75	2.63	4.00
16	5	25.38	3.33	3.67	4.00	4.00	3.11	2.89	4.33
17	5	23.45	3.64	4.27	3.45	3.73	2.91	2.27	3.27

An Explanation of Growth and
Pastoral Church Tendencies

The program church scores should not be compared with the pastoral church

scores in the same congregation in Table 21. Pastoral church scores may be compared with

pastoral church scores from other congregations, and program church scores may be

compared with program church scores in other congregations. Pastoral church tendencies,

as represented by questions 5, 10, 14, 19, 24, 28, and 33, were found in the precedent

literature.

There is a slight negative correlation (p=-.137) between the growth category of

the congregations studied and the total pastoral church score. Pastoral church scores ranged

from a high of 27.51 (Church 9; growth category 1) to a low of 17.27 (Church 7, growth

category 2). From the study of the precedent literature, the researcher expected a stronger

negative correlation between the growth category of the congregation and the cumulative

score of pastoral church characteristics. Therefore, it may be helpful to study the

relationship between the growth category of congregations and their scores on individual

questions (5, 10, 14, 19, 24, 28, and 33) that test for pastoral church tendencies.

In a pastoral church most newcomers find their way into the membership circle

through the pastoral work of the clergy. The new member ministry can become limited to

the work of the minister (Rothauge 1983, 17). Question 5 on survey "B" states: "Friendship

with our minister is "key" to assimilation in our church." There was a moderately low

negative correlation (p=-.242) between question 5 and the growth category of the church,

but not enough to be statistically significant. Scores ranged from a high of 4.20 (church 13;

growth category 2) to a low of 2.33 (church 10; growth category 6).

Congregations that transition from a pastoral to program church must give up

being a "single cell" in which every member knows everyone else (Gaede 2001, 25).

Question 10 on survey "B" states: "Most active members know the names of almost every church member." There was almost no correlation (p=-.002) between congregational scores on question 10 and their growth category. Scores ranged from a high of 4.50 (church 6; growth category 2) to a low of 2.67 (church 7; growth category 2). Such scattered results may suggest that the congregations studied that have broken the 200 barrier (growth categories 6 and 7) may still share many of the characteristics of the smaller pastoral church.

In the pastoral church the minister is often involved in almost every activity. The pastoral church has limited programs, and the minister is often involved in some way in every activity, and as a leader in most. Question 14 states, "Our minister is involved in almost every church activity." There was a weak positive correlation (p=.135) between agreement with question 14 and the growth category of the church. On the basis of the precedent literature one would have expected a negative correlation. Scores ranged from a high of 4.40 (church 5; growth category 6) to a low of 1.66 (church 7; growth category 2), the opposite of what one would expect from the precedent literature.

Question 19 is based upon similar reasoning as question 14: "The minister is at almost every congregational function." Scores ranged from a high of 4.70 (church 5; growth category 6) to a low of 2.00 (church 7; growth category 2). These extreme scores are again the opposite of what one would expect from the precedent literature. Question 19 and the growth category of the congregation yielded a moderately positive correlation (p=.225). On the basis of the precedent literature a negative correlation would have been expected. It is possible that responses to questions 14 and 19 reflect more upon the involvement or tenure of the minister than they do upon the social structure of the church.

Typically the minister of the pastoral church is known for the strength of his relationships with the church members, whereas the minister of the program church is

known for his organizational, administration, and professional abilities (McIntosh 1999, 60).

Question 24 stated, " Our minister knows all the church members well." On the basis of

precedent literature, it would be expected that pastoral churches would score significantly

higher than program churches on question 24. Congregational scores ranged from a high of

4.33 (church 11; growth category 4) to a low of 2.00 (church 7; growth category 2). There

was a moderate negative correlation ($p=-.223$) between question 24 and the growth category

of the church.

In the pastoral church the minister's personality may be more important than his

ministry skills (McIntosh 1999, 60). Question 28 read, "The minister's personality is more

important than his ministry skills." Responses ranged from a high of 3.2 (church 9; growth

category 1) to a low of 1.5 (church 8; growth category 5). As would be expected from the

precedent literature, there was a moderate negative correlation ($p=-.379$) between responses

to question 28 and the growth category of the church.

Church members of pastoral churches generally expect the minister to be

available to them when needed. Question 33 read, "Our pulpit minister is readily available

when I need him." Responses ranged from a high of 4.80 (church 5; growth category 6) to a

low of 1.66 (church 7; growth category 2). There was a slight positive correlation ($p=.089$)

between question 33 and the church's growth category. This response, the opposite of what

would have been expected from the precedent literature, may indicate more of an approval

of the minister's work than the social structure of the congregation. The shortest tenure of a

pulpit minister of a congregation from the study that broke the 200 barrier was fifteen years.

Such long-tenured ministers may have endeared themselves to the congregation over a

period of many years. Such a long tenure may have affected the congregation's perception

of the minister's availability to them more than the number of openings on his calendar.

Table 22. Growth division and pastoral church tendencies

Growth Divison	Mean Pastoral Church Score	Mean Q-5	Mean Q-10	Mean Q-14	Mean Q-19	Mean Q-24	Mean Q-28	Mean Q-33
Alpha	23.82	2.98	3.78	3.82	3.83	3.08	2.16	4.18
Beta	24.34	3.25	4.02	3.72	3.93	3.49	2.22	3.73
Gamma	24.63	3.37	3.84	3.52	3.51	3.53	2.56	3.82
Mean	24.32	3.23	3.90	3.67	3.75	3.41	2.33	3.86

The scores on questions 5, 10, 14, 19, 24, 28, and 33 should not be compared with each other. The mean scores of churches in each growth division on each individual question may be compared with the mean scores on each individual question of churches in another growth division. The total mean pastoral church score may also be compared in churches of various growth divisions. The mean pastoral church score, as anticipated by the study of the precedent literature, was highest in the declining churches and lowest in the churches that have broken the 200 barrier. Several of the individual questions did not follow this anticipated pattern. In questions 14, 19, and 33 the Alpha division churches did not have the lowest pastoral church score. These mixed results may indicate that the congregations just above the 200 barrier still display a number of the characteristics of pastoral churches. These breakthrough congregations may show the characteristics of "stretched pastoral churches" nearly as much as they do program churches. This includes high ministerial participation in the overall life of the congregation. This research indicates that the ministers of the Alpha division congregations were able to keep a "pastoral feel" to their emerging program congregations. The possible causes of the retention of numerous characteristics from the pastoral church by the growing program church will be explored more fully in Chapter 5 when conclusions are drawn from the research data.

**Growth and Program
Church Tendencies**

Program churches also have a number of defining characteristics. These

congregations are usually known for the number and quality of their programs. The senior

minister may be known more for his administrative and professional abilities than his

friendship with individual church members (McIntosh 1999, 60). In Rothauge's model,

these churches tend to run from about 150 to 350 in Sunday worship attendance (Rothauge

1983, 23). McIntosh considers the range of the middle-sized church 200-400 in attendance

(McIntosh 1999, 60). The middle-sized church is sometimes known as an "adolescent"

congregation, or a congregation in transition between the growth stages.

*An Explanation of Program
Church Tendencies*

Table 23 shows the data on congregational growth and program church

tendencies. The "program church score" of Table 23 is not to be compared with the

"pastoral church score" of Tables 21 and 22. The "program church score" for one

congregation may be compared with the "program church score" of another congregation.

The scores of various congregations may be compared on an individual question (i.e., the

scores of each church on question 6). A congregation's scores on question 6, however,

should not be compared with its scores on questions 12, 15, 18, 25, 30, or 35. Questions 6,

12, 15, 18, 25, 30, and 35 from survey "B" were meant to measure the tendency toward

program church structure in the research study. Thus the scores from these individual

questions should not be compared with each other, but the scores of churches in a similar

growth category may be compared with respect to each individual question. Table 23

outlines the research data from the study on congregational growth and program church

tendencies.

Table 23. Growth and program church tendencies

Church Number	Growth Category	Program Church Score	Q-6	Q-12	Q-15	Q-18	Q-25	Q-30	Q-35
1	6	24.30	4.40	4.10	3.20	3.10	3.30	2.80	3.40
2	7	22.42	3.90	2.70	1.60	3.22	4.20	3.00	3.80
3	5	22.05	4.00	2.60	3.11	2.80	3.44	3.30	2.80
4	4	24.20	3.40	3.40	3.50	3.50	3.60	3.80	3.00
5	6	22.50	4.20	3.00	1.70	3.20	3.50	3.40	3.50
6	2	21.12	4.13	3.13	1.75	2.12	3.87	2.62	3.50
7	2	19.82	4.00	3.00	1.33	2.33	3.66	2.00	2.00
8	5	20.34	3.44	1.80	1.70	3.80	2.40	3.60	3.60
9	1	21.77	4.16	1.80	1.83	3.66	3.33	3.66	3.33
10	6	22.07	3.25	3.50	1.75	3.08	4.25	3.08	3.16
11	4	22.48	4.00	2.33	1.66	3.22	3.50	4.00	3.77
12	3	20.46	4.17	2.50	1.66	2.67	3.66	3.00	2.80
13	2	22.57	4.10	3.10	2.27	2.90	4.00	3.20	3.00
14	2	20.23	4.12	2.12	1.37	2.75	4.12	3.25	2.50
15	2	21.64	4.50	2.50	1.75	3.38	3.88	3.38	2.25
16	5	20.65	3.22	3.33	2.89	2.56	3.11	2.89	2.67
17	5	20.99	3.36	3.09	2.27	3.00	3.36	3.27	2.64

There is a moderate positive correlation (p=.304) between the program church cumulative score and the growth categories of the churches in the study. This is in concurrence with expectations from the precedent literature, but the statistical score is not statistically significant to the 0.05 level. The scores ranged from a high of 24.30 (church 1; growth category 6) to a low of 19.82 (church 7; growth category 2).

The churches that had broken the 200 barrier (growth categories 6 and 7) had a mean program church score of 22.82 (Table 24). Churches in the "stable" categories near the 200 barrier (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean score of 21.60. Declining churches (growth categories 1 and 2) had a mean score of 21.19. Although the larger and better growing churches did have, on a whole, more frequent responses toward program church tendencies, the correlation is not strong enough to be statistically significant at the

0.05 level. Middle-sized churches are truly churches in transition. They tend to have characteristics of both the program and pastoral congregational models. This tendency for "shared characteristics" will be further explored in chapter five as a part of the researcher's conclusions to the problem of the 200 barrier. Table 24 compares growth divisions and program church tendencies.

Table 24. Growth Division and Program Church Tendencies

Growth Division	Mean of Program Church Tendencies	Mean Q-6	Mean Q-12	Mean Q-15	Mean Q-18	Mean Q-25	Mean Q-30	Mean Q-35
Alpha	22.82	3.94	3.33	2.06	3.15	3.81	3.07	3.47
Alpha without church 10	23.07	4.17	3.27	2.17	3.17	3.67	3.07	3.57
Beta	21.60	3.66	2.72	2.40	3.08	3.30	3.41	3.04
Gamma	21.20	4.17	2.61	1.72	2.86	3.81	3.02	3.21
Mean	21.74	3.90	2.82	2.08	3.02	3.60	3.19	3.04

There was a moderate negative correlation ($p=-.372$) between the question 6 and the growth category of the congregation. Question 6 read, "Involvement in ministry is "key" to social assimilation in our church." The precedent literature suggested that the program church frequently draws persons by the visibility and quality of its programs (Rothauge 1983, 25). The precedent literature suggested there would be a positive correlation between churches in the upper growth categories (growth categories 6 and 7) that have broken the 200 barrier and the involvement of new people in ministry programs, but the study did not bear out those results. Scores on question 6 ranged from a high of 4.50 (church 15; growth category 2) to a low of 3.22 (church 16; growth category 5). Churches

that broke the 200 barrier (division Alpha churches) had a mean score of 3.94 on question 6. If church 10 is removed from the study (church 10 has often had results that significantly differ from the norm of other congregations in its growth category), then the churches that broke the 200 barrier had a mean score of 4.17 on question 6. The churches in the more "stable" growth categories (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean score of 3.66 on question 6. Declining churches had a mean score of 4.17. The high score of the declining churches does not fit expectations from the precedent literature.

A Rationale for Community Groups of 150 or Less

As a church grows above 150 in attendance, it becomes difficult for the members to know each other's names. As early as 1961, Tyler noticed that active Christian communities had difficulty growing above about 150 active participants (Tyler 1961, 415-17). Dunbar found that the largest "community group" in which one may be in active relationships with the others numbers about 150 members (Dunbar 1992, 469-93). Question 12 tested for a common characteristic of program churches: "We don't know the names of everyone at church anymore." There was a moderate positive correlation (p=.367) between question 12 and the growth categories of the churches involved in the study. Scores ranged from a high of 4.10 (church 1; growth category 6) to a low of 1.80 (church 8, growth category 5; church 9, growth category 1). Congregations that have broken the 200 barrier (growth categories 6 and 7) had a mean score of 3.32 on question 12. Churches in the more "stable" growth categories (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) that may still be dealing with issues of the 200 barrier had a mean score of 2.72 on question 12. Declining churches had a mean score of 2.61 on question 12.

Question 15 is built upon the same assumption as question 12: "As the church grows past about 150 participants, everyone is not as connected to everyone else anymore." Question 15 stated: "We're too big to be just one big family at church anymore." There was a moderate positive correlation (p=.259) between question 15 and the growth categories of the churches in the study. Scores ranged from a high of 3.50 (church 4; growth category 4) to a low of 1.33 (church 7; growth category 2). Churches that have broken the 200 barrier (growth categories 6 and 7) had a mean score of 2.06. The more "stable" churches that may still be dealing with the 200 barrier (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean score of 2.40. Declining churches had a mean score of 1.72.

Assimilation in the Program Church

Question 18 read, "New members are "plugged in" to a church program." The precedent literature suggests that in churches of 150-350, new members are assimilated by their participation in a program of the church (Rothauge 1983, 25-26). There is a weak positive correlation (p=.172) between the growth category of the congregations studied and their response to question 18. Scores ranged from a high of 3.80 (church 8; growth category 5) to a low of 2.12 (church 6; growth category 2). Churches that have broken the 200 barrier (growth categories 6 and 7) had a mean score of 3.15 on question 18. The more "stable" churches that may still be dealing with the 200 barrier (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean score of 3.08. Declining churches (growth categories 1 and 2) had a mean score of 2.86.

In a middle-sized church a minister's administrative abilities may be more important than his personal relationships with his members (McIntosh 1999, 60). Question 25 read, "A minister's administrative abilities are very important to our church." There was a slight negative correlation ($p=-.146$) between question 25 and the growth categories of the

churches in the study. The precedent literature suggested a positive correlation would be present. Scores ranged from a high of 4.25 (church 10, growth category 6) to a low of 2.40 (church 8, growth category 5). Congregations that have broken the 200 barrier (growth categories 6 and 7) had a mean score of 3.81 on question 25. Churches in the middle of the growth categories (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean score of 3.30 on question 25. Congregations in the declining growth categories had a mean score of 3.81 on question 25.

Question 30 read, "Most new members easily fit into one or more church programs." Strong agreement would suggest that the church has a wide variety of quality programs open to new members (a characteristic of a program church as suggested by the precedent literature). This research found only a very slight positive correlation ($p=.039$) between question 30 and the growth categories of the churches studied. Scores ranged from a high of 4.00 (church 11, growth category 4) to a low of 2.00 (church 7, growth category 2). Churches that have broken the 200 barrier had a mean score of 3.07. Stable congregations (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean score of 3.41. Declining congregations (growth categories 1 and 2) had a mean score of 3.02.

Question 35 read, "Our church is known for the quantity and quality of its programs." This is a classic characteristic of the program church (Rothauge 1983, 25). There was a moderate positive correlation ($p=.413$) between the growth categories of the churches in the study and higher scores on question 35. Scores ranged from a high of 3.80 (church 2, growth category 7) to a low of 2.00 (church 7, growth category 2). Congregations that have broken the 200 barrier (growth categories 6 and 7) had a mean score of 3.47 on question 35. Stable congregations (growth categories 3, 4, and 5) had a mean score of 3.04 on question 35. Declining congregations (growth categories 1 and 2) had a mean score of 2.76 on question 35.

None of the above correlations on the characteristics of the pastoral or program churches and the growth categories was found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

**Pastoral and Program Church
Characteristics Related to
Ministry Factors**

Numerous other correlations that may have a bearing on the study are reported in Table 25. These correlations relate pastoral and program church tendencies to various ministry factors. Correlations are reported as Pearson Correlation values.

Table 25. Pastoral and program church characteristics
related to ministry factors

Leadership Factors	Pastoral Church Characteristics	Program Church Characteristics
Number of Assimilation Ministries	$p=.276$	$p=.296$
Breakthrough Churches (Growth Categories 6 & 7)	$p=-.118$	$p=.471$
Ministers per 100 Attendees	$p=-.401$	$p=-.087$
Outreach Program Minister Led	$p=.039$	$p=.510$
Outreach Program Volunteer Led	$p=.086$	$p=.192$
Total Belonging Groups	$p=.099$	$p=.592$
Years in Local Ministry	$p=-540$	$p=.303$

There was a moderate correlation between the number of assimilation ministries present in a congregation and its rating on both pastoral and program church characteristics.

A fairly strong (but not statistically significant at the 0.05 level) positive correlation ($p=.471$) existed between churches that had broken the 200 barrier (growth

categories 6 and 7) and churches with program church characteristics. There was a slight

negative correlation ($p=-.118$) between churches that had broken the 200 barrier (growth

categories 6 and 7) and congregations that evidenced pastoral church characteristics.

A fairly strong negative correlation (p=-.401) existed between the number of

ministers per 100 attendees and the characteristics of the pastoral church. A slight negative

correlation (p=-.087) was noted between the number of ministers per 100 attendees and the

characteristics of the program church.

A major difference between the pastoral and program church characteristics

surfaced in correlation with the churches that had an outreach program that was led by a

paid minister. A very slight positive correlation ($p=.039$) existed between churches that had

an outreach program that was minister led and the characteristics of pastoral church. A

strong correlation, significant at the 0.05 level ($p=.510$), was found between churches that

had an outreach program that was minister led and the characteristics of program churches.

The difference was not as significant with an outreach program led by a volunteer.

There was a weak positive correlation ($p=.086$) between pastoral church characteristics and

churches with an outreach program that was volunteer led. The correlation increases

slightly ($p=.192$) when the volunteer led outreach program is correlated with program

church characteristics.

There was a strong positive correlation ($p=.592$; significant at the 0.05 level)

between the program church characteristics and the total number of belonging groups in a

congregation. In contrast, there was only a weak positive correlation between the pastoral

church characteristics and the total number of belonging groups in a church ($p=.099$).

There was a strong negative correlation ($p=-.540$; significant at the 0.05 level)

between the number of years of a minister's local ministry in a congregation and the

characteristics of a pastoral church. Conversely, there was a moderate positive correlation (p=.303) between the number of years in a local ministry and the characteristics of a program church. The significance of these findings to the research study will be explored further in chapter 5. The statistically significant correlations will be the subject of conclusions drawn in Chapter 5.

Evaluation of the Research Design

Every social science research process needs to be examined through the process of critical thinking and the results of that exploration applied to improve the social science research design. The presence of suggested improvements does not necessarily invalidate a research design but rather refines it to be a more accurate tool in evaluating social science reality.

Evaluation of Surveys "A" and "B"

Survey "A" appears to have been accurately understood and thoroughly completed by most of the respondents involved in the survey. The researcher was concerned that the laborious instructions concerning counting "belonging groups" might be difficult to be comprehended, but the survey results suggest that in general the respondents understood and accurately reported that information. The researcher questioned the results of one survey item, but decided to include the questioned results as they stood. No changes are suggested to survey "A."

The researcher noticed a number of incomplete returns on questions 36-38 on survey "B." The researcher suspects that the instructions on that portion of the survey were unclear to some respondents or proved too difficult to easily grasp, so the questions were not

completed. Possibly survey "B" could be redesigned to ask for the same information in the more familiar Likert-response format.

Some survey participants complained about the redundancy of certain questions (done for triangulation purposes) on survey "B." The wording of those questions could be redone so as to better disguise the triangulation. Since all 38 of the questions were not triangulated, triangulation could not be used to prove the internal validity of the complete survey. The survey could be redone with complete triangulation, thus adding another avenue to provide a test for internal validity of the survey.

Sampling Concerns

It is the opinion of the researcher that more congregations need to be sampled for inclusion in the study in order to help minimize the possibility of skewing the study by a relatively low return rate. Of the seventeen churches included in the study, only four were congregations that had actually broken the 200 barrier within the past decade (defined in this study as an average attendance above 240). A larger sample might reduce the likelihood that demographic factors that were not evaluated in the study would significantly skew the results of the study. For example, if a church had suffered a split, or had significantly contributed to a nearby church plant, the numbers it reported might not represent the true ministry of that congregation. If the congregation is located in a fast-growing area or an area in population decline, the numbers reported might not be representative of the true social and ministry realities of the congregation. The researcher assumed that growth or decline due to demographic factors would, over the broad study, be compensated by reverse factors of other congregations included in the study. A low number of congregations in each growth category may not provide adequate data to compensate for the possible skewing effects of demographic factors and other factors outside the scope of this study. Therefore

the researcher recommends that a similar future study significantly increase the number of congregations sampled so that each growth category is represented by a larger number of churches. It is assumed that a larger sampling of congregations would make the study more accurate and help compensate for the presence of non-researched factors.

Other Research Methodologies

The researcher suggests that "survey A" be changed to be completed by any decade-long member of the congregation, not just the pulpit minister. The researcher found some congregations were between pulpit ministers, and other pulpit ministers were not interested in completing the survey (another member might be). Casual observation (from feedback on phone calls and the lack of returned surveys when promised) suggests that many of the pulpit ministers of the growing middle-sized churches considered themselves too busy to complete the survey.

The researcher suggests that congregations be categorized into three growth categories rather than the more elaborate seven-category system. Growth category 3 would include all churches in the study that have broken the 200 barrier within the last decade by reaching an average attendance over 240. Growth category 2 would include churches that are currently within the 160-240 range of worship attendance and are therefore likely to be struggling with the issues of the 200 barrier. Growth category 1 would include churches that were above 160 during the last decade but have declined to under 160.

Recommendations for Replication of the Study

The researcher anticipated that the surveys would be completed and returned within three weeks of their initial mailing. It took almost two months to get a minimum number of the surveys completed and returned so that the data could be studied. Those who

replicate this study should be encouraged to allow adequate time for the surveys to be returned. Future researchers should be aware that phone calls, e-mails, and reminder cards may be needed to spur potential respondents into action.

The researcher called each church prior to the mailing of a packet of surveys. The purpose of the call was to garner a verbal agreement for participation from the potential respondent and to get the respondent's name for the mailing envelope. It was anticipated that the phone calls would increase the response rate, as a verbal agreement had been made to complete the survey. Surveys were eventually received from 17 of the 32 respondents who had agreed in the phone interview to complete the survey. This is a return rate of 53%. Casual observation suggests that the return rate would have been far lower had the researcher not followed up the initial phone calls and mailings with reminder calls and mailings. Future researchers should not assume that all of those who verbally agree to participate in the study will complete and return the surveys.

Future researchers should also not assume that potential respondents personally known to the researcher will necessarily complete and return the surveys. The researcher was personally acquainted with 12 of the 32 ministers from the congregations randomly selected for the study. Of the 12 ministers personally known to researcher, 7 (or 58%) actually completed and returned the surveys as promised. This compares to an overall return rate of 53%. Those planning to replicate the study may wish to consider other means of encouraging church leaders to participate in the study in order to achieve a higher percentage of returned surveys.

Those planning to replicate the study may wish to consult with an expert in statistical analysis prior to beginning the study. The expert may assist in designing the statistical analysis and tables for the study. Those replicating the study may find it easiest to

"work backwards." They may wish to design the statistical displays needed first, and then design the survey and data recording structures in such a way to garner the data in its most usable form from the surveys.

Those wishing to replicate the study might find recording the data easier through the use of an "optically marked recorder" or similar device that would bypass hand tabulation of survey results. Such a scanning device might make the data recording more accurate as well as easier for the researcher.

Those wishing to replicate the study of middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States may wish to locate the most up-to-date directories of congregations within the fellowship and confirm current and past congregational size prior to including the church in the research sample. Churches of Christ have no headquarters or official reporting agency. National directories generally come from two publishing houses, but they are not released on any specific timetable, nor is their information guaranteed accurate. Those wishing to replicate the study may wish to identify potential congregations for the study by the use of random sampling from the national directories but may also wish to confirm congregational growth statistics during the initial interview by phone. This effort will help ensure that an adequate number of congregations representing each growth category may be located to participate in the study.

CHAPTER 5

RESEACH CONCLUSIONS

The data from Chapter 4 must be applied to the research questions in order for meaningful answers to the research questions to arise. The data from Chapter 4 must also be integrated and compared with the findings of the precedent literature in order for meaningful conclusions to result.

Research Purpose

This research sought to explore the impact of the congregational leadership factors of self-perception, organizational structure, and inclusion mechanisms and attitudes associated with new member assimilation on the success of western American Churches of Christ in breaking the 200 barrier. Although a tremendous amount of research has been done on the subject of effective leadership for church growth, the express purpose of this study was to identify leadership factors that resulted in numerical growth for middle-sized western American Churches of Christ.

Research Questions

The following research questions were explored in the research of breakthrough congregations, growing congregations, stable congregations, declining congregations, and severely declining congregations in middle-sized western American Churches of Christ:

1.   What organizational structures are characteristic of each type church?

2.   What assimilation strategies were implemented by congregational leaders?

3. What factors are characteristic of a congregation's self-perception of size and function?

4. What are the characteristics of belonging groups?

5. What leadership factors are related to growth?

Research Question 1: What Organizational Structures Are Characteristic of Each Type of Church?

Research question 1 asked what organizational structures are characteristic of congregations in various growth categories of middle-sized churches. The precedent literature indicated that the ratio of clergy members to church attendees has been about 1:156 during the last century (McIntosh 2000, 39). During recent years church growth experts have suggested significantly lower ratios for growth. Ellas found that growing congregations averaged a ratio of 1:125 (Ellas 1992, 42). Most church growth authorities suggest a ratio of 1:100-1:125 for church growth today.

Staffing Ratios

This research indicated that the needed ratio of clergy to attendees may differ in different cultures and ministry situations. Of the four congregations in the study that have broken the 200 barrier during the last decade, two are predominately black, inner city congregations. These congregations have broken the 200 barrier with only 0.52 and 0.67 ministers per 100 attendees (or ratios of 1:192 and 1:149 respectively). It is possible that that the social structure of these inner city predominately black congregations may allow for growth while maintaining a lower than average staff ratio. The other two congregations in the study that have broken the 200 barrier during the last decade had 1.27 and 1.15 minister per 100 attendees (or ratios of 1:79 and 1:86 respectively). Taken as a whole, the congregations in the study that had broken the 200 barrier within the last decade had a mean 0.90 ministers per 100 attendees, or a minister-to-attendees ratio of 1:111.

The number of ministers per 100 (Table 1) varied from a low of 0.52 to a high of 1.60. The lowest staffing ratio was in a fast growing growth category 7 congregation, and the highest staffing ratio was in a declining growth category 2 congregation. Obviously staffing ratios alone are not predictive of growth; other factors must be involved. Eleven of the seventeen congregations in the study had at least one minister per 100 attendees. The only congregations in the study that would be considered understaffed by current standards were church 8 (which has grown from 150 to 180 during the last decade) and the two predominately Black inner city congregations (churches 2 and 10). These two congregations have grown through the 200 barrier within the last decade. There was a moderate (but not statistically significant) positive correlation (p=.422) between the number of staff and the growth category of the congregation in the study.

There is nothing in the current study that would demand that the precedent literature is incorrect about the need of strong staffing ratios as an aid in congregational growth. All but three of the congregations in the study had staffing ratios within the generally accepted range, and two of those congregations were the inner city predominately black congregations. It is possible that needed staffing ratios may vary considerably in different cultural situations (such as the two predominately black inner city congregations). The needed staffing ratio may be at least partially culturally conditioned. This researcher concludes that inadequate staffing was not a major leadership obstacle to breaking the 200 barrier within the congregations studied. Adequate staffing may be a necessary, but in isolation insufficient factor for growth in middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States seeking to break the 200 barrier.

Since only three churches had lower than recommended staffing ratios, this study would need to be replicated with a larger sample of congregations in order to see if the

researcher's hypothesis concerning the cultural conditioning of staffing ratios is actually true. In addition, since only three congregations had lower than recommended staffing ratios, a replicated study with a broader sample of congregations might determine whether or not staffing ratios are, as the precedent literature indicates, a necessary factor in breaking the 200 barrier.

Until such studies are conducted, the best advice for staffing western American Churches of Christ that seek to break the 200 barrier is to develop a multiple-staff ministry with at least one staff member for every 125-150 attendees. As McIntosh mentions in the precedent literature, a church of 150-175 should begin to hire additional staff beyond the single pulpit minister (McIntosh 2000, 42). Staff should be added to enable the church to grow to the next level rather than waiting to add staff to serve the church once it arrives at the next level. Just as few congregations can grow to 125-150 in attendance without hiring a minister, so few will grow to 250-300 in attendance without first hiring a second staff minister prior to breaking the 200 barrier.

Minister Tenure

The tenure of the current pulpit minister had a much stronger relationship to growth through the 200 barrier than the ratio of ministers to attendees (Tables 1 and 2). The congregations in decline had a mean tenure of only five years for their pulpit minister (the maximum was twelve years). Churches in growth categories 6 and 7 (churches that have broken the 200 barrier during the last decade) had a mean tenure of 21 years. This finding suggests that the length of the relationship of the primary minister with the congregants may be of greater importance in breaking the 200 barrier than the ratio of ministry staff to worship attendance. A long tenure gives the pulpit minister the opportunity to develop relationships that engender trust. That earned trust may help the pulpit minister successfully

inculcate his vision of the church to the attendees. Over time, the congregation begins to take on more of the values and personality of the pulpit minister. The minimum tenure of a pulpit minister in a division Alpha congregation (one that has broken the 200 barrier in the last decade) from the study was fifteen years. This may indicate that the length of ministerial leadership was more important than the breadth of leadership in breaking the 200 barrier.

Ministry Emphasis

The perceived role of the pulpit minister on the "outreach versus church nurture" continuum seemed to be only slightly different for churches in the different growth categories (Tables 3 and 4). Churches that had broken the 200 barrier during the last decade (division Alpha churches) reflected only a slightly higher score (indicating the perception that slightly more of the minister's work was with newcomers to the congregation) than churches in the more stable categories (division Beta churches). The greatest differences were not between the division Alpha and Beta churches, but between the division Beta and Gamma churches. The mean score for the pulpit ministers on outreach was higher than the mean score of the secondary or tertiary ministers. This indicated a perception of greater outreach ministry being done by the pulpit minister than the other staff members. The statistics do not indicate that the perceived emphasis of the pulpit minister in outreach is a strong factor in a congregation breaking the 200 barrier.

Secretarial Staffing

The weekly hours of paid secretarial staffing varied as much as any variable in the study (Table 5). Eight (nearly half) of the churches studied had no paid secretarial help during 1992. Of the nine churches reporting paid secretarial help in 1992, the work ranged

from 2 to 40 hours per week. Four congregations reported no paid secretarial help in 2002, including two congregations that had broken the 200 barrier during the last decade (churches 2 and 10: these are predominately black, inner city churches).

There was actually a negative correlation (p=-.317) between the number of paid secretarial hours in 2002 and the category of church growth (Table 5). This surprising statistic might have any number of explanations. It is possible that, as a group, leaders in middle-sized western American Churches of Christ do not know how to make effective use of secretarial help in the middle-sized congregation. Most secretarial positions in middle-sized churches are part-time positions. It is possible that the part-time nature of the position has allowed for less than professional development of administrative talent. The researcher has noted that secretaries of middle-sized congregations have developed vastly differing job responsibilities. It is possible that part-time secretaries in middle-sized congregations find their role in transition or their work undefined: They do more than "run the bulletin" (as in a small church), yet they are not yet "office managers" (as in a large congregation). It is also possible that the ministers in the middle-sized churches have a difficult time delegating work to a part-time secretary, so the secretary develops a role as "data manager" without adequately conveying that data to those involved in meaningful ministry. In such cases the secretary becomes a record keeper rather than an enabler of ministry.

Of the nine congregations that increased their paid secretarial hours per 100 attendees between 1992 and 2002 (Table 5), only three of the congregations were growing (all in growth category five). The four congregations with the highest number of secretarial hours per 100 attendees (Table 5) were all category 2 churches in numerical decline.

One must not assume that a significant amount of secretarial work causes church decline. Correlation is not a proof of causality. The program staff minister generally needs

more secretarial staffing than the ministry generalist who emphasizes pastoral care (McIntosh 2000, 43). The low level and varied use of secretarial staffing in middle-sized congregations may be an indication of their transition from pastoral to program congregations. Lyle Schaller calls these congregations in transition awkward size churches (Schaller 1985, 8).

Middle-sized churches would do well to evaluate their use of secretarial help through the use of thoughtfully constructed job descriptions and regular work analyses. The secretarial position can be seen as a church growth tool, not simply a church maintenance tool, if it is used properly.

Research Question 2: What Assimilation Strategies Were Implemented by Congregational Leaders?

It appears that many middle-sized congregations Churches of Christ in the western United States may in effect be "stretched single cell" congregations. The single cell congregation where everyone knows everyone else becomes difficult to maintain past 150 in attendance, although a number of congregations of 150-250 remain "stretched" pastoral churches (Gaede 2001, 28). The answer to new member assimilation in the middle-sized church is not to "stuff" another person or family into the stretched single cell, but to provide for the development of a multi-celled fellowship. This is accomplished, in part, through the intentional development of a large number of belonging groups.

Number of Assimilation Tools

Table 7 indicates that a large number of different assimilation tools may not be necessary for congregational growth through the 200 barrier. Churches that have broken the barrier within the last decade (Alpha division churches) had a mean of only 1.47 tools per 100 attendees, whereas Beta division churches had 2.25 tools per 100 attendees, and Gamma

churches had 2.34 tools per 100 attendees. "Assimilation tools" included the use of a church membership class, a seeker's class, assigned greeters, an organized way to respond to visitors, a "buddy system" for pairing new members with established members, a record system to "track" involvement of guests and new members, and an organized outreach program administered by either a staff minister or a volunteer. All the churches that broke the 200 barrier had an organized visitor follow-up program and a system of greeters in worship services among their four assimilation tools.

Growth and Belonging Groups

Whereas the number of assimilation tools was not particularly significant for congregational growth through the 200 barrier (Table 7), the number of belonging groups did prove to be a significant issue (Tables 8 and 9). Lyle Schaller observed that the middle-sized church often has an inadequate structure for new member assimilation and therefore a number of new members drop into a relatively inactive role a year or two after joining the church (Schaller 1985, 103-04).

The Number of Belonging Groups

The study divided belonging groups into both Bible class groups and non-Bible class groups. A "belonging group" was defined as a meeting of at least five church members occurring at least monthly on an ongoing basis. Table 9 indicates that there was not a significant difference in the number of Bible class groups between churches that broke the 200 barrier and those who did not (4.99 Bible class groups per 100 attendees for Alpha division churches; 4.88 for Beta division churches; 4.22 for Gamma division churches).

Tables 8 and 9 indicate that the Alpha division churches had more non-Bible class groups than the Beta and Gamma division churches (20.75 groups compared with 12.14 and

10.00 groups). Alpha division churches had a mean 12.94 belonging groups per 100 attendees, whereas Beta division churches had 11.15 groups per 100 attendees, and Gamma division congregations had 11.39 groups per 100 attendees. If the data from church 10 is deleted from the study (church 10 has shown numerous statistical anomalies), then the Alpha division churches had a mean 15.48 belonging groups per 100 in worship attendance. The churches growing through the 200 barrier "made room" for newcomers by continually adding additional belonging groups to their congregation's program of ministry.

The Importance of New Belonging Groups

The most important factor in the relationship of belonging groups to growth through the 200 barrier is the percentage of new groups found in the church (Tables 8 and 9). "New groups" were defined as groups that were begun within the last two years. Typically "new groups" have more "social room" for newcomers than well-established groups. Well-established groups tend to become entrenched in their relationships and are less receptive to newcomers. Table 9 indicates that 21.42% of the mean 34.25 belonging groups in Alpha division churches were established within the last two years. In contrast, only 12.11% of the mean 16.17 belonging groups were established within the last two years in Gamma division churches. The churches that broke the 200 barrier have established almost twice as many new belonging groups than the churches who are in numerical decline.

The congregation wishing to break the 200 barrier should continually add new belonging groups to the social fabric of its congregation. On the basis of this research it appears that a congregation should maintain a minimum of a dozen belonging groups for every 100 attendees. This figure includes Sunday School classes as belonging groups.

Win Arn suggests a ratio of 7 belonging groups for every 100 in worship attendance (Arn 1990, 25) and a ratio of one new group (less than 2 years old) for every five

groups in the congregation (Arn 1990, 31). This researcher's work suggests that an even higher ratio may be needed for growth in middle-sized western American Churches of Christ. It is unclear from Arn's book whether or not he includes Sunday Bible classes in his category of "small groups." If Sunday Bible classes are not included in his "small group" category, then Arn's ratios would approximate the findings of this research. The number of small groups is an important part of the assimilation process because many congregational relationships form in and are nurtured through belonging groups.

Friendships and New Member Retention

In Yeakley's study, 86% of those who dropped out of congregational life had three or fewer friends within the congregation (Yeakley, 1979, 54). Yeakley's research indicated that it may take as many as 6 or 7 friends for some newcomers to be socially stable within a congregation (Yeakley 1979, 54). The strong ratio of belonging groups in comparison to worship attendance allows newcomers more possible "points of entry" for building friendships within the local body of Christ. While the presence of many belonging groups does not guarantee relational success for the newcomer, it improves the chances that the newcomer will find a significant number of friendships within the congregation. Relational success for the newcomer is also dependent upon the welcoming attitudes of those who already make up the belonging groups within the church.

The Alpha division churches (minus church 10) had the highest percentage of new belonging groups in the study (Table 10; 29% of their groups were under two years old). In general, new groups tend to be more open to newcomers than long-standing groups. The congregation wishing to break the 200 barrier should therefore not only develop a significant number of groups, but insure that new groups are forming regularly as prime points of entry into the relationships within the congregation.

Middle-sized western American Churches of Christ appear to underutilize the two most obvious belonging groups for newcomers: the seeker's class and the church membership class (Table 6). Only five of the studied congregations used church membership classes, and only eight of the studied congregations used classes specifically geared for seekers. Given the availability of such social structures, newcomers are more likely to make friends with each other rather than with long-standing members who may already have their "quota" of church friendships.

Ministerial Leadership in Outreach and Assimilation

Three of the four congregations that broke the 200 barrier had a staff-led visitor follow-up program (Table 6). The growing middle-sized congregation cannot depend solely upon a staff minister for outreach and assimilation of new members. There is a limit to the number of newcomers the minister can assimilate within the middle-sized church. One of the marks of the transition from a pastoral to a program church in Rothauge's model is the emergence of church programs, rather than the newcomer's relationship with the minister, as the primary means of new member assimilation (Rothauge 1983, 23-30). There is a difference between a staff-led visitor follow-up program and a staff-centered visitor follow-up program. Churches in the study that broke the 200 barrier exhibited ministerial leadership in a visitor follow-up program, but this does not imply that the ministerial staff did all the work or centered the program upon their own personality and skills. What this research does suggest is that that minister's emphasis on outreach may be reflected by involvement by others in his congregation. The minister's leadership by example may encourage others to join in active outreach ministries.

Perceptions of Assimilation Ability

Table 12 measured the relationship between growth divisions and the perceived assimilation ability of the congregation. Although the Alpha division congregations (congregations that have broken the 200 barrier during the last decade) were second to the Beta division congregations on their perceived assimilation ability score, there may be an explanation why the Alpha division congregations did not perceive their assimilation ability as positively as the Beta division congregations. Since the Alpha division congregations have grown through the 200 barrier, they are likely to have a higher percentage of new members than the Beta division congregations. Members of the Alpha division congregations may sense that their assimilation abilities have been "stretched" by their growth, whereas members of the Beta division congregations, with fewer newcomers, do not feel that tension. Thus the members of Beta division congregations may feel that they do a better job of assimilation when in fact their assimilation structures have not been "stretched" as much as the assimilation structures of the Alpha division congregations.

There was a strong positive correlation ($p=.607$) between the perceived assimilation ability of a congregation and the number of its assimilation ministries (Tables 11 and 12). Church members may feel that having ministry structures designed for assimilation actually leads to better newcomer assimilation, whereas the research indicates that the number of assimilation mechanisms was not as important for actual assimilation as other factors.

Table 12 bears out that the Alpha division congregations, even with their growth, have more Bible class groups and more non-Bible class groups per 100 attendees in worship than do the Beta and Gamma division churches. It appears that the increased ratio of groups per 100 in attendance may be an intentional part of ministry in the Alpha division

congregations. If an increasing number of groups was not intentional and was unrelated to overall growth, then one might assume that a growing church would actually have a lower ratio of groups per 100 attendees as the overall attendance increased. It appears that the congregations that have recently broken the 200 barrier have developed strategies for increasing the number of groups by regularly beginning new groups.

This research suggests that churches wishing to break the 200 barrier intentionally begin new groups on a regular basis and increase the overall number of active belonging groups within the congregation. This research suggests that congregations have a minimum of twelve active belonging groups (including Bible classes) for every 100 members in worship attendance. This research also suggests that congregations wishing to break the 200 barrier intentionally structure new groups in such a way as to be attractive to the newcomers in the congregation.

Research Question 3: What Factors Are Characteristic of a Congregation's Self-Perception of Size and Function?

Congregations may not always "act" their size, but may "act" according to their perceived size. Table 14 explored the relationship between the three growth divisions and their perceptions of congregational size. The perception of congregational size appears to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Alpha division congregations had less of a perception of their church as a "small church" ten years ago than churches in the Beta and Gamma growth divisions. They have grown to become what they "saw" themselves as ten years ago. Perceptions of present congregational size appear to be self-fulfilling prophecies concerning the future size of the congregation. The minister should seek to help the congregation see itself as a larger, rather than smaller, congregation. This may be accomplished by regularly reminding the congregation of the various ministries it supports and staffs.

"Big Church" Thinking

Church leaders wishing to help their congregations break the 200 barrier should speak and act in such a way as to convey "big church" thinking to their congregants. This "big church thinking" is more than just casting a vision for the future. It also involves the avoidance of imaging the congregation as a "small church" in the present. Congregations tend to act in ways concurrent with their corporate thinking. Churches that consider themselves "just a small church" tend to make leadership decisions to confirm that self-perception. Middle-sized congregations that consider themselves a bigger congregation tend to make leadership decisions to grow.

It is possible that many of the pioneering members of the congregation tend to see their congregation as a "small church," and may wish for it to remain that way. Pioneering members may see newcomers as a threat, not only to their "power" in the congregation, but also to their "congregational culture." Many times the pioneering members of a congregation joined that congregation because they wanted a small church (a single-cell fellowship). Imaging the middle-sized congregation as a "larger church" threatens their values. Dudley believes that members of a small church cannot make a change in the size of their congregation without losing their motivation for belonging (Dudley 1978, 49-50). Such pioneering members may consciously or unconsciously work to keep a "small church" atmosphere in the congregation.

The minister may partially overcome such "small church thinking" by helping the pioneering members clarify their corporate values. The minister may ask, "What attracted you to this congregation? Why did you begin this church? What did you like about this congregation ten years ago?" If the congregational pioneers express values of closeness and fellowship, the minister may lead a discussion on how newcomers may also experience the

values so treasured by the pioneers. While the pioneers may be the last members of a congregation to open their fellowship circle to newcomers, they may come to see the importance of letting newcomers experience those same values—albeit, in another fellowship group. The minister may lead the pioneering members to "grant permission" for the "new folks" to develop fellowship groups, and thereby expand the corporate thinking beyond the single-cell "small church" mentality.

Relationships between Congregational Self-Perceptions and Organizational Factors

Table 16 explored the relationships between congregational self-perceptions and selected organizational factors. Alpha division congregations had lower "small church" self-perception scores than the Beta or Gamma division congregations. There was not a significant difference between the Alpha and Beta division congregations in the number of congregational staff that served the congregation a decade ago. In this study there was not a significant difference in staffing ratios among the churches in comparison with their "small church" self-perceptions. However, all but three congregations in this study appeared adequately staffed, and two of the three understaffed congregations were the predominately black inner city churches that may represent different cultural expectations for ministry. It is the opinion of the researcher that a broader replication of this study might find a stronger relationship between staffing levels and growth through the 200 barrier as more congregations were studied. Under-staffing may be contributing to the 200 barrier in certain middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States that have unusually high members-to-staff ratios. This would be particularly true of congregations of 160-240 in attendance but with only a single staff minister. Only one church in this study had a solitary minister in 2002, and this church had declined.

The Alpha churches which scored lowest on "small church self-perceptions in 1992" had a mean 13.75 hours of secretarial work in 1992 (Table 16). Gamma division churches (which have declined from a larger size) had a mean 14.93 hours of secretarial work in 1992. The Beta division churches (which have been relatively stable near the 200 barrier during the last decade) recorded a mean of only 1.55 hours of paid secretarial work per week in 1992. Eight of the congregations in the study (Table 15) reported no paid secretarial hours in 1992, including two of the Alpha division congregations that have broken the 200 barrier in the last decade (these are the two predominately black inner city congregations). If these two inner city congregations are taken out of the data, the remaining two congregations that broke the 200 barrier had a mean of 27.50 hours of weekly secretarial work in 1992. This would indicate a relationship between a self-perception as a "small church" and the number of secretarial hours from a decade ago. Churches with more secretarial staff hours tend to see themselves less as a "small church."

Although the study reported a negative correlation between the number of hours of paid secretarial work (both in 1992 and 2002) and congregational growth (Table 5), the researcher questions if there is a causative nature to the correlation. It is the opinion of the researcher that more study should be done on this relationship before devaluing the work of the paid secretaries in middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States. It is possible that secretaries have not been trained to function well in areas of outreach (It is possible that secretarial work focuses primarily on maintenance of church ministries rather than outreach). It is also possible that secretaries are producing the proper informational tools needed for congregational growth but these tools are being underutilized or improperly utilized by staff and volunteers for church growth to occur. It is also possible that ministers in these congregations have not learned how to best work with the secretarial help available.

More study would be needed to confirm or deny the reliability of these observations concerning the state of secretarial staffing in middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States.

Research Question 4: What Are the Characteristics of Belonging Groups?

The middle-sized church often has an inadequate system for new member assimilation and thus an excessive number of new members drop into a relatively inactive role within a year or two after joining the church (Schaller 1985, 103-4). Although Rainer found the Sunday School the best tool for successful assimilation (Rainer 1999, 33), this research did not find a tremendous difference in the number of Bible class groups per 100 attendees in the various divisions of growth. Alpha division congregations had a mean of 5.49 Bible classes per 100 attendees, Beta division congregations had a mean of 4.88 Bible classes per 100 attendees, and Gamma division congregations had a mean of 4.22 Bible classes per 100 attendees (Table 12). Although the congregations growing through the 200 barrier had more Bible classes per 100 attendees than the stable and declining congregations, the differences do not appear significant. There was only a weak positive correlation ($p=.168$) between the number of Bible classes per 100 attendees and the growth categories of the churches in the research.

It is possible that successful assimilation may depend upon more than just a prescribed number of Bible classes being available, although a minimum number of classes may be needed for successful assimilation of new members. It is possible that successful assimilation through Bible classes may be more dependent upon the attitudes of the class leaders and members than the actual number of classes offered. This is an area that needs additional study.

The number of non-Bible class groups also differed among the growth divisions of congregations in the study. Alpha division congregations had a mean 7.96 non-class groups per 100 attendees, Beta division congregations had a mean 6.34 non-class groups per 100 attendees, and Gamma division congregations had a mean 7.17 non-class groups per 100 attendees (Table 12). The surprisingly high number of groups (7.17) in the Gamma division congregations may be explained if these declining congregations kept many of their social structures even though their overall attendance declined. Overall there was a strong correlation (p=.506; significant at the 0.05 level) between the total number of groups in a congregation and the growth category of the church as defined in this study. It is possible that successful newcomer assimilation may depend more on the attitudes of the group leaders and members than simply the number of groups available. Church leaders should not only establish an adequate number of groups (according to this research at least twelve groups per 100 attendees in worship), but also work with congregational groups to establish a welcoming attitude toward newcomers. This study has discovered a moderately strong correlation (p=.459) between the number of new groups less than two years old and the congregational growth category as defined in this study. Church leaders of middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States should make the beginning of new groups a congregational priority.

Types of Non-Class Groups

Table 18 indicates that there was a moderately positive correlation (p=.332) between the number of home groups and the growth category of the church. Alpha division congregations had a mean 6.5 home groups each, whereas Beta congregations had a mean 4.14 home groups each. Similarly, there was a moderately positive correlation (p=.346) between the number of meal groups and the growth category of the congregation. Alpha

division congregations had a mean 2.5 meal groups per church, whereas Beta congregations had a mean 0.71 meal groups per church. Although these correlations are not statistically significant, they reinforce the general principle that congregations with more belonging groups tend to grow better near the 200 barrier than congregations with fewer belonging groups. This study suggests that it is the number of belonging groups, and not the particular type of group, that is of more importance to congregations seeking to break the 200 barrier.

Leadership and Gender Groups

Table 19 indicates an extremely weak correlation between the number of leadership meetings (p=.034) and the growth category of the congregation. This reinforces the above conclusion that it is not the particular type of belonging group, but the number of belonging groups (and the establishment of new belonging groups) that is more important for congregational growth at or near the 200 barrier.

Alpha division congregations (Table 20) had a mean 2.25 gender groups per congregation, Beta division congregations had a mean 1.71 gender groups per congregation, and Gamma division congregations had a mean 1.00 gender groups per congregation. Overall there was a moderate (but statistically insignificant) positive correlation (p=.368) between the number of gender meetings and the growth category of the congregation. This data confirms the general trend that Alpha division congregations tend to have more belonging groups. This reinforces the conclusion that it is not the particular type of belonging group, but the number of belonging groups (and the establishment of new belonging groups) that is the more important factor for congregational growth at or near the 200 barrier.

The development of new belonging groups is a task of church leadership. Although some groups may begin without the direct influence of the official church

leadership, few groups are likely to begin without at least the "blessing" (and usually the involvement) of the church leadership. Group development is as much an attitudinal task as an organizational task. Church leaders who cast a vision for new group development, equip the leaders of new groups, and encourage the leaders of new groups (both publicly and privately) are more likely to be successful than those who only make announcements, post "sign up sheets," and handle the development of groups administratively.

Research Question 5: What Leadership Factors Are Related to Growth?

Rothauge found that pastoral churches (typically 50-150 in worship attendance) tend to assimilate new members by their relationship with the minister (Rothauge 1983, 16-17). Program churches (typically 150-350 in worship attendance) assimilate new members by their involvement in one or more church programs (Rothauge 1983, 25-6). In the pastoral church the minister's personality may be more important than his ministry skills (McIntosh 1999, 60). In the program church the organizational skills of the minister may be more important than his personality in the assimilation of new members.

Tables 21 and 22 measured general tendencies toward a pastoral church mindset. This study found that the congregations in division Alpha had a mean pastoral church score (23.82) only slightly lower than congregations in the Beta division (24.34) and the Gamma division (24.63). In a similar way, Table 24 measured general tendencies toward a program church mentality. As expected, Alpha division congregations had the highest mean score of program church tendencies (22.82). Beta division congregations had a mean score of 21.60, and Gamma division congregations had a mean score of 21.20. Leaders of congregations nearing 200 in attendance should work to develop program church characteristics in their congregations.

Flexibility as a Key to Growth

Although the above scores of the various growth divisions fit the trends that were anticipated by the precedent literature for pastoral and program congregations, the differences are relatively slight. It is the opinion of the researcher that the congregations in the Alpha division congregations in the study may actually be "stretched pastoral churches." These congregations are likely still in transition between Rothauge's pastoral and program stages of congregational development. Although the Alpha division congregations have numerically surpassed the range given by Schaller for the 200 barrier (Schaller 185, 102), they may still exhibit some pastoral church tendencies. The transition from pastoral to program church is not accomplished immediately at a certain numerical level, but rather changes occur over time as the leadership and social structures of the congregation continue to evolve. If the leadership and social structures of the congregation are inflexible, the congregation may hit a "glass ceiling" of growth between 160-240 in worship attendance. It may be the flexibility of the congregational leadership and the ability of congregational social structures to evolve in light of changing congregational needs that are keys to breaking the 200 barrier.

Further research will be needed to ascertain if growth beyond the 200 barrier is indeed more a matter of flexible adaptation (and structural flexibility) than a matter of the particular social structures used by the congregation (the emphasis of this study). It is difficult to separate the two. The appropriate social structures are unlikely to develop apart from a flexible attitude embracing change. Yet a congregation can be open to structural change but ignorant of what changes are most likely to bring about growth. Rather than emphasizing the importance of attitudinal over structural change, it is the opinion of this researcher that congregations should first emphasize attitudinal change, and then emphasize

structural change. Rather than weighing the relative importance of attitudinal change and structural change, it is the opinion of this researcher that attitudinal change paves the way for structural change. It is not a matter of which tool to emphasize, but a matter of which tool to use first. Just as it is easier to start a screw by making a nail hole, it is easier to initiate congregational structural change by first working on congregational attitudes.

Mann argues that churches that change in size must change in form (Mann 1998, 1). This researcher believes that the change in form must precede the change in size, and the change in form (structure) must itself be preceded by changes in attitude.

Pastoral and Program Church
Characteristics Related to
Ministry Factors

Table 25 relates the correlations between various leadership factors and pastoral and program church characteristics. The strength of the positive and negative correlations listed in this table is reflective of their importance to the research relationships. Although a strong correlation does not prove causality, the indication of a strong relationship is still significant in social science research.

A Move toward Program Structures

A fairly strong (but not statistically significant at the 0.05 level) positive correlation (p=.471) existed between churches that had broken the 200 barrier and churches with program church characteristics. It is the opinion of the researcher that the positive correlation (p=.471) is indicative of congregations in transition between the pastoral and program models. Even though this statistic is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, this researcher considers it high enough to suggest that congregations wishing to break the 200 barrier should begin to reshape their self-perceptions and ministry structures according

to the program church model. The congregation must give up knowing everybody by name and having ready access to their minister at all times (Gaede 2001, 37). Newcomers are assimilated more through involvement in programs than through their relationship to the pulpit minister. The program church should also have a multi-staff ministry.

There was a statistically significant (at the 0.05 level) correlation (p=.510) between churches that had a outreach program that was minister led and the characteristics of a program church. Since the program church model appears foundational to breaking the 200 barrier, churches seeking to break the 200 barrier should consider having an outreach program that is staff led.

Ministerial Tenure

There was a strong negative correlation (p=-.540, significant at the 0.05 level) between the number of years of a minister's local ministry in a congregation and the characteristics of a pastoral church. Conversely, there was a moderate positive correlation (p=.303) between the number of years in a local ministry and the characteristics of a program church. These two statistics, taken together, indicate that the longer a minister is at a congregation the better the chance that he will enable the church to transition from the pastoral church model to the program church model. Typically early in a ministry in a middle-sized church the pulpit minister is seen as the "deliverer" of ministry to the church. This helps to build his credibility as a servant-leader. The longer a successful minister remains in the church, the more open the church is to follow his leadership, including his leadership in changing the ministry paradigm to the program church model. The mean tenure of ministry in the Alpha division congregations (churches that had broken the 200 barrier) was an astounding 21 years for the pulpit minister. It is the conclusion of this researcher that the pulpit ministers in the Alpha division congregations have been able to

keep the "feel" of close pastoral church relationships with the congregants while moving the structure of the congregation toward the program church model (hence the moderate correlation (p=.303) between the number of years of ministry and the characteristics of a program church).

Belonging Groups

There was a strong positive correlation (p=.592, significant at the 0.05 level) between the program church characteristics and the total number of belonging groups in a congregation. Since a program church structure appears to be foundational for breaking the 200 barrier, churches wishing to grow through the 200 barrier should continually seek to add new belonging groups and increase the total number of belonging groups in the congregation. New belonging groups are an imperative part of any strategy to break the 200 barrier. This study found that churches should have a minimum of a dozen groups per 100 worship attendees, and at least one in five of the groups should be "new" groups (established within the last two years).

Research Implications

The results of this study must now be applied to impact issues discussed in the precedent literature. The implications of this research may affect the theories and practices recommended in the precedent literature.

Staffing Ratios

This study indicated that staffing ratios for middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States may be viewed somewhat differently than the opinions that generally characterized the precedent literature. The precedent literature recommends a staff-to-attendance ratio of 1:100-150. Ellas found that growing churches averaged a ratio of 1:125,

whereas declining churches averaged a ratio of 1:200 (Ellas 1994, 42). Arn recommends a ratio of 1:150 (Arn 1987, 16), and McIntosh recommends a ratio of 1:125-150 (McIntosh 1999, 93).

Staffing Ratio Results

This study found only three congregations that might be "understaffed" according to the ratios given above. One of the "understaffed" congregations has an attendance of 180 and 1.25 staff members (a ratio of 1:144), or 0.69 staff per 100 in attendance. This congregation would be within the norms given by McIntosh and Arn, but outside the norms for growth given by Ellas. Yet this congregation was in growth category 5. While it has not yet broken the 200 barrier, it has grown from 150 a decade ago to 180 today while decreasing staff from 2.00 to 1.25. Clearly staff ratios are not the only predicator of church growth near the 200 barrier.

The other two "understaffed" congregations in the study were predominately black, inner city congregations. Both of these "understaffed" congregations have broken the 200 barrier within the last decade. Church 2 has grown from 135 to 250 in average attendance during the last decade. Church 2 has increased ministerial staffing from 0.50 to 1.30 during that decade of growth. A decade ago this congregation was growing with a staffing ratio of 1:270. Currently church 2 has 0.52 ministers per 100 attendees, or a staff to attendee ratio of 1:192. Church 10 has grown from 165 to 300 in average attendance during the last decade. Church 10 has increased ministerial staffing from 1.00 to 2.00 during that decade of growth. A decade ago this church was growing with a staffing ratio of 1:165. Currently church 10 has 0.67 ministers per 100 attendees, or a staff-to-attendee ratio of 1:150.

It is the opinion of this researcher that staffing ratios vary with cultural and demographic differences. The staffing ratios given by church growth experts should be seen as "averages" rather than "rules." It is likely that churches 2 and 10, as predominately black inner city congregations, need less ministerial staffing for growth than predominately white middle-class congregations (the norm of the other congregations in the study). It is therefore the opinion of this researcher that staffing ratios, though helpful in the study of the 200 barrier, must be interpreted in light of the cultural and demographic context of the congregation. The precedent literature did not suggest these differences.

**Staffing Ratios Are No
Guarantee of Growth**

Appropriate staffing ratios do not guarantee congregational growth through the 200 barrier. Table 2 indicated that Alpha division congregations (those that broke the 200 barrier) had a mean of 0.90 ministers per 100 attendees. If churches 2 and 10 are taken out of the statistics, the Alpha division congregations had a mean 1.21 ministers per 100 attendees (far higher than the 0.67-1.00 ministers per 100 attendees recommended by church growth authorities). Division Beta congregations had a mean 1.03 ministers per 100 attendees, and division Gamma congregations had a significant mean 1.16 ministers per 100 attendees. The stable and declining churches sampled in the study do not appear to be suffering from understaffing. This study found that strong staffing ratios do not guarantee congregational growth through the 200 barrier.

A broader study (with more congregations included in the research sample) would be necessary to see if weak staffing ratios are a problem for some middle-sized congregations of Churches of Christ in the western United States. Weak staffing ratios may be hindering growth through the 200 barrier for some congregations in the population. It is

the conclusion of the researcher that adequate staffing ratios may be a necessary, but not a lone sufficient foundational element for congregations seeking to break the 200 barrier. "Adequate" staffing varies according to the cultural and demographic context of the congregation.

Ministerial Tenure

Although the value of a lengthy local church ministry is generally recognized in the precedent literature, this researcher did not find a lengthy tenure linked to the issue of the 200 barrier within the precedent literature. This study, however, indicates that a strong relationship exists between the length of service and a congregation's ability to break the 200 barrier.

Table 2 indicates that the mean tenure of the pulpit ministers in the Alpha division congregations (churches that have broken the 200 barrier) was a lengthy 21.00 years. In contrast, the mean tenure of a pulpit minister in the Beta division churches was only 6.14 years. A strong correlation ($p=.648$) existed between the years of ministry for the current pulpit minister and the attendance of the congregation in 2002 (the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level). This study found that growing churches tended to have longer ministerial tenures.

Ministry Emphasis

Table 4 indicates that growing churches had ministers who emphasized outreach functions slightly more than church nurture functions. The findings of this study failed to support McIntosh's postulate that ministry shifts from outreach to maintenance functions over time (McIntosh 2000, 20-25). McIntosh's "ministry fulcrum" postulates that early in a congregation's ministry the minister's emphasis is on outreach functions, whereas later in a

ministry the emphasis naturally shifts toward maintenance functions. Since the Alpha division congregations had such lengthy ministerial tenure (Table 2), yet their ministers scored higher on outreach than their peers in the Beta and Gamma division churches (Table 4), this study failed to support McIntosh's ministry postulate. Possibly the Alpha division congregations have been successful at breaking the 200 barrier, at least in part, due to the ability of their pulpit ministers to maintain a strong outreach emphasis in their local ministry. It is possible that the pulpit ministers of the Alpha division congregations have intentionally kept a focus on outreach. These research possibilities could be explored in a future study.

Belonging Groups

The study supports the findings from Flavil Yeakley, Win Arn, and others concerning the importance of friendship patterns and belonging groups to congregational growth. Yeakley studied the importance of personal relationships to the retention of new church members (Yeakley 1979, 55). Yeakley found that all fifty of the dropouts in his study had six or fewer friends in the congregation. He also found that 86% of the dropouts had three or fewer friends in the congregation (Yeakley 1979, 54). Arn suggested that a new member must make a minimum of seven new friends within six months in the new congregation in order to be "relationally stable" in that fellowship (Arn 1987, 23). Friendships within the congregation are nurtured by participation in belonging groups. Arn suggested that churches have at least 7 belonging groups per 100 worship attendees (Arn 1987, 25). If the mean of 4.67 Bible classes per 100 in worship attendance from this current study is added to Arn's suggested 7 belonging groups, the figure approximates the 12 belonging groups suggested by this study per 100 in worship attendance. (Table 9 indicates that Alpha division congregations had a mean of 12.94 groups per 100, Beta division

congregations had a mean of 11.15 groups per 100, and Gamma division congregations had a mean of 11.39 groups per 100).

This study also supports the findings of Win Arn concerning the importance of the establishment of new belonging groups. Arn suggests (Arn 1987, 29) that at least 20% of a congregation's belonging groups be "new" groups (established within the last two years). It is assumed that new groups are more likely to be "open" to newcomers. This study found that the Alpha division churches, minus church 10, had a mean 29% of their groups established within the last two years. The more stable Beta division congregations (churches thought to still be dealing with issues of the 200 barrier) had a mean 21.74% of their belonging groups established within the last two years. The Gamma division congregations had only 12.11% of their groups established within the last two years. These findings are concurrent with Arn's emphasis on the importance of establishing new groups for congregational growth.

Congregational Self-Perceptions

Lyle Schaller identified a tendency for middle-sized congregations to perceive themselves as small congregations (Schaller 1985, 90). The "small church" image is self-perpetuated, according to Schaller, through "modest expectations based up a perception of inadequate resources and limited potential" (Schaller 1985, 88). Wagner agrees that the "small church" perception is not so much the result of numbers as it is a state of mind (Wagner 1998, 29). This study confirms the power of "small church" self-perceptions as a predictor of non-growth. Table 16 confirms that the mean of six questions on survey "B" meant to measure indirectly the "small church self-perceptions from 1992" was similar for churches in each growth division (2.99 for Alpha division congregations, 2.90 for Beta division congregations, and 3.04 for Gamma division congregations). This implies that the

social structures in 1992 were similar for congregations in all three growth divisions in the study. Yet the growth divisions varied more widely on question 1 ("In 1992 our congregation perceived itself as a 'small church'"). Alpha division congregations scored only 3.00, Beta division congregations scored 3.20, and Gamma division congregations scored 3.65. This indicates that "small church" self-perceptions may be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Churches tend to "behave as they believe." This research supports Schaller's findings that a church possessing "modest expectations based on a perception of inadequate resources and limited potential" (Schaller 1985, 88) is less likely to grow.

Pastoral and Program Church Tendencies

This study found the differences in the pastoral and program church from Rothauge's model related to growth through the 200 barrier. Rothauges predicted of the pastor church (Rothauge 1983, 16): "The leadership required is predominately pastoral because there are so many relationships to watch over in this very large family . . . . If this congregation becomes larger in size, the internal dynamics will change because it will no longer be possible to operate as a super-family with a 'big daddy' (pastor)." Mann indicated that churches that change in size must also change in form (Mann 1998, 1).

Alpha division congregations scored a mean 23.82 on pastoral church tendencies, whereas Beta division congregations scored a mean 24.34 and Gamma division congregations scored an even higher 24.63 (Table 22). Conversely, Alpha division congregations scored a mean 22.82 on program church tendencies, Beta division congregations scored a mean 21.60, and Gamma division churches scored a mean 21.20 (Table 24). The churches that broke the 200 barrier had the lowest scores of pastoral church tendencies and highest scores of program church tendencies (the pastoral tendencies and program tendencies scores are not to be related to each other).

Research Applications

There were 160 congregations of Churches of Christ in the western United States that were identified as the research sample (congregations in the sample had between 160-240 in worship attendance sometime within the last decade). It is assumed that these congregations have dealt with issues of the 200 barrier. The results of this research have direct application to the congregations in this sample that still have worship attendances in the 160-240 range (the Beta division congregations).

The 200 barrier is a "glass ceiling" that prohibits further congregational growth due to the limiting factors of congregational attitudes, leadership factors, and static social structures. Typically congregations reach this "glass ceiling" (or numerical plateau) at between 160-240 in worship attendance.

In light of the precedent literature and the results of this study, it is the view of the researcher that any of at least seven factors may be limiting growth at or near the 200 barrier:

1. "Small church" self-perceptions (a self-fulfilling prophecy)

2. A lack of vision for the future growth of the church

3. Inadequate ministerial staffing

4. Short ministerial tenure

5. Too few belonging groups for social assimilation

6. Too few "new" belonging groups (under two years old)

7. Pastoral church structures predominate over program church structures

Growth beyond the 200 barrier requires correctly diagnosing and correcting the "bottleneck" factors that are limiting further growth. This list of seven limiting factors does not consider

any unique internal factors in the congregation or the community that may be limiting growth.

"Small Church" Self-Perceptions

When the leadership or a majority of the congregation hold to "small church" self-perceptions, growth through the 200 barrier is almost impossible. This self-imposed attitudinal limit may or may not be a conscious choice to limit the growth of the church. Some members, especially pioneering members, may value the "closeness" of the small church and are fearful that growth will destroy one of their most important values. Other members may see the church with limited resources and potential (Schaller 1985, 88).

The "fear factor" may be lessened by bringing it out into the open and discussing it (although some of these discussions may best be held privately in small groups). Fears that are named and described are usually lessened. Pioneering members may be reassured that the values that caused them to join the church will be honored and maintained, even as the church grows. Pioneers may not be as accepting of new people in "their" group, but may be accepting of "allowing" new people in the church if they join other groups. Pioneers may also be encouraged to share their values of close, intimate relationships with the newcomers in the congregation.

The attitude that "we are just a small church" may be equally difficult to combat. Schaller considers a poor self-image one of the most widely-shared congregational traits of the middle-sized church (Schaller 1985, 8). Leaders need to remind the membership of what the church is doing (regularly discuss programs and ministries supported by the church). It is possible that member's "small church" perceptions may also stem from feelings of personal inadequacy that have been projected upon the church as a whole. Christianity involves the healing of the whole person; ministry includes lifting people with good news of

Jesus Christ. Christ accepts us where we are but lifts us to new heights of personal growth. Lifting the self-image of congregants may help lift the self-image of the congregation.

A Lack of Vision for the Future of the Church

Pessimism is a self-fulfilling prophecy. A lack of vision for the future of a congregation will limit congregational growth. We tend to "behave as we believe." Churches that focus on their vision are more likely to be successful because they tend to be more people-centered (Barna 1996, 13). A people-centered congregation is more likely to fulfill God's vision for the congregation.

Congregational vision arises from the leadership and must be communicated by the leadership to the congregation. If the congregation lacks a vision of a preferable future, the leadership should ask themselves if they have a vision of God's will to be worked out within the congregation. If the leaders have no vision of God's will for the future of the congregation, it is assumed that the congregation as a whole will have no unified vision. Without adequate vision, ministry tends to deteriorate toward a focus on maintenance functions rather than outreach.

Inadequate Ministerial Staffing

Although the current study did not find inadequate ministerial staffing as a significant problem in the congregations in the study, both the precedent literature and the researcher's observation indicate that inadequate ministerial staffing is a limiting factor in the growth of some congregations near the 200 barrier. The problem of inadequate ministerial staffing is often unidentified in the middle-sized church. Members may consider that things are "just fine" if their own needs are being met. They may fail to notice that many newcomers are not assimilated into the congregation and tend to drop out into

inactivity. They may fail to notice that the church is not growing through the 200 barrier. They may fail to notice that the minister spends more time on congregational nurture than on outreach activities. Many ministers of middle-sized churches of 160-240 tend to experience a high level of frustration, fatigue, and guilt in their ministry (Schaller 1985, 8). The solitary minister in a middle-sized congregation is often painfully aware of the need for additional staff long before the congregation senses the need for additional ministerial staff.

The minister (and the broader leadership) of the middle-sized congregation may need months to plant the seed and cast the vision toward what God could do in the congregation through additional staffing. Since staffing is a significant budget item, the middle-sized congregation with limited financial resources will need to plan ahead for the addition of staff members.

Short Ministerial Tenure

All of the Alpha division congregations (churches that broke the 200 barrier) had long ministerial tenures. This study found ministerial tenure to be more important than the ratio of ministers to attendees in predicting growth through the 200 barrier. The pulpit minister must earn the love and trust of the congregation over time in order to incorporate significant successful changes to the church. It may be possible that the ministers of the Alpha division congregations in the study have been able to retain some of the non-limiting characteristics of the pastoral church while moving the congregation toward the program church model.

Short ministerial tenures may be caused by inadequate financial compensation, ministerial dissatisfaction with the congregation, congregational dissatisfaction with the minister, or a host of personal factors. A ministerial committee or ministerial advocate on the board of elders may help remedy some of the root causes of a short ministerial tenure. It

is often the disposition of the minister toward a lengthy tenure with the congregation that best insures that a lengthy ministerial tenure ensues. Congregations may affect, but cannot control, the minister's disposition toward a lengthy tenure.

Too Few Belonging Groups

This study has shown (Tables 8 and 9) that congregations that have broken the 200 barrier tend to have more belonging groups than the other congregations in the study. From this research and the precedent literature it appears that congregations should develop at least twelve belonging groups for every 100 attendees in worship. This recommendation of a dozen groups per 100 attendees includes Sunday Bible classes as well as many types of social and task groups. The types of groups organized did not appear to be as critical as the number of the groups organized.

Group development must be a congregational priority rather than just an individual minister's task. If a congregation of 200 attendees needs at least 24 groups, it is impossible for one minister to oversee the development and support of that many groups. The development and maintenance of congregational groups is a time consuming task that must be successfully delegated to a number of trusted congregational leaders.

Too Few "New" Groups

This research concurs with Win Arn (1987, 31) that at least one of five congregational groups should be "new" groups (formed within the last two years). Newer groups are generally more open to new participants than long-established groups. Dividing older groups (and sending their experienced leaders to start new groups) has the advantage of allowing the church to enjoy experienced leaders who can transfer the values of the

congregation to newer groups. Yet many members of successful groups find group division difficult and may resist the efforts of those who would "spoil their party."

Many congregations find it easier to begin new groups with people relatively new to the congregation. Newer people are generally more open to making new acquaintances in the congregation than those who already have their "social connections" filled. Leadership training for these groups may be a time consuming task for the church leadership; training responsibilities should be shared by a number of leaders in the congregation. New group leaders must be taught (both by word and by example) the values of the church in order for the new groups to be a successful "fit" in the local congregation. The training of new group leaders may also present the opportunity for the congregational leaders to inculcate certain new, but desirable values, into those who are ready to serve as group leaders.

Pastoral and Program Church Structures

This study has suggested that congregations at or near the 200 barrier often have organizational structures resembling both the pastoral and program church models. The transition from pastoral to program church structures may involve a gradual change that includes the temporary retention of some positive elements of the pastoral church even as the congregation surpasses the 200 barrier. However, a congregation that is "stuck" in the pastoral model is unlikely to break the 200 barrier.

Pastoral churches tend to have one large fellowship group. Everybody knows everybody else by name. The minister is the "center of the wheel." The minister is often at almost every congregational event. The minister knows about the pastoral needs of each member and "carries the church in his head." Pastoral care is delivered almost solely by the minister. New members are usually assimilated into the congregation by their relationship

with the minister. Generally there is only one paid minister. Second staff members, if present, are usually part-time.

Program churches have multiple fellowship groups. Usually there are two or more staff members. Pastoral care is delivered by a team of trained volunteers in addition to the work of the ministry staff. Administration is a major part of the staff's work; administrative abilities are as important as the minister's personality. The church is known for the quality and the quantity of its programs. Newcomers are assimilated through involvement in one or more church programs.

Congregations that are "stuck" in the pastoral model are unlikely to break the 200 barrier. If pastoral church characteristics predominate over program church characteristics, the church leadership needs to gently begin the process of change that will lead to organizational structures more in line with the program church model.

Congregational Triage

The researcher suggests that a diagnostic instrument be designed to help identify which of the seven limiting factors may be contributing to the 200 barrier in a particular congregation. The researcher suggests that in many cases the 200 barrier may be caused by more than one factor or by a group of related factors. Church leaders should identify which of the limiting factors is causing the greatest hindrance to growth and attempt to remedy that factor first. The aim of the process is to return the church to "health" as quickly as possible. A "triage" process could help identify the most critical limiting factor and help the congregation address it as a top-priority item.

None of these seven factors is easy to remedy. Small church self-perceptions and a lack of vision for the growth are attitudinal changes that may begin in the leadership but must permeate the congregation for their full effect. These attitudinal changes may take

years to effect. Inadequate ministerial staffing or short ministry tenure (if due to finances) may involve the need for additional financial resources and thus be difficult to solve immediately. The establishment of new belonging groups may be perceived as a threat to the current social structures (and power structures) of a middle-sized congregation. A greater ministerial emphasis on outreach may leave some members feeling that their own needs have been neglected. Likewise, moving from the pastoral church model to the program church model may leave members feeling neglected by their minister.

If the church leadership as a whole dedicates itself to making the transitions needed to break the 200 barrier, the church will usually follow. Since no congregation rises above its leadership, the leadership of the congregation must be both patient and persistent in implementing needed change. The rationale for change should be explained to the congregation prior to the changes being implemented. The congregation should be given an opportunity to consent to major changes before they are implement. A unified and committed leadership will be better able to "sell" the majority of the congregation on the needed change.

The researcher acknowledges that there may be many other factors contributing to congregational growth or decline that are not associated with the seven limiting factors of the 200 barrier.

Recommendations for Further Research

This researcher has already recommended that a replication of the current study involve at least twice as many congregations as the seventeen churches involved in the current study. The researcher identified 160 congregations in the research sample of the population that were between 160-240 in average attendance at some time during the last decade.

Similar studies might also be conducted in Churches of Christ in other regions of the country, or in congregations outside the United States of America. The western United States was chosen as the region of study partially because it is largely a mission area for Churches of Christ. It was the opinion of the researcher that the results of the study would be influenced less by transfer growth between congregations in a mission area where there are fewer congregations of Churches of Christ.

Similar studies might also be done in other faith fellowships. It is the view of the researcher that the 200 barrier is a sociological problem that is not significantly influenced by the varying doctrinal views of the fellowships or denominations of Christendom. Although the results of this study cannot be generalized to other faith fellowships, it is the hypothesis of the researcher that the results of a similar study in other faith groups would be similar, although not identical, to the results of this study.

Staffing Issues

Additional studies could be conducted on the cultural and demographic components of staffing ratios. The current study appears to indicate that appropriate staffing ratios may be culturally and demographically influenced. Churches 2 and 10 in the study are predominately black, inner city congregations. These congregations have grown through the 200 barrier while maintaining a low ratio of ministers to worship attendees. The researcher hypothesized that appropriate staffing ratios may be affected by differing cultural and demographic circumstances. A study could be conducted to examine the staffing ratios of congregations in various cultural, economic, regional, denominational, and demographic situations.

The current research did not study the relationship between a lengthy tenure of the secondary or tertiary ministers of middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United

States with the congregation's ability to break the 200 barrier. This research found that a lengthy tenure for the pulpit minister had a strong relationship with congregational growth through the 200 barrier. Future studies could explore any relationship between ministry tenure for the secondary or tertiary ministers and congregational growth through the 200 barrier.

Attitudes and Social Structures in New Member Assimilation

The current study examined the relationship of various social structures (belonging groups) to congregational growth through the 200 barrier. A future study could examine how attitudes of congregants affect new member assimilation. The flexibility (openness to new congregational structures) and social openness (receptivity to new congregational friendships) of current members could be compared between congregations of various growth categories at or near the 200 barrier. The leadership factors that may have influenced these attitudes could be studied.

The Role of Vision in Breaking the 200 Barrier

The current study examined the role of self-perceptions of congregational size as a limiting factor in congregational growth at or near the 200 barrier. Survey "B" helped measure self-perceptions of congregational size from a decade ago as well as the present. Vision is a perception of the future. Future research could be done of the effect of vision on breaking the 200 barrier. Many studies have been done on the role of vision in congregational growth, but research needs to be done on how vision, and visionary leadership, affects growth through the 200 barrier in middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States. Similar studies could also be made of the role of vision in breaking the 200 barrier in other fellowships and regions.

The Secretarial Role in the Middle-Sized Church

The current study found that the weekly hours of paid secretarial staffing in the middle-sized church varied as much as any variable in the study. There was actually a moderate (but not statistically significant) negative correlation ($p=-.317$) between the number of paid secretarial hours in 2002 and the category of church growth (Causality should not necessarily be inferred from a correlation). The research has noted the varied role of the church secretaries in middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States. It is the hypothesis of this researcher that the secretarial role in the middle-sized church may be ill-defined or in transition as the church changes in size. It appears that the role of a part-time secretary in a small church is to "run the bulletin," whereas the role of the full-time role of the secretary in the larger congregation is to serve as the office manager. Typically middle-sized congregations have part-time secretaries. More research needs to be done on the use of part-time secretarial help in middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States. This study could be related to congregational growth through the 200 barrier.

The Outreach Emphasis of the Pulpit Minister in Relation to Congregational Growth

The findings of this study failed to support McIntosh's postulate that ministry shifts from outreach to maintenance functions as the congregation grows (McIntosh 2000, 20-25). A future study could examine how pulpit ministers in churches growing through the 200 barrier were able to maintain an emphasis on outreach while serving the increasing needs of a growing congregation. The future studies might relate outreach emphasis to ministerial tenure, congregational leadership structures, and systems for the delivery of congregational pastoral care.

A Closing Word

The Spirit of God is not limited by Social Science research. Churches grow and decline for a multitude of reasons that cannot be delineated through research. God is still the head of the church; the Spirit still acts independently of man. The current study has endeavored to better understand recent growth of middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States through the 200 barrier. This study has concerned how congregational leadership factors may be related to growth. This study does not mean to imply that all congregational growth is explained through the use of the tools of social science research.

This researcher has found this study to be very applicable to the situation in his congregation (a congregation that has been in the 160-240 range of average worship attendance for the last several years). The social principles discovered during the process of this research have given the researcher insights on what limiting factors may be affecting the growth of his congregation near the 200 barrier. These factors will now be discussed with the congregational leadership in the hopes of beginning to remedy limiting factors that may be interfering with further congregational growth.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY "A"

Appendix 1 consists of the survey that was mailed to the pulpit ministers or other

congregational respondent participating in the research of their congregations. This survey

was developed to garner internal statistical demographic information about each

congregation participating in the study.

Survey "A"

(To be completed by the Pulpit Minister)

By completing this form I grant my permission for Mark McLean to use the results of this survey in his research. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my congregation will be published as a part of this research.

Church _____ city_____state_____

Respondent's name_____email_____

Check here if you would like an abstract of the completed study by email:_____

If exact numbers are unavailable, please estimate in your responses:

	Year	1992	2002
Average Sunday morning worship attendance		_____	_____
Number of paid ministry staff (not including secretaries) (Use 1.25, 1.5, 2.5, to express part-time paid positions.)		_____	_____
Number of HOURS of paid weekly secretarial work		_____	_____

How many pulpit ministers have served your church from 1992 through 2002?____

How many years has the present pulpit minister served in your congregation? ____

Our church currently uses the following assimilation tools…(check all that apply)

_____a "church membership" orientation class for newcomers

_____a "first principles" class for seekers or new believers

_____assigned greeters or ushers for Sunday morning worship

_____an organized way to acknowledge and respond to visitors

_____ a "buddy system" pairing new members with established members

_____ a record system to "track" the involvement of guests and new members

_____ an organized outreach program administered by a staff minister

_____ an organized outreach program administered by a volunteer

Examples of **belonging groups** are listed below. A group may be considered a "belonging group" if it meets as least once a month, has at least five participants, and includes a significant social dimension. Count the number of "belonging groups" in your congregation without consideration to the frequency of their meeting (whether once a week, twice a week, monthly, etc.). For example, a young adult's Bible class that meets BOTH on Sunday and Wednesday but contains basically the same people should be counted as only ONE belonging group. Be sure and include groups for children, teenagers, and adults. Groups should be counted if at least 50% of the members of the group are from your congregation or if all the leaders of the group are from your congregation.

To assist you in tabulating the number of belonging groups in your congregation, please use the following categories:

Number of belonging groups currently active in your congregation:

_____Bible classes (Sunday school, Wednesday night, etc.)

_____Home Bible study groups or "life" groups.

_____Breakfast, lunch, or supper groups (meet at least monthly)

_____Sports teams (50% or more of players from church)

_____Music groups

_____Youth ministry groups (are high school and jr. high activities separate?)

_____Elders and/or deacons meetings (if monthly with at least five participants)

_____Ministry task or committee meetings (if at least monthly)

_____Prayer groups

_____ Social groups: young adults fellowship group, senior saints, etc.

_____ Ladies' groups, men's accountability groups, etc.

_____ Other:_____

_____ **TOTAL "BELONGING GROUPS" IN YOUR CONGREGATION**

_____ Number of these groups that have begun in last two years.

Please return surveys within two weeks in the postage paid envelope to:

Mark McLean
Central Kitsap Church of Christ
P.O. Box 2495
Silverdale WA 98383-2495

Questions? Call (360) 692-4900

APPENDIX 2

SURVEY "B"

Appendix 2 contains survey "B." Survey "B" was administered to decade-long members of the researched congregations. The pulpit minister or other appropriate representative of the researched congregation administered the survey to at least ten decade-long members of his congregation. Survey "B" contains thirty-five Likert-response questions on both current and past small church perceptions, the current perceived assimilation ability of the church, and pastoral and program church characteristics. Survey "B" also asks congregants to rate their current paid ministers on an "outreach" vs. "church nurture" continuum.

Survey "B" (To be completed by decade-long church members)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the congregational leadership factors that assisted congregations of western American Churches of Christ to break the 200 barrier in attendance. This research is being conducted by Mark McLean for the purposes of dissertation research through the Ed.D. program in Christian Leadership at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will report on characteristics of your congregation during the last decade. Any information that you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported along with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Respond to each statement with your first impression or response. Some statements may seem similar; do not be bothered by any perception of redundancy. Do not compare different statements; let each statement stand alone. Your administrator will give you names of staff members for questions 37 and 38. Thank you for participating.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to the following statements about your church by circling your response as: **(5)** strongly agree; **(4)** agree; **(3)** neutral; **(2)** disagree; or **(1)** strongly disagree:

5 4 3 2 1 1. In 1992 our congregation perceived itself as a "small church."

5 4 3 2 1 2. In 2002 our congregation perceives itself as a "small church."

5 4 3 2 1 3. Our ability to assimilate new members is a strong asset in our church.

5 4 3 2 1 4. New people easily make friends in our church.

5 4 3 2 1 5. Friendship with our minister is "key" to assimilation in our church.

5 4 3 2 1 6. Involvement in ministry is "key" to social assimilation in our church.

5 4 3 2 1 7. I know the names of almost every member of our church.

5 4 3 2 1 8. Bringing in new people is a priority of our pulpit minister.

5 4 3 2 1 9. Ten years ago I knew almost everyone by name at church.

5 4 3 2 1 10. Most active members know the names of all the other active members.

5 4 3 2 1 11. We're just "one big family" at church.

5 4 3 2 1 12. We don't know the names of everyone at church anymore.

5 4 3 2 1 13. Ten years ago we were just a small church.

5 4 3 2 1 14. Our minister is involved in almost every church activity.

PLEASE TURN OVER FOR PAGE 2...

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to the following statements about your church by circling your response as: **(5)** strongly agree; **(4)** agree;

(3) neutral; **(2)** disagree; or **(1)** strongly disagree:

5 4 3 2 1 15. We're too big to be just "one big family" at church anymore.

5 4 3 2 1 16. Ten years ago we didn't need a picture directory; we knew each other.

5 4 3 2 1 17. Congregational survival is a significant, if unspoken, church issue.

5 4 3 2 1 18. New members are "plugged in" to a church program.

5 4 3 2 1 19. The minister is at almost every congregational function.

5 4 3 2 1 20. Most new members feel "at home" within six months in our church.

5 4 3 2 1 21. We see no need to consider additional paid staff in the near future.

5 4 3 2 1 22. In 1992 everyone in the church knew each other.

5 4 3 2 1 23. Few members drop out during their first year of church membership.

5 4 3 2 1 24. Our minister knows all the church members well.

5 4 3 2 1 25. A minister's administration abilities are very important to our church.

5 4 3 2 1 26. Over three-fourths of our members are involved in Sunday School.

5 4 3 2 1 27. In 1992 most members thought of us as "just a small church."

5 4 3 2 1 28. The minister's personality is more important than his ministry skills.

5 4 3 2 1 29. A paid full-time church secretary is not needed in our church.

5 4 3 2 1 30. Most new members easily fit into one or more church programs.

5 4 3 2 1 31. Ten years ago we were concerned with congregational survival.

5 4 3 2 1 32. Few new members leave our church unless they die or move away.

5 4 3 2 1 33. Our pulpit minister is readily available when I need him.

5 4 3 2 1 34. In our church everyone knows everyone else.

5 4 3 2 1 35. Our church is known for the quantity and quality of its programs.

Rank each paid staff member on the **"outreach"** (work with those not yet socially incorporated in the church) vs. **"church nurture"** (work with those socially incorporated in the church) continuum. Circle one number for each staff member:

Position:	**Outreach Ministry**		or	**Church Nurture Ministry**	
36. Staff # 1: Pulpit Minister	5	4	3	2	1
37. Staff #2:_____	5	4	3	2	1
38. Staff #3_____	5	4	3	2	1

Survey "B" Interpretation notes on Likert response scale questions:

Questions 1, 9, 13, 16, 22, 27, 31 test for "small church"self-perceptions from 1992

Questions 2, 7, 11, 17, 21, 29, 34 test for "small church" self-perceptions in 2002

Questions 3, 4, 8, 20, 23, 26, 32 test for current assimilation ability of the church

Questions 5, 10, 14, 19, 24, 28, 33 test for "pastoral church" characteristics

Questions 6, 12, 15, 18, 25, 30, 35 test for "program church" characteristics

(This page included only for your understanding of the survey. This page was not given to survey participants.)

APPENDIX 3

SURVEY EVALUATION

Appendix 3 aided in the field-testing of surveys "A" and "B" to help the

researcher evaluate the effectiveness of the surveys (see Appendixes 1 and 2 for surveys "A"

and "B"). A survey evaluation sheet was given to the members of the expert panel for use

with each of the surveys that they evaluate. This survey evaluation sheet was also given to

the members of the researcher's congregation who were involved in the field-testing of the

surveys. The researcher refined surveys "A" and "B" based upon input from the survey

evaluation forms.

Evaluation

For Field Testing

As an aid to the researcher please give your evaluation of the survey form which you have now completed. Your comments will assist in refining the design of the survey prior to its broad use.

1) Approximately how long did it take you to complete the instrument, exclusive of this evaluation form?
_____less than 10 minutes;   _____10-20 minutes;   _____more than 20 minutes

2) Were there any directions that were unclear to you?

_____

_____

_____

3) Were there any questions that were unclear to you (needed greater definition, etc.)?

_____

_____

_____

4) Given the nature of this research (leadership characteristics that help congregations break the two-hundred barrier), which questions would you have left out?

_____

5) Given the nature of this research, would you have added additional questions?

_____

6) Other comments:_____

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF CONGREGATONAL LEADERSHIP FACTORS AND GROWTH OF MIDDLE-SIZED CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES

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This dissertation examines the relationship between congregational growth through the 200 barrier in middle-sized Churches of Christ in the western United States and various leadership factors.

The 200 barrier is a "glass ceiling" of sociological factors that limits further congregational growth unless needed changes take place. The precedent literature in the field that applies to the 200 barrier includes studies in new member assimilation strategies, changing organizational structures, and changing congregational self-perceptions.

Two surveys were developed for congregations participating in the study. Survey "A" solicited internal congregational demographical information from the pulpit minister. Survey "B" solicited input from decade-long congregational members on the attitudes and structures of the congregation that may affect growth through the 200 barrier.

The bivariate correlation was used to identify the strength of the relationship between various pairs of data. Means and percentages were also used in the interpretation of data.

Seven "limiting factors" were discovered that may hinder a particular congregation's growth through the 200 barrier: "Small church" self-perceptions, a lack of

vision for the future, inadequate ministerial staffing, short ministerial tenure, too few belonging groups, too few "new" groups for new member assimilation, and "pastoral church structures" that predominate over "program church" structures.

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