

ABSTRACT
CREATING SYNERGY
IN CHURCHES WITH MULTIPLE CONGREGATIONS

by

C. Michael Pearson

Church growth has always presented the blessing and challenge of accommodating larger crowds with building expansions and added service times. The last few decades, however, have seen the emergence of a new blessing and challenge—a diversified group of people being reached through a diversified church ministry. Most noticeable among these diversified types of ministries are worship styles that draw people of different backgrounds, cultures, and, sometimes, ages groups. This new phenomenon is creating additional congregations within a single church.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to discover what factors influence the creation of synergy within a church of multiple congregations. This study measured four factors. The study revealed that leadership and communication were the strongest components related to creating synergy. In addition, a significant level of positive correlation existed in all four components being measured.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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IN CHURCHES WITH MULTIPLE CONGREGATIONS

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by
C. Michael Pearson

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

The twenty-first century has presented the overall church with the challenge of doing relevant ministry within the changing culture it is called to reach. One might even consider that with each new generation come enough social differences to cause the church to take a closer look at how its own mission field now consists of people whose worldview might very well differ from its own set of assumed church values. This difference would suggest that one of the greater barriers facing the church in sharing the gospel is not one of theology but one of culture (Morris 108).

In order to meet these challenges, churches across denominational lines are introducing, changing, and/or expanding the types of ministry that successfully reach, serve, and build community with each new generation. As a result of this increase in attendance and membership within a single church, the demand for space and alternative forms of ministry has resulted in a phenomenon that this project has chosen to refer to as *multiple congregations*.

Conducting multiple worship services at different times in order to utilize space is nothing new to growing churches. This expansion becomes the best use and stewardship of church facilities. Nevertheless, churches that diversify their ministry and successfully begin to draw people of a postmodern mind-set, of various life experiences, of little or no church background, or even those of similar backgrounds who attend separate services also find themselves being a church with multiple worshipping congregations.

For church consultant Lyle Schaller, this dynamic is a necessary improvement to bring vitalization into the church that, for the past century, has been accustomed to

participating in corporate worship of one kind in one single space. He affirms that reaching, attracting, serving, nurturing, and equipping persons at different stages of faith should have three to five separate physical environments for worship (11). This varying type of diversity sets up the situation to be considered for this project.

Multisite Church

In the process of becoming a pastor in the United Methodist Church, one's first appointment is likely to involve serving a charge with two or more churches. This type of appointment, for the most part, consists of rural or small-town churches that are geographically located on separate pieces of property. Each church serves out its call as Christians assembled for the purpose of ministering to the community that is geographically oriented to its location (Van Gelder 163). Nevertheless, because each church is financially unable to afford its own full-time pastor, one pastor is appointed to a charge of two or more churches. This type of appointment requires dividing the pastor's time between each church.

Though one pastor serves the entire charge, each church has its own administrative structure, consisting of committees such as Pastor-Parish Relations, Finance, Trustees, and Lay Leadership. The pastor, therefore, becomes one of the common links between each congregation. This setting of individual congregations presents the pastor with the challenge of creating an atmosphere of unity, fellowship, and support that represents one church for Christ and not separate churches in competition with one another. This challenge is not easily, if ever, accomplished.

Multisite churches also include a growing number that have chosen to expand their ministry by building or expanding secondary campuses in different areas of their

town or city. In this situation, these multisite ministries are served by separate staff from the main campus but are connected as one church through one or two key people serving on the main staff of the overall church.

Multiservice Church

Churches also tend to develop multiple worship services and, to a certain degree, establish something of a multi-point charge that exists on the same property. In this case, members or attendees of this one church might choose to attend and support the 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., or 11:00 a.m. service; the traditional, contemporary, or alternative service; or Pastor Jones' service or Pastor Walker's service.

Marva J. Dawn argues that offering choice in worship style develops division and that this division demonstrates a misunderstanding of the focus of worship. She suggests that having choice in worship style is counterproductive because it promotes a vendor, consumer mentality and that it separates people based on age or preference (550).

Kenyon L. Callahan disagrees with Dawn on eliminating the choices churches offer with different worship styles. Nevertheless, he does speak to the issue of divisiveness that occurs when churches have only two choices. He argues that having only two options promotes tension and becomes an unhealthy aspect of church unity (*Small, Strong Congregations* 119). Church planter and coach Dr. Jim Griffith also agrees that having only two groups creates a tension of one against the other. Nevertheless, whether one refers to two or more groups or two or more styles, diversity still points to the fact that when a church diversifies its ministry to reach different cultures or people with different spiritual or worship needs, a certain degree of dispersed loyalty, unintentional as it might be, is likely to occur.

This phenomenon became evident to me as a result of having served an appointment with five separate churches and attended, observed, and talked with people in larger churches with multiple services. Reflecting on these observations revealed an *us-versus-them* mentality, possibly developing solely from knowing very few, if any, of the people who attend the other services or other churches. In such cases, whether a faith community has separate congregations meeting in separate locations or separate congregations meeting at the same location, diversity presents a challenge to creating and maintaining a sense of overall unity and purpose as one church.

The Challenge

In both scenarios, people connect with a certain location, worship style, or generation of people, indicating that people come to the Church of Jesus Christ in different ways and with certain preferences. Article VII of the Augsburg Confession states its belief that the church's rites and ceremonies do not have to be the same everywhere (Bente and Dau 4). Nevertheless, the challenge from within a single church becomes one of creating an atmosphere of support and combined effort on the part of each separate congregation to achieve a common call given to all of God's people—to become one church for Christ and not separate services or congregations in competition with one another. The church is intended to bring people together in spite of the differences and to unite them in the common faith of Christ (Dawn 551). To establish this type of overall unity is not for the purpose of creating a holy huddle of Christians focused only on themselves but to bring about the greater impact the church has when all its diversity works together for the common cause of Christ—what this study refers to as church-wide synergy.

The Purpose

Given the possibility that competition can naturally develop within a church of multiple congregations, the long-range scope of this project was to discover and implement the synergistic elements necessary to making the transition from a single congregation church to a church with multiple congregations more effective.

Therefore, in one concise statement, the purpose of this project was to discover what factors influence the creation of synergy within a church of multiple congregations.

Research Questions

In order to fulfill the purpose of this study, three research questions are presented to guide the research.

Research Question #1

What are the elements that help create synergy in churches with multiple congregations?

Research Question #2

Do churches of either mixed worship style or same worship style correlate with higher synergy numbers?

Definition of Terms

This research utilizes three key terms that may invite ambiguous interpretations. The following explanations help prevent such possible ambiguities by the reader.

Synergy

The main focus of this study centered on the concept of church synergy. In the business sector, synergy represents the combined productivity gained when two or more companies, elements, or entities merge together. In the social sector, synergy refers to a

form of oneness, connection, and/ or community. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, synergy is defined as the overall sense of oneness that draws each unique congregation together toward achieving a common God-given vision, so that the performance of the entire church results in a greater ministry than is possible by the sum of each congregation on its own.

Congregation

For the purpose of this study, a congregation is defined as being a separate worshipping community. Therefore, multiple congregations refer to two or more worshipping communities of different styles or worship times that take place under the direction of a single church.

Church

For the purpose of this study, a church is understood to be a body of believers organized and identified under one name that is made up of two or more worshipping congregations.

Project Description

This project sought to discover the degree of synergy that exists within six churches with multiple congregations. These findings were further compared between each of the six churches to determine any common factors that helped create that synergy within these six churches.

Context

The focus of this study was born out of an appointment to Lafayette Street United Methodist Church (LSUMC) in Dothan, Alabama. This congregation was a downtown church in a city of more than seventy thousand. Fifty years ago, this church was

considered one of the flagship churches in the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference. During that time, this church was known for its evangelistic impact on the community; its United Methodist men's organization, which gained national recognition for its community service and financial contributions to nonprofit organizations; and, its impact on over thirty-five men who received their call and entered into full-time pastoral ministry.

Current Status

LSUMC has declined from an average attendance in the upper seven hundreds to approximately 140 at the time of my appointment as pastor. This church has not only declined in membership and average attendance numbers, but it has also grown older in average age. For example, 88 percent of its active membership at the time of my appointment was between the ages of sixty-five and 101. The fact that the majority of this church is comprised of senior citizens makes them no less vital than any other brother or sister in Christ; however, consideration must be given to the limit this statistic places on its human resources for ministry, as well as the fixed financial resources that come from being in retirement status.

In addition to the natural phenomenon of death that plagues an older church, the lack of consistent leadership and the loss of vision also had an impact on the decline. With the weakened interest in outreach and ministry to children, youth, and families, many transferred out to other churches. Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones state, "People stop showing up when an organization is not winning. Nothing will empty seats faster than a losing streak" (69). While describing the loss of attendance as a losing streak does not fit well with the mission of the church, people apparently do tend to go to

other churches if they sense the mission and ministry of their own church is not meeting their own personal and spiritual needs, as well as the needs of the general community. The loss of membership by death and transfer added to the downward trend at LSUMC.

In addition to the loss of vision, LSUMC's location has placed another factor in its decline. This church was located in a section of Dothan that has transitioned from being an upper-middle class, predominantly Caucasian neighborhood to being a lower economic, mixed racial neighborhood. The result of this transition gave way to a rise in criminal activity in the surrounding neighborhoods, including some unsafe activity happening in and outside the church itself. Safety issues alone left many members feeling uneasy. This uneasiness presented the need to hire a security service to guard the premises during church activity.

While the neighborhood has changed, this church has been staunchly against change within itself. In an attempt to address the membership decline and the changing neighborhood, an opportunity to relocate to an area of predicted growth was presented over twenty years ago, and it was voted down. Today, a United Methodist church sits in the general area that was being considered then, and that congregation has now grown to be one of the largest and strongest United Methodist churches in the city.

With the exodus of young families and couples, the condition of the neighborhood, the decline in attendance, and the overall age of the church, LSUMC was left with the choice to stay in its current trend of decline until it must close its doors, or make the decision to do what is necessary to revitalize its future.

A New Challenge

On 4 December 2005, LSUMC voted by an 80 percent majority to relocate. This

vote to relocate and the dynamics that will be involved in this transition are what present the long-range focus of this study. The new vision at LSUMC is *to live up to our heritage of reaching each new generation for Christ*. What is particularly salient about the vision to this study is the intent to diversify in order to reach new generations for Christ.

Diversification takes into consideration different types of worship settings for different age groups, ministry designed to be as much off campus as on campus, and becoming more intentional in various approaches to introducing unchurched people to Jesus Christ.

Fulfilling this vision was a decisive factor in voting to relocate the existing congregation to a new area while simultaneously planting a new congregation focused on reaching a new generation of people. This new beginning further ushered in the discussion and decision not only to relocate and restart the church but also to rename the church. LSUMC is now officially Greystone UMC (GUMC).

This relocation endeavor translates into starting over as a church with multiple congregations. It means facing the challenge of creating an atmosphere of unity and downplaying any competition mindset that might arise as a result of starting over with two separate worshipping communities. Therefore, this study was born out of a need to establish a way to create an overall sense of synergy within an up-and-coming church project that will be revitalized through congregational diversity.

In order to gain insights to help LSUMC in this transition, as well as other churches in similar situations, the context for this research focused on six churches that exhibit a multi-congregational status. More and more churches are experimenting with and moving into new services that are attracting a new constituency of people. In some cases, churches are forced to move to additional services to accommodate rising numbers

of people attending their churches. The intent of this project was not to discuss or compare the benefits of one worship style over the other; rather, the intent was to look at how churches with multiple congregations develop a sense of synergy among its entire membership.

Locale

The six churches used for observation are located within south Alabama, Georgia, and the panhandle of Florida. Within the state of Alabama, the churches are Harvest United Methodist Church and Bethel Baptist Church in Dothan, Grace Place United Methodist Church in Semmes, and Demopolis First United Methodist Church in Demopolis. Within the state of Florida is Saint Luke United Methodist Church in Pensacola. Within the state of Georgia is Saint Mark United Methodist Church in Columbus.

Methodology

This was an evaluative study in the descriptive mode to determine the factors of church synergy through a nonexperimental quantitative researcher-designed survey. The assessment of each church revealed an overall synergy score based on the Likert scale. Each survey was segmented into five blocks of statements, with separate scores being calculated for each block.

Participants

I selected six churches based on several predetermined criteria.

Historical background. Two historical backgrounds were set as criteria to determine if synergy accomplished and maintained equal scores in both categories or if synergy differed accordingly. These two backgrounds included two churches that were

new church plants within the past twenty-five years and four churches whose ministry has existed over twenty-five years in the same location.

The first historical category included two churches that are new church plants within the past twenty-five years and are still under the leadership of the founding pastors. These churches are Harvest United Methodist Church, located in Dothan, Alabama, and Grace Place, located in Semmes, Alabama.

The second historical category included four churches that have been in existence for over twenty-five years in the same location. These churches include First United Methodist Church, located in Demopolis, Alabama, Bethel Baptist Church, located in Dothan, Alabama, St. Luke United Methodist Church, located in Pensacola, Florida, and St. Mark United Methodist Church, located in Columbus, Georgia.

Time frame. These six churches were selected on a criteria of a twenty-year time frame. Within this twenty-five year window, each church must have begun with one single worshipping congregation and grown into two or more congregations of worship styles or worship times. This time window was chosen in order to allow enough churches to be included in this research and also meet the other criteria.

Average attendance. These churches must have had an average worship attendance of 250 or less within a single service before it moved into multiple congregational status. The purpose of this selection was to observe churches that were as close to the size of LSUMC as possible and still maintain integrity within the research.

Constants

At the core of this study was the intent to observe, not test. It did not focus on

manipulating selected independent variables in order to measure the extent of impact on dependent variables. Therefore, the elements treated in this study are treated as constants.

William Wiersma and Stephen G. Jurs define a *constant* as a characteristic or condition that is the same for all the individuals in a study (33). The constants within this study are a random sampling from within each of the six congregations.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation for this project was a researcher-designed and edited survey based on a similar survey entitled *Partnership Self-Assessment Tool* (Center for the Advancement). The *Partnership Self-Assessment Tool* was designed specifically to measure synergy levels in corporations with functional partnerships. The revised survey of this project is a quantitative approach to assess a representative perception of church synergy based on the responses given.

Data Collection

This study depended upon the participation of six different churches. To encourage the cooperation of these churches, I sent a packet of material to each senior pastor, asking for permission to include them in this study. This packet included four pieces of information. The first piece simply described this project, its purpose, and my agreement to make available the findings of this study as it pertained to their church. The second piece included an instructional sheet on how the selected church staff would participate in creating the random sample needed to survey. The third piece included the survey that his or her membership would be receiving in the mail (see Appendix C). The fourth piece was a sample of the Church Synergy Assessment Report (see Appendix G) that would be returned with the information obtained from the surveys.

Once agreed upon by the senior pastor, the church generated a random sample for me. Then each person on the list received a survey packet through the mail. The packet included a cover letter from his or her senior pastor encouraging participation, a cover letter explaining the survey and timeline for returning the document, and a return self-addressed stamped envelope.

Delimitations and Generalizability

This study was limited to a small region for my convenience. The findings of this study can only be generalized to churches of similar size and demographic variables. The subjective nature of the survey is also a delimiting factor.

Theological Endorsement

Creating synergy in churches with multiple congregations finds endorsement within the theology of community. Of particular focus is the Apostle Paul's understanding and theology of community. This theology takes on the following five characteristics.

A Synergized Community

The Greek New Testament uses the term *synergoi*/συνεργοι from which synergy is translated. This term does carry with it the idea of working together, but the context in which the term is used indicates more than the physical act of serving together. The following section looks at the two terms *syn*/συν and *ergo*/εργο, which make up this compound word, as well as its use within Scripture, which creates a theology of greater glory to God through the combined efforts of his people.

The contextual use of *syn*/συν. The prefix *syn*/συν is used in different contexts throughout the New Testament. By itself, it translates “with” or “together with” (Zodhiates 1674). For example, in reference to Mary’s visit to her cousin Elizabeth, Luke 1:56 states, “Mary stayed with (συν) her about three months” (NIV). This term implied more than a mere preposition or had more meaning than to the idea of being “along side of.” It implies a closer connection than does the preposition *meta* (μετα) or *pros* (προς), which also translate to mean “in company with” or “along side of” (1674).

Depending on its context, *syn* makes reference to a personal connection, commonality of experience, purpose, investment, or potential. For example, Paul states in Romans 6:8, “But if we died with [συν] Christ, we believe we will also live with [συνζήσομεν] him.” The theological implications of being with (συν) Christ indicates a common experience and connection with him while in no way indicating that one was literally with or in physical proximity of Christ. Ruth Page inserts that this synergy of *with* comes from the divine life and energy that is offered to believers in order to work alongside limited efforts as they pertain to a his or her thoughts and actions in their varied context (*God with Us* 52). This synergy refers back to the personal connection and potential which believers have in and with Christ, to which Page further comments that believers are not only to be responsive and responsible to God and others, but that they are also to be responsive and responsible *with* God (*Ambiguity* 197).

One other unique way Paul chose to use the term with (συν) was in a manner that indicated Christian community. Paul consistently chose to use συν when making reference to brothers and sisters of the faith. For example, in the concluding remarks in his letter to the Roman church, he gave instructions to “Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon,

Hermes, Patrobas, and the brothers with [σὺν] them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with [σὺν] them. Greet one another with [ἐν] a holy kiss” (16:15-16). Paul intentionally juxtaposes the use of with/σὺν and with/ἐν in this verse.

Similar uses can be found in 1 Corinthians 1:2, 5:4, Galatians 1:2, Philippians 4:9, and Colossians 4:21. Implied in these passages is a connection with one another that goes beyond proximity or familiarity, but one of community. This personal connection is a major component to understanding the concept of synergy when it is applied to the church community. It brings with it more than an understanding of merely working together for a greater outcome. It takes into consideration a sense of belonging and acceptance within the church community that brings energy within itself, which leads into the other portion of the term that needs defining.

The contextual use of *ergo*/ἐργο. The other Greek term used in the compound word synergy is ergo (ἐργο). This root becomes a familiar word translated in English as *work* or, to use another term, *energes*/ἐνεργεζ, which can be translated as energy. It carries with it a generic meaning of being in action, to be operative, to be at work (Zodhiates 621). The context in which this term is used also provides a significant connection to its overall influence on the term synergy.

In Matthew 14:2, Herod makes reference to the powers that were *working*/ἐνεργουσιν in John the Baptist. In Philippians 2:13, Paul acknowledges that God is the one who is *working*/ἐνεργων in each person to will and to *work*/ἐνεργειν on behalf of his good pleasure. The context supplies an understanding of work as the energy, the effective power of God himself, acting in and through his children (Rienecker and Rogers

552). God is energy. He is not a stagnant presence, but he is working and bringing his energy and power into the lives of those in whom he dwells.

The contextual use of *synergoi*/συνεργοι. Therefore, forming a compound word from these two terms offers more than a definition of working together. It serves as a term of investment, a term of commitment and covenant. It serves as a term indicating the overall energy of a community in service to achieve only what God can achieve through them.

In Philippians 4:3, Paul speaks of those who served in the work of the gospel as *coworkers*/συνεργοι. In 3 John 8, the Apostle John speaks of one as being a *coworker*/συνεργοι with the truth. This term implies a partnership with God and/or other Christians at work together in the world, which inherently includes a oneness with those different from oneself (Page, *God with Us* 26). Therefore, synergy becomes a vested union of the parties involved to combine each unique contribution for the sake of the overall purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ.

A Connected Community

In many of Paul's letters, he makes references in his final greetings to something of the scenario given in this study —namely, many groups with one purpose. Paul becomes the common link among these congregations and takes on the role of encourager and overseer, of sorts, to churches in any given area. His final greetings in his letter to the Romans, for example, makes three direct references to house churches and several indirect references to others, all of whom he instructs to be in communication with one another with his greetings and the content of his message. These references imply a common bond and unity among these house churches that do not appear on the surface to

be plagued with the mind-set of competition. Luke Timothy Johnson believes that the home, not the temple, was the center of Christian piety (*Writing* 57). Meals took on a certain sacred character, for meals symbolized fellowship, and eating together signified spiritual agreement (60). Karl Barth explains that this type of unity originates in the corporate acknowledgement of one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God above all, for all, and in all (27).

In Paul's final greetings to the church in Colosse, loving cooperation for the good of Jesus Christ is carried out through the exchange of his letters and the offer of encouragement to one another. He does not view the salvation experience between God and the individual to be isolated to that relationship alone. It has other ties, ties that connect the individual to the larger community of the church. The gospel is as much about tying believers in relationship with one another as it is with God. One is not exclusive to the other. Dietrich Bonhoeffer testifies that this connection to other Christians is a "source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer" (19). Jesus grounds this theology in the Great Commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39). Attempting to love God and be in relationship with him also means attempting to love and be in relationship to others. The more genuine and the deeper the community connection becomes, the more everything else between believers recedes, and the more clearly Jesus Christ and his work will become the one and only thing that is vital (Bonhoeffer 26).

Robert Banks agrees that this salvation experience between God and the individual mends the estranged relationship among other persons by bringing them into a new community, one in which this new life lived out actually deepens the community itself (19-20). He states, “To embrace the gospel, then, is to enter into community. A person can not have one without the other” (27). To love God is to love one another. To love one another is to understand and embrace such a connection.

People gather as the church for several reasons, two of which involve experiencing the presence of God and experiencing community with each other. Thomas G. Long states, “Churches have found ways to bring people together and to address ... the desire for companionship and belonging” (25). Paul’s theology of community is an automatic benefit of salvation in a spiritual sense. For one to know Christ is to be in Christ, and to be in Christ is to be in him with others.

A Gifted Community

Paul’s theology of community also includes a functioning body through the diverse gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit. He speaks to this giftedness in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Among the several church-wide problems that Paul is addressing in this letter, he speaks of how they should be using their individual giftedness to serve more effectively as one church. To help these Christians gain a better understanding and prevent further divisiveness, he uses a comparative analogy of how the church as community is like the human body.

The human body becomes a metaphorical example of multiple parts and/or organs working together to create a correlated movement. Likewise, a single congregation is made up of separate organizations working together to create an equally correlated

movement and outcome. The apparent intent of this metaphor is to point out that when no correlation, cooperation, or agreement exists among parts, as in the human body, the result is *dis*-ease within the church body. It is not functioning as true community. True community exist in the belief that cooperation beats competition (Van Marrewijk 152).

With the distribution of gifts comes natural diversity. Within the church, the structure of administration, for example, is set up on the concept of diversity. Different departments or committees serve an *I* function, which makes the body of Christ, as a whole, operate more effectively. This function dictates that diversity, by virtue of giftedness, exists as an ordained blessing, which causes a deeper sense of wholeness and unity to reside in the body (Banks 60).

Organizations utilize different functions that work together to form a correlated synergy, but synergy also takes place on a smaller level. For example, examining and being aware of how each ministry can potentially create interrelationships becomes another step from which synergy will emerge. Organizational synergy is one goal that cannot be achieved without synergy being developed and achieved on an activity-by-activity basis (Ensign 661).

Multiplicity and simplicity are integrated in 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, and 20 through the use of the words many and one. Paul makes reference to this dichotomy two chapters previous when, in reference to the symbolic nature of the bread in communion, he states, “Because there is *one* [emphasis mine] loaf, we, who are *many* [emphasis mine], are one body, for we all partake of *one* [emphasis mine] loaf” (1 Cor. 10:17). God, who is responsible for the distribution of these many gifts and functions, designs this degree of diversity to function within a body of one. This design is emphasized in verses

18 and 19, where unity becomes the key, not uniformity (Rienecker and Rogers 42-9).

Oscar Culman points out further that Paul shows clearly that the Holy Spirit creates unity not only in spite of diversity but precisely through it (16).

In order to have synergy, harmony among the various parts should be present. C. Brownlow Hasting uses the concept of harmony to describe the need for the gift of diversity to work within the church (37). In musical terms, harmony takes place when a series of dissonant notes, voices, or instruments are utilized in a way that complement one another. In the church, harmony is the effect produced by the Holy Spirit when diversely gifted believers and/or communities actively engage each other in seeking the highest good of God's kingdom. Hastings states further that this harmony leaves open the manner in which structures and programs need to be formed and allows for the Holy Spirit to move diverse people and communities into different circumstances (113). Placing multiple talents together caused these Christians in Corinth to think more highly of certain people over others. The natural outcome to such a paradigm is envy and division. Verses 24-26 explain how favoritism and special status are downplayed in this theology of community as a means to protect itself against division. Jesus also makes reference to the negative impact that special status and individualism has on a group: "A kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand" (Matt. 12:25). In Paul's theology, this principle of division applies to Christian community, as well.

Cohesion in Christian community is indicated by a few key terms found in the text. First, these believers *were baptized*/εβαπτισθημεν into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). Paul is not referring to the baptism that is an outward sign of an inward grace. Baptism in

this reference is the inward grace. This inward grace is the supernatural work of being placed in Christ, a spiritual commonality that tears down barriers based on race, culture, status, and/or life experience. Cohesive synergy begins with the transforming and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Second, the believers are *arranged* (ἠθέλησεν, vs. 18) and *combined* (συνεκερᾶσεν, vs. 24) by God. The term ἠθέλησεν refers to his act of creating, while συνεκερᾶσεν refers more toward an act of mixing or blending together (Rienecker and Rogers 429). Examining the use of both terms leads one to conclude that diversity is a part of God's sovereign will. Community built on this concept of blending indicates a new collaborative order of interdependence, mutual instruction, and commonality (Guder 146). Diversity essentially becomes a divine arrangement of each one's uniqueness that complements the uniqueness of others. At the same time, the diverse gifting of the Holy Spirit articulates the community life together, for combining them together creates the synergy needed to accomplish his perfect purpose that cannot otherwise be done (Johnson, *Writing* 370).

A Loving Community

This conversation on community giftedness concludes with the bonding agent that pulls together the many parts that serve with the synergy of one body—love. The importance of this one element in Paul's theology of community is best demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 13 by what he describes as the “most excellent way” (vs. 1) and “the greatest of these” (vs. 13). The placement of an entire chapter on the subject of love between two chapters that talk about diverse gifting and serving is no accident.

From this theology, church synergy is exercised and lived out as an inward love intended to support and build up each other and an outward love intended to reach and serve those not yet in Christ. Biblical synergy is not possible, has no meaning, and has no lasting impact on Christian community if love is not involved, remembering Paul's word in Romans 13:8: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law." The bonding agent to community and the motivating factor behind church synergy is love.

A Community of Belonging

Community becomes an expression of Christian fellowship and how that fellowship lives itself out among those connected through Christ. Johnson agrees that Christian community is not a matter of simply being friendly to one another, but this relationship is expressed in three ways of agape-style giving for the good of others:

1. The community contains a sense of unity and equality.
2. The community practices the sharing of themselves to help each other.
3. The community is marked by a genuine obligation to one another ("Making Connections" 160-61).

Long sees this kind of community as one where its members give themselves to something larger than themselves. He believes in a deep yearning within each person to be a part of joining with others in pouring out their lives for something that actually matters in life (19). Jeanne Hinton shows how European Christian communities, both Catholic and Protestants, are finding a synthesis of common concern centering on ministry to others. They hold in common the aim of building a church "in solidarity with the poor" (51). Callahan supports this precept when he states, "Wherever events of

mission are shared, wherever people live life's pilgrimage with each other and for the world, there one discovers community" (*Twelve Keys* 35). In this sense, community does not exist to simply be together, but authentic community is built together through a common purpose in life.

These agape-style characteristics not only build and express genuine Christian community, but they also become foundational characteristics that should help build and be witnessed in church synergy. Genuine community *is* synergy; therefore, church synergy must be grounded in a strong sense of belonging.

In conclusion, understanding these five areas of Paul's theology of community helps bring a biblical premise to the question of creating church synergy. This premise simply states that synergy is the designed will of God for his Church. When Jesus speaks to the disciples, in essence, he is speaking to the entire Church. While Paul wrote to the churches named in each letter, the Holy Spirit intended his letters to be shared among all future congregations of believers.

Based on this premise, churches that offer multiple service times and worship styles should give thought to developing synergistic community that goes beyond gathering under one name. People form and maintain interpersonal relationships that are frequent, pleasant, stable, and characterized by affective concern for each other's welfare (Chao and Moon 1130). Churches containing such diverse congregations are given the gifts, the power, and the potential to form such deep levels of community. This thought is not only sound theology; it is the will of God.

Biblical Endorsement

While theology endorses the concept of creating church-wide synergy, the creation of synergy in churches with multiple congregations finds endorsement within the Holy Scriptures as well. The following passages show how synergy has been exemplified throughout the historical journey of God's people within the New Testament.

Feeding of the Five Thousand

The feeding of the five thousand as recorded in Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:32-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-13, and the feeding of the four thousand as recorded in Matthew 15:29-39 and Mark 8:1-13 provide examples of biblical synergy that go beyond mere human effort. Synergy produced out of faith is nothing short of a miracle. In both accounts, Jesus took a diverse group of men and gave them a task to perform, but the result reveals the real point of the situation. Synergy is defined in mathematical terms as $1 + 1 > 2$ (Dent 178; Welsh 219). Thus, from this definition of synergy, one might conclude that these twelve men might feed forty or fifty; even one hundred would have been a miracle. However, thousands were fed from this miracle, which exemplifies the potential of synergy when ordained by God.

Many themes can be derived from these texts, including the idea that working together under the directive of God produces a level of synergy that cannot be measured or anticipated. The Apostle Paul expressed his belief in this immeasurable result of synergy:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! (Eph. 3:20)

As the early Church served together out of a sense of community and love, God ultimately produced the miraculous outcome. The following passages offer more credence to this application of synergy.

Acts 2:42-44

The Book of Acts records the beginning of the Church and gives evidence to the existence of synergy that operated within the Church. This synergy has a direct relationship to the giving of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is the connecting link among all believers that becomes the basis for synergy. This link is seen as Acts 2:42 makes reference to the three thousand new converts devoting themselves to four common purposes. What is often overlooked in this conversion experience is the diversity that existed among the various groups that composed this crowd of people, for among these three thousand new converts were “God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.... [E]ach one heard them speaking in their own language” (2:5-6). Synergy de-emphasized their differences, while at the same time retaining the uniqueness of each group’s individuality. These new disciples were together with one heart, while at the same time separated through their own grouping.

Luke records in Acts 2:44 that all the believers were all together. Matthew Henry notes the unrealistic scenario of believing that these new three thousand or so converts were physically in one place in Jerusalem at that time. He suggests that they were gathered in several different companies or congregations, according to their language, nations, or other associations (23). This verse concludes by stating that all these new believers had everything in common. The word *common* is *koinos*/κοινός, meaning that which belongs to several or of which several participate (Zodhiates 1641-42). This entire

verse gives further evidence of not only a fellowship of being together but also the synergy that comes from acting together out of such fellowship.

Joseph S. Excell notes that this gathering of diverse people enabled them to make a greater impact for Christ's cause. He confirms that this event gives further evidence to strength in unity and multiplied power in cooperation (*Biblical Illustrator: Acts* 236). Because of Pentecost, the single focus of Jesus Christ was now multiplied into action through the filling of the Holy Spirit in these three thousand new converts (237). This conversion of new believers is what Excell refers to when he uses synergy language to assert that the power of a small group or body of people are many times greater than that of each separate unit multiplied by the whole number in the group (243).

Acts 4:32-35

At this point in the early history of the Church, it had grown to about five thousand men (Acts 4:4). However, this number does not include the additional numbers that would have included the women and children within the Church through household conversions, as witnessed in Acts 16:34. The Church was large in number, but many congregations of people also existed. The formation of these home churches give continued evidence that synergy was a continued part of the early Church when Luke writes in 4:32, "All believers were in one heart and mind. " Nevertheless, synergy does not exist merely in faith, but in action:

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostle's feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. (4:33-35)

The synergy of one heart and one mind resulted in a few people who gave out of faith and love and made a tremendous impact on many others.

Further, Henry notes that the same power that gave the apostles the courage to preach the faith of Christ also gave that same courage to others to confess to his faith. Though many strangers lived among one another, once they entered fellowship with Christ, they entered fellowship with each other and became intimately acquainted with one another as if they had known one another many years (41). Nevertheless, their common action together produced this kingdom synergy, not merely the heart they had for one another.

Again, the gathering together of these new Christians produced no jealousy or uneasiness among them, even though they gathered in several separate congregations according to their unique dwellings or language. They demonstrated a love for the other congregations as truly as they loved their own (Henry 42).

Ephesians 2:11-16

The discussion of creating synergy out of diversity must also look at Scripture for direction on tearing down the barriers that promote differences rather than unity. Paul directly addresses this topic in his letter to the saints in the church forming in Ephesus. Ephesus itself was a commercial hub for trade, which attracted people of various cultural and religious backgrounds. The evangelical efforts of this church would most certainly have brought in people of diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the subject of unity and togetherness becomes a main theme highlighted in this letter. It speaks to a group of followers who are dispersed throughout the world and yet who make up one church,

regardless of locale, socialization, gender, or worship differences (Excell, *Biblical Illustrator: Ephesians* 199).

Particularly salient to the subject of unity is Paul's focus in 2:11-16 on how God makes one potentially diversified church more unified by tearing down any barrier that promotes divisiveness. "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.... [H]is purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two" (2:14-15). Leander F. Keck states that this text indicates the removal of all that creates division in order to create something unified through a common source, which is the cross (Vol 11: 398). This metaphor of creating one new man and forming a body of multiple parts demonstrates organizational harmony that embraces its own differentiated parts (398).

William Barclay describes this united body as that of a rebuilt temple, one in which the segregated inner courts with its rules and regulations were removed, thus creating a new man whose foundation is love (115). Barclay differentiates between the two main uses in the Greek for the term *new*. First, the term *neos*/νέος is simply a reference made to a point of time or sequence. This term refers to something that has been acquired or created recently, while at the same time others already have existed before. For example, I buy a *new* car, but other exact cars already exist.

However, the second Greek term is what Paul uses in 2:15. The term *kainos*/καίνος indicates an entirely new sense of quality, one that brings into the world a new quality that did not exist before. Jesus produces a new kind of person out of both, although they remain uniquely Gentile and Jew (Barclay 116). Jesus' purpose was not that all Christians be conformed into one nation or style, but that the Christian faith links

all people together as one while remaining unique to each one's own culture and mission field.

Theological and Biblical Conclusions

From a theological perspective, synergy is shown as an abstract concept supported by its contextual use in Scripture. Scripture reveals God's desire to partner with his people for the greater outcome of impacting the surrounding world. This synergy was seen in the degree of *koinonia* that the separate communities had with each other, regardless of their locations. This kind of connection gives evidence that synergy does not support isolation. Synergy becomes the manifestation of both being in Christ, being in Christ with others, and being Christ's body to the world. This combination of common love and the use of diversified gifts given by the Holy Spirit makes separate communities function as one body, not separate parts.

Biblical endorsements give direct evidence to the reality of synergy through the miraculous works of God. The synergy displayed in Scripture borders on or crosses over into the realm of miraculous. Jesus used his disciples to display the miraculous work of God in the feeding of the five thousand. Paul explains to the church at Ephesus that God is able to do more than his people can ask or imagine but that he also chooses to act in partnership with his people. Being the Church that lives, worships, and serves together out of a sense of love and community produces miraculous transformation both inside and outside the church.

The conclusion from the biblical endorsements is that synergy is an outcome for the church that is designed by God. It is not a goal or a method but the fruit and evidence with eternal implications.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 reviews a broad reading of literature in the fields of sociology, business, organization, and Christian leadership. Recurring themes from the literature are highlighted and serve as points of discussion in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research design, the churches that serve as subjects to this study, and the method used in this evaluative study.

Chapter 4 provides the findings from each of the churches individually and then compares the findings of each church with one another for any correlations discovered.

Chapter 5 concludes this study by providing the practical applications that flow from the themes of the literature review and the research findings. It recommends further areas of research that exist beyond the scope of this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Pastors enjoy the occasional Sunday off and the opportunity to visit another church to worship as a part of the congregation and not as the pastor in charge. One such pastor arrives at a given church and takes notice of the number of worship opportunities being displayed on the church sign. Curiosity arises about these opportunities. Once seated inside, one such pastor begins a conversation with a friendly person seated nearby and eventually inquires about the various worship opportunities being offered. To the pastor's surprise, the response gave more information than the mere spoken words: "I'm not sure what *those* people do. I don't know any of them. I just come to this service and go home."

This person's tone and choice of words leave the pastor with a sense of the potential disconnection that could exist among the worshipping communities of this church. As a leader, the pastor leaves that experience wondering what the possibility might be of creating a deeper sense of cooperation and partnership within a church with multiple services or multiple congregations.

As a result of such a scenario, the purpose of this project was to discover what factors influence the creation of synergy within a church of multiple congregations. As mentioned, synergy is being treated in this study as more than people merely working beside one another toward a common goal. It represents a bonded, committed partnership of love where individuals, through their diversity, serve for the common good of the kingdom of God.

Factors that help develop organizational synergy was the concept this study sought to understand better. The following literature review represents a wide reading in the fields of business, sociology, psychology, and general church literature in order to glean connecting principles at work that will help break new ground in this area of study. Because this study examined churches with multiple congregations, the field of sociology is a pertinent foundation from the standpoint of systems thinking. This field becomes particularly relevant based on the fact that each congregation contains various systems within itself and each congregation becomes a system within the larger organization of the church. Therefore, systems thinking on a macro level of separate congregations became another tool for helping this project better understand the dynamics and nature of synergy.

The Nature of Synergy

The nature of synergy is a widely understood phenomenon in the fields of chemistry and medicine, where the combination of two or more elements are manipulated to produce a greater outcome than the individual elements could achieve on their own. For example, synergy occurs when hydrogen and oxygen interact to create water. Neither hydrogen nor oxygen is wet or drinkable, but they interact in a way that creates something that has both attributes (Haeckel 1407). From a social standpoint, however, the synergy this study explored dealt with people and not inanimate elements.

In the business field, synergy represents the combined productivity gained when two or more companies, elements, or entities merge together. For example, synergy is seen in a favorite restaurant that keeps people coming back regularly, even though customers know that other restaurants may have better food, better service, or a better

atmosphere. This patronage is developed from the way the restaurant manages its food, service, and ambience to provide their customers and their tablemates with a unique feeling of well-being (Haeckel 408).

More and more companies are merging to expand their productivity and marketability by managing their diversities. Nevertheless, merely placing separate companies together under one name does not naturally form a corporate synergy. In some instances, merging separate companies together has just the opposite effect. Corporate synergy must be planned and produced in an environment conducive for corporate unity, but establishing this level of synergy is only half the process. Keith Harrell states that the success of any organization depends on maintaining synergy at all cost (198).

This literature suggests that, in the life of the church, merely creating two or more congregations under the auspices of one church name does not automatically assure that synergy is achieved. The same competitive and suspicious attitudes that invade a corporate merger often times find their way into a church that now has two or more separate worship gatherings. Therefore, church synergy must also be planned, produced, and maintained in an environment conducive for the glory of God.

The church does have one advantage to the nature of synergy that the business world does not have—the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. Paul's understanding of community, as previously mentioned, is all made possible by the working of the Holy Spirit. The ability to place a deep sense of common faith, personal connectedness, the dispersement of diverse gifts, and the bonding and motivating element of love is all made possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Synergy Defined

Synergy has a simple definition that, regardless of the field in which it is used, remains the same. Three dictionaries have similar definitions for this term. It means to work together towards a combined or cooperative action or force (“Synergy,” *Webster’s New World Dictionary*). It is the combined action of different agents or organs, producing a greater effect than the sum of the various individual actions added together (Thorndike and Barnhart; “Synergy,” *American Heritage Dictionary*).

Secular and church organizations embrace the sentiment of the previous definitions. For example, Romana Louis Autrey defines synergy as the output of a team or group that exceeds the sum of the output of its members individually (4). Similarly, Peter A. Corning defines synergy as the combined interdependent effects produced by two or more parts, elements, or individuals and is an ever present, ubiquitous phenomenon in human societies (133). Harold S. Geneen defines synergy as what occurs when one entity that behaves in one way and another entity that behaves in another way merge into a third entity that starts behaving in an entirely new way (92).

Using an example or object lesson approach, the following writers offer their explanations. One explanation uses a mathematical equation of $1 + 1 > 2$ to show the impact of synergy (Dent 178; Welsh 219). William D. Taylor expands this definition by describing how one draft horse is capable of pulling four tons of weight but adds that when two draft horses are harnessed together, they can pull twenty tons (6). Harrell provides the example of five basketball, nine baseball, or eleven football players working together. They always produce more results as a team working toward the same goal (28). Elmer Towns, C. Peter Wagner, and Thom S. Rainer provide a mental concept of synergy

as multiple forces that produce explosive energy. They point out that when three or four large *anchor* stores move into a shopping center in combination with a multitude of smaller specialty stores, the end result is a vastly larger population of shoppers which produce tremendously more sales and profits for all the stores (129).

In a study on patient care, synergy was defined simply as being the “Optimum outcome” (Hardin and Kaplow 4). In an effort to maximize such an optimum outcome for the patient, the patient’s needs were matched with a particular nurse’s skills and qualifications (4). The synergy of total care of medication, therapy, environment, and personal interaction brought about better or improved health.

From these various definitions on synergy, a connecting thought seen throughout was that it produced a greater outcome from combined or cooperative effort than the individual efforts added together. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, church synergy was defined as the cooperative community of multiple congregations that results in greater ministry than the sum total of each congregation’s effort on its own.

Factors Contributing to Synergy

Organizational synergy becomes a goal for both leadership and management when diverse functions and levels are present within an organization that must work together for a productive outcome. In this case, leadership attempts to develop synergy by defining a vision of what the future should look like, aligning people with that vision, and inspiring them to make that vision happen despite the obstacles. Therefore, managing organizational synergy becomes a set of processes that can keep a complicated system of people and purpose moving together (Kotter 25). Relating this type of vision casting to the church is what Aubrey Malphurs refers to as an instrument that enables people to

move from seeing the church as *their* church to seeing it as *our* church, which in turn makes the way for people to work together toward that goal (134-35).

Organizational synergy becomes just as much a reality in the life of a church with multiple congregations as it does in a complex business or corporation. Regardless of the product or service being offered, certain overtones and lessons are present to help understand better the dynamics of synergy as they apply to the church of Jesus Christ.

Complexity

Under the theme of complexity, this study took a medical firm and labor union into consideration, which revealed the following information.

Lessons from the medical field. Complexity and diversity are a natural outcome of expansion. As an organization grows, individual sections or parts become increasingly diverse in order to perform particular tasks that serve the purpose of the organization, while at the same time it develops useful relationships with other people and/or groups in the system (Stalinski 16). Therefore, complexity and diversity become a basic characteristic of synergy.

Within the business sector, one particular medical practice sought to expand its parameters. To downplay the complexity foreseen in this expansion, four factors were set forth to help form a more effective medical group.

1. They emphasized down playing or flattening the structural hierarchy to create equality among the physicians and a greater sense of ownership.

2. They emphasized establishing a strong vision and mission statement that would cause the individual physicians to look in a common direction to benefit the whole group.

3. The size of the group was set not to exceed nine members, and each member should possess some degree of diversified expertise in order to complement the entire medical group.

4. The group would guard against becoming too complex, preferring simplicity to help stay targeted on its vision and goals (Dahl).

The first three points are particularly germane to a team-leadership approach. This egalitarian system is what Robert E. Quinn defines as an enthusiastic set of competent people who have clearly defined roles, associate in common activity, work cohesively in trusting relationships, exercise personal discipline, and make individual sacrifices for the good of the team (161). This equality allows for equal input so that as the goals of the firm are reached, each party feels and understands they have had a part in the process and, thus, grants them a sense of ownership (Krauter 45). Much of the current literature substantiates and recommends such a team approach to leadership (e.g., Barna 28).

The medical group's focus on vision and goals is relevant for a church of any size or complexity. According to God's mandate to the church, a church's overall vision and goal of making disciples has not and will not change. A single church might develop and express this vision for its particular setting in different terms or colorful phrases, but biblical vision is the one conforming goal that should be a factor in church synergy. The issue of creating synergy through vision might come down to how often a biblical vision and mandate is being set before the congregation. Vision must be repeatedly presented, making use of every means of communication a church has (Krauter 49).

Nevertheless, according to the outcome of this medical group, the difficulty in making this synergistic approach successful was the failure to adhere to the last factor of

remaining simplistic in its function. In an effort to simplify, they grew larger and more complex, and the need for greater hierarchy surfaced. The failure to adhere to this last factor led the group to revert back to their original style of leadership due to their own lack of discipline and consensus. Their own preset boundaries were not honored.

Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr believe congregations have certain boundaries that function within. First, physical boundaries identify where the congregation gathers to worship, learn, and serve. Second, group boundaries determine each unique body of believers that gather within certain physical boundaries. Third, group characteristics give definition to the group in terms of demographic factors, such as age, ethnicity, and lifestyle (150). These boundaries help maintain the potential complexity that comes with such diversity.

Based on these findings and as a result of the research with the medical team, a certain level of hierarchy is necessary for a system set up on a team leadership concept. As churches grow larger, so does their complexity, which teaches that team leadership can offer equal input while functioning on a larger hierarchical scale of teams and not individuals.

Lessons from a labor union. Charlotte A. B. Yates researched a business setting that attempted to create unity while having to contend with growing complexity. Faced with declining membership, a Canadian autoworkers union expanded its guidelines to include labor unions of different trades (93). While successfully increasing its goal of membership growth, it also expanded its difficulty of being effective. The complexity that ensued from these various mergers required an intentional strategy of building support through the following three processes.

First, a redefined set of common goals were needed. As previously mentioned, these goals became the focal point for all who are involved; however, with such complexity due to its increasing size, establishing common goals that would directly interest and affect each group became increasingly difficult (Yates 97-98).

Second, a collective identity was needed. This identity was proposed to flow naturally out of the redefined common goals and each additional union would adapt a new worldview by which the entire organization could interpret the marketable world in the same way. Nevertheless, the more heterogeneous the union became, the more difficult became the effort to establish this collective identity (Yates 98).

Robert R. Blake and Jane Srygley Mouton discovered that the greater the sense of group pride and identity, the more their commitment was to maintaining their own position, even if it became illogical. This discovery was particularly true when contrary views were present (54). Employees reported stronger identification with their groups within the organization than they did with the organization itself. This identification was significantly related to their attitudes and motivations about their job (Chao and Moen 30).

Therefore, this commitment to status quo suggests that membership pride actually feeds complexity within an organization by the unwillingness to adapt. This assessment agrees with an observation made earlier in this study that this type of unhealthy diversity manifests itself in an *us-versus-them* mentality (Blake and Mouton 54). Jack Welch affirms this finding when he suggests that focusing so intently on the structure and strategy of the merger causes the organization to overlook the cultural fit, which becomes equally, if not more, important to the success of the merger (220).

Third, an efficient system of communication between the leadership and the union members was established. Efficient communication was successful as all union members had equal representation and input. Nevertheless, the problem that greater complexity presents was that the more decentralized and the less hierarchical the system became, the less efficient it became. Similarly, Yates notes that the more centralized and bureaucratized the system, the more efficient it grows, but at the expense of the input and common interest of the membership as a whole (98).

This merger involved diverse groups from different backgrounds that did not adapt well to being bought out, brought together, and handed an entirely new identity and method of thinking. This difficulty would seem somewhat parallel to the scenario of churches forced to join together because of declining membership and financial struggles, only to be handed down a new identity and worldview without taking into consideration each congregation's uniqueness. Having a common goal, identity, and communications are valid and accurate points. How a church introduces and implements these components appears to be the greater issue.

Diversity

At this point, the amount of diversity a single organization can stand leads one to conclude that it does have limitations, but the literature does not suggest that diversity should be avoided altogether. Unity and diversity are two elements that naturally take place in any organization and are particularly salient in Paul's discussion of spiritual giftedness within the church. In Romans 12:12 and following, he makes reference to the church as a body that is held in both balance and tension at the same time. The church

necessarily thrives on the need to be unified while at the same time to be diverse. The

Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2004 gives guidance in this matter:

The ministry of all Christians is complementary.... All United Methodists are summoned and sent by Christ to live and work together in mutual interdependence and to be guided by the Holy Spirit into the truth that frees and the love that reconciles. (Olson 90)

Synergy is actually implied in this statement of working together, for only as United Methodists work together can the outcome be greater than the sum of its total congregations. In Methodist terms, this interdependence becomes known through the ideals of the connectional system.

Craig Van Gelder states that the church exists as one, while at the same time it exists as many. He explains that diversity is consistent with the church's catholic nature in that it calls on the church to allow freedom in forms and styles while maintaining a common fellowship and confession. This unique form of oneness is what he concludes is the call of the church to bridge the diversity of the culture in which it is called to minister while understanding and embracing the oneness of the church body (121-22).

Paul A. Crow, Jr. inserts that both the Resurrection and Pentecost became a new ordering of life that drew a very diverse group of people together to become one people of God, living with the Holy Spirit in their midst (38). Page contends that this unity of the church may be understood to include a discerning enjoyment of diversity and an unwillingness to draw sharp lines of demarcation (*God with Us* 140).

Nevertheless, unity does not extinguish this diversity. In addition, Peter L. Steinkamp defines and utilizes diversity in his reference to self-differentiation as "being separated together" (10). Edwin H. Friedman defines differentiation as the capacity to be an *I* while remaining connected to the whole (27). This differentiation paradigm promotes the

importance of being a diverse population and further grounds itself in the belief that differences are good and valuable (Stalinski 15). In essence, differentiation refers to the ability to affirm a sense of uniqueness while not succumbing to the pressure to conform.

A leader's responsibility is to create a sense of unity around linking factors such as vision, purpose, and values while realizing that a certain level of diversity is an element that helps make that happen. Esther Byle Bruland believes in the value of having diverse groups of Christians engaging a society composed of very diverse groups of people (46). Knowing the church is still called to reach and minister to such a multifaceted world means that diversity is important to remaining relevant and moving into new areas to establish new pathways for relationship and ministry (Klagge).

Leroy T. Howe agrees that human beings are created with both the capacity and the calling to be different, to set themselves apart as distinct individuals, even as they remain connected and contributory to the larger family ("Self-Differentiation" 348). The Bible maintains that human beings are created in God's image (Gen. 1:27). Taking these two approaches into consideration, the Holy Trinity is seen as God differentiated as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and yet existing and functioning as a loving and cooperative community. This unique quality is further lived out in each individual who is in Christ, which further allows people of different ability, personality, and background to gather as one body. On a macro level where synergy is concerned, congregations of different abilities, personalities, and backgrounds are commended to exist and function as one church. In this sense, diversity complements unity in a way that witnesses to God's image and brings him glory.

Howe expands this thought to state that differentiation as individuals can become dysfunctional for congregations who have long been embedded in a paradigm that expects everyone not like them to conform to their likeness:

Differences in ages, stage, socio-economic level, ethnicity, preferences, lifestyle, worship practices, moral convictions, and beliefs ... become the separateness-and-otherness-fearing faithful only dissonances which threaten the tranquility of a contented existence circling an ecclesial hearth. ("Self-Differentiation" 351)

Congregations set in their ways and comfortable with what they feel they have established do not like upsetting the balance of their complacency. Serving against this paradigm are churches that are successfully embracing differentiated groups while maintaining a community atmosphere of fellowship and common purpose. Bruland states that churches that disrupt such a status quo can move toward a deeper sense of unity, but only if the people or groups involved are committed to the relationship and the challenge of working through their tensions. Only if they are willing to work together toward a shared future can any kind of authentic unity come of the disruption (48).

These kind of churches exemplify the oldest military treatise in the world: "[As] a single united body, it is impossible either for the brave to advance alone or for the cowardly to retreat alone" (Kraeuter 92). These diverse churches were able to look beyond and escape their own preferential conformity, or else they began as a church embracing diversity and never fell victim to this paradigm.

No matter how many congregations may gather under the oversight of one single church, no two are the same. Each congregation gathers as a unique group of people at a particular place in time (Herrington, Bonem, and Furr 153). This type of diversity is the nature of a church with multiple congregations.

Koinonia

When examining the concept of synergy through complex, diverse, or even like groups within the New Testament, one element that was present within the Christian community was a deep sense of common fellowship. The *NIV Study Bible* states that *koinonia* is the spiritual union of the believer with Christ and parallels this relationship to that of the vine and branches in John 15:1-5 and the body and the head in 1 Corinthians 12:12, as well as having communion with the Father and with other fellow believers (Barker 1908). This common fellowship gave an expanded and deeper meaning to the Greek term *koinonia*. In secular Greek, this term means fellowship or participation. It was often used to describe the relationship that existed within a marriage or business partnership. In the Septuagint, *koinonia* exclusively made reference to the fellowship that existed between people and often referred to the effect that sharing common meals had on binding these people together (Hasting 46).

Margaret Jenkins states that *koinonia* accentuates the need for unity in diversity. It emphasizes the need that churches have of each other in appreciating the shared life everyone has with God. She states this appreciation would be something similar to the admiration one would develop after noticing the flash and fire of a diamond by viewing it from different angles (97). Every believer and each congregation of people are called and expected to express this *koinonia* so that this visible sharing in common life can bring hope to a world torn by divisions (97). Jenkins goes on to say that the life that exists among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the prototype and source of all *koinonia*. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute and form the basis of community (94).

The relationship that exists within the Trinity is exemplified within God's church.

The church shares in (has *koinonia* with) the very triune nature of God, sharing (having communion, *koinonia*) with the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, the Church also has communion or *koinonia* with God and share with one another and with all of humanity his divine love in Jesus Christ (Brown 167).

Lawrence O. Richards describes this level of community when he states, “Everything in life is an expression of our mystical but real participation in all that Jesus is. This mystical union is what overflows into our relationship with other believers, ... sensing a partnership in the gospel” (276). No greater place is this relationship truly exemplified than in the life of the first church community that lived throughout Jerusalem. The New Testament emphasizes the participation “in something,” particularly objective realities outside and independent of one’s own existence (O’Brien 294). This transformed style of living did not happen apart from the gift of the Holy Spirit. God’s transforming presence united the different believers into a community of *koinonia* (Keck 10: 71).

The Holy Spirit plays an important role in this community of *koinonia* because this term does not appear in any of the four gospels. This level of synergistic relationship emerges only after Pentecost. This term occasionally appears in Acts, as in 2:42, where believers gathered to learn the apostle’s teaching and enjoy this new fellowship [*koinonia*], to the breaking of bread together and to prayer. In essence, the fruit of synergy is produced as a result of this Spirit-filled *koinonia*. From a Pauline perspective, *koinonia* is related to the movement of the good news of Jesus Christ from the Jewish to the Gentile world (Brown 168).

Testimony

Larry C. Ingram examines the impact that personal testimony within the congregation has on building such a community. He suggests that one's own personal testimony of experiencing God's grace and work in one's life is noted as an element that plays a role in creating a deeper sense of community identity. Testimony identifies and connects people to one another through a common faith and life experience (297). Testimony itself has the potential to allow people to identify vicariously with that testimony and to remember what is important about being a community of people redeemed by Christ. Testimony reminds the community of the purpose to which it commits itself and instills a desire to recommit to that purpose to maintain the current effects of its ministry.

Most of Ingram's work on this subject has to do with examining the impact that vicarious testimony has on the individual. His focus on testimony also brings out the impact it has on a church community made up of diverse people. Ingram concludes that the more diverse the community, the more likely a vicarious connection will occur. He states, "Atonement is experienced collectively through the testimony of persons who represent the potential vulnerabilities of each" (302). Said another way, different testimonies impact different people in different ways.

This vicarious connection suggests that for a witness to be a part of creating genuine church synergy among separate congregations, a testimony of experiencing God's presence and transforming grace should be presented through the lens of the overall purpose and vision of the church. Testimony that is not utilized with this end in mind creates the possibility of simply stirring the emotions of a few, becoming short-

lived, and having limited impact for the whole church. If testimony does not support the vision of the overall church, then it will not become a part of creating synergy.

This conclusion implies that communicating regularly among the entire church as to how lives are being impacted through the church as a whole is helping promote greater levels of church synergy. Testimony gives evidence to the positive nature of diversity. Martin Palmer speaks on how diversity has a positive influence on a changing culture as the church tells God's story and the stories of changed lives in vividly different ways. In doing so, the church will have taken on board many new ideas, shapes, and forms from the diverse culture in which it is encountering (190).

Testimony was effectively shared in communications formats such as Web sites, newsletters, information inserts, as well as other means of affirming the positive outcome of their diversity.

Communication

The ability to live in community and to serve with one mind and spirit is a witness to people that the body of Christ can be diverse, even complex, and yet be one. Authentic Christian community and church synergy are potential goals that must be intentional and communicated. Communication, by definition, is a system involving a flow of information, energy, or material between both a sender and a receiver (Johnson, Kast, and Rosenzweig 380).

Interpersonal communication. Communication involves a clear system of interpersonal communication (IC) within the church. The inability to build IC leads, too often, to church arguments, splits, or an exodus of membership and constituents to other churches. This lack of IC becomes a negative witness to a church's ability to build a

community of love and service within itself, and the attempt to be evangelistic without this type of community becomes ineffective.

People live in a constant group environment of some sort, be it family, work, church, etc. Communication becomes a necessary part of making each group environment work (Gangel and Canine 13). Howard A. Snyder agrees with this assessment when he states, “Community in the New Testament sense of *koinonia* assumes and requires face-to-face communication” (102). To that end, Kenneth O. Gangel and Samuel L. Canine suggest that interpersonal communication is as much or more about meaning exchange as it is about word exchange (39). They give the following suggestions as communication tools for creating synergy.

First, Gangel and Canine suggest the need to *communicate the objectives repeatedly and clearly* (39). Overcommunication is not a concern when dealing with something as central as the mission goals of the church. Detail to communicating mission goals is an essential part of promoting the mind-set that each part of the church body is contributing to the same outcome, which, in turn, equates itself with synergy. Church leaders need reminding of the inherent caution that comes with the week-to-week operations of church ministry. Merely getting things done can sometimes overshadow the objectives. This oversight highlights the need that a church with multiple congregations has for continual communication.

Second, Gangel and Canine suggest the need to *protect the emotional tone of what is being communicated* (39). The assumption that all members of a congregation receive communication in the same way is an oversight, particularly when dealing with cultural differences. If one congregation is promoting a ministry with excitement and vigor, but

other congregations do not communicate it with the same enthusiasm, then it becomes inadequately communicated. This anomaly might be better corrected with a form of electronic media. This form of communication can protect the emotional tone of what is being communicated by exposing everyone to the same message.

Third, Gangel and Canine suggest the need to *identify clear channels for communication* (39-40). This point addresses the question of who is delivering the communication, to whom the message is being communicated, how it is being communicated, and addressing questions for clarity. This clarity means getting the communication out and evaluating the channels through a system of feedback.

Fourth, Gangel and Canine suggest the need to *recognize that different levels of communication exist* (40). Not every communication holds the same intensity or urgency. Different channels can be designed for the different levels of urgency needed. On certain occasions, the information being communicated will be pertinent to the entire church system, while at other times the information being communicated will only be pertinent to a particular congregation or groups within a congregation.

Fifth, Gangel and Canine suggest the need to *teach people how to communicate* (40). Teaching systematic communication methods and conducting seminars and demonstrations enhance the process. Knowing that communication does not stop on the organizational level, communicating on a person-to-person level is just as important outside the church as is the emphasis placed on communicating within it.

Structured communication . From a business perspective, company mergers became a close parallel to churches with multiple congregations and the need for succinct communications instruments. One company merger served as a case study for Blake and

Mouton. The attraction to this particular merger was the integration of the interface conflict-solving model, which was designed to take the human aspect of the merger into consideration before the actual merger was implemented. Applying this approach to the front end of the merger was intended to help counteract the 80 percent failure rate of companies who merged first and then began to work through the social details (41).

Blake and Mouton note that the particular human aspects taken into consideration are the feelings of insecurity and worthlessness, distrust and ungrounded suspicion between personnel of each organization. These feelings are said to stem from the lack of communication between companies and the sheer ignorance that one company has of the other (42). Patrick Granfield argues that the neglect to take these human aspects into account create entropy, which becomes an enemy to effective communication (664).

The interface model focuses on establishing cooperative and collaborative relationships. The procedure takes the parties through a series of general sessions that involve the whole group, and then into the specific break-off groups. The purpose was to bring out each other's historical backgrounds, self-perceptions, concerns, and observations of the other organization. Two consultants led the process by asking for questions of clarification, expectations, and agreements. These sessions went through several cycles until a general consensus could be formed. A key element in this collaboration was the willingness to express each other's concerns and the flexibility for the good of the overall organization.

The main observation made from this case study was the tension created from the lack of information being exchanged concerning the inside details of the other group. This tension led to battle lines being drawn and inferences being made on the basis of

opinion, personal motivation, and hearsay (Blake and Mouton 55). In a church with multiple congregations, this observation helps church leadership understand that indifference and suspicion form as a result of uninformed opinions, biased observations, and incorrect hearsay. On a larger level, this lack of detail concerning the other congregation becomes yet another counterproductive factor in creating and/or maintaining synergy.

Thus, the end result of this case study shows the interface conflict-solution model increasing the likelihood of a successful business merger between two autonomous organizations. Nevertheless, their model does not completely connect with building church synergy from the standpoint that one congregation is not buying the other out. In the case of two or more churches merging together to form one larger church, the Interface Conflict-Solving Model would be crucial.

This study takes into consideration that starting or adding new congregations to an existing church generates a different yet similar dynamic. This dynamic becomes necessary to draw any diverse addition around the common vision and goals of the church while, at the same time, encouraging that congregation's unique contribution to that end. Granfield agrees that the more communication among all levels in the church and between the church and its total environment, the more effective the church's witness will be (662). Thus, communication contributes to more than a great understanding of each other. It is a witness to the oneness of God.

Leadership

No secular or religious, profit or nonprofit organization will be any better than its leadership. Growing amounts of literature from secular and Christian fields are currently

available on the topic of leadership (e.g., Miller). Universities, liberal arts colleges, and seminaries are expanding their catalogues to include courses, if not full degrees, in leadership. One wonders what role leadership plays in influencing the creation of synergy within churches of multiple congregations. Among the many roles and responsibilities church leaders undertake, two show themselves to be imperative: casting vision and team leadership.

Vision. As mentioned previously, vision and common goals are factors of creating a synergistic link between diverse groups if the vision and goals are compelling and representative enough to those involved. Peter M. Senge agrees with this condition on vision when he teaches that vision can become a living force only when the people truly believe that the vision can shape their future (231). Therefore, leadership that has influence on creating synergy must be visionary and able to link the various qualities into one effective and cohesive approach (Van Marrewijk 155).

Vision has been defined in the past as a mental picture of a preferred future. Malphurs describes it as a ministry snapshot that one carries around in a mental wallet (141). However, this definition alone is too simplistic. Vision should contain within it some inspirational component that draws and does not push toward a common goal. Vision should be an inspired destination that motivates all persons involved to move forward in the same direction. Motivation and compassion toward a common mission appears to be at the heart of creating synergy. A vision means a common goal with which every member can be aligned and to which every member can be accountable.

Michael C. Mack believes that when all levels of leadership and members hip

know a clearly defined vision, ministry can be effectively aligned with that mission (131). This alignment becomes a perfunctory role of good leadership, but good leadership goes beyond the senior pastor or most visible leader. Leaders at every level of the church should communicate vision and demonstrate the importance of lining up every aspect of what the church does as a fulfillment of that vision. Leadership is key and points to the major benefit that team leadership provides.

Team leadership. Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber examines the impact that team management theory (TMT) would have on multiculturalism within the workplace. TMT supports the breakdown of a highly hierarchical system. She suggests that a form of *synergy* develops within a leadership team as they work together to reach a common goal and a common connection (459). Robert E. Quinn discovered that even two opposing teams become joined in a synergistic relationship. This relationship occurs when the outstanding effort of one team stimulates the opposing team to a higher level of play, which in turn stimulates the first team to an even higher level of play. At this point, the two opposing teams become a single mutually reinforcing system (163). In this case, a certain level of competition within an organization can be productive and positive.

Nevertheless, to bring balance to this competitive thought, Schreiber suggests that teaching aspects of all the cultures involved helps everyone rethink the *us-versus-them* paradigm through a different, more compatible lens (460). Learning to value each other's unique differences and how those differences contribute to the whole means having the ability to see each other as equals. Having equality starts with the need for new sensitivities and understanding. It calls for team leadership and greater collaboration. This equality suggests that for a church to create synergy, team leadership must take an

active role in communicating and celebrating the diversities and similarities of each congregation.

Diversity in team leadership. A leadership team models the same type cooperative synergy it seeks to create, except on a smaller scale. Asako Miura and Misao Hida conducted a university experiment to test the hypothesis that groups with members of higher levels of diversity and similarity of thought would show greater synergy to produce greater group creativity. Group diversity is defined in this experiment as the ability of an individual to think differently from other group members based on his or her own experience, learning, and/or personality (542). This definition supports leadership and team-building principles. Therefore, team leadership consists of people with a diverse enough background to contribute to a wide variety of needs.

The results of this experiment suggest that the greater the diversity brought to a problem, the more likely a better solution is discovered (Miura and Hida 542). This finding should challenge any hierarchical structure of church leadership to consider the synergy derived from team leadership. A fast-changing spiritually diverse culture needs the kind of diversity that team leadership offers in order to continue to reach and minister effectively.

Parameters in team leadership. A literature review also reveals the need to have a certain degree of balance between similarities and differences in order for this diverse grouping to work. Miura and Hida explain that having a certain degree of similarity among members will help prevent too large a disagreement gap from forming. Too much dissimilarity would be counterproductive in the end (544). While diversity provides a creative element in the team, the team must also consider its ability to work toward a

consensus. Noah E. Friedkin refers to this type of consensus as cohesiveness, a positive group behavior and attitude that, in turn, maintains its group attachments (410). Robert L. Phillips, John D. Blair and Neal Schmitt add that cohesion is the foundation to organizational synergy because it becomes the social mechanism that will prevent a breakdown when the organization is exposed to extremely stressful conditions (140).

This aspect of diversity and similarity contains a theological element, as well. Being Christian, by nature, is to have certain things in common while being uniquely individual at the same time. Christians have the same faith, the same Lord, the same baptism, the same Holy Spirit living within, the same call to love and be in fellowship, and the same mandate to go and make disciples of all nations. These common theological similarities bind together the unique differences of individual Christians to develop a more effective team of leaders.

Relevant Theories

Two theories are relevant to creating synergy. First, the review looks at systems theory and how it pertains to creating synergy within separate church congregations. Second, the review looks at stepfamily theory and how it tends to work against synergy as it pertains to separate church congregations.

Systems Theory and Its Relationship to Synergy

Systems theory examines the interrelatedness of connecting parts and relationships that exist and function within the whole (Steinke 3). Friedman also describes systems thinking as that which pays less attention to the content of what is going on and more to the process that governs the content (15). Several of the businesses and church situations previously listed demonstrate how systems theory works within the

organization seeking or struggling with organizational synergy. For example, when a Canadian labor union began merging additional diverse labor unions together, systems theory surfaced in the need to understand better how to create synergy among labor unions of different trades for the good of the overall union. The section on communication also indicates how important sharing and exchanging information among its parts is to the promotion of synergy. Thus, communication becomes a promotional concept to systems theory. Systems theory is designed to take notice of how each of its connecting parts affects the whole, as well as the effect it has on each of its parts. A theology of the Trinity, for example, is a form of systems thinking. This doctrine looks at both the totality of God and the three equal persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While equally the same, they, nevertheless, function differently within the whole.

Systems thinking helps to understand better the process of change that goes on within an organization. Senge expresses in an interview his belief that change should not be understood as the result of an A-causes-B exchange but as a cause and effect that results from a variety of different angles (Loren 45). Gilbert R. Rendle also states that systems thinking approaches an organization not from the whole to its parts, but begins with the parts to understand the whole better (55). Looking at an organization from its parts to its whole, Sonya R. Hardin and Roberta Kaplow add that systems thinking becomes the ability to understand how one decision can impact the whole (6). This principle better assists team leadership in solving organizational problems and in helping prevent future conflicts through anticipation and planning. Unsolved conflict must be managed and handled in a collaborative manner (Dent 179).

Each congregation contains within itself various systems that make it function.

These systems are a basic premise behind the attempt to understand better the next macro level of how each separate congregation becomes a system that functions within the larger church. This larger view of systems theory also helps manage and maintain a new level of complexity.

Callahan helps bring further clarity to systems thinking within a church of multiple congregations:

What we call a large church is a collection of small congregations who have enough in common to share the same centralized space and facilities and the same pastor and pastoral staff. The art of serving a large church is, in fact, the art of serving a cooperative parish. (*Twelve Keys* 36)

His statement promotes the point that systems still exist, regardless of how large or small the church becomes.

According to Jesus' example in John 13 and his mandate in Matthew 28, a body of believers is responsible for loving and serving to and with one another in order to make disciples and teach the community to whom they are called to serve. In order to accomplish this mandate today, a single congregation must be able to communicate this instruction effectively among its various systems in order to execute this expected ministry. Seeking this mandate, or any vision, without systems thinking paints a lovely picture of the future with no deep understanding of the forces that must be mastered to move from here to there (Senge 12). If cooperation among these systems is true of a single congregation, then it serves to be equally true of a church with multiple congregations. In fact, such communication among its systems becomes even more complex.

Tony Gill states, "Social systems are about people having thoughts; articulating those thoughts; communicating these thoughts to others; people listening to the

communication; understanding the communication and responding appropriately.” From a sociological perspective, this understanding of systems theory applies within congregations, in that they function as social systems under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to carry out his unique ministry through the people who see, understand, and communicate together for the common good of the whole.

This idea and thought on communication invites many to be involved. Communicating what the Holy Spirit is revealing through people becomes a key ingredient in building church synergy. The fact that congregations may be divergent in age and culture, or simply similar in character but meeting at different times, does not change the need for this type of systems thinking for the benefit it produces. Therefore, three elements specifically link systems theory with building church synergy.

Firstly, this link involves relationship. Each system that exists within a single congregation is made up of individuals who are understood to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship is foundational from the standpoint that he is the one from whom the Church receives its Great Commission to make disciples and its Great Commandment to love each other.

Each individual system is also understood to have relationship among its members, who, in turn, develop a level of cooperative connection within that system. Systems thinking is an organizational tool to help promote synergy within a single system and then expand that synergy to the macro level of single systems having relationship with each other. Sunday school classes, ministry teams, and/or small home groups represent individual systems that function in different ways but, nonetheless, have an ongoing relationship serving toward a common call with each other. Steinke gives further

support to the idea that synergy does not depend on its organizational parts being identical but does become necessary for them to be identified with one another.

Belonging to the Lord through faith is inseparable from belonging to each other through love and care (56).

Systems thinking embraces a common love, Lord, life, and purpose that each individual shares with in a single system and further develops that synergy by sharing those same commonalities with other systems for the common goal of the Church and its calling. This commonality all begins with a fundamental and unifying relationship with Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the link between systems thinking and synergy involves leadership. A review of literature suggests that leadership should contain certain elements of both hierarchical and team styles. The greater the complexity of the system, the greater the requirement for some level of hierarchy to exist. In the church, hierarchy is already made possible by the appointment of a senior pastor. From that point, even as leadership is tiered downward, team leadership becomes representative of the systems involved. Leaders from these various systems form that same relational synergy among themselves, knowing that church synergy will never go any further than what the leadership experiences and witnesses.

Thirdly, the link between systems thinking and synergy involves communication. These three elements build on one another, but communication is essential in building synergy within any systematic level of relationship or leadership. As the communication system becomes more effective, the information that is passed on will become more accurate. As communication system becomes less effective, the information becomes

more inaccurate in an effort to fill any information void (Popenoe 531). Therefore, communication brings clarity of function in a common call for Christ.

Christ communicates to people through his Holy Spirit and brings them into relationship with him and into the reality that he is the leader of their lives and the Church. The Holy Spirit creates a synergistic connection among those of a single system as they communicate with each other in a personal, spiritual, and functional manner. On a greater level, the Holy Spirit uses leadership to communicate God's will throughout the system in a manner that discovers and exposes his will for his Church and how that will is to be lived out in any given church.

In the case of a church with multiple congregations, each congregation becomes a single complex system. These systems continue with the purpose of willingly allowing the Holy Spirit to develop an effective synergy through these same elements of relationship, leadership, and communication.

Stepfamily Theory and Its Relationship to Synergy

A literature review of systems theory reveals a connecting link with the dynamics of stepfamilies. The stepfamily theory bears a striking resemblance to the human and structural side of congregations serving together. This dynamic is particularly germane to this study, where a single congregation grows and expands to offering different worship times and styles that result in the addition of new congregations. The addition of each new congregation interrupts the church's established patterns, otherwise known as homeostasis (Steinke 6). Thus, each additional congregation takes on the characteristics of being what is described here as stepfamilies.

Brent B. Allred, Kimberly B. Boal, and William K. Holstein point out how mother organizations acquiring and merging one or more companies together face similar systemic challenges as that of stepfamilies. One top executive summarizes the similarities by comparing his company's makeup to that of his own family :

Sandy (executive's wife) and I both have the problem that our "children" look up to us as they never did before, and reject the other parent with equal vigor, saying, "Sandy wouldn't want to do this, so what do I care what John wants." (24)

His analogy of this parent/child relationship refers to the reaction of merged employees and divisions of the newly restructured form of parental leadership.

Churches with multiple congregations are similar to this family situation with stepchildren who feel a lack of connection. They either lack a history together or remain disconnected because of the absence of regular interaction. Unless the original congregation is convinced of the need, values, and purpose behind expanding its ministry to incorporate additional congregations, they do not view any additional congregations as a real part of their church family. Thus, the atmosphere of being a congregational stepfamily is born.

Churches often refer to themselves as families. Small congregations, for example, hold very strong ties, resulting from a long history of being together and being involved in each other's life histories. In many cases, the reference of *church family* carries a literal connotation due to the actual kinship of many members to one another. One might even conclude that churches with a stronger sense of family are less likely to create synergy with additional congregations because of the perceived threat they bring to the family history.

With culture becoming more and more diverse, churches are faced with becoming more open and mission minded to accommodate this type of congregational diversity. In essence, they are unknowingly adopting a stepfamily model where new congregants and new Christians are likely to hold their loyalty to the congregation that is most instrumental in introducing them to Jesus Christ. They are in the same overall church family by means of membership but are connected to the overall church family through a different parent—being the particular congregation (Allred, Boal, and Holstein 26).

Allred, Boal, and Holstein compiled a chart of similarities that exist between stepfamilies and merged corporations, which also fit quite easily into a situation involving multiple congregations (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Similarities between Stepfamilies and Merged Corporations

Characteristics	Tasks	Issues
High stress	Forming new traditions	Power issues
Culture shock	Creating new coalitions	Coping with loss & change
Role ambiguity	Establishing new relationships	Life cycle discrepancies
Limited shared history		Boundary problems
Complex structures		Insider versus outsider
		Loyalty conflicts

Source: Allred, Boal, and Holstein 27.

Based on their comparison of stepfamily dynamics and merged corporations, Allred, Boal, and Holstein conclude that merging and acquiring organizations should center on similarity in size, industry, culture, and strategy, suggesting that similarity becomes a key component that can be linked to a greater success rate (26, 32).

Nevertheless, based on the nature of the church and its call to make disciples of all

people, this similarity principle cannot be applied in all cases. The grace of God is offered to all persons, regardless of dissimilarity. The culture the church is called to reach today is ever changing, and systems thinking embraces this change rather than avoiding it.

Communities are dissimilar in regard to race, religions, marital status, beliefs, and life experiences. This mentality of embracing similarity would be counterproductive to Christianity and would condone a close-minded approach to those unlike themselves. Not only would this mentality miss an opportunity to carry out the Great Commission, but it also promote a consistent source of tension for any attempt at church health and church growth. Becoming a vibrant church of the twenty-first century means learning to embrace diversity in order to embrace the people. Creating church synergy suggests starting with embracing each other with God's unconditional love.

Stepfamily theory is a subcategory of systems thinking that helps church leadership better anticipate and plan the results and requirements of ministering to a fast-changing world. This theory can also be instrumental in helping church leadership anticipate potential problems within a church family dynamic; therefore, the goal of church leadership is to protect against a *step-congregation* mentality.

Summary on Synergy

A summary of five main topics on creating synergy are addressed from the literature review.

First, as complex and diverse as the twenty-first century culture has grown, no biblical mandate exists that requires one church to attempt to match the complexity of an entire culture in order to be effective. Though the examples used in this literature review faced their difficulties in a complex system, their experience does not prove any

conclusive parallels between individual physicians or separate labor unions and the complexity involved in individual congregations. The complexity that results from becoming too diverse suggests limitations exist as to how complex a church can become and still build synergy. Without certain key components in place, size and/or complexity can become the antithesis to organizational synergy.

A potentially complex situation of having a church with multiple congregations can be simplified by the manner in which the complexity is minimized through its organizational structure. Multiple congregations become much less complex if the boundaries of being a congregation are held to a worshipping community while the other aspects of church life are served as one. Serving as one while celebrating diversity helps to create stronger levels synergy. That element of one church celebrating its own diversity helps in building greater church-wide synergy.

Second, the literature examined unity and diversity only within the context of a single operational environment. The review dealt with individuals within a single group and not groups within a larger organization. The question still remains as to whether the sociological principles that guide individuals within a single group can be effectively applied to the larger entity of separate congregations within a single church. In order to have synergy within an organization with multiple groups, individuals within a single group must first find their own balance between diversity and unity. This balance is a fundamental step toward church-wide synergy.

Churches with multiple worshipping congregations naturally invite a diverse group of people who bring with them different gifts, backgrounds, history, experience,

and talents. That diversity has the potential of building synergy as each diverse grouping understands and celebrates its contribution to the overall commission, command, and specific vision of that church.

Third, based on the conversation on building community, testimony should become a tool for connecting and communicating how God's grace is being exemplified in each congregation, regardless of the diversity in style, age, or culture. Testimony, therefore, becomes the concrete evidence of God's grace working in the entire church, which should be shared equally with each congregation to raise the level of identification with the entire church. I contend that persons giving testimony through personal, video, or written witness to all church congregations help promote synergy. The value of testimony being communicated church-wide leads to the next common theme discovered in this literature review.

Churches of multiple congregations help build synergy through the realization of lives being changed as a result of its diverse ministry. Testimony gives a vicarious connection to the spiritual success of the overall church ministry and is not necessarily isolated to the one diverse area of that church.

Fourth, as a church grows more complex, the need for effective communication grows proportionately. The need for a systematic distribution of information or detail is not merely for the sake of being informed but for building a history together and for understanding the celebrations and needs of each congregation within that history. The one element that differentiates church synergy from corporate synergy is the spiritual element. Sociologically speaking, synergy is a part of effectively communicating a common goal and worldview that motivates a person to work alongside another. Indeed,

this aspect is not missing from the church, but the involvement of the Holy Spirit adds a dynamic that takes communication to a greater level.

Communicating and celebrating the milestones of each congregation can help in building synergy, which, in turn, gives each member a greater sense of ownership in the total ministry of the church. Developing this systematic form of communication is a matter for the next overarching theme found in this literature review.

Fifth, leadership in a church with multiple congregations presents monthly, weekly, if not daily, challenges in building and maintaining synergy. One compulsory element of leadership on this level is making biblical vision a consistent part of the entire church. Team leadership is about building sound structures of communication, relationship, and problem solving. Team leadership is equally about modeling the element toward which it seeks to lead, which in this case is synergy among leadership. The diversity and unity of each congregation essentially requires the same or similar diversity and unity in its leadership team. Synergy is modeled and guided by its church leadership.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

This study was born out of a need to establish a way to create an overall sense of synergy within an up-and-coming church project that will be revitalized through diversity. The challenge at hand was to determine what elements are present in churches that are currently displaying a healthy level of synergy among multiple worshipping congregations; therefore, the purpose of this project was to discover what factors influence the creation of synergy within a church of multiple congregations. To that end, an evaluative study was conducted on six churches that currently function with multiple congregations.

Research Questions

After completing a review of the literature, the following questions helped bring direction to the design of this study.

Research Question #1

What are the elements that help create synergy in churches with multiple congregations?

This question simply sought to discover the essential guidelines and practices that would help bring further unity and church synergy among those churches that find themselves faced with a community challenge of having multiple congregations. The data and summary of this study can either be considered for use among churches struggling with displaced synergy or become replicated by other researchers to expand this study into areas currently beyond its scope.

Research Question #2

Do churches of either mixed worship style or same worship style correlate with higher synergy numbers?

Because diversity lends itself to complexity, this question sought to discover any inherent value in reducing a sense of competition among congregations that function with same style services and those that function with mixed styles or settings. To answer this question, I selected six churches that met one of the two categories: three with same style and three with mixed style worship services.

Delimiting Factors

Delimiting factors were set to narrow the field of church samples to those that fit a specified parameter of qualifications. These factors are a part of determining the common components that promote synergy among churches with multiple congregations. These delimiting factors divide into four main categories.

1. Selecting only those churches that ministered through multiple worshipping communities delimited the field qualifying churches. Churches must have at least two services that meet either in the same facility, separate locations on the same facility, or separate locations all together.

2. Selecting only those churches that progressed from one service to two or more services within the past twenty-five years delimited the field of qualifying churches. Qualifying churches include on campus or off campus congregations.

3. Selecting only those churches that fit within one of two worship categories delimited the field of qualifying churches. The first category includes those churches that

duplicate their worship style in all services. The second category includes those churches that offer different worship styles.

4. Selecting those churches whose average attendance in primary worship twenty-five years ago was 250 or less delimited the field of qualifying churches. Current worship attendance did not delimit the selection of these churches.

Subjects

Based on the previous delimiting factors, six churches were selected.

Church #1: Bethel Baptist Church (BBC)

BBC is located in Dothan, Alabama. It meets factors #1 and #2 as being a church with two or more separate worshipping congregations and has grown from one to two services in the past twenty-five years. BBC meets style factor #3 as being a church that duplicates its service styles and meets the size factor of #4 as being a church whose average worship attendance twenty-five years prior was less than 250. BBC conducts its multiple worship services within the same facility and currently averages over five hundred people in attendance.

Church #2: Harvest United Methodist Church (HUMC)

HUMC is located in Dothan, Alabama. It meets factors #1 and #2 as being a church with two or more separate worshipping congregations and has grown from one to two services in the past twenty-five years. HUMC meets style factor #3 as being a church that duplicates its service styles and meets the size factor of #4 as being a church whose average worship attendance twenty-five years prior was less than 250. HUMC conducts its multiple worship services within the same facility and currently averages over twelve hundred people in attendance.

Church #3: St. Mark United Methodist Church (SMUMC)

SMUMC is located in Columbus, Georgia. It meets factors #1 and #2 as being a church with two or more separate worshipping congregations and has grown from one to two services in the past twenty-five years. SMUMC meets style factor #3 as being a church that duplicates its service styles and meets the size factor of #4 as being a church whose average worship attendance twenty-five years prior was less than 250. SMUMC conducts its multiple worship services within the same facility and currently averages over 350 people in attendance.

Church #4: Demopolis First United Methodist Church (DFUMC)

DFUMC is located in Demopolis, Alabama. It meets factors #1 and #2 as being a church with two or more separate worshipping congregations and has grown from one to two services in the past twenty-five years. DFUMC meets style factor #3 as being a church that offers two different service styles and meets the size factor of #4 as being a church whose average worship attendance twenty-five years prior was less than 250. DFUMC conducts its multiple worship services within separate facilities on the same campus and currently averages over 360 people in attendance.

Church #5: Grace Place United Methodist Church (GPUMC)

GPUMC is located in Semmes, Alabama. It meets factors #1 and #2 as being a church with two or more separate worshipping congregations and has grown from one to two services in the past twenty-five years. GPUMC meets style factor #3 as being a church that offers three different service styles and meets the size factor of #4 as being a church whose average worship attendance twenty-five years prior was less than 250.

GPUMC is a new church plant that conducts its multiple worship services on separate locations and currently averages just fewer than one hundred people in attendance.

Church #6: St. Luke United Methodist Church (SLUMC)

SLUMC is located in Pensacola, Alabama. It meets factors #1 and #2 as being a church with two or more separate worshipping congregations and has grown from one to two services in the past twenty-five years. SLUMC meets style factor #3 as being a church that offers two different service styles and meets the size factor of #4 as being a church whose average worship attendance twenty-five years prior was less than 250. SLUMC conducts its multiple worship services within separate facilities on the same campus and currently averages over 550 people in attendance.

Instrumentation

The literature review highlighted four essential components that have some influence on creating church-wide synergy. These components were community, leadership, communication, and vision. Tables 3.1-3.4 display these statements as they pertain to each component. To measure the degree to which each of these four components functioned within each participating church, I designed a survey instrument with thirty-five statements on which to respond. This instrument is the Church Synergy Assessment Tool (CSAT).

The original Partnership Self-Assessment Tool (PSAT) was the model from which the CSAT in this study was edited and formatted. In 2001, the Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health at the New York Academy of Medicine conducted the National Study of Partnership Functioning. This methodologically rigorous study of sixty-three partnerships throughout the United States

was designed to determine the extent to which partnerships achieve synergy and to identify the factors that influence the ability of partnerships to maximize synergy (Center for the Advancement). In 2008, Elisa Marie Orosco used this instrument for her dissertation research in order to identify dimensions of synergy in the College Going Initiative of Imperial County, California. The scope and the purpose for which this survey tool was used made it a relevant resource for this study.

The PSAT measured the mean score of each component and interpreted these scores through the lens of three synergy zones. Scores from 1.0 -2.9 are in the Low Synergy Zone, which means that this area needs a lot of improvement. Scores from 3.0 - 4.0 are in the Moderate Synergy Zone, which means that more effort is needed in this area to maximize the congregation's cooperative potential. Scores from 4.1-5.0 are in the High Synergy Zone, which means that the partnership currently excels in this area and needs to focus attention on maintaining its high score. I used these synergy zones to interpret the data obtained in the CSAT.

In the CSAT, statements 7-14 formed a perception of synergy score (PSS) section. These eight statements provided an overall perception of synergy. The PSS encompassed all four components being measured (see Table 4.4). The mean score of the PSS was necessary to calculate the level of correlation each category had on influencing the creation of synergy. Statements 15 -22 focus on elements of community. These statements measured the level to which community was being lived out in the church. Statements 23-29 focus on elements of leadership. These statements measured the level to which leadership was functioning in the church. Statements 30 -35 focus on elements of communication. These statements measured the level to which communication was

functioning in the church. Statements 36-41 focus on elements of vision. These statements measured the level to which vision was being lived out in the church.

Table 3.1. Synergy Assessment Statements: Community

Community
Feels like one church rather than two or more separate congregations. (#9)
Meets the social and spiritual needs of our church as a whole. (#12)
Know at least ten people attending <u>other</u> congregations in our church. (#15)
Go out of my way to know people who attend <u>other</u> congregations. (#16)
I am actively involved in ministries with people who attend <u>other</u> services. (#17)
Less unified as a single church and more like two or more separate churches. (#18)
Attend <u>other</u> services in our church to show my support of the larger church. (#19)
Number of people (25%+) meet together for fellowship, group study, or conversation. (#20)
Provide intentional ways for people from all services to meet one another. (#21)
Not very satisfied with the way our separate congregations work together. (#22)

Table 3.2. Synergy Assessment Statements: Leadership

Leadership
Identifies new and creative ways to solve church problems or issues. (#7)
Responds quickly to the needs and problems of our community. (#11)
Units the separate congregations in the overall ministry of this church. (#23)
Fails to inspire and motivate to serve as one church and not separate congregations. (#24)
Creates excitement around the vision and mission of our church. (#25)
Has not helped me fit in and feel like a part of the church as a whole. (#26)
Is authentic, works together, and provides good examples to follow. (#27)
Represents the diverse group of people and life experiences of this church. (#28)
Effective at coaching, developing, and discipling. (#29)

Table 3.3. Synergy Assessment Statements: Communication

Communication
Includes the views and interests of people in the entire church. (#8)
Communicates our ministries, goals, and successes in a way that creates excitement. (#13)
Keeps me well informed through the newsletter and/or Web site. (#30)
Helps me understand the financial, ministry, and membership status of our church. (#31)
Prepares and distributes important information in a timely manner. (#32)
Could do better at making me aware of how the other worshipping congregations are helping reach goals and fulfilling our vision. (#33)
Frequently celebrates the small wins and successes throughout the church. (#34)
Rarely mentions our vision from the pulpit or the pastor's sermons. (#35)

Table 3.4. Synergy Assessment Statements: Vision

Vision
Collectively pursues the common vision of our church. (#10)
Fully understands the meaning and purpose of our vision and mission as a church. (#14)
Has a positive outlook toward policy and program changes. (#36)
Has great worship attendance but lacks a passion and commitment to our vision. (#37)
Sometimes leans toward maintaining the status quo. (#38)
Has a strong and clear picture of our preferred future (#39).
Can be inconsistent at times in sticking to our goals in fulfilling our vision. (#40)
Helps us memorize and routinely state our church's vision statement. (#41)

The survey included five demographic questions. These questions compare any variances in perceptions against the biases of gender, age, length of time in the church, participation, and length of relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Table 3.5 charts these questions.

Table 3.5. Synergy Assessment Questions: Demographics

Demographics
Male or Female (#1)
Which age bracket defines you? (<i>please check one</i>) (#2)
20 or younger 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-65 65+
Please list the number of years you have been attending this church: ____ (#3)
Approximately how often <u>in the past year</u> have you spent time participating in each of the following church activities? (#4)
—Worship Services
—Sunday school, small group, or Bible study
—Serving in volunteer ministry at the church.
—Serving in volunteer ministry at or on behalf of the church
How long have you had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? (#5)
<input type="radio"/> 5 years or less <input type="radio"/> 6-10 years <input type="radio"/> 11-15 <input type="radio"/> 16-20 <input type="radio"/> 21+
Please indicate the service you attend most by day or time it meets: (e.g., 9:30 a.m. service) (#6)

The survey was heavily influenced and modeled after a similar assessment tool used in the business field, entitled *Partnership Self Assessment Tool* (Center for the Advancement). I modified questions one, two, and five from page 2 to best fit the nature of this assessment tool. I modified statements seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen from page 4 to best fit the nature of this assessment tool. I also modified statement sixteen from page 14 to best fit the nature of this assessment tool.

Jim Clemmer offered additional insight from his assessment tool, entitled *Measuring Organizational and Team Energy Levels*. I modified statements twenty-one, twenty-three, thirty-one, thirty-two, and thirty-three to best fit the nature of I formulated all other statements as they pertained to the specific category.

Reliability

The one major drawback for using the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool as a model to create the Church Synergy Assessment Tool (CSAT) was that I could find no

scores for reliability testing. In statistics, reliability is the consistency of a measuring instrument to return consistent data when used again. This reliability can either be whether the measurements of the same instrument give or are likely to give the same measurement in a retest or, in the case of more subjective instruments such as the CSAT, whether two independent assessors give similar scores (“Reliability”).

To test the reliability of the CSAT, I used Cronbach’s Alpha to measure its degree of consistency. For scales that are used as research tools to compare groups, calculated scores of 0.7 to 0.8 are regarded as satisfactory. For clinical applications, much higher values of reliability are needed. The minimum for a clinical instrument is 0.90 (Bland and Altman 572). Two hundred CSAT surveys were tested and returned an alpha score of .928. This high score indicates a high internal consistency that gives confidence that, if used again, will return similar results.

Table 3.6. Synergy Assessment Tool Reliability Test

	Questions Tested	Sample Size	Alpha
Survey Tool	35	200	.928

Face Validity

On 15 May 2008, I sent a survey to ten selected church members from Greystone United Methodist Church and five additional persons not connected with the church to participate in the pretest of this instrument. These participants were of varying age and educational levels. I instructed the participants to be aware of four main concerns. Firstly, they looked for any unclear wording or confusing statements in the instrument. This

assessment assured more accurate answers based on a clear understanding of the questions. Secondly, they made notes of any typographical and grammatical errors. Thirdly, they recorded the time the survey began and the time it ended. This record was for the purpose of calculating an average time in completing the survey. Lastly, they looked for any question or statement that would potentially place a respondent in a compromising position. These measures helped minimize any skewing of the data.

The shortest time taken to complete the pretest survey was five minutes. The longest time taken to complete the pretest survey was approximately fifteen minutes. Average time to complete the survey was ten minutes. Only a few misspelled words needed to be corrected. No unclear or confusing statements were found. In addition, no questions or statements that would seemingly compromise the integrity of the answers given were found.

Data Collection

This research was an evaluative study utilizing a nonexperimental, quantitative research method. The research was evaluative based on the observations made on churches with multiple congregations. Wiersma and Jurs define quantitative research as that which describes a phenomenon with numbers and measurements rather than using words (13). The data collected helped in evaluating the level of synergy from which each church was functioning and what elements helped instill that synergy.

This quantitative study collected data through a survey distributed among a random sample of the membership of each participating church. Each participating church generated a random sample mailing list of 12 percent. I selected this 12 percent sample size to increase the likelihood of attaining a greater return rate toward a 10

percent target. The random model chosen for this research is known as systematic sampling (Wiersma and Jurs 307). I provided an instruction sheet to each church, giving the following directions as to how to generate a systematic sample:

1. By providing me with the total church membership number;
2. By writing the numbers 1 through 8 on separate pieces of paper. I chose the number eight on the basis that selecting every eighth person would closely generate a random sample of 12 percent;
3. By randomly selecting one of those eight numbers (e.g., drawing out a number 5); and,
4. By going down the membership list and beginning with the fifth member listed (e.g., most likely the person's last name will begin with an A). Beginning with the fifth person, selecting every eighth person until reaching the end of the membership list. This method creates the random selection.

Because this study depended on the participation of churches that I did not have direct connection, I personally contacted each senior pastor to inquire of his or her interest in participating in this project. For the pastors who expressed interest in participating in this research, I sent a packet explaining the project and the details as to how each church would participate in creating a random list of participants and making his or her congregation aware of the church's participation in this research. I made a further agreement to provide the findings of that particular church to the senior pastor. The data provided from this survey could prove to be helpful in affirming the excellence they provide in developing and maintaining church synergy, in addition to being an evaluative tool to further leadership development and synergy improvement.

I informed each senior pastor that I would contact him at a later date to explain the project in greater detail and answer any questions to help assure the leadership of the wide benefit this study would provide. The survey packet sent to the pastor included the following protocol.

1. A *public announcement* provided a detailed announcement concerning this project and its publication to be made two consecutive Sundays prior to the distribution of the survey. This announcement requested that the senior pastor make a verbal presentation from the pulpit to indicate his or her approval and support of the project, to announce the project in the bulletin, to present this announcement in the monthly newsletter briefly outlining the project and the forthcoming random selection of participants, and that the senior pastor provide a cover letter on church stationery in the survey mailing.

2. The *membership survey* provided the church leadership the opportunity to examine the contents and nature of the survey prior to the beginning of the public announcement. By knowing the potential benefits that would be forthcoming, the leadership received further assurance to participate. In addition, I provided permission to the church to use this survey as a tracking instrument to measure any progress in low-rated areas if the church so chooses.

3. An *instruction sheet* outlined how to generate a random sample, a deadline to return the survey, and for the convenience of the participants, I included a self-addressed stamped envelope in the packet.

Confidentiality

Giving one's opinion or perception of the church and its leadership is a very

private matter, particularly if someone's perception does not portray the church or its leaders in a positive or favorable manner. A. Ardolino states that if a participant believes their anonymity will not be maintained, the survey will either not be completed and returned or will contain skewed self-censored data. In the effort to maintain anonymity, to alleviate any skewed data, and to promote a higher rate of return, the assessment tool included no questions of identification. I included a cover letter assuring strict confidentiality. Because this instrument was not intended to track any change in the respondents' perception over a period of time, no further surveys were used for follow-up data. This non follow-up design eliminated the need to assign a unique participant code for tracking purposes, thus assuring complete anonymity.

Constants

This study was an evaluative study that did not focus on manipulating and measuring variables. No independent, dependent, or intervening variables were a part of this study. The principles discovered in this study could provide such variables for further research in order to determine the greater impact they have on church-wide synergy. For the purpose of this study, however, no relevant variables were used, only constants.

Wiersma and Jurs define a *constant* as a characteristic or condition that is the same for all the individuals in a study (33). The constants within this study include, firstly, the random sample selected from the entire membership that existed within each church and, secondly, the overall sense of church-wide synergy perceived by this random sample.

Data Analysis

After compiling the information from all six church surveys, my Research

Reflection Team assisted in analyzing and interpreting the results. The data from the surveys was summarized with the descriptive statistics¹ and the use of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient².

¹ Descriptive statistics are the categories and measures by which the quantitative data is described.

² Pearson correlation is a method of computing the mean or average score from the total data given.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Evaluating effective churches can usually be measured in terms of the number in attendance, the number of choices in worship style, and the number of ministries offered to meet a variety of needs. These are concrete milestones that are easily assessed.

Evaluating church synergy is a subject that is rarely, if ever, brought into consideration in such an evaluation. Synergy is a subjective topic. The previous indicators certainly give evidence of setting and achieving goals in ministry and indeed represent milestones worthy of celebration. However, they do not tell the complete story of the overall capacity of the church to utilize its diversity to the most effective level. This scenario led to the development of the Church Synergy Assessment Tool (CSAT) to help discern this subjective matter. The purpose of this project was to discover what factors influence the creation of synergy within a church of multiple congregations.

Two research questions guided this study: What are the elements that help create synergy in churches with multiple congregations? Do churches of either mixed worship style or same worship style correlate with higher synergy numbers?

Profile of Participants

In each of the six churches that participated in this study, a random sample of twelve percent received the CSAT survey in the mail. Total population of the overall surveys mailed out was 588. Two hundred and thirty-nine surveys (41 percent) were returned by the prescribed deadline. Of these 239 participants, ninety-seven participants (41 percent) were male, and 142 participants (59 percent) were female.

Participants marked which age bracket he or she fit (see Table 4.1). The category with the least participants was the 20 -year-old or less age group with only three. The next category with the fewest participants was the 21 to 30-year-old age group with twelve. The next category was the 31 to 40-year-old age group, with thirty-five participants. The fourth category was the 41 to 50-year-old age group with forty-two participants. The fifth category was 66 year-old and older age group with sixty-six participants. The category with the most participants was 51 to 65-year-old age group with eighty-one participants. The participants' overall average number of years in attending their churches was 13.5 years.

Table 4.1. Age Breakdown (N=239)

Age Bracket	N	%	Male	Female
20 or less	3	1	1	2
21-30	12	5	2	10
31-40	35	15	13	22
41-50	42	18	14	28
51-65	81	33	35	46
66+	66	28	31	35

In addition to the basic demographics, participants provided information concerning the level of participation in the life of their churches (see Table 4.2). The greatest majority of participation was seen in the bracket of once or more weekly in worship (80 percent), in Sunday school or small groups (57 percent), and active participation in ministry (27 percent), which was equally as high as those who did not participate at all.

Table 4.2. Participation in Church Ministries over Past Year (N=239)

	Weekly or more n (%)	1 or 2 times per month n (%)	Once every 5-6 weeks n (%)	6 or less per year n (%)	None n (%)
Worship	190 (80)	41 (17)	3 (1)	4 (2)	1 (.4)
Sunday school, small group	137 (57)	31 (13)	11 (5)	12 (5)	48 (20)
Active in ministry	65 (27)	54 (23)	26 (11)	29 (12)	65 (27)

Church Assessment Summary

The following assessment data is based on a five-point Likert scale. The assessment numbers represent the ratings given and calculated among respondents from each category being examined.

According to the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool from which this survey was modeled, three zones were used to interpret the scores from the instrument (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Assessment Synergy Zones

	Low Synergy Zone	Moderate Synergy Zone	High Synergy Zone
Mean Scores	1.0-2.9	3.0-4.0	4.1-5.0

The scores that range between 1.0-2.9 are considered to be in the Low Synergy Zone, indicating that the area needs a great deal of improvement. The scores that range between 3.0-4.0 are considered to be within in the Moderate Synergy Zone, indicating more effort is needed to maximize the congregation's cooperative potential. The scores that range

between 4.1-5.0 are in the High Synergy Zone, indicating that the partnership currently excels in this area and should focus attention on celebrating and maintaining its high score.

Total Survey Assessment

The Church Synergy Assessment Tool was segmented into six sections: demographics, perception of synergy score (PSS), community, leadership, communication, and vision. The PSS was designed to give one's perception of synergy, then using that perception score to measure if any significant correlation might exist between community, leadership, communication, and vision. These were the last four components in the survey.

Perception of Synergy

Synergy denotes the extent to which a church with multiple congregations can do more together than the total accomplishments any of the individual congregations added together. This section reflects the extent to which the participants as a whole perceived they were accomplishing more together than they would on their own. This synergy score established a baseline against which to compare scores of the four components being measured in the Church Synergy Assessment Tool.

A perception of synergy score measured eight indicators of synergy within each church. These totals were then calculated to derive a mean of the overall participants. The responses are ordered according to their average scores, starting with the attribute receiving the highest average score and ending with the one that received the lowest average score (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. PSS—Perception of Synergy Score (Overall Mean=4.17)

Perception of Synergy Score	Mean	SD*
10. By working together, our church collectively pursues the common vision of the church. (vision)	4.31	.05
11. By working together, our church responds quickly to the needs and problems of our community. (leadership)	4.29	.05
12. By working together, our church meets the social and spiritual needs we have as a whole. (community)	4.29	.02
14. By working together, our church fully understands the meaning and purpose of our vision and mission as a church. (vision)	4.28	.06
13. By working together, our church communicates our ministries, goals, and successes in a way that creates excitement and momentum for our entire church. (communication)	4.16	.10
7. By working together, our church identifies new creative ways to solve church problems and issues. (leadership)	4.15	.01
8. By working together, our church includes the views and interest of people in the entire church. (communication)	4.10	.07
9. By working together, our church clearly feels like one church rather than two or more separate congregations. (community)	3.81	.37

*SD = Standard Deviation

The four categories of community, leadership, communication, and vision were addressed in these eight indicators of synergy. Statements 9 and 12 addressed community, averaging a score of 4.05 between the two. Statements 7 and 11 addressed leadership, averaging a score of 4.22 between the two. Statements 8 and 13 addressed communication, averaging a score of 4.05 between the two. Statements 10 and 14 addressed vision, averaging a score of 4.30 between the two. This particular high score indicated that a preferred future was an important component to creating synergy.

The average overall perception of synergy score (4.17) indicates a strong impression of cooperative synergy within the combined church survey (see Table 4.4). The strongest perception of synergy score came from Harvest Church—4.33, and the least strongest rating came from Grace Place Church—3.90 (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Overall Perception of Synergy Scores

Church	Harvest	Bethel	St. Luke	Demopolis	St. Mark	Grace Place
Perception of synergy (PSS)	4.33	4.23	4.20	4.08	3.94	3.90
Community	3.83	3.59	3.67	3.87	3.70	3.36
Leadership	4.34	4.20	4.36	4.15	3.97	4.05
Communication	4.04	4.12	4.15	4.11	4.04	3.78
Vision	4.10	3.81	3.82	3.80	3.46	3.70

Community

Community denotes an expression of deep Christian *koinonia* and how that level of belonging and personal connection lives itself out among those connected through Christ. Participants considered the relationships they have with people throughout the church as a whole. This section reflects the responses to which the participants expressed their level of community.

The Church Synergy Assessment Tool measured eight indicators of strength within the community component. The overall mean score (3.83) was the lowest of the four components and rated considerably lower than the mean perception of community score (4.05), which is found in the perception of synergy score section. The community score was also the lowest score calculated among the four components. The strongest indicator of cooperative community was seen in the participants, indicating they knew at least ten other people by name who attend other congregations in their church (see Table 4.6, see statement 15). The standard deviation of .68 indicates a widespread opinion on this matter.

Table 4.6. Strength of Community (Overall Mean=3.80)

Strength of Community	Mean	SD
15. I know at least ten people by name that attend other congregations in our church.	4.11	.68
21. Our church provides intentional ways for people from all congregations to meet one another.	4.08	.09
20. A significant number of people (25+) from all of our congregations meet together for some form of fellowship, group study, or conversation.	4.05	.05
22. I am not very satisfied with the way our separate congregations work together (-). ³	3.90	.01
18. Our church seems less unified as a single church and more like two or more separate congregations (-).	3.82	.54
17. I am actively involved in one or more of our church ministries with people who attend other congregations.	3.64	.08
16. I go out of my way to know people who attend other congregations in our church.	3.38	.03
19. I occasionally attend other services in our church (4 or more per year) just to show my support of the larger church.	3.08	.07

The lowest three scores seen in statements 17, 16, and 19 suggest that the community scores tended to rate lower as the personal effort to interact across congregational lines decreased.

Leadership

Leadership denotes those persons in positions of pastoral, staff, and lay leadership. Participants considered and responded to the total effectiveness of their church leadership in working together to achieve greater results for the kingdom of God. This section reflects their responses to the leadership as a whole.

The Church Synergy Assessment Tool measured seven indicators of strength within the leadership component (see Table 4.7). The overall mean score (4.22) matched exactly the mean perception of leadership score found in the PSS section. The strongest

³ The (-) symbol indicates that the statement is stated from a negative perspective. High scores indicate disagreement with the statement.

indicator of cooperative leadership was seen in the leadership's effort to assimilate each participant into the life of the local church, along with the authenticity that was seen in the pastoral, staff, and lay leadership (see statements #26 and #27).

Table 4.7. Strength of Leadership (Overall Mean=4.22)

Strength of Leadership	Mean	SD
26. Our leadership has not helped me fit in and feel like a part of the church as a whole (-).	4.38	.03
27. Our leadership is authentic, works together, and provides a good example to follow.	4.37	.05
23. Our leadership takes responsibility for uniting the separate congregations in the overall ministry of the church.	4.23	.05
25. Our leadership creates excitement around the vision and mission of our church.	4.23	.04
24. Our leadership fails to inspire and motivate people involved in our different congregations to serve as one church and not separate congregations (-).	4.13	.23
28. Our leadership represents the diverse group of people and life experiences of this church.	4.13	.03
29. Our leadership is highly effective at coaching, developing, and disciplining me as a Christian and servant of Christ.	4.08	.03

In all subcategories that were examined, the high score in leadership was consistent. The lowest score of 4.08 suggests the inability or lack of time and oversight on a more personal basis. With the exception of statement #24, the standard deviation scores of .03, .04, and .05 show a strong consistency among these scores.

Communication

Communication denotes the amount of information being processed throughout the church that allows participants to feel a greater sense of inclusion and understanding of the church as a whole. Participants considered and responded to the various ways their churches communicated with their memberships as a whole. This section reflects the extent to which the participants believed communication was a strong component in their churches.

The Church Synergy Assessment Tool measured six indicators of strength within the communication component (see Table 4.8). The overall mean score (4.08) was closely supported by the mean perception of communication score (4.13) found in the Perception of Synergy section. Information pertaining to how church activities and ministry activities was circulated became the strongest indicator of communication (see statement #30).

Table 4.8. Strength of Communication (Overall Mean =4.07)

Strength of Communication	Mean	SD
30. Our church keeps me well informed of church activities and ministry opportunities through the newsletter, announcements, and/or Web site.	4.54	.03
32. Our church prepares and distributes important information in a timely manner.	4.24	.02
35. Our church rarely mentions our vision from the pulpit or includes its importance in the pastor's sermons (-).	4.14	.04
34. Our church frequently recognizes, appreciates, and celebrates the small wins and significant successes throughout the church.	4.05	.28
31. Our church helps me know and understand the financial, ministry, and membership status of our church.	4.02	.06
33. Our church could do better at making me aware of how the other worshipping congregations in our church are helping reach goals and fulfilling our vision (-).	3.50	.06

Participants agreed that the churches communicated well as a whole but indicated a lack of information concerning congregations outside their own. This lack of awareness dropped the overall mean score. With the exception of statement #34, the standard deviation scores of .02, .03, .04, and .06 show a consistency across the study on this perception.

Vision

Vision denotes a common goal, a preferred future with which every member can be inspired and to which every member can be accountable. Participants considered the

vision and/or mission statement of their churches, and then rated the churches based on statements contained in the section. This section reflects the extent to which the participants believed vision was a strong component in their church.

The Church Synergy Assessment Tool measured six indicators of strength within the vision component (see Table 4.9). The overall mean score of the vision component was (3.83). This score differed greatly from the mean perception of vision score (4.31) found in the perception of synergy section. The strongest indicator for synergy was the churches' flexibility in policy and ministry change in order to fulfill their mission (see statement #36). The high perception of vision in the Synergy section is not reflected in five of the six statements rated below. The participants' perception of vision does not match the practice of communicating and understanding the vision.

Table 4.9. Strength of Vision (Overall Mean=3.86)

Strength of Vision	Mean	SD
36. Our church has a positive outlook toward policy and program changes as it seeks to fulfill our vision and mission.	4.26	.04
39. Our church has a strong and clear picture of our preferred future.	3.96	.13
37. Our church has great worship attendance but lacks an overall passion and commitment for our vision (-).	3.93	.16
40. Our church can be inconsistent at times in sticking to the goals of fulfilling our vision (-).	3.85	.15
38. Our church sometimes leans toward the status quo (-).	3.82	.12
41. Our church helps us memorize and routinely state our church's vision statement.	3.16	.11

A two-tailed *z-test* was performed between the overall mean perception of synergy scores and the overall mean scores for each component to measure if any of these differences were considered significant. The test compared each component against

its own PSS with in categories against a two-tailed test, $\alpha \leq .01$ of 2.58. The *z-test* scores would have to calculate (+/-) 2.58 or higher to be considered significantly different. The results confirmed that community and vision had significant differences between their mean PSS and mean component scores (see Table 4.10). Nevertheless, according to the *Pearson correlation coefficient* value (*r*), vision was shown by a right-tail test to have a very strong correlation to creating synergy. The correlation coefficient countered the means score and the zonal interpretation.

Table 4.10. Total CSAT Comparisons

PSS & Component	M	SD	r	z
PSS	4.17	.54		
Community	3.80	.64	.482**	-4.49 ⁺⁺
Leadership	4.22	.57	.690**	0.66
Communication	4.07	.56	.536**	-1.26
Vision	3.86	.62	.608**	-3.95 ⁺⁺

**0.01; ⁺⁺ 0.01

Correlation between Perceived Synergy and Component Mean

One of the most significant findings from the data comes out of the Pearson correlation coefficient calculations. As seen in the overall comparisons listed in Table 4.10, each component has a moderate to high correlation to creating synergy. Each component rated moderately high with a positive correlation to synergy. To illustrate this finding further, four scatter charts representing the correlation between synergy and each component are provided (see Figure 4.1).

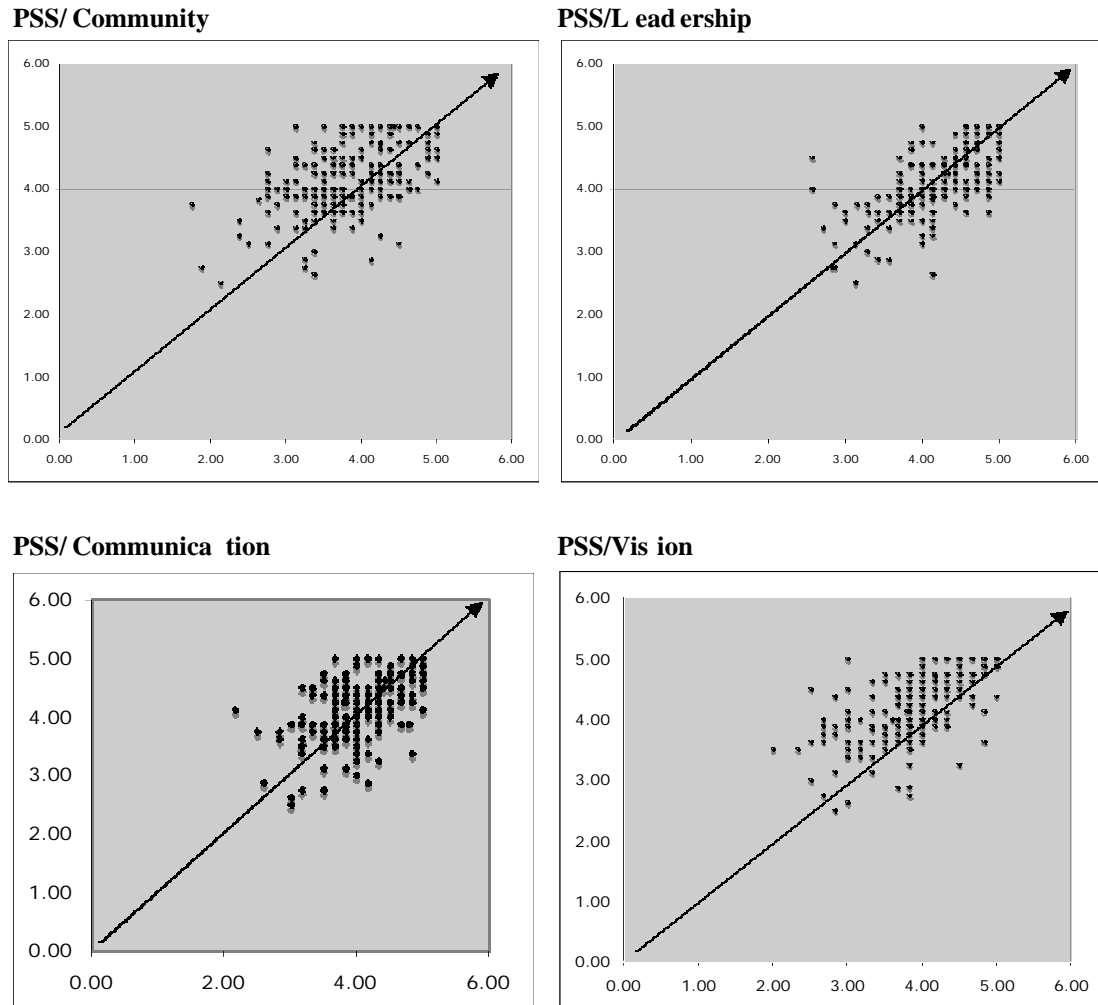


Figure 4.1. Correlation scatter plots.

A scatter plot helps determine whether a linear (straight line) correlation exists between two variables, or whether a nonlinear relationship exists. Four types of outcomes exist. First is a *negative linear correlation*, which states that as x increases, y tends to decrease. This type is seen on a chart as a grouping from upper left to lower right scattering of the x and y plots. The second type is *no correlation* and is seen on a chart as a random scattering of the x and y plots. The third type is a *nonlinear correlation* and is seen on a scatter plot as a broad-spread grouping of the x and y plots. The last type is a

positive linear correlation, which states that as x increases, y tends to increase as well.

This type is seen on a scatter plot as a grouping from lower left to upper right scattering of the x and y plots (Larson and Farber 442).

Figure 4.1 representing this study illustrates a fairly tight pattern holding between all four components. The upward right-hand direction indicates the *positive linear correlation* involved in each component's relationship with synergy. As the focus or strength in either component increases, the tendency is for synergy to increase, as well.

Worship Style Comparison

One final consideration for this project was whether the worship structure had any bearing on building synergy. Of the six churches surveyed, three churches corresponded on the basis of having identical services on a given Sunday and three churches corresponded on the basis of having different style worship services, including those in a language other than English, on any given Sunday (see Table 4.11).

None of the components compared revealed any significant differences.

Participants who attended a same-style church tended to have a stronger correlation (.798) between their perception of synergy and the leadership of that church than those of a mixed-style church. Participants who attended a mixed-style church tended to have a stronger correlation and mean between perception of synergy and communication than those who attended a same-style church. As seen in the previous comparisons, the data presented under the r -value supports the claim of a significant positive correlation involved in each category.

Table 4.11. Worship Style Comparisons

PSS and Component	Same Style (n=92)			Mixed Style (n=111)			
	M	SD	<i>r</i>	M	SD	<i>r</i>	<i>z</i>
PSS	4.20	.59		4.16	.50		0.50
Community	3.77	.66	.465**	3.82	.62	.504**	-0.53
Leadership	4.20	.58	.798**	4.23	.57	.586**	-0.31
Communication	4.01	.52	.490**	4.12	.52	.628**	-1.31
Vision	3.88	.61	.643**	3.81	.63	.595**	0.78

** 0.01 (right tailed)

Demographic Comparisons

The Church Synergy Assessment Tool took into consideration certain demographic and contextual information in order to measure their impact on church synergy. These variables include the participants' age grouping, gender perceptions, frequency of participation (worship, discipleship, and ministry), membership tenure, and the style of church congregations (same or mixed worship styles). The literature review of Chapter 2 led me to establish the null hypothesis that each church component (community, leadership, communication, vision) would have a positive relationship on creating church synergy. I compared the demographic and contextual information to discern any bearing they may have on church synergy.

The following analysis consists of calculating a correlation between the participants' perception of synergy score and their responses to the statements contained in the four church components. I analyzed these scores using the *Pearson correlation coefficient test (r)*, *t-test analysis* (right-tailed), and *z-test* (two-tailed) for comparing mean scores.

The r -value indicates the strength of the positive linear relationship indicated between the scale of 0 to + 1. A double asterisk (**) following an r -value indicates a statistical significance in this correlation on the level of .01—indicating one chance in one hundred that this correlation would occur randomly. A single asterisk (*) following an r -value indicates a significant correlation on the level of .05—indicating another relationship not expected randomly. The t -test in each measure is a positive right-tailed test.

The z -value indicates any significance in the comparison of mean. A double plus sign (++) following a z -value indicates a significant difference between the mean scores on the .01 level of confidence. The mean scores were also calculated under an .05 level of confidence, but all calculated scores fell within the .01 range of significance.

Participant Age Comparison

One consideration for this project was whether one's age category had any bearing on creating church synergy. Age groups segmented into six categories. Participants between the ages of 21-30 reported higher mean scores on four out of the five categories. Perception of synergy score, 4.39; community, 3.79; leadership, 4.52; communication, 4.33; and vision, 4.20 (see Table 4.12). The 31-40 age group ($n \leq 30$) scored second highest, with the exception of community, which was the highest reported score. Pooling these two categories into one shows that participants between the ages of 21-40 reported the highest mean scores, thus perceiving the greatest level of overall cooperative church synergy. As indicated by the r -values, the data supports the claim of a significant positive correlation involved in most categories.

Table 4.12. Age Level Comparisons in Relation to Synergy Scale

	20 OR LESS	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-65	66 Plus
Sample	n=3	n=11	n=30	n=34	n=71	n=54
PSS						
Mean	3.88	4.39	4.34	4.09	4.14	4.15
SD	.87	.61	.51	.57	.49	.57
COMMUNITY						
Mean	3.88	3.79	3.98	3.81	3.69	3.83
SD	1.08	.42	.56	.82	.60	.61
<i>r</i>	.937	-.392	.327*	.511**	.393**	.718**
LEADERSHIP						
Mean	4.19	4.52	4.33	4.13	4.26	4.11
SD	.65	.37	.53	.65	.51	.62
<i>r</i>	.898	.756*	.524**	.771**	.544**	.845**
COMMUNICATION						
Mean	4.08	4.33	4.12	3.94	4.08	4.04
SD	.49	.42	.59	.63	.49	.60
<i>r</i>	.547	.598*	.520**	.466**	.547**	.600**
VISION						
Mean	3.89	4.20	3.98	3.69	3.89	3.73
SD	.52	.63	.76	.57	.52	.57
<i>r</i>	.489	.784**	.672**	.552**	.489**	.656**

* 0.05 (right tailed); ** 0.01 (right tailed)

Gender Comparison

From the demographic information, consideration was given as to whether gender had any influence on the creating synergy. A comparison was done between the responses of the male and female participants (see Table 4.13). Both genders rated similarly in their perception of synergy scores (4.19-4.16). Women generally rated the significance of community (3.80 -4.16) higher than men, whereas men generally rated

leadership (4.23-3.85) higher than the women. The *z*-test noted these two categories as having a significant difference, and both are in the low range of the high synergy zone. The double asterisks found in the *r*-test show each of the four components has a positive correlation with the perception of synergy score. Further stated, this correlation means that, as community, leadership, communication, and vision increase, the tendency is that synergy will increase accordingly for either gender.

Table 4.13. Gender Comparisons

PSS and Component	Male (n=78)			Female (n=125)			
	M	SD	<i>r</i>	M	SD	<i>r</i>	<i>z</i>
PSS	4.19	.52		4.16	.56		0.46
Community	3.80	.68	.521**	4.16	.60	.650**	-3.95 ⁺⁺
Leadership	4.23	.58	.691**	3.85	.60	.462**	4.55 ⁺⁺
Communication	4.08	.57	.614**	4.07	.55	.510**	0.12
Vision	3.81	.63	.679**	3.87	.62	.580**	-0.64

** 0.01, (right tailed) ⁺⁺ 0.01, (two-tailed)

Ministry Participation Comparison

How much a person participates in worship, discipleship, and ministry opportunities was another area under consideration. The participants responded to the how often they participated in three areas of church activity (worship, Sunday school/small group, ministry opportunity). Those who attended and/or participated two times per month or more were compared with those who attended and/or participated once per month or less (see Table 4.14).

The perception of synergy score showed no significant difference (4.18-4.17) between the two groups but was unequally dispersed as shown in the standard deviation

score. Those who participated more often in the life of the church rated community higher (4.02) than those who participated less (3.47). The *z-test* notes this score to be a significant difference. The other three components rated close to each other with no significant difference in mean scores. The data presented under the *r*-value supports the claim of a significant positive correlation involved in each category.

Table 4.14. Ministry Participation Comparisons

PSS and Component	Twice per Month or More (n=122)			Once per Month or Less (n=81)			z
	M	SD	r	M	SD	r	
PSS	4.18	.55		4.17	.54		0.17
Community	4.02	.56	.518**	3.47	.60	.539**	6.67 ⁺⁺
Leadership	4.21	.57	.640**	4.24	.56	.776**	-0.32
Communication	4.05	.56	.482**	4.06	.54	.632**	-0.14
Vision	3.80	.66	.593**	3.91	.56	.668**	-1.24

** 0.01 (right tailed); ⁺⁺ 0.01 (two-tailed)

Tenure Comparison

Participants listed the number of years they had been members of their perspective churches. A tenure of ten years or less and a tenure of eleven years or more created two measurable categories into which this data was compiled and separated (see Table 4.15). The division of these two groups has no statistical reasoning other than dividing the sample as closely as possible into two equal groups.

Those whose tenure was ten years or less rated higher on three out of the five mean scores than those whose tenure was eleven years or more. This group's perception of synergy score (4.22-4.11) and leadership rating (4.27-4.16) were both in the high

synergy zone while their vision rating (3.95-3.71) was in the upper moderate zone. This vision score was the only component the *z*-test noted as significantly different.

Nevertheless, while those of lesser tenure tended to rate higher in three out of the five categories, the data presented under the *r*-value supports the claim of a significant positive correlation involved in each category.

Table 4.15. Tenure Comparisons

PSS and Component	Ten Years or Less (n=111)			Eleven Years or More (n=92)			<i>z</i>
	M	SD	<i>r</i>	M	SD	<i>r</i>	
PSS	4.22	.57		4.11	.51		1.41
Community	3.80	.66	.477**	3.80	.61	.496**	-0.03
Leadership	4.27	.55	.710**	4.16	.58	.662**	1.44
Communication	4.07	.59	.538**	4.07	.53	.539**	0.06
Vision	3.95	.61	.613**	3.71	.61	.593**	2.75 ⁺⁺

** 0.01 (right tailed); ⁺⁺ 0.01, (two -tailed)

Summary of Significant Findings

The Church Synergy Assessment Tool produced the information necessary to bring answers to three research questions established in this study. The following significant findings relate to the research questions.

- All four components of community, leadership, communication, and vision show up as elements that influence the creation of church-wide synergy.
- Leadership and communication rated in the high synergy zone as the strongest components functioning within these churches.
- Women tended to rate the community component higher than men.

- Those who participated more in the life of the church tended to rate community higher than those who attended less.
- Participants between the ages of 21 -40 revealed a greater likelihood to perceive synergy higher and serve in a synergistic manner than the other four age groupings.
- Similarity and diversity in worship style showed no significant difference or bearing on one's advantage of creating synergy over the other.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This project was born out of a personal experience that motivated me to discover the necessary factors involved in creating synergy within a church of multiple congregations. A written survey was the only instrument employed to measure synergy across a random sample. The purpose of this project was to discover what factors influence the creation of synergy within a church of multiple congregations. The hope was to understand which components assure that as growth in size and diversity increase, churches would continue to function as one cooperative body and not separate congregations within themselves. The data from this project can be useful in helping pastors discern their churches' strength of synergy. These strengths can be leveraged to develop training and strategies to manage situations of numerical growth and diversity better.

Blake and Mouton demonstrate that cooperative synergy is not a naturally occurring outcome (41). As organizations expand and diversify, thus requiring more oversight and responsibilities, a certain level of discernment and strategy is required. While similar in many respects to secular organizations, cooperative synergy within the church is dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit to bring out the gifted, focused, selfless character within its individual members to promote a one church mentality. Put another way, the church functions on much more than human effort. Luke highlights this truth in Acts 2:42-43, 47:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Multiple components were at work among these disciplines that exemplify something beyond human effort. While this study focuses on the components of synergy, it recognizes that synergy within the body of Christ is a partnership between the participation of human effort and the sheer grace of God. Synergy within the church occurs as the children of God combine their human efforts, faith, and spiritual giftedness to achieve outcomes that not only go beyond human effort but also have eternal consequences.

Participants in this study responded on a voluntary basis. The ratings they gave were based on their perceptions and observations as to whether their particular church was cooperatively moving together. The data collected from this research confirmed that leadership and communication had a greater influence on creating synergy in churches with multiple congregations than did community and vision. By comparing the mean scores of the four components against the participants' perception of synergy scores, this conclusion was reached.

Major Findings

The major findings in this research are categorized as demographic influences on creating synergy, the perception of synergy, high synergy components, including leadership and communication, and moderate synergy components, including vision and community.

Demographic Influences on Creating Synergy

Participants between the ages of 21–40 rated the highest in all six categories over the other age groups. Several reasons contribute to this finding. This age group characterizes an overlap between the Generation Xers and Millennial Generation. Sally

Kane describes Gen Xers as those who adapt well to change and are tolerant of alternative lifestyles. They are ambitious and eager, wanting to accomplish things on their own terms. Neil Howe and William Strauss describe Millennials as very positive about the future and goal oriented toward achieving that future. Given these characteristics, they tend to see the church, its mission, and its ministry from a different worldview than other generations.

Though community rated lowest among the four components, women tended to rate higher than men. George H. Gallup, Jr. points out several dynamics that help understand this finding. Women tend to be more open about sharing personal problems. Women are more relational than men. Gallup research found that a higher proportion of women than men say they have a “best friend” in their congregation. The tendency toward women being more involved in the life of the church has manifested over seven decades of scientific polling, and church membership figures indicate that it probably existed for many decades prior to the advent of survey research in the mid-1930s.

Adding to the findings on community is that those who participated more in the life of the church tended to rate community higher than those who participated less. This finding suggests that participation in ministry, along with regular worship attendance, helps create a greater sense of community. The overall data found in Table 4.2 suggests that the more inactive the people become, the more likely they are to be out of sync with synergy and to skew the responses given.

At the same time, the length of participants' tenure indicated that the longer they participated in the life of the church, the less likely they saw vision as being an integral part of the church. The Gallup organization offers some insight into a possible

explanation for this finding when they speak about the tenure of the senior pastor. Albert L. Winseman suggests that in years five through ten of a pastor's tenure, the congregation and the leader have gotten to know each others strengths and weaknesses, and members have decided, for the most part, whether or not to buy into the leader's vision, or at least try not to hinder it.

The Perception of Synergy

The six churches studied were selected on the basis of their assumed strength as seen through their increase in membership and attendance growth within the twenty-five year time limitation. Their overall perception of synergy score (4.17) corresponded with the numbers in the high synergy zone scale (4.1-5.0). This synergy zone suggests that the majority perceived their particular church with multiple congregations was cooperatively moving together as one church. As defined by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, to *perceive* something is to regard it as being true ("Perceive"). The participants' perception of their churches refers strictly to their subjective, overall impression of the churches. Their perceptions were influenced by demographic factors, including their ages, their tenure in the church, and their time invested in ministry participation.

A comparison was conducted between the mean scores calculated in the perception of synergy score section with the mean scores calculated within the community, leadership, communication, and vision components. This comparison was to see if any significant correlation might exist. A significant, positive linear correlation did exist in all of these relationships. The data revealed that, regardless of whether the component measured in the moderate or high synergy zone, each of the four components had a direct correlation with creating synergy.

High Synergy Components

The synergy components reported to have the strongest influence on creating synergy were leadership and communication. Both components were indicative of the intercorrelating perception of synergy scores. The leadership component had seven out of seven statements that rated in the high synergy zone (see Table 4.7, p. 90). The communication component recorded five out of six statements in the high synergy zone (see Table 4.8, p. 91).

Leadership. The participants uniformly showed a strong belief in their leadership based on the standard deviation numbers. Six out of seven standard deviation scores were $\leq .05$, showing a strong consistency in perception. Considering the high mean scores along with their standard deviation scores demonstrates the participants' confidence in their clergy, staff, and lay leadership in assisting and partnering with them on their own personal journey of faith to achieve something of eternal significance. This outcome supports the premise that leadership is the foundation of any good organization (e.g., Maxwell; Bennis and Nanus; Clinton).

This type of leadership is the basis behind the Apostle Paul's explanation of leadership responsibility in Ephesians 4. He declares that the leadership of the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers should assist and partner with the entire body to grow the church, to grow in maturity, and to attain the fulling of Christ in their lives. Colin G. Kruse supports this concept in his commentary on Paul's understanding of leadership in ministry. He states that, even though every believer has been gifted for ministry, Ephesians 4: 11-13 demonstrates Paul's belief that certain people

are divinely appointed to have leadership roles in the church. This task of leadership was to equip, build up, and lead the church as a whole (60-3).

The section on leadership in the Church Synergy Assessment Tool (CSAT) asked the participants to keep all levels of leadership in their churches in mind while responding to the statements, so that they did not focus solely on the senior or sole pastor but kept the entire staff and/or lay leadership in mind. Therefore, the strong leadership that the CSAT reported modeled the strong support and confidence the congregations have in their leadership, whether that leadership is structured under a hierarchical approach or a more egalitarian approach, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Vision was only a moderate influence among the membership in creating synergy, but at the same time the churches were seeing measurable growth. This measurable growth suggests that leadership does play a major role in leading others to a preferred future, though the vision may not be known or owned by the larger membership. John C. Maxwell informs this conclusion when he talks about the power of people buying into the leadership. For example, every message that people receive is filtered through the messenger who delivers it. If the person, or in this case the congregation, considers the messenger to be credible, then the message is believed. Credibility, or at least recognition, is why actors or sports stars are typically recruited to promote the sale of a product. In this case, the person's credibility is not because he or she is an expert in the product per se, but because the people relate to the person. Once people relate to that leader, they are willing to be a part of that person's vision (146-47). This type of associational connection serves as a possible explanation as to why the CSAT reported

high leadership synergy and low vision synergy. Leadership is one of the main components in influencing the development of synergy.

For leadership to be truly effective, it must be shared. Moses was advised by his father-in-law Jethro to spread his leadership out among qualified people (Exod. 18 :21-22). The Gospels show Jesus modeling a method of ministry to the disciples, showing them how it is done, helping them do it, and then finally sending them to do it. This model of sharing leadership could be summed up from his promise to make them fishers of people (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17). The multiplication of leadership is seen throughout the New Testament with the impact these apostles had on the spread of the gospel through the early Church. In each case, whether Moses, Paul, the Apostles, or Jesus, the leader becomes the one person who commits another to action, who converts followers into leaders. As a result, the church continues to exist today because such leadership converts leaders into agents of change. This concept is what Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus refer to as transformational leadership (3).

Leadership strongly influences the creation of synergy. What should be noted from this conclusion, however, is that leadership in churches with multiple congregations must be intentional in training and empowering its leadership. Effective leadership does not happen naturally. When the disciples returned from one of their ministry excursions, Jesus debriefed their experience and used it as a training moment (Luke 10:17-20). This model reflects the importance of having a mentoring style of leadership functioning in the church in order to carry out what is pertinent to a church's unique call to ministry. If possible, it should also include learning venues such as training sessions sponsored by

others churches and parachurch organizations that inspire new ideas and understanding of how to lead and inspire others.

Schreiber describes the importance of continual teaching and learning as leaders (467). Learning together helps to bring out each leader's unique giftedness to a discussion, resulting in a greater sense of synergistic leadership and downplaying a fractured, single approach.

Communication . Like leadership, the mean score for communication rated in the high synergy zone, indicating a strong influence on creating synergy . The standard deviation scores indicated that the participants uniformly shared a strong confidence in their communication structure. This section asked the participants to think of the various ways that the church communicated to all those involved in the life of the church. Their response led to five out of six statements being rated in the high synergy zone (see Table 4.8, p. 91), indicating that the church's communication structure had an influence on creating church-wide synergy. Five out of the six S D scores were calculated at $\leq .06$, showing a strong consistency in their perception.

Gangel and Canine assert that community cannot exist without adequate communication (13) . For example, Snyder states that community and *koinonia* assume face-to-face communication (102). It means that communication contributes to more than understanding the activities of the church. It becomes a sheer witness to the oneness of God. For communication to have a strong influence on synergy, it must involve a concise and clear transference of what the leadership wants the larger body to understand and thus be motivated to move toward. The lowest score under the communication component indicated a lack of communicating how the other congregations might be

contributing to achieving the mission and vision of the church (see Table 4.8, p. 91). For ministry purposes, a breakdown in communication on this level is the antithesis of synergy.

In Exodus 12, God gives Moses instructions as to how the Passover was to be conducted. In this instance, and many other places where God communicates to the leaders or to his people, communication involved hearing and understanding the message, not just the delivery. To assure that the message is being properly received, two-way communication is important among staff and lay team leaders, yet communication becomes more challenging when sharing information more broadly with the larger congregation. The churches surveyed are to be commended for communicating clearly and consistently enough to help the participants feel like they were a part of one church and not participating in a part that is disconnected from the rest.

Nonetheless, one area in communication that did show an oversight on the leadership's part, as evidenced by a statistical difference between the highest and lowest mean scores. Participants rated the church low on how well it was keeping them informed on how the other congregations or the larger church was helping to fulfill the vision. This oversight makes sense in light of the fact that the entire area of vision was being rated in the moderate zone. It implied that vision was not consistently communicated or it was not communicated in a way that motivated the larger church body to understand or accept the vision for themselves.

Vision. Authors such as Calvin Miller, Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr strongly encourage churches to establish a compelling vision. A compelling vision should energize the body of Christ toward a preferred future and compel the

membership to move together toward the ministry of the kingdom. Marcell Van Marrewijk asserts that leadership must be visionary and link the church's various qualities into one effective and cohesive approach (155). Senge states that vision can become a living force only when the people truly believe that the vision can shape their future (231). From the literature, I assumed that vision would be one of the stronger components as measured by the mean scores.

However, based on the data from the Church Synergy Assessment Tool, vision creates a nuance when interpreting its influence on creating synergy. Using the synergy zone to interpret the mean scores, vision rated in the moderate synergy zone. While leadership and communication both rated as the top components of promoting synergy, the vision score indicated that it had not been adequately conveyed. This responsibility rests solely with the leadership, either to place it as a priority or to oversee that it is communicated throughout the various church systems. Vision is not something that is presented once and need not be repeated. Vision must be presented time and time again, in order that it become a part of the church's culture, and then evaluated for any change in light of new circumstances (Bennis and Nanus 101).

To highlight further a potential reason for vision's low rating, the lowest mean score in the vision component points to the lack of communication (see Table 4.8, p. 91). This statement focused on how well the leadership helped the church memorize and routinely state the church's vision. Mack states that leaders and members alike should know its clearly defined vision in order to align themselves with that mission effectively. Motivation toward a common vision can have both a direct and indirect influence on creating synergy. Communication is key to vision's producing that impact.

All six of these churches were selected based on the merits of their church growth. Their church growth indicates that the leadership has been potentially following and pursuing a strong vision. Nonetheless, the vision that the leadership might be striving to accomplish does not mean that they have broadly communicated the vision enough for the membership to understand and know it.

The fact that vision's mean score did not have any strong bearing on creating synergy was the one surprising outcome I found. Only four of the six statements rated mean scores in the upper moderate synergy zone.

Two exceptions are worth noting. First, Harvest United Methodist Church rated noticeably higher in vision over the other five churches (see Table 4.5, p. 88). The one dynamic that sets them apart from the other five is that as a new church plant, multiple congregations became a necessity due to their growth. They did not add services in order to grow or to meet a different group or ministry need. In addition, due to being a new church plant within the past fifteen years, their high synergy score suggests that there is a tendency for new churches to be more focused on vision. The other church plant surveyed operated on separate campuses and offered three different type worship services. They rated second lowest on vision.

The second exception to vision's influence on synergy is seen in the participants between the ages of 21-40 (see Table 4.12, p. 98). They perceived vision and overall synergy as being stronger in their church than the rest of the age groups. This age range is an overlap of two generations defined as Generation X and Millennials. While the scope of this research does not go into the dynamics that characterized different generations,

participants in this age range do demonstrate the characteristic of being drawn to churches that exhibit a purpose they deem worthy of their time.

Michael Galligan Stierle gives insight to this observation from a Catholic viewpoint. He defines twelve specific ways in which Millennials find purpose and embrace vision through the Catholic Church. He further states that Millennials are best situated to influence other Millennials. Engaging and equipping Millennials who fit one or more of the twelve character types will enrich the faith community in different ways. The character types referred to in his article line up with this conversation on vision and synergy.

Diane Thielfoldt and Devon Scheef describe Gen Xers as those who work best when they are given the desired outcome and then turned loose to figure out how to achieve it. They further describe this generation as being typically team oriented who look for challenges. Taking these characteristics together shows one possibility why this particular age range has a greater perception of synergy and vision than the other age groups. This observation leaves me to conclude that the younger the median age in a congregation, the greater influence they will have on creating church-wide synergy.

This nuance to vision comes from its high correlation to vision (see Table 4.10, p 93). The correlation coefficient rated .608 for vision. Because correlation countered the mean score for vision so strongly, this score suggests that correlation potentially makes it a stronger component to influencing the creation of synergy than the interpretative lens of the synergy zone gives credit.

“Correlation” is defined in the *American Heritage Dictionary* as putting or bringing into causal, complementary, parallel, or reciprocal relation. Wiersma and Jurs

state that the correlation coefficient does not necessarily indicate a cause-and-effect relationship between two variables (361). Ron Larson and Betsy Farber further state that the fact that two variables correlate does not in itself imply a cause-and-effect relationship. The possibility does exist for x to cause y . At the same time, an outside or combination of factors can also cause y as well (452). While correlation does not equal causation, causation does equal correlation. I conclude from this possibility that while vision rated in the moderate synergy zone, it does have the potential to be a high synergy component.

Moderate Synergy Components

One component rated in the moderate synergy zone, and thus was considered the weakest of the four components. This lower scoring component was community. As a church grows, a natural reduction occurs in its sense of community simply based on the impossibility of knowing everyone on a more personal basis. The remedy to this reduction is creating community on a smaller scale through small groups, Sunday school, or ministry teams. The inability to create a strong sense of overall community becomes an accepted consequence.

In talking with people who are members of larger churches with multiple congregations, a deep sense of community was not the reason they became a part of that particular church. In this research, the Church Synergy Assessment Tool measured community or *koinonia* on a level that went beyond the small networks toward which people tend to gravitate when looking for kindred relationships. It was intended to measure community as a whole.

The data demonstrated that people were not open to expanding their network of community beyond what was comfortably familiar to them. Disproportionately low scores were given to statements that inquired as to whether participants made any extra effort to connect with people they did not know or to participate in and support the other congregations that gather in the same facility or under the same church name. In the end, a strong sense of dedication linked the participants to their preferred gatherings. This conclusion is further supported by the uniformity of responses seen in the standard deviation of these scores.

This observation falls in line with information brought out by Van Gelder, who stated that diversity is consistent with the church's catholic nature (121). A common fellowship can exist while at the same time separate groups tend to remain separate for a deeper sense of community. Steinke and Freidman also help bring understanding to the lower scores by describing this scenario as "being separated together" (Steinke 10; Freidman 27). Nevertheless, churches still had an open opportunity to reinforce the concept of community. One of the higher scores under the community component was acknowledging that the church provided ways for people from all congregations to meet and know each other.

In addition, the data reported that the 21-30 age group actually had a negative correlation between community and synergy (see Table 4.12, p. 98). Tim Augustine describes this age group as being very social, thriving in team environments, and having grown up to expect diversity. Based on this description, a negative correlation was not expected. Howe and Strauss offer insights into this matter. They support the fact that people between the ages of 21-30 were tightly scheduled as children and used to having

every hour of their day filled with structured activity. As these children grew up into the present, the over-scheduling mentality would still be prevalent. While being connected and participating in community is important, over scheduling other activities and perceived priorities may very well contribute to their negative correlation to synergy.

The Influential Nature on Synergy

Systems theory looks specifically at the interrelatedness that exists and functions within the whole (Steinke 3). The premise of systems theory is that relationships among variables will result in sometimes broad, unpredictable outcomes because of the variety of different angles from which systems function (Loren 46). No doubt this theory holds true in a church with multiple congregations.

Connecting systems to the creation of synergy does not equate a direct A-causes-B relationship. Nevertheless, the correlational nature of this study sought to discover any linear influential relationship that might exist that impacts the creation of synergy. This study demonstrated that such a relationship does exist concerning synergy in churches with multiple congregations. Synergy is both interconnected and interdependent upon the four identified components in this study. However, this conclusion does not exclude other influences outside the scope of this study.

This study tested the relationship between four components believed to be related to building synergy in churches with multiple congregations. I discovered that influencing synergy can be a manageable process. To highlight this point, vision rated in the moderate synergy zone, but the data reported that it still had a significant correlation with synergy. To raise the vision score means communicating and connecting the vision to the ministry accomplishments more often. Casting and connecting the vision of God

helps draw people more toward *being* the church rather than simply *going* to church. In essence, vision should motivate those who are only active in worship to be a part of the larger community that is involved in fulfilling the vision.

Vision simply must be repeatedly mentioned, making use of every means of communication and technology that a church has available (Krauter 49). Centralized events, confessions of faith, personal testimonies, and ministry and mission successes should be communicated as to how they are fulfilling the vision. These are fundamental connecting points. Where systems theory is concerned, this study asserts that repeated casting and connecting the vision would help raise its score and impact synergy. This interaction is what was referred to earlier as a manageable linear process of influencing synergy. In addition, systems theory also provides the understanding that the act of raising vision will not only have the tendency to increase levels of synergy accordingly but potentially influence outcomes among other family systems within the church, as well.

Implications of the Findings

This study provides practical insights for those who find that their church growth or expansion of ministry outreach is moving them from a single congregation status into a multiple congregation status. The nature of this transition brings with it a broader level of systems and diversity of many potential levels. The insights of this study provide pastoral and lay leadership with an advantage of knowing ways in which to become more proactive in preventing an *us-versus-them* mentality. Becoming proactive will help create and maintain a sense of overall unity and purpose as one church.

The strength of this study was seen in the correlation calculated between church synergy and all four components that were measured. Church community, leadership, communication, and vision were shown to have a significant correlation on church synergy, though the mean numbers were lower in two of the four components measured. While correlation does not equal causation, it does imply that as one variable increases, the tendency for the other variable to increase is likely. Perhaps the most significant finding was the higher mean scores found in leadership and communication. Not only are the findings significant in themselves, but the fact that they are both manageable is significant, as well.

Leadership is manageable because strong leadership is about a continual learning process. Learning is the essential fuel of the leader. Learning sparks new ideas, understanding, and new challenges (Bennis and Nanus 1976). Continuing education and self-discipline lead to improvement of leadership. Managing one's own leadership ability is necessary in a church with or moving into multiple congregations and the complexity that brings with it. Leadership must stay informed with the ever-changing culture both inside and outside the church. Therefore, this study concludes that to increase one's leadership ability is to have a significant influence over how synergy is created, increased, and maintained within the church.

Likewise, communication is also a manageable component in terms of how much, how often, and in what ways visionary leadership is delivered. Communication can be managed and improved by directly changing the ways messages are delivered and received. For example, increasing or changing the channels in which communication is delivered, repeating important messages along multiple venues, and identifying and

eliminating any communication problems are just a few ways to manage communication (Holmes). Communication is further improved by assuring that the message being delivered does not contain ambiguities, is directed inclusively, and is utilized in a timely manner. Good communication becomes a witness of how the body of Christ can be diverse, even complex, and yet be one.

Together, leadership and communication are combined components that create a sense of synergy themselves. An example of how leadership and communication becomes a synergistic tool is to include the discussion of how communication becomes the vehicle through which ministry accomplishments and vision are linked. This type of communication promotes synergy by publicizing such successes in membership classes, discipleship training, recorded video testimony that is displayed on Web sites and in church services, or newsletters. Highlighting testimonies of those who have entered a relationship with Christ or been ministered to through people in another congregation serves to underscore how the church as a whole is synergistically serving as a larger community. It is a way of vicariously connecting with a person who attends another congregation but participates in the whole church.

Other possibilities of leadership and communication being a synergistic tool include publications or broadcasts of information that reduce potential anxiety produced from the lack of knowing what is taking place in the church body. When needed, venues for open discussion between congregation and leadership serve as a synergistic tool, as well. This study shows that areas such as these are likely to have a significant influence on creating synergy within the overall church.

Limitations of the Study

One of the major weaknesses in this study was only taking into account six churches as defined by the parameters set forth in Chapter 3. Churches were limited only to those that have grown from a single service into two or more within the past twenty-five years. This parameter did not take into consideration those churches that have had multiple congregations for longer periods of time. These six churches were selected to form a manageable base for me to suggest further study potential.

The number of surveys returned also limited the size of the study. While forty-one percent of the surveys mailed out were returned, they only represented approximately seven percent of the churches overall membership. The target was a ten percent representation.

This study did not and could not take into consideration all the factors that impact the creation of synergy. Therefore, this study is limited only to four factors identified out of the literature review. Each of the four components will no doubt have influential factors involved in how effective they are at actually creating synergy.

The subjective nature of a random survey also poses a potential weakness in itself. In particular, the perception of synergy score was derived from statements in which the participants were asked to give his or her opinion of agreement or disagreement. Until a more objective method is developed to measure synergy, it will remain in and of itself a subjective matter.

Given that five of the six churches were United Methodist, the data was skewed toward those theological leanings. Therefore, no consideration was given to measuring any denominational influence on creating synergy. In addition, the churches selected were regional to my location in the southeast portion of Alabama. The churches either

existed within the bounds of the Alabama, West Florida Conference or were no farther separated from me than a two-hour drive. Therefore, no consideration was given in this study as to how different regions of the country might have an impact on a participant's perception of synergy. The same is true for other regions of the world.

Recommendations

I used this survey mainly to examine churches in a specific region of the southeast part of the United States; therefore, a follow-up study that compares churches of various denominational backgrounds in the same region can further inform the results of this study. Expanding the sample to include churches from different areas of the country and comparing the results regionally can also be a follow-up study.

I generated a straight random sample of the entire membership population without consideration given to any specific considerations that could influence the outcome. A follow-up study that includes a stratified random sample can further inform the results of this study. Examples might include a random sample from ethnic groups, age groups, the number of years one has had a relationship with Christ, and those who are active nonmembers versus those who are active members.

As noted previously, the Church Synergy Assessment Tool was modeled after an assessment tool designed to measure synergy in secular organizations. The questions were reworded and edited to fit the context of the church environment for this study. Consideration should be given to editing the CSAT as it applies to different geographic regions of the country or world and to the denominational influences that might be relevant.

While this study depended on a quantitative method to draw its conclusions, additional studies should include an intervention and use of a pre-, mid-, and posttest design. Testing dependent and independent variables can track the impact leadership and communication has on vision, community, and overall synergy scores.

Postscript

The appointment or calling of a pastor to a church brings with it much more responsibility than merely preaching and teaching. It is an automatic position of leadership. Now, more than any other time in history, pastoral leadership is met with the challenge of reaching and bringing an ever-changing culture into the Church of Jesus Christ while overseeing the shepherding and administrative responsibilities of an ever-increasing diverse church at the same time. For pastoral leadership to be effective, a changing culture requires convincing and ushering the church into an openness and execution of change required by the Great Commission to make disciples. This balancing of diversity and oneness is the challenge that brought me to this project.

As a result of this study, I have grown to see leadership from a deeper sense of systems thinking. I now find myself thinking through decisions and how they might increase or diminish the synergy of the church. I feel better equipped to plan proactively for future growth rather than merely reacting from a blind approach dealing with issues and concerns after they arise. Church growth that leads to multiple congregation status brings with it new dynamics that I feel better equipped to utilize to create a level of synergy that is both biblical and honoring to God.

Church leadership faces an ever-increasing challenge to embrace the changing opportunities set before them. I am grateful and honored to have had the opportunity to

participate in a project that I believe can make a difference for churches that are fractured as a result of the diversity brought on by such growth. Mostly, I stand in awe of our Heavenly Father who transforms people's lives through the presence of the Holy Spirit to make biblical synergy possible, regardless of background, history, race, or status in life.

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF SOLI CITATION

To:
From:
Subject: Assessing Church Synergy

Date:

Dear ,

To complete my degree in the Doctor of Ministry studies, I am working on a project that measures synergy in churches with multiple worshipping congregations. The intent of this project is to discover the necessary factors involved in creating synergy within a church of multiple congregations.

To that end, I am seeking the input of a random sampling of church members from churches like yours in four main categories: community, leadership, communication, and vision. The assessment tool is a survey made up of forty-one questions or statements that will help determine if these four categories are linking factors across strong, vibrant churches.

The proposed result will provide valuable information, as well as an assessment tool, to further benefit the growing number of churches that are expanding to include multiple congregations.

If you agree to participate in this research, I agree to provide you an assessment report of your church. This data could prove to be helpful to you in further affirming the excellence that your leadership is providing to develop and maintain church synergy, in addition to being an evaluative tool for further improvement.

Further, if you agree to participate in this research, I will follow up with you personally to explain the project in greater detail, provide a copy of the Church Synergy Assessment Tool, a copy of the Church Synergy Assessment Report, and answer any questions to help assure you and your leadership of the wide benefit this study would provide.

Because of the time limitations involved in this research, I will be in contact with you soon to answer any preliminary questions you might have and to see where you heart may be in assisting in this project.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

APPENDIX B

SURVEY COVER LETTER AND SOLICITATION

Date

Dear Brother or Sister in Christ,

By now, you have received information that I am doing research on your church family for a dissertation project toward the completion of my Doctor of Ministry degree from Asbury Theological Seminary. My faculty committee has approved my research project, and it is now time to collect the data I need from growing, progressive churches like yours. You have been selected from a random sample to represent your church. Therefore, with permission from your pastor, I am asking for your assistance in this project.

Here is how you can help:

1. Complete the enclosed questionnaire. It should take no more than 10 minutes. Note that there are **four** pages to this questionnaire.
2. Please mail your completed questionnaire in the self-addressed envelope. I have included the postage for your convenience.
3. Please place in the mail to me **no later than** xx/xx/xx. A timely return is crucial to this project and much appreciated.

Here is my promise to you:

1. I guarantee complete anonymity in this survey. You are not asked to identify yourself by name.
2. The results of this research will be returned to your church leadership to help celebrate and/or improve the level of synergy that is currently operating in your church.

I want to thank you ahead of time for helping make this project have far reaching implications beyond your church.

APPENDIX C

CHURCH SYNERGY ASSESSMENT TOOL

Name of Your Church: _____

A congregation is defined in this questionnaire as each worship service in your church that utilizes the same message but at different times, or worship services that meet at the same time but under a different pastor's preaching.

Demographic

Directions: Please mark or provide the following information as it applies to you and your relationship with your church.

1. Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Which age bracket defines you? (please check one)

☐ 20 or younger ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-65 ☐ 65+

3. Please list the number of years you have been attending this church: _____

4. Approximately how often in the past year have you spent time participating in each of the following church activities?

Weekly one or two once every 6 or less none
or more times a month 5-6 weeks

Worship services ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Sunday school, small group ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
or Bible study

Serving in volunteer ministry ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
at or on behalf of the church

5. How long have you had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

☐ 5 years or less ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 21+

6. Please indicate the service you attend most by day or time it meets: (e.g.; 9:30 am service)

Synergy

Directions: Please think about the two or more congregations in your church, then rate the following statements accordingly.

By working together, our church ...

7. Identifies new and creative ways to solve church problems or issues.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
8. Includes the views and interests of people in the entire church.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
9. Clearly feels like one church rather than two or more separate congregations.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
10. Collectively pursues the common vision of our church.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
11. Responds quickly to the needs and problems of our community.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
12. Meets our social and spiritual needs we have as a whole.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
13. Communicates our ministries, goals, and successes in a way that creates excitement and momentum for our entire church.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
14. Fully understands the meaning and purpose of our vision and mission as a church.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Community

Directions: Please think of the relationships you have with people in your church, then rate the following statements accordingly.

15. I know at least ten people by name who attend other congregations in our church.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
16. I go out of my way to know people who attend other congregations in our church.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
17. I am actively involved in one or more of our church ministries with people who attend other services.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

18. Our church seems less unified as a single church and more like two or more separate churches.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

19. I occasionally attend other services in our church(4 or more times per year) just to show my support of the larger church.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

20. A significant number of people (25%+) from all of our congregations meet together for some form of fellowship, group study, or conversation.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

21. Our church provides intentional ways for people from all congregations to meet one another.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

22. I am not very satisfied with the way our separate congregations work together.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Leadership

Directions: Please think of the people who provide the clergy and lay leadership in your church, then rate their total effectiveness in working together to achieve greater results for the Kingdom of God.

Our leadership...

23. Takes responsibility for uniting the separate congregations in the overall ministry of this church.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

24. Fails to inspire and motivate people involved in our different congregations to serve as one church and not separate congregations.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

25. Creates excitement around the vision and mission of our church.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

26. Has not helped me fit in and feel like a part of the church as a whole.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

27. Is authentic, works together, and provides good examples to follow.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

28. Represents the diverse group of people and life experiences of this church.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

29. Is highly effective at coaching, developing, and discipling me as a Christian and servant of Christ.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Communication

Directions: Please think of the various ways your church communicates with its membership and regular attendees, then rate the following statements accordingly.

Our church ...

30. Keeps me well informed of church activities and ministry opportunities through the newsletter, announcements, and/or website.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
31. Helps me know and understand the financial, ministry, and membership status of our church.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
32. Prepares and distributes important information in a timely manner.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
33. Could do better at making me aware of how the other worshipping congregations in our church are helping reach goals and fulfilling our vision.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
34. Frequently recognizes, appreciates, and celebrates the small wins and significant successes throughout the church.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
35. Rarely mentions our vision from the pulpit or includes its importance in the pastor's sermons.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Vision

Directions: Please think of the vision and mission of your church, then rate the following statements accordingly.

Our church ...

36. Has a positive outlook toward policy and program changes as it seeks to fulfill our vision and mission.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
37. Has great worship attendance, but lacks an overall passion and commitment to our vision.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
38. Sometimes leans toward maintaining the status quo.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
39. Has a strong and clear picture of our preferred future.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

40. Can be inconsistent at times in sticking to the goals of fulfilling our vision.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

41. Helps us memorize and routinely state our church's vision statement.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX D

SURVEY FOLLO W-UP CARD

What a great time and opportunity God has given us to be involved in His ministry. I wanted to personally thank you for participating in the research of my doctoral dissertation. If you have not had a chance to mail yours back, I wanted to thank you pre-maturely for your help. Everyone's participation will be so helpful to this project and for the feedback your church will receive back from this study.

Abundant shalom to you and your family,

Pastor Mike Pearson

APPENDIX E

RANDOM SAMPLE DIRECTIONS

WAYS THE CHURCH CAN HELP

1. The **Senior Pastor** plays a key role in this research by putting his or her weight of support behind this project and asking for participation from the congregation.
 - Announce the project and his or her support from the pulpit one week prior to mailout and during the two-week return deadline.
 - Write a cover letter to be included with the questionnaire asking their participation in this short instrument to help complete this doctoral dissertation.

2. The **Church Secretary/Administrator**'s help is key as well in the following areas:

- a. provide a 12% random selection of membership participants in the following manner:
 - Establish the total **membership** number of your church and provide that number to the researcher;
 - Write the numbers 1 through 8 on separate pieces of paper;
 - Randomly, select one of those seven numbers, (e.g., you draw out a 5)
 - Go down the membership list and begin with the 8th person/household on that list, (e.g., most likely the person's last name will begin with an "A")
 - Beginning with that person, select **every eighth person/household** until you reach the end of the membership list. This will create the random selection.

This sounds a little quirky, but it does establish a random sample. For example, a 12% sample of a church of 600 would equal 72. By choosing every 8th person, the sampling would equal 75 people in that random sampling.

- Provide researcher with a list of those names and addresses. If possible, it would be helpful if this information could be pre-formatted for labels. If that is not easily accomplished, please don't feel obligated to put the extra time in. I realize the workload that churches already place on church secretaries and administrators, and I do not want to add any additional stress.
- b. Include the following announcement in the church bulletin/newsletter/website one week prior to mailout and during the two-week return deadline.

APPENDIX F

PRE-SURVEY ANNOUNCEMENT INFORMATION

BULLETIN OR NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

Giving Us Your Opinion

Our church has been selected as one of several churches that have shown success in reaching people for Christ and for its church growth. We have been asked to participate in a research project that will help other churches understand what it means to create cooperative energy in churches with multiple worship services or congregations. A random sample from our membership has been selected, and those persons will be receiving a Church Synergy Assessment Tool by mail. This survey should take no more than approximately 10 minutes. If you are selected, we hope you will cooperate by filling out the information and returning it on or before the deadline date. Your participation will provide valuable information to our church leadership as well as be a simple ministry in helping bless other congregations.

APPENDIX G

CHURCH SYNERGY ASSESSMENT REPORT *

CHURCH

SYNERGY

ASSESSMENT REPORT

Church Name

City, State

* Adapted and edited from Partnership Self-Assessment Report

Overview of Report

For the sake of this report, a “congregation” is defined as any separate worshipping group of people within St Mark who meet at different times in the same facility, or in separate worship areas at the same time. These congregations are those who work together to achieve the church’s overall vision and to fulfill its common mission.

This Church Synergy Assessment Report has four main sections. First, this report begins by looking at the **response rate** of the random sample selected from your church. This percentage helps establish a reasonable degree of confidence in the information of this report.

Second, this report looks at the **respondent’s impression of synergy in your church**. These questions get at a general sense of how the congregation feels concerning the oneness and effectiveness of the church as a whole.

The report continues by presenting your church’s strengths and weaknesses in the following areas known to be related to organizational synergy:

- (1) The effectiveness of your church’s ability to create community;
- (2) The effectiveness of your church’s leadership;
- (3) The effectiveness of your church’s communication; and
- (4) The effectiveness of your church’s ability to comprehend, focus, and strive for a common vision.

The report then presents and interprets **your church’s synergy score**. This score is a key indicator of how well your church’s cooperative process is working. It tells you how well the process is combining your church’s knowledge, spiritual gifts, and multiple resources so that each worshipping congregation can accomplish more together than they can on their own. This information can help your church identify what it is doing well and what it needs to focus on to improve the success of its cooperative process.

Next, the report presents your **church’s views about their own participation within in the partnership of a church with multiple congregations**. It describes their views about the decision-making process in the church, the benefits and drawbacks they are experiencing as a result of participating in the church, and their overall satisfaction with the church. Acting on this information can help your church in affirming or becoming more successful in utilizing the broad array of diversity that exist within your church.

The report concludes by discussing **how your church can use the information** in this assessment report to celebrate, encourage, and/or take corrective action.

1. YOUR CHURCH'S RESPONSE RATE: KEYS TO INTERPRETING THIS REPORT

The information in this report is based on data that members of your church provided when they filled out the Church Synergy Assessment Tool. Most of the questions in the questionnaire focus on how members view your church as a whole. The other questions in the questionnaire focus on how participants view specific areas in your church that are deemed crucial to creating and maintaining church-wide synergy.

The findings in this report are relevant only to the degree that the randomly selected members in your church were familiar enough with the church to complete the questionnaire and actually did so.

In your church :

00 people were asked to complete the questionnaire, which represented a 12% random sampling of your church.

00 people completed the questionnaire within the one month time frame.

Your church's response rate is therefore % 00

Obviously, the higher your church's response rate, the more confidence you can have in the findings in this report.

2. YOUR CHURCH'S PERCEPTION OF SYNERGY SCORE (PSS): AN IMPORTANT INDICATOR OF THE SUCCESS OF YOUR COOPERATIVE PROCESS

The Church Synergy Assessment Tool looks for the success of a church's cooperative process by measuring its level of synergy. Synergy reflects **the extent to which a church with multiple congregations can do more together than any of its individual congregation's successes added together**. Put another way, your church's level of synergy indicates the extent to which your church, as a whole, is greater than the sum of its individual congregations.

A church's cooperative effort helps achieve high levels of synergy by **combining the different kinds of knowledge, spiritual gifts, and human resources of its membership**. It is this combination of gifts and cooperation that enables your diverse membership and worshipping communities to accomplish more than each of them can achieve on their own. When your church achieves high levels of synergy, it becomes stronger in two ways.

1) Your church is able to come up with **new and better ways of thinking about ministry, problems, and solutions**. By combining your diverse types of knowledge, gifts, background, and experience, your membership creates a synergistic community that is able to:

- a) Break new ground, challenge the "accepted wisdom", and discover innovative solutions to ministry challenges;
- b) See the "big picture" of your vision coming to fruition as your ministry relates to each other and to the sin problems your church is trying to address;
- c) Understand your local environment and determine which strategies are most likely to work in that environment.

2) Your church is able to **take actions that go beyond what any single congregation could do alone**. By combining their diversity of knowledge, gifts, and resources, this synergistic partnership is able to:

- a) Give focus to a ministry opportunity or problem from multiple vantage points simultaneously;
- b) Carry out comprehensive intercessions that connect multiple ministries and resources;
- c) Coordinate ministry in the community (i.e., fill gaps in community services, improve outreach, and/or provide ministry more effectively or economically).

When a church of multiple congregations is ***not*** achieving high levels of synergy, it is ***not*** realizing the full benefit of the resources God has provided them to strengthen thinking, action, and relations with the broader community. In fact, such a partnership doesn't have much of an advantage over what individual people or organizations can do by themselves.

In the Church Synergy Assessment Tool, your respondent's impression of synergy is measured by a set of 8 questions. Your church's **PSS** is the average of all of your respondents' answers to all 8 of these questions. It reflects the ***extent to which the participants felt they were accomplishing more together than they would on their own.***

Your church's ISS is 0.00.

Scores from 1.0–2.9 are in the Low Synergy Zone, which means that this area needs a lot of improvement. Scores from 3.0–4.0 are in the Moderate Synergy Zone, which means that more effort is needed in this area to maximize the congregation's cooperative potential. Scores from 4.1–5.0 are in the High Synergy Zone, which means that the partnership currently excels in this area and needs to focus attention on maintaining its high score.

The table on the next page shows how your church scored on each of the 8 questions that make up the PSS scale. This table reflects the particular ***ways that the congregations in your church feel they are doing more together than they can on their own.*** The 8 questions are ordered according to their average scores, starting with the attribute that got the highest average score and ending with the one that got the lowest average score.

PERCEPTION OF SYNERGY

How well, by working together, are the congregations
in your church able to:

Church
Average

Identify new and creative ways to solve church problems or issues. (ldrsh p)	0.00
Include the views and interests of people in the entire church. (cmmnc)	0.00
Clearly feel like one church rather than two or more separate congregations. (cmmt y)	0.00
Collectively pursue the common vision of our church. (vs n)	0.00
Respond quickly to the needs and problems of the community. (ldrshp)	0.00
Meet the social and spiritual needs of our church as a whole. (cmmt y)	0.00
Communicate our ministries, goals, and successes in a way that creates excitement and momentum for our entire church. (cmmnc)	0.00
Fully understand the meaning and purpose of our vision and mission as a church. (vs n)	0.00

Because this Church Synergy Assessment Tool gives your church a way to measure synergy, you can now document this information that was previously invisible. To celebrate and/or improve the level of synergy your church is experiencing, discuss what synergy means with your church leadership, paying particular attention to the attributes of synergy in which your church is weakest. The rest of this report is a more detailed extrapolation from which you and your leadership can further discuss and focus.

3. YOUR CHURCH'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN AREAS KNOWN TO BE RELATED TO SYNERGY

An in depth literature review and study of secular church organizations has identified four factors that are related to a church's ability to achieve high levels of synergy:

- (1) The effectiveness of your church's ability to create community;
- (2) The effectiveness of your church's leadership;

- (3) The effectiveness of your church's communication; and
- (4) The effectiveness of your church's ability to comprehend, focus, and strive for a common vision.

The Church Synergy Assessment Tool measured your church's strengths and weaknesses in these areas. With this information, your church can readily identify what it is doing well and what it needs to focus on to improve the success of its cooperative process.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR CHURCH'S ABILITY TO CREATE COMMUNITY

The Holy Scripture places a heavy emphasis on the importance of community and solidarity within the church. Churches that are effective in creating a true sense of community involve a sense of belonging and acceptance, regardless of the size or structural dynamics of the church.

In the Church Synergy Assessment Tool, the effectiveness of a church's ability to create community is measured by a set of 8 questions. Your church's score for overall community is the average of all of your respondents' answers to all of these questions.

Your church's score for creating community is 0.00.

Scores from 1.0–2.9 are in the Low Synergy Zone, which means that this area needs a lot of improvement. Scores from 3.0–4.0 are in the Moderate Synergy Zone, which means that more effort is needed in this area to maximize the congregation's cooperative potential. Scores from 4.1–5.0 are in the High Synergy Zone, which means that the partnership currently excels in this area and needs to focus attention on maintaining its high score.

The table below shows how your church scored on each of the 8 questions that indicate the ability to create community. This table provides you with more detailed information than the overall score. The 8 questions are ordered according to their average scores, starting with the attribute that got the highest average score and ending with the one that got the lowest average score.

CREATING COMMUNITY

Attributes Of Community:	Church Average
I know at least ten people by name who attend <u>other</u> congregations in our church.	0.00
I go out of my way to know people who attend <u>other</u> congregations in our church.	0.00
I am actively involved in one or more of our church ministries with people who attend <u>other</u> congregations than I.	0.00
Our church seems less unified as a single church and more like two or more separate churches. <i>(high numbers here mean disagreement with this statement.)</i>	0.00
I occasionally attend <u>other</u> congregations in our church just to show my support to the larger church.	0.00
A significant number of people from all our congregations meet together for some form of fellowship, group study, or conversation.	0.00
Our church provides intentional ways for people from all congregations to meet one another.	0.00
I am not very satisfied with the way our congregation works together. <i>(high numbers here mean disagreement with this statement.)</i>	0.00

Look at these results carefully. They identify the particular strengths and weaknesses of your church's ability to create meaningful community with one another. Churches that achieve an average community score in the upper 4 range from these 8 attributes have the kind of community atmosphere that promotes the highest level of synergy.

Be sure to celebrate your church's strengths in this area. Identify the people in your congregations who are providing the attributes of leadership that received high scores. Recognize these participants for their important contributions to the church and encourage them to train other members in these skills so that the church's leadership will be sustained beyond the tenure of any particular individual.

To improve the effectiveness of your church's community, discuss the findings in the table with the other members of your church. See if any of them have or know someone who has leadership skills that the church is either under-utilizing or lacking in this area. Use the information in the table to recruit new people from the church body

who can provide needed kinds of leadership in building greater community. When you do so, look for people who are boundary-spanners—people with different backgrounds and experiences who understand and bring different perspectives to your leadership and can bridge diverse cultures.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR CHURCH'S LEADERSHIP

A broad reading of leadership studies show that leadership is one of the most important factors related to church synergy. Churches that are effective in creating a cooperative atmosphere involve a number of people in both formal and informal capacities of leadership. Together, these leaders help a church of multiple congregations make the most of cooperation by playing the following roles:

The leadership **inspires and motivates the people involved in each congregation** by communicating what the congregations can accomplish together and how their joint ministry can benefit not only the community, but also each of them individually.

The leadership runs a collaborative process that **allows key leaders from each congregation to talk to, learn from, and work with each other**. To make this happen, leaders create an environment where differences of opinion can be voiced, thus, successfully managing, rather than avoiding, conflict among congregations.

The leadership **helps congregations do more together than they can on their own** by stimulating them to be creative and look at things differently, by relating and synthesizing their different ideas, and by finding effective ways to combine their complementary skills and resources.

In the Church Synergy Assessment Tool, the effectiveness of a church's leadership is measured by a set of 7 questions. Your church's score for leadership effectiveness is the average of all of your respondent's answers to all of these questions.

Your church's score for leadership effectiveness is 0.00.

Scores from 1.0–2.9 are in the Low Synergy Zone, which means that this area needs a lot of improvement. Scores from 3.0–4.0 are in the Moderate Synergy Zone, which means that more effort is needed in this area to maximize the congregation's cooperative potential. Scores from 4.1–5.0 are in the High Synergy Zone, which means that the partnership currently excels in this area and needs to focus attention on maintaining its high score.

The table on the next page shows how your church scored on each of the 7 questions that make up the leadership effectiveness scale. This table provides you with more detailed information than the overall score. The 7 questions (each representing an attribute of effective leadership) are ordered according to their average scores, starting with the attribute that got the highest average score and ending with the one that got the lowest average score.

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

Leadership Attributes:	Church Average
Takes responsibility for uniting the separate congregations in the overall ministry of this church.	0.00
Fails to inspire and motivate people to serve as one church over serving as separate congregations. <i>(high numbers here mean disagreement with this statement.)</i>	0.00
Creates excitement around the vision and mission of the church.	0.00
Has not helped me fit in and feel like a part of the church as a whole. <i>(high numbers here mean disagreement with this statement.)</i>	0.00
Is authentic, works together, and provides good examples to follow.	0.00
Represents the diverse group of people and life experiences of this church.	0.00
Is highly effective at coaching, developing, and discipling me as a Christian and servant of Christ.	0.00

Look at these results carefully. They identify the particular strengths and weaknesses of your church's leadership. Churches that achieve an average leadership score in the upper 4 range from these 7 attributes have the kind of leadership that promotes the highest level of synergy.

Because of the spiritual nature of the Church, the attributes of leadership on this scale are very different from the kind of leadership that most people have experienced or have been trained to provide. Therefore, be sure to celebrate your church's strengths in this area. Identify the people in your congregations who are providing the attributes of leadership that received high scores. Recognize these participants for their important contributions to the church – both staff and volunteer – and encourage them to train other members in these skills so that the church's leadership will be sustained beyond the tenure of any particular individual.

To improve the effectiveness of your church's leadership, discuss the findings in the table with the other members of your church. See if any of them have or know someone who has leadership skills that the church is either under-utilizing or lacking. Use the information in the table to recruit new people from the church body who can provide needed kinds of leadership. Look for people who are boundary-spanners—people with different backgrounds and experiences who understand and bring different perspectives to your leadership and can bridge diverse cultures.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR CHURCH'S COMMUNICATION

Communication is the “glue” that makes it possible for multiple congregations to combine their knowledge, skills, and resources. Two or more congregations within a single church need a **certain degree of communication** to achieve high levels of synergy. Churches that maximize synergy, and are thus able to make the most of their communication, effectively carry out the following kinds of administration and ministry activities:

Facilitate **timely communication** by keeping the membership up to date on activities and ministry opportunities.

Provide the church with **analytic support** by preparing documents that inform the membership to best help them make timely decisions for themselves.

Provide **orientation to new members** as they join the church.

In the Church Synergy Assessment Tool, the ability of the church to effectively communicate is measured by a set of 6 questions. Your church's overall score for its effectiveness to communicate is the average of all of your respondents' answers to all of these questions.

Your church's score for communicating effectively is 0.00.

Scores from 1.0–2.9 are in the Low Synergy Zone, which means that this area needs a lot of improvement. Scores from 3.0–4.0 are in the Moderate Synergy Zone, which means that more effort is needed in this area to maximize the congregation's cooperative potential. Scores from 4.1–5.0 are in the High Synergy Zone, which means that the partnership currently excels in this area and needs to focus attention on maintaining its high score.

The table below shows how your church scored on each of the 6 questions that make up the communication scale. This table provides you with more detailed information than the overall score. The 6 questions are ordered according to their average scores, starting with the activity that got the highest average score and ending with the one that got the lowest average score.

COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS

Communication Attributes:	Church Average
I am well informed of church activities and ministry opportunities through the newsletter, announcements, and/or website.	0.00
Helps me know and understand the financial, ministry, and membership status of our church.	0.00
Prepares and distributes important information in a timely manner.	0.00
Could do better at making me aware of how the other congregations in our church are helping reach goals and fulfilling our vision. <i>(high numbers here mean disagreement with this statement.)</i>	0.00
Frequently recognizes, appreciates, and celebrates the small wins and significant successes throughout the church.	0.00
Rarely mentions our vision from the pulpit or includes it in a connection to the pastor's sermons.	0.00

Look carefully at these results. They identify the particular strengths and weaknesses of your church's ability to effectively communicate uniformly among congregations. Churches that achieve an average communication score in the upper 4 range from these 6 attributes have the kind of communication skills that promote the highest levels of synergy.

To improve the effectiveness of your church's communication skills, discuss the findings in the table with your leadership. See if any of them have, or know some one who has, communication skills that the church is either under-utilizing or lacking. Use the information in the table to explore better use of your staff and volunteers who can contribute to, and strengthen, the church's ability to achieve greater synergy through communication.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR CHURCH'S ABILITY TO COMPREHEND, FOCUS, AND STRIVE FOR A COMMON VISION.

Vision and common goals are consistent factors in creating a synergistic link between diverse groups if the vision and goals are compelling and representative enough to inspire those involved. Vision becomes a vital component that connects the total church toward a greater ministry than the sum of each congregation on its own. Synergy is established as vision pictures what the future should look like, aligning people with that vision, and inspiring them to make that vision happen despite the obstacles. Churches that maximize synergy, and are thus able to make the most of their vision, effectively carry out the following kinds of administration and ministry activities:

Communicate vision as an inspirational component to **draw and does not push** toward a common goal.

Live out the vision through exemplary leadership as a means to **motivate all persons** involved to move forward in the same direction.

Offer consistent testimony to the success of this vision as the common goal with which **every member can be aligned** and to which every member can be accountable.

In the Church Synergy Assessment Tool, the effectiveness of a church's ability to comprehend, focus, and strive for a common vision is measured by a set of 6 questions.

Your church's score for leadership effectiveness is the average of all of your respondent's answers to all of these questions.

Your church's score for effectiveness in vision is 0.00.

Scores from 1.0–2.9 are in the Low Synergy Zone, which means that this area needs a lot of improvement. Scores from 3.0–4.0 are in the Moderate Synergy Zone, which means that more effort is needed in this area to maximize the congregation's cooperative potential. Scores from 4.1–5.0 are in the High Synergy Zone, which means that the partnership currently excels in this area and needs to focus attention on maintaining its high score.

The table below shows how your church scored on each of the 6 questions that make up the scale of effective vision casting. This table provides you with more detailed information than the overall score. The 6 questions are ordered according to their average scores, starting with the activity that got the highest average score and ending with the one that got the lowest average score.

EFFECTIVENESS IN VISION

Vision Attributes:	Church Average
Our church has a positive outlook toward policy and program changes as it seeks to fulfill our vision and mission.	0.00
Our church has great worship attendance, but lacks an overall passion and commitment to our vision.	0.00
Our church sometimes leans toward maintaining the status quo. <i>(high numbers here mean disagreement with this statement.)</i>	0.00
Our church has a strong and clear picture of our preferred future.	0.00
Our church Can be inconsistent at times in sticking to our goals in fulfilling our vision.	0.00
Our church helps us memorize and routinely state our church's vision statement.	0.00

Look carefully at these results. They identify the particular strengths and weaknesses of your church's ability to adequately communicate and inspire its membership toward a common vision. Churches that achieve an average vision score in the 4 range from these 6 vision attributes have the kind of inspiring vision to promote the highest levels of synergy.

To improve the effectiveness of your church's ability to comprehend, focus, and strive for a common vision, discuss the findings in the table with your leadership. Discuss which areas or methods of communicating your vision that is to be celebrated, or which areas or methods are either being under-utilized or lacking. Use the information in the table to explore better use of your staff and volunteers who can contribute to, and strengthen, the church's ability to achieve greater synergy through vision.

4. CONCLUSION: HOW TO USE THE INFORMATION IN THIS ASSESSMENT REPORT

The information in this report gives you a **snapshot of your church's level of synergy**—a picture of how your church is functioning together at this point in time. The findings are most meaningful if everyone who is familiar with the way your church works was asked to complete the questionnaire and did so honestly. As the text in each section of this report indicates, there are many ways your church can act on these results, both to sustain what it is doing well and to address its weaknesses. Used repeatedly over time, the Church Synergy Assessment Report gives your church a way to track the impact of its efforts to improve the cooperative process.

Think about this assessment report as a **starting point for discussion and corrective action**. It provides the leadership of your church a framework for talking about the cooperative process and with objective, quantitative data to anchor and stimulate their conversation. Also, be sure to **keep a copy of this report**. If you so choose to do a follow up survey, you will need to compare the results of future assessments.

WHAT DOES THE DATA IN THIS REPORT TELL YOU?

Your church's **level of synergy** indicates how well the cooperative process is enabling the congregations of your church to do more together than they can on their own. In other words, it tells the people involved in your church how much of an advantage they are getting from everyone's cooperation. The **detailed synergy scores** indicate the particular ways that your church's cooperative process is, and is not, strengthening its participant's thinking, actions, and relations with the broader vision and mission of the church, as well as the direct impact this will have on your community. These scores describe the value your church has already gotten from its cooperation and indicate the additional value it can work to achieve.

The other data in this report provide your church with a road map to realize the full potential of cooperation. The overall and detailed scores in each of four areas related to synergy—**community, leadership, communication, and common vision**—indicate how well your church is doing at the current time and what it needs to strengthen to make the cooperative process work better.

HOW CAN YOUR CHURCH BENEFIT FROM THIS INFORMATION?

A suggested first step is for the pastor(s), staff, and lay leadership to **talk about the findings**. Your overall scores indicate that your church synergy is functioning on the upper end of the 3 range, which is to be celebrated, but keeping in mind also that there is room for improvement, particularly in the area of **Vision Casting and Community**. Keep in mind that the data in this report is based on the "perception" of your membership, thus your church leadership needs the ideas and talents of your membership to understand how its cooperative process is working and to make the process work better.

What can you do in the course of these discussions?

Bring the data alive by **telling stories** about your church. Illustrate the scores in this report with vivid examples of things that have and have not gone well in your church. **Celebrate the successes** your church has achieved and use the data in this report (along with your vivid examples) to **communicate** these otherwise invisible accomplishments to your membership and constituents.

Further, use the results to **identify and acknowledge the contributions of people in your church** (e.g., those who have valuable leadership or ministry skills or are contributing other valuable resources). Use this as a kick off to yearly leadership or ministry training weekends, seminars, or classes.

See if current members or constituents have **untapped knowledge, skills, or resources** that they would like to contribute and that could further the work of your church. Consider bringing persons who currently play a more peripheral role in your church into the “inner core.” Use information in the report to identify **new** kinds of participants that your church needs and, therefore, should recruit, new staff you should hire, and/or new sources of funding you should explore. **Broaden involvement in the leadership and management** of your church.

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