

**A Survey of (Very) Small Congregations
Of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church**

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22 May 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not have been written if it were not for the help of several folks. I want to express thanks to the Pleasant Hill congregation (MY FAVORITE CHURCH IN THE WORLD!), the “laboratory” for my crazy ideas, Ms. Rebecca O’Bryan (THE ONLY PERSON IN THE WORLD WHO CAN READ MY WRITING ANYMORE!) for typing the report, the Lovely Ms. Irene Alexander (MY FAVORITE PERSON IN THE WORLD!), who provided me with hours of fun while we collated results of surveys, Rev. George Estes for “getting on board” and caring about our “little outposts,” and my reviewers: My colleague at Kentucky Wesleyan College, Dr. Yvonne Taylor, Rev. John Phelps, Mr. Kevin Beck, Rev. Bert Owen, Mr. Aaron Alexander (“a chip off the old block”), who was, as usual “merciless,” and Rev. Tom Campbell. Special thanks to Ms. Maria Egnatz for her kind comments. Of course, special thanks to the 111 church clerks who really made this all possible. You guys are my heroes! I’m one of ya! It is my hope that this report will indeed make a difference for the Kingdom!

You know, sometimes I drive from Kentucky Wesleyan College where I serve as professor, to the edge of Daviess County; just a few yards into McLean County. I make the trip just sit in the quiet of the sanctuary at Pleasant Hill. I seem to hear the echoes of the past; all of the preachers who have served at the pulpit, administered the sacraments, and loved...all of the children baptized into the Covenant in hopes of a decision for the Master...all of the folks who had an encounter with the One Who Knows Us Best But Loves Us Anyway...all of workers for the cause sent from this place...I think of all of the years; the first building going to the PCUSA in 1906, the move to Elba, the fact that Pleasant Hill is nearly two centuries old. I hear the echoes, and I am duly humbled.

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22 May 2004

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Many books dealing with small churches will toss out a membership figure of 200 as a downward starting point. Some writers, much more realistic concerning the church landscape in the U.S., set the beginning downward figure at 50.

Membership figures are of interest, of course. But, for this study, *attendance* figures form the basis of the data collected. In the present investigation, no church with an attendance greater than 50 was included. The smallest attendance was 5; the greatest 50. The mean (or average) attendance size in this study was 23. The mode (most occurring figure) was 25. The median (the attendance right in the middle of the list) was 20. It would be quite safe to say that we are dealing with a collection of quite small churches. This raises the immediate question: Why does this study of very small churches matter?

A “Bunch” of Small Congregations!

This study deals only with congregations of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (CPC). The basis of the study is surveys sent to approximately 400 church clerks in 400 congregations (actual 407). The rationale for conducting surveys of these congregations is that they are in a similar size category. According to page 21 of the *2003 Yearbook of the General Assembly*, there are 703 congregations in the U.S. If 400 congregations are, indeed, in this small church category, 57% of all Cumberland congregations are small -- mostly *very small*.

Referring to the same table in the *Yearbook*, it can be determined that there are 45,438 active members. If the ratio of attendees to active members represented by the congregation in which the author serves as minister rings true, average attendance stands at about 75% of average membership. If we say 80% of the active membership is a fairly accurate attendance figure, the average weekly U.S. attendance stands at 36,350. So, that said, let's assume the average weekly attendance in the U.S. is somewhere in the range of 36,400-45,400. The average attendance of churches in our study stands at 23. If there are 400 such churches, we can conclude that these congregations likely enjoy a weekly attendance of around of 9,200.

What's the bottom line? Folks in (very) small churches make up about one-fourth of all folks in CPC pews on any given week.

A Lot of Ministry

One-fourth of the church (remember we are talking about *attendance*) is found in (very) small congregations. Yet, these congregations represent about 6

out of every 10 congregations. Surely, this represents a considerable “amount” of ministry carried out by CP’s.

An important way to gauge ministry might be financial giving. Certainly, this is not an exact figure. But, if these small churches represent 25% of the membership, wouldn’t it stand to reason that they give around 25% of the funds for ministry? This means (referring to page 21 again) these churches quite possibly give over \$11,000,000 annually. Looking just at funding of OUO, these congregations likely contribute in excess of \$600,000.

Figures at a Glance

To truly comprehend all of this, it might be helpful to construct a table showing how things stand in the CPC in the U.S.

Table 1

	Total	Small Membership Churches
Congregations	703	400*
Attendance	40,894**	9,200*
Total Giving	45,827,998	11,456,999*
OUO*	2,437,515	609,379*

*Estimate

**Average of actual + 80% of actual

The Most Important Reason of All

All of the above makes a solid case to provide an answer to the question of why (very) small churches matter. To this could be added a net loss in 2003 of over 1,000 members globally, primarily in the U.S.

But, the *main reason* it matters has nothing to do with tables and percentages and dollars. The most important reason, plain and simple, is because we (all of us) are the Body of Christ. We all need each other. We are all a part of the ministry of the CPC.

Limitations of the Study

The goal of a study such as this is, of course, to say something. In this case, we desire to investigate certain beliefs, attitudes, and concerns held by session clerks of small (*always read small/very small*) congregations. Anything that is said in this context must be viewed in the light of possible limitations of this study. Some of these limitations are as follows:

1. The usefulness is limited to the extent that the participants did not understand the item rated.
2. The usefulness is limited in that not all participants rated the item correctly.
3. The usefulness is limited by the choice of items included.
4. The usefulness is limited in that qualitative analysis (dealing with open-ended responses) is exactly that-- *qualitative*.
5. The usefulness is limited by the type of quantitative analyses possible as well as the type of analyses chosen.
6. The usefulness is limited by possible calculation errors.
7. Naturally, the interpretation and application of results is open to debate.
8. Finally, the survey was mailed to the session clerk with directions for *only that person* to complete it.

How Was the Survey Designed?

On August 17, 2003, the author of this study met with two other small church ministers, a former General Assembly moderator and a representative of the Board of Missions for a roundtable discussion regarding the strengths and needs of small congregations.

The product of this discussion was a list of roundtable notes (see Appendix A). These notes provided the concerns/questions that became survey items. In constructing the survey, the author attempted to reflect the concerns/thoughts represented on the list as well as those not recorded but expressed at the roundtable. The survey attempts to “capture” the spirit of the discussion by including items expressed or items of considerable reflection.

The Survey

The survey used in this study can be found in Appendix B. The denominational Board of Missions mailed out 407 surveys. At the time of this report, 111 surveys had been returned representing 27% of those mailed. Ten surveys were judged to be unusable for a variety of reasons:

- 6 were completed incorrectly to a degree that virtually no data was usable.
- 2 surveys indicated an attendance of 60. The cut off point for this study was set at 50.
- 2 surveys were identified as being completed by ministers. It was asked that the survey be completed by the church clerk.

One hundred and one surveys were usable. Some had parts/items incomplete. Where possible, all or part of the survey was used. Seventy-six surveys included comments. All comments were read and analyzed.

Demographic Information

The mean attendance of the congregations in the study was found to be 23. The smallest congregation had an attendance of 5; the largest 50. Other measures of central tendency seem to indicate that the mean is an accurate reflection of size. Approximately 70% of congregations ranged from 12 to 35 in terms of attendance. Many congregations had no attendees under age 18. Overall, the average age of attendees under age 18 was about 3 2 years. About 60% of congregations had a children's Sunday School regularly of as needed..

Getting at the average age of attendees is a bit more complicated. The average (mean) age was about 55 1/2 years. The median age was 55. The mode was 60. Because the mode (most occurring age) was 60, and because of difficulty in determining from surveys if those under 18 were included in the clerk's appraisal of average age, it is my opinion that the adult composition of these congregations is probably somewhere between age 55 and 60, or perhaps older.

Results of the Survey

The reader is encouraged to review the survey in Appendix B. The results are presented as follows.

1. Survey items beginning with the "General Questions" section and the percent of respondents rating each item a 5 or 6 (agree and strongly agree) are presented. Beginning with the "Helpful Things" section, percentage reported shows which helpful things and concerns are rated as being the "most helpful" and the "biggest concern," respectively.
2. Data obtained by a correlation study presents information on items showing the greatest correlation (those judged to be "moderately" correlated the greatest correlation was 0.49).
3. Information from the open-ended items is presented. Review of the survey revealed at least 5 apparent "themes" representing common areas of concern expressed in responses.

1. Survey Items

The first 5 categories (A-E) below show the percent of respondents rating the item as a 5 or 6. (% rounded to whole numbers)

A: FIRST, SOME "GENERAL" QUESTIONS:

(55%) The most important issue for our congregation is survival.

- (92%) Our church is a place where people know they are loved.
- (67%) Our church is well known in the community.
- (48%) We have a clear sense of purpose/mission as a congregation.

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B: REGARDING THE PROGRAMMING/ OUTREACH OF OUR CONGREGATION:

- (58%) It is difficult to plan meaningful programs/activities due to the size of our congregation
- (50%) The key to growth/survival in our congregation is closely tied to the establishment/continuance of a children’s program.
- (35%) In ministering to our community, our congregation needs to place a special emphasis on ministry to older adults.
- (50%) In fulfilling our ministry, it would be helpful to have one special service or gift we could offer to our community than to simply focus on the need to “grow.”
- (29%) There is not enough “internal” ministry--programs, meetings, visitation, and activities--for those who currently attend our church.

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C: REGARDING LAY LEADERSHIP IN OUR CONGREGATION:

- (54%) It is difficult to find folks in our congregation willing to accept leadership positions.
- (83%) When someone does accept a position, such as elder, treasurer, group leader, etc., they tend to remain in that position for a long time.
- (34%) All in all, our congregation tends to decide things “by consensus” rather than by the decision of the session or a given committee.

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D: PASTORAL LEADERSHIP:

- (37%) Pastors of small/very small congregations tend to be more “preachers only” rather than providers of pastoral care.
- (54%) The greatest need we face as a congregation is securing and retaining quality pastoral leadership.
- (61%) It is very important for us to have a pastor who is Cumberland Presbyterian in belief and practice.
- (34%) We have often had to find preachers/pastors who are not Cumberland Presbyterians.
- (73%) Pastors of congregations the size of ours need to have a “special” calling/vision for ministry in small/very small congregations.

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E: PRESBYTERIAL AND DENOMINATIONAL INVOLVEMENT:

- (68%) The presbytery needs to give more time and effort to the recruiting, training and on-going education of small church pastors
- (74%) The future of small (5-30 attendance) congregations should be one of the main concerns of the denomination.
- (43%) Presbyterian/denominational requirements for ordination are unrealistic when it comes to securing leadership for congregations the size of ours.
- (72%) The presbytery/denomination needs to provide more help in pastoral placements and finding pastors willing to serve a very small congregation.

The next two categories (F & G) show the percent rating each item as their number 1 choice. (% rounded to whole numbers)

F: HELPFUL THINGS:

- (28%) Help on how to conduct a meaningful community outreach
- (28%) Ways to continue/restart children’s programs
- (18%) Conducting special outreach for older adults
- (11%) Special training for pastors of small/very small churches
- (16%) The formation of an association/fellowship of CP ministers serving congregations similar to ours in size.

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G: WHAT’S YOUR BIGGEST CONCERN?

- (18%) Programming for our church
- (29%) Effective lay leadership
- (48%) Pastoral leadership
- (5%) Presbyterian/denominational involvement

2. Correlation Study

A correlation study revealed several items that are moderately correlated. The meaning of this will be covered in more depth later. In general, when the first item or concern was rated highly, so was the other. In short, they “go together.” To avoid redundancy, the items are listed only once under the section, Making Sense of the Results, #2, Correlation.

3. Open-Ended Response

The open-ended responses are certainly of great interest. When these responses are taken one-by-one, much information can be gained. When they

are investigated using qualitative coding methods, common themes or patterns can be discerned. What follows are five common themes in the order of frequency along with representative comments. Theme 1 represents *at least 17* responses (17 out of 76 responses is a *very* significant theme, especially when responses were “unguided”. Theme 5 represents at least 3 responses (still judged a significant response).

Theme 1 - Pastors

- We need pastors or lay speakers . . . The denomination needs to provide benefits (insurance and retirement) for small church pastors . . . The Methodist (itinerant) system could serve as a model . . .
- Train pastors to be tentmakers. Funding a pastor drains our financial resources . . .
- We need a pastor “dedicated to the congregation, willing to be very active reaching the community, trained in working with children=s programs . . . (and) make most of their living on their own . . .”
- “A younger minister (living near the church) . . . could double attendance in a year . . .”
- “We’ve been seeking a minister for approximately 9 months. We have received a number of resumes but after contacting the person, they are not willing to move.
- Develop a ‘process or test’ so pastors could apply ‘previous experience’ towards ordination.
- “. . . Lessen some requirements for ordination for ministers outside the CPC.”
- “The small CP church’s greatest need is ordained CP preachers.”
- “Up-to-date and filtered list” of viable pastoral candidates is needed.
- “We need a young minister with a family.”

Theme 2 - Focus on Small Churches

- “The denomination and presbytery are very supportive and forward thinking in the mission field . . . but seem to disregard small congregations as being ‘on their own’. . . “
- Denomination and presbytery need to “validate the small church ministry that already exists . . .”
- “Show concern for older and smaller churches in the presbytery first before trying to build a new church near one that needs help.”
- “In addition to having a new church development board, we need a board dedicated to . . . needs of small congregations.”
- “. . . Need to place much more emphasis on small churches.”

Theme 3 - Programs

- “Give us information on what works in getting people to church who do

- not attend.”
- “We need seminars and workshops on outreach and programs for activities and re-establishing an active Sunday school program for all ages.”
- “Provide information or ‘tools’ to give ideas for children’s programs, community outreach, developing church leadership, etc.”
- “Encourage and train leaders on how to inspire individuals to turn their faith into actions and commitment.”
- “Help with a children’s program.”

Theme 4 - Children

- ‘A children’s ministry is not the key to church growth . . .’
- ‘Need ideas to get youth into the church.’
- ‘Help us find ways to attract young couples with children

Theme 5 - Organizing

- ‘Coordinate and/or organize small churches relatively close in proximity . . .’
- ‘Activities/conferences for small church session members.
- ‘It might be useful to create a newsletter for small churches to get ideas on how situations are handled (would be a support group).’

Three comments of current interest in the denomination are noted: Support for PAS; help currently being given in establishing a yoked pastorate with a larger church; and a pilot small church revitalization program.

Making Sense of the Results

What follows is an attempt to interpret the results of information collected from the survey. Please bear in mind that there is great diversity among the congregations surveyed. Of course, the “goal” of this study was to find common patterns and themes. The life of these congregations is infinitely multivariate. This must be remembered when attempting to make sense of the data. No claim is made of making the *one* correct interpretation of the data. No doubt, the data could and should be looked at from many different angles. The reader is encouraged to draw his/her own conclusions. In discussing the data, the same pattern utilized above will be followed. At the conclusion, data will be used to suggest needs and possible ways needs might be addressed.

1. Survey Items:

A. General Information

There is little doubt that these congregations are places that major in love.

Folks have a sense of being loved and cared for. They are pretty well known in the communities where they are located, which could be a positive or a negative depending on how they are known. If they are viewed as loving, caring contributors to the local community it could well be a plus. If, however, they have a reputation as a “once was” congregation, that may well create an obstacle difficult to overcome.

For more than half of these churches, the main issue seems to be survival. Throughout the notion of desperation keeps creeping into the picture. Combine this with the notion of having a definite sense of purpose or mission, which is NOT claimed by over half of the congregations and we can see a recipe for disaster: Desperation combined with lack of purpose, direction, and mission.

B. Programming/Outreach

The majority of congregations seem to have a sense of frustration in attempting to plan programs and activities due to size. Half of the churches felt that a key element in growth and survival is centered in having/starting a children’s program. About half thought there would be a benefit in having one special ministry or gift that could be offered to the community and that this focus on ministry is as or more important than a focus on growth.

Although these congregations are largely comprised of late middle-aged and senior citizens, only about a third of the respondents felt a need to emphasize an outreach to older folks in the community.

C. Lay Leadership

There is a reasonably strong sense of frustration in finding folks to take leadership positions in the congregation. This could be due to an entrenched leadership (85% say folks in leadership positions remain in that position for a long time). Or, this effect may be rooted in a genuine disinterest in taking positions. Interestingly, about a third of the congregations did ‘business’ more by group consensus than in the Presbyterian Way.

D. Pastoral Leadership

Throughout this survey this seemed to emerge as a dominant theme. There are certainly some unrealistic hopes expressed in ratings and comments; hopes that the ‘right minister’ could ‘fix things.’ The desire for a young minister with a family to start a children’s program and ‘work the community’ is strong. Yet, the notion is very real that this minister needs to be a ‘tentmaker.’

Sixty-one percent of clerks felt that the congregation puts high premium on having a CP minister and 73% felt such a minister needed a special vision/calling for small church work. Slightly over half of the congregations seem to feel that

their greatest need in general is that of obtaining quality pastoral leadership.

Smaller percentages feel that small church ministers are more preachers than 'pastors.' About a third said they often have to find ministers outside of the CPC.

E. Presbytery and Denomination

A very robust finding is that the future of very small congregation needs to be a *main concern* for the presbytery/denomination. In view of the large number of members/congregations we are discussing (see A "Bunch" of Small Churches, above), this is certainly true. Congregations want more efforts on the part of the church leadership to recruit, train and assist with placements of pastors willing/desiring to serve small congregations. A considerable minority seem to feel that ordination requirements are unrealistic in view of their situation.

F. Helpful Things

Two areas tied for first place for the type of help desired. Both seem to fit together. There is a desire among just over a quarter of congregations for help on how to conduct meaningful community outreach and how to continue or restart a children's program. The third type of help desired, but by a *much smaller* percent of congregations, deals with conducting a program for older adults.

In terms of "biggest concern," the "hands down" winner is the area of pastoral leadership.

2. Correlation:

What we are dealing with here is whether two items rated by clerks tend to "go together." In other words, did those who ranked item "A" as of importance, also mark item "B?" This can be determined. Several areas of moderate correlation were noted.

It gets sticky, however, when we try to say 'why' two items go together. There may or may not be an apparent reason. And, there are also items that 'chain' together. "A" and "B" tend to show up together. So do "B" and "C." So, are "A," "B" and "C" *all* somehow linked? This is certainly deep within the realm of conjecture. These possible explanations are just that: *possible explanations*. Some or all of the suggested explanations may be *dead wrong!* But, here goes!

- A. The idea of unrealistic ordination requirements is correlated with the idea that small church ministers are more preachers than pastors -- Could this indicate a dissatisfaction with pastoral care attributed to a limited pool of candidates?

- B. Unrealistic ordination requirements AND often having to utilize a non-CP minister are correlated -- Do CP ordination requirements drastically cut down the CP pool?
- C. The notion that presbyteries/denomination need to give special consideration to recruitment/training of small church pastors AND the need for pastors to have a special calling are correlated-- The thought here may well be that congregations would like presbyteries/denomination to help train those with this 'special small church calling.'
- D. Presbyteries/denomination need to give special attention to recruiting/training small church pastors AND the greatest need being securing/retaining a pastor are correlated-- Here, it seems obvious that congregations would desire more presbyterial help in finding qualified ministers.
- E. The future of small churches needs to be a main concern for the presbytery/denomination AND the presbytery/denomination needs to recruit and train ministers for small congregations showed correlation-- One way the concern could be expressed is by recruitment and training.
- F. Survival is the main concern AND difficulty in planning meaningful programming-- This could represent a sense of desperation or a logical connection between numbers of volunteers and planning.
- G. We have a clear mission/purpose AND we are well-known in the community-- Here it is safe to say that one simply follows the other.
- H. Ministers tend to be preachers more than pastors AND it's hard to plan programs because of size-- If a minister is not giving general pastoral oversight, it stands to reason that s/he is not giving much help and directions in congregational planning; often a time consuming process.
- I. Future of the congregation is closely tied to a children's program AND the greatest need is securing pastoral leadership-- The open-ended comments reveal a desire to locate young pastors with kids. This may be explanatory.

3. Open-Ended Responses

Following is an interpretation of open-ended responses.

Theme 1 - Pastors - There is a keen sense of wanting help in the area of selecting/training pastors. Ordination requirements may be unrealistic for these congregations, but there is some sense of wanting 'special training' in small church leadership. Many churches want to have pastors dedicated to a 'tentmaking' ministry, desiring/expecting little financial support. Some expressed a desire for economic assistance for pastoral compensation. A few expressed help in 'yoking' churches or developing a 'Methodist-like' system of appointments.

Theme 2 - Small Church Focus - There seems to be a sense of being overlooked and underestimated. Congregations desire to be a 'big concern' of the presbytery/denomination.

Theme 3 - Programs - Programming that might help include: General info on small church growth/health and training on children's work/programs.

Theme 4 - Children - There is a general (but not universal) sense that children are the key to survival.

Theme 5 - Organization - There is a desire for coordination and organization of small church support groups - especially in a given geographic area.

Recommendations

The reader is referred to Appendix C, which is a compilation of ideas related to church life and health as well as Appendix E, a list of resources for those wishing to investigate the nature of small church life, health, and growth. A word of caution is, however. In order. "Small" often means churches of 50 or so attendees (or even larger) for most experts. When we speak of churches with 8, 10, 12, 20 or 30 attendees, we are dealing with a group of churches that might be termed *micro-congregations*. Resources and information on these churches is quite sparse.

In making the following suggestions related to the life and health of these congregations, it is once again stressed that *no claim of infallibility is made*. Someone else might deal with all of this in a much better way. Bearing this in mind here are the recommendations that seem to be urgently suggested by this report:

1. The denomination/presbytery needs to find a ways of honestly valuing and validating these congregations. They form a large and important part of the CPC. A task force should be formed to deal with some of the issues raised in this report.
2. Since a fair amount of the programming already offered by the denomination and presbytery is directed at small membership churches, it may well be useful to look at how the programs are "marketed" and why more churches do not make use of programming already offered.
3. In keeping with the above, it might be useful to take programs to the churches instead of asking churches to come to programs. Since congregations often have few members, and therefore fewer folks able to attend events, a way to A"take it to the people" would seem in order.
4. This raises the issue of training. Could something be done in the way

- of programming offered that would involve trained laity? Could laity be trained to conduct workshops? This might be a way for small congregations to network and support each other.
5. These congregations are well-known in their communities. How are they known? They need a reputation built on some unique ministry.
 6. To arrive at this ministry, congregational leaders/pastors must be trained to do a needs assessment pertinent to the context where the given congregation is located.
 - a. Appendix D is an example of a plan created from such an assessment. We made this at Pleasant Hill. Since I (James) am a long time elementary teacher and professor of education, we worked on this like we were making a diagnostic lesson plan.
 7. In keeping with the above, ministry must be viewed realistically. Though most folks might think a full-time pastor with children would solve most problems, that is doubtful. After 100 years in a community, being small and mostly older folks, what is realistic? Could something be planned that could impart a sense of mission/ministry (something over half of these congregations need to find). Might it be better to reach older folks than wish for a children's program? What is realistic for any given church? How can any given church make an impact?
 8. The way pastors of the churches are secured and trained needs to be greatly revamped. Obviously, small congregations desire a minister with a unique sense of calling. Perhaps PAS or some other programs could offer training in how to conduct a needs analysis, create a ministry plan and address the special needs of these congregations. (For an example of such a plan and an evaluation of effectiveness, see Appendix D).
 9. These congregations need to develop a flexible leadership model that is functional and directive in implementing a prescriptive approach to ministry.

Conclusion (Bet you thought it would never come!)

I am very much at an advantage in this arena. I have a full time appointment as a professor in the Education Department at Kentucky Wesleyan College. I do not desire to be employed as a 'full time' minister. Yet, because of the flexibility of my teaching position, and an understanding and flexible congregation, I am able to provide pastoral care. I fully recognize the unusual circumstances I am able to exploit. Few will have such opportunity.

It is my hope that this report does not become a 'relic' to put on a shelf in some denominational office. The value of the effort and time involved in this report is usefulness. Can we make a difference? The crying need is for these *micro-congregations* to develop a sense of purpose, define a ministry, and carry it out day-by-day. Small congregations are a central part of the CPC. I am not at all convinced that we can just 'let them go.' It is my hope that these churches

can play a decisive role in the future of the CPC and that the CP's will own these "sheep" as an integral part of the flock. Thank you for your interest in this matter.

APPENDIX A

Roundtable notes

BRAINSTORM NOTES

Small Church Revitalization Roundtable

August 12, 2003 - Shepherd's Rest, Eddyville, KY

1. Some Characteristic CONCERNS of Very Small Congregations

Leadership (pastoral) - This matter was highlighted repeatedly in the discussion, noting the need for capable, anointed pastors which a servant-heart, vision for the ministry, and commitment to the unique ministry of the small church, even a specialized sense of call

Number one issue is always survival - Fear of not surviving; tendency to look back at the glory days of the past; doing what's necessary to 'keep the doors open'

Chicken with head off syndrome- Trying desperately to do everything, but no sense of direction for the ministry. Making long-term plans (eg, 2 years) is challenging because of the ages of the people, the concerns about being able to continue, etc.

Financial concerns - Limited financial resources typically requires bivocational or semi-retired pastor. This has a plus side in that the minister is not 'owned' because livelihood is not dependent on the church. It seems unrealistic to assume we can have seminary-trained pastors in all these situations. Yet there does need to be financial investment from the congregation in the overall ministry

Unavailability of pastors - Leads to use of many non-CP ministers and/or lay leaders

Validation of small church pastorate - Pastors engaged in the calling of small church/bivocational ministry need to have their ministry supported, validated

Low congregational self-esteem - Church self-image suffers when it has been in decline or aging for a long period; could be an issue also of God-esteem, ie, what God is able to do

Personnel limitations - Number of people available for church program is small and overworked

'Closed' community - Not always easy to break into the 'family' circle

Children and youth ministry - Few or no children; is a problem when new families attend and want something for the kids

Training needs - Special needs for clergy training in these specific kinds of ministry settings; often resources, books, etc. speak of the 'small church' as 150 members; may have to write our own resources for CP use

Turnarounds are slow, and may not happen

Presbytery attitudes toward the smaller churches need changing

Lay leadership must want to do more than just hold the doors open
Power struggles - inner conflicts, personality conflicts, turf battles, always did it this way; matriarch/patriarch syndrome
Approximately half the denomination's churches are small membership
Many of these congregations once had thriving Sunday Schools, even when there was no pastor or preaching service; today SS itself has declined across the board, so what once was a strength for these churches is now either very weak or impossible; yet no vision as to how to do another kind of ministry
Presbyterial boundaries can create barriers between some of these smaller churches that could support each other, or seem to inhibit larger churches taking them on
Smaller churches are in both rural and urban settings, with different issues in each

2. Some Characteristic GIFTS of Small Congregations

- Individual or personal attention/ministry; value of the individual
- Longevity in the community - connections in the community, esp. among older persons
- Celebratory of even little victories
- Small group dynamics as a positive -- something larger churches have to work at
- Strength of inclusion and involvement (this is the flip side of the 'closed' community in some places); like 1st century house church, someone can be incorporated quickly
- Sacred memory - what it means to be CP, people of God in the community long-term ,etc.
- Need/opportunity to declare CP doctrine, distinctiveness; story of our origins, eg, responsiveness to Spirit's leadership; CP identity; however, it was noted too that many of these churches may either try to be super-denominational (have every GA-recommended committee or ministry), or may become independent and autonomous, with little regard for presbytery, etc.
- Desperation may be a plus; churches, like people, tend to change only when all other options have been exhausted
- Love between pastor and people is unique; especially when it is evident that pastor and spouse are committed to that congregation
- Many of these churches are mission-minded, and some do have financial resources to support mission efforts
- Lay persons know how to keep the church going; have been doing it for years; may be open to 'gift-oriented ministry' of laity rather than pastor-dependent
- Smaller churches are often tenacious, tough, enduring for generations, long after others would have given up

3. Some KEYS to Small Church Revitalization

- Need an association of small church pastors for networking, support, training, etc.
- Need to identify/screen people with gifts for small church ministry; part of this process should include especially a sense of this specific call, and also an awareness of 'Cumberland specific' dispositions, attitudes, etc.
- Shift of concept of ministry from 'professional' model toward 'relationship' model.
- Ministry to the one is as viable as ministry to the thousand.
- Ministry should be emphasized versus numbers/numerical growth
- Positive publicity (eg, 'Pleasant Hill Story' makes big impact
- Training conference(s) needed for pastors, recognizing that it will be difficult because so many are bivocational and have little time/funding for such activity; also, should occur in a small church context, and with issues/agenda that are suited for that ministry
- Churches need pastors more than preachers; ministry-oriented, lay-led
- Networking among small churches; do things together, eg, youth/kids ministry; thinking creatively about what we can't do
- Hope (ours is a resurrection faith); joy
- Among the Key Issues for leaders lifted up: Vision, inspiration, passion, trust, call, servant-heart, empowering/equipping; sufficient authority to be flexible and get things done; must pastor the community
- Six keys from Nehemiah: 'Laying New Foundations'
 - 1) leadership is to be called, anointed, heart for ministry
 - 2) vision of leader
 - 3) people adopt the vision
 - 4) opposition can arise from discouragement
 - 5) direct opposition comes through threats and obstructionism
 - 6) each person to do his/her part in building the wall, cooperating with neighbors

4. Next Steps

- Review this discussion, add to it.
- Collect and/or develop resources
- Initiate grassroots process of networking among smaller church leaders
- Talk with others, especially in areas of the denomination where there are numerous smaller churches
- Think about training events that might be helpful

APPENDIX B

Survey

1. What is your average attendance? _____
2. Do you have a children's Sunday School? Y N
3. How many regular attendees are age 18 or younger? _____
4. What would you say is the average age of attendees? _____
5. How long has your congregation been in existence?

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 6. Use this key to help you rate each item.

6 = strongly agree; 5 = agree; 4 = more yes than no; 3 = more no than yes; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree.

FIRST, SOME "GENERAL" QUESTIONS:

- _____ The most important issue for our congregation is survival.
- _____ Our church is a place where people know they are loved.
- _____ Our church is well known in the community.
- _____ We have a clear sense of purpose/mission as a congregation.

=====

REGARDING THE PROGRAMMING/ OUTREACH OF OUR CONGREGATION:

_____ It is difficult to plan meaningful programs/activities due to the size of our congregation.

_____ The key to growth/survival in our congregation is closely tied to the establishment/continuance of a children's program.

_____ In ministering to our community, our congregation needs to place a special; emphasis on ministry to older adults.

_____ In fulfilling our ministry, it would be helpful to have one special service or

gift we could offer to our community than to simply focus on the need to 'grow.'

_____ There is not enough 'internal' ministry-- programs, meetings, visitation, and activities-- for those who currently attend our church.



REGARDING LAY LEADERSHIP IN OUR CONGREGATION:

_____ It is difficult to find folks in our congregation willing to accept leadership positions.

_____ When someone does accept a position, such as elder, treasurer, group leader, etc., they tend to remain in that position for a long time.

_____ All in all, our congregation tends to decide things 'by consensus' rather than by the decision of the session or a given committee.



PASTORAL LEADERSHIP:

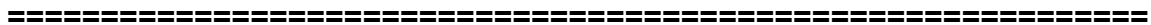
_____ Pastors of small/very small congregations tend to be more 'preachers only' rather than providers of pastoral care.

_____ The greatest need we face as a congregation is securing and retaining quality pastoral leadership.

_____ It is very important for us to have a pastor who is Cumberland Presbyterian in belief and practice.

_____ We have often had to find preachers/pastors who are not Cumberland Presbyterians.

_____ Pastors of congregations the size of ours need to have a 'special' calling/vision for ministry in small/very small congregations.



PRESBYTERIAL AND DENOMINATIONAL INVOLVEMENT:

_____ The presbytery needs to give more time and effort to the recruiting, training and on-going education of small church pastors

_____ The future of small (5-30 attendance) congregations should be one of the main concerns of the denomination.

_____ Presbyterial/denominational requirements for ordination are unrealistic when it comes to securing leadership for congregations the size of ours.

_____ The presbytery/denomination needs to provide more help in pastoral placements and finding pastors willing to serve a very small congregation.

=====

HELPFUL THINGS:

Here are five kinds of ‘help’ that might be available to your congregation. Please place them in order in terms of how helpful your congregation might find them. (for example, the most helpful thing would be 1, the next 2, and so on down to the least helpful, which would be number 5)

_____ Help on how to conduct a meaningful community outreach

_____ Ways to continue/restart children=s programs

_____ Conducting special outreach for older adults

_____ Special training for pastors of small/very small churches

_____ The formation of an association/fellowship of CP ministers serving congregations similar to ours in size.

=====

WHAT’S YOUR BIGGEST CONCERN?

Please place these in order to show the area you judge to be of greatest concern to your congregation. The area of greatest concern would be 1, the next 2, and so on through 4.

_____ Programming for our church

_____ Effective lay leadership

_____ Pastoral leadership

_____ Presbyterial/denominational involvement

=====

Please add a sentence or two that tells how the denomination could best help your church in fulfilling its ministry.

THANKS!

APPENDIX C

CHURCH GROWTH/ HEALTH RESEARCH INFO

James Alexander-21 September 2002

I thought you might find this helpful. I created it from information (all actual research to the best of my knowledge) from the databases at the college where I am employed, internet searches, and SEVERAL books. I have attempted to distil it down to one easily manageable list.

I. Eight Characteristics of Effective, Healthy Congregations (very much researched-based, see Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 1996)

1. Leadership that empowers others by equipping them to further the growth of the congregation
2. Ministry organized around spiritual gifts of membership
3. A spiritual passion/devotion to the cause of Christ and evangelism
4. Emphasizing what works over what we've always done
5. Enthusiastic/inspiring worship services (The services are 'fun')
6. Small group ministries
7. Evangelism targeted to needs in the community
8. Loving, caring relationships

II. Top Ten Reasons People List for Going to Church (Barna Research)-- These are in order highest to lowest.

1. Theological beliefs of the church
2. Caring between members
3. Quality of sermons
4. Friendliness to visitors.
5. Involvement in outreach to the poor
6. Quality of children's program
7. How much they like the pastor
8. Denominational affiliation
9. Quality of adult Sunday School classes
10. Convenient service times

III. Strategies for Small-Church Growth/Health

1. Remember: We cannot cause growth. We can only create a climate where growth can take place.
2. Have a vision/sense of purpose.
3. Begin new ministries targeted to community need.
4. Add a second worship service (different style).
5. Emphasize relationships/family 'feel' of the church.
6. Enthusiastic worship services
7. Get a 'brand name' by specializing in some specific service to the community.
8. Strong pastoral leadership in the area of church growth.

9. Improve self-esteem of congregation.
10. Make it a point to celebrate the victories the church achieves (for example completed projects, programs that work, baptisms, etc.).
11. As rural communities change (context), churches can still stay strong IF they reframe their message in terms of the new context.

IV. What Doesn't Bring People to Church

1. Using guilt or duty as a motivation for people to attend
2. Emphasizing fear of hell (hell, fire and brimstone sermons)
3. Passive, formal, traditional worship

V. Special Problems for Small Churches Wanting to Grow.

1. Small church image-- members don't believe the church has anything special or unique to offer the community (a negative mindset).
2. Ineffective, pastor centered evangelism. Most members have stopped trying to engage in relational evangelism with friends and family. They leave evangelism to the pastor.
3. Not enough programs (for example, nursery, Sunday school, vacation Bible school, support groups, etc.).
4. Believing they are on a downward spiral. Churches fail to 'plan' for evangelism.
5. Ingrown congregation that lacks 'new blood' or is difficult to really become a part of.

VI Other Facts that May Help:

1. People won't come to church services/sermons that don't meet their needs.
2. People are more 'consumer-oriented' about church than they are interested in 'brand loyalty' (denomination).
3. 20% of church attendees change denomination at least once and AT LEAST 10% change 3 or more times.
4. Churches that grow generate a high level of 'member satisfaction.'
5. Most people don't leave church because of anger but due to lack of interest.
6. Religious training of children is a main motivator for people to attend church.
7. It is easier and more beneficial to attract 'church shoppers' than the uninterested. Neither conservative nor mainline churches do a very good job of attracting the truly disinterested and disconnected.
8. Mixed-aged churches have an easier time growing.
9. At least 3/4 of the people who end up at a church came because of a personal contact.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE MINISTRY PLAN and EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

PLEASANT HILL MINISTRY PLAN

Your godly lives will speak to them better than any words. They will be won over-- St. Peter

I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ-- St. Paul

Preach the gospel. Use words if you have to-- St. Francis

Do good... expecting nothing in return-- Jesus

Like most very small congregations, we are a church in need of direction and a plan. We are all in this together, and we have to begin somewhere. I think that place is by fully admitting what we all know. Pleasant Hill congregation has done incalculable good in the community, the CP Church, and even the world during its 160+ years. Yet, now, if we are all honest, we **MUST** admit that our future is *uncertain* at best. We are down to precious few folks, rarely have visitors, and have experienced very little 'growth' for some time.

Regardless of all of this, I know my mission:

1. To love and care for each of you to the best of my ability.
2. To be viewed as a 'pastor' to the community, and to help the community see Pleasant Hill as *a church for the whole community*.
3. To logically, carefully, and sometimes painfully evaluate our condition.
4. To apply treatment to areas diagnosed as hurting.
5. To maintain my focus on the 4 out of 10 congregations in the CP Church that might be called, not small, but *very small and with an uncertain future*. Congregations just like ours.

Where did this mission come from? **God gave me the mission!** The way you view all that follows depends somewhat on how you view this mission.

The Components of the Plan

The plan proposed to turn our church around has three parts. Will it 'fix us?' Will it 'grow us?' **I don't know**. I **do** know whatever we've been doing certainly isn't working. This plan is built on research concerning church growth **and health**, small and rural churches, and 'turnabout churches.' I have gathered many of these ideas from you.

There are three components to this plan. They are:

1. A look at ourselves and how we might *improve the quality of our church*.
2. A look at our community and suggestions concerning *one ministry that we can offer as a free gift*.
3. A plan for our worship and how it can be *made more user-friendly*.

Each section of this report will provide brief background information and an action plan. I will conclude with the 'conditions of adoption.'

I. Church Quality

Christian Schwartz is a German researcher who conducted a highly regarded research project on the characteristics of church growth and health. Through his research, he discovered eight characteristics common to all healthy churches:

1. **EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP:** The pastor takes a personal interest in members; involves them in ministry and decision making, and spends time *personally* shepherding and loving members.
2. **GIFT-ORIENTED MINISTRY:** The members know and use their spiritual gifts in a specific ministry in the church.
3. **PASSIONATE SPIRITUALITY:** Members are 'alive' with the love and power of God and maintain a vital, *personal* devotional life.
4. **INSPIRING WORSHIP:** This kind of worship is uplifting, enjoyable and often described as *fun*.
5. **FLEXIBLE USER-FRIENDLY STRUCTURE:** In terms of how the church operates, both in worship services and programming, what *works* takes the place of 'we've always done it this way.'
6. **SMALL GROUPS:** Members meet together in small groups.
7. **NEEDS-FOCUSED EVANGELISM:** Evangelism is based on needs of the community. Those with the gift of evangelism are nurtured, encouraged, and helped.
8. **LOVING RELATIONSHIPS:** The members love each other and prove it by spending time together.

Schwartz has developed a way to rate churches on these characteristics, but it requires 30 members. So, using his book, I turned his descriptions into statements to be rated on how much one agreed with any statement. I randomly surveyed about half of the congregation. I also completed a survey.

How useful is this at judging these characteristics? He surveys at least 30 members, We have a much smaller survey. I don't know what questions Schwartz put on his scale, nor how many. I don't know how they were rated. What does a high score mean on *our* survey? For example, the items dealing with the pastor were rated higher than any other area. The only significantly lower rating by someone I recognized (surveys were anonymous) was mine!

What do we make of this? Are you too generous? Am I too tough? Or, are we both too generous?

I think this can only be used in one meaningful sense. All we can say is that one area was rated lower than another. The farther you go down the list, the more work that area needs.

Highest Score

1. *Empowering Leadership*
2. *Flexible, User-friendly Structure*
3. *Inspiring Worship/Needs Focused Evangelism**
4. *Gift-oriented Ministry*
5. *Passionate Spirituality*
6. *Loving Relationships*
7. *Small Groups***

Lowest Score

*These two were tied for this position.

**This may be artificially low. Some folks probably can't come to our small groups (Wednesday night/Sunday school). I think this is a low area, but it's your call!

ACTION PLAN:

I will deal with these characteristics from a teaching/discipleship perspective. Your part is willingness to improve any characteristics needing work. This seems to me to be an issue of *shepherding* (I'll be nice, don't worry!).

II. A Ministry (Gift) to Our Community

I know that some people were a bit skeptical about the usefulness of the demographic data I presented. But from my research, knowing the community is may well be the key to the whole enterprise. The data* I gathered lead to these conclusions:

- ▶ The community is mostly older (middle-aged and up).
- ▶ Quite a few people in the area are relatively poor.
- ▶ Most people seem to be church members.
- ▶ At least 4 out of 10 church members DO NOT attend church.
- ▶ More women attend church than men.
- ▶ The most attended church is the Baptist Church.
- ▶ General religious interest seems to be on the low side.
- ▶ Most folks prefer friends like themselves in age and interests.
- ▶ A major concern seems to be grown children and grandchildren.
- ▶ Music events might be attended in the community, but in view of information

- above, they'd have to be light in the religion department.
- ▶ We live in a stable 'neighborhood' and likely know many of the 'long-timers.' (Most folks are long timers.)
 - ▶ Most of our neighbors are married.
 - ▶ Many of our neighbors are not well educated.
 - ▶ Our neighbors are busy.

*(*Anyone needing to see the actual demographic statistics again please see James.)*

Of course you've seen all of this before when we looked at the data that were collected. I know that you agreed with some of it, and disagreed about some of it. You also disagreed with *each other* about whether certain points were correct. But the following *three paragraphs* seem to sum up what most of you were expressing:

This community is pretty stable when it comes to older folks. It is mostly upper middle-aged and younger seniors. These people have been here a long time. We know them, and they know us. There are some younger ones around, but they tend to move in and out of the community, they are not a stable population.

Of the stable folks it might be said that they are friendly, helpful, enjoy talking with each other and catching-up on each other. This usually happens at a community event, often a funeral. Our community is busy--often with grandchildren related things (babysitting, ball games, etc.). Also, though they are friendly, it is very unlikely that one of them would just 'drop in' for a friendly chat. If the community is together for some reason (funeral, sale, etc.) they might talk for hours. But they will not go out of their way to visit-- you know, just come over.

In terms of ways we might reach out, it seems that we will do the best 'zeroing in' on people we know well. We might want to think of how to gear our efforts to the middle-aged and older crowd. Community suppers and musical events might offer avenues of outreach.

Looking at this, especially in light of discussions with members working through the planning process, only one need seems evident. The gift we can offer is **the gift of community**. It will not be easy to give

People need each other. But, the folks around here seem to have lost sight of that in some ways. It is obvious that they enjoy being together. But they don't get together. It seems that the need we can meet is that of getting 'old friends' together. This can be our free gift. I'm not at all sure that that gift has ANY religious connotations. It needs to be offered with no strings attached. **We need to become a community center.**

ACTION PLAN:

1. Every member will be asked to think of two people to whom they might extend the gift of community. These two people should be community members like you in some significant respect. The goal is not to constantly try to get them to come to church. It will be to simply befriend them and go about doing friendship evangelism. The commitment is long term. These two folks are to be your *personal focus*. We need to think less in terms of getting folks to come to church and work on transmitting the gift of community to them. So, whom should you concern yourself with? *Someone you think might be receptive to friendship, a more cohesive community, and especially anyone in need of a friend*. This is going to be something very 'natural' and 'easygoing.' James will provide some 'training' in friendship evangelism and make specific suggestions. You will relate to lots of people, but these two folks will be 'special' in that you will relate to them in a very intentional way.
2. We should appoint a committee including the pastor and others who are interested in community events. We probably need a community get together at least every other month. Some general principles from our discussions are:
 - a. Involve food!
 - b. In general don't have any set program. Just let people interact.
 - c. Avoid sermons, hymns, etc. We don't want this to be seen as a church service; we aren't having any luck getting folks to come to church services.
 - d. Some music might be nice (Like the 'girls' who sang at the seminar). They might sing some fun, harmony stuff. We should avoid 'religious concerts'.
 - e. A brief prayer for our community and current situations like the Middle East might be good. This should be a short prayer, not a 'sneaky sermon.'
 - f. We should send invitations, and probably some *personally written ones* would go much farther than 200 photocopied ones.
 - g. Follow- up on invitations with a phone call or visit, but don't bug people about this constantly.
3. The data revealed there were a significant number of people in the area who might be considered low income. Therefore it is recommended:
 - a. We set aside a room to stock things folks might need.
 - b. We work out a voucher system with the store in Beech Grove. A voucher would be for a minimal amount-- I suggest \$15.
 - c. We inform the social agencies that deal with emergency requests of our desire (and extent of ability) to help. When someone is referred, I recommend that we allow him or her to choose about \$20-30 worth of goods from our storeroom. They will also be given a voucher for the store.
 - d. We explore the possibility of doing something with the community in

terms of donations so that the community sees this as a community effort.

- e. We help anyone in need at least three times. Then we will have to consider the situation case-by-case.
- f. A committee be created to draft a benevolence policy for other needs to be discussed by the church and adopted by the session.

THIS IS IMPORTANT! We cannot say 'come have fun,' 'get together with old pals,' 'meet new folks,' 'just enjoy yourselves,' and then stick people in a church service. If we say that they are coming for the purpose of *community*, with no strings attached, that is what we must offer. Also, we can't 'give-up' because of low response. We need to get a few coming and hope they spread the word that this really is a free, no strings attached gift of fun. Take what we get (we hope that includes some folks in church) and have fun-- and that means us too!

All of this leads to a brand name: The church that cares for the needs of average folks in the community and has *fun* doing it. It is a pretty nice brand name and one worthy of servants of God.

III. User-friendly Worship

Now we have a group to think about. We also have ministry ideas and an action plan. We need to bear this group in mind as we review our worship. Why? We don't have any of these people visiting, what do they matter? It's all part of getting a focus. **We want to be *known* as the church that ministers to regular people in our community.** These folks very likely don't relate much to creeds, confessions of sin, responsive stuff, etc. At the same time don't forget that we are here every week; we count too. By the way, I've talked to several folks and, in case you are wondering, we differ on worship preferences among ourselves.

ACTION PLAN:

We need to recall the evangelical character of church folks in the area (remember most are Baptist and surely influence what folks in general think of as 'church.' Also, the unchurched folks in the area have to be considered. One 'general conclusion' about worship is that we need to keep it simple. We had a bit of a 'dry-run' of a less formal style on October 20 & 27. We discussed this at a Wednesday night Bible study. That pattern seemed to get a favorable review. Other ideas include keeping the service to under an hour, spending very little time on announcements, and using 'lots' of music, including both choruses and hymns.

There are those of us with a more 'churchy-church bent' (creeds, confessions of sin, etc.). I am of that mind. Irene is a good example of many of us who are not.

To be more 'user-friendly' and be known as **the church where the people of the community can feel comfortable worshipping**, a good plan would seem to be to have a simple, less formal service (as on Oct. 20 & 27). Still, for those of us who feel a need to 'plug into' traditional worship, a good idea might be to focus on the Communion service. Communion could be more frequent; once a month seems popular. I will likely be able to officiate in March. In that service, the direction could be more formal and traditional (More the *James way* than the *Irene way*). This might prove beneficial in our community focus as well. Many people have deep roots in a tradition that has the Eucharist as the central act of worship, but cannot participate because of divorce. We might possibly become known as **the church where the community can celebrate the Eucharist**.

IV. Conditions of Adoption

The plan requires certain 'conditions of adoption' if there is any hope for change (turnabout). We must *really* attempt to follow the plan, or it will do no good whatsoever. Also, it will take *time*. A week, or a month, or **a year** means **nothing**. We may have to adjust the plan many times as we go along. That's okay. But, adopting it means being intentional and *honestly* attempting it. This is a plan to be implemented, not just words to file away in the session records. So here are three conditions of acceptance that need be agreed upon from the start:

1. In adopting this plan, we are also accepting the responsibility to *really* implement it to the best of our ability.
2. This plan will be implemented by the church on January 1, 2003. The plan needs to be adopted for a **minimum** of *two years*. It will do us no good to adopt this for any lesser period of time, and even that may not be long enough to make any difference.
3. The church must not just quit this plan. If we find problems, the church/session needs to discuss it with James and give him opportunity to address those issues. The session will, of course, have the final say. But the session should try to *fix it before they pitch it*. The plan will take time, lots of time. But it will be *our PLAN*, a direction to go, and we must *honestly attempt to work the plan*.

Here we are. The end. You look at all of this and say, 'Where's the beef? What's different here? We've done lots of this stuff before.' True. I'm not surprised it looks familiar. It should. Think back to the seminar, and even before -- all the way back to when we wrote the mission statement. Think about this past month. *It sounds familiar because you have told me practically all of it!* I have contributed very little substance. We wrote and met and discussed. When I got an idea or comment from you, I tried to write it down and break it into small parts. Then I took those "parts," "hooked" them to other "parts" and put it all together to make a directed, focused whole. I'm more of an editor than composer. The plan is a "mixture" of many "parts." Two years? I am not a

fortune teller. I don't know what will happen with any of us (me included) over the next two years. I know that, even after two years, we can only ask: 'Have we had a ministry to our community? Is our church life better?' The plan is about vision and faithfulness. We are in trouble, but ***no plan can cause growth***. As Paul puts it, we are planting and watering. Only God causes growth. Thanks for your help. Blessings to all!

Pastor James

ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PLAN

On May 19, 2004, the congregation met to assess the effectiveness of the plan. Here are a few of the representative comments made:

1. We have 'done' the plan. (But not all of it consistently!)
2. It has been FUN!
3. It has been very worthwhile to have the plan.
4. We have given out hundreds of food baskets, helped lots of community folks, and had community events drawing 20-60.
5. Folks in the community are amazed that a small church has done so much.
6. We have started a newsletter mailed to over 60 homes, the pastor writes a weekly column for the local paper, we have mailed out six brochures about the history/beliefs of the CPC with newsletters. This has been very positive for our church.
7. With no plan, you don't know where you are going nor can you tell when you have arrived.
8. We have seen folks attend from time-to-time that did not attend in the past.
9. We still have much to do!

APPENDIX E

RESOURCES

Following are some books I have found helpful:

- Barna, G. (1993). *Turn Around Churches*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- Burt, S & Roper, H. (2000). *The Little Church That Could*. Valley Forge: Judson.
- Callhan, K. (2000). *Small, Strong Congregations*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass.
- Crandall, R. (1995). *Turn Around Strategies for the Small Church*. Nashville: Abington.
- Daman, G. (2002). *Shepherding the Small Church*. Grand Rapids: Kregel.
- Dudley, C. & Walrath, D. (1988). *Developing Your Small Church's Potential*. Valley Forge: Judson.
- Exman, G. (1987). *Get Ready, Set-Grow!* Lima, OH: CSS Publishing.
- Hood, B. (1991). *A Little Book for Small Churches that Want to Grow*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press.
- McIntosh, G. (1998). *One Size Doesn't Fit All*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revel.
- Pappas, A. (2002). *Inside the Small Church*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute.
- Patton, J. (2002). *If it Could Happen Here- Turning the Small Membership Church Around*. Nashville: Abington.
- Schaller, L. (1994). *The Small Membership Church*. Nashville: Abington.
- Schwarz, C. (2000). *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches (4th Ed.)*. St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources.
- Schwarz, C. & Schalk, C. (1998). *Natural Church Development*. St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources.