COMPONENTS OF LAY-MOBILIZING CULTURES AND SYSTEMS

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Tracy D. Hoskins

May 2006
ABSTRACT

COMPONENTS OF LAY-MOBILIZING CULTURES AND SYSTEMS

by

Tracy D. Hoskins

The purpose of this project was to identify common, crucial elements in effective processes of deploying and sustaining laypersons in volunteer ministries within large churches. The context for the study was three large churches that mobilize and deploy persons in multiplied ministries. Data was collected through open-ended, semi-structured interviews with fifteen persons selected from the three churches.

The study demonstrated that lay-deploying churches create lay-ministry cultures and have detailed systems based upon biblical and theological foundations. Lay-deploying churches establish and maintain cultures and systems through which laypersons are inspired, motivated, trained, placed, and supported in volunteer ministries.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I offer my deepest appreciation to

Dr. Leslie Andrews. Your instruction and wisdom enabled me to envision and initiate this project.

Rev. James Hampton. As dissertation mentor you firmly yet gently led me through the refining process. Your keen mind and compassionate heart have been great gifts to me. Your assistance made project completion possible and somewhat enjoyable.

Bob and Pam Anderson, Stephanie Anderson, Tim Caister, Mike and Lynette Christensen, and Britt Shipley. Your voluntary ministry as my Congregational Research Reflection Team is deeply appreciated. Your prayers of support, words of encouragement, and genuine interest in the project mean more than you will know.

Rev. Gene Tanner. As senior pastor of Valparaiso Nazarene Church, you allowed me to pursue my dream of completing a doctoral program. Your encouragement and support are highly valued.

Jill Hoskins. As my wife you loved and supported every step of the educational process. Your patience and resolve inspired me to endure and complete this project. You are a truly amazing person, and I am grateful that we are doing life together.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Acknowledgements

ix

## Chapter

1. Understanding the Problem

   - Introduction
   - Purpose of the Project
   - Research Questions
     - Research Question 1
     - Research Question 2
     - Research Question 3
     - Research Question 4
   - Definition of Terms

2. Methodology

   - Context of the Study
     - Granger Community Church
     - Willow Creek Community Church
     - Southeast Christian Church
     - Pilot Project
   - Population and Sample

3. Instrum entation

4. Data Collection

5. Importance of the Study

Page
Overview of the Document .................................................................12

2. Precedents in the Literature ...............................................................13

Lay Mobilization Cultures .................................................................13

Scripturally Mandated Lay Mobilization Cultures .................................20

Colossians 4:17 ..............................................................................20

Exodus 18:17, 21-22 ........................................................................21

1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10 .......................................................................24

Romans 12:1, 4-8 ..........................................................................26

1 Corinthians 12:4-5, 12-20, 27-28 .............................................28

Ephesians 4:11-13 .......................................................................30

Theologically Supported Lay Mobilization Cultures ............................32

Components of a Theology of Laity ..................................................36

Church ..........................................................................................37

Ministry .........................................................................................40

Laity ..............................................................................................41

Vocation .........................................................................................43

Lay Mobilization Systems ...............................................................44

Vision Casting ...............................................................................45

Recruiting .....................................................................................48

Training .........................................................................................50

Placement ......................................................................................51

Retention ......................................................................................52

Summary .......................................................................................54
3. Design of the Study

   Problem ....................................................................................................................56
   Purpose ....................................................................................................................56
   Research Questions ..................................................................................................57
     Research Question 1 ..................................................................................57
     Research Question 2 ..................................................................................58
     Research Question 3 ..................................................................................59
     Research Question 4 ..................................................................................59
   Pilot Project ..............................................................................................................60
   Population and Sample .............................................................................................61
   Methodology and Instrumentation ...........................................................................62
   Data Collection .........................................................................................................63

4. Findings of the Study ...............................................................................................64
   Profile of Subjects ....................................................................................................64
   Lay Ministry Cultures Substantiated .......................................................................65
   Theological and Biblical Foundations for Lay Ministry Culture .........................66
     Results from Granger Community Church ..................................................67
     Results from Southeast Christian Church ..................................................68
     Results from Willow Creek Community Church .......................................71
   Attraction Mechanisms Inspiring Lay Ministry Involvement .............................73
     Results from Granger Community Church ..................................................74
     Results from Southeast Christian Church ..................................................81
     Results from Willow Creek Community Church .......................................86
Reasons for Personal Involvement in Volunteerism .........................................................91

Results from Granger Community Church .................................................................91

Results from Southeast Christian Church .................................................................93

Results from Willow Creek Community Church .....................................................94

Lay-Deploying Processes ..........................................................................................95

Results from Granger Community Church .................................................................95

Results from Southeast Christian Church .................................................................98

Results from Willow Creek Community Church .....................................................101

Volunteer Connection Personnel .................................................................................104

Results from Granger Community Church .................................................................104

Results from Southeast Christian Church .................................................................105

Results from Willow Creek Community Church .....................................................106

Volunteer Connection Procedures .................................................................................106

Volunteer Equipping Mechanisms ............................................................................107

Results from Granger Community Church .................................................................107

Results from Southeast Christian Church .................................................................110

Results from Willow Creek Community Church .....................................................111

Preferred Equipping Mechanisms .............................................................................112

Results from Granger Community Church .................................................................112

Results from Southeast Christian Church .................................................................113

Results from Willow Creek Community Church .....................................................114

Retention Mechanisms .............................................................................................114

Results from Granger Community Church .................................................................114
Results from Southeast Christian Church.................................118
Results from Willow Creek Community Church.........................120
Perceived Key Elements in Volunteer Cultures and Systems...............123
Results from Granger Community Church..................................123
Results from Southeast Christian Church.................................125
Results from Willow Creek Community Church..........................126
Volunteer Perceptions Coincided with Leadership’s Published Materials ....128
Results from Granger Community Church..................................128
Results from Southeast Christian Church.................................130
Results from Willow Creek Community Church..........................132
Observations from Interview Videotapes....................................135
Summary of Major Findings ......................................................137
Cultural Components within Three Large Churches........................138
  Biblical and Theological Foundations Provide Purpose .................138
  Attraction Mechanisms Inspire Persons to Volunteer ..................138
  Subjective Reasons For Personal Involvement Illustrated Motivations .138
  Objective Reasons For Personal Involvement Illustrated Motivations ...138
Organizational Components within Three Large Churches ................139
  Lay-Deploying Processes Were Clearly Defined and Understood .......139
  Volunteer Connection Personnel Linked Persons with Ministries ....139
  Volunteer Connection Procedures Moved Persons into Serving Roles ..139
Equipping Mechanisms within Three Large Churches ....................140
  Established Equipping Mechanisms Prepared Persons for Service ....140
DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
COMPONENTS OF LAY-MOBILIZING CULTURES AND SYSTEMS

presented by
Tracy D. Hoskins

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at
Asbury Theological Seminary

______________________________  __________________________
Mentor  Date

______________________________  __________________________
Internal Reader  Date

______________________________  __________________________
Representative, Doctor of Ministry Program  Date

______________________________  __________________________
Dean, Doctor of Ministry Program  Date
CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Consensus was reached at a weekly staff meeting at our local church: “We don’t have enough volunteers.” During that meeting full-time staff members reported similar frustrations. Our children’s pastor informed us about serious problems resulting from lack of volunteers for Wednesday night and Sunday morning programs. Our youth pastor desperately recruited fellow staff members for a retreat to be held the following weekend. He explained about persons who verbally committed to serve as chaperones and then recanted. A public appeal by another staff person for parking lot volunteers had resulted in two responses toward the needed fifteen attendants. Before adjournment from the meeting, remaining staff members added further examples illustrating shortfalls of persons willing to serve in ministry positions within our church.

Listening to those conversations, an observer might wonder if this occurrence was rare or an ongoing, problematic situation. Truly, minimal lay involvement in ministries is a perpetual, constraining challenge in our church. The above-stated consensus (“We don’t have enough volunteers”) frequently has been acknowledged. Although our congregation includes one thousand weekly attendees, a shortage of willing, joyful, consistent volunteers exists.

The scenario described above is not confined to our local church. In twenty-one years of ministry, I have served in three local churches. All three of these churches utilized an estimated 15 to 20 percent of laity in ministry positions. All three churches have been constrained in ministries because of lack of servant-oriented personnel. All
three churches have not been effective in tasks of mobilizing and deploying laypersons in meaningful positions of service.

Constraint in ministries because of minimal involvement in lay participation extends beyond my personal experiences. Other persons leading ministries have voiced similar anxieties and frustrations in attempts to carry out the work of Christ in the world.

Christ himself expressed dismay when he realized the immensity of tasks to be completed as compared to the number of actual persons participating in those tasks. At one point in his earthly ministry he trained and commissioned seventy-two persons to do ministries. Before sending them out, two by two, he told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Luke 10:2, NIV).

Fellow minister Alan Johnson expresses consternation about present-day, noninvolvement of laity in ministries. In his recent dissertation he assesses concomitant results in churches where laity are not deployed. He writes, “No matter how large a congregation becomes, or how accomplished clergy become in their personal roles, without an equipped and empowered laity, the Kingdom’s potential is reduced, and God’s vision for his church is thwarted” (3). Johnson’s statements express the same sentiment Christ expressed in Luke 10:2: Many tasks need to be done, but so few are motivated and equipped to do the work. His dissertation addresses this problem and sets forth an action plan for mobilization and equipping of laity for service in his local church.

Marlene Wilson agrees with Johnson’s assessment, confirming the gravity of the present situation. She characterizes the church as a happening that never quite happened or as dynamite that failed to go off. With regret she noted that church pews are filled with
unrealized potential and untapped energy. She laments, “A phenomenon that I describe as ‘the pillars’ and ‘the pew-sitters’ has gradually developed. A faithful core of people do almost everything in the congregation while the vast majority simply observe” (21). Primary disappointment is voiced as she concludes that this situation has affected the quality and quantity of ministry done within churches as well as ministries performed outside the walls of the physical building.

Bill Hybels agrees with previous persons who report that lack of volunteers is a common, present-day predicament. Through his relationship with the Willow Creek Association, he has visited hundreds of churches and talked with numerous leaders. Hybels states, “Almost everywhere I turn, when I meet with pastors and leaders, they’re bemoaning the fact that they don’t have enough volunteers for their ministries” (“Seven Myths,” 11). He further assesses that the predicament’s existence should not be the focus of anxiety and attention. Instead, leaders ought to work to discover realities that have initiated this problem and then attempt to do something to change those realities. Being an individual who is driven to solve problems, Hybels challenges leaders to move from despair to action. He declares, “There are a lot of people who are potential servants in your church. You have to identify why [original emphasis] they are not serving” (11). Hybels’ statements encapsulate the intent of this project.

Fellow pastor W. C. Dishon understands the stated problem. He agrees with Hybels’ proposal of discovering reasons for lack of participation. He states the goal of the resulting discovery would be “to mobilize God’s people for ministry, enabling them to experience spiritual growth and the church to experience greater growth and effectiveness in fulfilling its mission” (5).
Comparison with other churches that are effective at mobilizing and deploying masses of persons in multiple ministries stimulated this project. Some churches successfully motivate and release persons to do meaningful, multiple ministries. Some churches exhibit servant-oriented environments in which laypersons joyfully commit to consistent service toward others. This study was designed to discover elements present within churches that are mobilizing and deploying masses of persons in multiplied ministries.

A specific, puzzling element of our situation was stimulus for this study. The full-time staff proclaim and communicate a gift-based ministry. They teach that persons are to serve from arenas of personal, spiritual giftedness. They offer opportunities for persons to discover their spiritual giftedness. In the past they have taught curriculum that informed persons about all spiritual gifts. Subsequently, they have given correlating inventories to assess personal, spiritual gifts. One particular curriculum, *Network: The Right People in the Right Places* (Bugbee, Cousins, and Hybels), was taught a few years ago. After little success in engaging persons in ministries, that curriculum was abandoned. More recently, Saddleback Community Church’s spiritual gifts curriculum, *C.L.A.S.S. 301: Discovering My Ministry* (RickWarren), was adapted. Again, minimal results have been observed, in terms of persons being mobilized for ministry. These experiences validate the truth that mobilization and deployment of laity involves more than impartation of knowledge. These experiences also validate the truth that effective mobilization and deployment of laity incorporates more than spiritual gifts discovery. These experiences indicate a need for additional mobilizing and deploying essentials beyond curriculum or programs. This project was initiated as an attempt to discover further elements that compose a matrix of
Purpose of the Project

This study sought to discover elements present within churches that are mobilizing and deploying persons in multiple ministries. The purpose of this project was to identify common, crucial elements in effective processes of deploying and sustaining laypersons in volunteer ministries within large churches. The result was a compilation of observations and principles applicable in settings similar to the church I presently serve (Valparaiso Nazarene Church, Valparaiso, Indiana) and to larger settings.

An initial assumption presupposed that successful deploying and sustaining of laypersons in volunteer ministries involves more than implementation of a curriculum or departmental program.

Research Questions

In order to fulfill the purpose of this study, four research questions were identified.

Research Question 1

What common cultural components motivate laypersons to participate in processes through which they are consistently deployed and sustained?

Research Question 2

What organizational components assist persons in productive volunteer service?

Research Question 3

What common equipping mechanisms productively prepare persons for fruitful volunteer service?
Research Question 4

What common retention mechanisms inspire persons to commit to long-term service within a local congregation?

Definition of Terms

Volunteer ministries are positions in which ordinary laypersons serve with no financial remuneration. The terms “volunteer ministries” and “lay ministries” are used interchangeably throughout this project.

Common, crucial elements in effective processes are essentials that could be effective in other large churches. Common elements are those observed in the context of the churches studied and could be implemented in other churches. Crucial elements are those essential to effective processes. Effective processes are end-to-end sets of activities that together create a working lay deployment system.

Large churches are ones with weekly attendances of one thousand or more persons. These are multi-staff churches employing numerous (five or more) full-time ministers. Full-time ministers are persons employed a minimum of forty hours per week and may or may not be ordained. These parameters coincided with inherent characteristics of the church I presently serve.

Common cultural components include ideologies, behaviors, and practices establishing an environment in which lay mobilization flourishes. These components are ones that could be replicated in other churches.

Organizational components include indigenous structures and managerial procedures incorporated to provide a framework for the processes of deploying and sustaining laypersons in volunteer ministries.
**Equipping mechanisms** are activities, events, and curriculums designed to assist in training and instructing laypersons for fruitful volunteer ministries.

**Retention mechanisms** are activities, events, and behaviors intended to affirm laypersons in ministry and induce long-term commitment to volunteer service.

**Methodology**

The purpose of this qualitative research project was to identify common, crucial elements in effective processes of deploying and sustaining laypersons in volunteer ministries in large churches. I chose a multi-case, exploratory methodology. I selected three churches as the context for this study. I interviewed five persons from each of these (for a total of fifteen interviewees). Prior to these interviews, I read Steinar Kvale’s book. Kvale’s writings communicate basic practices and principles associated with the interview process.

**Context of the Study**

The context of the study encompassed three churches: Granger Community Church, Granger, Indiana, Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, Illinois, and Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky.

These churches were selected according to the following criteria:

1. They deploy and sustain significant numbers of persons in volunteer ministries;
2. They are churches reporting weekly attendances of five thousand or more;
3. They are Protestant and evangelical in spirit and practice;
4. They have adapted a lay deployment system or have developed their own system that is consistently monitored, evaluated, and improved; and,
5. They conduct workshops or conferences that teach other churches about lay
deployment.

**Granger Community Church**

Located near South Bend, Indiana, Granger Community Church was founded in 1986 by Dr. Mark Beeson. Presently, weekly attendance is over five thousand persons. Current volunteer involvement is approximately 1,800. Denominationally, Granger Community Church is United Methodist.

**Willow Creek Community Church**

Located in the western suburbs of Chicago, Willow Creek Community Church is an interdenominational church. Founded by Bill Hybels in 1975, the church has grown to a weekly attendance of over 17,500 at weekend services. The current number of ministries is nearly one hundred. Current volunteer involvement is approximately 7,500.

**Southeast Christian Church**


**Pilot Project**

Prior to interviewing subjects at the three contextual churches, a pilot project was conducted at Family Christian Center in Munster, Indiana. The purpose of the pilot project was twofold: (1) The pilot project was to provide a “trial run” that would allow me to become comfortable with the interview process; and, (2) The pilot project would give opportunity to test interview questions.

The twofold purpose of the pilot project was fulfilled. The trial run allowed me to experience actual interview situations. After completing the five pilot interviews, I felt
confident and comfortable with the interview process.

The trial run also provided opportunity to experiment with the interview questions. Experimentation resulted in changing initial questions in order to stimulate engaged and active responses. In the first two interviews I simply asked the interview questions as they were written in Appendix A. I observed that responses were stated in “matter of fact” tones, without much energy and enthusiasm. The trial run exposed interviewees’ nervousness and fear about giving wrong answers. One benefit of the pilot project, then, was discovery of the importance of establishing a relaxed and secure atmosphere that would stimulate active and accurate responses. My response to this discovery was to revise the way I began the interview process. Rather than beginning with Question One, I asked interviewees to introduce themselves and describe their present volunteer roles. I then asked them to explain how they first became involved in volunteer ministries within their local church. This approach inspired interviewees to participate passionately in the process because they were talking about significant personal matters relating to actual experiences. As participants responded to these introductory suggestions, they often answered actual interview questions that had not yet been posed.

Located in Northwest Indiana, Family Christian Center is a nondenominational church. The church was selected on the basis of previously mentioned criteria. Approximately six thousand persons attend weekly services. Five subjects were selected according to criteria for actual subjects as is explained in the subsequent section

**Population and Sample**

A full-time staff person at each of the three churches chose volunteers to be
interviewed for this study. Each staff person selected five persons serving in volunteer ministries according to the following criteria:

1. All interviewees must have consistently served in some volunteer ministry position/positions for at least three years;

2. Interviewees were selected from various ministries/departments within the church. Not more than two persons from a particular volunteer ministry area participated in the interview process (i.e., youth department, children’s department, women’s ministry, etc.); and,

3. Interviewees could have no immediate or closely related family members serving as paid staff at the local church (husband, wife, children, parents).

Instrumentation

This study employed a researcher-designed interview instrument. A semi-structured, open-ended interview format was utilized to gather information from the selected volunteer laypersons.

Data Collection

I contacted staff persons responsible for lay ministry mobilization at each of the selected churches. After obtaining agreement for participation in this study, I scheduled dates and times for interviews. I informed staff persons about the criteria for selecting volunteers to be interviewed. Through subsequent phone calls, I confirmed the scheduling and agreement of laypersons involved in the project.

Interviews were conducted over a one-day period at one of the churches and a two-day period at the other two churches. My personal assistant videotaped the interviews. I wrote pertinent observations in a researcher journal. Data for this project
included responses to interview questions and content of the journal.

My personal assistant and I transcribed the audio-taped sessions. I compared and categorized responses and reported findings in Chapter 4.

**Importance of the Study**

This study provided a broad representation of three existing lay ministry systems that persistently involve large percentages of laypersons in multiplied, need-meeting ministries. Local church leadership desires to invest energies into efforts that will replicate principles and practices of these productive lay ministry systems. The local church leadership hopes to implement essential activities that will enhance and enlarge God’s kingdom through multiple ministries. They do not want to waste time and labor continuing programs and curriculums that do not stimulate such enhancement and enlargement; rather, they desire to understand and implement those elements that will increase effective ministry to the congregation and community. This project provided information that can eliminate unnecessary and unproductive efforts. Generally speaking, most churches possess similar desires.

The major focus of this particular study was upon responses by persons who actively participate in three specific, productive lay ministry systems. Rather than interviewing or surveying a large number of “lay ministry directors” in a large sample of churches, I chose to interview volunteers within lay ministry systems. I wanted to discover lay ministry principles and practices as perceived by persons volunteering within productive systems. In addition, I also wanted to observe whether laypersons’ perceptions of lay ministry principles and practices coincided with published materials of leadership from churches included in this study. I wanted to observe whether the
published materials were mere theory or whether those teachings were reflected in laity’s understanding and practice.

This study focused upon a convenience sampling of church volunteers in three specific churches. Limitations pertaining to the sampling are acknowledged. A larger sample might have yielded more comprehensive results, but for the intended purpose of this study, five persons from each church were selected and interviewed. The sampling consisted of fifteen participants. The limited size of the sampling allowed me to study responses to numerous open-ended questions intensively.

Generalizability of results was presupposed. My intent was to discover common principles that would apply in other large churches. I assumed the findings from this study could be generalized and applied to multi-staff churches that record attendances of one thousand or more persons. This study presupposed that lay mobilization principles present in churches with attendance of five thousand or more attendees would be applicable to churches with attendances of one thousand or more persons.

**Overview of the Document**

Chapter 2 anchors this study in the ongoing flow of related studies. Biblical and theological foundations are identified, and contemporary writings on lay ministry mobilization are examined. Chapter 3 describes the design of the study. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the study. Chapter 5 presents a summary of major conclusions, indicates major implications, and offers suggestions for further inquiry.
CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENTS IN THE LITERATURE

This study sought to examine elements present within churches that are mobilizing and deploying masses of persons in multiple ministries. The purpose of this project was to identify common, crucial elements in effective processes of deploying and sustaining laypersons in volunteer ministries within large churches. Common, crucial elements in effective processes are essentials that could be effective in other large churches. Large churches are multi-staff churches that record weekly attendances of one thousand or more persons. Common elements are those that are observed in the context of the churches studied and that could be implemented in other churches. Crucial elements are essential to effective processes, end-to-end sets of activities that together create a working lay deployment system.

An initial assumption presupposed that persistent deploying and sustaining of laypersons in volunteer ministries involves more than implementation of a curriculum or departmental program. The reviewed literature supported the initial assumption. In summary form, consulted sources indicated that lay-deploying churches have specific cultures and detailed systems. This chapter explains the concepts of culture and structures in regard to lay mobilization in local churches. The first section of this chapter reports findings concerning lay mobilization cultures. The second section discusses lay mobilization systems.

Lay Mobilization Cultures

Study of related literature reveals that effective lay mobilization arises from a distinctive culture within the setting of a particular local church. Lay-deploying churches
have specific cultures that create conditions through which persons are motivated to adopt integrated ideologies and subsequently participate in corresponding activities.

A beginning point for this project was to attempt to define culture. Time and space limitations prohibited extended study of volumes of literature addressing the complex issue. Edgar H. Schein summarizes the complexity of attempts to describe and identify organizational culture in his book. Schein cites considerable amount of debate concerning various approaches to describing and studying culture. He acknowledges that analysts of culture have described it in a wide variety of ways. In summary form, he reports that various scholars include the following concepts in definitions of culture:

1. Observed behavioral regularities when people interact: the language they use, the customs and traditions that evolve, and the rituals they employ.
2. Group norms: the implicit standards and values that evolve in working groups.
3. Espoused values: the articulated, publicly announced principles and values that the group claims to be trying to achieve.
4. Formal philosophy: the broad policies and ideological principles that guide a group’s actions.
5. Rules of the game: the implicit rules for getting along in the organization.
6. Climate: the feeling that is conveyed in a group by physical layout and the way in which members of the organization interact with each other … and with outsiders.
7. Embedded skills: the special competencies group members display in accomplishing certain tasks.
8. Habits of thinking, mental models, and/or linguistic paradigms: the shared cognitive frames that guide the perceptions, thought and language used by the members of a group and are taught to new members.
9. Shared meanings: the emergent understandings that are created by group members as they interact with each other.
10. “Root metaphors” or integrating symbols: the ideas, feelings and images groups develop to characterize themselves. (8-10)

A concise encompassing definition of culture appeared to be multifaceted. The ten distinct concepts indicated compound elements present within culture.
Schein believes that these ten concepts relate to culture but do not encapsulate its true essence. He observes that previous attempts at studying culture do have one common element. The previous definitions include the idea that culture involves “shared things held in common within groups” (10). He formulates his own working definition of organizational culture, bringing many of the previous concepts together. Schein, speaking from a secular organizational viewpoint, states that the culture of a group can be defined as follows:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (12)

Schein further expands his definition. He explains that clarity about culture can be obtained by differentiating levels at which culture manifests itself. The author identifies three levels of culture: artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions. Artifacts are defined as visible organizational structures and processes. Identifying artifacts is an initial task in discerning and exegeting a culture. Espoused values are defined as philosophies, norms, rules for behavior, as well as strategies and goals of the organization. Basic underlying assumptions are defined as taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. Basic assumptions are those values or behaviors that have been so verified by the group’s experience that they are now the unquestioned basis for the group’s function.

Although his formal definition of culture does not directly apply to church settings, one of Schein’s contributions to this project is his belief that clarity about culture can be obtained by differentiating levels at which culture manifests itself. His approach to
studying organizational culture is a comprehensive methodology, encouraging persons to observe the total environment of an organization. According to him, if a person is to gain true understanding of a particular organization’s culture, one must discover visible organizational components that maintain and sustain the environment; one must determine underlying ideologies and belief systems from which the culture originates; and, one must uncover the beliefs, perceptions, shared experiences, and emotions that fuel the culture. Schein’s three levels of cultural manifestations assist in confirming the presupposition underlying this project. The initial presupposition was that lay mobilization and deployment occurs because of a matrix of environmental components, including cultures and systems.

His contribution to this project, therefore, is his connection of artifacts with espoused values and basic assumptions. Inclusion of this aspect of his discussion on culture differs from other cultural analysts. His inclusion of artifacts indicates his understanding of the interrelatedness of what other persons consider as cultural components (i.e., espoused values and basic assumptions) intertwining with these systemic or organizational components (artifacts). Therefore, an important aspect of this study was to observe how the total environment of these three large churches, including the culture and systems, helped create common crucial elements in effective processes of deploying and sustaining laypersons in volunteer ministries.

As was initially stated at the outset of this section, review of related literature revealed that effective lay mobilization arises from a distinctive culture within the setting of a particular local church. In this project, “culture” refers specifically to an environment within the local church. In this usage, “culture” does not include the environment outside
of the church in the realm of society. Since Schein’s formal definition targets secular organizational culture, analysts’ definitions pertaining to religious, church culture also were observed.

Gary L. McIntosh gives a simplified, succinct definition: “Culture is nothing more than the behaviors, values, rules, and atmosphere a group of people share. From the perspective of a local church, culture is simply ‘the way we do church around here’” (17). Two further definitions affirm the content and intent of McIntosh’s classification. Melvin J. Steinbron’s definition correlates with McIntosh’s concepts of behaviors, values, and rules: “Culture is that which most people in the church know is expected, permitted and appropriate” (Lay Driven Church, 84). Sue Mallory rephrases McIntosh’s entire definition with the following synthesis: “The culture is who we are and what we actually do” (54). Combining elements of these definitions, a working definition was proposed for this study: Culture includes ideologies, behaviors, and practices establishing a common environment.

Observed literature exposes lay-mobilizing churches’ understanding of culture as a determinative concept. R. Paul Stevens utilizes the terms “environment” and “culture” somewhat synonymously. Recognizing culture’s determinative nature he writes, “An environment [culture] is the sum total of the social, relational and spiritual attitudes and factors in a society or group that influences what the individual thinks of him or herself and what he or she does” (Liberating the Laity 26). Applying these insights to the corporate nature of the church, lay-mobilizing churches acknowledge culture’s determinative influences. They believe that a church’s culture “affects practically everything the church does. It has a major effect on … which new programs succeed and
which programs fail” (McIntosh 18). Steinbron supports McIntosh’s statement and clarifies the interrelatedness of culture, values, processes, behaviors, and structures: “Culture must be defined to create a lay ministry of any kind…. Ministries that are incongruent with the culture of a church will fail no matter how biblical, well organized, well promoted or heavily endorsed they are” (Lay Driven Church 84). Responding to these truths, lay-mobilizing churches invest priority effort toward creating a conducive climate that results in lay ministry in their indigenous settings.

A distinguishing characteristic of lay-mobilizing churches, then, is their highly visible, consistently sustained effort toward creating and maintaining conducive lay ministry cultures within their settings. A foundational cornerstone of their value system is the belief that culture precedes productivity (productivity equals laypersons effectively deployed and sustained). One of the most powerful but unexpected statements encountered during the literature review was one made by Stevens:

We must measure the adequacy of lay-training programs against God’s grand plan for equipping all the saints. It is not primarily a program [original emphasis] that is needed, but an environment [original emphasis]…. What most needs to be equipped is not the laity, but their environment. (Liberating the Laity 26)

These statements support the initial assumption of this project: Deploying and sustaining of laypersons in volunteer ministries involves more than implementation of a curriculum or departmental program. These statements exemplify foundational values and practices present in lay-mobilizing churches. These churches are distinctive in their prioritization of cultural dynamics. Their well-defined belief system emphasizes a culture of persistent lay mobilization rather than a temporary “plug-and-play” program. Instead of focusing efforts solely upon a few training seminars and events, these churches adopt a holistic
view of mobilization processes and end results. They believe the environment or culture for lay mobilization is a key component in involving laypersons in ministries.

An appropriate observation is drawn from the secular world of business. James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras distinguish between organizations or businesses that are “Time Tellers” or “Clock Builders.” “Time Tellers” are those businesses that come up with a single idea or single product that hits the market at exactly the optimal window of opportunity. Collins and Porras indicate that these businesses are often short-lived because of short-term demand or declining usefulness of their product. “Clock Builders” are businesses or companies that intentionally create environments for multiple ideas or multiple products. Clock building involves creating a company (environment or climate) that flourishes and endures beyond a single leader’s term of service and through multiple product life cycles (23). Collins and Porras explain a clock-building organization as follows:

[A clock building organization will] concentrate on building an organization,… building a ticking clock,… rather than on hitting a market just right with a visionary product idea and riding the growth curve of an attractive product life cycle…. The primary output of their efforts is not the tangible implementation of a great idea…. Their greatest creation is the company itself and what it stands for. (23)

The clock building analogy has application to effective lay mobilization. Lay-mobilizing churches appear to be clock builders. These churches are not interested in short-term faddish programs. They are not interested in producing a few dedicated volunteers who will serve for a limited amount of time. These churches are interested in creating cultures that identify, equip, and empower lay armies to impact their churches and communities for lifetimes.

Operating from that value system, these churches have labeled their lay-
mobilizing cultures/environments using various descriptors. Steinbron, at Hope Presbyterian in Richfield, Minnesota, describes their model as The Lay Driven Church. Ray Fulenwider explains his church’s lay mobilizing culture as The Servant-Driven Church. John Ed Mathison depicts Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church’s (Montgomery, Alabama) culture as Every Member in Ministry. Wayne Cordeiro, pastor at New Hope Christian Fellowship (Honolulu, Hawaii) has worked with his laypeople to establish an environment where they are Doing Church as a Team. Similarly, James L. Garlow advocates that lay-mobilizing cultures are environments in which pastors and laity work together as Partners in Ministry. Mallory (Brentwood Presbyterian, Los Angeles, California) describes their environment as The Equipping Church.

The remainder of the first section of this chapter reports some of the components within effective lay-mobilizing cultures. Review of related literature reveals that lay-mobilizing cultures are scripturally mandated and theologically supported.

**Scripturally Mandated Lay Mobilization Cultures**

This section is a survey of Scriptures that supports a lay ministry culture but was not intended to be an in-depth exegetical study. Rather, an overview was undertaken in order to gain a broad understanding of pertinent Scriptures relating to lay ministry mobilization. Consulted sources confirm that Scripture teaches and mandates laypersons to be actively involved in service to others. Service to others is synonymously referred to as ministry.

**Colossians 4:17**

Francis O. Ayres builds a case for lay mobilization based on Paul’s instructions to a person named “Archippus.” Paul writes, “Tell Archippus: ‘See to it that you complete
the work you have received in the Lord’” (Col. 4:17).

Ayres discusses the probability of Archippus’ position as a layperson. The author subsequently structures his book around a basic simple outline: “You are a minister: therefore fulfill your ministry” (25). Ayres presents corollary Scriptures that support a solid case for a scripturally mandated lay mobilization culture in which laypersons are called and sent. He summarizes Scripture’s instruction concerning lay ministers and their responsibilities in the conclusion of his book:

If you are baptized, you are a minister whether you are ordained or not. All men are called into the church by God for a life of service in the world. All men have been freed by the death of Christ on the cross. Through Christ, immeasurable riches have been made available to all men. As a baptized person, you have said yes to the call, you have accepted your freedom and the other gifts of God, and you have been sent into the world. (127)

Beginning with discussions concerning Colossians 4:17, Ayres presents convincing justification for lay-mobilizing culture within the church at Colosse.

**Exodus 18:17, 21-22**

Exodus 18 authorizes a lay-mobilizing culture in Moses’ Old Testament setting:

What you are doing is not good…. But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and ten. Have them serve as judges for the people…. They will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. (Exod. 18:17, 21-22)

This passage records the account of Jethro visiting Moses and counseling him to delegate responsibilities to capable persons. During the review process, this passage is seen most often as a model for structuring and organizing lay pastor or congregational care systems. As such, it is often referred to as the Mosaic model of pastoral care. Steinbron labels this teaching as “the pivotal model” that contradicts the common tradition that pastors are to
do ministry, while all other people are to receive ministry (Lay Driven Church 79). In addition to providing a model for congregational care, the passage contains foundational evidence of the truth that laity are to be deployed in meaningful and purposeful ministry.

Jethro’s instructions specifically undergird the necessity of building a ministry team that shares tasks and responsibilities of ministry.

This Exodus passage of Scripture gives specific underpinnings of a lay-mobilizing culture. In his book Can the Pastor Do It Alone, Steinbron lists several principles extracted from Exodus 18. These concepts are primary values within his lay ministry system:

1. The traditional way of one person trying to minister to all the people is not adequate: “You are not able to perform it alone,” and “the thing is too heavy for you” (Exodus 18:18).
2. The people will not know what to do unless they are equipped: “You shall teach them … what they must do” (v. 20).
3. There are qualifications for those who are to pastor: “Choose able men from all the people,… men who are trustworthy” (v. 21).
4. The structure was simple: “Place such men over the people as rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens” (v. 21).
5. The plan was specific: “Let them judge the people at all times” (v. 22). They were to decide on certain matters. The greater matters they were to bring to Moses.
6. The results were spectacular: a.) “It will be easier for you” (v. 22); b.) “They will bear the burden with you” (v. 22); c.) “You will be able to endure” (v. 23); d.) “This people also will go to their place in peace” (v. 23). (42-43)

These biblical principles appear to be appropriate within the spectrum of wider lay mobilization cultures.

McIntosh connects Exodus 5:1, “Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “Let my people go,”’” with the Exodus 18 passage. He parallels the Egyptian captivity with a new kind of bondage within their freedoms. Their new bondage resulted from a centralized position of
ministry. McIntosh equates that bondage to a present-day practice of centralized ministry by professional clergy. He diagnoses a significant problem present in some churches:

> People in our churches often find themselves in a similar situation. They have been called out of the bondage of sin and empowered by the Holy Spirit for ministry. Yet when they attempt to become involved in ministry, they find they are in bondage to a church culture and system that prevents them from doing so…. The goal of our church should be to empower every member and regular attender to serve others by taking ownership of the ministry and having the freedom to exercise their God-given calling. (8)

Understanding the determinative nature of culture, McIntosh builds a solid case for distinctive lay ministry cultures within local congregations. Building upon the aforementioned biblical principles, McIntosh proceeds to develop a five-part strategy that attempts to create the kind of culture necessary for lay ministries to thrive: Part 1—Designing a Culture of Service; Part 2—Preparing for a Culture of Service; Part 3—Communicating a Culture of Service; Part 4—Practicing a Culture of Service; and, Part 5—Empowering a Culture of Service (8-9).

Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck also teach lay mobilization principles based upon a connection between Exodus 5 and 18. The basic concept of their book was drawn from awareness of a particular dominant theme throughout the Bible: “From the time of Moses, one of the distinctive threads found woven throughout the biblical story is a recurring emphasis on setting free the people of God to serve him” (9). Further biblical precedent for lay involvement in ministry is observed in a summarizing statement made by the authors: “Be aware that laity have been called as God’s instruments from the beginning. God did not first create clergy and then laity” (20). Elevating the status of laity to early biblical proportions, the authors believe that the decree issued in Exodus 5 (“Let my people go”) is issued to today’s church and to its leaders.
1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10

Peter’s writings communicate the truth that a lay-mobilizing culture is normative in the realm of the Christian community:

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Pet. 2:4-5, 9-10)

In a sense, Peter’s writings indicate that lay mobilization is an inherent characteristic of followers of Christ. These Scriptures reference Old Testament images of God’s followers (not just professional clergy) as “the people of God.” As such, the people who are called of God through Jesus Christ are to “declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9). In other words, Peter’s writings declare that the people of God are to do the work of God.

Acknowledging that these Scriptures are directed toward all believers, Richard J. Mouw describes this passage as “a charter for the people of God”:

In this marvelous chapter the Apostle outlines the shape of the life of the Christian community as that community seeks to live obediently in the world. Verses 9 through 17 constitute a kind of “charter” for the corporate life of the New Testament community. (37)

Howard Grimes identifies six titles given to Christians listed in I Peter 2:5,9. The six terms included the following designations: Every Christian is a living stone, a holy priest, a chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, God’s own people. Grimes explains the significance of these titles in regard to lay ministry: “It is this passage which has been

---

1 Lawrence O. Richards and Gilbert R. Martin extensively discuss the Old Testament concept of “the people of God,” in part one of their book (11-137). Chapter 1 lays groundwork by specifically addressing the concept. Four subsequent chapters intermittently correlate the concept to New Testament passages.
most productive in the formation of the doctrine of the ‘priesthood of all believers,’ or of ‘the baptized,’ or of ‘the laity’” (29).

Oscar E. Feucht summarizes commonly observed truths from this passage of Scripture:

No less than six titles are given to the Christian in 1 Peter 2:5, 9. They are based on Old Testament promises and figures of speech. According to this catalogue of titles every Christian is claimed by God, belongs to a holy nation, is set apart for a particular ministry, has both a “kingship” and a “priesthood” of his own to fulfill in his life…. These titles raise all believers to the status of “ministers.” They put all Christians in the role once performed by Old Testament priests. The coming of Christ brought to the church a whole new dispensation—a new order—an order of the laos including every Christian, both men and women. (37)

A key statement in Feucht’s remarks is this declaration: “These titles raise all believers to the status of ‘ministers’” (37). Thomas Gillespie parallels this proclamation: “This is the new upward direction which a Biblical perspective on the laity requires of us—the elevation of every member of God’s people to the status of a minister” (17). According to these two biblical scholars, this scripture indicates normative, priestly, lay participation in ministry roles and activities.

Having recognized the interconnectedness of the Old Testament concept of “the people of God” passing into the New Testament understanding of the Christian community, Gillespie further notes the universal inclusiveness of the New Testament concept of the “people of God”:

Here the traditional titles of honor ascribed in the Old Testament to Israel as the laos [people] of God are applied without reservation to the Christian community. What makes this affirmation remarkable is the fact that the titles are here ascribed to a community composed of both Jews and gentiles. Those who were once “no people” but who are now “God’s people” are the gentile Christians. In Christ the radical distinction and separation between … Israel and the gentiles, has been transcended…. Through the Gospel God has called all people…. Whatever the leadership
roles within this priestly community may be,… the fact remains that here, as in Exodus 19:4-7, the priesthood and its responsibilities are assigned to the whole laos. (17)

According to Gillespie, all followers of Christ are thrust into the realm of ministry.

Reviewed literature pertaining to this passage confirms that Scripture teaches and mandates that laypersons are to be actively involved in ministry to others. The universal nature of lay ministry is illuminated clearly and directly in this passage. Reflecting upon his studies of this particular passage and others in the Bible, Feucht states this truth lucidly: “It is unmistakably clear that the term ‘priest,’ as used in the New Testament, does not refer to officiants in a church building but describes all Christians in their particular role as the priesthood of all believers” (40). Feucht’s observations support the concept of a commissioned laity.

**Romans 12:1, 4-8**

The concept of “spiritual gifts” affirms a corollary lay-mobilizing environment:

> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship…. Just as each of us has one body with many members and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. (Rom. 12:1, 4-8)

In studying this passage, some scholars focus attention upon the paradoxical concepts of diversity and unity present within the body of Christ. Most scholars pinpoint the central element of the passage as being the spiritual gifts that God freely gives to followers of Christ. This passage is one of the three primary references to spiritual gifts listed in the
New Testament (along with 1 Cor. 12:4-11 and Eph. 4:11).

Writers focusing upon spiritual gifting emphasize the purpose of individual gifting, as well as the urgency of deploying persons according to personal giftedness. These writers declare that as laypersons are biblically perceived, they are recognized as being gifted in order to fulfill specific roles within the body of Christ. They are then mobilized and empowered to serve within the parameters of their gifting. Garlow is representative of this latter group:

The laity are gifted…. God gives every Christian gifts—tools for serving Him…. The gifts are abilities or tools God gives every Christian to respond to the call He places on their lives…. God is not so capricious to ask anybody, including the laity in your church, to do something and then deny them the giftedness for doing what He asks. (“Purpose-Driven Lay Training” 75)

According to Garlow, “God has given us gifts so that we can respond to His call to ministry” (Partners 72). His extensive treatment of this passage and topic includes a discussion of pertinent, correlating issues and concerns: dangers concerning gifts, a six-step process through which persons can discover their gifts, relationship between giftedness, ministry, and personality (76-84).

The significance of the Romans 12 passage of Scripture is considerable. Warren uses these verses in teaching the biblical basis for “Every-Member Ministry” at Saddleback Community Church. After emphasizing the importance of laying a biblical foundation for everything a church does, he identifies this passage as the biblical basis upon which Saddleback Church implements a lay-mobilizing culture:

We have summarized what we believe about ministry in a Ministry Mission Statement. Based on Romans 12:1-8, we believe the church is built on four pillars of ministry:…. Every believer is a minister; Every ministry is important; We are dependent on each other; and ministry is an expression of my SHAPE. (Purpose Driven Church 367-69)
Warren’s four-point teaching outline communicates solid biblical truth pertaining to laity’s involvement in ministry.

1 Corinthians 12:4-5, 12-20, 27-28

Paul’s discussion on the body of Christ validates the existence of lay mobilization cultures:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord…. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body…. Now you are a part of the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others. (1 Cor. 12:4-5, 12-20, 27-28)

The unique contribution of this passage is in the comparison of the ministry of believers to the image of the human body. Various writers indicate that lay-mobilizing churches embody the images alluded to within this passage of Scripture.

One example, Frazer United Methodist Church, in Montgomery, Alabama, has based its extensive “Every Member in Ministry” culture upon this Scripture. Mathison summarizes the imagery and intended implementation:

Paul compares the ministry of the church to the human body. He points out the functions of the different members of the body. Each member has its own individuality, but each member finds its significance in its
Mathison declares that this passage of Scripture affirms that all parts of the body, including laypersons, have specific functions and roles to be utilized and implemented into ministries.

Feucht also summarizes the imagery and intended implementation in similar fashion:

For this ministry of the whole church the Holy Spirit has bestowed on every Christian various gifts. The apostle Paul uses a whole chapter to expand this concept…. The diversity of gifts is given for the mutual profit and well-being of all Christians. In this one body the interrelationships and mutual helpfulness are to be as cooperative and complementary as the various members and organs of the human body. (38)

Mathison and Feucht identify specific values, behaviors, and components present within a biblically functioning, lay-mobilizing culture.

Warren gives practical explanation of the implications of the identified specific values, behaviors, and components:

Every ministry is important…. There are no little people in the body of Christ, and there are no insignificant ministries…. We are dependent on each other…. [E]very ministry is also intertwined with all the others. No ministry is independent of the others. Since no single ministry can accomplish all the church is called to do, we must depend on and cooperate with each other. (Purpose Driven Church 368-69)

The interdependent nature of the various parts of the body of Christ confirms the inclusion of all believers in supporting and completing the work of Christ in the world.

Greg Ogden proposes three major paradigm shifts that must take place in order to usher in a new reformation that fully engages and empowers laypersons in valid ministries. One of the three proposed paradigm shifts corresponded to the 1 Corinthians
12 concept of the Church as the body of Christ. Ogden suggests a rejection of the concept of the Church as institution, which operates with a top-down hierarchy. In place of the institutional model, he proposes a bottom-up understanding of the Church as an organism, valuing all persons as core participants of the body. Three chapters of his book discuss and explain the concept of the church as an organism (the body of Christ as described in 1 Cor. 12:1-3). Reviewed literature indicates that lay-mobilizing churches have made the proposed paradigm shift from an institutional mind-set to the organism mind-set. Their cultures appear to emanate the catchphrase that Odgen presents as a mantra for a biblically functioning body of Christ: “The church as organism—we don’t have it all together, but together we have it all” (42).

**Ephesians 4:11-13**

Paul’s instruction to the church in Ephesus prescribes a lay-mobilizing culture that results in ministry for all believers:

> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephs. 4:11-13)

Examination reveals three main emphases exhibited in this passage: every believer is to be involved in ministry; the pastor’s and leader’s role is to ensure all believers are equipped for ministry; the church is to be an equipping center.

First of all, during the literature review, this passage was often referred to as a chief example portraying the truth that all laypersons are qualified, called, and commissioned to do ministry. Steinbron labels this passage as “the pivotal doctrine” that contradicts the common tradition that pastors are to do ministry, while all other people
are to receive ministry. He says, “This doctrine fuels the second reformation” (i.e., the first Reformation gave the Bible back to the people; the second reformation will give the ministry back to the people; Lay Driven Church 77). Representative of many scholars who studied this passage, Steinbron documents key terms that affirm every believer is a minister:

Grace: Grace is powerful because it saves, reveals and gives gifts for ministry.
Gifts: Many kinds of spiritual gifts have been given, and not one Christian in the whole world and in all of history has ever been overlooked.
Saints (laos, God’s people): God’s first call is to be His…. As His people, we have the privilege of access to Him and the honor of doing work for Him.
Ministry: Every Christian is a minister by virtue of the fact that God gives gifts to every Christian with which to do ministry and calls every Christian to a special task that utilizes those gifts. If God gives you a ministry (your special task), it follows that you are a minister. (77-78)

Steinbron’s exegesis and explanation of this passage reveal biblical truth pertaining to lay ministry. His work establishes a strong case, affirming that every believer is a minister.

Secondly, this passage elucidates that the pastor’s or leader’s role is to ensure all believers are equipped for ministry. Discussions upon verses 11 and 12 universally focused upon punctuation. Specifically, scholars’ attention centered upon deletion of a particular comma in recent translations. Deletion of this comma changes the role and tasks of clergy from previous understanding.

Earlier renderings of this passage included a comma after the phrase “God’s people.” Including the comma in this particular place communicated that ministry is solely the responsibility of pastors or teacher (synonymous with “clergy” today). Punctuation in earlier renderings appear this way: “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and
teachers, to prepare God’s people, for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (KJV). Garlow reports this rendering appeared to assign three tasks to pastors: to prepare God’s people (laypersons), to do the work of ministry (works of service), to edify the Church. The more recent renderings appear as follows, deleting the “fateful” comma after the phrase “God’s people:” “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (NIV).

Indeed, the meaning of the passage is drastically altered with this change. Rather than prescribing ministry roles exclusively to clergy, the laity are now described as the agents of ministry.

According to Garlow (as well as the remainder of scholars observed), accepting the proper punctuation means the role of pastor or teacher is reduced to one task instead of the previously described three tasks. Garlow explains implications of the recent change in punctuation in this manner:

Now we discover that “ministry” is NOT [original emphasis] something done exclusively by clergy. It is done by all God’s people (v. 12). What is the role of those mentioned in v. 11? To do the ministry? No! To prepare all of us for ministry. Thus we see that the “enablers” (as we choose to call those referred to in v. 11) have one task: To equip God’s people—for service/ministry, and their ministry, in turn, strengthens or “builds up” the body of Christ, the church. Pastors are not to do the work of ministry alone. They are to prepare others (laity) for ministry. The primary work of the pastor is the “ministry of enablement,” that is to enable others for ministry. (Lite A3)

Corrected punctuation illuminates the truth that all of God’s people are to be involved in God’s work.

**Theologically Supported Lay Mobilization Cultures**

Numerous scholars suggest a biblically functioning lay ministry culture has a
sound theology of laity at its core. Corresponding to Scripture’s mandate for lay mobilization is a theology undergirding behaviors, values, and atmosphere in a local church environment.

Garlow articulates the necessity and productivity of a theology of laity. In simple form, his explanation communicates the truth that a theology of laity assists in producing a climate of lay participation and involvement. Without a theology of laity, probability for laity involvement in ministry decreases. A theology of laity is a key component in a lay-mobilizing culture in that it assists in creating a total environment in which persons are inspired and expected to participate:

Much of what we do is determined by what we believe…. If I believe that there is such a thing as a ministry of the laity and I have a place for it in my thinking, I will want to do certain things. Perhaps it can be best illustrated this way: If I believe that our pastor is the minister and I am not a minister, I will not get involved in ministry. On the other hand, if I conceive of myself as being a minister along with my pastor, I will get involved in a ministry. The way we think about certain things causes us to respond to them in certain ways. Thus it is important for us to have a theology of lay ministry. If we have a clear theology of lay ministry, we should be well on our way to responding like lay ministers should. (Partners 31-32)

Garlow establishes a strong rationale for clear understanding of a theology of laity. A solid theology of laity is the foundation for the existence of lay cultures and systems.

Understanding the necessity and productivity of a theology of laity, writers explain the scope and content of a sound theology of laity. It ought to be more than an imposed body of information about the laity’s responsibilities and duties. Mouw suggests three aspects ought to be considered. First of all, in discussions about the nature and role of the laity (as has been stated), the Church ought to develop a more adequate theology of the laity:
We need careful theologizing about who the laity are in the Christian scheme and what their calling is, or callings are, in the context of the total mission of the Christian community. Rather than having theological discussions in which the laity is a subsidiary topic or a theological afterthought, the standard issues of theological discourse—church, sacraments, mission, salvation, liberation, eschatology, anthropology, doctrine of God—must be examined with a central focus on questions concerning the status of the laity. (20)

Mouw’s writings challenge theologians to carefully consider the significance of laity’s contributions to the church. Rather than viewing those contributions as secondary issues, they ought to be elevated to primary status.

Secondly, Mouw believes that adequate theologizing about the laity must result in a theology for the laity: “It must be a theological engagement for which the agenda is set by the needs, dilemmas, and problems of the laity. And it must be carried on with the clear goal of building up the laity for their ministries in the world” (20). This proposed theology of laity would be pertinent to reality experienced by laity in the present and to future participation in ministries.

Thirdly, Mouw proposes that reflection on lay issues ought to include theology by the laity. His proposal suggests that laity ought to be involved in discussions about their theology. Mouw illuminates the different contexts of clergy and lay orientations in regard to lay issues:

The theologizing that takes place in the Christian church has been an overwhelmingly clergy [original emphasis] oriented activity. Theology has been taught and written by people who are very closely tied to the interests of the clergy; the theological issues have been formulated and explored from that point of view, from within that context. (23)

The proposed theology of laity would be formed and fashioned by the inclusion of laity’s input and participation.

Corresponding to the spirit and intentions of Mouw’s contribution to theology of
laity discussion is Hendrik Kraemer’s classic contribution, *A Theology of Laity*.

Kraemer’s writings originated in response to an insightful observation that paralleled Mouw’s diagnosis. Kraemer supports Mouw’s perceptions:

> [F]or the greater part of its history the church has provided little place in its thinking for expressing the meaning of the laity in the divine economy of salvation of the world and in the economy of the church. At best the laity was the flock; always it was object, never subjects in its own calling and responsibility. (72)

Kraemer addresses this practice and perspective by proposing a theology of laity in which laity is viewed not as objects, but as subjects (19). His classic work is a brief but informational compendium addressing the following issues: a brief overview of lay involvement historically (Chap. 1); foundational laity concepts from a theological perspective (Chap. 2); a proposed theology of laity in which the realm of ecclesiology is reoriented to elevate the status of laity to biblical proportions (Chap. 3); a proposal that a theology of laity has to become a theology for the laity more adequately informing about the Christian faith and the Church (Chap. 4); and, an appeal to understand that such a theology is not an appendix to ecclesiology but is an organic part of a total ecclesiology (Chap. 5).

Key elements within Mouw’s and Kraemer’s proposals point toward a theology that will recognize the role, value, worth, and contributions of laypersons from a biblical perspective. Such a theology combats some of the myths about ministry that have been present in the Church. Eddy Hall and Gary Morsch encapsulate many conceptions about lay ministry into one they call “The Ministry Myth”: “Ministry is just for ‘ministers,’ ministers [original emphasis] here meaning only full-time ministry professionals” (19-20). Dale Galloway identifies other corresponding myths that have stymied lay
involvement in the church: “There are two classes of Christians, clergy and laity; the clergy give ministry—the laity receive ministry; a person becomes a minister by formal education and ordination; and trained clergy are more effective than laypeople” (“Sharing Ministry” 12-13). These myths can be exposed and obliterated by a sound theology of laity that recognizes the role, value, worth, and contributions of laypersons from a biblical perspective.\(^2\)

One further observation was noted concerning a sound theology of laity. Stevens argues against a theology of laity that recognizes the value and worth of laypersons from an institutional perspective. In his discussion about Ephesians 4:11-12 (“And he gave some to be … for the equipping of the saints”), Stevens makes the following statement: “Equipping the saints does not mean harnessing the laity for the felt needs or institutional tasks of the church nor harnessing the laity to assist the pastor with certain delegated ministries. The saints are to be equipped for their own ministry [original emphasis]” (Liberating the Laity 34). Stevens’ statement is interpreted as practical implementation of elements proposed by Mouw and Kraemer in creating a sound theology of laity. A more adequate theology of laity confirms laypersons’ responsibilities, roles, and status as valid ministries and ministers, apart from and yet partnering with the clergy. An adequate theology of laity perceives laypersons as partnering agents in carrying out the mission of the Church. An adequate theology of laity recognizes laity as subjects rather than objects.

**Components of a Theology of Laity**

During the literature review, four words continually surfaced in discussions concerning a theology of laity: Church, ministry, laity, and vocation.

---

\(^2\) For a brief rebuttal against these myths see Galloway’s explanations (“Sharing Ministry ” 12-13).
The area of theology that addresses the nature, role, mission, and purpose of the Church is ecclesiology. Garlow states, “If we are to have a proper theological system that includes laypeople, many of us need to rework our ecclesiology” (Partners 34). Kraemer echoes the same sentiment:

We will find the amazing fact that, notwithstanding the often great, even crucial significance of the laity, they have never become really theologically relevant in the church’s thinking about itself. Therefore, in raising today the lay issue in the church, one raises at the same time the demand for a new ecclesiology. (48-49)

These statements issue a call to reconsider the nature, role, mission and purpose of the church in ways that emphasize laity’s role within those arenas.

Recognizing the significance of an ecclesiology that includes a proper perspective concerning laity, the literature review includes biblical and historical studies pertaining to such a theology. The following overview summarizes trends and common approaches in regard to ecclesiology.

John R. Stott is representative of common biblical approaches to theologizing about the Church. Beginning in the Old Testament, he traces the concept of the Church as *ecclesia*: “His ecclesia, called out of the world to be His, and existing as a separate entity solely because of His call” (24). Stott then discusses New Testament metaphors of the Church. These metaphors represent God’s people through the following images: as his bride, his vineyard, his flock, his kingdom, his household or his family, a building not made with hands, and the body of Christ. Stott reports that these metaphors do more than display the relation between God and his people. They go further in demonstrating the duties and ministries people have (23).
Grimes’ treatment of the concept of the Church was more comprehensive in that he addresses the historical setting as well as the biblical one. Having first discussed the Old Testament covenant theology, he then traces historical developments in regard to ecclesiology from New Testament times through the medieval and Reformation periods and on to the twentieth century (21-63).

More recent treatments of theologizing in regard to ecclesiology seem to focus upon the missional nature of the Church. Coupled with these interpretations of the nature and purpose of the Church are discussions concerning laity’s involvement in the Church’s mission. Three examples are cited: R. Paul Stevens, Howard A. Snyder, and Darrell L. Guder et al.

Stevens is representative of theologians identifying the missional nature of the Church as a primary component of ecclesiology. He devotes a large portion of his book The Other Six Days to explain the Church as “a people sent by God.” In summary form, Stevens discusses the Church as mission. After discussing how mission is within the nature and being of the triune God, he correlates the fact that the Church exists to carry out God’s mission. Many of his thought-provoking statements stimulate further reflection: “Mission is what God is doing in the world through the church…. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa…. The church is born because of mission, not the other way around…. [M]ission is the mother of theology (193, 197). His writings call for an awareness of laity’s involvement in carrying out the mission of God in the world.

Snyder is also representative of persons who advocate the missional nature of the Church as the centerpiece of ecclesiology. He proposes that mission is the DNA of the
Church. As the body of Christ, the Church is to replicate that DNA (13). He suggests that the Church is the covenant community focusing upon mission and ministry: The covenant calls the Church to ministry and mission, to “equip God’s people for the work of ministry and to structure its life accordingly” (51-52).

Guder et al. provide relevant discussion pertaining to a reworked ecclesiology that supports lay ministry. They provide the following insights.

First, the Church’s mission (purpose) is to be founded upon the mission of God. Emphasis is placed upon extending the mission of God, rather than focusing upon the Church’s efforts to extend itself (Guder et al. 82).

Second, they advocate moving from the idea of being a Church with mission to being a missional Church. Their distinction challenges churches to reject the idea of categorizing the missional aspect as a program of the Church. Instead, they propose that churches understand the centrality of being missional. Guder et al. say, “Either we are defined by mission, or we reduce the scope of the gospel and the mandate of the church…. The missional aspect is the essential nature and vocation of the church” (6, 11). Mission is not what the church does, it is what the church is.

Third, Guder et al. define and examine the Church as the people of God who are called and sent to represent the reign of God (77-109). The Church is categorized as “a people sent on a mission” rather than as “storefront vendors of religious goods and services” (82-85).

Observation of the preceding theologians’ works illuminates the connection between ecclesiology and a theology of laity. The Church cannot be successful in its mission without a mobilized, empowered, and deployed laity. They are the Church.
Laypersons are the agents who are sent to carry out the work of God in the world.

Ministry

Reviewed literature addresses three major themes in regard to the concept of ministry: What ministry is; who is capable of doing ministry; where ministry is done.

Stevens encapsulates components of a definition of the biblical sense of ministry:

Ministry is service to God and on behalf of God in the church and the world. Ministers are people who put themselves at the disposal of God for the benefit of others and God’s world. It is not limited by the place where the service is rendered, the function, the need met, by the title of the person or even by the overt reference to Christ. (Other Six Days 133)

In actuality, Stevens addresses all three of the issues raised in studies pertaining to ministry. He defines ministry as service. He declares that all are ministers as they put themselves at God’s disposal for the purpose of serving. He proclaims that ministry is done in the relational realm. Ministry includes service toward God as well as toward other humans in need of that ministry. Further expansion of these concepts are addressed in the following paragraphs.

Ministry is service. The primary New Testament word for ministry is the Greek word *diakonia*. Stevens references Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and gives the following explanation: “[D]iakonia is simply the word for service, a term that originally means anything done in the employ of another but is used for the service of the Word, practical love, apostolic activity and providing meals” (qtd. in Other Six Days 138). Defined in this manner, ministry is commonly practiced and administered by laypersons. All laypersons are involved in serving.

Jesus modeled what he wanted followers to understand about ministry. Jesus made the meaning of ministry clear. He told it simply. He did not come to be served, but
to serve (Mark 10:45). Jesus declared, “Whosoever wants to become great among you
must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave” (Matt. 20:26-
27). “In simple terms, ministry equals servanthood” (Garlow, Partners 35).

In the biblical sense of the word, all are ministers as they put themselves at God’s
disposal for the purpose of serving. The biblical perspective stands in tension with
common understandings of the words “minister” or “ministry.” In many persons’
perception, “minister” is usually equated with clergy. In the Bible this understanding is
not correct. Rather, ministry is performed by any follower of Christ, whether lay or
clergy. J. Douglas Williams substantiates this claim:

The diakonia (service, ministry) of the New Testament did not
differentiate between lay and clergy. It was a loving service in the name of
Christ for the benefit of others whether in or out of the Christian
fellowship. Serving tables was a diakonia and so was the preaching of the
word. (54)

As laypersons perform acts of service they are fulfilling the biblical act of ministry.
Ministry is not confined to the ranks of the ordained.

Consulted sources discuss two arenas in which ministry is performed: in the
church and in the world. Garlow, in his book Partners in Ministry, gives treatment to
ministry within the Church and in the world. In summary form, within the Church,
servant ministers are to exercise their acts of ministry to one another, as extensions of the
ministry of Christ. Ministry is mutual service to others within the body of Christ. Within
the world, servant ministers are to extend the ministry of Christ by being salt and light
and through outreach endeavors (35-40).

Laity

Reviewed literature addresses several key components pertaining to laity’s
involvement in ministry. Historically, Stephen Charles Neill and Hans-Ruedi Weber’s projects trace laity’s involvement in the life of the Church. Their historical account begins with laity’s participation in the life of the Church from AD 30 and continues through the year 1961. This work is a comprehensive, global, interdenominational treatment of the subject. Exposure to this resource deepened my appreciation and understanding of the value and worth of laity’s contributions to the Church through the ages.

Richards and Martin are representative of scholars who intensively study and communicate the theological concept of laity as the people of God. Their worthy contribution explains laity’s identity as the people of God. These writers describe the people of God from the following framework: “A New Covenant People; A Kingdom People; A Servant People; An Empowered People; A Gifted People” (5).

Other representatives of intensive studies of laity as the people of God include these scholars: Stevens (Other Six Days), Garlow (Lite), and Kathleen Bliss (We the People).

Ogden is representative of scholars who desire to see laity’s role as “priesthood of believers” be fully realized. Believing that institutional behaviors and philosophies have stymied fulfillment of the first Reformation, he proposes a view of the Church as an organism, as “the body of Christ.” He declares that hierarchical structures and leadership roles create a priesthood within a priesthood. His entire book is a treatise addressing a theology of laity that returns the ministry to laity, the people of God. Within this new paradigm, professional clergy take on the role of equipping the people of God for service.
Vocation

Elton Trueblood establishes a sound theology of vocation. He illuminates the biblical understanding of laity’s ministry and mission within the realm of profession, occupation, or existence outside the realm of the church:

In the previous chapter an argument has been presented for volunteer Christian work…. We are making a serious mistake, however, if, in stressing this volunteer work, we seem to suggest that work is not Christian work unless it is work for the churches. Actually the witness made in regular employment may be far more significant and productive than any service rendered in free time. It is a gross error to suppose that the Christian cause goes forward solely or chiefly on weekends. What happens on the regular weekdays may be far more important, so far as the Christian faith is concerned, than what happens on Sundays. (57)

Trueblood challenges readers to realize the significance of laity’s influence and calling, not just in our church world, but in the world in general. He proposes that the ministries of laity in their secular work may be as important as our Sunday services and church activities.

On later pages Trueblood establishes a case for vocation as a calling, similar in specific ways to the calling of a person to full-time ministry: “The word ‘vocation’ has been debased in the modern world by being made synonymous with ‘occupation,’ but it is one of the gains of our time that the old word is beginning to regain its original meaning of ‘calling’” (63). Tracing biblical understandings of vocation as “calling,” Trueblood proposes that God is interested in laypersons outside of the Church and indeed has meaningful and purposeful plans for them: “The most exciting part of this developing biblical idea is that God has a purpose for each [original emphasis] man’s life” (64).

Other scholars focus their writings upon the theology of vocation. Mark Gibbs and T. Ralph Morton discuss a comprehensive theology of vocation. Their work
discusses laypeople at work, in the world, with neighbors, and in their leisure. Also, Ralph D. Bucy’s work contains several chapters pertaining to laity and vocation.

**Lay Mobilization Systems**

Before the literature review began, an initial assumption was that persistent deploying and sustaining of laypersons in volunteer ministries involve more than implementation of a curriculum or departmental program. Reviewed literature supports the assumption. In summary form, examined writings indicate that lay-deploying churches have detailed systems in place. Lay-deploying churches maintain a system that inspires, identifies, equips, empowers, releases, and sustains persons in volunteer ministries.

James Emery White declares a supporting diagnosis pertaining to churches in general: “The problem of the church is not a task problem but a process problem” (11). He proposes that leaders and churches ought to prioritize the need for structured processes, consisting of end-to-end sets of activities that work toward fulfillment of mission and purpose (1).

White’s diagnosis applies specifically to the area of volunteer ministry. Within most churches is a general awareness that persons ought to serve in some capacity. What is lacking in many churches is a corporate culture that includes a system or process consisting of end-to-end activities that inform, motivate, guide, and advance persons toward involvement in active service.

Churches sustaining volunteer ministry systems understand this vital task of structuring for maximum impact. In his book, George Barna reports simple but consequential truth: “Highly effective churches cannot be agencies of transformation
unless they are structured to facilitate effectiveness” (58). Churches with vibrant ministry systems understand this truth. These churches do the hard tasks of creating forms and structures that result in high participation. Initial review of literature pertaining to volunteer ministry reveals at least five structured elements of effective systems: vision casting, recruitment, training, placement, and retention.

**Vision Casting**

Lay-mobilizing churches expend much energy and effort casting vision about the volunteer system. Vision casting communicates theology, terminology, expectations, and goals. Vision casting creates a mental image of the Church as a serving culture in which serving is normal activity for every person. A common theme in various books is the goal that every member/person would be involved in ministry (Steinbron, *Lay Driven Church* 97; Barna 58; Mathison, *Every Member* 6). In these settings, vision casting results in inspiration; inspiration results in involvement.

Writers identify vision casting subject matter resulting in participation. Vision casting subject matter includes ideas and principles that inform and motivate participation. In reviewing discussions concerning vision casting’s content, three themes emerged. Lay-mobilizing churches inform laypersons that volunteer ministry systems are purposeful, practical, and productive.

Lay-mobilizing churches teach laypersons that volunteer ministry systems are intentional. Volunteer ministry systems assist in endeavors to fulfill God’s intentions for his church. These churches teach and preach biblical foundations for volunteer ministry systems, as explained in the first section of this chapter. Persons are informed or reminded about God’s intentions and purposes for his church. The church exists to
worship, evangelize, make disciples, provide fellowship, and minister (Warren, _Purpose Driven Church_ 103-07). Volunteer ministry systems are purposeful because they are structured instruments through which persons demonstrate God’s love to other persons through meaningful acts of serving ministries.

Erwin McManus provides further content for vision casting. He affirms the necessity of purposeful volunteer ministry systems. He describes results that occur when churches do not cast and catch vision for serving ministries. In a discussion about dying churches, McManus declares their decline is due to departure from fundamental God-given purposes (specifically serving ministries). In a state of decline, pastors and churches are thrust into survival mode. Forgetting the original intentions for the Church, they focus on peripheral issues rather than central ones. He casts vision for ministry systems:

> The purpose of the church cannot be to survive or even to thrive, but to serve,… The church is not called to survive history but to serve humanity…. The heart of God is to serve a broken world…. The church cannot live when the heart of God is not beating in her. (23)

Churches with sustained volunteer ministry systems teach persons that the Church exists to serve. They invite persons to become part of a purposeful, serving culture that will be created through an indigenous ministry system.

Lay-mobilizing churches teach laypersons that volunteer ministry systems are practical. Volunteer ministry is practical in the sense that God’s plans and purposes are more efficiently and effectively accomplished. As ordinary Christians are inspired, mobilized, and released to assist in ministry, God’s work gets done. Bob Russell states, “One of the keys to advancing the Gospel is for the church to be made up of individuals who consider it their task to do the work of the ministry, rather than having a
congregation of people who expect the paid staff to minister to them” (175). Initial review of literature reveals two observations pertaining to the practical nature of volunteer ministry systems.

A functional feature of volunteer ministry systems is illuminated as persons understand the immensity of needs in relation to amount of service one person or a small percentage of a congregation can give. Volunteer ministry systems result in multiplied numbers of servants and acts of service. Steinbron succinctly summarizes the practical necessity of volunteer ministry systems: “It takes all the people of God to do all the work of God…. God’s work is so important and so large that it cannot be done by the typical twenty percent of the congregation who do eighty percent of the work” (Lay Driven Church 87).

The practical nature of volunteer ministry systems is evident in the quality of pastoral care in a congregation. Pastors who attempt to provide pastoral care to an entire congregation cannot give directed, specific personal attention to individual needs. More often, they provide pastoral care only in times of crisis. In a system where laypersons are mobilized and equipped to do ministry, specific, ongoing care can be provided. “Care in general can be replaced by care in particular for every member, when ministry is shared with ordinary Christians” (Steinbron, Lay Driven Church 41). Where a structured volunteer ministry system operates, the following acts of ministry/serving can be done: Everyone in the church can be prayed for regularly; everyone has someone keeping in touch with him or her regularly; everyone does his or her part according to his or her abilities, talents, and giftedness (41).

Involvement in volunteer ministry systems enhances persons’ spiritual growth.
Russell says serving stimulates personal growth:

Nothing helps you grow as a Christian like service. If you want to be stretched, visit a nursing home, teach a class of six-year-olds, go on a short-term mission trip, or volunteer to do a humbling job like cleaning stains in the sanctuary. If your church is not providing opportunities for your members to serve, you are stifling their spiritual growth. (178)

Cordeiro states, “God designed us to make use of our gifts. We were created to serve, anointed to serve and gifted to serve. That’s God’s plan. In fact, using our gifts to serve is a crucial and indispensable ingredient for spiritual growth” (78). Lay-mobilizing churches teach that volunteer ministry systems are productive in the sense that they enhance persons individually and enhance the church corporately.

Volunteer ministry systems enhance a church’s potential. As large numbers of persons are equipped and empowered to do ministry, it increases exponentially. In many churches ministry is done by paid staff or by a small percentage of the congregation.

Russell describes a common paradigm of church ministry, placing the pastor at the top of the pyramid. The pastor attempts to meet everyone’s needs and does most of the work. In this style of ministry, productivity is limited to the service one individual can provide. A new paradigm of volunteer ministry envisions a circle where all persons minister to each other. Inside the circle is a series of smaller circles, each representing a different ministry. This model allows mutual ministry resulting in more people being nurtured. Parts of the body are allowed to function in the manner for which they were designed (176).

Multiplied growth and nurture result from this paradigm, affirming the productive nature of volunteer ministry systems.

**Recruiting**

Significant recruiting philosophies and practices are present within churches that
motivate and deploy large numbers of persons in volunteer ministries. In lay-mobilizing churches, recruiting efforts invite persons to enter a process of discovering a fulfilling ministry instead of coercing persons to fill positions or empty slots (Mathison, Every Member 21). Frazer United Methodist Church describes its process as “Niche-pickin’.” “Niche-pickin’” is a process through which laypersons pick a ministry position that uses their spiritual gifts, aligns with their passions, and, therefore, matters to them. Believing that everyone has a God-given niche, each person is given responsibility to pick and fulfill their niche (“Niche-Pickin,” 51-52).

In lay-mobilizing churches, recruiting becomes a continual communication process through which persons are informed about equipping opportunities and schedules (Steinbron, Lay Driven Church 97). Persons are informed in a variety of ways and times. Recruiting takes place fifty-two weeks a year but culminates in specific lay commitment Sundays. Southeast Christian Church uses multiple modes of recruitment throughout the year. Volunteer brochures are always available. A Volunteer Connection Center operates preservice and post-service each week. Volunteer Placement Callers consistently connect with persons. In conjunction with continual modes of recruitment, specific lay commitment Sundays assist in the recruiting process. At Southeast Christian, Children and Student Ministries sponsor a recruitment event in the spring. In the fall, a specific Sunday is designated as a recruitment/commitment day for remaining volunteer ministries (Leppert, “Volunteer Services Ministry” 3).

Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church discovered recruiting is made easier when a ministry menu is provided to all prospective volunteers. This menu simply lists 160 different areas where persons can choose to volunteer, utilizing their spiritual gifts in
ministry. Leadership believes this recruiting mechanism elicits awareness, which
stimulates response (Mathison, Every Member 12, 19-20).

Southeast Christian Church expanded the menu by including designation of
ministry positions according to requirements and perceived abilities. Ministry
opportunities are designated according to these levels: 101 = entry level, 201 =
membership required, 301 = spiritually growing with ability to lead, and 401 = greater
time commitment (Leppert, “Volunteer Services Ministry” 1). These designations enable
all persons to commit to a ministry at their level of ability and spiritual readiness. In lay-
mobilizing churches, recruiting is enabled/advanced when churches allow and encourage
persons to implement personal, need-meeting ministries. Mathison says, “The most
effective and exciting ministries are those that are designed to meet a specific need which
laity perceive” (Every Member 8). Creating a permission-giving climate inspires
volunteerism and stimulates personal ownership.

Training

Pertinent literature reveals a consistent practice among churches with volunteer
ministry systems. These churches continually offer initial training opportunities that
prepare persons for successful ministry. Initially, these training opportunities lead persons
to discover their spiritual gifts. “Spiritual giftedness” is the method of placing persons in
specific ministries. These churches design a system including (1) biblical instruction
informing persons about the varieties of gifts and (2) a specific method of discovering
personal giftedness—a spiritual gifts inventory. Examples of training curriculum include
the following resources: C.L.A.S.S. 301: Discovering My Ministry, used by Saddleback
Community Church (Warren); Network, used by Willowcreek Community Church
(Bugbee, Cousins, and Hybels); and, Discover Your Design, used by Southeast Christian Church (Leppert).

One of the distinguishing factors within lay-mobilizing churches is their insistence on further training beyond initial gift recognition. Lay-mobilizing churches make concerted efforts to give specialized training for particular ministries within the church. This training includes basic skills instruction. Two parts are often included in this instruction. The first part gives a group of volunteers general instructions and information about the ministry position they will be filling. The second part is a more personalized preparation for ministry. This part might include individual, specific mentoring or on-the-job experience and supervision (D. Johnson 113).

Another distinguishing factor within lay-mobilizing churches is their practice of connecting individual ministries to the entire mission of the Church. In these churches, training goes beyond skills acquisition: “Training includes relating previous experience to current tasks, but it also involves understanding the nature and functioning of the church, its purposes and goals, the manner in which each job fits into the total program” (D. Johnson 109). Connecting individual ministries to the entire mission of the Church raises the value of individual ministries and inspires wholehearted commitment.

With their emphasis upon training laity for ministry, these churches consider themselves to be leadership-developing cultures. Their training occurs in order to develop leaders who will direct and perform significant ministries. Leadership cultivation is a priority in that it is a crucial component in helping volunteers succeed (Morris 85).

Placement

Once spiritual gifts have been discerned, persons participate in follow-up
interviews that culminate in placement within a particular ministry for which the person is suited. Lay-mobilizing churches emphasize this stage of the process as one of the most crucial aspects of a volunteer ministry system (Warren, C.L.A.S.S. 301 56).

Mallory confirms this component as a most crucial aspect of a volunteer ministry system. She talks about placement in terms of “connections”:

[T]he principle of connections represents what can be the weakest link in the process of transformation that marks an equipping church. Time and again I’ve watched churches do a wonderful job gathering all the equipping components. They have taught and preached a vision, conducted culture studies, analyzed systems, and conducted extensive discovery interviews. The pieces are all in place, but the connection never takes place…. Connection takes place when we take all that we’ve learned about the people and the needs of the church and community and begin putting them together. The process can be called “matching” or “placement.” Ideally, we are … “placing the right people in the right places for the right reasons.” (124)

In stressing the urgency of effective placement, Mallory writes an entire chapter discussing dynamics of matching people to ministry positions. An additional element seen as crucial to the placement process is the suggestion of appointing ministry connectors. Ministry connectors have a twofold responsibility: They connect persons with ministry position; they also follow up on persons after they are allowed to fill a ministry position. Ministry connectors make intentional and concerted effort to offer help and evaluation once an individual assumes a ministry position (141).

Retention

Team-ministry churches work hard to retain volunteers in ministries in these ways: by assisting in initial assimilation, by giving clear communication and care, and by developing persons through monthly training sessions (Leppert, Volunteer Services Ministry 2).
Various writers discuss common approaches and techniques that inspire volunteers to continue in ministry positions. Common approaches and techniques include concerted efforts to reward and recognize persons for their service. William Caldwell believes that retention occurs as leaders and churches are aware of motivations for service as well as reasons for quitting volunteer positions. Awareness of these dynamics allows creation of an environment for motivation and subsequent retention (6-7).

Dave Goetz urged churches and leaders to pay volunteers with what he calls, “psychic income”:

“Psychic income” refers to what motivates people other than money, such things as respect, recognition and challenge. Psychic income may be the only earthly benefit people receive from serving in the church, yet it’s often in short supply. Simple things such as a thank-you note, clear communication and expectations, a leader who’s excited about the work—all contribute to psychic income, which makes volunteers feel their service was worth-while, part of something great. (97)

Goetz’s words urge churches and leaders to support laity in ministries by encouraging them with simple gestures that communicate sincere gratitude and worth.

Lyn Walton confirms the significance of operative retention mechanisms within team-ministry churches in her recent doctoral dissertation. Specifically, she discovered the importance of personal encouragement and relevant training as means through which support occurred and volunteers were motivated to continue serving. One of her foundational assumptions is stated as follows: “Satisfied volunteers are more effective ministers. They stay longer and attract others to the work of the ministry” (6).

Walton’s hypothesis is that volunteers will have greater satisfaction in service when leadership establishes vital relationships through which mentoring and support occurs. Her research includes pre-surveys and post-surveys, as well as personal
interviews. She initially introduces volunteers into their roles. She gives basic orientation and subsequent training. She maintains personal contact with volunteers throughout the research time, communicating information and allowing opportunities for feedback and assessment. She concludes that data supported her initial hypothesis. According to this data, leadership’s supportive activities created greater satisfaction in volunteers (114). Walton reports, “This project clarified … volunteer satisfaction is linked with supervisory support, especially when there is a connection between the leader and the individual volunteer” (121). Her research indicates the positive influence that retention mechanisms infuse into the hearts and lives of volunteers. These findings affirm the value of attending to volunteers in nurturing, collaborative ways.

**Summary**

Related literature reveals effective lay mobilization arises from a distinctive culture within the setting of a particular local church. Lay-mobilizing churches understand that culture is a determinative concept. A foundational cornerstone of their value system is the belief that culture precedes productivity (productivity equals laypersons effectively deployed and sustained). A distinguishing characteristic of lay-mobilizing churches is their highly visible, consistently sustained effort toward creating and maintaining conducive lay ministry cultures within their settings. They believe the environment or culture for lay mobilization is a key component in involving laypersons in ministry. Observed writings reveal that lay-mobilizing cultures are scripturally mandated and theologically supported.

Various resources indicate that lay-deploying churches have detailed systems in place. Lay-deploying churches maintain systems that inspire, identify, equip, empower,
release, and sustain persons in volunteer ministries. Lay-deploying churches create end-to-end sets of activities that work toward fulfillment of their mission and purpose. These churches are structured to facilitate effectiveness in lay mobilization. Review of related literature reveals at least five structured elements of effective lay deployment systems: vision casting, recruitment, training, placement, and retention.

Recent trends seem to indicate that lay-deploying churches combine the concepts of culture and systems in a “systems thinking” approach. Instead of focusing on one area, such as spiritual gifts discovery, lay-deploying churches are viewing their task holistically. These churches recognize the connectedness of both culture and processes (structure of systems) in creating lay mobilization efforts.

In the secular realm, Peter M. Senge explains the art and practice of systems thinking:

> Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static snapshots. Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing the structures that underlie complex situations. (68)

Reviewed literature indicates that lay-deploying churches design models for lay mobilization from a systems thinking approach. These churches emphasize the significance of culture and systems in significantly deploying and sustaining laypersons in ministries. Mallory’s work is exemplary of churches that design and implement systems thinking models of lay deployment.
CHAPTER 3
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Problem

Churches in which I have served have been constrained in ministries because of lack of volunteers. In attempting to increase percentages of volunteers, my present church implemented programs intended to identify spiritual giftedness among participants. These programs imparted knowledge and personal spiritual gift discovery. We proclaimed our church a gifts-based ministry; however, minimal results were observed, in terms of persons being mobilized for ministry. Obviously, something is lacking that inhibits or prohibits deployment of laypersons in ministries.

Comparison of my experience with churches who are effective at mobilizing and deploying large percentages of persons in multiple ministries stimulated this project. Some churches motivate and empower large numbers of persons to do meaningful, extensive volunteer ministries. Certain churches establish and sustain serving environments in which laypersons joyfully, consistently, and sacrificially serve the church and others.

Purpose

This study was proposed to discover elements present within churches that are mobilizing and deploying masses of persons in multiple ministries. The purpose of this project was to identify common, crucial elements in effective processes of deploying and sustaining laypersons in volunteer ministries within large churches.

My initial assumption declared that successful deploying and sustaining of laypersons in volunteer ministries involves more than implementation of a curriculum or
departmental program. The literature review supports this initial assumption. The
literature review indicates that lay-deploying churches have distinctive cultures and
detailed systems.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study and provided the foundation
for data collection. The research questions addressed the literature review’s findings: Lay
deploying churches have distinctive cultures and detailed systems.

**Research Question 1**

What common cultural components motivate laypersons to participate in
processes through which they are consistently deployed and sustained?

Common Cultural Components include ideologies, behaviors, and practices
establishing an environment in which lay mobilization flourishes. This study was looking
for present components that can be replicated in other churches. Answers to Research
Question 1 provided understanding of environmental and cultural factors influencing
laypersons to commit to ministry.

Three interview questions were asked in order to obtain data that would assist in
answering Research Question 1. The first interview question attempted to discern the
presence or absence of theological foundations for lay ministry within each local church’s
culture. Interview Question One was, “Why does your church encourage you to become
involved in ministry?” (see Appendix A).

The second interview question was framed to provide occasion for interviewees to
discuss indigenous cultural factors that inspire commitment to lay ministry. Interview
Question 2 was, “What does your church do to persuade you to say ‘yes’ to serving in a
ministry?” (see Appendix A).

The third interview question allowed interviewees to express perceived reasons for involvement. I was curious to hear whether individuals serve because of internal motivations or external motivations. The answer to this question could aid in confirming the aforementioned presupposition: Lay mobilizing churches have distinctive cultures that produce commitment. Interview Question 3 was, “What motivates you to do ministry in this place?” (see Appendix A).

**Research Question 2**

What organizational components assist persons in productive volunteer service?

Organizational components include indigenous structures and managerial procedures incorporated to provide a framework for the processes of deploying and sustaining laypersons in volunteer ministries.

Answers to Research Question 2 provided data describing some of the foundational structures, roles, and processes that compose a system of lay mobilization. Three interview questions were asked in order to obtain data that would assist in answering Research Question 2.

The fourth interview question probed the interviewees’ understanding of the end-to-end set of activities that their church has implemented to facilitate lay mobilization. Interview Question 4 was, “What is your church’s process for linking persons with a ministry?” (see Appendix A).

The fifth interview question identified the presence or absence of persons whose role was to assist in connecting potential lay volunteers with specific ministries.
Interview Question 5 was, “What persons assisted in linking you with a ministry?” (see Appendix A).

The sixth interview question was designed to explore each church’s actions in regard to placing specific persons in places where they will succeed in ministry. Interview Question Six was, “What procedures were used to gather information about your interests and abilities?” (see Appendix A).

**Research Question 3**

What common equipping mechanisms productively prepare persons for fruitful volunteer service?

Equipping mechanisms are activities, events, and curricula designed to assist in training and instructing laypersons for fruitful volunteer ministries.

Answers to Research Question 3 provided data describing training procedures and content that instructs persons for meaningful service. Two questions were asked pertaining to equipping mechanisms. The seventh interview question allowed interviewees to give an overview of equipping practices and principles. Interview Question Seven was, “How did your church prepare you for your ministry?” (see Appendix A).

The eighth question allowed persons to express their personal preference concerning equipping procedures, principles, and activities. Interview Question Eight was, “What do you think was the most helpful learning experience in your preparation for ministry?” (see Appendix A).

**Research Question 4**

What common retention mechanisms inspire persons to commit to long-term
service within a local congregation?

Retention mechanisms are activities, events, and behaviors intended to affirm laypersons in ministry and induce long-term commitment to volunteer service.

Answers to Research Question 4 provided data describing efforts that support and assist in sustaining persons in ministry over periods of time. The ninth question was intended to identify coaching systems and methods of rewarding persons for service. Interview Question Nine was, “How does your church continue to support you in your ministry?” (see Appendix A).

The tenth question allowed persons to express other reasons for their enduring service to their church. Interview Question Ten was, “What other factors motivate you to continue doing ministry in this place?” (see Appendix A).

**Pilot Project**

Prior to collection of data at the three contextual churches, a pilot project was conducted at Family Christian Center in Munster, Indiana. Family Christian Center (FCC) was chosen because this church met the criteria established for context and purposes of this study:

1. FCC deploys and sustains significant numbers of persons in volunteer ministries;

2. Approximately six thousand persons attend weekend services;

3. FCC is Protestant and evangelical;

4. The church has developed a volunteer system that is consistently monitored, evaluated, and improved;

5. Yearly volunteer conferences inform and teach about lay deployment.
Methodology and data collection mirrored intentions and practices of the actual research process. I contacted the staff person responsible for lay ministry mobilization. This study’s criteria was communicated fully to this staff person. After obtaining initial agreement for participation in this study, a date and times were scheduled for interviews with five volunteers. I conducted interviews at FCC over the period of one day. My personal assistant videotaped the interviews. I kept a journal in which pertinent observations were recorded.

The pilot project benefited my experiences in two ways. First, the project exposed dynamics of actual interview situations. Having completed the initial five interviews I understood interview dynamics and felt at ease in conducting remaining interviews. Secondly, the project allowed me to test interview questions. I quickly discovered the need to revise my approach to beginning segments of the interview process. Rather than asking Interview questions One and Two, I began by allowing subjects to describe present volunteer experiences and initial entrance into the realm of volunteerism in their local church. I discovered their involvement and excitement increased as they explained meaningful, personal experiences. I also discovered that some subjects answered the first interview questions without the questions being posed.

**Population and Sample**

The context for this study was three churches that mobilize and deploy persons in multiplied ministries: Granger Community Church, Willow Creek Community Church, and Southeast Christian Church.

These churches were selected according to the following criteria:

1. They deploy and sustain significant numbers of persons in volunteer
ministries;

2. They are churches reporting attendances of five thousand or more persons attending weekly services;

3. They are Protestant and evangelical in spirit and practice;

4. They have adapted a lay deployment system or have developed their own system that is consistently monitored, evaluated, and improved; and,

5. They conduct workshops or conferences that teach other churches about lay deployment.

The sample for this study was fifteen persons selected from the three churches. A full-time staff person at each church selected five persons serving in volunteer ministries. The population and sample were selected according to the following criteria:

1. All interviewees must have consistently served in some volunteer ministry position/positions for at least three years;

2. Interviewees were selected from various ministries/departments within the church. Not more than two persons from a particular volunteer ministry area could participate in the interview process (i.e., youth department, children’s department, women’s ministry); and,

3. Interviewees could have no immediate or closely related family members serving as paid staff at the local church (husband, wife, children, parents).

Methodology and Instrumentation

This study was a multi-case, exploratory, qualitative research project. This project employed a researcher-constructed interview instrument (see Appendix A). Prior to conducting interviews I read Kvale’s book. Interview practices and principles were
observed in his writings. The research questions were addressed through data collected from an open-ended, semi-structured interview format. In addition, a researcher-kept journal reported observations about each of the churches.

**Data Collection**

I contacted staff persons responsible for lay ministry mobilization at each of the selected churches. After obtaining agreement for participation in this study, dates and times were scheduled for interviews. These staff persons were informed about the criteria for selecting volunteers to be interviewed. Subsequent phone calls confirmed the scheduling and agreement of laypersons involved in the project.

I conducted interviews over a one-day period at one of the churches and a two-day period at the other two churches. My personal assistant videotaped the interviews. An eight-millimeter video camera was used to record the interviews. I kept a journal in which I recorded pertinent observations. Responses to interview questions and the content of the journal formed the data for this project.

My personal assistant and I transcribed the audio-taped sessions. Individual responses were compared and categorized. Videotapes were studied in order to detect verbal intonations and body language pertaining to responses. Particular notations were recorded pertaining to responses exhibiting joy, enthusiasm, or passion for lay ministry participation. Findings are reported in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Churches are often constrained in ministries because of lack of volunteers. My present church attempted to address the dilemma by implementing a spiritual gifts discovery program. Minimal lay-mobilizing results occurred, indicating absence of elements that inspire and motivate persons to become involved in volunteerism. The purpose of this research was to identify common, crucial elements in effective processes of deploying and sustaining laypersons in volunteer ministries within large churches.

Four research questions guided this study: What common cultural components motivate laypersons to participate in processes through which they are consistently deployed and sustained? What organizational components assist persons in productive volunteer service? What common equipping mechanisms productively prepare persons for fruitful volunteer service? What common retention mechanisms inspire persons to commit to long-term service within a local congregation?

Profile of Subjects

Fifteen subjects were interviewed for this study. Five subjects were interviewed at each of the three participating churches. Proportioned gender representation was present among the total population of fifteen subjects. The total population consisted of eight female subjects and seven male subjects.

In addition, proportioned representation was present between leadership personnel and support personnel. Leadership persons were volunteers who coach, coordinate, train, or impact other volunteers in their ministries. Leadership persons were volunteers whose ministries primarily targeted volunteers. Support persons were volunteers who perform
tasks for the church and congregation, primarily targeting the wider church body. Eight subjects were leadership personnel, seven subjects were support personnel.

**Lay Ministry Cultures Substantiated**

The literature review revealed that lay-deploying churches establish common cultures in which volunteerism is a normal part of the church’s purposes and existence. Lay-deploying churches do not simply implement quick-fix programs that attempt to address volunteerism. Rather, lay-deploying churches create pervasive environments that communicate values and maintain processes and systems that attract and release laypersons in volunteerism.

Subjects’ responses indicated the presence of pervasive cultures in which volunteers are attracted, connected, trained, and supported in lay ministries. Representative of responses from the other four subjects from Granger Community Church (GCC), subject one affirmed the existence of this enveloping culture:

There is a very strong atmosphere in this body that suggests you need to get in the boat basically. It’s just everywhere; there’s not any one place where I can say, “Well it’s most predominant…” It’s just something that as soon as you become a part of a routine body of people that attends here, it’s very obvious that if you are a believer,… that you serve.

Volunteerism apparently is a way of life at GCC.

Subjects from Southeast Christian Church (SEC) also voiced awareness of the lay ministry culture present at their church. Speaking about the serving environment, Subject three exclaimed, “There is an atmosphere of helping that’s pervasive. I don’t know how else to explain it.”

Subjects from Willow Creek Community Church (WCC) confirmed the enticement of that church’s volunteer ministry culture. Subject one declared, “It
[volunteerism] is going on all around you. You are quite aware of it…. It gets into your blood. You want to be part of it.”

In addition to subjects’ responses, my personal observations substantiated the presence of pervasive cultures existing within these churches. Personal field notes (see Appendixes B, C, and D) substantiated environments in which persons understand that volunteerism is a normal part of these churches’ purposes and existence. While visiting these churches on weekdays, volunteerism was going on all around me. Persons within the church building seemed to be there for the sole purpose of helping others.

Encounters with volunteers who were not interviewees confirmed that lay ministry values have been infused into the hearts and minds of individuals within these cultures. The tone and the content of their conversations revealed devoted, focused intention in their volunteerism. They avidly desired to express their love for God through their service and wanted to participate in the church’s mission to impact this community. Their conversations corresponded with their behaviors and activities. Volunteers articulated lay ministry values and ideologies, and they demonstrated them through their actions and attitudes. These churches have definitely created enticing volunteer environments through which many people find joy and fulfillment in serving, in order to advance God’s kingdom in their communities. The remainder of this chapter substantiates the existence and compositions of the cultures present within the three churches.

**Theological and Biblical Foundations for Lay Ministry Culture**

Research question one guided this project to discover common cultural components that motivate persons to participate in processes through which they are deployed and sustained. The first interview question attempted to discern the presence or
absence of theological and biblical foundations for lay ministry within each local church’s culture. Interviewees’ answers indicated strong, personal awareness of theological foundations present in all three lay ministry cultures.

**Results from Granger Community Church**

When asked the question, “Why does your church encourage you to become involved in ministry?” all five subjects from GCC spoke about the church’s mission. Subjects repetitively described the church as “the body of Christ, put here for a purpose.” These volunteers understood the indigenous purpose for their church. All GCC subjects distinctly articulated the church’s mission as helping persons take their next steps toward God. For some persons their next step involves personal salvation. For other persons their next step involves becoming more like Christ.

Within GCC’s culture, servanthood is evidence of next steps taken towards Christlikeness and is a perceived goal for all persons. Subject one’s response was representative of the missional aspect of the GCC lay ministry culture: “If you are a believer, a Christ follower, we are to serve. We are to look for and bring seekers in and help them get to the same place.”

Although subjects did not specifically mention the “priesthood of all believers,” interview content indicated infusion of the theological concept into GCC’s culture. All five persons communicated awareness of personal, lay responsibility to assist the church’s corporate mission. Subjects consistently alluded to a foundational principle taught in GCC’s “Core Classes.” This foundational principal declared that serving is one of the five purposes of not only the church, but of individual members of the body. (These allusions indicate probable use of Warren’s “purpose driven” concepts.)
All subjects also explained their understanding of the theological concept of “spiritual giftedness.” As members of the body of Christ at GCC, each person is encouraged and challenged to use their spiritual gifts, abilities, and experiences in serving the church and the world. All subjects identified specific and consistent teaching concerning the necessity of serving within their giftedness and passions. Specific teaching on spiritual gifts occurs in core classes at GCC. In teaching the theological concept, the acronym “SHAPE” is incorporated into the lessons. Obviously, this church has adapted Warren’s SHAPE concept and curriculum as an integral component of their system and culture. Subject three stated, “I heard you are to serve with your SHAPE, using what God gave you to serve with.”

**Results from Southeast Christian Church**

When asked the question, “Why does your church encourage you to become involved in ministry?” SEC subjects spoke in consensus. According to them, SEC leaders teach and communicate that service is an essential part of being a Christ follower. Four distinct reasons for serving in volunteer positions as Christ-followers surfaced during the interviews.

First of all, persons at SEC are to be involved in ministry because a resulting factor is personal spiritual growth. All five subjects parroted a foundational tenet. They said the church teaches the following principle to potential members and present ones: “If you are going to grow as a Christian, you must invest three hours in specific commitments each week at or through the church; you must participate in one hour of worship, one hour of Bible study, and one hour of service.” All five subjects recited this principle, almost word for word, indicating awareness and personal implementation and
infusion into their personal lives. The subjects indicated this foundational teaching is communicated verbally in membership interviews and classes and from the pulpit and is present in widespread church publications. A major theological foundation for SEC’s lay ministry culture, then, correlated directly to personal spiritual growth: Personal spiritual growth is a resulting factor of three commitments; one of those commitments is volunteer service.

A second reason for serving in volunteer positions as a Christ follower correlated to the missional aspect of SEC. Leadership apparently has communicated an intentional, indigenous purpose and mission to its congregants. The mission statement of this church was presented as follows: “Southeast Christian Church exists to … evangelize the lost; edify the saved; minister to those in need; and, be a conscience in the community.” This mission was further clarified by these statements: “Here, we strive to provide Christians with a place where they can develop relationships with each other; grow in their walk with the Lord, and put their faith into action through Christ-centered service” (Southeast Christian Church. Home Page. August 18, 2005. <WWW.southeastchristian.org>). The clarifying statements explain how the mission is to be pursued: Christians are to be involved in community, spiritual growth, and service. The mission statement and further statements demonstrate alignment with biblical and theological understanding of the purpose of the church in the world. This church exists to carry on the work of Christ in today’s world.

Subjects’ responses indicated understanding and cooperation with the purpose statement and the clarifying statements. Their discussions revealed understanding that each member of the church, whether lay or clergy, is to assist in the missional challenge.
Representative of the remaining subjects, subject four said, “The Bible teaches us to go out and do things for Christ and to display Christlike attitudes in everything we do.” A major theological foundation for SEC’s lay ministry culture, then, correlated directly to the missional component of the church.

A third reason for serving in volunteer positions as a Christ follower pertained to the biblical concept of spiritual gifts. All five subjects referenced specific classes and teachings about spiritual gifts. These classes and teachings instruct persons about the presence, necessity, and privilege of spiritual gifting. All subjects reported that persons are encouraged and instructed to serve in positions directly matching their spiritual gifting. Representative of all interviewees at SEC, subject five stated, “God gives everybody something to do. Mine’s with a paintbrush. My wife’s is working with children…. They have a ‘Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts’ class where you can think through where you would fit best.” A major theological foundation for Southeast Christian Church’s lay ministry culture, then, correlated directly to the biblical concept of spiritual gifts and their deployment in the church.

A fourth reason for serving in volunteer positions as a Christ follower at SEC pertained to practical aspects of the theological concept of the priesthood of believers. The immensity of tasks to be completed requires that all believers be released to assist in those tasks. In other words, in order to complete all of the work of God, all of the people of God must participate.

The subjects specifically referenced the immensity of needs and tasks and the subsequent necessity of laypersons assisting with ministry at SEC. Subject One described the amount of volunteers utilized at services:
We could not run a service without volunteers … to put on a service it is not exaggerating to say it takes probably four hundred members a service, and we do three services on a weekend. There are about twelve hundred volunteers that are probably needed for those services. In addition, there are a lot of other opportunities to get involved. One of the big things we do is our Easter pageant each year. It plays to at least seventy or eighty thousand people over a two-week period. There are between seven hundred to a thousand people who are involved in putting that on, in it or behind the scenes, ushering, putting up props, or whatever it takes.

Volunteers are vital team members who willingly participate to help this church function.

Subject two affirmed the necessity of releasing all believers to do the work of ministry. She said, “I always knew there was lot to do in the church…. The bigger the church, the more need there is,… the more jobs there are to do.” A major theological foundation for SEC’s lay ministry culture, then, correlated directly to the practical aspects of releasing the church body to assist in ministry.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

Interviews with WCC’s subjects indicated their volunteer culture is biblically mandated and theologically instituted. First of all, subjects’ responses disclosed that WCC’s volunteer culture is founded upon a solid theology pertaining to ecclesiology. They indicated that WCC is a missional church. This volunteer culture and systems exist to do the mission and ministry of God. Subject two reported that her involvement in volunteer ministries originated from her personal desire to do the mission and ministry of God. She said, “What motivates me is a cause…. When I walk through the door,… I am here to serve my Lord…. Coming and volunteering is for him.”

Subject one further confirmed WCC has established a climate in which laypersons are challenged and inspired to volunteer in ministries that advance the work of God in their world:
[We volunteer] … to serve the church, serve the community, serve the world. I think half of why people want to do what they are doing in this church is that they want to be a part of all of this. They want to feel like they are having a part in this enormous campaign to get people in.

Personally participating in the work of God appears to be a normal practice at WCC.

Subjects’ responses also disclosed that this volunteer culture is founded upon a solid theology of laity. My visit and the five interviews at WCC disclosed evidence of biblical teaching from Ephesians 4. As stated in Chapter 2 of this project, this Scripture revealed three main emphases pertaining to the priesthood of believers: Every believer is to be involved in ministry; the pastor’s and leader’s roles are to ensure all believers are equipped for ministry; and, the church is to be an equipping center. Based upon my visit and the five subjects’ responses, WCC appears to have established a culture that lives out those three emphases. These volunteers indicated they are the agents who carry out the mission of the church. According to interviewed subjects, laypersons at their church are frequently taught and reminded that they are qualified, called, equipped, and commissioned to do ministry. Subject one repeatedly alluded to the presence of a culture in which laypersons are to do ministries, thus freeing the staff (or clergy) to implement and expand other ministries. In regard to his personal leadership position within the church, he made the following statements:

The thing my wife and I want to do most of the time is really take ownership of what we are doing, so we can free up the staff,… that basically you can run the ministry. That’s what this church eventually wants to get to. Eventually we want to put volunteers in charge of all of the ministries. Then all the staff will do is coordinate. That way we can do more ministries.

WCC’s culture empowers laypersons to fulfill responsibilities pertaining to biblical mandates.
Subject four further affirmed WCC’s existence of a biblically based, theologically grounded culture that teaches and implements the empowerment and commissioning of laypersons to do ministry. He stated, “We are a church run by volunteers. Every staff member will tell you that. We have two hundred fifty or so staff members but we have nine thousand or more volunteers.”

Interview content also unveiled WCC’s distinctive fundamental teaching pertaining to spiritual maturity, membership, and spiritual gifts. According to interviewees, leadership teaches that advancement in spiritual maturity (growing in Christlikeness) is evidenced by personal adoption of what they called, the “Five Gs.” The Five Gs refer to grace, group, growth, gifts, and giving. In order to become a member at Willow Creek, persons must commit to pursuit of becoming more Christlike in each of these areas. They must have experienced grace (made a profession of faith); they must join a small group (live the Christian life in community); they must pursue personal spiritual growth (through Bible study and attendance at church services); they must discover their spiritual gifts and find a place to serve (in their area of giftedness); they must give financially (generosity is a mark of a fully devoted follower of Christ). The Five Gs acronym is widely communicated, taught in membership classes, and is frequently referred to in public sermons. The Five Gs acronym apparently has been an effective means through which leadership has helped establish the volunteer culture at WCC.

**Attraction Mechanisms Inspiring Lay Ministry Involvement**

The second interview question was framed to provide opportunity for interviewees to discuss indigenous cultural factors that inspire commitment to lay
ministry. Question 2 was, “What does your church do to persuade you to say ‘yes’ to serving in a ministry?” The intended purpose of this question was to discover attraction mechanisms that inspire and motivate persons to commit to volunteer service in the local church. Representatives from the three churches identified numerous indigenous mechanisms that function to attract persons to commit to volunteer ministries within their local churches.

**Results from Granger Community Church**

Subjects from GCC explained multiple mechanisms through which persons are informed about volunteerism and inspired to commit to volunteer ministry. Multiple mechanisms were ideologies, attitudes, procedures, and behaviors that have assisted in creating GCC’s culture in which masses of persons have been deployed in volunteer ministries.

All five subjects identified the Core Classes as a mechanism that persuades persons to say “yes” to serving in ministries. The Core Classes consist of three consecutive classes, appropriately titled, “101,” “201,” and “301.” Subjects stated that classes “101” and “301” specifically speak about volunteerism. The “101” class is the membership class. Taught by the senior pastor, this class educates persons about the mission, vision, and values of the church. Servanthood is one of the values that are taught. Subjects reported that upon completion of the class attendees sign a covenant indicating their personal commitment to the mission, vision, and values of the church. A segment of the covenant includes personal commitment to volunteer service within the church. Thus, class 101 is an instrument through which some persons are initially invited to say, “yes,” to serving in ministries.
Class “301” is a means through which persons are more fully informed about servanthood. In this class they are guided toward personal involvement in volunteer ministries. Here persons are taught to discover their personal SHAPE (spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences). Persons are then encouraged to discover a place of service that compliments and utilizes their personal “SHAPE.” Class 301 is a practical instrument through which persons are encouraged to say, “yes,” to serving in specific ministries. Upon completion of this class, attendees move from the realm of theory into practice.

All five subjects identified an annual sermon/teaching series as a mechanism that persuades persons to say, “yes,” to serving in volunteer ministries. Once a year the teaching staff of the church has designed and produced a three to four-week series of sermons addressing servanthood and volunteerism. According to subject five, the leadership teaches about “serving and what the impact of serving is for the church and how it honors God. Mark [the senior pastor] talks about that a lot.”

In addition to the pastoral staff’s teachings during the annual series, attendees have also heard stories of peer involvement in volunteer ministry. Subject two said, “The series on servanthood usually culminates with a weekend service of testimonies of people who have gotten involved and how it’s changed their perception, life, and relationships.” Attendees have then been given opportunities to make a commitment to explore possible options for their personal involvement.

All five subjects from GCC said that an annual “volunteer expo” is a mechanism that informs persons about volunteer opportunities and encourages involvement. The “volunteer expo” occurs during the three to four-week teaching series. Sometimes the
expo is held on the concluding weekend of the teaching series. Subjects specifically described the location and intention of the volunteer expo. This attraction mechanism is located in a large, portable, white tent situated directly outside of the church auditorium, erected just for the occasion. At past expos, each ministry of the church was represented at a table or booth inside this tent. Persons obtained information about ministries and asked questions about ministry opportunities.

Another attraction mechanism pertained to specific requests or appeals for volunteers to serve at specific activities or large events. All five subjects mentioned specific occasions when leadership encouraged persons not presently serving to assist with some prime event in the life of the church. Subject five first became involved in volunteer ministry when an appeal was made to serve at a kickoff event for a building campaign in 2001. Subject two reported he became involved when he saw an appeal in a bulletin informing volunteers about opportunities to serve at a special event. Subject three referenced frequent appeals for volunteers to assist with random events, such as campus cleanup day, as well as with big projects, such as an annual food drive. Subject one referred to appeals for new volunteers to assist with larger crowds that would result from the new, larger auditorium space. Subject four talked about appeals for men to assist with men’s ministry retreats. All of these appeals for volunteers were means through which persons were invited to “step up to the plate,” “get into the serving game,” or “get connected to a ministry team.” The appeals were communicated verbally from the church’s platform or were included in weekly bulletins or announcements.

Subjects identified peer influence as a powerful attraction mechanism. Peer influence was enthusiastically described as a dominant stimulus for involvement in
volunteer ministries. Subject four spoke about male peer influence in men’s ministries:

The most effective method with men, who want to connect but won’t do it on their own,… is for a friend or another man to invite them to come along, to actually help them sign up and get connected. People want to do that but it’s hard for them to do it by themselves,… to get connected, to sign up and serve.

He subsequently confirmed peer influence in small group settings as a principal attraction mechanism with these words: “There is small group encouragement where people serving in a ministry are asking other people to serve in a ministry with them.”

Subject five testified about the effectiveness of personally influencing peers to become involved in volunteer ministries. She said, “[Another way of inspiring persons to commit to ministry] is through word of mouth, encouraging your friends, saying, ‘I serve on a team.’ I have friends who are not serving. I invite them to come shadow me for a weekend or a night to see what I do. Nine times out of ten they say, ‘This is fun; this is cool.’” The power of peer influence appears to be strong.

Subject two explained that various departments within the church are trained to use their personal influence to invite others to join them in ministries. He described the process as “shoulder tapping”:

We try to teach all of our teams to recruit, to tell people we are having fun doing this. As a seeker church we are always inviting newer people. It’s kind of a circular thing, we expect ourselves to be recruiting; it doesn’t have to come from the staff. We call it “shoulder tapping.” In children’s ministries we have outlawed the use of the word “recruiting,” because it sounded to military. We thought “shoulder tapping” was a lot more user friendly.

This form of exercising peer influence appears to be an efficient means through which persons are inspired to volunteer.

Subjects from GCC acknowledged the acronym “SHAPE” as an attraction
mechanism that generates interest and involvement in volunteer opportunities. Persons are matched to ministry opportunities according to their spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and past experiences. Subject three explained the attractive features of matching persons to ministry opportunities according to their SHAPE:

At other churches where I’ve been it was just “we need someone here, we need somebody to do this,” whether you like children or do well with them; “we need you.” [Here at Granger] … they really teach you to find your SHAPE and serve in that capacity. It makes a big difference when you are doing that rather than because you feel like you should, but it’s not an area that you’re passionate for.

Subject one explained a practical aspect and compelling stimulus of matching persons to ministries according to their SHAPE. Subject one was a volunteer in the children’s ministries area. According to her, the church and the individual benefit through this component of volunteer ministry. She contrasted personal fulfillment in serving within one’s SHAPE, with the common practice of filling spots with persons who will do a duty because they sense a need:

We never use the word “need.” We never go to people and say, “we need you to serve in preschool ministry” because lots of people will serve if they feel needed. But, people that have a heart for the Lord and a heart for the ministry that they are about to serve in, those people are the people who will have a passion about what they serve, where they serve. Lots of people can step up and pour juice,… but will they be passionate about it, or will they just be a warm body in the room…. There’s a big difference between those two types of volunteers.

Subject one’s remarks were interpreted as affirmation that “SHAPE” is an attraction mechanism. Persons would rather serve in places where they have passion (heart), gifting, abilities, and experience, rather than in places where they serve out of obligation.

Subjects identified “easy access” as an attraction mechanism that inspires persons to say “yes” to serving in ministries. GCC attempts to make the process of connecting to
a ministry as visible, accessible, and effortless as possible. The atmosphere of volunteerism is continually pervasive. According to interviewees, a person could walk in on any Sunday of the year and begin the process of connecting to a ministry on that day. Easy, initial access points included the weekly bulletin, the information desk, First Impression team members, the church’s Internet Web page, and church receptionists.

Subject one explained how the weekly bulletin serves as an initial access point:

There’s a perforated card on the back of our bulletins…. You fill out your name, address, e-mail, and indicate you want to get involved,… then we have people that weekly are responsible for the sole job of going through those cards and logging into the computer everything that comes through on those cards so that it gets to the right leadership and gets followed up.

This church seriously attempts to provide simple, consistent means through which persons can gain access into volunteerism.

GCC’s subjects identified the information desk as an access point that gives crucial volunteer instruction and reception of personal information about personal interest in volunteering. The information desk is open and staffed during all weekend and weekday services.

First Impression team members are initial access points for persons interested in connecting to a volunteer opportunity. First Impression team members serve as hosts, greeters, and ushers. These team members are trained to respond to questions from persons inquiring about volunteer opportunities. They are taught to obtain pertinent information from interested, potential inquirers and channel it to the proper recipient.

The church’s Internet Web page was mentioned as a conduit through which volunteers can easily access the realm of volunteerism. This means is a convenient and nonthreatening access point. Subject five said, “The Web seems to be a pretty safe
environment for someone to go in and search and check out areas of ministry someone would like to explore.”

In addition to these easy access points, church phone receptionists sometimes serve as links in the process of connecting persons to volunteer opportunities. According to Granger subjects, some prospective volunteers call the office and receive information and express personal interest in specific volunteer opportunities.

The concept of “experimentation” is another attraction mechanism valued by GCC’s subjects. Volunteers are given freedom to experience various ministries and various teams within ministries before making a commitment to serve. According to interviewees, an attractive component of this “testing of the waters,” is the ability to choose between options, knowing that their personal preference is crucial. Subject five described how this experimentation ideology works:

We invite you to come test the waters. Shadow someone, see what they do. If you like it great! Think about what it is you like. If you don’t, then try something else. If you are not sure you want to be in my ministry on my team, come shadow the team that is volunteering the next weekend…. There are options; you have a choice. There is nothing that says you have to serve once you tried a ministry. By leaving those options open, it makes people feel more comfortable,… and, [if you are not comfortable in my ministry] we will help you find another place where you will feel comfortable. The beauty of this church is that there are always options.

The experimentation ideology inspires motivation by valuing the volunteers’ abilities and desires.

“Guiltless exit” was another attraction mechanism valued by GCC’s interviewees. Two components of the guiltless exit ideology enhance its attractiveness: one-year commitments to ministry and freedom to leave a ministry with a guilt-free conscience.

The first component of the guiltless exit ideology is a one-year commitment to
ministry. Subjects appreciated the fact that service in a particular ministry is for a one-year term, not for life. Subjects were pleased about the existence of a termination point in a particular ministry. They reported that at some point during the year, the church gives opportunity for persons to either renew their commitment to serve in a particular area or to exit that ministry and find another place of service.

The second component of the guiltless exit ideology is the freedom to leave a ministry with a guilt-free conscience. Persons are encouraged to exit a ministry if they no longer have passion for that ministry or do not possess the gifts to do the ministry. Persons are then encouraged to find other places of ministry where they can effectively and passionately volunteer. Subject four described this component:

In men’s ministry we get through to the end of the year. We ask our men who have been on the leadership team, “are you aligned to be on the team again next year?” If you are not, that is fine. If you have some other ministries or passions you want to pursue, it’s okay to get off. It is important for people to know it’s okay to leave a ministry they have been serving in, that it is not a bad thing to leave a ministry if God is calling you to another ministry. That’s encouraged here so that people who start serving somewhere, and find out it’s not for them, or it’s not their passion or gift to do that,… they should go find a ministry that is their passion or gift…. so people can come and go…. There’s a way to acquiesce out of a ministry and get connected to another ministry so you don’t feel guilty.

The guiltless exit ideology creates an atmosphere in which persons can leave ministries without feeling remorse.

**Results from Southeast Christian Church**

Subjects from SEC described several attraction mechanisms through which persons have been educated about volunteerism and that appeared to them to be effective means of inducing commitment to volunteerism. They spoke about mechanisms that personally convinced them to volunteer, as well as ones that have influenced peers.
All five subjects declared “membership expectations” as a major volunteerism attraction mechanism. When a person comes forward at the end of a service indicating they want to join the church, a membership mentor is assigned to them. The membership mentor dispenses crucial membership information, educating the potential member about significant expectations for persons who join this local church. All five subjects quoted, almost word for word, a foundational precept communicated to all potential members:

At Southeast Christian Church we believe that if you are going to grow as a Christian you should make three commitments that are to be fulfilled each week: you are being called to commit to one hour in worship, one hour in Sunday school or some type of Bible study, and one hour in volunteer service.

Subjects reported that additional appointments occur with prospective members. The membership mentor schedules further meetings with the new member in order to support the person and hold him or her accountable to the three commitments. Membership expectations appeared to have been profusely infused into the culture at SEC. All five subjects quoted this precept and indicated their personalization of the precept through their volunteer commitments.

In addition to the membership mentor situation, subjects mentioned a “What We Believe” class culminating in membership. Interviewees stated that the membership expectations are expounded upon in this scenario. So, between these two educational mediums, all potential SEC members are indoctrinated with the expectation that they will commit to at least one hour of weekly volunteer service.

The subjects mentioned two major, service-oriented events that have functioned as attraction mechanisms. The two events mentioned were an Easter pageant and a “Great Day of Service.” These two events have been held annually.
The Easter pageant is a massive dramatic production of the life and passion of Jesus Christ, presented for the community and region. Seven hundred to one thousand volunteers have been involved in this production each year it was performed. According to interviewees, this event often has inspired persons to experience the joys and benefits of volunteering for a cause impacting the lives of masses of people.

The second major service oriented-event was labeled a “Great Day of Service.” This event involves massive numbers of volunteers impacting the church’s surrounding community. Several local agencies are contacted and asked what needs are present. The church attempts to meet some of those needs on their Great Day of Service by deploying volunteers throughout the community. According to interviewees, over two thousand volunteers were involved in a recent Great Day of Service. Subject one explained how this particular volunteer service opportunity has served as an attraction mechanism. He said, “[Serving on our Great Day of Service] gets a lot of people’s appetites whet for future volunteer service.”

Another major attraction mechanism is an annual sermon series on volunteerism. The teaching pastors preach sermons on volunteerism, sometimes for three or four consecutive Sundays. Each year this sermon series culminates in a Commitment Sunday. Information about the upcoming series and the Commitment Sunday is disseminated through the church’s newspaper, other publications, and the Web site. On Commitment Sunday all persons are invited to indicate their preferences for volunteer service for the following year. All five subjects referred to it as one of the most visible attraction mechanisms.

All five subjects identified the church’s newspaper as a predominant attraction
mechanism that has inspired and motivated persons to say, “yes,” to volunteerism at SEC. The newspaper is named The Southeast Outlook. Published weekly, this newspaper rivals the quality and excellence of many public newspapers. The newspaper is distributed to attendees as well as various business establishments in the community. According to interviewees, the newspaper has been a voice listened to by the masses attending this church.

The newspaper is a communicative voice speaking consistently and effectively about volunteerism at SEC. Subject two declared, “There is almost always something in the paper about volunteerism. It may be an editorial about what it means to be a volunteer or about what special needs they have, or it may be highlighting a person who has been an outstanding volunteer.” The newspaper provides weekly exposure to the ideology and practices pertaining to volunteerism at this local church.

Three of the five subjects referenced “peer influence” as an attraction mechanism that has persuaded persons to say, “yes,” to volunteering at SEC. Some persons have been motivated to serve subsequent to a verbal invitation given by a peer. Other persons have been inspired to serve after observing peers presently serving. Seeing persons who have enjoyed their volunteer service has influenced others to find similar fulfillment.

Responses from two of the subjects indicated that church culture may have impacted present volunteers to use their influence proactively to attract new volunteers. When asked, “Who would a visitor talk to about trying to find a place to volunteer?” Subject five responded, “You can almost ask anybody in this church, ‘where could I fit in?’ And they would find a place for you … they might question you about your interests and connect you to someone that you could talk to.” This response indicated that
laypersons have sensed a responsibility to assist in helping peers connect in service.

Subject three indicated a pervasive culture in which laypersons proactively use personal influence to persuade peers to say, “yes,” to serving in volunteer ministry. She stated, “If someone came to me,… I would say, ‘What are your interests? Would you like to work with children? Have you been to our activity center? Where [do you think] you would best fit in?’” She also explained that most volunteers share the same sense of urgency in helping someone else find a place of ministry.

“Matching persons’ spiritual gifts and abilities with volunteer opportunities” was another attraction mechanism interviewees discussed. All five subjects referred to SEC’s ideology and practice of matching persons to volunteer opportunities according to spiritual giftedness and God-given abilities. Common terminology among interviewees was “you are encouraged to find a place where you fit.”

“Expectation without high pressure” was another attraction mechanism discovered in SEC’s volunteer ministry culture. All five subjects reported that leadership has communicated that all members are expected to find a ministry position in order to grow spiritually; however, leadership does not pressure anyone to take a volunteer position. Subject five said, “What we like is that there is no high pressure…. We have never been pressured…. There’s no grilling you or making you feel bad. It makes it easy to want to do it.”

At this church, the culture of “expectation without pressure” allows persons to choose their place of service according to their personal desires. Responsibility for entering the realm of volunteerism ultimately rests entirely on the shoulders of potential volunteers. According to interviewees, persons are encouraged to enter the realm on their
own terms. Subject four stated, “They don’t force you to do anything. They just say, ‘Here’s a list of all of the volunteer areas, and you can check off which ones you are interested in.’”

Once they have become volunteers, the established culture pursues the welfare and interests volunteers. As was the case with GCC, the length of commitment at SEC is one year. When persons sign a volunteer commitment card, they know the length of their service will be for one year, not an indefinite period of time or a lengthy period of time. Knowing the termination date for their commitment has served as an attraction mechanism for many persons.

Another component of the “no pressure” ideology was a sort of limited volunteerism. On the annual commitment Sunday, persons have been instructed to sign up for volunteer opportunities that fit within their time schedules and lifestyles:

They don’t want you to overcommit, they don’t want you to sign up for more than two or three roles at most. They don’t want you just checking off everything. They know that won’t work. I think after coming from a small church, where it got to the place where I was overworked, I think this is a real blessing.

This church respects individuals’ life circumstances and encourages persons to volunteer in roles that are conducive to healthy lives and families.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

Interviews with subjects at WCC revealed several attraction mechanisms parallel to ones present at GCC and SEC. Subjects spoke about similar attraction mechanisms that have effectively persuaded persons to say, “yes,” to volunteerism within this local church. One corresponding attraction mechanism was an annual sermon series addressing specific aspects of volunteerism. All five subjects reported that members of the teaching
staff have created and communicated special sermons or teachings about lay ministry each year.

Similar to GCC, ministry fairs have been held at WCC during the series or on the concluding weekend of the series. At these ministry fairs various church departments have erected booths, provided materials about their ministries, and answered questions about their ministry opportunities.

As was the case with the previous two churches, publications and written materials have served as effective attraction mechanisms at WCC. Interviewees stated that volunteer opportunities are constantly listed in bulletins distributed at midweek services. According to participants, possible volunteer openings are consistently in front of them throughout the year, via church publications. In addition, two of the five subjects mentioned that the senior pastor had written a book about volunteerism. That book was the primary source for the sermon series completed last January. In addition to the weekly bulletin and the book written by the senior pastor, the church Web page also provides information concerning volunteerism. Interviewees believed some persons are inspired and motivated to volunteer at this local church because of church publications, written materials, and the Internet Web page.

Another attraction mechanism paralleling GCC and SEC was that of peer influence. According to three WCC subjects, persons have been persuaded to volunteer because of visible modeling by peers or verbal invitations from peers. Subjects one and two explained that the majority of present volunteers on their serving teams have come through peer influence.

Subject five talked about the process of peer modeling that has inspired persons to
volunteer. She indicated that veteran volunteers attract persons who are not yet volunteering through their example and their words:

Volunteers become recruiters…. If you go to any area, I think you see the volunteers and you see their love for what they are doing. And people start questioning them, saying, “I want what you have! How did you get into this?” I would say that this is probably the biggest selling point,… wanting to be happy and be doing what those people are doing. There is something attractive. People are willing to talk about how much they love doing what they are doing.

Visible demonstrations of meaningful, peer volunteer service entice potential persons to serve.

“Membership expectations” was declared to be an attraction mechanism at WCC, as well as at SEC. Membership at WCC church is taken very seriously. According to interviewees, a distinction is drawn between membership in a traditional sense of the word and the concept of “participating membership.” At some churches, membership involves agreement to basic doctrines and a verbal assent to support the church and its ministries. On the other hand, participating membership, is more comprehensive and involves more than verbal assent. According to subject one, a participating member at WCC is a person who is actively participating in making the church function. Consequently, volunteerism has been an integral part of membership expectations. Participating members commit to spiritual growth in what is labeled, “the five Gs.” The five Gs refer to the concepts of grace, group, growth, gifts, and giving. In order to become a participating member, persons agree to utilization of their spiritual gifts in volunteer ministry. According to interviewees, to be a participating member at WCC you have to serve somewhere. These expectations have created a climate in which volunteerism is natural and necessary.
In addition to the corollary attraction mechanisms paralleling the other participating churches, interviewees at WCC identified unique components of their culture and volunteer system. WCC’s subjects spoke passionately about two integral attraction mechanisms: a culture of pervasive experimentation and “right people in the right places” ideology.

WCC’s leadership has created a culture of pervasive experimentation. According to interviewees, persons in this local church are encouraged and challenged to experiment in numerous ministry opportunities before selecting one as their choice for committed service.

A distinctive, key component of this experimental culture was labeled, “First Serve” opportunities. Subjects spoke more passionately about First Serve opportunities than about any of the other observed attraction mechanisms. First Serve opportunities were described as entry-level, introductory, “no strings attached,” ministry positions that allow persons to observe a particular ministry without making a commitment to that ministry. Each department within the church designs and designates First Serve opportunities. Subject four succinctly explained this prominent attraction mechanism:

The First Serve [ideology] is kind of a noncommittal, “ride along with me my friend and see what it is like to do this particular job” scenario. It may not be quite right for you, but try it out and see; no commitments. You don’t have to be here next week for it again; just see if you like it. It’s a really nice way to break into any given field in the church. We have so many ministries. There’s no guarantees you are going to like any particular one, but you kind of have a feel for where you are going.

Apparently, an appealing factor of this ideology was the freedom to view options and then individually choose one’s place of service.

Subject four believed that another appealing factor in WCC’s First Serve
instrument was the ability to remain anonymous throughout the process of experimentation. She affirmed the anonymity factor:

You can try a ministry … without filling out paperwork…. You do it and there’s no commitment. They won’t call you and bug you or say, “are you interested?” You don’t have to give your name or your phone number. [That is important] especially if you have come from a past where a church has had their claws in you once after you gave them your name and phone number, and they thought they had a volunteer. There is none of that…. [After you try it], then you decide.

I observed that the subjects spoke energetically and gratefully about WCC’s culture of pervasive experimentation. Their enthusiasm about the First Serve opportunities indicated that it is a major attraction mechanism perceived by these interviewees.

A second specific attraction mechanism that WCC’s subjects passionately described was a perceived practice of “putting the right people in the right places.” The subjects identified two key components of this ideology: serving in volunteer ministries according to one’s spiritual giftedness and serving in one’s area of passion.

The practice of putting the right people in the right places involves matching persons’ spiritual gifts with volunteer opportunities. All five subjects mentioned that persons are to discover their personal spiritual gifts by attending classes and subsequently find a volunteer position in which those gifts are to be utilized. At WCC the right place to serve is in a ministry that corresponds to personal giftedness.

A second component of the “right people in the right places” ideology was the concept of making sure that persons served in areas about which they are passionate. Four of the five subjects indicated that this ideology has been an attraction mechanism for them personally and for many other volunteers. According to the interviewees, they are enticed to serve because they are allowed and encouraged to serve in places that bring joy
and fulfillment. That resulting joy and sense of fulfillment creates a desire to be faithful, and volunteers’ desires to be faithful result in longevity and consistency in volunteerism. Subject four stated, “They want to make sure you get in a ministry, a serving opportunity, that is really right for you…. You have to be happy with what you are doing, otherwise you are not going to stay with it.”

**Reasons For Personal Involvement In Volunteerism**

Responses to the first two interview questions affirmed various common cultural components assisting in creating cultures deploying persons in volunteer ministries. Biblical and theological foundations provide purpose for effective cultures. Attraction mechanisms are instruments through which persons are inspired to participate in these volunteer cultures.

The third interview question allowed subjects to express perceived personal reasons for involvement. I was curious to hear whether individuals serve because of internal motivations or external ones. Interview question three was, “What motivates you and others like you to do ministry in this place?”

Responses to this question revealed that the interviewees serve because of both internal and external motivations. They serve because of personal, subjective reasons and individual benefits received through volunteerism and because of corporate, objective, external realities.

**Results from Granger Community Church**

Subjects at GCC explained they serve at this local church because of at least three personal, subjective motivations. They also spoke about two objective, external motivations for serving in volunteer ministries.
One of the personal, subjective motivations discussed by interviewees was summarized as follows: I serve because of gratitude to God. Two subjects stated they serve because God has given specific resources or blessings to them. In return, they desire to show appreciation by giving service back to him.

A second personal, subjective motivation discussed by interviewees was summarized as follows: I serve because I can experience community. Three subjects reported that a powerful motivation for volunteer service is the benefit of connecting with other persons in community.

A third personal, subjective motivation discussed by one interviewee was summarized as follows: I serve because in serving I connect intimately with God. Subject four earnestly and actively explained his motivation as follows:

I love to serve,…. whether it’s out here doing spring cleanup, digging a ditch, or out here helping ministries stay coordinated, that’s where I feel closest to God…. When I am serving here at the church, serving him, serving others, I get to know him better.

According to this subject, volunteerism was a conduit through which relationship with God was deepened and strengthened.

GCC’s subjects spoke about two objective, external motivations for serving in volunteer ministries. Persons volunteer because they understand the church exists to serve and because God has given spiritual gifts to be used in ministry.

One of the objective, external motivations discussed by interviewees was summarized as follows: I serve because the church exists to serve. Two subjects correlated serving with the church’s purpose in the world. According to them, people serve because they know that is what the church is supposed to do.

A second objective, external motivation, discussed by interviewees was
summarized as follows: I serve because God has given spiritual gifts. Three subjects declared that the presence and purpose of spiritual gifts has aroused motivation to utilize God-given spiritual abilities and talents in serving others.

**Results from Southeast Christian Church**

Subjects at SEC primarily cited internal, personal, subjective reasons and rewards as motivations for serving in their local church. Subjects reported two major, identifiable internal impulses for serving. Some subjects also referenced two external, objective motivations.

One of the internal, subjective motivations was summarized as follows: I serve because I can experience community. Four of the interviewees expounded upon the joys and benefits of serving together in the church. Benefits included the following elements: shared social experiences; working with genuine Christian people; mutual spiritual growth; and, cooperative efforts toward significant causes.

A second internal, subjective motivation was summarized as follows: I serve because I find fulfillment in volunteering. Interviewees expressed emotion as they verbalized this motivation for service. They listed the following fulfillment motivations: Personal satisfaction in investing in the lives of teens and observing spiritual growth and maturity; joy in seeing one’s own children follow a mother’s volunteer example; and, feeling a sense of purpose in knowing that actions are making a difference.

Three subjects also referenced one external, objective motivation. This motivation pertained to biblical teaching. Two subjects spoke in broad, general terms about biblical teaching on servanthood. When asked why she does ministry at SEC, subject four stated, “The Bible teaches us to go out and do things for Christ and display Christlike attitude in
everything you do.” Subject two explained she had attended church since she was a child, heard pastors teach and preach about servanthood, and “knew that [volunteering] was part of being a Christian.” When asked about personal reasons for volunteering, another subject referenced the biblical concept of spiritual gifts. He stated that God had given him spiritual gifts and artistic abilities to be used in volunteer ministries.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

Subjects at WCC explained they serve at this local church because of at least two personal, subjective motivations. They also spoke about two objective, external motivations for serving in volunteer ministries.

One of the personal, subjective motivations discussed by interviewees was summarized as follows: I serve because I can experience community. Four subjects reported that connecting with other serving persons is stimulus for involvement. According to interviewees, in the large church setting serving is a major means of establishing meaningful relationships with others.

A second personal, subjective motivation discussed by interviewees was summarized as follows: I serve because I find fulfillment in volunteering. Four subjects affirmed that fulfillment was a personal motivation for involvement in volunteerism. WCC subjects discussed the following fulfillment motivations: Personal satisfaction and enjoyment; personal self-discovery; receiving benefits far exceeding personal efforts; and enjoying a sense of purpose knowing efforts are advancing God’s causes.

Some subjects referenced one external, objective motivation. This external serving motivator was the biblical and theological concept of spiritual gifts. Three subjects mentioned that God had given unique gifts that were given specifically to be
used in volunteer ministries through the church.

### Lay-Deploying Processes

The fourth interview question probed interviewees’ understanding of the end-to-end set of activities their church has implemented to facilitate lay mobilization. The fourth interview question was, “What is your church’s process for linking persons with a ministry?”

### Results from Granger Community Church

Subjects recounted previously mentioned attraction mechanisms that provide multiple entry points into volunteer service. Three categories of attraction mechanisms were designated, based on frequency of implementation: Continual attraction mechanisms that constantly communicate volunteer opportunities; frequent attraction mechanisms that occasionally are utilized; and annual attraction mechanisms that occur once a year. Subjects conveyed specific end-to-end sets of activities that occur for each of the categorized attraction mechanisms.

Four continual attraction mechanisms were identified as providing entrance into the realm of volunteerism. Those four “doorways” into volunteerism were listed as follows: The weekly bulletin, the guest services kiosk, the Internet Web page, and small group encouragement. The processes for entering the realm of volunteerism via each of these doorways were explained by interviewees.

One attraction mechanism that serves as a continual entry point into volunteerism is the weekly bulletin. If a person were to walk into GCC on any given Sunday he or she would see a section of the weekly bulletin that invites persons to express interest in volunteering. Those persons could write down pertinent personal information and
indicate possible areas of service. They would tear off the perforated sections of the bulletin and place them in the offering plate. These informational pieces would be collected by ushers and taken to a designated place. On Monday a specific person or persons would sort through these cards according to areas of interest. The cards would be given to departmental ministry leaders. These leaders would give them to designated volunteer team leaders who would then contact the potential volunteer that week and discuss their interest and possible participation.

A second continual attraction mechanism that serves as an entry point is the Guest Services kiosk. The Guest Services kiosk is staffed during all services. Persons who approach the kiosk and express interest in volunteering are greeted warmly, asked about areas of interest, often given a pamphlet describing specific volunteer arenas, and are given names, e-mail addresses, or phone numbers of contact persons within those ministry opportunities. Guest service staff members are trained to obtain personal information; they forward that personal information to departmental leaders. The departmental leaders either contact the potential volunteer themselves or designate someone else, possibly a volunteer team leader, to contact them that week.

A third continual entry point into volunteerism was the church’s Internet web page. Potential volunteers browse areas of interest. They discover names and e-mail addresses or phone numbers of departmental leaders. They then contact that person. The departmental leader contacts them or designates a volunteer team leader to contact them and obtain further information about their specific desires to volunteer.

A fourth continual entry point into volunteerism was through small group encouragement. Small group peers encourage someone to join them in serving. They
discuss potential areas of interest. In either case, the peer assists the person by introducing him or her to volunteer leaders or by giving him or her contact information for departmental leaders.

Two frequent attraction mechanisms were identified as providing entrance into the realm of volunteerism. Those two “doorways” were listed as follows: Class 101 and Class 301. These two entry points are offered various times throughout the year.

Class 101 teaches the values and mission of this local church. One of the values is that of serving. At the end of each class persons are encouraged to volunteer. They are given contact information for departmental leaders or designated volunteer leaders and encouraged to get in touch with them. Someone from that department then contacts them to discuss their involvement.

Class 301 teaches the SHAPE concept. At the conclusion of this class, a SHAPE counselor sits down with potential volunteers. The counselor assists the interested persons by discussing their spiritual gifts, passion, abilities, personality, and past experiences. The counselor guides them to identify three possible areas of interest. The potential volunteers leave this encounter with three contact numbers for the three ministry areas in which they have the most interest. The SHAPE counselor forwards the potential volunteers’ information and interests to the departmental leaders. Those leaders, or their designated volunteer team leaders, make initial calls to inform the persons they have received their information and would like to schedule times to talk.

Two annual attraction mechanisms were identified as providing entrance into the realm of volunteerism. These entry points occur one time a year. Those two doorways were listed as follows: An annual sermon series and a volunteer expo.
The teaching staff annually creates a sermon series addressing volunteerism and servanthood. Throughout the series persons are encouraged to express their interests in volunteering by tearing off the perforated section of the bulletin (mentioned earlier), giving pertinent personal information, and placing it in the offering plate. The process for involvement proceeds as has been established in previous sections.

The volunteer expo provides opportunity for persons to gather information about areas of interest and to talk with persons serving in that ministry. Potential volunteers are encouraged to sign up or express interest in specific ministry areas. When they fill out a card, the card is given to appropriate contact persons who then communicate with them and arrange for future discussions.

**Results from Southeast Christian Church**

Subjects recounted previously mentioned attraction mechanisms that provide multiple entry points into volunteer service. Referencing continual, frequent, and annual attraction mechanisms, subjects conveyed specific end-to-end sets of activities that occur for each of the categorized attraction mechanisms.

Subjects identified five continual attraction mechanisms that persistently serve as entry points into volunteerism at SEC. Those initial doorways were listed as follows: the church newspaper, the welcome desk, volunteer connections, peer influence, and membership mentoring.

The church newspaper informs readers weekly about volunteerism ideologies and opportunities. Readers receive contact numbers for departments with available volunteer opportunities. When the number is called, the contact person obtains pertinent information, discusses possible ministry roles, and arranges for further discussions to
Welcome desk personnel are trained to assist persons requesting help in plugging into volunteerism. The welcome desk is staffed throughout the week as well as on weekends. This welcome desk volunteer briefly interviews persons who come to them, asking about interests, abilities, and past experiences. The volunteer suggests possible areas of interest that might be a good place for the person to pursue volunteerism. Contact names and numbers are given to the potential volunteer. Responsibility for following through with the process falls on the shoulders of the potential volunteer. When this person calls the ministry leader, a brief interview ensues, and the leader makes arrangements for further discussions.

SEC has a designated volunteer department. This department casts vision for volunteerism and administrates volunteerism. A visible, volunteer connections desk is located in the main atrium, near the welcome desk. This desk is staffed primarily during weekend services. Potential volunteers express interest at the desk. The process for linking to a volunteer position is similar to what was described in the previous paragraph.

Peers positively assist one another in volunteerism. A present volunteer often invites a friend to volunteer with them during their appointed time of service. The present volunteer introduces the potential volunteer to the ministry leader. A brief interview is conducted in which the leader obtains pertinent personal information about interest, abilities, and past experiences. The potential volunteer observes their peer’s service. After observing their friend’s ministry role, the potential volunteer is encouraged to discuss future service with the ministry leader.

When a person comes forward to join the church at the end of a service, a
membership mentor is assigned. The membership mentor establishes relationship and then communicates three expectations for a member: members commit to give one hour per week in worship, Bible study, and volunteer service. The mentor encourages immediate entrance into volunteerism. The potential member expresses interests, abilities, and past experiences. The mentor suggests possible areas for service and gives contact names and numbers for ministry leaders in those areas. This person is encouraged to contact the ministry leader promptly. In many cases, the mentor also forwards the name and number of the potential volunteer to the ministry leaders.

Subjects identified two frequent attraction mechanisms that occasionally serve as entry points into volunteerism at SEC. Those entry points were listed as follows: “What We Believe” class and a spiritual gifts discovery class.

The What We Believe class communicates doctrinal beliefs and membership expectations. Since one of the membership expectations is one hour of service, attendees are encouraged to find a place of service. Attendees are encouraged to pursue possible involvement through various means: They are challenged to read the newspaper’s listed opportunities and to call the designated contact person in areas of interest or to visit the welcome desk.

A spiritual gifts discovery class is frequently offered. Persons are led through a process to discern personal spiritual gifts. They are encouraged to find places of service that match their gifts, abilities, and desires. They are given contact names and numbers for ministry leaders in potential areas of interest. Class members contact the designated person and begin the process of linking themselves to that ministry.

Two annual attraction mechanisms were identified as providing entrance into the
realm of volunteerism. These entry points occur one time a year. Those two doorways into volunteerism were listed as follows: An annual sermon series pertaining to volunteerism and “A Great Day of Service.”

The culmination of the annual sermon series is a commitment Sunday, on which persons actually sign up to volunteer. A card is distributed to attendees. Potential volunteers express interest in specific volunteer ministries on this card. They give brief personal information. These cards are collected and distributed to the designated departments. Personnel within those departments process those commitment cards. Persons from within those departments then contact the potential volunteers and schedule appointments for further discussions.

Each year the church attempts to impact the local community by hosting A Great Day of Service. Various service projects are completed around the city on that day. Potential volunteers are challenged to sign up to participate via various means: through Sunday school classes, Bible studies and small groups, at the welcome desk, or through various departments within the church. Leadership personnel within each of these arenas serve as contact persons. Once the day’s projects have been completed, first-time volunteers are encouraged to find a consistent place of service. When they discern a possible ministry role, they are instructed to contact the designated person within that area. The designated person works with them to link them to a ministry role.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

Similar to subjects at the previous two churches, subjects referenced continual, frequent, and annual attraction mechanisms inspiring participation.

Five continual attraction mechanisms were identified as providing entrance into
volunteerism at WCC. Those five portals were listed as follows: the volunteerism department at the church, the weekly bulletin, guest central, peer influence, and “First Serve” opportunities.

Interviewees reported that the volunteer department at WCC is a recognized starting point for persons desiring to connect to a volunteer role. Contact names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses for volunteer department staff persons are widely published. Persons wanting to find a volunteer position simply contact the designated person. A meeting is scheduled to discuss the potential volunteer’s experiences and gifts. Possible ministry roles are suggested. Contact names and information is given to the potential volunteer. The volunteer then communicates with that person to further discuss involvement.

A second entry point into volunteerism is the weekly bulletin. Ministry opportunities are listed each week, along with contact information for persons within departments enlisting volunteers. The prospective volunteer phones or e-mails the designated person. Information is exchanged pertaining to the prospect’s involvement.

A third doorway into volunteerism is guest central, which is an information area. Persons inquiring about volunteerism would talk with a guest central volunteer who would follow similar procedures and processes described in the two preceding paragraphs.

A fourth continual attraction mechanism is peer influence. Three subjects testified they entered the realm of volunteerism through the example and urging of peers. These subjects were attracted by the enthusiasm and sense of purpose observed in friends.

A distinctive portal into volunteerism is WCC’s concept of First Serve
opportunities. These are entry-level ministry positions that require little or no training. A potential volunteer obtains a list of First Serve opportunities available in the department in which they might want to serve. That person would simply show up in that department at the appointed time for working. They would minister, without having to give personal information or without committing to serve in that area. They might possibly return to the same place another time to observe the ministry roles again. They could choose another First Serve opportunity to see if it better fit their gifting and passions. When potential volunteers decide to which roles they want to commit, they approach leadership in those departments and express their interest. The ministry leader discusses their gifting, passions, and interest. The ministry leader then assigns them to roles or assigns mentors to work with them for a short period of time. First Serve opportunities place responsibility for connecting with a ministry almost entirely on the shoulders of the prospective volunteers.

Two frequent attraction mechanisms were cited. All subjects spoke passionately about the presence and significance of this church’s spiritual gifts class. During the class persons are guided to distinguish areas of potential interest relating to their gifts and passions. Once they decide to explore involvement in a particular ministry, they are given contact information. After making contact with the appropriate person within the ministry, an interview occurs in which assignment to a ministry role is discussed.

A second frequent attraction mechanism was labeled Serving 101. This mechanism was described as recurrent orientation to ministries within specific departments. Serving 101 informs potential volunteers about expectations, roles, and philosophies of ministry. Following this class volunteers meet with a counselor or
designated person within the ministry. Involvement and placement are discussed and implemented.

Two annual attraction mechanisms serve as initial entrances into volunteerism: an annual sermon series addressing volunteerism and ministry fairs. Persons desiring connection to a volunteer role through these two means would follow similar procedures as reported for Granger Community Church’s annual sermon series and volunteer expo.

**Volunteer Connection Personnel**

The fifth interview question confirmed and identified the presence of persons whose role was to assist in connecting potential lay volunteers with specific ministries. Interview question five was, “What persons assisted in linking you with a ministry?”

Subjects from all three churches reported existence of recognized staff infrastructure to facilitate volunteer connections. The staff infrastructure includes paid and volunteer staff persons.

**Results from Granger Community Church**

In regard to initial entry points into specific volunteer roles, the five subjects naturally fell into two distinct categories. The two categories were as follows: persons who were self-directed or self-motivated and persons who were initially influenced by other persons.

Three of the subjects reported they were self-directed persons. They responded to a public appeal for a volunteer opportunity. They showed up at the appropriate time and place for their first introduction to the particular volunteer role. Specific volunteer leaders within each department assisted in linking them to that ministry.

The two persons categorized as “initially influenced by others,” served within
guest services ministries. Both were invited by friends to join with them in serving on their teams. Because the active volunteers were already serving on the teams, they introduced the potential volunteers to appropriate leaders. The leaders affirmed their participation. The friends became mentors and coaches for the new volunteers.

Testimonies from interviewees confirmed the effectiveness and presence of persons whose role was to connect persons with ministries at GCC. Persons are in place and/or are equipped to accomplish this essential component of lay deployment processes. Volunteer leaders successfully linked three subjects to volunteer ministries, demonstrating that a crucial component of lay deployment appears to be in place. Two subjects were successfully linked to volunteer roles through the influence and presence of peers. Evidently, the culture has impacted laypersons to exercise established influence in connecting peers to volunteer ministries.

Results from Southeast Christian Church

Four of the five SEC subjects reported they became volunteers in response to published volunteer needs within ministries. They had read about needs within ministries either in the church bulletin or the church newspaper. The interviewees indicated they returned cards containing personal information and interest in serving in a particular area, or they simply contacted the department directly. In both cases, persons from within the indicated departments served as links, personally connecting the potential volunteers with specific ministry opportunities. In some cases, paid staff persons served as the connecting link. In other cases, volunteer persons served as the connecting link.

The fifth subject originally volunteered within the teen department. He said he volunteered to serve in that area because his teens were involved. He progressed through
the established process of becoming a volunteer in youth ministries. He contacted the appropriate staff person. That person interviewed, oriented, and assigned him to a volunteer ministry role.

Interviewees authenticated the presence and efficacy of persons whose role is to connect persons with ministries at SEC. They testified that departmental persons are in place to accomplish this essential component of lay deployment processes. These persons may be paid staff persons or volunteer leaders.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

Interviewees at WCC reiterated the fact that ultimate responsibility for plugging into a ministry rests on the shoulders of potential volunteers. WCC personnel do not confront persons or coerce them into volunteerism. Potential volunteers must take the first steps to initiate their involvement. When they decide they are ready to participate in volunteerism they follow the lay-deployment procedures. Departmental coaches or ministry team leaders serve as the connecting links in most cases.

Interviewees validated the presence and usefulness of persons whose role is to connect persons with ministries at their church. They said that departmental persons are in place to accomplish this essential component of lay deployment processes. As was the case at SEC, these persons may be paid staff persons or volunteer leaders.

**Volunteer Connection Procedures**

The sixth interview question was designed to explore each church’s actions in regard to placing specific persons in places where they will succeed in ministry. Question six was, “What procedures were used to gather information about your interests and abilities?”
During the interviews, answers to question six were actually given previously when subjects responded to questions four and five. Questions four and five were asked as follows: “What is your church’s process for linking persons with a ministry?” and, “What persons assisted in linking you with a ministry?” In efforts to avoid redundancy in reporting, a brief summary of subjects’ previous responses is reported in this section.

Subjects from all three churches reported that potential volunteers express interest and provide basic information via widely distributed, designated cards and information sheets. After potential volunteers individually complete these cards or sheets they are dispersed to appropriate connection personnel within ministries throughout the church. Connection personnel (referenced in the previous sections) arrange personal interviews with potential volunteers. Potential volunteers’ interests, spiritual gifts, past experiences, and passions are discussed during these interviews. Connection personnel advise about appropriate volunteer opportunities for each interviewee. Connection personnel then attempt to connect persons to ministry roles in which volunteers will find fulfillment and value.

Volunteer Equipping Mechanisms

Research Question 3 guided this project to discover common equipping mechanisms that productively prepare persons for fruitful volunteer service. The seventh interview question attempted to discover equipping mechanisms present in each of the local churches. The seventh question was, “How did your church prepare you for ministry?”

Results from Granger Community Church

All subjects from GCC spoke enthusiastically about equipping mechanisms
present within their local church. They indicated they believed present equipping mechanisms adequately prepared them to do ministry roles. These subjects discussed training procedures and activities for three separate departments. The three departments in which these subjects served were as follows: first impressions ministries, children’s ministries, and guest services.

The subjects explained similar training processes existing in each of the three departments. The processes involved at least four phases or steps.

The first step in preparing volunteers for service was a departmental orientation meeting. Each department hosted an orientation meeting. At the orientation meeting, departmental leaders explained the particular ministry’s vision and mission. They demonstrated how the departmental vision and mission complements the total mission and vision of the church. Subsequently, leaders elucidated basic expectations, commitment levels, and ministry guidelines.

The second phase of training specifically outfitted volunteers for distinct roles within ministries. Team leaders or coaches within the ministries conducted this portion of training. In this phase of training, volunteers were informed about particular responsibilities and duties that would be part of serving in that arena.

Another equipping phase included on-the-job training. Volunteers were equipped as they participated in various levels of activity and service. Subjects explained two methods of on-the-job training: instruction through observation and instruction while serving.

Some persons were equipped for service by observing veteran volunteers already serving in specific ministry departments and roles. Subjects volunteering within the
children’s ministry stated that shadowing is a key component of training volunteers for service. For example, potential small group leaders in the children’s ministry observed present small group leaders for a period of two to three weeks. Then, when they felt comfortable assuming the role, they were invited to take on that responsibility by themselves. One subject reported about her personal training to be an area coordinator for the third, fourth, and fifth grade room on Sundays. This subject shadowed the present area coordinator for three weeks, observing his Sunday morning activities and his role and responsibilities at team meetings. When she thought she was adequately prepared, she stepped into the role with confidence.

A second method of on-the-job training involved receiving instruction while serving. One subject serving in first impressions ministries explained that a potential volunteer is paired with a veteran volunteer, who coaches or mentors the new volunteer as they serve together.

A fourth phase or step in equipping persons to be fruitful in serving was described as ongoing, continual training. Serving in first impressions ministries, one subject described weekly instruction that enables volunteers to be informed and prepared to minister each weekend. Volunteers serving in certain areas of first impressions ministries arrive at the church 1 1/2 hours before the service starts. For thirty to forty-five minutes, team coaches or leaders update volunteers on critical information pertaining to their duties for the approaching service. Oftentimes crucial emergency procedures are reviewed. Other times persons are simply informed about the order of service and volunteers’ duties to be performed at certain points in that service.

Subjects also mentioned two other continual training opportunities. Some
departments hosted quarterly training sessions. Some subjects mentioned that the church
encouraged and provided opportunities for volunteers to attend conferences and seminars
at other churches.

**Results from Southeast Christian Church**

All subjects from SEC spoke confidently and optimistically about equipping
mechanisms present within their church. Subjects indicated that training processes are
pervasive throughout the various ministries of this church.

Subjects also confirmed the productivity of the equipping mechanisms. They said
they believed that training received adequately prepared them for responsibilities and
demands of their roles.

One noticeable difference was observed between responses from subjects at GCC
and subjects from SEC. Subjects from GCC recognized and emphasized the distinct, four
phases of training present within their equipping process. These SEC subjects did not
emphasize various phases of preparation. Instead, they revealed three dominant
ideologies present within their equipping culture. The three ideologies were as follows:
departmental training, written directive training, and continual training.

First, all subjects declared that training is accomplished through each department.
According to participants, responsibility for training rests entirely upon departmental
needs. Each ministry department has determined the type and amount of training that will
adequately prepare volunteers for service.

Secondly, subjects indicated the presence and value of written directive training.
Interviewees reported that ministries have created training manuals or handbooks for
their ministries. Apparently, these training manuals are given to all potential volunteers. I
personally observed the manual for volunteers serving in Junior High Ministries. This notebook communicated the department’s mission and vision statements, detailed listings and descriptions of volunteer opportunities, detailed information concerning responsibilities, roles, and expectations of volunteers, and instructional articles pertaining to youth ministry. This manual and corresponding ones served as initial training pieces and as continual reference materials for consultation.

A third observed ideology confirmed by subjects was the principle and practice of continually educating and training volunteers. As was just mentioned, the written manuals aid in providing continual training. In addition, quarterly, departmental training meetings provide practical instruction as an ongoing process throughout the year.

Results from Willow Creek Community Church

All interviewees at WCC proudly commended the amount, quality, and value of training provided at this local church. Subjects enthusiastically boasted, “They train everybody…. [E]very ministry trains their volunteers;… there is a lot of training!” Representative of other subjects, subject one stated, “It’s always done with excellence!” One subject, who served as a training person in a particular ministry explained, “The first thing that people asked me was, ‘How will I know what I am supposed to do?’ I said, ‘We will show you.’ And we will. We won’t expect them to do it without learning how.”

Subjects revealed a training system, similar to the one revealed by interviewees at GCC. Interviewees described a process including the following elements: initial training, apprenticing, and continual training.

First, potential volunteers experienced initial training within specific departments or ministries. Initial departmental training was usually done within group settings.
According to interviewees, initial training is done in Serving 101 classes. Apparently each department created a Serving 101, class which “breaks you in on serving within that particular ministry.” Serving 101 is held on a Saturday and lasts for half of the day. The class is mandatory.

Secondly, potential volunteers were assigned to an apprenticeship position. Individual, potential volunteers were matched with a veteran volunteer for a period of time, possibly two to three weekends. Potential volunteers observed the mentor, learning from his or her actions and conversations.

Thirdly, new volunteers were assigned roles or positions near someone who was a veteran volunteer. Modeling and mentoring occurred through this ongoing instruction.

Along with individual training occurring on continuing basis, subjects also told about continuing group instruction. Various departments hold quarterly meetings to equip volunteers further. Some departments, such as guest relations, meet weekly for specific training and instruction for each week’s services.

Preferred Equipping Mechanisms

Interview question eight disclosed personal opinions about which equipping components were most useful. Question Eight was, “What do you feel was the most helpful learning experience in your preparation for ministry?”

Results from Granger Community Church

Subjects unanimously agreed that the most helpful equipping mechanism present at GCC pertained to on-the-job training. With little hesitation, all subjects pinpointed the practice of shadowing a veteran volunteer as the most beneficial element of their personal equipping. They stated that the methodology of shadowing placed them in one-on-one
mentoring situations. This personalized instruction allowed new volunteers to observe, see practices and principles visibly modeled, ask questions, clarify procedures, dispel confusion, feel comfortable, operate within a team structure, and experience caring connection. According to subjects, the practice of shadowing quickly moves potential volunteers into serving roles. Understanding a particular role and its place in the departmental scheme enables volunteers to assume confidently a volunteer ministry position fairly rapidly.

**Results from Southeast Christian Church**

Subjects from this church expressed diverse opinions as to which equipping mechanisms were most helpful. Subject one said the most helpful learning experience has been frequent, periodic, ongoing training. He appreciated the continual learning taking place throughout any given year. This continuing education allows volunteers to be reminded of their mission and to learn new skills.

Subject two stated her most helpful learning experience occurred as she was being trained to serve at the compassionate ministries center. Leaders taught new volunteers how and when to witness to persons who would come to the ministries center. This subject appreciated being trained effectively to impact the spiritual lives of clients who would come.

The other interviewees reported that they believed their most helpful equipping experience correlated with the fact that training is provided departmentally. According to them, departmental training allows persons to be trained specifically for their particular duties, enhancing their skills and inspiring motivation.
Results from Willow Creek Community Church

Subjects from this church also expressed diverse opinions as to which equipping mechanisms were most helpful. Two subjects stated they believed the practice of equipping through apprentice relationships was most helpful to them. They appreciated being connected to a mentor who modeled and taught duties and skills. These mentors guided, encouraged, and informed new volunteers throughout beginning stages of their volunteer ministries. The mentors not only taught information and procedures, they also established a climate of encouragement and confidence.

Three subjects voiced appreciation for the comprehensive nature of training provided to them. They were told everything they needed to know about volunteering in their particular ministry areas. They were specifically equipped to handle actual and potential situations, instilling confidence and providing fulfillment in ministry.

Retention Mechanisms

Answers to Research Question 4 provided data describing efforts that support and assist in sustaining persons in ministry over periods of time. Interview question nine was, “How does your church continue to support you in your ministry?”

Results from Granger Community Church

Subjects from this church categorized two support classifications in their culture. First, interviewees distinguished enhancement mechanisms that assist volunteers in ministries. Secondly, subjects explained encouragement mechanisms that affirm and confirm volunteers in ministries.

Enhancement mechanisms were activities, attitudes, and behaviors that improved personal skills and augmented personal participation and expression. Enhancement
mechanisms consisted of continual training processes, cultural values, and recurrent assessment.

Subjects who volunteered in the children’s ministry department spoke gratefully about continual training processes. They reported that various training opportunities stimulated development of skills that allow them to do effective ministry. Subjects told about the following existing, supportive, training opportunities at GCC: monthly leadership team meetings that include training videos, verbal instruction, and pertinent written and verbal information about their department; and, attendance at other church’s training conferences.

Some subjects indicated that cultural values serve to support them and persuade them to commit to long-term ministry. Cultural values at GCC include the concepts of capability and resourcefulness. At GCC, volunteers knew they were perceived as being capable to do ministry and were encouraged to be resourceful in personal expressions of ministry.

Another supportive, cultural concept identified by subjects was the practice of “doing church as team.” Subject three spoke enthusiastically and gratefully about the fact that the church operates with a team infrastructure and philosophy. She voiced appreciation for the fact that no one feels alone, that persons on teams help each other and, that everyone knows they can depend on each other.

Subjects from this church discussed one further enhancement mechanism that served to support their efforts in volunteerism. Along with continual training processes and indigenous cultural values, a third enhancement mechanism identified by interviewees was periodic assessment. Interviewees valued periodic assessment of
procedures and personnel.

Two subjects mentioned that weekly and/or monthly assessment of procedures was an element that supported and enhanced their volunteer ministries. At weekly or monthly meetings, current procedures were evaluated, changed, or abandoned. Periodic assessment of procedures supported subjects by attempting to promote current, relevant ministry that intends to be purposeful and effective.

Interviewees also valued the practice of periodically assessing personnel. Periodic assessment allowed volunteers to consider continued involvement in specific ministries.

Some subjects mentioned that personnel assessment took place within their department at the monthly leadership meetings. This personnel assessment consisted of asking volunteers about their roles. If persons believed that they were not capable of fulfilling the roles or were not feeling their gifts were being utilized, new assignments were made.

Some subjects stated that personnel assessment takes place annually. Volunteers are allowed to assess future involvement or choose to exit from their present role. Subject three reported that she has received a letter every year that asks if she would like to continue volunteering in her current assignment for the subsequent year. This subject indicated that persons are appreciative for specific terms of service that allow them to commit to another term of service or to exit a ministry in order to find a more fulfilling one.

Along with the enhancement mechanisms, interviewees also explained encouragement mechanisms that affirmed and confirmed them as volunteers in ministries. Encouragement mechanisms were activities, events, and behaviors that
communicated gratitude and recognition for service. These activities, events, and behaviors stimulate volunteers to continue volunteerism. All five subjects confirmed that this local church intentionally and consistently expresses thankfulness to volunteers for their service through a variety of experiences.

Most departments within the church hold annual celebrations, highlighting and recapping what has been accomplished through volunteers in the previous year. Some departments host a nice dinner, some departments have an annual summer picnic, and some departments provide a Christmas gathering.

Subjects also mentioned that volunteers are recognized and affirmed by leadership at weekend services. Frequently one of the pastors will highlight a particular department or group and thank them for their service. Three to four times a year, media is created which demonstrates activities of volunteers. Leadership expresses thankfulness at those times for the volunteers highlighted in the videos and for all others who serve faithfully. Also, recognition and affirmation occurs during the annual teaching series on volunteerism. Media is created that displays activities of volunteers throughout the year. This public recognition affirms the value of volunteers and inspires them to commit to further service.

Subjects also mentioned that continual affirmation and recognition occur departmentally. One subject, who serves in a leadership role, reported that she is trained to express gratitude to volunteers in her department on a continual basis. According to her testimony (and other interviewees), specific departments consistently acknowledge volunteers’ activities and attitudes at weekly and monthly leadership team meetings. As a result of this practice, subjects voiced that they feel valued, affirmed, and supported in
their roles as coworkers in the cause of the church.

Results from Southeast Christian Church

When asked about support mechanisms that aid in retaining volunteers at SEC, subjects spoke specifically and ardently about encouragement mechanisms.

All five subjects confirmed that this local church intentionally and resourcefully expresses thankfulness to volunteers for their service through a variety of experiences. Subjects declared that gratitude is expressed through periodic dinners or events, through verbal encouragement from leadership, through various means of correspondence and communication, and through occasional gifts or treats.

All five subjects spoke reflectively and intently about volunteer appreciation dinners or events they had attended. Appreciation dinners or events are planned and hosted by individual ministries. Some ministries host a special Christmas dinner. Other ministries host dinners at other times during the year. Some ministries plan and provide picnics for their volunteers.

An observed distinction about these appreciation dinners was the creativity corresponding to these appreciation dinners. Subject two said, “They go to every extreme to show gratefulness for volunteers. Subject one illustrated the truth of that statement. He described a recent appreciation dinner for all volunteers serving in the junior high youth ministry. Volunteers arrived at the youth building. The youth volunteers were divided according to their grade level responsibilities (i.e., sixth grade, seventh grade, and eighth grade). At an appropriate time, each group was escorted from the building to a limousine. First, sixth grade volunteers entered the stretch limousine (later, seventh and eight grade
volunteers experienced the same activities). They were driven several blocks away from
the church, without being told where they would eat dinner. The car then returned to the
church and the volunteers were ushered to one of the nice private banquet areas located at
the church. This subject expressed thankfulness for this special way of expressing
gratitude to volunteers.

Subjects also voiced that recognition and gratitude has often been communicated
through verbal encouragement from leadership. Verbal encouragement has come from
paid staff and volunteer leaders who coach, supervise, or mentor other volunteers.

Interviewees said that pastors have publicly spoken words of encouragement,
gratitude, and inspiration from the pulpit, annually, during the volunteer emphasis and
periodically throughout the year. Specifically, pastors have voiced words of appreciation
after volunteers served at large events, such as the Easter pageant and the community day
of service. Those celebratory remarks impacted the interviewees and served to inspire
volunteer retention.

Subjects also said that volunteer leaders have repeatedly expressed gratitude to
volunteers. Subjects who have attended monthly, departmental team meetings have
received public accolades. Some subjects indicated that meaningful expressions of
gratitude were also received in private scenarios.

Subjects also voiced that recognition and gratitude has been communicated
through various means of correspondence and communication. Subject two reported she
had occasionally received notes or cards from various persons, thanking her for her time
and service. Subject five reported that he has received thank you notes each year after
volunteering in the Easter pageant. Interestingly, he said that persons from Sunday school
classes or adult Bible fellowship groups wrote those notes. They had taken on that role as a part of their volunteerism.

In addition to correspondence through cards, notes, or letters, subjects said they also occasionally received phone calls. Quick words of appreciation through that means of communication conveyed that the volunteers were valued and needed.

Subjects also told that recognition and gratitude were expressed through occasional gifts or treats. One subject reported that cookies or treats have been given to volunteers on Valentine’s Day or other holidays as an expression of gratitude. One subject reported that special gifts were given to volunteers in the nursery department each Mother’s Day.

All of these encouragement mechanisms appeared to be instrumental means of retaining volunteers. Interviewees spoke gratefully and reflectively about feeling valued and needed.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

When asked about support mechanisms that inspire volunteers to continue serving, subjects from WCC alluded to enhancement mechanisms that aided volunteers in continued participation in ministries. They voiced thankfulness for continual training that assists them in personal skills development.

Similar to subjects from SEC, these subjects emphasized the existence and impact of encouragement mechanisms that make them feel valued and needed. Six encouragement mechanisms were discussed: planned events, surprise luncheons, written correspondence, public acknowledgement, sense of community and personal acknowledgement.
All five subjects spoke about planned events that impacted their continued involvement in volunteer ministries at WCC. Two specific planned events were explained: a church-wide, annual volunteer celebration event and a Christmas dinner.

All five subjects excitedly explained this church’s annual volunteer celebration event. Held on a Wednesday night, volunteers arrived and discovered that the aura or atmosphere for the evening was that of an award ceremony. They walked on a red carpet leading into the building and were greeted and applauded by staff persons strategically positioned along the red carpet. They were treated as if they were celebrities. Photographers took pictures of them as they walked along the carpet. Volunteers were directed toward the areas where they ate a wonderful dinner (with “all the goodies and foods one could imagine”). Bands played in the various venues during dinner. Following dinner, volunteers went to the sanctuary, where they sat together as ministry groups. Professional entertainment was provided. Volunteers were applauded, thanked, and honored.

All five subjects also reflected upon annual Christmas dinners designed to express gratitude to volunteers. The Christmas dinners were hosted departmentally.

Subjects expressed amazement and thankfulness for sporadic surprise luncheons that are provided for volunteers. Subject three stated, “[T]hey are always thanking me. They took me out to lunch the other day here in the bookstore. I didn’t know it was even coming.” Subject two mentioned that the accounting department recently and unexpectedly treated volunteers to a free lunch. Subject one stated that a month earlier, the Willow Creek Association said to his team, “We want to really do something special for all the things you have been doing for us.” This subject said, “They provided a big
luncheon, served on cloth tablecloths, no paper cups, no paper napkins. It was a dinner party luncheon just for us!”

Subject three also reported that written correspondence is a means through which they are inspired to continue serving as volunteers:

If I serve in a conference,… the next week I will get a personal card from somebody in the full-time staff, thanking me for serving. They are trained to do that for their volunteers to make them feel valued. They do the same thing in the children’s ministry. They send out thank you notes at various times thanking you for what you are doing.

Volunteers are affirmed through simple gestures such as written communication.

Subjects also confirmed that public acknowledgement served to stimulate them to continue serving. Public acknowledgement was delivered by pastoral staff and by volunteer leaders. This affirmation and recognition occurred both in large settings and smaller, departmental settings.

According to subjects, pastors frequently express public gratitude for volunteerism at midweek services, weekend services, and various conferences held throughout the year. Subject five said, “There is always that positive reinforcement, that ‘you are doing a good job,’ and, ‘we couldn’t do it without you.’”

Affirmation, recognition, and nurture occurred during monthly or weekly departmental, volunteer meetings. Subject four said that appreciation is frequently expressed in his preservice meetings. He said, “In the pre-service meeting, we have several opportunities to acknowledge outstanding service.”

One distinctive element of WCC’s support system correlated to a “sense of community.” Three subjects indicated that they continue to serve because of the benefits of serving together as a united, loving group of people who really care about each other.
Finally, subjects indicated that personal acknowledgement has stimulated persons to continue serving at this church. They stated that volunteer leadership and paid staff have frequently and individually voiced personal acknowledgement of volunteers’ assistance.

They also reported that occasional personal gifts have been given to volunteers as expressions of gratitude for their service.

**Perceived Key Elements In Volunteer Cultures and Systems**

The tenth question allowed persons to explain other personal reasons for their enduring service to their church. The question allowed interviewees to discuss what they believed were important components that appeal to volunteers and inspire involvement and long-term commitment. Interview question ten was, “What do you think are the key elements necessary to create and sustain a volunteer environment in a local church?”

**Results from Granger Community Church**

GCC’s subjects responded by identifying matters pertaining to various elements of volunteer systems and cultures. Categorically referenced, the interviewees discussed the following key elements: biblical and theological foundations, organizational components and processes, attraction mechanisms, and retention mechanisms.

Three subjects believed that biblical and theological foundations of volunteerism are key elements in volunteer cultures. Subject three indicated that vision needs to be cast and that people fully understand the biblical reasons for volunteerism. Subjects one and five specifically mentioned that potential volunteers need to understand the concept of spiritual gifts, discover their personal gifts, and volunteer according to personal giftedness. Subject one believed persons must understand that volunteers do not serve
because someone is needed; rather, they serve because God has given spiritual gifts that are to be utilized in valid ministries. Subject five affirmed this truth and confirmed that a key element is to help people understand that serving is part of being a Christ follower.

Three subjects identified volunteer systems’ organizational components as being key elements. Subject one spoke passionately about the need for good organization throughout the system. Subject four preached the importance of placing solid, competent volunteer leadership in key positions. Subject two affirmed the value of strong lay leaders who inspire potential volunteers through their commitment and excellence.

Moving from observations about volunteer leadership roles to the realm of general volunteers, subject five talked about specifically placing persons in individual roles that are appropriate and effective. She believed a key component pertains to placing persons in roles where they experience passion.

One subject believed that two specific attraction mechanisms are crucial elements in a volunteer culture and system. First, he proclaimed the significance and necessity of clearly defined and obviously simple entrances into the realm of volunteerism. He said, “There needs to be an easy, safe access point where people can get plugged in and serve.”

Secondly, he declared that a consistent, visible volunteer connection place is a key component in a volunteer system and culture. This connection place would be present and available at each service.

Two subjects believed the retention mechanism of “expressed appreciation” is a key component in a volunteer culture and system. Subjects one and three expounded upon the need to communicate awareness and appreciation frequently and significantly for volunteer’s efforts. According to them, a key element is persistent and authentic
communication expressing gratitude and worth. According to these subjects, volunteers need to hear and know that they are valued and their ministries are impacting people’s lives.

**Results from Southeast Christian Church**

Subjects gave responses that were categorized under four previously designated classifications. They discussed matters pertaining to biblical and theological foundations for volunteerism, attraction components, equipping mechanisms, and, retention mechanisms.

Three subjects reported they believed biblical and theological foundations are important elements. Specifically, they declared the rationale for volunteerism is to accomplish God’s intentions and purposes.

Three attraction mechanisms were designated as crucial components of a church’s volunteer environment. First, subject four believed that passionate vision casting by the senior pastor is a key component:

> I think it [vision casting] needs to come from the top down,… that says we need you to help us do our job in ministering to people, edifying you, going out and saving the lost, and being a conscience in the community…. If your senior pastor is not passionate about it, [no one else will join them].

Congregants must experience leadership’s modeling and communication of vision for volunteerism.

A second attraction mechanism labeled as a key component was the concept of flexibility in volunteerism. Subject five spoke about flexibility in terms of ministry expectations and time requirements. He discussed the importance of allowing flexibility so that volunteers can choose roles based upon their lifestyles, work schedules, and
A third attraction mechanism identified as a crucial component was that of communication about the vast variety of options for volunteer roles. One subject emphasized the importance of providing options so that as many people as possible can serve in areas where they can make an impact.

Two subjects chose to speak about one connection mechanism as a key element in a volunteer culture and system. These subjects voiced the importance of connecting persons in appropriate roles, based upon personal preference and abilities. According to them, volunteers are to be placed “where they fit,” in roles where they can use personal God-given abilities and passions.

One subject said equipping mechanisms are vital to a church’s volunteer environment. He believed the number one priority in a volunteer environment is training of volunteers.

One subject stated that the retention mechanism of “support” is a dominant factor in a volunteer culture and system. He said, “I think that a key ingredient to getting volunteers and keeping volunteers is to show them some attention. Don’t just get them and throw them out there to work and forget them;… support your volunteers. Let them know they are appreciated.”

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

Interviewees confirmed some key elements discussed by respondents from the previous two churches. They also discussed additional components they believed were important. Subjects from WCC discussed organizational systems and process issues, attraction mechanisms, connection mechanisms, and retention mechanisms.
Subjects stated perceptions about three organizational issues. One issue pertained to established descriptions and explanations of volunteer roles. One subject talked intently about the need to identify all possible volunteer roles. According to him, explanations should be given about precise expectations, commitment levels, and number of volunteers needed for each particular role. This information should be presented in a way that is readable and interesting.

A second organizational procedure issue correlated with the first one. One subject stated the urgency of asking for precise numbers of volunteers for specific roles, based upon actual need. When too many persons come to volunteer and are not used, they may not return for future service.

Communication was a third organizational process issue. One subject illuminated the importance of clear communication as he described the complexities and size of the volunteer force at his local church. This church has about 250 paid staff persons. In contrast, the church deploys about nine thousand volunteers. He expounded upon the critical necessity of communicating often and precisely in this large church setting.

Two subjects believed a key element in a church volunteer environment is the attraction mechanism of conveying personal volunteerism benefits. These subjects expressed personal satisfaction received and experienced as a result of their volunteerism. Both subjects indicated the importance of informing people about the sense of fulfillment and joy that comes as volunteers do ministry. According to these interviewees, sensing and seeing present volunteers serving with happiness and contentment functions to inspire potential volunteers to join volunteerism.

Three subjects endorsed a connection philosophy as a key element in a church
volunteer system and culture. They parroted their understanding that volunteers need to be connected in ministries based upon spiritual giftedness and personal passions for particular volunteer tasks.

Two subjects discussed the retention mechanism of “expressed appreciation” as a key element in a church’s volunteer environment. They emphasized their belief that expressed appreciation is crucial.

**Volunteers’ Perceptions Coincided with Leadership’s Published Materials**

Part of this project included comparison between leadership’s written materials about volunteerism and volunteers’ perception of existing volunteer ministry principles and practices. I wanted to observe whether or not these two entities coincided. I wanted to observe whether the published materials were mere theory or whether those teachings were reflected through laity’s responses about their volunteerism environment.

**Results from Granger Community Church**

Although GCC’s senior pastor has not published materials specifically on volunteerism, two of his paid staff members collaborated on a book titled, *Simply Strategic Volunteers: Empowering People for Ministry*. Tony Morgan is the Pastor of Administrative Services at GCC. Tim Stevens is the Executive Pastor. Comparison of their writings to responses of GCC’s subjects revealed infusion of included teachings into the minds and hearts of volunteers and into the lay-deploying culture.

The authors proclaim necessity of identifying a process to help people discover their spiritual gifts, abilities, and passions. The goal of this process is to help persons discover how they are wired so that they can serve efficiently in areas where gifts, abilities, and passions will make the most impact (Morgan and Stevens 59-60). All five of
GCC’s subjects identified the core classes as that established process.

The writers say that ministry fairs are effective means of attracting persons into volunteerism (Morgan and Stevens 63). All five of GCC’s subjects said that ministry fairs (volunteer expos) were existing mechanisms that informed persons about volunteer opportunities and encouraged involvement.

Morgan and Stevens declare that shoulder tapping is one of the most successful means of recruiting volunteers (47). Three GCC subjects made explicit references to this ideology, using the exact terminology appearing in the book.

The authors propose a designated length of commitment for volunteer roles. They suggested a term of six months or one year (Morgan and Stevens 174). This term of service allows volunteers to experiment in roles, to see if they want to commit to long-term service, or it allows them to exit in order to “find a better fit.” They believed potential volunteers more likely will commit to serving if they know there is an “opt out” date. The subjects spoke appreciatively about this established practice in their church. They believed this practice is one of the predominant attraction mechanisms that inspired participation.

The writers state that volunteer training is a crucial element in a lay-deploying environment. The subject of volunteer training is discussed at least nine times in their book (Morgan and Stevens 33, 54, 133, 159, 164, 167, 176, 199, 219). Paralleling their emphasis upon training, GCC’s subjects spoke enthusiastically about existing equipping mechanisms. According to them, efficient training processes and procedures are in place. They identified four training phases that adequately prepare volunteers for service.

Morgan and Stevens advocate retention mechanisms that genuinely and
satisfactorily support volunteers. These men write extensively about processes and methods of encouraging volunteers, addressing correlating components (26, 32, 62, 111, 168, 172, 181, 204). Subjects’ responses revealed that correlating retention mechanisms have been established and effectively inspire volunteers to commit to serving.

**Results from Southeast Christian Church.**

The senior pastor of SEC, Russell, wrote the book, *When God Builds a Church*. In this book he shares ten principles upon which SEC was built. Principle seven is labeled, “Participation: Expect the Congregation to Participate in Every Ministry.” This particular section of the book addresses some of his predominant views about volunteerism. Specific content from this book was definitely internalized and verbalized in volunteers’ responses. Several of volunteers’ perceptions of existing ideologies, principles, and practices coincided with major teachings within Russell’s writings.

Russell addresses several aspects pertaining to biblical and theological foundations for volunteer ministry. Russell’s writings and subjects’ responses about biblical and theological foundations correlated.

First, when discussing Old and New Testament teachings about the priesthood of believers, Russell states that every person is a minister who is mandated to serve Christ’s purposes. As stated, SEC’s subjects reported that a fundamental reason for volunteering is that serving is an essential part of being a Christ follower.

Secondly, Russell writes an entire section proclaiming that serving enhances volunteers’ spiritual growth. He explains that this church has “made every effort to involve volunteers in every facet of the work of the church so that people can continue to grow and stretch” (178). This ideology was reflected in responses of all five subjects
when they unanimously reported church-wide understanding of membership
expectations:

At Southeast Christian Church, we believe that if you are going to grow as a Christian you should make three commitments that are to be fulfilled each week: you are being called to commit to one hour in worship; one hour in Sunday School or some type of Bible study; and, one hour in volunteer service.

This teaching appeared to be solidly infused in this culture.

Thirdly, Russell asserts that a spiritual gifts class is an important part of a formula for a lay-deploying environment (179). All five subjects mentioned the existence and value of a spiritual gifts class that teaches about the presence, necessity, and privilege of spiritual gifting.

Along with teachings pertaining to biblical and theological foundations, Russell references one specific attraction mechanism. He states that a crucial element in involving as many members as possible is an annual volunteer commitment event (181). He prescribes a process in which a series of sermons ought to be taught preceding the commitment event. He states that all service opportunities should be listed and described. On the commitment day, a prayer should be said, after which everyone is encouraged to fill out a card for a one-year service commitment. All five subjects described past annual commitment events and corresponding components, using terminology similar to Russell’s teachings.

Russell references an equipping mechanism as a crucial element within a lay-mobilizing environment. He states that training is mandatory for fruitful and meaningful service (189). SEC’s subjects affirmed the presence of equipping mechanisms that prepared them for ministry tasks.
Russell’s book also cites a support mechanism as a crucial element within a lay mobilizing environment. He says that genuine encouragement is a means through which volunteers are motivated to continue serving. He lists several principles about genuine encouragement, including the necessity of using creativity in one’s expressions (188). SEC’s subjects spoke passionately about the abundant and creative expressions of received encouragement and rewards.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

The senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, Hybels, wrote the book *The Volunteer Revolution: Unleashing the Power of Everybody*. The book proposes a church environment in which pastors and leaders equip and release volunteers to assist in ministries so their cooperative efforts will impact their communities with the love of Christ. Statements summarizing the author’s vision for volunteerism are included:

> When those who are called to equip really do equip, and when volunteers show up to be equipped, trained, empowered, and entrusted with ministry, everybody wins:… the equippers, those being equipped, the church, and the community. And God gets the glory because it was his incredible idea. (65)

Hybel’s passion for releasing laypersons in volunteerism was evident throughout his book.

As was the case in the previous two scenarios, ideologies and practices published in the Hybels’ book were reflected, reported, and sometimes rephrased by subjects from the church (*Volunteer Revolution*). Subjects’ responses indicated awareness, understanding, and infusion of many of those concepts into their hearts and minds and into the WCC culture. While their responses did not allude to all of his teachings, the subjects spoke about major teachings appearing in his published writings. Content of
their discussions and delivery of opinions demonstrated agreement with his writings. Their responses displayed utmost respect for their leader and his ideologies.

The first chapter of Hybels’ book promptly explains that the church and individuals exist in order to join God on his mission to transform the world (Volunteer Revolution 11-19). Starting from this biblical truth, the author said notes the crucial task of teaching this concept in order to move laypersons from being spectators to being participants in God’s mission.

As reported, WCC’s subjects recognized the missional nature of their church, knowing it exists to do the mission and ministry of God. Subjects passionately affirmed they volunteered in order to join this church’s efforts in carrying out the mission. One conclusion drawn from their responses is that they have heard and believed the senior pastor’s teaching and subsequently were motivated to volunteer.

According to Hybels, another major component of a volunteer culture is the biblical concept and corresponding theological implications of the priesthood of believers. One entire chapter entitled, “What, Me a Priest?”(Volunteer Revolution 59-66) addresses biblical teachings and historical developments pertaining to this key concept. Citing Scriptures pertaining to the concept, he establishes the truth, “If you’re a Christ follower, you’re a priest” (63). Hybels observed that the early Church functioned from this scriptural understanding; however, somewhere along the line, the Church adopted the Old Testament model of functioning in which persons were hired to do ministry. This book calls leaders to regain the original, scriptural understanding and correlating practices in which all persons, clergy and lay, are priests or ministers.

As was previously reported, WCC’s subjects declared that their volunteer
environment was based upon correlating biblical teachings and theological implications of “the priesthood of believers.” These laypersons testified that laypersons are frequently taught and reminded that they are qualified, called, equipped, and commissioned to do ministry. Subjects affirmed infusion of the scriptural and theological mandate into their environment. They reported if one is a Christ follower, he or she is to serve at WCC.

Along with biblical and theological foundations for volunteerism, a second emphasis in Hybels’ book pertained to the ideology of pervasive experimentation. Chapter six (Volunteer Revolution 67-77) discusses deployment of volunteers according to spiritual gifts. The author states, “The key is to look at discovering, developing, and deploying your spiritual gift as a process” (71). His writings encouraged environments in which volunteers are challenged to experiment in various ministry roles in order to find their ministry niche. The concept of First Serves was introduced as a nonthreatening and guilt-free means through which pervasive experimentation should be experienced.

Previous portions of this chapter reported that WCC’S subjects understood these concepts and applauded them gratefully. Their responses were sometimes communicated word-for-word, corresponding to content from Hybels’ book. They appreciated the freedom and anonymity that accompanied this process.

Linked to the ideology of connecting to ministry roles based upon personal spiritual gifts was the additional concept of connecting persons according to their passions. Chapter seven of Hybels’ book expounds upon this foundational tenet. He states, “Connecting our spiritual gift with an area of passion is the key to ultimate effectiveness and fulfillment in serving” (Volunteer Revolution 81-82). His writings challenged readers to identify their skills and subsequently identify their passions.
corresponding to those skills. Once passions are identified, volunteers should then serve in areas in which spiritual gifts, skills, and passions can make the most impact.

WCC’s subjects confirmed cultural existence of Hybels’ teachings about connecting volunteers to ministry roles according to gifts and passions. They talked about this connection mechanism as “putting the right people in the right places.” All five subjects said persons are to discover personal spiritual gifts and skills and then serve in areas about which they are passionate. They affirmed effectiveness of this methodology when they reported they were enticed to serve because they are allowed and encouraged to serve in places that bring joy and fulfillment.

**Observations from Interview Videotapes**

Interviews with all subjects were recorded with a video camera. Videotapes were studied in order to observe verbal intonations and body language pertaining to responses. I was particularly interested in responses exhibiting joy, enthusiasm, appreciation, or passion for lay ministry. I listened to responses and noted where subjects were more expressive in verbalizing information. I watched for indications of excitement and gratitude expressed through various body movements and gestures: persons leaning forward, increased hand and arm gestures, and facial expressions. Similar conclusions were drawn from observations of subjects from all three churches. In order to avoid redundancy in reporting results, common conclusions are reported in this section, rather than giving results from individual churches.

Verbal intonation and body language indicated joy, enthusiasm, appreciation, and passion correlating to three common elements within the lay ministry environments. Subjects became animated and energized about the following three elements within their
volunteer environments: personal satisfaction resulting from serving, specific support mechanisms that conveyed appreciation and value, and user-friendly components with volunteer environments.

Subjects passionately talked about personal satisfaction they have experienced through serving. Subjects became animated and vibrant when they described present roles in which they were serving. They were eager to explain their titles, their roles, and the ways in which their ministries are supporting God’s causes and are impacting people’s lives. Most subjects exhibited a sense of awe relating to the fact that they get to do what they are doing for a cause that is greater than themselves. Emotions and gestures displayed amazement at the awareness of personal fulfillment resulting from serving God and others.

Subjects expressed gratitude for the personal satisfaction coming from the ability to serve in arenas in which they have spiritual gifts and corresponding passions. Interviewees repeatedly voiced thankfulness for an environment that encourages persons to discover personal gifts and passions and are encouraged and challenged to serve within those parameters. Rather than being “guilted” into service because “there is a need,” subjects were enticed to serve because of unique, God-given gifts and hearts that function best in matching roles. Subjects testified that contentment was present in their beings because they knew they were serving in line with God’s specific purposes for their lives. They were excited about gratification that comes from serving in roles in which their God-given gifting had allowed them to be efficient and impacting. They were enthralled that they were making a difference in their worlds.

Along with the concept of personal satisfaction, subjects’ responses indicated joy,
enthusiasm, and appreciation for specific support mechanisms within their environments. Specifically, intonation and gestures indicated pleasure about expressions of appreciation and encouragement received from their churches and departments. They described several activities and events through which they received affirmation and encouragement. They voiced genuine thankfulness for the creative means through which these expressions of support were displayed. They spoke gratefully about unexpected gifts, lunches, dinners, and other surprises received for serving. Subjects also spoke in reverent tones about verbal recognitions given to volunteers that raised the value of volunteerism in public settings.

Subjects spoke with passion and delight when they described user-friendly components within volunteer environments. For example, they appreciated the easy access points into volunteerism. Energy appeared to increase when they talked about the amount of flexibility present within their volunteer environments. Happiness was apparent when they revealed they were encouraged to find volunteer roles that would fit within their personal schedules and lifestyles. They enjoyed the fact that serving could be performed at times and during life seasons that would most benefit the volunteers.

Finally, positive emotion and body language displayed delight over the user-friendly component involving “pervasive experimentation.” As subjects explained how their churches encouraged them to try several ministry roles before committing to one, they became animated and lively. They appeared grateful for the fact that their churches were more concerned about personal “fit” than about filling positions.

**Summary of Major Findings**

Common, crucial elements in effective processes of deploying and sustaining
laypersons in volunteer ministries within three large churches are summarized in the following list. For a detailed discussion of major findings see Appendix E.

Cultural Components within Three Large Churches

Biblical and Theological Foundations Provide Purpose

• Volunteer cultures exist to carry out God’s work in the world.
• Laypersons are qualified, capable, and commissioned agents for God’s work.
• Laypersons do the work of God utilizing personal spiritual gifts.

Attraction Mechanisms Inspire Persons to Volunteer

• Vision casting occurs through sermons, publications, membership expectations.
• Volunteers express service in areas of giftedness and passions.
• Volunteers influence peers to become participants.
• Volunteers experience persistent exposure to volunteer opportunities.
• Volunteerism is user-friendly, encouraging pervasive experimentation.
• Volunteerism allows guiltless exit when laypersons decide to terminate a role.

Subjective Reasons for Personal Involvement Illustrated Motivations

• Community is experienced through serving.
• Fulfillment is experienced through serving.
• Intimate connection with God is experienced through serving.
• Gratitude toward God is expressed through serving.

Objective Reasons for Personal Involvement Illustrated Motivations

• Volunteers serve because God has equipped them with spiritual gifts for service.
• Volunteers serve because the Bible teaches Christ followers to serve.
• Volunteers serve because the church exists to serve.
Organizational Components within Three Large Churches

Lay-Deploying Processes Were Clearly Defined and Understood

• Potential volunteers personally decide to enter the process and system.
• Potential volunteers provide personal information via card, e-mail, or telephone.
• Designated volunteer personnel contacts potential volunteers, helping them discern perceived areas of interest.
• Potential volunteers are given contact information for designated leaders within prospective ministries.
• Potential volunteers are interviewed and assigned ministry roles.

Volunteer Connection Personnel Linked Persons with Ministries

• Connection persons were paid staff or volunteer leaders or coaches.
• Connection persons identified and verified appropriate roles for volunteers.
• Connection persons sometimes oriented volunteers to their roles.
• Connection persons sometimes assigned a mentor or coach to assist the volunteers in acclimating to their new roles.

Volunteer Connection Procedures Moved Persons into Serving Roles

• Connection procedures consisted of established paths clearly comprehended and followed by potential volunteers.
• A key element of connection procedures was a connection person who guided potential volunteers to ministries within giftedness and passion.
• Subjects praised current procedures, indicating the adequacy of the process.
Equipping Mechanisms within Three Large Churches

Established Equipping Mechanisms Prepared Persons for Service

• Ministry departments provided initial training that introduced philosophies of ministries and basic expectations.

• Ministry departments provided specific training that prepared persons for specific roles.

• Ministry departments provided continual, on-going training that equipped volunteers comprehensively and consistently.

Preferred Equipping Mechanisms Indicated Effective Methods

• Subjects identified on-the-job training as one preferred method of training; shadowing and apprenticing were most helpful in their experiences.

• Subjects believed that detailed, specific instruction added their preparation.

Retention Mechanisms within Three Large Churches

Encouragement Mechanisms Inspired Consistent Commitment

• Encouragement mechanisms demonstrated volunteer affirmation, appreciation and celebration: departmental parties; church-wide celebrations; verbal affirmation publicly and privately by pastoral leadership and by volunteer leadership; written correspondence; surprise events; lunches; treats; or, gifts.

Enhancement Mechanisms Provided Support

• Enhancement mechanisms stimulated growth and development of personal skills and abilities through training and instruction.
Perceived Key Elements in Lay-Deploying Cultures and Systems

Organizational Components

- Volunteers should be placed in ministries based upon spiritual gifts and passions.
- Volunteer cultures should be established upon solid biblical and theological foundations: God’s purposes are accomplished through the Church; Christ followers express devotion through service.

Attraction Mechanisms

- Simple entrances into volunteerism entice persons to volunteer.
- A visible connection place and available connection personnel are key components in attracting potential volunteers.
- Vision casting by the senior pastor inspires involvement.
- Flexibility in participation allows persons to volunteer when personal schedules permit involvement.
- Multiple options for volunteer roles allow various gifts to be utilized.
- Continual communication of benefits received through volunteering motivates persons to desire personal participation.

Retention Mechanisms

- Expressed appreciation affirms persons, declares their worth, and inspires commitment.

Equipping Mechanisms

- Training prepares volunteers to function in efficient and fulfilling ways.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Four research questions guided this study. Resulting data obtained from fifteen subjects identified common cultural components, organizational components, equipping mechanisms, and retention mechanisms present within their realm of volunteerism. Cultural components included biblical and theological foundations for volunteer cultures as well as other attraction mechanisms that inspired and motivated volunteers to participate in those cultures. Organizational components incorporated processes and systems that linked individual persons to specific ministry roles. Equipping mechanisms adequately prepared persons for efficient, productive service. Retention mechanisms supported volunteers in their roles and encouraged them to continue serving. This chapter summarized my findings and stated conclusions drawn from the research.

Two summarizing statements are made about lay-deploying processes and systems at the three churches. First of all, volunteer connections occur intentionally and productively. Once persons express interest in volunteerism they proceed through end-to-end sets of activities that direct, equip, and sustain them in their roles. Volunteer connection is no accident or random occurrence at these churches. They have established accessible means through which potential volunteers are linked to fulfilling ministry roles.

Secondly, processes of linking persons to ministries occur continually at these churches. What was just described evidently occurs on an ongoing, weekly basis. This process is not just an annual, semi-annual, or quarterly occurrence but is a natural common happening. Lay-deploying cultures have been well established and continue to
entice and position persons in volunteer ministry roles.

**Implications of Findings**

Results of this research provided information that can aid large churches and leaders of large churches whose ministries have been constrained because of lack of personnel. Common, crucial elements of effective lay-deploying cultures and systems have been identified. As churches and leaders understand and implement these findings, similar environments can be created through which masses of persons can be deployed to assist in carrying out God’s work in the world.

A predominant finding from this project confirmed the complex and comprehensive nature of lay-deploying cultures and systems. This study originated from a realization that lay deployment was not occurring in our local church because something was lacking. Valparaiso Nazarene Church had implemented a spiritual gifts discovery class that resulted in minimal numbers of persons actually connecting into volunteer ministry roles. We knew that persons should be connected and placed in ministries based upon personal spiritual gifts. We believed this “plug-and-play” program would be the solution to our problem. While this one component was important, we were not aware of the matrix of components that intertwine and intermingle to create an environment where laypersons joyfully desire to serve. This study substantiated the presupposition that volunteerism does not occur through implementation of a program; rather, deployment of masses of volunteers results from creation and maintenance of a culture and systems that progressively move potential volunteers from complacency about volunteerism to committed service.

This predominant finding is summarized as follows. Results indicated the
presence of several crucial elements in effective volunteer cultures and systems. These three churches demonstrated a matrix of components intertwined to create a synergetic environment and outcome. According to subjects from these three churches, lay-deploying cultures include the following common, crucial elements: cultural components including biblical and theological foundations and other effective attraction mechanisms that inspire persons to volunteer; organizational components that connect persons with volunteer ministry positions; equipping mechanisms that prepare persons for fruitful service; and, retention mechanisms that stimulate persons to commit to long-term service within a church.

This research has provided a wealth of information that can assist leaders and churches in creating similar environments within their situations. Through this project, subjects who personally experienced effective lay-deploying cultures and systems verified practical methodologies and activities. As leaders and churches are exposed to this information, they can creatively adapt these methodologies and activities to their local situations.

As leaders adapt these findings to their local situations, they must consider the scope of this project. This study observed lay deployment in total environments, encompassing cultures and systems. Together, the cultures and systems have created environments where volunteerism is natural, expected, and enjoyed. As leaders attempt to recreate similar environments in their own settings, attention and efforts should be directed to duplication of cultures and systems. Both elements of these environments are crucial components. If leaders were to attempt to create lay-deploying cultures in their settings without accompanying systems, results might be different than in the three
observed churches. Likewise, if leaders were to attempt to construct lay-deploying systems without the foundational culture, their efforts might be in vain. Keeping in mind the encompassing scope of this project, several implications are drawn from findings pertaining to the four research questions.

Research Question 1 disclosed cultural components that were foundational, motivating factors present within lay-deploying environments. Two cultural components were identified: biblical and theological foundations and attraction mechanisms.

First of all, biblical and theological foundations provided purpose for lay-deployment. A primary task in creating similar cultures in other churches would be instructing laity about biblical and theological mandates pertaining to ecclesiology and the laity. This study revealed various ways of approaching the task of infusing biblical and theological mandates into a local church’s environment. Since teaching of these mandates in the observed churches occurred in large settings and small ones, multiple means of communication should be considered in attempts to recreate similar settings.

This study also disclosed various scriptural emphases utilized by churches in their settings. No specific Scripture or theological tenet was used as basis for all three cultures. Rather, each church established biblical and theological foundations around Scriptures and theological principles they chose as major starting points. Each church then created visionary statements expressing the foundation and intent for their lay-deploying cultures.

GCC’s subjects repetitively spoke about the church as the body of Christ, put here for a purpose. In their chosen language, they expressed this purpose as “helping persons take their next steps towards Christ.” Subjects identified a progressive step towards Christ would be to enter into volunteer ministries that carryout the mission and purpose
of the church.

SEC’s subjects stated the visionary foundational statements that inspire volunteer participation in their church emphasized volunteerism’s connection with personal spiritual growth. Attendees and members consistently hear the church’s mantra: If you are to grow as a Christian, you must invest three hours into your personal growth – one hour in worship, one hour in Bible study, and one hour in service.

WCC’s subjects spoke about their responsibility to assist in advancing the work of God in the world through their roles as priests. Every follower of Christ is to minister to others within the church and outside the church because they are equipped, called, and commissioned to perform the role of priest.

The varying emphases indicated that churches and leaders have the flexibility to structure their lay-deploying cultures around specific biblical and theological passages and principles. Each church’s task is to determine what their particular focus will be and then create indigenous visionary statements expressing the foundation and intent for their environment.

Secondly, in relation to Research Question 1, multiple attraction mechanisms enticed individuals to volunteer. Subjects’ repeated references to vision casting via sermons, publications, and membership expectations indicated the significance of continual exposure to volunteerism’s purposes and practices. Leaders who desire to establish volunteerism as a way of life will accept the challenge of discovering appropriate means and methods of capturing attention and commitment of their attendees and will infuse them consistently and persistently. They will decipher specific attraction mechanisms that will appeal to the interests and needs of their constituencies. They will
want to consider infusing forms of the following attraction mechanisms in their local situations: expressing service in areas of giftedness and passion, teaching volunteers to use personal influence to invite others to join them in serving, allowing pervasive experimentation in several roles before committing to serve in one role, and creating an environment in which the concept of guiltless exit allows persons to terminate their roles.

Leaders will want to create an environment in which service is expressed through personal gifts and passion. Practices of expressing volunteer service out of personal spiritual giftedness and passions were effective in motivating subjects at all three churches. This combination of gifts and passions provided enticement that drew volunteers to serve.

All three lay-deploying cultures match persons with ministry roles according to their spiritual giftedness. One subject from GCC expressed the pervasive teaching about spiritual gifts present in all three churches. He said, “They really emphasize that you have some gifts and talents that were given to you to specifically advance the body of Christ.” He was saying that God has given laypersons the tools to do ministry. Leaders will want to encourage laypersons to utilize God-given resources.

Along with the tools for ministry, God gives desires and passions for specific roles and responsibilities. He gives persons hearts for focused ministries. Leaders will want to infuse the ideology of “right persons in the right places,” which allows laypersons to use God-given tools and God-given passions in service. Subjects referenced previous situations in other churches in which they were placed in ministries because of need or expectation. According to them, such practices are counter-productive. In comparison, one subject from WCC expressed the joys and consequences of serving in
the right places:

I think that another thing that makes volunteering go so well here is that you never get put into anything that you don’t want, because WCC knows that you won’t do your best. It’s like the schoolteacher that teaches public school. And somebody thinks that because she goes to this church, “Oh, she should teach Bible school.” Not at all! She might just absolutely hate to teach Bible school. Or, she might not even want to teach children when she is not teaching school. You have got to want to love it if you are going to do your very best. WCC wants people serving that can really serve their best because they love it.

An environment allowing persons to serve in areas of gifts and passions benefits individual persons and the overall ministries of the church.

This study showed that environments promoting practices and ideologies of pervasive experimentation were effective in tasks of attracting persons to serve. This attraction mechanism was present in all three churches in various forms. Subjects’ body language and intonations expressed positive emotions and beliefs about opportunities to try several options before making commitments to serve in one area. Leaders may want to adapt WCC’s concept of First Serve opportunities. Representative of all subjects who spoke about this concept, Subject one enthusiastically explained the joys and results of pervasive experimentation:

They ask you to sign up for a First Serve. That means you pick it, but they want you to go out on your own and serve and see what you think of that ministry. If you don’t like it, go to another one, and go to another one. In the meantime, you are never pressured to serve in any of those places that are First Serves. It is entirely left up to you…. Have you ever heard the old term, “I have been volunteered?” There is none of that here, none of that literally…. They will never pressure you. I think that is a thing that makes volunteering go so well here.

Leaders will want to consider the intentions and outcomes of this ideology, especially noting the last statement made by that subject. Pervasive experimentation is valued by volunteers, inspiring them to participate.
Research Question 2 identified organizational components assisting persons in productive volunteer service. Subjects discussed structures, roles, and managerial processes that created systems through which lay mobilization flourished. These frameworks, persons, and end-to-end sets of activities were identified as integral parts of productive lay mobilization. Previously discussed cultural components might be considered to be the heart of a lay-deploying culture. Organizational components might be considered the arms and legs of a lay-deploying culture and system. Considering the significance of these components, leaders must carefully, prayerfully, and intentionally design their organization. They must identify, train, and place volunteer connection personnel. These necessary components must be clearly defined, communicated, understood, and maintained.

Research Question 3 uncovered equipping mechanisms that prepared volunteers for success in their chosen roles. Subjects indicated existence of initial, specific, and continual training opportunities that equipped them for efficient service in ministry roles. They discussed advantages correlating to on-the-job training opportunities involving apprenticing and shadowing of veteran volunteers. As leaders implement lay-deploying systems in their churches, attention and effort must be given to creation of training methods and identification of training personnel. Placing persons in vital ministry roles without providing proper instruction would be similar to demanding a person to pilot an airplane without going through flight school. The result would be certain disaster.

Research Question 4 divulged support mechanisms that have sustained persons in ministry roles and have resulted in long-term commitments to volunteer service. Subjects identified encouragement mechanisms that inspired consistent commitment. As leaders
establish lay-deploying environments, efforts must be exerted to discover creative means through which volunteers are affirmed, appreciated, and celebrated. A vital component of a lay-deploying system might be a support team that specifically designs events and opportunities through which volunteers are encouraged and valued.

In addition to encouragement mechanisms, subjects also declared that enhancement mechanisms provided support that sustained them in their roles. Leaders attempting to maintain lay-mobilization cultures and systems would bolster devotion by exploring various means of enhancing volunteers’ personal skills through consistent, appropriate training and instruction. Another vital component of a lay-deploying system might be a support team that specifically designs venues and opportunities for enhancing laypersons’ skills through continuing education.

As leaders begin to adapt observed components, methodologies, and activities explained by subjects in this study, they should specifically note the discussions pertaining to personal reasons for involvement and perceived key elements in lay-deploying processes and systems. This study observed laypersons rather than clergy or staff persons responsible for volunteerism. My intent was to reveal perceptions and understandings of persons existing within the environments. I was interested in observing experiential realities from participants’ viewpoints rather than from engineers of the cultures and systems. Active volunteers revealed crucial information about effective processes and systems within these two specific discussions (personal reasons for involvement and perceived key elements). Their responses confirmed elements of cultures and systems that have significantly impacted their lives. Their responses confirmed effective elements of lay-deploying processes. Since these are voices of
effectively mobilized and deployed laypersons, re-creators of similar environments ought to give focused attention to their stories and statements about personal reasons for involvement and perceived key elements. As leaders begin to design their own lay-mobilizing environments, they should incorporate these testimonial findings into their settings. Having evaluated their own environments, they should determine which elements need attention and direction. They then can create intentional means through which these ideals and practices are embodied in their local situations.

One final observation and implication is offered. Obviously the three observed churches have established their cultures and systems over extended periods of time. Their cultures and systems have evolved through many years. Present cultures and systems did not suddenly or immediately appear once these churches realized the necessity of lay-mobilizing environments. Rather, these cultures and systems have resulted from sustained efforts to create and recreate components that nourish and develop the intended result. As leaders accept the challenge of constructing similar environments in their settings they must understand that creation of their lay-deploying cultures and systems is a process that may take extended periods of time. This process may necessitate focused efforts for periods of two, three, four, or more years. As they consider the amount of time and work necessary for implementation and maintenance of these cultures and systems, they should also remind themselves and their constituency of the benefits resulting from their sustained efforts. These benefits enhance the church and individual persons.

This study revealed that churches benefit immensely when lay-deploying cultures and systems are infused and implemented. As churches become lay-deploying organisms that enable, empower, and release volunteers to do actual priestly service, the problem of
constrained ministries is addressed. Further, when laity and leadership become a united force, God’s kingdom advances. Functioning as a team they become what the church is intended to be in the world. Subject two from GCC stated, “We are the body of Christ,… put here for a purpose:… to specifically advance the body of Christ.” As pastors and leaders attempt to create similar environments, they should do so informing their people that the church becomes what Christ envisioned it to be when all persons, laity and pastors, are united in serving.

This study also disclosed that individual persons benefit immensely when they move into the realm of active volunteerism. The following consequential, personal benefits should be presented and explained to laity.

Serving in volunteer ministries provides actualized purpose, satisfaction, and a sense of fulfillment in one’s life. GCC’s Subject five shared personal testimony of how God restored her from cancer at the base of her tongue. Subsequent to that restoration and healing, she realized she had been restored for a reason. She related her personal scenario:

I realized God restored me for a purpose. I asked, “Well, what is that purpose?” and then it hit me: It’s to serve him well and it’s to serve him hard, and to serve him with what he restored to me, which was my speech and my love for people,… giving back to him what he gave to me.

This subject and others testified about sensing personal satisfaction, enjoyment, and value as they expressed willing service to God and their church.

Serving in volunteer ministries provides opportunities to connect with other persons in community. GCC’s Subject two confirmed that connecting in relationship with others through service is a beneficial motivation: “By serving you can meet people and you’re probably going to have similar interests with the people you are serving with. It
builds friendships, relationships;… it’s a win-win for everyone.” WCC’s Subject four encapsulated common elements expressed by fellow interviewees who stated that community and social interaction are concomitant benefits of serving with others:

We become a family when we serve…. These people become close to you, and we do become family. That is part of the thing that keeps the serving volunteers together here, it’s that we become family. And, we really do care about each other. And, oh how it shrinks the church…. By serving you start to know more and more and more people…. It makes you a closer family.

Communicating the fact that community is experienced through serving could be a powerful means of attracting persons to become involved in volunteerism.

**Weaknesses of This Study**

The volume of data collected through the interview process was almost overwhelming. I had constructed ten interview questions pertaining to the four Research Questions. Fifteen subjects were interviewed. One possible weakness of the study pertains to the mass of information gathered. I deciphered this information with the assistance of my Research Reflection Team. I attempted to summarize comprehensively and succinctly and report the findings. Nevertheless, due to subjective, human limitations, my interpretation of massive amounts of data may have been a potential weakness.

A second potential weakness of this study may have pertained to methodology. I chose to interview volunteer persons within specific departments in volunteer systems. Since their responses were entirely subjective, they may not have been representative of the church’s entire volunteer system. Subjects explained experiences within specific departments in the churches. Their experiences within these departments may not have totally or truly reflected practices and procedures of all departments or leadership’s
Considerations for Further Studies

Further studies could expand upon the findings generated through this project. Since this study confirmed the synergetic nature of effective lay-deploying cultures and systems, a further study could focus specifically upon one component (such as cultural components, organizational components, equipping mechanisms, or retention mechanisms). Focused research probing into a specific component could generate more precise findings.

Further studies could include interviews with key leadership (such as senior pastors or staff persons responsible for volunteerism at the church). Responses from key leadership could be corroborated with responses from interviewees. Combining information obtained from volunteers and leadership personnel could address subjectivity limitations.

Further studies could incorporate some kind of instrument that would allow participants to rate or rank the effectiveness of the various mechanisms being researched. Compiled data could indicate specific strengths and weaknesses within existing systems and cultures.

Further studies could test results of this research in smaller churches. This study investigated lay ministry cultures and systems present in churches that recorded weekly attendances of five thousand persons or more. Generalizability of results was presupposed. I assumed the findings from this study could be generalized and applied to multi-staff churches that record attendances of one thousand or more persons. Future research could test these results in smaller churches to see if discovered principles and
practices would be applicable to churches of all sizes.

**Personalized Conclusion**

This project has been a worthy academic endeavor. This study exposed me to the rigors of academic research. This quest to discover possible solutions to a present dilemma within our local church, as well as within other churches, was an enlightening process. The literature review broadened my perspective on pertinent issues. The actual interviews confirmed initial assumptions and demonstrated existence and implementation of ideologies and practices. The intriguing environments of these three churches inspired awe and appreciation for visionary leaders who are mobilizing, deploying, and sustaining laypersons in kingdom-advancing ministries.

The findings of this study have already impacted my local church in significant ways. Our local church has begun to attempt to create a culture and systems present in the observed churches. The following actions have begun at Valparaiso Nazarene Church.

Ministerial staff was exposed to many of the findings. In the past our church has been staff centered. A culture shift is occurring. Leadership is now looking for opportunities to involve laity in ministries previously conducted and supervised by paid personnel. Our paid leaders have recognized the biblical mandate to become persons who enable and empower laity in ministries.

Our senior pastor preached a four-week series on the biblical basis for laity’s involvement in ministries. The series was titled, “Fear Factor … Myths of Volunteerism.” On the concluding weekend, persons were challenged to overcome their fears relating to volunteerism by committing to a place of service. Over two hundred persons responded by signing commitment sheets. Staff members and designated connection coordinators
have been processing these commitment sheets and linking persons with ministry roles.

A volunteer exposition was held on the concluding weekend of the teaching series. This exposition was labeled, “A Taste of VNC.” This exposition provided exposure to ministry opportunities in various departments.

My Research Reflection Team has served as vital participants in the implementation process. Most of the team members are also members of our church board. Our church board was restructured this past year to serve the needs of our church better. Three teams were designated in order to address focused areas of need specifically: a ministries team, a building and grounds team, and a financial accountability team. Members of my Research Reflection Team serve on the ministries team. The main focus of efforts emanating from the ministries team pertains to volunteerism this year. Having been exposed to the findings of this project, this team has played an instrumental role in creating direction in our church. This team accepted the responsibility of planning, promoting, and hosting our volunteer exposition.

Our church has hired a staff person to serve as a connections pastor. This person will assist in creating, administrating, and maintaining crucial systems that will move persons into active volunteer ministry roles.

I reported the implementation of these actions in my local church in hopes that future readers will understand that they, too, can adapt observed findings in their local settings. Possibilities and potentialities of mobilizing laypersons to assist in ministries are attainable and numerous. May God bless the efforts of leaders who accept the challenge of enabling and empowering laypersons to partner with them in carrying out God’s work in the world.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why does your church encourage you to become involved in a ministry?

2. What does your church do to persuade you to say “yes” to serving in a ministry?

3. What motivates you to do ministry in this place?

4. What is your church’s process for linking persons with a ministry?

5. What persons assisted in linking you with a ministry?

6. What procedures were used to gather information about your interests and abilities?

7. How did your church prepare you for your ministry?

8. What do you think was the most helpful learning experience in your preparation for ministry?

9. How does your church continue to support you in your ministry?

10. What do you think are the key elements necessary to create and sustain a volunteer environment in a local church?
APPENDIX B

FIELD NOTES FROM GRANGER COMMUNITY CHURCH

A staff person scheduled interview appointments with volunteers. I did not realize until later that this staff person was not the designated “Connections Pastor” who oversees the processes of persons linking with ministries. Her role was in another ministry area. However, her willingness to assist in scheduling interview appointments was representative of the spirit of serving and helping that was evident at this church.

Interviews were conducted on two separate afternoons, prior to evening services. The first interviews occurred on a Thursday evening before the “New Community” service. Subsequent interviews were conducted on Saturday afternoon, prior to one of the weekend services. Interviews took place in a conference room within the church. All interviewees arrived at designated times. They were delighted to share their volunteer experiences at the church. Their enthusiastic and engaged responses indicated a passion for their ministry roles. The tone and content of their conversations revealed feelings of purpose and focus in their lives resulting from their ministries. They loved volunteering at this church. They were thrilled to be able to share insights about their experiences and to boast about their church and it’s significance in their lives.

There were no overt, visible evidences pertaining to volunteerism in the church building. As I initially entered the foyer area early in the afternoon, I noticed a coffee shop and café area to the right. These elements stimulated a sense of welcoming comfort. On the left side of this area was what appeared to be an extensive welcome desk or information center. Computers were placed at various points along the counter.

Both afternoons, at some point between interviews, I walked through hallways
leading to the worship center. Several persons were intently and joyfully preparing for the evening services. I noticed there were tones of anticipation in their voices and focused looks upon the faces of these volunteers as they were readying themselves and the building for the upcoming services. They acted as if their duties were the most important activities to be performed at that time.

After completing interviews on Saturday evening my assistant and I went for supper. After eating our meal we returned to the church campus to attend the service. After we parked the car a shuttle bus approached. The driver cheerfully offered to give us a ride to the worship center. Discussion with the driver revealed that he was a volunteer. He explained that he believed his role was a crucial part in making guests and attendees feel welcome and valued. He believed that he was performing a vital service that would enhance persons’ total experience at this service. I sensed that this church is concerned about providing a positive, memorable experience for all attendees. This experience began in the parking lot and continued all the way until we were seated in the sanctuary. This experience was made possible by participation of numerous volunteers who assumed various ministry roles.

Upon exiting the bus, we were greeted by another volunteer who welcomed us to the service. As we approached the front doors, more volunteers greeted us and held doors open. Once inside, various volunteer hosts were positioned throughout the foyer offering assistance and making guests feel at ease. One of those persons engaged in conversation with us. She pointed at the coffee shop and invited us to purchase a beverage. When I asked about the information center on the left she explained the roles of various volunteers positioned at the area. At one area of the welcome center volunteers were
registering women who wished to attend a women’s retreat. Stationed at various spots along the long countertop were other persons who served as welcome desk attendants. These volunteers were available to answer questions and provide directions and verbal assistance.

The lady explaining these roles told us that the computers were used for a variety of functions. Persons wanting to join a small group could search for one within their geographical area, could receive basic information about a group that might be enticing, and could obtain basic contact information about the group’s leadership. Persons wanting to become involved in volunteerism could research possible ministry opportunities, could indicate their interest in specific ministry opportunities, and could obtain contact information for leadership within those specific ministry opportunities.

As we approached the doors leading to the worship center, more volunteers greeted us and offered bulletins for the service. When we arrived at the aisle where we wished to be seated a volunteer usher politely asked us how close we would like to sit to the front stage. When we replied that we would like to be about halfway toward the front she motioned to another volunteer stationed at the halfway point, indicating that two of us would like to be seated in his section. This volunteer located seats for us, motioned for us to proceed towards him, and seated us in the area that we had indicated. He asked if we had any questions and then told us he hoped we enjoyed the service.

In the moments before the service began I perused the bulletin. Contained in the bulletin was pertinent information about upcoming events. I noticed that one section described current volunteer opportunities that might be of interest to some persons. In this section of the bulletin there was a perforated section on which persons could indicate
interest in connecting with one of those volunteer positions or other volunteer roles within the church. Interested persons could give basic, personal contact information and could indicate possible areas of interest. The bulletin informed persons to give the perforated section to an usher or to place it in the offering plate during the service. I also observed the large number of volunteers serving as ushers in the worship center. These volunteers were cheerfully assisting attendees in finding seats and engaging in conversation with persons who appeared to want to talk with them. There was an atmosphere of friendliness, warmth, and anticipation.

The service began with edgy, contemporary music that lasted for about twenty minutes. Following the music, the senior pastor spoke to the congregation for several minutes. He explained that he and several staff members had just returned from California where they had led several workshops at a conference hosted by Saddleback Church. Pastor Beeson reminded his congregation that Saddleback Church’s senior pastor, Rick Warren had conducted workshops at Granger Community Church in previous years. He told the crowd that Rick Warren was familiar with GCC and that the two pastors have a close friendship. Pastor Beeson said that Rick Warren had specifically asked about current events and advancements at Granger. When Pastor Beeson reported exciting news about the church’s numerical growth, financial strength, and new building project, Rick Warren expressed congratulations, commending the congregation for its efforts in extending God’s kingdom. According to Pastor Beeson, Rick Warren instructed him to extend congratulations and best wishes to the Granger Community Church family. Pastor Beeson spoke several minutes, raising the value of volunteerism. He pointed out that the church’s growth was resulting from the combined efforts of the entire church.
family who was united in the cause of “helping persons take next steps towards God.” He repeatedly exclaimed that the church was advancing because of the time, and effort, and expense of the vast army of volunteers that perform myriads of ministries. He told the volunteers, “We could not be doing what we are doing without your help! I am so proud of you. I am so glad to be the pastor of this church!” His authentic expressions of appreciation were received well by the congregation. After hearing his remarks and sensing the spirit of unity and purpose, I felt that if I attended this church on a regular basis, I would want to be a part of the vast volunteer army that was being supported and affirmed in those moments.

Following the message and the conclusion of the service we left our seats and headed towards the exits. Volunteer ushers and greeters were still in positions that they occupied prior to the service. They extended the same friendly, cheerful greetings. We left with the feeling that this church has definitely created an enticing volunteer environment through which many people find joy and fulfillment in serving, in order to advance God’s kingdom in their community.
APPENDIX C

FIELD NOTES FROM SOUTHEAST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

I contacted the church, explained the research project, and was directed to the “Volunteer Connections” ministry. After explaining the intent and process of this project, the assistant to the staff person in this department worked to arrange interview appointments with volunteers serving in various ministries in this local church.

Interviews were held on a Tuesday afternoon and the next day, on Wednesday morning. Volunteers working in the Junior High ministry were available Tuesday afternoon since there was a scheduled youth activity that day. Volunteers were also present working in the mail department and at the Welcome Center. On Wednesday, volunteers were present because they were serving in the church’s bookstore and others were painting in the Children’s Department. I sensed that this church is a “seven-day-a-week” church offering numerous ministries and activities every day of the week.

As I initially entered the foyer leading to the Atrium, I noticed strategically placed newsstands that held stacks of newspapers. I later heard that these newspapers were compiled and distributed by this local church. During the interview process I discovered that the newspaper is a crucial component in attracting and informing persons about volunteerism. As I personally perused the paper I saw that there were articles reporting recent activity of specific volunteers within the church. I noticed a section that listed current volunteer opportunities that persons could investigate. Later, as I walked throughout the various buildings on the church’s campus, I saw numerous newsstands providing these papers.

I approached the Welcome Center located in the center of the Atrium. I noticed
attendants engaging in joyful conversations amongst each other. They appeared to be enjoying their time of serving together. These volunteer attendants greeted me warmly and offered assistance. I explained the purpose of my visit and gave the name of my contact person. One of them phoned the staff person that had arranged interviews. This staff person conveyed the interview appointment times and names of interviewees. One of the volunteers gave detailed directions to the Youth Building where the first interviews were to be conducted. The encounter with volunteers at the Welcome Center was a positive one. These persons appeared to be intently focused upon serving anyone who came into the building.

At the Youth Building I was introduced to the Junior High Youth Pastor. We conversed in general terms about his department and about procedures for attracting volunteers and supporting them. He provided a copy of a notebook that is given to each volunteer in this ministry. This notebook outlined important information that he believed volunteers should understand: Expectations; time commitments; and duties pertaining to specific roles. The notebook also included various articles addressing relevant topics pertaining to youth ministry. As I perused the comprehensive notebook I sensed that this staff person intently desired that this manual would be a means of helping his volunteers succeed in ministry. He was equipping and supporting his volunteers in tangible ways.

During the interviews I observed that subjects were passionate about serving in this place. As was the case at Granger Community Church, the tone and the content of their conversations revealed a devoted, focused intention in their volunteerism. They avidly desired to express their love for God through their service and wanted to participate in the church’s mission to impact this community. They expressed
understanding that volunteerism is a natural, normal, expected way of life for a Christ-follower. At times these subjects spoke in reverent tones about the specific benefits received through their volunteerism: They sensed fulfillment and purpose in serving in ways that made a difference in people’s lives and in their church; they experienced spiritual growth that enlarged their hearts; and they enjoyed a sense of community received through mutual service with other persons.

While waiting between interviews I walked around the Atrium. I observed long counter-top stations located the entire length of the back wall of this massive room. Signage above these counters indicated various departmental ministries (i.e., Women’s Ministries, Men’s Ministries, Children’s Ministries). I questioned persons stationed at the Welcome Center about these stations. They informed that these stations are manned by volunteers from each of these departments prior to services and following services (midweek and weekends). One of the designated stations was labeled as “Volunteer Connections.” When I questioned Welcome Desk personnel about this particular station, they told me that this area allowed persons to inquire about possible volunteer participation. Persons not yet connected to a volunteer ministry could talk face-to-face with someone about possible options for ministry roles. They could discover procedures for linking to specific ministry roles. They could obtain contact information pertaining to ministries in which a person could volunteer. This place was a visible, constant “go-to” location that persons in this church could access at their convenience.

Noting the “Volunteer Connections” station and the existence of the articles on volunteerism in the churches newspaper I concluded that volunteerism is constantly before people at this church. The presence of these two components indicated that
volunteerism is a crucial element of this church’s ideologies and activities. Volunteerism did not appear to be a program within the church. Volunteerism appeared to be a component of it’s essence.
APPENDIX D

FIELD NOTES FROM WILLOW CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH

I contacted Willow Creek Community Church by telephone. When I explained the purpose of this project they informed me that I needed to talk with someone in the Willow Creek Association. I was told that the Association exists to attempt to serve other churches as effectively as possible. When I contacted the Willow Creek Association they connected me with the designated staff person responsible for responding to initial inquiries. This staff person was extremely helpful in the process of completing the project at this church. He contacted various departments within the church and arranged interview appointments. When I arrived at the church campus this staff person warmly greeted me and spent about an hour talking about the church. He stated that he would be willing to answer any questions about volunteerism that I might have subsequent to the interviews. My encounter with this staff person set the tone for experiences with all of the subjects at this church. Each person I came in contact with exhibited authentic servanthood.

Interviews were conducted on one day, a Wednesday morning and afternoon, at this church. As was the case at Southeast Christian Church, there was much activity throughout the buildings on this midweek day. Volunteers were engaged in ministry roles all day long. Volunteers observed, both in interview situations and actively engaged in ministry tasks, displayed excited enthusiasm about serving. They talked about their roles and performed ministries as if these responsibilities were the most important tasks to be accomplished by them at the moment. Their conversations and their activities indicated a desire to serve with excellence and relevance. Volunteers proudly reported their gratitude
for opportunities to serve the great cause of impacting the lives of people with the message of Christ’s gospel and with loving acts of service. There was an atmosphere of joyful, devoted, compassionate service permeating this local church. It appeared that volunteerism is a part of the essence of this church. Volunteers’ responses and activities indicated that this church exists to serve the purposes of God by serving others.

There were no visible physical evidences pointing towards volunteerism in the church. There were no signs instructing persons about volunteerism. There were no specific stations or locations designated as a volunteer connection point. However, there were several computer kiosks located throughout the spacious foyer. The church’s Web page was displayed on the computer screens. Persons interested in various ministries could peruse the Web site, looking for pertinent information. Potential volunteers could view the specific Web page dealing with the Volunteer Connections Ministry. They could read about specific ministry opportunities and obtain contact information relating to areas of interest.

I noticed one area that appeared to be an information center. Later I was told that this indeed was the information center. I was informed that trained volunteers manned this area during all services, both at midweek and on weekends. Persons interested in obtaining information about volunteerism could talk with someone who could answer basic questions and then direct them to contact the Volunteer Connections Ministry.

I perused the bulletin that was to be distributed at the evening service. Information pertaining to church activities and events was included in the bulletin. And, there was a sizeable section describing present volunteer opportunities for the week. Readers were instructed to contact designated persons within the Volunteer Connections Ministry or to
contact departmental leadership. Subjects later confirmed that the bulletin delineates
volunteer opportunities on a weekly basis.

As persons entered the worship center for the evening service, volunteer greeters
cheerfully and warmly greeted them. Each volunteer greeter wore a badge that clearly
identified them as a volunteer. The badge included the individual’s name and the phrase,
“Here to Serve.”
APPENDIX E

DETAILED SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

CULTURAL COMPONENTS WITHIN THREE LARGE CHURCHES

Synopsis of Theological and Biblical Foundations for Lay Ministry Culture

Subjects at all three churches indicated strong, personal awareness of theological and biblical foundations undergirding their volunteer cultures. These cultures exist and function based upon scriptural and theological underpinnings.

Results from Granger Community Church

Summary statements about responses given by subjects from Granger Community Church include the following observations. The five volunteers understood the missional nature of the church. The church is the body of Christ, put here for the purpose of continuing his work. This particular church believed its mission is to help persons take their next steps towards being like Christ. For some persons, their next step includes involvement in serving. The volunteers, therefore, articulated distinct awareness of personal responsibility to assist in the church’s mission. In their environment, spiritual giftedness was an important component through which personal participation in the church’s mission was expressed.

Results from Southeast Christian Church

Summary statements about theological and biblical foundations for lay ministry at Southeast Christian Church include the following observations. The five volunteers understood the biblical concept that service is an essential part of being a Christ follower. They referenced awareness and personal confirmation that service is an instrument through which personal, spiritual growth is stimulated. The subjects reported awareness
of the missional nature of the church. Some subjects directly described the necessity of involving all believers in carrying out the mission of the church. Subjects reported that laypersons are to assist with the missional challenge by understanding and utilizing personal spiritual gifts. Subjects voiced knowledge of the practical aspects of the theological concept of the priesthood of believers. They observed that the immensity of tasks to be completed requires that believers be released to assist in those tasks.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

Subjects from Willow Creek Community Church stated their culture is also founded upon a solid biblical theology of ecclesiology and theology of laity. According to them, this volunteer culture exists to do the mission and ministry of God in their world. Underlying this culture is the scriptural basis of Ephesians 4 which emphasizes three teachings: Every believer is to be involved in ministry; the pastor’s and leader’s role is to ensure that all believers are to be equipped; and, the church is to be an equipping center. WCC appears to have established a culture that embodies those three emphases. Corresponding to the previous two churches’ volunteer culture and systems, this church also teaches that volunteers are to be placed in ministries according to their personal spiritual giftedness.

**Synopsis of Attraction Mechanisms Inspiring Lay Involvement**

Realizing that my local church currently lacked means and methods of inspiring persons to join volunteer ranks, I sought to discover attraction mechanisms that inspire persons to commit to volunteer service in the local church. Representatives from the three churches identified numerous indigenous mechanisms that inspire persons to commit to serving.
Results from Granger Community Church

Summary statements about attraction mechanisms that inspire persons to become involved in volunteer ministries at GCC include the following observations. GCC has infused the following attraction mechanisms into their culture:

• Core Classes that teach and implement deployment of volunteers according to their SHAPE;

• An annual sermon/teaching series that casts vision and inspires involvement; annual volunteer expos that delineate all volunteer ministry opportunities and stimulate personal involvement;

• Specific requests or appeals for special events or activities, issued to newer persons who may not be presently serving as well as to the wider congregation;

• “Shoulder tapping” by present volunteers who use peer influence to inspire others to join them in volunteer ministry;

• The practice of matching persons with volunteer ministry opportunities according to their SHAPE;

• Easy access points that remove barriers that inhibit or prohibit persons from potential involvement in volunteer ministry;

• An experimentation ideology that allows persons to test the waters in various ministries before making a commitment to serve;

• The ideology of “guiltless exit,” which allows persons to leave ministries without remorse.

Results from Southeast Christian Church

Summary statements about attraction mechanisms that inspire persons to become
involved in volunteer ministries at SEC include the following observations. SEC’s subjects described several attraction mechanisms through which persons have been educated about volunteerism and that appeared to them to be effective means of inducing commitment to volunteerism. According to the interviewees, SEC has infused the following attraction mechanisms into their culture:

- Membership expectations that establish the foundational principle that all members should commit to one hour of weekly volunteer service;
- Two major, service-oriented events in the church calendar (the Easter pageant and the “Great Day of Service) that provide initial opportunities for new volunteers to step into volunteer ministries positions, as well as for veteran volunteers to serve;
- An annual sermon series of volunteerism culminates on a Commitment Sunday at which attendees are challenged to sign a one-year commitment to serve;
- The church’s newspaper that serves as a continual voice providing weekly exposure to volunteerism ideology and practices at this local church;
- Peer influence through which volunteers give verbal invitations to non-serving persons and model passionate service in front of non-serving persons;
- The practice of “matching persons’ spiritual gifts and abilities with volunteer opportunities” to encourages person to volunteer where they fit and feel comfortable;
- “Expectation without high pressure” allows persons to commit and serve on their own terms, according to their lifestyle.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

Summary statements about attraction mechanisms that inspire persons to be involved in volunteer ministries at WCC include the following observations. Subjects
revealed several attraction mechanisms parallel to ones present at GCC and SEC. Corresponding attraction mechanisms included the following components:

• Annual sermon series have taught various aspects of volunteerism and servanthood;
• Ministry fairs have aroused interest and provided information concerning volunteer opportunities;
• Publications, written materials, and the Internet Web page have constantly communicated pertinent information and ideologies;
• “Peer influence” attracted three of the interviewed subjects to say, “yes,” to volunteer ministries and have enticed many others to become volunteers;
• “Membership expectations” have established a culture in which volunteerism is a natural and necessary part of membership in this local church.

Paralleling responses from subjects at GCC, these interviewees spoke passionately about the practice of encouraging pervasive experimentation. This culture of pervasive experimentation included the component labeled First Serve opportunities. First Serve opportunities have allowed potential volunteers to experience specific ministry opportunities without making a personal commitment. Potential volunteers have experienced the freedom to view options before making a decision about serving in one specific area. Another appealing factor in the First Serve model was the ability to remain anonymous throughout the experimentation period.

In conjunction with the ideology of connecting persons to ministries based upon spiritual gifts, subjects described an ideology of “putting the right people in the right places.” Subjects connected two key components of this ideology: Discovery of personal spiritual gifts with consequential service within areas of giftedness and serving in one’s
area of passion, which results in personal joy, fulfillment, and excellence in service. As persons serve according to giftedness and passion, they continue to serve joyfully with purpose and fulfillment.

**Synopsis of Personal Reasons for Involvement**

Being curious about whether persons serve because of internal motivations or external ones, I asked, “What motivates you and others like you to do ministry in this place?” Responses to this question revealed that the subjects serve because of both internal and external motivations. They serve because of personal, subjective reasons and individual benefits received through volunteerism and because of corporate, objective, external realities.

**Results from Granger Community Church**

Summary statements about perceived personal reasons for involvement in volunteerism at GCC include the following observations. Subjects reported they serve because of internal and external motivations.

Subjects indicated they serve because of three primary internal, personal, subjective reasons and rewards received through volunteerism. Personal, subjective motivations were summarized as follows: I serve because of gratitude for God; I serve because I can experience community; I serve because I can experience community; I serve because in serving I connect intimately with God.

Interviewees also indicated they serve because of two objective, external motivations. Objective, external motivations were summarized as follows: I serve because the church exists to serve and I serve because God has given spiritual gifts.
Results from Southeast Christian Church

Summary statements about personal reasons for involvement in volunteerism at SEC include the following observations. Subjects primarily cited internal, personal reasons and rewards as motivations for serving in their church. The two primary internal, subjective reasons were summarized as follows: I serve because I can experience community; I serve because I find fulfillment in volunteering.

Some subjects also mentioned two external, objective motivations. The external, objective reasons were summarized as follows: I serve because God’s Word gives specific instruction pertaining to servanthood and spiritual gifts; I serve because the Bible teaches people to serve, using the tools and gifts he has provided.

Results from Willow Creek Community Church

Summary statements about personal reasons for involvement in volunteerism at WCC are encapsulated in the following observations. Subjects cited two internal, subjective reasons for serving: I serve because I can experience community through serving and I serve because I find fulfillment in serving. Subjects reported one external reason for serving: I serve because I have been given unique spiritual gifts.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMPONENTS WITHIN THREE LARGE CHURCHES

Synopsis of Lay-Deploying Processes

A presupposition at the outset of this project was that these churches have designed and implemented end-to-end sets of activities that facilitate successful lay mobilization. Responses confirmed this presupposition. Subjects adequately explained processes and procedures through which potential volunteers are introduced to volunteerism and are inducted into specific ministry roles.
Results from Granger Community Church

Subjects referred to previously mentioned attraction mechanisms that provided multiple entry points into volunteer service. Three categories of attraction mechanisms were designated, based upon frequency of occurrence: continual attraction mechanisms that constantly communicate volunteer opportunities, frequent attraction mechanisms that occasionally are utilized, and annual attraction mechanisms that occur once a year. Subjects explained explicit end-to-end sets of activities that occur for each of the categorized attraction mechanisms.

Four continual attraction mechanisms were identified as providing entrance into the realm of volunteerism. Those four “doorways” into volunteerism were listed as follows: the weekly bulletin, the guest services kiosk, the Internet Web page, and small group encouragement.

The processes for entering the realm of volunteerism via each of these doorways were explained by interviewees. Potential volunteers would express interest and abilities and provide initial contact information. This data would be sent or delivered to a designated person who would sort information according to departmental interest. This information pertaining to potential volunteers would be sent or delivered to departmental leaders. These departmental leaders would give potential volunteers’ contact information to designated volunteer team leaders who would quickly contact the potential volunteer and discuss their interest and possible participation.

Two frequent attraction mechanisms were cited as providing entrance into volunteerism. Subjects stated that the core classes (Class 101 and Class 301) are initial doorways into volunteerism. These classes are offered several times throughout the year.
At the conclusion of Class 101, participants are encouraged to investigate possible volunteer roles. They are given contact information for departmental leaders or designated volunteer leaders. Departmental leaders then discuss their involvement. At the conclusion of Class 301, a personal counselor guides the potential volunteer to identify three areas of interest. Contact information for persons within those three departments is given. The person contacts the designated departmental person. Potential involvement is discussed and arranged.

Subjects cited two annual attraction mechanisms that provide initial entrance into volunteerism. Occurring one time each year, they were listed as follows: An annual sermon series and a volunteer expo. Subsequent to these events, a potential volunteer progresses through the end-to-end set of activities previously explained for continual and frequent attraction instruments.

**Results from Southeast Christian Church**

Similar to subjects from GCC, interviewees recounted previously mentioned attraction mechanisms that provide multiple entry points into volunteer service. Subjects conveyed precise end-to-end sets of activities that occur as potential volunteers enter volunteerism via continual, frequent, and annual attraction mechanisms.

Subjects identified five continual attraction mechanisms that persistently serve as entry points into volunteerism at SEC. Those initial doorways were listed as follows: the church newspaper, the welcome desk, volunteer connections department peer influence; and membership mentoring.

Subjects identified two frequent attraction mechanisms that occasionally serve as entry points into volunteerism at SEC. Those entry points were listed as follows: “What
We Believe” class and a spiritual gifts discovery class.

Two annual attraction mechanisms were identified as providing entrance into the realm of volunteerism. These entry points occur one time a year. Those two doorways into volunteerism were listed as follows: an annual sermon series pertaining to volunteerism and a Great Day of Service.

The connecting processes corresponding to the various categories of attraction mechanisms were consistent and similar to those present at GCC. Potential volunteers provide initial information. This information is delivered to appropriate departments. Someone within the department contacts the potential volunteer and discusses involvement and assigns specific roles.

Results from Willow Creek Community Church

Subjects from WCC identified five continual attraction mechanisms that provide entrance into volunteerism. Those five portals were listed as follows: the volunteerism department at the church, the weekly bulletin, guest central, peer influence, and First Serve opportunities.

Procedures for connecting into a specific ministry role in any of the first four portals paralleled procedures at GCC and SEC. Potential volunteers provide initial personal information and interest in an area of ministry. The person’s information is given to the appropriate department. A designated person within that department contacts the person. Involvement and specific placement are discussed and arranged through an interview process.

The process for connecting to a ministry role through First Serve opportunities was explained separately. A potential volunteer simply shows up at the designated place
and time to participate in a First Serve opportunity. They serve without providing personal information. They might possibly serve two or three Sundays in a particular department or they might experiment and visit several. Once the potential volunteer decides he or she would like to serve in a specific department and role, he or she then contacts the designated person within that department, expressing interest. The designated person discusses the potential volunteer’s involvement after the person approaches and declares he or she is ready to commit to volunteerism in their department.

Subjects discussed two frequent attraction mechanisms that have served as doorways into volunteerism. The two frequent attraction mechanisms were identified as follows: a spiritual gifts class and a Serving 101 course.

During the spiritual gifts class, potential volunteers are guided to distinguish areas of potential interest, relating to their gifts and passions. They are given contact information pertaining to the department or ministry they would like to investigate. Once they contact that person, an interview ensues in which possible involvement and assignment to a ministry role is discussed and arranged.

Serving 101 courses are hosted departmentally throughout the year. Potential volunteers attend and are instructed about expectations and responsibilities. Once they formally decide to participate, they discuss their involvement with designated persons within that department.

Two annual attraction mechanisms serve as initial entrances into volunteerism. Subjects listed the initial portals as follows: An annual sermon series addressing volunteerism; and Ministry Fairs. Persons desiring connection to a volunteer role through these two means would follow similar procedures that were reported for Granger
Community Church’s annual sermon series and volunteer expo.

**Synopsis of Volunteer Connection Personnel**

This study confirmed and identified the presence of persons whose role was to assist in connecting potential lay volunteers with specific ministries. Subjects from all three churches reported existence of recognized staff infrastructure that facilitates volunteer connections. The staff infrastructure included paid and volunteer staff persons. The subjects discussed how these staff persons interact with potential volunteers, based on their point of entry into the volunteer system and processes.

**Results from Granger Community Church**

Interviewees confirmed the existence and effectiveness of persons whose intentional role was to connect persons with ministries at GCC. According to subjects, departmental persons are in place, equipped to accomplish this essential component of lay deployment processes. Three self-directed subjects made decisions to commit to volunteer service. They showed up at the appropriate time and place for their first introduction to the particular volunteer role. Specific volunteer leaders within each department assisted in linking them to that ministry. Those team leaders made them feel comfortable, assigned them to teams or roles, and worked with them to ease into new ministry roles.

The remaining two subjects reported they were influenced by peers to join the ranks of volunteerism. Both were invited by friends to join with them in serving on their teams. Since the friends were already serving on the teams, they introduced the potential volunteers to appropriate team leaders. Those team leaders oriented the potential volunteers, affirmed their participation, and worked with them to find a specific role.
Subsequently, the friends who introduced them became mentors and coaches for the new volunteers.

**Results from Southeast Christian Church**

Interviewees confirmed the presence and efficacy of persons whose role is to connect persons with ministries at SEC. They testified that departmental persons are in place to accomplish this essential component of lay deployment processes.

Four subjects returned cards containing personal information and interest in serving in a particular area, or they simply contacted the department directly. In both cases, persons from within the indicated departments served as links, personally connecting the potential volunteers with specific ministry opportunities. In some cases, paid staff persons served as the connecting link. In other cases, volunteer persons served as the connecting link.

Volunteering within the youth department, the fifth subject progressed through the established process of becoming a volunteer within that department. He contacted the appropriate staff person. That person interviewed, oriented, and assigned him to a volunteer ministry role.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

Interviewees validated the presence and usefulness of persons whose role was/is to connect persons with ministries at their church. They said that departmental persons are in place to accomplish this essential component of lay deployment processes. Departmental coaches or team leaders serve as the connecting links in most cases. As was the case at SEC, these persons may be paid staff persons or volunteer leaders.
Synopsis of Volunteer Connection Procedures

A desired goal was to discover each church’s actions in placing specific persons in places where they will succeed in ministry. I initially planned to ask the question, “What procedures were used to gather information about your interests and abilities?” During the interviews this question was answered during the previous two questions. Responses are briefly summarized.

Subjects from all three churches reported that potential volunteers express interest and provide basic information via widely distributed, designated cards and information sheets. After potential volunteers individually complete these cards or sheets, they are dispersed to appropriate connection personnel within ministries throughout the church. Connection personnel arrange personal interviews with potential volunteers. Potential volunteers’ interests, spiritual gifts, past experiences, and passions are discussed during these interviews. Connection personnel advise about appropriate volunteer opportunities for each interviewee. Connection personnel then attempt to connect persons to ministry roles in which the volunteer will find fulfillment and value.

EQUIPPING MECHANISMS WITHIN THE THREE LARGE CHURCHES

Synopsis of Established Equipping Mechanisms

Subjects at all three churches spoke positively, enthusiastically, and appreciatively about equipping mechanisms that prepared them for their ministry roles. According to them, their churches efficiently trained them before they began and continued to train them throughout their terms of service.

Results from Granger Community Church

All subjects from GCC spoke enthusiastically about equipping mechanisms
present within their local church. They indicated they believed present equipping mechanisms adequately prepared them to do ministry roles.

Subjects reported four phases or stages of training that prepared them for service. Procedures within each of the phases progressively prepared volunteers for service.

Phase one consisted of departmental orientation that explained broad parameters of the particular ministry. Departmental leaders usually conducted this part of the training process. This phase included instruction pertaining to that ministry’s role in relation to the overall mission of the church. In addition, departmental orientation presented basic expectation levels, commitment levels and ministry guidelines.

Phase two began the process of specifically preparing potential volunteers for distinct roles within the ministries. Volunteer team leaders or coaches usually conducted this training component. They communicated details about specific responsibilities and duties correlating to roles through group training settings and in private appointments with individuals.

Another training phase included elements of on-the-job preparation. As new volunteers participated in various levels of service, they were equipped by team leaders, coaches, or peers.

Two training procedures were mentioned within the realm of on-the-job training opportunities. First, some departments incorporated a modeling process. Through this procedure, new volunteers observed veteran volunteers presently serving. Subjects labeled this equipping component as “shadowing.” Shadowing usually occurred for two to three weeks. Once new volunteers believed they understood the role and felt comfortable assuming that role, they then moved into ministry.
Secondly, rookie volunteers received personal instruction while actually performing introductory ministry tasks. Usually new volunteers were paired with an experienced volunteer. The veteran volunteer coached and mentored the new volunteer as they served together.

A fourth equipping stage was described as ongoing, continual training. Some subjects indicated that specific departments host weekly informational, training sessions that prepared volunteers to serve effectively. Other departments hosted quarterly training sessions. Some subjects reported that the church gives volunteers opportunities to attend conferences and seminars that enhanced their understanding of their ministry roles.

**Results from Southeast Christian Church**

All subjects from SEC spoke confidently and optimistically about equipping mechanisms present within their church. Subjects indicated that training processes are pervasive throughout the various ministries of this church.

One noticeable difference was observed between responses from subjects at GCC and SEC. Subjects from GCC recognized and spoke about the distinct, four phases of training present within their equipping process. SEC’s subjects did not emphasize various phases of preparation. Instead, they revealed three dominant ideologies present within their equipping culture. The three ideologies were as follows: departmental training, written directive training, and continual training.

Subjects declared that training is accomplished through each department. The subjects stated that responsibility for training rests entirely upon departmental needs. Each ministry department has determined the type and amount of training that will adequately prepare volunteers for service.
Secondly, subjects indicated the presence and value of written directive training. Interviewees reported that ministries have created training manuals or handbooks for their ministries. Apparently, these comprehensive training manuals are given to all potential volunteers.

A third observed ideology confirmed by subjects was the principle and practice of continually educating and training volunteers. The written manuals, previously mentioned, aided in providing continual training. Volunteers appreciated the ability to refer back to these manuals whenever they felt they needed to refresh their memory. In addition, various departments hosted quarterly training meetings. These quarterly meetings provided inspiration and information pertaining to present and future procedures.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

All interviewees at WCC proudly commended the amount, quality and value of training provided at this local church. Subjects revealed a training system, similar to the one revealed by interviewees at GCC. Interviewees described a process including the following elements: Initial training, apprenticing, and continual training.

First, potential volunteers experienced initial training within specific departments or ministries. Initial departmental training was usually done within group settings. Apparently each department created a Serving 101 class which “breaks you in on serving within that particular ministry.” Serving 101 is held on a Saturday and lasts for half of the day. The class is mandatory.

Secondly, potential volunteers were assigned to an apprenticeship position. Individual, potential volunteers were matched with a veteran volunteer for a period of
time, possibly two to three weekends. Potential volunteers observed the mentor, learning from his or her actions and conversations.

Thirdly, preparation for effectiveness occurred through continual equipping mechanisms. One component of continual training included the element of individualized instruction. New volunteers were assigned roles or positions near someone who was a veteran volunteer. Modeling and mentoring occurred through this ongoing instruction.

Along with individual training occurring on continuing basis, subjects also told about continuing group instruction. Various departments hold quarterly meetings to equip volunteers.

**Synopsis of Preferred Equipping Mechanisms**

This project targeted volunteers (rather than staff or professional persons) presently serving within effective lay-deploying cultures. I was curious to discover their perception pertaining to favored methods and practices of training. Therefore, after discussing established equipping mechanisms present within their church environment, Subjects were allowed to express opinions about which ones were most meaningful for them.

**Results from Granger Community Church**

Subjects unanimously agreed that the most helpful equipping mechanism present at GCC pertained to on-the-job training. With little hesitation, all subjects pinpointed the practice of shadowing a veteran volunteer as the most beneficial element of their personal equipping. This personalized instruction allowed new volunteers to observe, see practices and principles visibly modeled, ask questions, clarify procedures, dispel confusion, feel comfortable, operate within a team structure, and experience caring connection.
According to subjects, the practice of shadowing quickly moves potential volunteers into serving roles.

**Results from Southeast Christian Church**

Subjects from this church expressed diverse opinions as to which equipping mechanisms were most helpful. One subject said the most helpful learning experience was frequent, periodic, ongoing training. Another subject stated her most helpful learning experience was being trained about personal evangelism that would impact the lives of persons she would serve. Other interviewees reported that they believed their most helpful equipping experience correlated with the fact that training is provided departmentally. According to them, departmental training allows persons to be trained specifically for their particular duties.

**Results from Willow Creek Community Church**

Subjects from this church also expressed diverse opinions as to which equipping mechanisms were most helpful. Two subjects stated they believed that the practice of equipping through apprentice relationships was most helpful to them. They appreciated being connected to a mentor who modeled and taught duties and skills. Three subjects voiced appreciation for the comprehensive nature of training provided to them. They were told everything they needed to know about volunteering in their particular ministry areas. They were specifically equipped to handle actual and potential situations. This comprehensive training instilled confidence and fulfillment in ministry.

**RETENTION MECHANISMS WITHIN THE THREE LARGE CHURCHES**

**Synopsis of Retention Mechanisms**

Subjects from all three churches reported their lay-deploying cultures include
intentional and adequate support systems for volunteers. These calculated and sufficient mechanisms motivated volunteers to continue serving in these churches.

**Results from Granger Community Church**

Subjects categorized two classifications of retention mechanisms in their culture. First, interviewees distinguished enhancement mechanisms that assisted volunteers in ministries. Secondly, subjects explained encouragement mechanisms that affirmed and confirmed volunteers in ministries.

Enhancement mechanisms were activities, attitudes, and behaviors that improved personal skills and augmented personal participation and expression. Enhancement mechanisms consisted of continual training processes, cultural values, and recurrent assessment. Subjects reported that various training opportunities stimulated development of skills that allowed them to do effective ministry. They cited the existence of cultural values that flowed from a philosophy and practice of “doing church as team.” These cultural values conveyed the ideology that volunteers are capable of doing ministry and are encouraged to be resourceful in personal expressions of ministry. Subjects appreciated periodic assessment of their roles and service. Periodic assessment allowed volunteers to commit to another term of service or to exit a ministry in order to find a more fulfilling one.

Encouragement mechanisms were activities, events, and behaviors that communicated gratitude and recognition for service. All five subjects confirmed that this local church intentionally and consistently expresses thankfulness to volunteers for their service through a variety of experiences: departmental parties, dinners, and celebrations; verbal recognition and affirmation by leadership at weekend services; and, continual
verbal affirmation and recognition from departmental leadership.

**Results From Southeast Christian Church**

Subjects spoke specifically and ardently about encouragement mechanisms. All five subjects confirmed that this local church intentionally and resourcefully expresses thankfulness to volunteers for their service through a variety of affirmation experiences. Subjects declared that gratitude is expressed through periodic dinners or events through verbal encouragement from leadership, through various means of written correspondence and communication, and through occasional gifts or treats. Subjects especially appreciated the creativity and resourcefulness with which appreciation was expressed.

**Results From Willow Creek Community Church**

Subjects from WCC alluded to enhancement mechanisms that aided volunteers in continued participation in ministries. They voiced thankfulness for continual training that assists them in personal skills development.

Similar to subjects from SEC, these subjects emphasized the existence and impact of encouragement mechanisms that make them feel valued and needed. Six encouragement mechanisms were discussed: planned events, surprise luncheons, written correspondence, public acknowledgement, sense of community and personal acknowledgement.

**Synopsis of Perceived Key Elements In Volunteer Cultures And Systems**

A final question allowed subjects to explain other personal reasons for their enduring service to the church. Subjects discussed what they believed were important components that inspire involvement and long-term commitment.
Results from Granger Community Church

Subjects unhesitatingly identified several key elements. Responses included the following components: Biblical and theological foundations; organizational components and processes; attraction mechanisms; and, retention mechanisms.

Persons from this church believed that lay-deploying cultures should originate from biblical foundations. Interviewees identifying biblical and theological foundations as crucial elements spoke about two biblical, theological concepts. The two foundational elements they believed are necessary are listed as follows: (1) connection into ministry roles, based upon spiritual gifts and their mandate to be utilized through the church and (2) instruction demonstrating that serving is a natural and necessary part of being a Christ follower.

Interviewees stated that various organizational components, ideologies, and processes are crucial to the productivity of lay deployment cultures. The following components and processes were believed to be foundational rudiments: good organization (management behaviors and procedures); strong, competent, appropriate volunteer leadership; and, placement of volunteers in roles through which personal passions are expressed.

Another perceived crucial element pertained to two attraction mechanisms. First, one subject proclaimed the significance and necessity of clearly defined and obviously simple entrances into the realm of volunteerism. Secondly, a consistent, visible volunteer connection place is a key component in a volunteer culture and system. This connection place would be a “go to place” for anyone, anytime, who wished to begin the process of connecting into a ministry role.
Finally, two subjects believed the retention mechanism of “expressed appreciation” is a key component in a volunteer culture and system. According to these subjects, volunteers need to hear and know that they are valued and their ministries are impacting people’s lives.

Results from Southeast Christian Church

With the exception of one distinction (adding “equipping mechanisms”), subjects from this church voiced similar responses to ones given by interviewees at GCC. These subjects spoke about the following matters: biblical and theological foundations for volunteerism, attraction components, an organizational or system’s procedure, equipping mechanisms, and retention mechanisms.

Three subjects believed biblical and theological foundations are important elements. Specifically, they declared the rationale for volunteerism is to accomplish God’s intentions and purposes. According to them, volunteer cultures and systems naturally carry out God’s intentions and purposes through utilization of volunteers’ spiritual gifts.

Three attraction mechanisms were designated as crucial components of a church’s volunteer environment. First, was the belief that passionate vision casting by the senior pastor is a key component. A second attraction mechanism labeled as an essential element was the concept of flexibility in volunteerism. Flexibility allows volunteers to choose roles based upon personal lifestyles, work schedules, and family responsibilities. A third attraction mechanism identified as a crucial component was that of communication about the vast variety of options for volunteer roles. Existence and awareness of multiple options provides opportunities for as many people as possible to
serve in areas where they can make an impact.

Two subjects identified an organizational, connection procedure as a crucial element. They noted the importance of connecting persons in appropriate roles, where they can use God-given abilities and passions (rather than just “filling positions because there is a need”).

One subject said equipping mechanisms are vital to a church’s volunteer environment. He believed the number one priority in a volunteer environment is training of volunteers, so that they can function in efficient and fulfilling ways.

One subject stated that the retention mechanism of support is a dominant factor in a volunteer culture and system. Volunteers should not be put into a role and forgotten. Volunteers are to be supported by letting them know they are appreciated.

Results From Willow Creek Community Church

Interviewees confirmed some key elements discussed by respondents from the previous two churches. They also discussed additional components they believed were important. WCC’s subjects discussed organizational systems and process issues, attraction mechanisms, and retention mechanisms.

Subjects stated perceptions about four organizational procedure and process issues they believe are key components. First, subjects stated the significance of precise descriptions and explanations of volunteer roles. Secondly, subjects noted the urgency of asking for precise numbers of volunteers for specific roles, based upon actual need. Too few or too many volunteers for a specific event will have disastrous results. Thirdly, clear and consistent communication ensures that pertinent information is widely dispersed and allows volunteers to know expectations. Fourthly, persons are to be connected into
ministry roles according to personal spiritual gifts and personal passions for specific ministry roles

Two subjects believed a key element in a church volunteer environment is the attraction mechanism of conveying personal volunteerism benefits. Both subjects emphasized the significance of informing people about the sense of fulfillment and joy that comes as volunteers do ministry.

Three subjects endorsed a connection philosophy as a key element in a church volunteer system and culture. The connection philosophy consisted of two elements: linking persons to roles based upon spiritual gifts and personal passions for specific ministry roles.

Two subjects discussed the retention mechanism of expressed appreciation as a key element in a church’s volunteer environment. These subjects believed that expressed appreciation is a powerful, motivating factor for volunteers.
WORKS CITED


